

EDINBURGH CASTLE UNDER SIEGE 1639-1745

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This is the third and final part of a review of the sieges of Edinburgh Castle, perhaps the most besieged fortress of all time. The surrender of the castle after a heavy bombardment in May 1573 by a combined English and Scottish government force had greatly dented its reputation for invincibility as well as leaving much of it in ruins. It was quickly rebuilt and strengthened, especially by the erection of the great Half Moon Battery which is such a prominent part of its structure to this day. It was then to remain untested as a fortress until the civil wars of the following century.

1639

As the Covenanting Party in Scotland moved to open conflict with their king their cause was enormously helped by the return to his native land of Alexander Leslie, a distinguished soldier who had served as a field marshal in the Swedish army. By March he was well on his way, aided by other Scottish officers who had served abroad, to creating the militia armies that were to play such an important part in the upcoming civil wars. The capture of Edinburgh Castle on 21 March marked the beginning of the First Bishops' War.¹

The castle was held by its constable, Archibald Haldane. Leslie with a party of noblemen, along with Sir Alexander Hamilton, General of the Artillery, General Major Robert Monro, both of whom had also been in Swedish service, and the companies of men raised by Edinburgh (1,000 musketeers) went up to the castle between four and five in the afternoon to parley with Haldane, apparently with the expectation that he could be persuaded to relinquish his charge or support the covenanting cause. This turned out not to be the case, but before Leslie and his party withdrew a petard was attached to the outer gate, and once it had exploded a full scale assault was mounted on the inner two gates with axes, hammers and 'ramming-leddirs' while the walls were scaled. So unprepared and unnerved were the castle garrison that they attempted no resistance and the castle was taken within half an hour 'without a stroke'.

This has to be one of the most remarkable and easy captures of a major fortress in the history of warfare. Presumably the constable, Haldane, was inexperienced, perhaps even overawed by the distinguished officers who had come to speak to him. There had as yet been no open hostilities between king and covenanters and he seems not to have anticipated that this might be the occasion for that state of affairs to change. It may be

¹ There are two main accounts of this enterprise, one in *The Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie* Vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Bannatyne Club, 1841), p. 195; the other by Sir James Balfour in *The Historical Works of Sir James Balfour* Vol. 2 (Edinburgh: W. Aitchison, 1824), p. 321.

supposed that the conference took place with Leslie and his party outside the spur, near to its entrance, and Haldane on the wall top looking down on them.

It is possible that the petard, an explosive device designed to blow open a gate, was affixed to the entrance of the spur without Haldane being aware that it was happening. One had been made available several years earlier in 1614 for the siege of Dunyvaig Castle in Islay,² but apart from that there was probably little awareness of this technology in Scotland and no occasion for their use. Leslie's assault on the castle may well have been opportunistic, but he had obviously prepared well. Having won entrance to the spur his men were well briefed and equipped to take the rest of the castle. The inner gates that also had to be won were the Inner Barrier and the Portcullis Gate. Everything we know about Leslie's career would indicate that he would only have embarked on such a bold plan if he was reasonably sure that he could force all three gates without serious opposition.

Leslie was one of the greatest generals ever produced by Scotland, undeservedly largely forgotten.³ His capture of the castle in 1639, so swiftly and with no loss of life, ranks with other great moments in the fortress' history like its capture in 1314 and 1341.

1640

The castle was restored to Charles I after the conclusion of the First Bishops' War and the new commander, Patrick Ruthven, Lord Ettrick, was a very experienced soldier. With war again inevitable between the king and the Covenanters he had managed to effect repairs and increase its garrison and food supplies to hold out for at least six months – or more optimistically a year - if necessary, despite a lack of cooperation from the Edinburgh townsfolk. There is a considerable amount of detail about the siege, primarily from two sources. Firstly there are letters to and from Ettrick detailing preparations for the siege,⁴ and secondly, there is the biography of one of the key players amongst the besiegers, Major Hugh Somerville, written by his son, who actually, as a child, witnessed much about which he wrote.⁵ Somerville may be guilty of 'talking up' his father's role and importance and of a certain amount of exaggeration. There is also the difficulty that he has directing the siege, and taking part in specific

² David Masson (ed), *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland* (Edinburgh: H. M. General Register House, 1898), second series Vol. 10, pp. 726-27.

³ See C. S. Terry, *The Life and campaigns of Alexander Leslie, first earl of Leven* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1899); S. Murdoch and A. Grosjean, *Alexander Leslie and the Scottish General of the Thirty Years' War, 1618-1648* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016).

⁴ William Dunn Macray (ed), *Letters and Papers of Patrick Ruthven, Earl of Forth and Brentford, and his family, A.D. 1615 – A.D. 1662 with an appendix of papers relating to Sir John Urry* (London: Roxburghe Club, 1868).

⁵ James, Lord Somerville, *Memorie of the Somervilles: being a history of the baronial house of Somerville, by James eleventh Lord Somerville* (Edinburgh: J Ballantyne, 1815) Vol.2, pp. 223-61.

events relating to it, General Alexander Leslie, even though it is clear that he was off with the Covenanting army in its expedition into England.

Nevertheless, Somerville's account is of great importance, and not only gives insights and opinions which are most probably derived from his father but includes some fascinating human interest stories, of which we give two examples here. Firstly, when his father invited a number of fellow officers to dine at his quarters in the Castlehill, a piece of shot fired from the castle burst into the kitchen and passed between the legs of a serving wench. As it turned out, she was not badly hurt, though she also had to suffer ribald comments from the officers and their displeasure at having to serve themselves as a result of her injury. Secondly, after Ettrick had surrendered, he invited the officers, from the besieging forces and some noblemen to dine with him in the castle. Somerville, actually on duty, placed himself at the other end of the table from him. When the toasts were being made Ettrick took off his sword and propelled it down the table to Somerville with words to the effect that he recognised from his actions during the siege that he was most worthy of it.⁶

King Charles was determined that Edinburgh Castle should be held for his cause. He had appointed and ennobled Ettrick, as the best man for the job, and went to some lengths to establish what he needed and to supply it for him, including men, money munitions and food. He took a personal interest in Ettrick's efforts to completely dig a second well in the castle to improve his water supply and made suggestions about gathering rain water. He required an inventory of the supplies, munitions, etc in the castle and Ettrick's assessment of how long he could hold out. He also made it clear to Ettrick that he had authority to use his cannon against the town of Edinburgh should it deny anything he needed.⁷ The mood in Edinburgh in the autumn and winter of 1639 was very much against the king and the provost and Town Council had to be bullied into facilitating the entrance into the castle of a force of 100 English soldiers to reinforce the garrison and also supplies. Ettrick, however, could not get any substantial amount of timber for use in scaffolding and repairs to the Spur or other outworks, the walling of which was falling down. He nevertheless managed to effect repairs before the start of the siege.⁸

Apart from substantial supplies of food and drink, a garrison of above 300 men with a few women and children, Ettrick had the following mounted guns:

'Brass' guns

1 French cannon

4 demy cannon drakes

1 demy cannon 'cut of 6 foot'

2 whole culverins

⁶ *Memorie of the Somervilles*, Vol. 2, pp. 234-36.

⁷ *Ruthven Letters and Papers*, pp. 13-16, 47-52.

⁸ *Ruthven Letters and Papers*, pp. 30-31, 43, 47, 58.

6 demy culverins
 1 saker
 2 minions
 3 falcons
 7 bastard pieces (betwixt minions and falcons)
 3 falconets

Iron pieces

6 demy culverins
 3 sakers
 2 falcons
 1 falconet
 2 mortars
 2 petards

This appears to be a formidable collection of guns, many of large size. We might reasonably suppose that the 20 larger guns, the various cannons and culverins, fired shot of 12½ pounds (5.68kg) weight and over, perhaps up to 33 pounds (15kg) weight. The iron pieces would have been modern, muzzle-loading guns of cast iron. His master gunner, James Goudall, was joined by three other gunners sent by order of the king, and supplies of equipment included well over 3,000 pieces of shot of different sizes and ‘cases’ filled with cut iron and bullets for repelling assaults at close quarters. It is likely, however, that these quantities of powder and shot meant that Ettrick always had to be aware of the need to conserve his resources.⁹

The siege was precipitated in early June by Ettrick firing some of his cannon into the town. The inhabitants had been bringing dirt into some yards near the castle and Ettrick saw this as the first stages in the erection of batteries to fire against him. Possibly they meant at this stage to do no more than provide protection for the meeting of Parliament which was then taking place. Whatever the case, there was no way back. The Estates summoned Ettrick to surrender on 4 June, and on his refusal passed sentence of forfeiture against him on 11 June.¹⁰

The Covenanters had two regiments of foot, one of which was commanded by Colonel Lindsay with as major, Hugh Somerville, the other by Colonel Blair. They also had siege guns, 36 pounders and 24 pounders brought from Holland,¹¹ and set about establishing four batteries as follows:

⁹ *Ruthven Letters and Papers*, pp. 37, 40, 48-52.

¹⁰ *Ruthven Letters and Papers*, p. 62; Records of the Parliaments of Scotland, <https://www.rps.ac.uk>, 1640/6/15 and 1640/6/63. Accessed 17 February 2014.

¹¹ Balfour, *Historical Works*, Vol. 2, p. 379.

1. On the Castlehill, beyond the last house (Robert Davidson's) on the north side of the street, only about 60 paces away from the Spur. Because of the underlying rock it had to be constructed of 'horse litter', clad with dales (planks), with ports for the guns to fire through. Here the besiegers had mounted eight demy cannon each firing shot of 40 to 36 pounds (c. 18 to 16kg) weight.
2. At the northwest end of Greyfriar's Church, with six guns firing 24 pound (10.88kg) weight shot.
3. On the 'long gait' (the road leading north from the north side of the North loch, the present day Hanover Street). Here there were seven large (i.e., long barrelled?) guns of no great size.
4. Near the West Kirk (St Cuthbert's), actually on the present day Queensferry Street) – six guns of smaller size.

These all had to be put in place despite gunfire from the castle. Lord Somerville, no doubt reflecting the views of his father, believed that the second and third of these batteries were of little or no use and criticised Leslie for not making more of an effort to breach the castle's western defences.¹² Assuming that this plan really was down to Leslie, we might suppose that he had so positioned his batteries in order to deal with the guns opposing him from the castle. As for battering a hole in the castle defences, with limited resources in large guns, there was a choice either of going for the Spur, already showing signs of weakness, or attempting a bombardment of the walling about the West Sally-port – a strategy that failed for the besiegers in 1689 (see below).

Once the Covenanters had their guns in position there was a lively exchange of fire with the castle as each side attempted to dismount their opponent's guns. There is no record of this duel producing notable results for either side. It was recorded, however, that two of the iron guns in the castle were broken when they were inventoried at the end of the siege and Somerville gives a graphic account of a shot from the castle, at a later stage in the siege, entering through a gun port in the Castlehill battery and killing two gunners as they were sighting along the barrel of their gun.¹³ The course of the siege quietened down considerably after the initial artillery duel with neither side anxious to waste powder and shot.

The Covenanters had also by July created a line of circumvallation around the castle to make their blockade effective.¹⁴ Nevertheless, sorties by the garrison are said to have taken place, including one in which a party of the garrison issued early in a morning to round up a group of escaped sheep that fled to the north side of the Castlehill. They were almost immediately challenged by a party of the besiegers, and in the fighting about 40 were left dead. The soldiers from the garrison did, however, manage to get nearly 30 sheep.¹⁵

¹² *Memorie of the Somervilles*, Vol. 2, p. 201.

¹³ *Ruthven Letters and Papers*, p. 67; *Memorie of the Somervilles*, Vol. 2, p.234.

¹⁴ Balfour, *Historical Works*, Vol. 2, p. 379.

¹⁵ *Memorie of the Somervilles*, Vol. 2, pp. 230-32.

The main strategy of the besiegers for winning the castle was to explode a mine under the Spur and create a breach through which they could send a sizeable force of men. If they managed to retain a complete element of surprise they could hope to have their men upon the enemy forces in the Spur while they were still in a state of confusion and before they had a chance to withdraw into the main part of the castle and close the Inner Barrier and Portcullis Gate. Major Somerville was chosen to lead the assault with a party of 250 drawn from the two regiments and 40 pioneers provided with shovels and mattocks. Immediately after the mine was exploded in the early morning, all the guns in the Castlehill battery were to fire a salvo into the breach and Somerville with half the force was to storm his way into the Spur. Once they were in it they were to be followed by the second detachment under a Captain Waddel. What they did not know is that Ruthven had already been warned by his guards of unusual noise coming from the enemy entrenchments and rightly judged it might relate to the springing of a mine followed by an assault. He had, therefore, removed his six cannon from the Spur as well as his men, placing them within the Inner Barrier – just in time.

The opening phases of the assault went according to plan, though the breach opened up by the mine was not as generous as could be hoped for. Somerville and his men were supplied with 12 ladders and they had to be used. Once inside, they found that they were like ‘sillie myce in a trapt’, exposed to the gunfire of a garrison that had been waiting for them. Many were killed outright, Somerville himself wounded, and reduced to trying to seek shelter behind a thin stone wall that crossed the interior of the Spur – visible on a plan of the Spur dating to about 1650.¹⁶ Meanwhile Waddel was shot as he attempted to enter the breach at the head of his men and they all sought shelter beneath the exterior of the Spur walls. The whole enterprise had turned out to be a disaster and Somerville and his men had to be called off. Somerville’s son claims that Ettrick offered to allow the major and his men to withdraw without being fired upon. Of the 125 plus officers and pioneers he led into the Spur he returned with only 33.¹⁷

After this the castle was merely blockaded. Ettrick finally indicated his desire to surrender in September, after a siege of over three months, pretending that it was not through lack of resources but the desire of his king that he should serve him elsewhere. The actual date of surrender was 15 September. Ettrick was allowed the full honours of war and on 18 September marched his remaining 137 men out with their arms and baggage, colours flying, to be shipped off for England in ships awaiting them at Leith. In fact, Ettrick’s men were badly afflicted with scurvy, himself included (his legs had swollen and he had lost many of his teeth), and other illness. Their supply of fresh water had given out as early as 6 June and he had lost about 200 killed. He had used up more than half his powder.¹⁸ It was estimated by Somerville that over 1,000 men, women and

¹⁶ G. Ewart and D. Gallagher, *Fortress of the Kingdom. Archaeology and research at Edinburgh Castle* (Edinburgh: Historic Scotland, 2014), illus. 6.3.

¹⁷ *Memorie of the Somervilles*, Vol. 2, pp. 243-52. Compare Balfour, *Historical Works*, Vol. 2, p. 379.

¹⁸ Balfour, *Historical Works*, Vol. 2, pp. 403-4; *Ruthven Letters and Papers*, p. 67.

children, had been killed by fire from the castle – an exaggeration? - and over 1,000 cannon shot fired by the besiegers.¹⁹

A soldier of Ettrick's standing and experience with a large professional garrison in Edinburgh Castle was a definite threat to the Covenanting movement. The capture of the castle was of more than symbolic value to them. Meanwhile Charles I had nothing to celebrate in his dealings with the Scots who in August, under the command of Alexander Leslie, had won a victory at Newburn and captured Newcastle upon Tyne. Ettrick's defence of the castle for so long could at least be seen as an achievement of sorts. He remained in high favour, being created Earl of Forth in 1642.²⁰

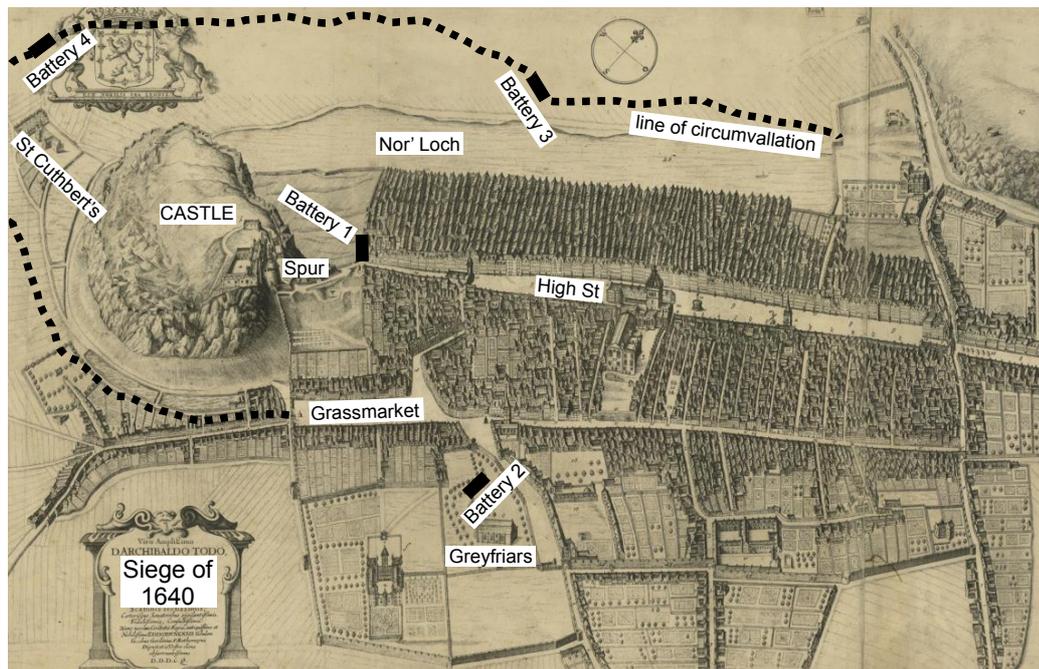


Figure 1: The siege of 1640 based on the 1647 bird's-eye view of Edinburgh by Gordon of Rothiemay. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.

1650

‘When a Sheep is General of An Army of Lions they may be beat’ – a note written later by the castle’s master gunner, referring to the Keeper of the Castle.²¹ Late in the year,

¹⁹ *Memorie of the Somervilles*, Vol. 2, p. 260.

²⁰ S. Reid, ‘Ruthven, Patrick, earl of Forth and earl of Brentford (d. 1651)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008 [2004]). At: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24373>. Accessed 16 February 2014.

²¹ T. Binning, *A Light to the Art of Gunnery wherein is laid down the true weight of powder, both for proof and action, of all sorts of great ordnance: also the true ball and allowance for wind, with the most necessary conclusions for the practice of gunnery, either in sea or land-service: likewise the ingredients and making of most necessary fire-works, as also many compositions for the gunner's practice, both at sea and land* (London: John Darby, 1677), p. 118.

after his victory at Dunbar on 3 September, Cromwell undertook the siege of Edinburgh Castle, which surrendered after three months although still unbreached and well supplied. Useful information on the siege comes from a contemporary diary by John Nicoll and from Cromwell's correspondence.²²

Cromwell was in control of the town of Edinburgh. The castle was under the command of Colonel Walter Dundas, younger, of that ilk, who may have counted as the number one reason why he had the post the fact that he was Alexander Leslie's son-in-law. It was reported to Cromwell that the castle was well provided, for at least 15 months. The resources in men and guns that Cromwell was prepared to apply to taking the castle were clearly limited. He considered the possibility of bombarding it from the Calton Hill but opted for mining his way in, using Scottish colliers and miners from Derbyshire. They had made a start by the end of September, apparently approaching from the present day Johnstone Terrace to the south.²³

It would have been difficult for artillery in the castle to fire at this mining operation, no doubt one of the main reasons why this location had been selected. It was notoriously difficult for gunners at that time to get their guns to fire downhill. The master gunner, however, describes how during the siege he cut out the 'breast-bands' of gun carriages and elevated the breeches of his guns to achieve such a result. He claims to have dug traverses to counter the mining activity. A volley fired by six cannon together caused part of the mine to collapse and a powder barrel filled with noxious and combustible materials was dropped into it to clear out the enemy. The men from the castle were later able to recover the miners' tools.²⁴

Meanwhile Cromwell had established a fort or gun battery on the north side of the Castlehill, to the west of the Castlehill Kirk (in the process of being built but never completed), apparently further back from the Spur than the battery erected for the siege ten years earlier, about the present day Ramsay Gardens. It had large siege guns and mortars which were fully operational by 12 December and duly put into action to try and dismount the castle guns. It took some time for the besiegers to get their range, many of their shot flying harmlessly over the top of the castle, but Cromwell now thought it worthwhile to summon the castle to surrender.²⁵

Dundas had not responded to the threat posed by Cromwell's guns on Castlehill. Remarkably, he had forbidden his guns to be fired, giving to his master gunner as his reason for this that he had already shed too much blood. The latter insisted on having

²² S. C. Lomas (ed.), *A Diary of Public Transactions and Other Occurrences, Chiefly in Scotland, From January 1650 to June 1667* (Edinburgh: Bannatyne Club, 1836); *The Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell with Elucidations by Thomas Carlyle* (London: Methuen, 1904) Vol. 2. See also K. C. Corser, 'The Surrender of Edinburgh Castle December, 1650', *Scottish Historical Review*, Vol. 28 (1949), pp. 43-54.

²³ *Cromwell's Letters*, Vol. 2, p. 137; *Nicoll's Diary*, p. 34; Corser, 'The Surrender of Edinburgh Castle', p. 44.

²⁴ Binning, *Gunnery*, 'Introduction' (n.p.), and pp. 117-18.

²⁵ Binning, *Gunnery*, p. 119; *Cromwell's Letters*, Vol. 2, pp. 153-64.

this instruction given him in front of all his men so he could be held blameless for the consequences.²⁶ Dundas' qualms of conscience must have related to the prospect of firing into the town, especially with the likelihood of hitting one of the burgh churches. Despite having just had his force increased by a German mercenary, Captain Augustine, with 36 men, who managed to get through the English lines on 14 December, Dundas negotiated a surrender. The terms of his capitulation were agreed by night on 19 December. On Christmas Eve he walked away from a castle that had suffered little damage and which was still estimated to have provisions for two or three months and water in abundance. It was also well provided with artillery, powder and shot, and other arms.²⁷

Dundas has been regarded as a villain, a traitor, a coward even, for giving up his charge so lightly. The problem for any present-day historian examining this event and others like it with inadequate knowledge is why was his behaviour and performance regarded as so much worse than, for instance, Etrick's in 1640? From the available documentation we cannot say that Edinburgh Castle was more able to resist its besiegers for any length of time on 19 December 1650 than on 15 September 1640. It does, however, seem clear that Dundas was less reckless than Etrick in preserving the lives of his fellows and the townsfolk of Edinburgh. Corser (1949) makes an interesting case that Dundas was easily swayed in deciding to give up through clandestine contact with a more senior Scottish Officer, Colonel Archibald Strachan, who had joined with Cromwell.

1689

In 1688, when William of Orange arrived in England to dislodge his uncle and father-in-law, King James II/VII as king of England, Edinburgh Castle was commanded by George Gordon, first Duke of Gordon. For many months it was not at all clear how this revolution would affect Scotland. As in England there was considerable opposition to King James' desire to introduce toleration for Catholics, but the struggle was about much more, and did not result in clear cut battle lines pitching Protestants against Catholics. Gordon, himself a Catholic, as only about one in ten of those in the castle before the siege, received no instructions from King James either before or after his flight abroad in December 1688, and after May 1689 when William had accepted the offer of the Crown of Scotland from the Convention of Estates sitting in Edinburgh, he had to make his own decisions as to what was the most honourable course of action. It is possible that he was lukewarm in support of the ousted monarch, and it is said only

²⁶ Binning, *Gunnery*, pp. 117-18.

²⁷ Corser, 'The Surrender of Edinburgh Castle', pp. 49-51. The information on guns and other supplies comes from contemporary newsletters: *The Faithfull Scout*.

undertook to hold the castle until the Convention of Estates decided for James or William as king of Scots.²⁸

The main sources of information on this siege are two anonymous accounts, one written by a member of the garrison, another not dissimilar account published in French, and reports in contemporary newsletters.²⁹ There is also much useful material in the records of the Privy Council of Scotland, especially information on the location of the siege batteries and damage inflicted by the castle guns, contained in claims for compensation by those who had been affected. More can be learnt from the proceedings of the Estates of Scotland.³⁰

The castle had a garrison which consisted of up to 200 officers and men, divided into three squadrons. It was also the base for the gunners and others, 25 in all, who looked after the royal artillery,³¹ although it was noted in September 1688, when there was a proposal to restore their lodgings, that none of them were actually resident in the castle.³² There were, besides, wives and children, and also a few prisoners. Many of the garrison, however, were unhappy at the prospect of defending the castle for the exiled King James against King William, and the Duke of Gordon took the pragmatic step of allowing all that would not support him unreservedly to leave – seven officers and 41 men.³³ That left him at the start of the siege proper with only six officers and about 120 sentinels (privates), and crucially, no cannoners, surgeon or other specialists.

Most of the gunners had headed south to England with the Scottish standing forces in October 1688, taking guns, powder and other equipment with them. To a limited extent the deficiency in men was made good by the arrival in the castle of several volunteers. Particularly welcome amongst them was Robert Dunbar, a ship captain who was an expert on artillery. At first the Williamite forces did not maintain a tight blockade on the castle and it was possible for Gordon to maintain lines of communication with supporters in the town and elsewhere, but he also suffered from

²⁸ *Siege of the Castle of Edinburgh M.DC.LXXXIX*, presented to the Bannatyne Club by Robert Bell (Edinburgh: Bannatyne Club, 1828), pp. 19-20, 99, 114-15.

²⁹ *Siege of the Castle of Edinburgh* [henceforth *Siege*]; *Siege du Chateau d'Edimbourg. Relation De ce qui s'est passé au Siege du Chateau d'Edimbourg durant la derniere Revolution d'Ecosse* [printed account in The National Library of Scotland; no author or place of publication given, 1690]; C. S. Terry, 'The Siege of Edinburgh Castle, March – June 1689', *Scottish Historical Review*, Vol. 2 (1905), pp. 163-72.

³⁰ E. W. M. Balfour-Melville, (ed.), *An Account of the Proceedings of the Estates in Scotland 1689-1690* (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 1954-55). 2 vols. Much of the more useful material in these proceedings has also been extracted for publication in *Siege of the Castle of Edinburgh*.

³¹ National Records of Scotland, E28/286/1.

³² *Reg. Privy Council of Scotland*, 3rd ser. Vol. 13, p. 1.

³³ *Reg. Privy Council of Scotland*, 3rd ser. Vol. 13, p. lvi.

further defections and sickness amongst his men. By the time the castle capitulated there may have been considerably fewer men fit for duty.³⁴

During the siege the duke deployed his men in two squadrons, one commanded by the ensign, Mr Winchester, the other nominally by himself but ordinarily under a gentleman volunteer, Francis Gardin of Midstrath. The squadrons took it in turn to be on duty each night. During the day a total of eight sentinels, and at night 17, did guard duty at the High Guard House (formerly positioned between the present National War Memorial and St Margaret's Chapel), the Low Guard (later called the Port Guard, inside the outer or Principle Entrance) and the Sally-port. By 18 May the guard was concentrated in the Low Guard and at the Sally-port. From the beginning of June, as a result of more desertions and the activities of the besiegers, the main guard was kept at the Sally-port and six sentinels under a gentleman were posted a little eastward. Split between the Low Guard, the Half Moon Battery and Crichton's Yard (location not known, but possibly the later Coal Yard) there was a force consisting of two gentlemen, a sergeant, a corporal, a gunner and nine soldiers; and there were a further five sentinels commanded by a gentleman at the Portcullis Gate. It is also evident that the garrison could still access the Well House Tower, outside the castle wall, at this stage in the siege and might place men there to help protect members of the garrison, coming and going, to maintain contact with the outside world.³⁵

The duke only had limited supplies in the castle of gunpowder for his guns, which are listed as:

'Brass' guns

one 42 pounder
 one 36 pounder
 four 24 pounders
 one 18 pounder
 two 12 pounders

Iron guns

several, 24, 16 and 12 pounders, not worth much

Other pieces

some small field pieces and a mortar firing 14 inch (356mm) shells.³⁶

The brass 42 pounder was probably the gun nicknamed the 'Plus Vestra' (? from an inscription on it) and the four brass 24 pounders seem to have been called the four sisters.³⁷ Perhaps they were amongst the cannon that John Slezer, Master General of

³⁴ *Siege*, pp. 29, 35-36, 61-62, 70; Terry, 'The Siege of Edinburgh Castle', p. 169; *Proceedings of the Estates*, Vol. 1, p. 22.

³⁵ *Siege*, pp. 36, 53, 65.

³⁶ *Siege*, p. 52; *Siege du Chateau d'Edimbourg*, pp. 11-12.

³⁷ National Records of Scotland, E28/330/14.

the Artillery, got in Holland in 1683, at least one by Johan Onderogge of Rotterdam.³⁸ The iron guns 'not worth much' would have included some at least of the 97 pair of cannon from Burntisland Castle, transferred to Edinburgh Castle in 1685 – presumably small 'leather cannon' that fired stone or grape-shot.³⁹ His supplies of food and drink were also limited. The latter were unexpectedly augmented by an unseasonal heavy fall of snow on the night of 19/20 May.⁴⁰

One of the most famous events of the time, now commemorated by a plaque on a path below the West Sally-port, was a meeting between the duke and Viscount Dundee, commander for King James of the military forces in Scotland, on 18 March 1689. Dundee had decided to flee from what he regarded as the futility of taking part in the Convention of Estates. The Duke had spied through his telescope Dundee with his party of horsemen riding round the north of the castle and, after an exchange over the wall, came out through the Sally-port to speak directly with him. That was the last communication between the two. The duke had been on the verge of capitulating the previous week and had only held off through the intervention of Dundee and another leading supporter of King James, the Earl of Balcarres.⁴¹ No doubt Dundee was determined at this interview to ensure he did not waiver again.⁴² At that time Edinburgh Castle was the only strongpoint or garrison of significance in Britain still holding out for King James.

The Estates placed guards around the castle on 10 March to stop supplies getting in and to hinder communications between the castle and the outside world.⁴³ The siege officially commenced 18 March with the order by the Convention of Estates that the castle should be blockaded. At first the men responsible for carrying this out were the Covenanters from the south and west, perhaps the largest and politically most significant group to swamp Edinburgh while the Convention was sitting. They were then of unknown worth and politically embarrassing to many of the Williamites in the Convention. On 30 May they were mustered as a regiment, soon to be known as the Cameronians, and in August in hard fighting at Dunkeld defeated the Jacobite forces.

With the arrival by sea at Leith of the Dutch Brigade under General Hugh Mackay of Scourie some of his men under Brigadier Balfour, and then General Sir John Lanier, experienced professionals mostly of Scottish extraction, took over the prosecution of the siege on 25 March. Mackay came with some cannon and ammunition and had sent

³⁸ National Records of Scotland, E28/286/3.

³⁹ National Records of Scotland, E28/330/4. See D. Stevenson and D. H. Caldwell, 'Leather guns in Scotland and other light artillery of the mid seventeenth century', *Proceedings Society Antiquaries Scotland*, Vol. 108 (1976-77), pp. 300-17.

⁴⁰ *Siege*, pp. 54-55, 70, 79.

⁴¹ Terry, 'The Siege of Edinburgh Castle', p. 164.

⁴² *Siege*, pp. 38, 70, 100-01, 104.

⁴³ *Siege du Chateau d'Edimbourg*, p. 9.

from England at least two mortars that fired shells weighing over 100 hundredweight (50.8kg) and other cannons. Other guns and a mortar were got from Stirling Castle.⁴⁴

The Covenanters' blockade of the castle involved the establishment of posts at the Weigh House at the head of the Castle Hill, at the West Port and at St Cuthbert's Church. They also started digging a small entrenchment in Widow Livingston's yard below the castle to the west, and then another a bit further south, intending to create an entrenchment stretching from the West Port to St Cuthbert's Church. These obviously threatened the West Sally-port of the castle and the castle garrison erected an earthwork outside it for protection from small arms fire.⁴⁵ A contemporary report, however, noted that the Covenanters showed so little skill in the way they laid out their work that it was only thanks to the duke's desire to avoid unnecessary bloodshed that most of them were not killed.⁴⁶ A sortie was made from the castle against these works, and bundles of straw, presumably used as a temporary defence, were taken back into the castle.⁴⁷

When Balfour's men took over the siege work on 25 March they continued digging earthworks to the west of the castle [the west battery] which were battered by the castle's guns on 30 March while the besiegers fired mortar shells, with little effect. Balfour had some of his men shelter in the old tower of Coates (a predecessor of Easter Coates House, Palmerston Place) which the castle guns then duly hit, knocking some of it down.⁴⁸

More information on these siege works to the west of the castle can be got from claims for compensation by residents after the siege was over. There were three trenches, probably part of a line of circumvallation round the castle. Helen Wilson, the widow of William Livingston, claimed in respect of the use of her house, below the west side of the castle, by a detachment of guards. Guards were also placed in the house of John Barclay, a little beyond the West Kirk (St Cuthbert's) and William Byres at the church itself.⁴⁹

The west battery appears to have been an earthwork of some size, judging by the claims for compensation in respect of it. It was at Lauriston – 'behind Heriot's work' (viz George Heriot's School) according to a newsletter report – outside the West Port.⁵⁰ This battery fired mortars, and was manned by a Captain Brown, who requisitioned the houses of Alex Tweedie and William Neilson for his men. The fire from the castle guns

⁴⁴ *Siege*, pp 45, 52-53; Terry, 'The Siege of Edinburgh Castle', p. 167; J. Mackay, *Life of Lieut.-Gen. Hugh Mackay of Scoury* (Edinburgh: Laing and Forbes, 1836; London, 1842), p. 22; *Reg. Privy Council of Scotland*, 3rd ser. Vol. p. 265.

⁴⁵ *Siege*, pp. 42-45.

⁴⁶ Terry, 'The Siege of Edinburgh Castle', p. 166.

⁴⁷ *Siege du Chateau d'Edimbourg*, p. 11.

⁴⁸ *Siege*, p. 46.

⁴⁹ *Reg. Privy Council of Scotland*, 3rd ser. Vol. 14, pp. 342-47.

⁵⁰ Terry, 'The Siege of Edinburgh Castle', p.166.

against this battery affected a number of properties in the area, as far as Tollcross.⁵¹ It is probable that this was where the main damage was inflicted by the castle guns, for two main reasons. Firstly, since it was an open area of gardens and yards the duke probably felt it was fair game to strike at it, unlike the built up area of the town itself. Secondly, the battery was obviously a major threat and could readily be targeted from guns positioned on the Butts Battery.

Damage was done to the castle defences by the guns positioned in the west battery in the early days of the siege, creating a breach near the Sally-port, although the steepness of the hill made an assault seem impractical. Nevertheless, it was reported that one was being prepared for sometime about the second week in April, and the entrenchments were heightened and strengthened. Nothing came of all this, and an attempt by the besiegers to create a lodgement on the Castle Hill near the Blew Stone (a large boulder on the Castle hill?), using wool packs for shelter, was a failure. The work was too exposed to fire from the castle's guns.⁵²

By 16 April the besiegers had finished digging another battery to the south of the castle [the south battery] at an old ruined tower called 'Collops' (? the corner tower of the Flodden Wall to the southwest of Greyfriars Church) in which they mounted two 18 pounder guns. They were dismantled after a few hours bombardment from the castle. Meanwhile the duke had part of the bridge (presumably across the Dry Ditch at the upper end of the Esplanade) at the castle entrance removed. He also had the west Sally-port shut and filled up with earth.⁵³

On 29 April it was noted that the besiegers had drained the North Loch, thereby hoping to divert the spring water that replenished the castle wells; and on 9 May the castle fired some of its great guns at a house beside one of the besiegers' batteries, and in the days that followed they beat down the earth parapets of some of the siege works. The besiegers began digging another battery [the north battery] at Moutrie's Hill (St James Square/Centre) to the northeast.⁵⁴

By Sunday 19 May, Balfour had all his guns in place and began bombarding the castle at 10 o'clock that night. The greatest danger from the point of view of the castle garrison was two large mortars positioned in the south battery. They were bedded very low and did not require embrasures so that the castle guns had failed to hit them. The garrison now took up residence in the castle vaults for safety. A sentinel was positioned on Hawk Hill in the castle to give warning of in-coming mortar shells. The duke gave orders for the shards of the shells to be gathered up to be re-used as grape-shot in the

⁵¹ *Reg. Privy Council of Scotland*, 3rd ser. Vol. 14, pp. 339-41, 343-4, 557-60.

⁵² Terry, 'The Siege of Edinburgh Castle', p.166-67.

⁵³ *Siege*, pp. 47-50.

⁵⁴ *Siege*, pp. 51-52.

event of an assault on the castle.⁵⁵ As many as 40 mortar shells were being fired in a night.⁵⁶

The duke had also ordered the garrison not to fire into the town (with their small arms) and specifically not at anyone who was not directly involved in the blockade of the castle. His instructions had not strictly been adhered to, and seven townsfolk, including a woman, had been killed by a mortar shell. So when the besieging forces put up an earthwork at the head of the Castle Hill near the Weigh House on the night of 22 May they were able to pretend that it was done by the town's people to protect themselves. After some threats from the duke to fire at it (with his large guns) it was taken down the next day.⁵⁷

From 24 May the besiegers fired their mortars during the day which was more dangerous for the garrison since the daylight made it harder for incoming shells to be seen in time. More and more damage was being done to the castle though there was no loss of life.⁵⁸ From early on Sunday 26 May the three cannon, including two 24 pounders, in the newly completed north battery, kept up a barrage against the castle, joined by cannon in the south battery on 27 May.⁵⁹

During the night of 31 May/1 June the guard posted in the Low Guard could hear digging nearby which, it was soon clear, was to do with the erection of another battery by the besiegers on the south side of Castle Hill, only a short distance from the Half Moon Battery. This must have been positioned at the east end of the present day Esplanade, adjacent to Cannon Ball House. A party of 14 detailed to disrupt this work had to be called off by the duke since there was no agreement as to whom should be included in it.⁶⁰

In the early hours of 1 June there was a break out from the castle by 15 men and two women, most of whom were captured. They were able to reveal that the garrison were running short of powder, and while there were enough provisions for one or two months they were likely to run out of drink in three weeks' time. They painted a picture of a force suffering from constant bombardment and low morale, and suggested the possibility of a mutiny.⁶¹

⁵⁵ *Siege*, pp. 53-56.

⁵⁶ *Siege du Chateau d'Edimbourg*, p. 13.

⁵⁷ *Siege*, pp. 56-57; Terry, 'The Siege of Edinburgh Castle', p. 168.

⁵⁸ A late seventeenth century cemetery with at least 15 inhumations has been excavated in the Coal Yard (area M) of the castle and the excavators have not unreasonably suggested that these deaths might relate to the 1689 siege, through disease and illness rather than combat wounds. See S. T. Driscoll and P. A. Yeoman, *Excavations within Edinburgh Castle in 1988-91* (Edinburgh: Society of Antiquaries of Scotland Monograph 12, 1997), p. 111.

⁵⁹ *Siege*, pp. 58-59.

⁶⁰ *Siege*, p. 61.

⁶¹ Terry, 'The Siege of Edinburgh Castle', p.169.

Late on the evening of Sunday of 2 June those on watch in the castle sounded the alarm in the belief that the besiegers were mustering an assault force in the corn fields to the north of the castle (present day Princes Street). All in the castle turned out to man the walls and guard the Sally-port, including women, but it was soon evident that they had over-reacted. The next morning there were signs of digging there and many scattered faggots. On 3 June the castle guns dismounted the two cannon in the besiegers' south battery and more were dismounted the following day, including one in the north battery. On 5 June the castle guns dislodged more of the besiegers who were trying to create a more protected position for themselves at the back of the West Church (St Cuthbert's).⁶²

By 9 June, with communications with the outside world finally cut off, a much diminished garrison, many of them sick from drinking dirty water, and supplies of food, drink and ammunition almost spent, it seemed to the duke that the time had come to consider capitulation. Mindful of the fate of his predecessor, Kirkcaldy of Grange, he even considered a break out and escape to the north of Scotland.⁶³

On 12 June the duke entered into negotiations to surrender. These broke down when a man made a run for the castle and was taken in by the garrison. The besiegers claimed he should be handed back to them since it happened in time of truce, but the duke refused to surrender someone who had sought his protection.⁶⁴ That evening the besiegers attempted, using packs of wool rolled before them as protection, to lodge themselves between the town and castle (on the site of the Esplanade) despite vigorous firing from the castle. They managed to maintain their position the next day, apparently supported by gunfire from two nearby lodgings.⁶⁵

The duke reopened negotiations to capitulate on 13 June. Terms were finally agreed, the castle handed over, and the Jacobite garrison allowed to depart on 14 June.⁶⁶ Ironically, King William's Secretary of State for Scotland, Lord Melville, had written to Balfour on 13 June of the king's wish that he should not fire any more mortar shells at the castle as they had clearly had little effect and it would be difficult to supply him with more. He was to await the return of General Mackay for a decision on what more to do in this respect.⁶⁷ By the time of the surrender the fabric of the castle had suffered quite badly. It is said that several mortar shells had crashed through all the stories of the buildings, from top to bottom, and there was scarce a room that was undamaged.⁶⁸

⁶² *Siege*, p. 66.

⁶³ *Proceedings of the Estates*, Vol. 1, pp. 160-61.

⁶⁴ Terry, 'The Siege of Edinburgh Castle', p. 171.

⁶⁵ *Siege du Chateau d'Edimbourg*, p. 15.

⁶⁶ *Siege*, pp. 70-81.

⁶⁷ *Leven and Melville Papers: Letters and State Papers chiefly addressed to George Earl of Melville Secretary of State for Scotland 1689-1691*, (Edinburgh: Bannatyne Club, 1843), p. 57.

⁶⁸ Terry, 'The Siege of Edinburgh Castle', p. 169.

It is apparent from contemporary documentation that both sides were for much of the time tentative in the prosecution of this siege, with opposing soldiers and commanders unsure of their position in the changing politics of the time and sometimes doubtful of the allegiances of their comrades. Both sides also had issues with supplies. Although the holding of Edinburgh Castle seemed at first to have a fair amount of symbolic value for the Jacobite cause it seems to have done little to foster support for King James, and as events turned out was of no strategic significance.

The Duke of Gordon has never received much credit for his role in the events of 1689 from one side or the other, either then or later.⁶⁹ He had served in the French army, and from his actions during the siege seems to have had a sufficient amount of military experience and knowledge to prosecute the defence of the castle. It is possible, however, that he lacked the necessary ruthlessness to make a success of the job, and there are reports (some already mentioned) of his men not always carrying out his orders, including Francis Gardin leading out a party of six men on the night of 10 June to attempt to clear the enemy from the Castle Hill.⁷⁰ He is not given credit for the fact that he refused to subject the town of Edinburgh to bombardment, even though that would probably at times have greatly strengthened his position.

Perhaps the criticism by contemporaries that he did not take sufficient steps to make sure the castle was adequately supplied in advance is unfair. Treasury accounts reproduced along with the printed records of the Scottish Privy Council demonstrate that during 1688 considerable supplies were taken into the castle and the wells were cleaned out.⁷¹ The duke was still attempting to get supplies into the castle on 16 March 1689 but they were impounded.⁷² At about the same time he was not prepared to risk getting a party of his men from the north into the castle to supplement his forces for fear of causing rioting in the town.⁷³

A crucial point to understand, however, in reviewing the duke's effectiveness is that he was not in charge of the military stores and artillery in the castle and that those who were – the Master of the Artillery of Scotland and his officers - had already abandoned their charge prior to the commencement of the siege. He is said to have raised this difficulty of management responsibility with his superiors on more than one occasion without getting any resolution. On 10 March, when it was clear that a siege was inevitable, the Duke broke down the doors to the castle's magazines so he could

⁶⁹ B. L. H. Horn, 'Gordon, George, first duke of Gordon (b. In or before 1649, d. 1716), nobleman', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11038>, accessed 8 February 2014.

⁷⁰ *Siege*, p. 69.

⁷¹ *Reg. Privy Council of Scotland*, 3rd ser. Vol. 13, pp. xliv, l, li.

⁷² Terry, 'The Siege of Edinburgh Castle', p. 165.

⁷³ *Siege*, p. 21.

find out for himself the state of supplies. He was clearly disappointed only to find 160 barrels of powder, badly stored and not all full.⁷⁴

Despite the manifest difficulties of his position the duke still managed to hold out in the castle for a remarkable period of time, and although he lacked professional gunners still managed to keep the enemy from mounting an assault. One of the contemporary accounts points out that not only did he lack an adequate number of men to make sorties, but he was reluctant to do so because he could not trust many of the men not to desert once they were outside the castle walls.⁷⁵ Perhaps his skill and resolution needs to be reassessed more favourably.

The French account of the siege gives a list of reasons why the duke was obliged to capitulate, basically because:

- There was no hope of help or rescue
- His soldiers were deserting
- Almost half of his men were ill
- The water was unfit for drinking
- He only had eight days food remaining (apart from basic supplies)
- Almost all his munitions had been used up.⁷⁶

It is generally agreed that the initial work against the castle by the Covenanters lacked competence but what of the efforts of the professional forces of General Mackay? From a position in early April where it was reported that they were near to launching an assault on the castle there was then a period of several months in which it appears they were making little or no progress apart from wrecking the internal structures of the castle with their mortar shells. When the castle surrendered on 13 June they were still well away from any hope of launching a successful attack and were clearly lacking the resources to maintain an effective bombardment. The surrender of the castle was more to do with the lack of supplies remaining to the garrison and the diminishing hope they retained of being relieved, rather than any present expectation that they would be overwhelmed. Surely, underlying King William's instructions passed on to Brigadier Balfour on 13 June is a lack of confidence that he was managing the siege effectively.

⁷⁴ *Siege du Chateau d'Edimbourg*, p. 9.

⁷⁵ *Siege du Chateau d'Edimbourg*, p. 12.

⁷⁶ *Siege du Chateau d'Edimbourg*, pp. 17-18.

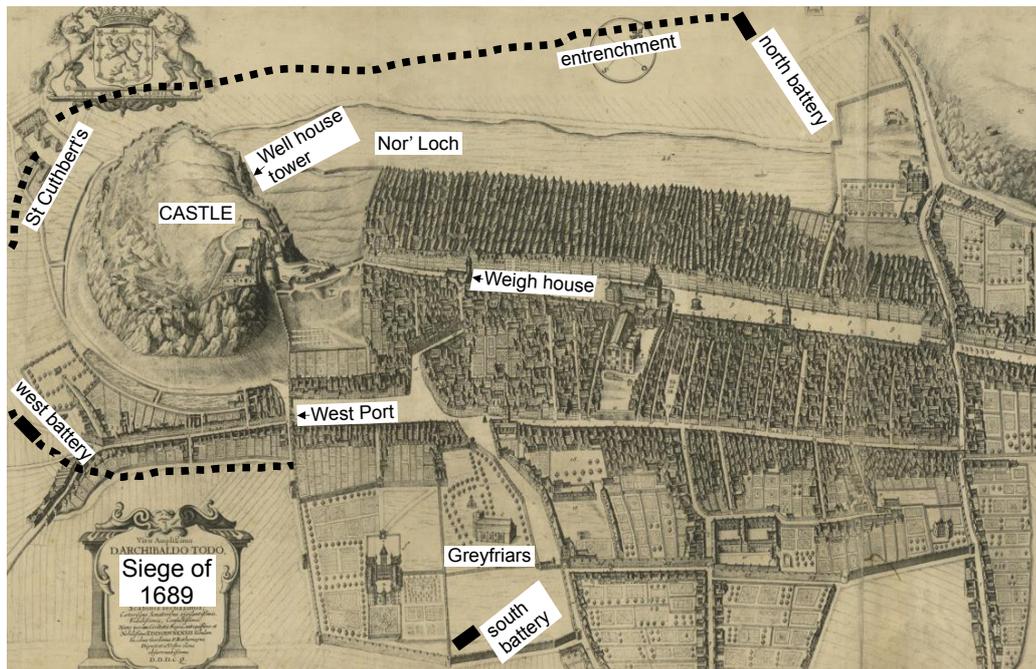


Figure 2: The siege of 1689 based on the 1647 bird's-eye view of Edinburgh by Gordon of Rothiemay. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.

1715

Even before the Earl of Mar raised his banner at Braemar on 6 September 1715, thus signalling the start of the Jacobite uprising in Scotland, there had been discussions on the taking of Edinburgh Castle. Mar encouraged the enterprise, which was taken in hand by Lord Drummond (later Earl, and Duke in the Jacobite Peerage, of Perth). He used ‘a little broken merchant’, Charles Forbes, to manage affairs for him.⁷⁷ The plan involved bribing some of the men in the castle garrison, and using a force partially drawn from apprentices and servants in the town. This was a mistake since it proved impossible to keep the plans a secret and they came to the attention of the Provost of Edinburgh and the Lord Justice Clerk, Sir Adam Cockburn of Ormiston. There are three main accounts of what happened, all in remarkable agreement. One is contained in a letter of the provost reporting on the activities of the Edinburgh Town Guard.⁷⁸ The other two are in histories of the uprising by Peter Rae and the Master of Sinclair.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ James Master of Sinclair, *Memoirs of the Insurrection in Scotland in 1715* (Edinburgh: Abbotsford Club, 1858), p. 29.

⁷⁸ William Kirk Dixon, (ed.), *Warrender Letters* (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 3rd ser. Vol. 25, 1935), no. 99.

⁷⁹ Peter. Rae, *The History of the Late Rebellion Rais'd against his Majesty, King George by the Friends of the Popish Pretender, Containing An Account, as well of the Settlement of the Succession to the Crown of Great Britain, in the Illustrious Family of Hanover, and the Tory Scheme to defeat it, during the last four Years of the late Queen Anne; as of His Majesty's Happy Accession, the Rebellious Conspiracy*

Amongst the conspirators was one Thomas Arthur, formerly an officer in the castle, and through him a serving sergeant, William Ainslie, and two privates, James Thomson and John Holland, who were prepared to turn traitor. The time chosen for the enterprise was late on the evening of 8 August when Ainslie would be on duty in the Western Defences and could aid the assailants over the walls, helping them secure the grappling irons on their rope ladders. Their force consisted of about 80 to 90 men, some of them from the town, 40 of them Highlanders supplied by Lord Drummond. He had arranged for them to go to Edinburgh in small groups by different routes to avoid suspicion. They were under the command of Drummond of Bouhadie.

The rendezvous was set for the West Kirk (St Cuthbert's) at 9pm, but there was then a delay waiting for all the ladders to arrive. They were being made by a workman over in the Calton and, it was alleged, Charles Forbes was too interested in drinking to hurry things along. The assailants were aware that they had to act before the changing of the guard at midnight and decided to carry on without Forbes and the remaining ladders, but when they got beneath the castle wall, and made contact with Ainslie inside, discovered that their ladders were too short by over a fathom (6 feet = 1.83m). There was yet further delay.

Meanwhile, details of the plan had leaked to the Lord Justice Clerk who sent an express letter to the Deputy Governor of the Castle, Lieutenant Colonel Stuart. It arrived about 11 o'clock at night, while the attempt on his defences was actually being made, but he merely gave orders for the doubling of the guards before going off to bed – for which he was later deprived of his post. Fortunately, from the Government's point of view, the Provost of Edinburgh had also been warned. The City Guard was doubled and detachments, the lead one under Major James Aikman, marched to the West Sallyport between 11 o'clock and midnight, catching the assailants red-handed. They offered no resistance, dropping their weapons and fleeing. Four of them were captured. Sergeant Ainslie was later hung on a gallows over the castle wall.

This attack on the castle might well have been successful if the assailants had been better led, but it is doubtful how much difference the holding of Edinburgh Castle would have made to the Jacobite cause. Their forces made no serious effort to take Edinburgh Town and were easily chased away from Leith. Although the battle of Sheriffmuir on 12 November that year was not reckoned a defeat for the Jacobite army the uprising lost all impetus in its aftermath.

1745

Prince Charles Edward Stewart took the town of Edinburgh with his Highland army, almost unopposed, on 17 September and remained in control of the town until he

form'd by His Enemies, and the Execution thereof; both by the High Church Mobs, on Pretence of the Church's Danger under His Majesty's Administration, and by the open Rebellion; which is here exposed in all its Parts, from its first Rise to its final Exit. By a lover of the prosperity and peace of Great-Britain (Dumfries: Robert Rae, 1718), pp. 198-200; Sinclair, *Memoirs of the Insurrection*, pp. 29-31.

marched off for England on 1 November. The mixed views of the inhabitants, their preparations to resist the Jacobites, and the way they were let down by the Government forces that should have made more effort to protect Scotland's capital city, are all detailed in contemporary documents, especially eye-witness accounts.⁸⁰

Edinburgh Castle was not seriously threatened, being well supplied and the Jacobites lacking time and siege guns. The Deputy Governor of the Castle (The post of Governor was an honorary one) was George Preston, a veteran Scotsman then 86 years old. He was joined in the castle by the 85 year old General Joshua Guest, former commander-in-chief in Scotland, a position that was briefly thrust upon him again in the aftermath of the defeat of the current post-holder, Sir John Cope, at the battle of Prestonpans on 21 September.⁸¹ Preston fired three cannon at the Jacobite army as it approached Edinburgh on 16 September from the south and on the night of 18 September fired more shot into the army's camp, positioned to the east of the town beneath Salisbury Craigs.⁸² The location was presumably chosen as much to provide shelter from such fire as to be near the prince in Holyrood Palace. Even the camp for the army at Duddingston in the aftermath of its victory at Prestonpans was not totally out of reach of gun fire from the castle.⁸³

At first the Jacobites made no attempt to restrict communications between the town and castle, and indeed, it is said that General Guest was of old a friend of the prince's secretary, John Murray of Broughton, who was happy to allow milk and butter to be taken into the castle specifically for Guest's use. When, however, on 29 September it was discovered that a letter had been hidden in the butter the Jacobites stopped free access. Guards drawn from the regiment of Cameron of Lochiel had been posted in the Grassmarket, in the Weigh House at the head of the Lawnmarket and other old buildings nearer the castle from 22 September, and there was another detachment lodged in Livingston's Yards to the southwest where it could watch out for comings and goings via the West Sallyport.⁸⁴

On the evening of the 29th General Guest, disdaining to deal directly with the Jacobite regime, sent a letter to the Provost of Edinburgh threatening that unless communications with the castle were restored the castle's guns would be used to dislodge the Highland guards and consequently there would be much damage caused to the town itself. As was no doubt intended, the provost consulted with the Prince and negotiations were commenced which resulted in a suspension of the threatened action

⁸⁰J. Home, *The History of the Rebellion in Scotland in 1745* (Edinburgh: Peter Brown, 1822 [1802]); *Woodhouselee MS. A Narrative of Events in Edinburgh and District during the Jacobite Occupation, September to November 1745* (London and Edinburgh: W NS R Chambers Ltd, 1907).

⁸¹W. B. Blaikie, 'Edinburgh at the Time of the Occupation of Prince Charles', *Book of the Old Edinburgh Club*, Vol. 2 (1909), pp. 1-60, at p.12n.

⁸²*Woodhouselee MS*, pp. 24, 32.

⁸³*Woodhouselee MS*, p. 39.

⁸⁴Home, *History of the Rebellion*, p. 90; *Woodhouselee MS*, p. 51; Blaikie, 'Edinburgh at the Time of the Occupation', pp. 40, 46-47.

while Guest got advice from his superiors in London. On 1 October, however, some people carrying food to the castle were shot upon by the Jacobites, and in retaliation the next day the castle fired cannon and firearms at the houses sheltering the Highland guards. The house of Allan Ramsay the poet, of known Jacobite sympathies, was also demolished with some eight to ten cannon shot. Another shot hit the Reservoir.⁸⁵ Possibly the cannon ball lodged in the wall of 'Cannon-ball House' on the Castle Hill was shot at this time. All this resulted in an increase of the blockade and a proclamation by the prince forbidding all contact with the castle on pain of death.⁸⁶

The stand-off now escalated further. On 3 October the house at Livingston's Yards occupied by one of the detachments of guards was demolished by gun fire from the castle. This detachment was led by one Robert Taylor, an Edinburgh shoemaker. When it was known that neither he nor his men were greatly feared, real, Highlanders, a sortie was made against them from the castle, some of them being killed and Taylor taken prisoner.⁸⁷

The castle's guns were fired again all day 4 October. When it grew dark the garrison sallied out and set fire to some of the houses the guard had been sheltering in on Castle Hill, including apparently, the house of Allan Ramsay the poet, and dug a trench between the castle and the upper end of the town where they positioned field-pieces which they then used to fire canister shot down the High Street. The next day the cannonade again continued, killing and wounding several of the Jacobites and townsfolk, until in the evening the Prince published a new proclamation restoring communications between the town and castle. It was claimed that Guest intended by this bombardment, amounting to over 60 cannon shot a day, not to mention musket fire, that the Jacobites should think that the castle was in desperate need of supplies and might be tempted to stay and try and force its surrender rather than move on to England.⁸⁸

From 6 October to the departure of the Jacobites on 1 November relative calm returned to town and castle.

A curious event which took place in the background of the 1745 siege was the release of money from the castle to fund the Jacobites' expedition into England. The story is told in the diary of John Campbell, Cashier of the Royal Bank of Scotland. The Royal Bank had been founded in 1727 as competition to the Bank of Scotland which was perceived to have Jacobite sympathies. With the approach of the Jacobite Army to Edinburgh in September 1745 the Royal Bank took steps to have its assets, including bank notes and gold coins, lodged in Edinburgh Castle. It was not, however, quick enough or very efficient in having its own bank notes removed from circulation. When

⁸⁵D. Wilson, *Memorials of Edinburgh in the Olden Time* (Edinburgh: A. and C. Black, Ballantyne Press 1891), Vol. 1, p. 186.

⁸⁶ Home, *History of the Rebellion*, pp. 90-91; *Woodhouselee MS*, pp. 51-54.

⁸⁷ Blaikie, 'Edinburgh at the Time of the Occupation', p. 40.

⁸⁸ Home, *History of the Rebellion*, pp. 91-92; *Woodhouselee MS*, pp. 56-59.

Prince Charles Edward put pressure on the directors and staff of the Royal Bank to honour its notes with gold they put up remarkably little resistance. On 3 October the Royal Bank's Cashier, John Campbell, negotiated permission from both sides to enter the castle with some colleagues to sort out some bank business. They removed gold coins for the Jacobite war effort, paying up eventually the large sum of £6,676.⁸⁹ Ironically, the money and assets of the Bank of Scotland, allegedly pro-Jacobite, remained safe in the castle.

1745 was to be the last time that there was any threat to the castle by an enemy force. The castle has remained as a symbol of the Scottish nation, the home of the crown jewels and the Scottish National War Memorial. The advancement of military technology, especially artillery and fortifications, meant that its best days as a secure fortress were over by the late 16th century, as demonstrated by the bombardment it suffered in 1573. The sieges recounted in this paper are not, however, lacking in importance or significance as political and religious forces struggled for the hearts and minds of the Scots people, recognising the key place the castle held in our national consciousness.

⁸⁹ J. S. Gibson, *The Diary of John Campbell: a Scottish Banker and the 'Forty-five* (Edinburgh: The Royal Bank of Scotland, 1995), pp. 18-19.