

Derby 1745 – A Turning Point in History



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On December 4th 1745, Charles Edward Stuart, “Bonnie Prince Charlie” and his Scottish Army arrived in Derby. Earlier that day two men had arrived at the George Inn demanding billets for 9.000 men. Charles himself arrived in the evening and Charles’s father was proclaimed King James 111.

As soon as it was obvious that the Scots were heading for Derby, leading citizens, including the Duke of Devonshire and the Derby Militia, fled to Nottingham.

The following day, parties were sent out to try and recruit volunteers. Whilst some members of the gentry were sympathetic, they were not prepared to openly rebel against the Government. This continued lack of support in England for the Stuart cause convinced the Clan Chiefs and senior Officers of Charles’ army that a retreat back to Scotland was the only option. This was put to Charles at a council meeting on the evening of 5th December and after a long and bitter argument, Charles eventually agreed.

On the morning of 6th December 1745, Bonnie Prince Charlie and his army retreated back to Scotland. On the same day, in London there was panic, Government stocks fell sharply and the King and the Royal Family were preparing to flee to Hanover. No one really knows what would have happened if Bonnie Prince Charlie had decided to go on, but historians now believe that the decision to retreat ensured that the ’45 Jacobite rebellion was doomed to fail.

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