

## FOLLOW THE MONEY OR FOLLOW THE PRINCE

Alistair Ross

### INTRODUCTION

This article was born from a talk presented to the Sydney Society for Scottish History on 18 May 2023. The talk has been augmented by providing some general context on its main subject, Bailie John Steuart, and on Inverness, Scotland in the first half of the eighteenth century. The first half of the eighteenth century in Scotland was a period of seismic events, ranging from the residual impacts of the Darien scheme to the 1707 Union, and the failed Jacobite Risings. All this turmoil was underwritten by the growth in structures and the demands of a developing fiscal military state as the British Empire began to emerge. Using the Letterbooks of Bailie John Steuart, an Inverness merchant, as the backdrop to these events, this article will consider the impact of his Jacobite adherence on his commercial and personal relationships post the 1715 Jacobite rising. It will consider whether personal gain outweighed his politics or whether his actions could be explained by more covert motives. It will hopefully provide a more nuanced understanding of Steuart's world, which led to his eventual penury, and contribute more generally to our understanding of the period.

On 27 November 1752, Bailie John Steuart, an Inverness merchant, 'wrot' a letter to his son John in Charles Town, Carolina.<sup>1</sup> It was the final entry in a series of Letterbooks which he had maintained since 1715. Its last paragraph evidenced a poignancy and regret about where Steuart found himself at the age of 76.

This have I given you an Account of all our family, so have only to add that your mother and I have laboured under great troubles of late years, and only subsisted by the bounty of our children, and few or non-other of late; and our schemes have missgiven. May God sanctify every dispensation of his providence to us and prepare us for death and eternity. Which I may dayly look for, as I am now old, and of late feel the effects of it. Your mother Meg and brothers give you their blessing, and to your spouse and child in which I join.<sup>2</sup>

His death, six years later, ended a career which spanned a range of pivotal events in Scottish history. Where previous historiography has used Steuart as an exemplar, the objective here is to look out rather than in, and place Steuart as an actor on a stage through a time of pivotal events and changes in Scottish history. A mass of unpublished material from his Letterbooks, coupled with several previously unpublished, and never before associated primary sources, present an opportunity to link resources and to contribute to knowledge of the merchant class of Inverness at that time.

His main commentator, William MacKay, an Inverness solicitor and antiquarian, produced an edited volume of Steuart's Letterbooks in 1915 covering the period 1715 to 1752. MacKay described Steuart as a person of "sanguine temperament [who] ventured and trusted too much."<sup>3</sup> MacKay made choices as to what he included in his presentation, and his overall

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<sup>1</sup> The name was changed to the now more recognisable Charleston by an act of the South Carolina General Assembly in 1783. See N. Butler, 'The Evolution of Charleston's Name', *Charleston County Public Library* (9 August 2019), <https://www.ccpl.org/charleston-time-machine/evolution-charlestons-name> (accessed 28/11/21).

<sup>2</sup> Highland Archive (hereafter HCA), D291-HCA/D291, Letterbooks of Bailie John Steuart – 1735-1752, Sheet 239.

<sup>3</sup> William MacKay, *The Letter-Book of Bailie John Steuart of Inverness, 1715-1752* (Edinburgh: University Press/T. and A. Constable, 1915), p. x.

approach to his subject matter (and indeed main subject John Steuart), can be deemed a largely positive one. His commentary was consistent with the romanticised style of writing of the day, suggesting Steuart's family were of royal descent and playing on Steuart's Jacobite sympathies and connections.<sup>4</sup> To the modern eye this sentimental approach may appear unprofessional; to conclude that would be a mistake, it merely reflects the style of the time it was written. It also highlights a thriving localised cultural environment, presenting history to a wider audience via the auspices of the Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness (TGSI), which continues to do so to this day. MacKay was an active contributor to its proceedings, and his work on Steuart is a substantial, professionally researched and analysed, well-presented piece of work. The positive approach did have a downside, as MacKay ignored some of Steuart's more obvious failings as a merchant and did not explore or engage fully with the information available. A cursory examination of letters, which were not included in MacKay's book, for the period from 1735 onwards, reveals a business increasingly in trouble. If any balance is to be observed in considering the MacKay's work and its content, these gaps need to be addressed, rather than being persuaded by MacKay's approach, as has been largely the case until now.<sup>5</sup> MacKay reproduced some 162 entries in the period 1735 to 1752, but omitted 275 other entries in the same timeframe. Some are certainly of little interest, but others reveal much about the period and Steuart's choices as a merchant.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, only a portion of the originals which MacKay worked with are available to the contemporary researcher. There is no way of knowing what was omitted in the twenty-year period from 1715 to 1734 as the originals cannot be sourced. Additionally, it must be acknowledged that *Letterbooks* may exist prior to 1715 which have never been discovered. MacKay offered the view that Steuart was likely to have been trading before 1700, which would suggest that other records may exist but are as yet undiscovered.<sup>7</sup>

However, this should not preclude an examination of what MacKay chose to omit; rather it suggests the tantalising thought of what might be found by scholars in the future. If 275 omissions can be observed post-1735 it is highly likely that MacKay would have been equally selective in his choices of what to produce pre-1735. It is a truism of human conduct that past behaviours tend to repeat themselves in decision making, a form of "decision inertia."<sup>8</sup> In acknowledging the gaps, it must be asked, does this detract from Steuart's writings as a primary source? The answer, if an examination of Scottish historiography for the period is considered, would be a resounding no. The *Letter-Book* and *Letterbooks*, both published and unpublished, remain rich with contemporary comment, with insights and details of Steuart's trading activities and personal challenges. They have been well used by a variety of scholars of Scottish history to support their work: Steve Murdoch in considering trade networks to Bordeaux or the Baltic where Steuart operated; Stana Nenadic with insights into luxury items in eighteenth-century Inverness; Marjorie Plant at the basic level of an eighteenth-century Scottish household; and

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<sup>4</sup> MacKay, *The Letter-Book of Bailie John Steuart of Inverness*, pp. ix, xlvii.

<sup>5</sup> From this point references to *Letter-Book* refers to those entries in MacKay's book and will be noted as a page number. References to *Letterbooks* refers to the non-published entries to be found in the Highland Archive covering the period 1735 to 1752 and will be noted as a Sheet number. Within the text they will be shown in italics.

<sup>6</sup> All 275 of these omitted entries have now been transcribed from the Highland Archive records.

<sup>7</sup> MacKay, *The Letter-Book*, p. ix.

<sup>8</sup> C. Alos-Ferrer, S. Hugelschafer and J. Li, 'Inertia and Decision Making', *Frontiers in Psychology*, Vol. 7, No. 169 (2016), p. 1.

David Worthington on examples of developing trading links between Inverness and Danzig.<sup>9</sup> Their usefulness, even in abbreviated form, is demonstrated by their wide scope and utility.

This usefulness is amply demonstrated in terms of who actually wrote the *Letterbooks*. As a primary source they have until now been largely presented as Stuart's, yet there are at least three different sets of handwriting, together with different spellings on commonly used words. Deciding which handwriting then actually belongs to John Stuart becomes more elusive. There are for example, two very clear pieces of copper-plate writing in 1750, which it could be reasonably argued were written by a much younger person.<sup>10</sup> That is reinforced by a letter that year in which Stuart asks for "a coper plate coppie book for assisting my sons in ther writing," and it is not difficult to link the two, or to imagine the father trying to school his sons in the ways of commerce.<sup>11</sup> This in no way detracts from the *Letterbooks'* value as a primary source. Rather, it highlights something which until now had gone largely unnoticed: that the *Letterbooks* had multiple writers, but one over-riding author. It demonstrates that Stuart did not work alone on the administrative side of his business, and adds to their value in terms of understanding the day-to-day minutiae of how an eighteenth-century merchant functioned in Inverness.

This article will use the unpublished elements of Stuart's *Letterbooks* together with the examination of other associated primary sources, some published, some unpublished, which to date have not been considered together. By adopting this approach, it is the intention to produce a wider and more nuanced picture of an eighteenth-century Inverness merchant's place in a changing world post-1707. It will examine Stuart's personal relationships and commercial relationships post-1715. Were these impacted by his political opinions? It will then consider his Hanoverian associations given his Jacobite sympathies. Finally, it will consider Stuart's politics, an assessment of his Jacobitism revealing, an at times ambiguous affiliation which may have been tempered by financial need.

#### *STUART'S PERSONAL AND COMMERCIAL RELATIONSHIPS AFTER 1715*

In 1715, Stuart was nearly forty years old and had been trading for at least fifteen years.<sup>12</sup> He was an established part of the merchant community of Inverness, having been elected to the Burgh Council in 1703 and serving as a magistrate from 1713 to 1716.<sup>13</sup> That he was no longer a member of the Burgh council or a magistrate post-1716 is of some significance. Miller's excellent history of Inverness, covering events pertaining to the 1715 Jacobite rising, shows deep divisions within of the town, as pro-Jacobite and pro-Hanoverian interests jockeyed for

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<sup>9</sup> Steve Murdoch, *Network North: Scottish Kin, Commercial and Covert Associations in Northern Europe 1603-1746* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), p. 244; Steve Murdoch, 'The French Connection: Bordeaux's Scottish Networks in Context, c. 1670-1720', in G. Leydier (ed.), *Scotland and Europe, Scotland in Europe* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), pp. 20-21; Stana Nenadic, 'Print Collecting and Popular Culture in Eighteenth-Century Scotland', *The Historical Association*, Vol. 82 (2002), p. 205; Marjorie Plant, 'The Scots Household', *The Scottish Historical Review*, Vol. 28 (1949); David Worthington, 'Men of Noe Credit: Scottish Highlanders in Poland-Lithuania, c. 1500-1800', in T. M. Devine and D. Hesse (eds.), *Scotland and Poland: Historical Encounters, 1500-2010* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 2011), pp. 94-95.

<sup>10</sup> HCA, *The Letterbooks*, Sheet 205.

<sup>11</sup> HCA, *The Letterbooks*, Sheets 217-218.

<sup>12</sup> MacKay, *The Letter-Book of Bailie John Stuart of Inverness, 1715-1752*, p. ix.

<sup>13</sup> James Miller, *Inverness: A History* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2018), p. 116.

control, a situation mirrored, for example, in Dundee.<sup>14</sup> Steuart was a known Jacobite, an association he seemed to have maintained through his life, finding mention in Archibald Primrose, Earl of Rosebery's 1746 list of those concerned in the Rebellion.<sup>15</sup> The Burgh minutes of October 1714 saw him in concert with other like-minded Baillies and the Provost of the time causing disruption around celebrations of the birthday of George I.<sup>16</sup> None of the men involved in the 1714 incident were in office after the unsuccessful 1715 rising, albeit they did continue as merchants. It is thus difficult not to consider the possibility that in a commercial sense, involvement in such overtly political actions did them no favours.

In examining this possibility, via the lens of both the *Letter-book and Letterbooks* several points emerge. Entries in general are sparse for that period, as are any references to his dynastic allegiances in his writings. This is not wholly unexpected, as they are about commercial transactions not political attitudes and, as Bruce Lenman, Murray Pittock, and Daniel Szechi have all pointed out, the range of legislation available to charge someone with treason or sedition was wide, and caution, particularly when dealing with the written word was well advised.<sup>17</sup> All the men mentioned in the Burgh records of the 1714 incident continue to feature in the *Letter-Books*, in an ongoing commercial sense, albeit these associations gradually peter out. Thomas Robertson, the most prominent, features in a number of transactions, although there does appear to be a serious disagreement at some point over money owed by Robertson to Steuart.<sup>18</sup> In June of 1715, Robertson and Steuart had been involved in a transaction that involved Amsterdam, Minorca and Inverness.<sup>19</sup> Later that year he wrote to Robertson addressing him as "Loveing Comrade."<sup>20</sup> In October 1716, in the aftermath of the rebellion, Steuart hinted at subscribing to a fund that had been started for the Jacobite prisoners then held at Carlisle, and the same letter suggested a still amicable relationship with Robertson.<sup>21</sup> By September of 1717 however, the origins of the dispute can be seen to be emerging. Robertson had received funds for a "Cargoe of Corn" which should have been spread jointly between Steuart, Robertson, and Alexander McIntosh, who also featured in the 1714 birthday celebration disruption incident.<sup>22</sup> The next time Robertson features, apart from one transaction in 1720, is in October 1736, when Steuart says "my claim against him which is very

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<sup>14</sup> Dundee District Archives (DDA), quoted in A. Smith, 'Dundee and the '45', in L. Scott-Moncrieff (ed.), *The 45: To gather an Image whole* (Edinburgh: The Mercat Press, 1988), p. 100.

<sup>15</sup> Archibald Primrose, Earl of Rosebery, *A List of Persons Concerned in the Rebellion: Transmitted to the Comissioners of Excise by the Several Supervisors in Scotland in Obedience to a General Letter of the 7th May 1746, and a Supplementary List with Evidences to Prove the Same* (Edinburgh: University Press/ T. and A. Constable, 1890), p. 128.

<sup>16</sup> Highland Council Archive (HCA)/B1 Burgh of Inverness cited in Miller, *Inverness: A History*, p. 116.

<sup>17</sup> Bruce Lenman, *The Jacobite Risings in Britain 1689-1746* (Dalkeith: Scottish Cultural Press, 2004), p. 108; Murray Pittock, *Material Culture and Sedition, 1688-1760: Treacherous Objects, Secret Places* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 3-8; and Daniel Szechi, *The Jacobites: Britain and Europe, 1600-1788* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), p. 19.

<sup>18</sup> HCA, *The Letterbooks*, Sheets 112-114.

<sup>19</sup> MacKay, *The Letter-Book*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>20</sup> MacKay, *The Letter-Book*, p. 6.

<sup>21</sup> MacKay, *The Letter-Book*, p. 35.

<sup>22</sup> MacKay, *The Letter-Book*, pp. 51-52.

considerable.”<sup>23</sup> This appears to relate to the same dispute from the 1717 affair and the case appeared to be heading to the Admiralty Court.<sup>24</sup> The outcome is unclear, although it is unlikely that the matter was settled in Stuart’s favour. He wrote;

I know not what to doe as to my claim on Tam Robertson  
I am heartily vexed to be shifted out of so much money as the man owes me  
I have not the money at present to bestow on persuaieing it  
And I know it will never be got <sup>25</sup>

This long running episode raises several intriguing questions. Was there a split post-1716, in terms of which merchants or sellers of commodities Stuart then dealt with? Was the dispute with Robertson purely about money, or were other factors in play? Are there examples of Stuart being frozen out of certain commercial relationships because of his politics? Conversely, did the attraction of commercial gain effectively trump political or dynastic affiliations? Lenman is noticeably clear, labelling Stuart as “politically ambiguous,” and having, “no qualms about doing business with the Hanoverian establishment.”<sup>26</sup>

As regards a split in terms of old relationships it is telling that transactions with Robertson, his ‘loveing comrade’, effectively petered out within four years of the 1715 rebellion. Additionally, we have the unsavoury spectacle of Stuart in dispute with Robertson over money that is owed to Stuart, despite a previously harmonious relationship. Taken together, with an increasing involvement, on Stuart’s part, in supplying the Hanoverian garrisons with meal, the conclusion is that Stuart, whether through design or the actions of former comrades gradually distanced himself from those comrades. As regards being frozen out, Eveline Cruickshanks highlights the possibility when she describes “Tory merchants who could no longer get government contracts.”<sup>27</sup> This theme was also raised by Pittock when he referred to government, military and ecclesiastical roles being removed from Jacobite supporters.<sup>28</sup> Could such actions therefore be equally valid at the micro level of business or politics in Inverness? Margaret Sankey suggests that the situation in Scotland was one where the ongoing Scottish establishment recognised a need for neutralising the Jacobite threat by more nuanced approaches than the visceral methods which would be employed circa thirty years later.<sup>29</sup> By playing on their opponents’ sense of honour and by protecting them from harsher treatments, she argued, a personal and political indebtedness emerged that created an environment of rehabilitation.<sup>30</sup> It is a theme which Lenman also highlighted, referring to the Hanoverian

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<sup>23</sup> HCA, *The Letterbooks*, Sheet 44.

<sup>24</sup> HCA, *The Letterbooks*, Sheets 83, 88-89.

<sup>25</sup> HCA, *The Letterbooks*, Sheet 113.

<sup>26</sup> Bruce Lenman, ‘Scots and Access to Spanish America before the Union to 1748’, *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (2018), pp. 84-85.

<sup>27</sup> Eveline Cruickshanks, *Political Untouchables: The Tories and the ‘45’* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1979), pp. 3-4.

<sup>28</sup> Murray Pittock, *Great Battles: Culloden* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 15.

<sup>29</sup> Margaret Sankey, *Jacobite Prisoners of the 1715 Rebellion: Preventing and Punishing Insurrection in Early Hanoverian Britain* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), pp. xiv-xvi.

<sup>30</sup> Sankey, *Jacobite Prisoners of the 1715 Rebellion*, p. 100.

establishment having to deal with the Scottish elites who had been in charge pre-1715.<sup>31</sup> This environment would have been attractive to those of a commercial bent, where the mantra of ‘follow the money’ held more influence.

At the macro level of government policy, it also provided a breathing space for integration into the post-1707 union project and created commercial opportunities for those ready to engage. Pittock, in reviewing Sankey’s work, disagreed with this analysis, suggesting that a harsher approach was implemented *pour encourager les autres*.<sup>32</sup> The truth, in all likelihood, lies somewhere in between and reflect personal circumstances rather than a one size fits all generalisation. MacKay may have revelled in the romantic associations of Steuart and the Jacobite cause, but the stark ongoing commercial reality of the post-1716 landscape in Inverness and elsewhere in Scotland was a more pragmatic one. It is obviously difficult, to know for certain how Steuart viewed all of this. Lenman observed that it was an almost impossible task to recreate the “mental values of Jacobites,” wryly observing “that by and large those who wrote most did not act and those who acted wrote little if anything.”<sup>33</sup>

At the micro level for Steuart, it involved a choice: he could have restricted his activities to a smaller core of contacts based around dynastic loyalties; or fully engaged with the proponents of the alternative regime. Either choice was fraught with uncertainty, bearing in mind Cruickshank’s observation of contracts being denied. The consequences, of getting such a decision wrong would have been considerable. Thomas Robertson may have viewed this as collaboration. Locally Robertson was one of the leading merchants in the salt-fish trade; he accounted for 15% of all bounty claims in the Inverness customs precinct in 1713-1714, a trade Steuart was also heavily involved in.<sup>34</sup> His influence was considerable and can be best illustrated by his involvement in what Steuart referred to as the “running of salt.”<sup>35</sup> This was an investigation of “sundry fraudulent practices” by Robertson by the Treasury Lords of the House of Commons, where in concert with other merchants and customs officers some £11,000 sterling was avoided in revenue payments.<sup>36</sup> In simplistic terms, this involved avoiding the paying of duty on foreign salt at the importing stage, then claiming the duty back at the exporting stage, Lenman labelled it as a “permanent incitement to skulduggery.”<sup>37</sup> Steuart was indignant that he was being mentioned in such company, describing it as a “malicious willin’ falsehood” but was advised, “by very good friends that what they say in that matter will mount to nothing,” which would appear to have been the case.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Lenman, *The Jacobite Risings*, pp. 178-179.

<sup>32</sup> Murray Pittock, ‘Review of *Jacobite Prisoners of the 1715 Rebellion: Preventing and Punishing Insurrection in Early Hanoverian Britain* by Margaret Sankey’, *The Scottish Historical Review*, Vol. 87, No. 1 (2008), pp. 162–163.

<sup>33</sup> Bruce Lenman, ‘The Scottish Episcopal Clergy and the Ideology of Jacobitism’, in Eveline Cruickshanks (ed.), *Ideology and Conspiracy: Aspects of Jacobitism 1689-1759* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1982), p. 36.

<sup>34</sup> D. Alston, *My Little Town of Cromarty: The History of a Northern Scottish Town* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2006), p. 94. Post 1708 a bounty was paid on fish exports cured with foreign salt on which a duty had already been paid, effectively a refund of the duty. See Alston, *My Little Town of Cromarty*, p. 87.

<sup>35</sup> MacKay, *The Letter-Book*, p. 55.

<sup>36</sup> Report to the King from the Treasury Lords on the petition of Thomas Robertson, merchant of Inverness, 1 May 1718, *CTP*, 1718, p. 334.

<sup>37</sup> Lenman, *The Jacobite Risings*, p. 102.

<sup>38</sup> MacKay, *The Letter-Book*, p.55.

That this was not a simple binary choice over which Steuart had full control is obvious and it must be acknowledged. Would Steuart, even be allowed to engage with the Hanoverian regime given his Jacobite associations? Both choices, had potential repercussions and he had to consider, as Sankey suggests, the complexities, such as familial implications, the opportunities or otherwise that might present for his sons and daughters by his actions, and ultimately the future of his business.<sup>39</sup> Steuart's choice, as evidenced by the *Letterbooks*, is of immersion in the brave new world then opening up in Scotland, corroborated by the gradual distancing from his old connections. It may at first sight be inconsistent, to reconcile Steuart's self-proclaimed support for the Stuarts against his growing close relationships with the Hanoverian establishment.

The earliest reference which can be seen in terms of Steuart working with that Hanoverian establishment is in June 1717, when a transaction is mentioned of providing meal to the Fort William garrison.<sup>40</sup> MacKay also highlights the regular acceptance by Steuart of bills for officers and their subsequent discounting, presenting this as normalised behaviour.<sup>41</sup> For example, on the strength of a recommendation from George Ochterlonie, a London connection, we see even Steuart discounting a bill on a Captain Mungoe Herdman, a naval officer "being for Cash for building a frigate on Lochness for his Majesties service."<sup>42</sup> An even closer longstanding relationship can be found with Joshua Guest, an officer in the British Army who had served in Scotland in various capacities from 1715.<sup>43</sup> He features repeatedly in Steuart's correspondence and was as a Major-General in charge of the defence



Figure 1. Samuel Taylor after Johan van Diest, *Major-General Joshua Guest* (1744). British Museum.

<sup>39</sup> Sankey, *Jacobite Prisoners*, p. 153.

<sup>40</sup> MacKay, *The Letter-Book*, p. 41.

<sup>41</sup> MacKay, *The Letter-Book*, p. xlix.

<sup>42</sup> MacKay, *The Letter-Book*, p. 242. The vessel was to be used to transport supplies to the garrison at Fort William and Steuart was still chasing the debt into 1726.

<sup>43</sup> W. Wheeler, 'Memoir of Lieutenant-General Guest', *Colburn's United Service Magazine, Naval and Military Journal*, Part II (1868), pp. 73-79.

of Edinburgh Castle during the 1745 rising.<sup>44</sup> Steuart refers to his “good friend” or “worthie friend” Guest on several occasions, in seeking Guest’s assistance on various matters.<sup>45</sup>

The phraseology echoes the “loveing comrade” salutation provided to Thomas Robertson, an indication of a close personal relationship, albeit with no indication as to its genesis, and gives pause for thought. It continued even after Guest returned to England, Steuart noted forwarding correspondence from Guest to the Laird of Macleod in 1737.<sup>46</sup> The only reasonable conclusion is that it places Steuart within the Hanoverian sphere of influence albeit in line with the milieu in which both men operated: there were accusations that Guest was a “Jacobite at heart.”<sup>47</sup>

Two noticeably clear examples of this unlikely association, given their Jacobite and Hanoverian loyalties can be seen in the period 1726 to 1729. Steuart advised his cousin Commissar Steuart in Edinburgh that he had enlisted Guest’s assistance in “our unlucky affair.”<sup>48</sup> This referred to non-payment for a consignment of meal provided by Steuart to a “Collonell Lie” (Lee) whom Steuart railed at saying “I think as the pretensions he has not for standing to his bargain are but wheebeles” (wheebles is a Scots word that loosely translates as nitpicking).<sup>49</sup> To add weight to leveraging payment for the meal, Steuart was assured by Guest, who was lodging with Steuart in Inverness, that he would involve General Wade in the matter.<sup>50</sup> Wade’s involvement aside, it seems incredible that the avowed Jacobite is providing lodgings to a high-ranking Hanoverian officer. The second example it could be argued is even more extraordinary and justifies MacInnes’s observation that “a common commitment to prosperity, commercial growth and colonial enterprise was shared across the political spectrum,” a view also shared by Murdoch.<sup>51</sup> Steuart contacted Guest seeking his influence once again with General Wade in attempting to resolve a further non-payment by the Strontian Mining Company, Wade being a partner, for meal delivered to them.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> J. Falkner, ‘Guest, Joshua (1660-1747), army officer’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (23 September 2004), at <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-11715> (Accessed 24/02/22).

<sup>45</sup> Colonel Joshua Guest is referred to in Mackay’s *Letter-Book* as Governor of Inverness Castle and suggests that Guest lived in Steuart’s house in Inverness, the friendship continuing even after Guest was posted elsewhere, p. xlvi; MacKay, *The Letter-Book*, pp. 286, 312-313.

<sup>46</sup> HCA, *The Letterbooks*, Sheet 66.

<sup>47</sup> K. C. Corsar, ‘The Canter of Coltbridge, 16<sup>th</sup> September 1745’, *The Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Vol. 20, No. 78) (1941), p. 96.

<sup>48</sup> MacKay, *The Letter-Book*, p. 249.

<sup>49</sup> MacKay, *The Letter-Book*, p. 286.

<sup>50</sup> S. Dodgson, ‘The Babe of Tangier: An enquiry into the Life and Circle of General George Wade’, *The Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Vol. 82, No. 330 (2004), pp. 109-131.

<sup>51</sup> MacInnes, ‘Union, Empire and Global Adventuring’, p. 128; Murdoch, ‘The French Connection’, p. 26.

<sup>52</sup> MacKay, *The Letter-Book*, pp. 307-308.





Figure 2. Johan van Diest, *Field-Marshal George Wade, 1673-1748, Commander in Chief Scotland* (About 1731), National Galleries of Scotland.

This apparent inconsistency, and indeed relationship with Guest, would seem to go much further than would be expected given Steuart's political attachments. Here we appear to have two diametrically opposed positions, with Steuart the Jacobite appearing to be completely comfortable dealing with what could be termed the enemy, "a practical collaboration."<sup>53</sup> Strontian represents not only dealing with the pro-Hanoverian establishment, but it also represents engaging, although not directly, with the Forfeited Estates programme.<sup>54</sup>

In fairness to Steuart, he was not alone in Scotland in presenting two faces simultaneously on the dynastic or constitutional issues of the day. Jeffrey Stephen has highlighted the considerable number of Presbyterians in Scotland in the period, who both stayed loyal to the

<sup>53</sup> Sankey, *Jacobite Prisoners*, p. 155.

<sup>54</sup> A. Cameron, 'A page from the past: The Lead Mines at Strontian', *TGSI*, 38 (1937-1941), pp. 444-452. The Forfeited Estates was the commission set up after the 1715 Rebellion to sell the estates of prominent Jacobites, of which Strontian formed part of one.

Hanoverian regime yet, still remained hostile to the Union.<sup>55</sup> Max Skjonsberg has emphasised the point that “many Scottish Jacobite’s and non-Jacobites co-existed harmoniously to a surprising degree”.<sup>56</sup> Steuart’s Janus-like approach to his business dealings may well have been born out of commercial necessity.<sup>57</sup> That said, his relationships with Guest and Herdman seem to go much further, examples of what can only be described as the enigma that was John Steuart. Conversely, are we witnessing a practical variation of the Jesuit concept of equivocation, allowing you to lie under oath in order to preserve your life or those of other Catholics, thus avoiding incriminating themselves or others, without lying in the eyes of God?<sup>58</sup> Steuart’s friend Lord Lovat walked a not dissimilar path where his “natural power of dissimulation,” the ability to disguise one’s true feelings and conceal your true motives, was legendary.<sup>59</sup> Could Steuart’s ostensibly close relationships with the Hanoverian establishment be a means to an end? It is perhaps within Steuart’s Jacobitism that the answer to that question is to be found?

### *SOURCES CONFIRMING STEUART’S JACOBITISM*

From what has been seen in a commercial sense, Steuart’s Jacobitism would appear to have been sacrificed on the altar of commercial necessity after 1715. Any conclusions reached in Jacobite research need to be considered carefully, as ambiguity and ulterior motives are common, and the mantra of *caveat emptor* is of primary consideration. To that end let us consider five different sources of information, which, when taken together, will strongly suggest that Steuart was not only a supporter of the Jacobite cause but an active Jacobite, despite his Hanoverian relationships.

First, it is apparent from the *Letterbooks* that Steuart maintained a correspondence over many years with his cousin John Roy Stuart, who was to become an officer of some note in the Jacobite army of 1745.<sup>60</sup> The correspondence was usually via second parties, and while not conclusive proof of Steuart’s loyalties, he tended to be very guarded in what he wrote. Recently however, a letter has been found, by Steuart, dated 1740, where he asked after his cousin.<sup>61</sup> In itself that would be an innocuous enquiry, were it not for the fact that the letter is addressed to

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<sup>55</sup> J. Stephen, ‘Hymns to Hanover: Presbyterians, the Pretender and the failure of the ‘45’, *Journal of Scottish Church History*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (2010), p. 78.

<sup>56</sup> Max Skjonsberg, ‘David Hume and the Jacobites’, *The Scottish Historical Review*, Vol. C, 1, No. 252 (2021), pp. 26-27.

<sup>57</sup> The Roman god Janus was depicted in antiquity as having two faces which allowed him to look or act in opposite or contrasting ways at the same time.

<sup>58</sup> British Library, *The Trial of Henry Garnet, 1606*, at <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/the-trial-of-henry-garnet-1606#:~:text=Equivocation%20was%20a%20Jesuit%20logic,in%20the%20eyes%20of%20God> (accessed 11/03/22).

<sup>59</sup> J. H. Burton, *Lives of Simon Lord Lovat and Duncan Forbes of Culloden* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1847), p. 79.

<sup>60</sup> MacKay, *The Letter-Book*, pp. 398, 412, 414, 422, 424-425, 439, 441-442, 453-455, 462; S. Handley, ‘Stewart, John [known as John Roy Stewart; Ian Ruadh Stiubhart (c. 1700-1747), Jacobite soldier and Poet’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (23 September 2004), at <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-26493?rskey=7SMvn0&result=26>. (Accessed 22/03/22); HCA, *The Letterbooks*, Sheets 4-5, 28, 103, 122, 123, 127, 132.

<sup>61</sup> N. McGregor, ‘John Roy Stuart: Jacobite Bard of Strathspey’, *TGSI*, Vol. 63 (2002-2004), pp. 1-124.

James Edgar, Secretary to James Francis Edward Stuart, the *Old Pretender*, Edgar being responsible for co-ordinating intelligence reports for the Jacobite cause.<sup>62</sup> Steuart's opening sentence, "it is now a verie long time since I hade the pleasure to hear from you," suggests a longstanding relationship.<sup>63</sup> It also contains an enigmatic request for Edgar to tell a Mr Hart that Steuart humbly kisses Hart's hands and will always be at his command. This could be a veiled reference to James II and VII.

Additionally, an anonymous letter written to a merchant Alexander Fraser in Inverness on 10 October 1745 outlines how support for the rising was increasing, quoting troop numbers and signed off by a 'JS' in Edinburgh.<sup>64</sup> MacKay who presented the letter to the TGS, towards the end of the nineteenth century did not suggest it had been written by Steuart only making the observation that a remark in the letter "Give my best respects to my dear Friend My Lord" was a reference to Simon Fraser, Lord Lovat the Old Fox and the letters contents were really for him.<sup>65</sup> The letters date of 10 October would, however, be at odds with a letter dated 13 October where Steuart (apparently in Inverness) writes to his son John in England, telling him "I am under the most pressing necessity of going immediately south-ward as afar as Eder (Edinburgh) and Newtown."<sup>66</sup> This raises the question of how he could be in two places at the same time, but applying critical reasoning to this dilemma, there is no guarantee the dates are accurate or indeed may have been deliberately dated in this way to create confusion. Trying to unravel the puzzle further is complicated by the 10 October letter referring to the writer's son coming south and asking Fraser to assist him financially, whereas in the 13 October letter Steuart mentions that he has drawn on Fraser for his own travel expenses. All that can be said, with any degree of certainty, is that Steuart was on the move south and it is difficult not to see this in terms of actively supporting the Rising. He does not provide a reason as to the need for his journey, Edinburgh was then in the hands of the Jacobite army, but it is difficult not to connect the two. Taken at face value as regards its veracity, the inference is that his journey would only take him as far as Newtown. However, that does not explain what was pressing or necessary.

An explanation, which further confirms his active Jacobitism, has been recently found during my own research, in a letter, (Figure 3) in *The Stuart and Cumberland Papers*.

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<sup>62</sup> L. B. Smith, 'Edgar, James (1688-1764), secretary to James Francis Edward Stuart', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (23 September 2004), at <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-65470?rskey=crUB0Y&result=3>. (Accessed 17/022).

<sup>63</sup> Royal Archives, Windsor Castle (hereafter RA), *The Stuart and Cumberland Papers*, 225/62, Letter from John Steuart to James Edgar 25 July 1740.

<sup>64</sup> MacKay, *The Letter-Book*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>65</sup> MacKay, *The Letter-Book*, p. 9.

<sup>66</sup> MacKay, *The Letter-Book*, p. 455.

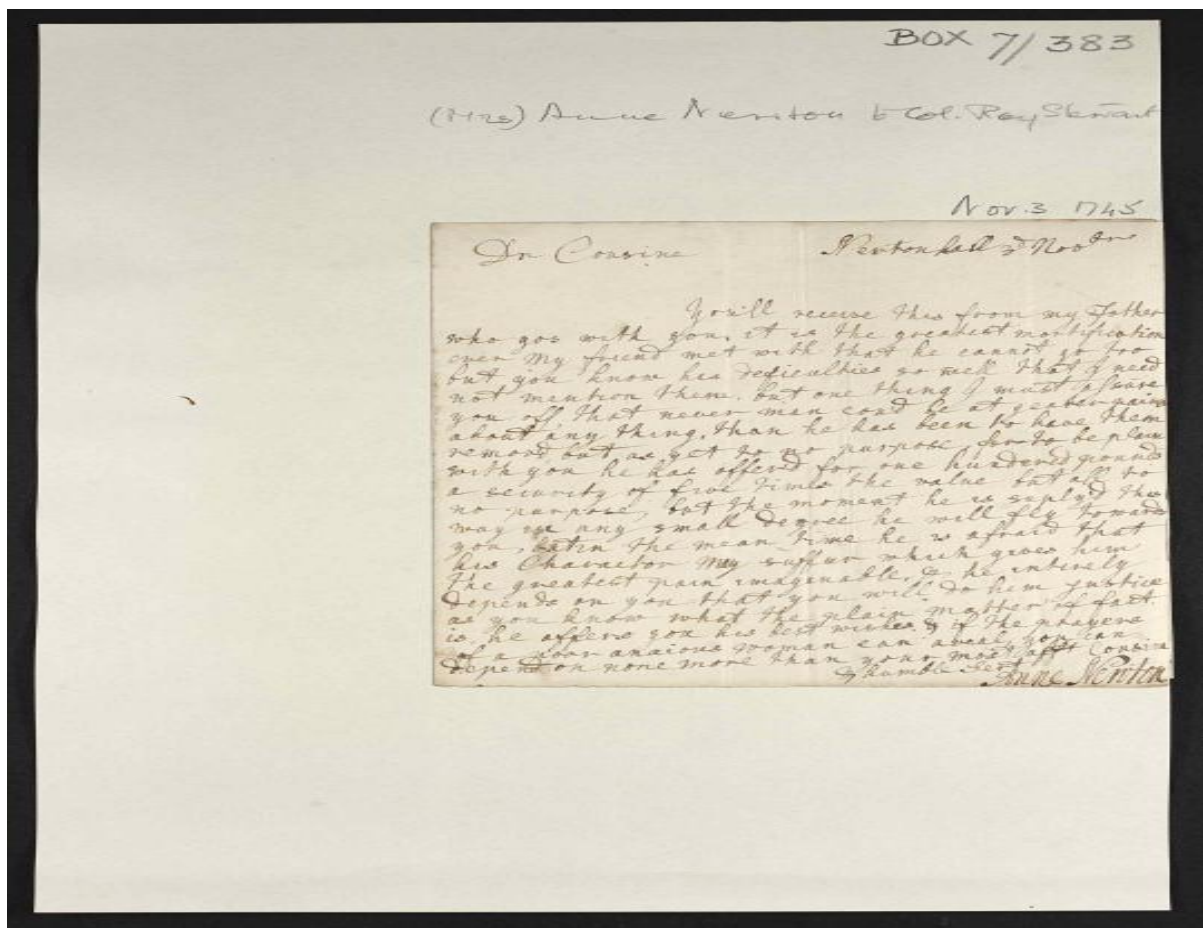


Figure 3 - Letter from Anne Newton to Col. John Roy Stuart (1745), The Stuart and Cumberland Papers.

His daughter Anne writes on 3 November 1745 to Colonel John Roy Stuart, “Dr. Cousine, you’ll receive this from my father who gos with you.”<sup>67</sup> As John Roy was about to march into England with the Jacobite army, the inference seems very clear, Stuart was a volunteer in that army, which is indicative of being an active Jacobite. Stuart’s daughter goes on to talk about another friend not being able “to go too,” citing his difficulties (which John Roy is apparently aware of) and it may be that she is referring to her husband Richard Newton.<sup>68</sup>

This Jacobite adherence gains even more credence by a letter again by Anne Steuart in May 1747 addressed to Lord Vere Beauclerk. It was found by a friend in the National Archives who was researching another topic, saw her name and knowing of my interest very kindly alerted me to its existence.<sup>69</sup> Written in London in 1747 Anne is asking Beauclerk, a high-ranking Naval officer, to intercede on behalf of her and some friends to obtain “seeing me at more liberty.” She also refers to “her bail” suggesting she is under some form of house arrest as she needs to send her maid to deliver the missive.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>67</sup> RA, The Stuart and Cumberland Papers, Box 7/383.

<sup>68</sup> RA, The Stuart and Cumberland Papers, Box 7/383.

<sup>69</sup> British Library (hereafter BL), Add MS 32711 (May 1747-Jun 1747), page 92, Jacobite’s, 1747, folio 184. Letter by Anne Steuart her maiden name to Andrew Stone (under-secretary of State under the Duke of Newcastle).

<sup>70</sup> I cannot think of a more selfless example of historical research networking.

Finally, Primrose's *List of Persons Concerned in the Rebellion of 1745* seem noticeably clear on Stuart: "A volunteer in the said rebel army and very active now at Newtown" (Richard Newton's residence near Haddington).<sup>71</sup> This matches Stuart's October letter in terms of confirming his location, close to Edinburgh and Prestonpans and on the route south to England. It is also possible, to observe the aftermath of the rebellion, as Stuart is persuaded to go to the Continent in 1751. He stayed with friends in Boulogne, and had negotiations involving a friend in Italy, where the Jacobite court were now based, but the monetary support offered was insufficient and he returned to Inverness.<sup>72</sup>

Stuart has also been recently portrayed as a character in S. G. MacLean's novel *The Bookseller of Inverness*, where he is portrayed as a Jacobite agent, and in her notes the author suggests that "as far as preparations for a rising in the 1750's were concerned Bailie John Stuart was up to his neck in it."<sup>73</sup> The reference to his neck is certainly germane to the subject under consideration, his Jacobite loyalties, bearing in mind the times he lived in. It cannot be stressed too much, that Stuart's Jacobite association was not just adopting a political stance, it involved an relationship with a "clandestine organisation dedicated to the overthrow of the existing order."<sup>74</sup> It could involve a range of involvements from active involvement to a "fairly passive identification," a sense of shared values perhaps tempered by personal realism as, it was considered treasonous not just for him but also his family.<sup>75</sup> Sir George Mackenzie's maxim of, "keeping snug at home is safest", was also a consideration.<sup>76</sup>

## CONCLUSION

As a member of the Inverness merchant class and socio-economic grouping, Stuart was required to navigate various relationships in which his Jacobite allegiances could have been a major impediment. His loss of Baillie status post-1716 reflected those allegiances and an exploration of the commercial impacts, has revealed a number, of at times contradictory positions. A gradual distancing has been observed from former business associates who shared his political views such as Thomas Robertson whilst an increasing engagement with the Hanoverian establishment both personal and commercial emerged, particularly with Joshua Guest. This localised engagement would have been driven by commercial necessity and fitted well with the macro environment of rehabilitation created in Scotland post-1715. That said, Stuart's choices were not without risk, the alienation of former contacts such as Robertson and uncertainty as to whether he would even be allowed to take part in the new world then emerging and forming in Scotland has been highlighted. That Stuart managed to make that transition was in part a reflection on his pragmatism and the friendships he built with the likes of Guest, which seemed totally at odds with his Jacobite allegiances. His use of these friendships even extended to obtaining the support of high-ranking officers when issues arose around money owed to him. The question then arose was this approach purely a means to an end or were other more covert factors in play as suggested by various letters which when

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<sup>71</sup> Primrose, *A List of Persons*, pp. 128-129.

<sup>72</sup> MacKay, *The Letter-Book*, pp. 475-476.

<sup>73</sup> S. G. MacLean, *The Bookseller of Inverness* (London: Quercus, 2022), p. 391.

<sup>74</sup> Szechi, *The Jacobites*, p. 19.

<sup>75</sup> Neil Guthrie, *The Material Culture of the Jacobites* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 7-19.

<sup>76</sup> National Archive of Scotland (hereafter NAS), GD 23/6/148: 34 Letters from Sir George MacKenzie to Gilbert Gordon, Inverness.

considered together reveal an active Jacobite. There are indicative hints: the recently discovered letters by his daughter Anne to John Roy Stuart on the eve of the march of the Jacobite army into England in 1745; and Anne's plea for a relaxation of her house arrest; his description as a volunteer in the Jacobite army in Primrose's list; the correspondence with James Edgar; and even the need to go South in such haste. These all point to Steuart being an active Jacobite, his daughter's letters in particular. John Steuart, however, could never be accused of being straightforward. Doubts and inconsistencies emerge as to how wholehearted his support for Jacobitism actually was. If past behaviours repeated themselves John Steuart was more than capable of saying and doing one thing whilst pragmatically thinking of something else. A triumphant Stuart restoration could have re-established a business which had been on the brink of bankruptcy on more than one occasion, and it is difficult not to think that Steuart did not make that calculation. In conclusion, the German poet Friedrich Schiller once commented that "truth lives on in the midst of deception," and the challenge in understanding Steuart lies in identifying which ever truth he held at a particular time, *caveat emptor*.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> AZ Quotes, at <https://www.azquotes.com/quote/739522>. (Accessed 23/03/22).