

THE PRIVY COUNCIL OF SCOTLAND AND THE JACOBITE SIEGE OF THE BASS ROCK, 1691–1694

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The revolution of 1688–90 precipitated a three-year conflict in Scotland between government forces and supporters of the exiled James VII and II, known as Jacobites. While the bulk of the fighting had ended by 1691, a group of Jacobite prisoners held in a state prison on the Bass Rock revolted and overran their captors in the summer of that year. These Jacobites were able to hold out until 1694 and, despite the government's best efforts, they received supplies and aid from Scottish, English and Irish Jacobites, along with French forces, who were allied to the exiled king. This episode has been overlooked by most scholars of early Jacobitism and those who do discuss it view it as a minor event. However, the Jacobite takeover of the prison caught the nascent Williamite government off guard and threatened the security not only of the Scottish state in military terms but the revolution regime in general. Through an analysis of recently digitised Privy Council records, this article proposes that this event was significant, especially when considered alongside the European context and contemporary government policy decisions. The article is a contextual study of this little-known episode which concludes that it should be considered as an important case study of both early Jacobitism and Williamite government instability.

THE Bass Rock lies about a mile beyond the east coast of North Berwick. The rock had been fortified from the medieval period and used by King James I (r. 1406–37), for instance, to house disaffected magnates before it was utilised by the Cromwellian government in the 1650s to store records. In 1671 the island was purchased by John Maitland, 2nd earl (and future 1st duke) of Lauderdale (1616–82)—who was part of a triumvirate of patrician managers of the Scottish state—for the government to use as a prison. Due to the government's clampdown on

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religious nonconformity after the Restoration of 1660, many Presbyterians were imprisoned around the country, including at Dunnottar and Blackness castles and the Bass Rock. Although exact figures are disputed, approximately forty to fifty recalcitrant Presbyterians were imprisoned on the Bass Rock between 1673 and 1687.¹

Readers may be less familiar with the fact that the island was likewise used as a prison by the Williamite regime after 1689, following the outbreak of war between supporters of the revolution and Jacobites, whose allegiances lay with the deposed King James VII and II (r. 1685–8). An attritional standoff that took place on and around the Bass Rock between prisoners and the government between 1691 and 1694 has been severely neglected in historiography in the last century, save for some recent accounts.² However, the case is yet to be analysed in depth, and it has escaped analysis in the wake of recent developments in both Jacobite studies and the history of the Scottish government in the later seventeenth century. This article intends to rectify this neglect, focusing on the political and strategic consequences of the siege.

To early historians of the Rock, who tend to focus on Presbyterian martyrs imprisoned at the hands of Charles II's Scottish government, the 1690s is an outlying decade that sparks little interest. Thomas M'Crie saw the Rock as 'the Patmos of so many godly men' and the 'Scottish Bastile' but painted the 1691–4 siege as an aberration in the wider history of the island.³ Other early historians agreed: John Hill Burton, for instance, suggested that it was noteworthy only as an example of naval siege tactics. R. P. Phillimore and James Grant considered the siege as a romantic example of futile Jacobitism while depicting the government's response as weak.⁴ In general, these early interpretations undervalue the strength of the Jacobite threat, governmental priorities, and the international context. Accounts such as these fall into the category of commemorative depictions of the Jacobite 'lost cause' myth, involving a process of memorialisation infused with national identity and notions of tragedy.⁵

1. John Crichton (ed.), *Memoirs of the Rev. John Blackader* (Edinburgh, 1823), 375–82; Thomas M'Crie (ed.), *The Bass Rock: its Civil and Ecclesiastical History, Geology, Martyrology, Zoology and Botany* (Edinburgh, 1848), 1–382.

2. Robert D. Tree, 'The Bass Rock Siege, 1691–1694', *History Scotland*, 23:6 (November–December 2023), 36–41; idem, 'Jura Majestatis, or The Rights of Sovereignty: The Privy Council and Government Administration in Scotland, 1689–1708' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Stirling, 2024), 244–5.

3. M'Crie (ed.), *Bass Rock*, 18, 34–7, 377.

4. R. P. Phillimore, *The Bass Rock: Its History and Romance* (North Berwick, 1911), 105–18; James Grant, *The Old Scots Navy from 1689 to 1710* (London, 1914), 133.

5. Ryan K. McNutt, "'What's Left of the Flag': the Confederate and Jacobite 'Lost Cause' Myths, and the Construction of Mythic Identities Through Conflict Commemoration", *Journal of Conflict Archaeology*, 12 (2017), 142–62, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15740773.2017.1480419>.

The Bass Rock siege was an example of Jacobitism in the 1690s that posed a threat to Williamite government stability. But most recent authors have concluded that it was either a minor event or find it unworthy of discussion beyond passing reference, despite a growing body of work on Scottish governance during the 1690s, and a re-appraisal of the seriousness of the Jacobite threat in the initial post-revolution period.⁶ The extent of parliamentary Jacobitism in 1689–90 has been recognised for some time.⁷ Bruce Lenman has blamed government mismanagement in part for the survival of Jacobitism in the later 1690s.⁸ Similarly, Daniel Szechi linked the rise of Scottish Jacobitism from the 1690s to the movement's opposition to the blunder- and disaster-prone Williamite state.⁹ Paul Hopkins convincingly points out the ways in which martial Jacobitism in the Highland War (1689–91) influenced government policy.¹⁰ Graeme Millen has recently extended this argument, paying close attention to the role played by the Williamite Scots-Dutch Brigade in the Highland War; he also affords the privy council an important role within the conflict.¹¹ As Millen observed, most accounts of the war have attempted to locate and further understand Jacobites and Jacobitism at the expense of a fuller comprehension of the government's operations and strategic considerations.¹²

Clearly, Jacobitism caused multiple realignments in government policy. A useful comparison with the contemporary English fiscal-military state can be made here. Hannes Ziegler demonstrated that changes in the operations and make-up of the customs department in 1690s England, especially in relation to the preventive service, a 'designated coastal police force', were led not only by fiscal pressures, but also by the government's response to the Jacobite threat.¹³

6. See, for example: Edward Corp, 'The Scottish Jacobite Community at Saint-Germain After the Departure of the Stuart Court', in Allan I. Macinnes, Kieran German and Lesley Graham (eds), *Living with Jacobitism, 1690–1788: The Three Kingdoms and Beyond* (Abingdon, 2015), 27–37, at 37.

7. Alasdair Raffe, *Scotland in Revolution, 1685–1690* (Edinburgh, 2018), 133, <https://doi.org/10.3366/edinburgh/9781474427579.003.0001>; James Halliday, 'The Club and the Revolution in Scotland', *Scottish Historical Review*, 45 (1966), 143–59; Derek J. Patrick, 'Unconventional Procedure: Scottish Electoral Politics after the Revolution', in Keith M. Brown and Alastair J. Mann (eds), *Parliament and Politics in Scotland, 1567–1707* (Edinburgh, 2005), 208–44, at 223–7, 240.

8. Bruce Lenman, *The Jacobite Risings in Britain, 1689–1746*, second edition (Dalkeith, 1995), 51–78.

9. Daniel Szechi, *The Jacobites: Britain and Europe, 1688–1788*, second edition (Manchester, 2019), 114–22.

10. Paul Hopkins, *Glencoe and the End of the Highland War* (Edinburgh, 1986).

11. Graeme S. Millen, 'The Scots-Dutch Brigade and the Highland War, 1688–1691' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Kent, 2022); idem, 'The Scots-Dutch Moment? The Scots-Dutch Brigade and the Highland War, 1689–1691', in Peter Edwards (ed.), *Monarchy, the Court, and the Provincial Elite in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden, 2024), 73–95, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004694149_006.

12. Millen, 'Scots-Dutch Brigade', 11.

13. Hannes Ziegler, 'Jacobitism, Coastal Policing, and Fiscal-Military Reform in England after the Glorious Revolution, 1689–1702', *Journal of British Studies*, 61 (2022), 290–314, quotation at 292, <https://doi.org/10.1017/jbr.2021.113>.

The regime faced many challenges and other forms of opposition in the 1690s; the response to the Bass Rock siege sheds light on the broader contours of the government's response to political and military crises in this period. Without disregarding the obvious fact that the Williamite regime faced several (at times self-inflicted) crises, this article builds on recent work pointing to the enhanced power of the Scottish parliament and privy council and Allan Macinnes's interpretation of the 1690s by questioning notions of government failure, viewing this as a decade in which the nascent regime was forced to develop novel policies in order to tackle a series of distinct challenges to its authority, one of which was Jacobitism.¹⁴ The article demonstrates the considerable threat posed by Jacobites in southern Scotland, diverging from works which continue to emphasise the Highland and north-eastern bases of Jacobite support.¹⁵ Moreover, in analysing the government's response to this event, it seeks to remove Jacobitism from the vacuum in which it has too often been viewed.

This analysis of the government's response to the Bass Rock siege is based primarily upon the records of Scotland's privy council, the executive branch of government, which remains under-researched in the post-revolution period.¹⁶ The privy council was made up of government ministers, parliamentarians, legal officials and officers of state, as well as military officers. Its competencies were similar to those of a modern cabinet and Laura Rayner has described its operations in the 1690s as covering 'everyday government'.¹⁷ Additionally, Gillian MacDonald has shown the post-revolution council engaging in espionage and taking great care to secure information and intelligence on its opponents.¹⁸ The

14. Derek J. Patrick, 'People and Parliament in Scotland, 1689–1702' (Ph.D. thesis, University of St Andrews, 2002); Tree, '*Jura Majestatis*', 24–94, 241–57; Allan I. Macinnes, 'William of Orange – 'Disaster for Scotland'?', in Esther Mijers and David Onnekink (eds), *Redefining William III: The Impact of the King-Stadholder in International Context* (London, 2007), 201–23.

15. E.g. Kelsey Jackson Williams, *The First Scottish Enlightenment: Rebels, Priests, and History* (Oxford, 2020). For a nuanced discussion of Jacobite support beyond these traditional heartlands, see Allan I. Macinnes, 'Jacobitism in Scotland: episodic cause or national movement?', *Scottish Historical Review*, 86 (2007), 225–52, <https://doi.org/10.3366/shr.2007.86.2.225>.

16. There are some recent exceptions to this trend, which are the fruits of the Scottish Privy Council Project, including Alastair J. Mann, 'Political Parties and the Eclipse of the Scottish Privy Council', *Parliaments, Estates and Representation*, 45 (2025), 53–72, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02606755.2025.2452823>; Laura Doak, 'Makers, Mistakes, and Miscellaneous Matter: Materiality and the Scottish Privy Council Records, c.1688–1708', *Parliaments, Estates and Representation*, 45 (2025), 363–80, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02606755.2025.2466396>; Robert D. Tree, 'Controverted Elections, Electoral Controversy and the Scottish Privy Council, 1689–1708', *Parliamentary History*, 43:1 (February 2024), 53–71, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1750-0206.12722>.

17. Laura Rayner, 'The Tribulations of Everyday Government in Williamite Scotland', in Sharon Adams and Julian Goodare (eds), *Scotland in the Age of Two Revolutions* (Woodbridge, 2014), 193–210, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781782043317.012>.

18. Gillian S. Macdonald, 'Black-Boxes, Flying Packets, and Espionage: the Information Trade and Scottish Governance, 1689–1691', *Parliaments, Estates and Representation*, 40 (2020), 269–89, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02606755.2020.1853882>.

council was also deeply involved in military affairs, such as providing for war widows.¹⁹ While the council's records provide detailed evidence on government administration, they are in reality snapshots of the daily operations of central government that have been curated 'as part of a carefully constructed historic façade, rather than an open window into the past'.²⁰ These sources do not always tell us about motivations or experiences of opponents of the regime since they often exist as part of a broader aim to craft a political narrative sympathetic to the governing authorities. The focus here is therefore on the government's response to the siege, into which the council's records give us a unique insight.

I

In the 1690s, the Bass Rock complex consisted of three main blocks: the governor's house, the garrison, and the prison, encased within a large wall, fronted by an outside courtyard patrolled by guards. The Rock was staffed by sentinels armed with muskets and it had cannon available in addition to stores of ammunition. Behind the main complex, there lay a path ascending to St Baldred's Chapel and a garden, which then led ultimately to a cairn and flagpole atop the island. Imprisonment on the island was a wholly grim experience, which prisoners had to fund themselves, living on meagre rations sent from the mainland. The radical Presbyterian minister Alexander Shields, who was imprisoned on the island in the 1680s, portrayed it bleakly as 'a dry and cold rock in the sea', where the only provisions had to be 'brought many miles from the country' and 'would not keep unspoiled' for long.²¹

The last of the Presbyterian nonconformists imprisoned on the Bass Rock were released by 1687, but a detachment of troops remained on the island. Prior to 1688, the commander of the garrison was Charles Maitland, who stood out for James VII at the revolution.²² Showing concern for national security and trade in July 1689, the privy council ordered the provost of Edinburgh to send a small detachment of armed men to 'Castleton', possibly the settlement around Tantallon Castle, on a mainland promontory opposite the island. These troops sought 'to stope any corispondance with the Bass and hinder the depute governour from

19. Gillian S. Macdonald, 'Bestowing Charity: War Widows and the Privy Council During the Williamite Revolution in Scotland (1688–91)', *Parliaments, Estates and Representation*, 44 (2024), 120–37, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02606755.2023.2279382>.

20. Doak, 'Makers, Mistakes, and Miscellaneous Matter', 379.

21. Alexander Shields, *A hind let loose; or, An historical representation of the testimonies of the Church of Scotland, for the interest of Christ: With the true state thereof in all its periods* (Glasgow, 1797), 225.

22. Army Muster Rolls, 12 April and 16 October 1688, National Records of Scotland (hereafter NRS), Bass Garrison, E100/39/1/11, E100/39/1/13.

takeing any provissiones from the ships or boats that pass by their'.²³ On 26 July, the privy council ordered £76 Scots to be paid to Captain Archibald Dunbar to fit out a vessel to cruise around and blockade the Bass Rock.²⁴ Attesting to the wider context of the Jacobite threat, that same day the council warned Archibald Hope of Rankeillor, sheriff depute of Fife about Jacobites and 'priests' who had been found 'skulking up and downe in armes in the east' and granted a warrant to apprehend them.²⁵

The blockade was a success, and, in August 1689, the privy council oversaw the garrison's handover to Henry Fletcher, brother to the famous political theorist and politician, Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun. Maitland was ordered to surrender the garrison and its munitions to Captain Dunbar on 9 August. While negotiations on his surrender were ongoing, the council was keen to prevent Maitland from causing a nuisance to local trade, urging him 'not to disturb or trouble the herring fishers'.²⁶ Maitland was ultimately provided with an indemnity that extended to the men under his command, his brother David Maitland of Soultray, and others on the mainland who were found to have corresponded with them, save for one Captain Wallace, who was to be delivered as a prisoner to the government. The council also paid the Jacobite soldiers within the garrison for their service for three months of the year.²⁷

Fletcher took charge of the garrison in August 1689, following Maitland's surrender. He was granted a month's pay for the soldiers within the garrison, £10 sterling for repairs to be carried out, plus £15 sterling in advance for a year's worth of coal and candles for the garrison.²⁸ These troops oversaw an influx of Jacobite prisoners to the island in 1690, including three soldiers who had been found not only to have drunk to the exiled King James's health while in the government's military service, but to have compelled fellow soldiers in their regiment to do so while stationed in Dunning, Perthshire.²⁹ Further Jacobite combatants or suspected Jacobites were committed as prisoners to the island in 1690, including Captain Wallace, mentioned earlier, an English Jacobite officer named Thomas Dunbar who had been captured and imprisoned upon his arrival in Scotland in June 1689, and Lieutenant Colonel Edward Wilson, an officer in government service who was a 'suspected person', although he was soon liberated and allowed to travel to the Dutch Republic.³⁰ Four junior officers who had been

23. P. Hume Brown et al (eds), *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland* [hereafter *RPCS*], 3rd series, 16 vols (Edinburgh, 1908–70), XIII, 518.

24. *Ibid.*, 561.

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid.*, XIV, 12.

27. *Ibid.*, 28.

28. *Ibid.*, 122.

29. *Ibid.*, XV, 213–16.

30. *Ibid.*, 50, 109–10, 162, 165–6, 180, 238, 552.

captured in 1690 after the Battle of Cromdale—lieutenants James Halyburton and Michael Middleton, and ensigns Patrick Roy and David Dunbar—were also imprisoned on the Bass in 1691.³¹ Although one subsequent account claimed that these four were the only men imprisoned on the Bass Rock in June 1691, the evidence here attests to nine prisoners being held on the island at the time of the siege.³² By February 1691, Fletcher was in command of eighteen soldiers in the Bass—a lieutenant, a sergeant, a corporal, a gunner, and fourteen sentinels—and, apart from Fletcher himself, who could govern in absentia, it would appear that these men all remained on the island until the siege.³³

It was perhaps significant that some of the regime's most serious and potentially threatening opponents were not held on the Bass Rock. James Drummond, 4th earl of Perth (1648–1716) and his brother John Drummond, 1st earl of Melfort (1649–1714), two of James VII's leading acolytes and Catholic converts, were held between the castles of Stirling, Edinburgh, and Blackness for suspected treason, as was the Jacobite agent and serial plotter Henry 'Neville' Payne (d. c. 1710).³⁴ Choosing more easily defensible and traditional methods of imprisonment for those who were considered likely to escape or gather popular Jacobite support might signal the council's recognition of the potential weaknesses of the Bass Rock prison. Consequently, the decision to use the Bass primarily for housing Jacobite officers appears somewhat naïve.

The events that led up to the siege began in June 1691, when George Melville, 1st earl of Melville and joint secretary of state for Scotland heard from Thomas Livingston, commander-in-chief of Scottish forces, that French ships had been spotted near Aberdeen and Skye, threatening invasion.³⁵ Throughout the summer of 1691 the government was anxious of a full-scale invasion of Scotland; some of their worst fears were realised when a group of Jacobite prisoners overran the Bass Rock garrison. On 15 June, while the prison guards helped to unload a cargo of coal from a boat, four prisoners—Halyburton, Middleton, Roy, and Dunbar—instigated a revolt, taking control of the garrison, its boats, and ammunition. The first report of the incident came the following day by way of Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, writing to an unnamed government official or statesman and, by extension, the privy council. The report placed blame for the revolt squarely on the garrison's sergeant, Hubert La Fosse. In doing so, Fletcher appears to have been conveying second-hand information from his brother Henry, the garrison

31. *Ibid.*, XVI, 340.

32. Crichton (ed.), *Memoirs*, 383.

33. Army Muster Rolls, February–April 1691, NRS, Bass Garrison, E100/39/1/14.

34. RPCS, xv, 2; *Scottish Privy Council Records 1692 to 1708* (University of Stirling and University of Dundee, 2024, <https://spcr.ac.uk>) [hereafter *SPCR*; last accessed 15 July 2026], A1692/5/148; *SPCR*, A1692/11/18.

35. *Leven and Melville Papers: Letters and State Papers Chiefly Addressed to George Earl of Melville, Secretary of State for Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1843), 617, 621.

commander at the time who had been absent from the island during the take-over. It seems likely that the recipient was Thomas Livingston, who sent a very similar, but shorter, report to Melville that same day, based upon 'straing neus' which he had received 'Just nou'.³⁶ Fletcher claimed that the sergeant, as acting commander, had ordered the whole garrison to attend the coal ship save for a sentinel, the gunner and one other soldier, 'which two last it Semes wer concious to his villanie'.³⁷ The group apparently shot the sentinel through the shoulder and proceeded to liberate the four prisoners mentioned above.

Fletcher of Saltoun insisted on Henry's innocence and claimed that his brother, despite his office as governor, was not obliged to reside permanently on the island; he also mentioned that the lieutenant had been attending to business in Edinburgh, where he had subsequently fallen ill. Andrew and Henry Fletcher's motives in describing the revolt in this manner might signal that the account was embellished in their favour, but it went on to influence the official government record and, with a lack of supplementary evidence, the true course of events may therefore never be fully known. Livingston's relaxed optimism in articulating to Melville that the Bass siege 'will make a great noice, althoug[h] [it is] in it self very inconsiderable', belied the government's serious concern about a potential French invasion and Jacobite internal uprising.³⁸ Fletcher of Saltoun appeared more worried, declaring that 'it wil notwithstanding make a great noise amongst the Jacobins [*sic*]; for the place is not of the least moment in a war'.³⁹ From this last statement, it can be concluded that Fletcher of Saltoun felt that the event should neither be overlooked nor viewed as trivial, since it could be consequential in a period of international and domestic conflict. The privy council appeared to take Fletcher at his word when it found that due to the 'negligence or raither knavery' of La Fosse the four prisoners had been able to overrun the island.⁴⁰ La Fosse had served as garrison sergeant since the handover of the Bass to Henry Fletcher and was recorded in muster rolls there in February 1691.⁴¹ Furthermore, La Fosse's wife Janet Haslep and servant, in addition to Alison Peebles, wife of the garrison's gunner James Swan or 'Suan', and the former porter to the garrison were held as prisoners in Edinburgh for a short while before their release under caution, which testifies to the council's suspicions of a wider conspiracy.⁴²

36. *Ibid.*, 622.

37. Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun to [unknown], 16 June 1691, NRS, Leven and Melville papers, GD26/9/323.

38. *Leven and Melville Papers*, 622.

39. Fletcher of Saltoun to [unknown], NRS, GD26/9/323.

40. *RPCS*, XVI, 340.

41. *Army Muster Rolls*, February–April 1691, NRS, E100/39/1/14.

42. *RPCS*, XVI, 586–7.

Significantly, there is some evidence of collusion within a clandestine network and prior planning of the takeover of the island. For example, John Seton, brother to George Seton, laird of Garleton, was held as a prisoner, since the council suspected that he had ‘a great, if not the greatest hand, in this affaire’.⁴³ While it is not entirely clear why the council reached this conclusion, it was not the first time that John Seton had come to the attention of the authorities. In 1690, Seton had been arrested and jailed for stealing a mail ‘pacquet’ between Haddington and Cockburnspath with several accomplices, but had escaped prison.⁴⁴ He was later found and apprehended while attempting to escape on a ship bound for the Dutch Republic.⁴⁵ Although he was ultimately absolved of the charge, he was then imprisoned for about ten months, with the government suspecting that there was either a political motive for the crime or that important information had been stolen. His pleas of ignorance and request for release in February 1691 were ineffectual, and the council granted a warrant to raise criminal proceedings against him before the Justiciary Court.⁴⁶ Little contemporary evidence survives to ascertain the extent of the family’s involvement in the planning of the 1691 revolt. However, at least one nineteenth-century source suggests that the revolt owed to the efforts of a Jacobite network involving Garleton, a man named Ardmillan, and the former governor of the Bass, Charles Maitland.⁴⁷ The council’s arrest of John Seton thus suggests that the prisoners on the Bass Rock were suspected of maintaining contact with Jacobite agitators on the Scottish mainland who may have taken part in the organisation and execution of the initial revolt.

The Garleton family’s recusancy was also an important factor leading to the government’s suspicion towards them. John Seton’s late father and namesake was a character whose litigiousness and religion led to his unpopularity with the Restoration government. Following a spate of legal cases against his kin regarding land disputes, debts, and estate management, he was also implicated in helping members of his household convert to Catholicism and in sheltering Jesuits.⁴⁸ John Lauder, Lord Fountainhall opined during the Restoration that ‘Gairleton had the misfortune to be generally ill-loved’.⁴⁹ The younger John Seton, along

43. *Ibid.*, 408.

44. *Ibid.*, XV, 390, 393.

45. *Ibid.*, 496.

46. *Ibid.*, XVI, 91, 206–7.

47. Crichton (ed.), *Memoirs*, 385.

48. James Balfour Paul (ed.), *The Scots Peerage; Founded on Wood’s Edition of Sir Robert Douglas’s Peerage of Scotland; Containing an Historical and Genealogical Account of the Nobility of that Kingdom*, 9 vols (Edinburgh, 1904), VIII, 598; Hew Scott (ed.), *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae: The Succession of Ministers in the Church of Scotland from the Reformation*, 8 vols (Edinburgh, 1915–50), II, 625.

49. David Laing (ed.), *Historical Notices of Scottish Affairs, Selected from the Manuscripts of Sir John Lauder of Fountainhall, 1661–1683*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1848), I, 49.

with his two brothers George and Robert, had been educated at the Catholic Scots College in Douai.⁵⁰

Members of the Garleton family were therefore not only Catholic opponents of the revolution but committed Jacobites who align with Szechi's description of the 'inner kernel' of the movement.⁵¹ In March 1689, the Convention of Estates granted a warrant for John Ramsay, sheriff depute of Haddington to search for and seize arms in the family house belonging to George, laird of Garleton.⁵² Garleton was subsequently imprisoned, although he was later ordered by the privy council to live peaceably in 1690, having been granted bail under the penalty of £500 sterling.⁵³ Indeed, Garleton was imprisoned and then confined to his household for much of the period between 1692 and 1697 for failure to swear the oath of allegiance and sign the assurance, and for correspondence with so-called 'rebels'.⁵⁴ In December 1696, following a letter from King William regarding a potential French invasion, the privy council ordered the Edinburgh town guards to detain Garleton, who had been placed on house arrest due to ill health since April and then released on caution in October, and one other individual in the Canongate tolbooth.⁵⁵ The inference to be made from the government's reaction in this instance was that Garleton could potentially provide domestic support for a French onslaught. The Garletons' inauspicious involvement and Saltoun's claims regarding Sergeant La Fosse's corruption, when combined with further evidence of outside influence on an international scale might point towards an event which was neither spontaneous nor opportunistic.

Following the initial revolt, the former prisoners on the Rock quickly received outside support. Despite prohibiting vessels from going within a mile and a half of the Bass without the express permission of Henry Fletcher, the privy council was soon faced with challenges to its authority.⁵⁶ After a council committee was established to enquire into suspected Jacobites attending the Rock, a group of fishermen from Burntisland were imprisoned. Significantly, the Bass was soon re-supplied by French vessels.⁵⁷ According to Szechi, in order to gain French support, 'the Jacobites had to catch and hold the attention of the

50. *Records of the Scots Colleges at Douai, Rome, Madrid, Valladolid and Ratisbon. Volume I: Register of Students* (Aberdeen, 1906), 56, 64.

51. Szechi, *Jacobites*, 24–5. On the Setons' later involvement in the failed 1715–16 rising, see Paul (ed.), *Scots Peerage*, VIII, 600.

52. Keith M. Brown et al (eds), *The Records of the Parliaments of Scotland to 1707* (St Andrews, 2007–2025) [hereafter *RPS*], 1689/3/65.

53. *RPCS*, XV, 309, 421.

54. *SPCR*, A1692/1/32; A1693/5/41; A1694/4/19; A1694/5/10; A1696/3/149; A1696/10/12; A1697/2/5.

55. *Ibid.*, A1696/4/36; A1696/10/12; A1696/12/32.

56. *RPCS*, XVI, 452.

57. *Ibid.*, 601.

French government on a medium-term basis while trumping alternative options for the use of French power'.⁵⁸ We can therefore conclude that this was viewed as a productive use of French resources. When the council was informed of the French ship lying next to the Bass, it issued a warrant for levying new troops and a committee meeting was called to deal with arms that had been distributed by the government to towns and regions during the revolution in 1689.⁵⁹ This committee was tasked with investigating what had become of these arms since the council wanted to ensure that none were being misused. This demonstrates the government's concern about a French invasion and illustrates that the arming of the shires and towns in 1689 could, it was feared, easily be used against the government by hostile forces. Fears about both internal and external threats were palpable. Considering the rapidity with which French assistance arrived, moreover, these measures may have been orchestrated to coincide with a planned French invasion of England in 1692.

Upon the prisoners' revolt, the garrison's troops were forced to flee the island on the boat that was supplying them. The 'rebels', who were soon bolstered by a group of about ten Irish and Scottish Jacobites, then proceeded to loot supplies and vessels from nearby villages on the mainland and the Isle of May, about eight miles north-east of the Bass and closer to the east coast of Fife. A detachment of twelve soldiers from the regiment of David Leslie, 3rd earl of Leven costing over £57 Scots was sent almost immediately to attempt to curtail further disruptions to local communities and trading vessels.⁶⁰ On 30 June, the council ordered the treasury to pay £10 sterling to requisition a boat with five seamen and have it patrol around the Bass for a month to prevent any such comings or goings.

Throughout 1691 the government struggled to contain the siege, as the single vessel initially sent to defend the Bass proved insufficient to stem the tide of support the 'rebels' received. In July, a proclamation was prepared that declared the Bass Jacobites traitors and then in August they were offered an indemnity if they surrendered, which they did not.⁶¹ Also in August, another detachment of troops from the earl of Leven's regiment was employed in 'Blocading the Bass', which cost over £62 Scots.⁶² These measures proved ineffectual, and supplies continued to arrive from foreign vessels, mainly French but also some Irish. The council's suspicion on this front led to a committee being formed to examine people

58. Daniel Szechi, 'Jacobite Scotland and European Great Power Strategy', *Northern Scotland*, 1 (April 2010), 42–52, quotation at 46, <https://doi.org/10.3366/nor.2010.0005>.

59. *RPCS*, XVI, 601–2.

60. Papers regarding regimental accounts of the earl of Leven's regiment, 1689–93, NRS, Leven and Melville papers, GD26/9/10, fo. 51.

61. *RPCS*, XVI, 551–2.

62. Papers regarding earl of Leven's regiment, NRS, GD26/9/10, fo. 61.

who had been seized on seemingly suspicious ships, including one that landed at Alnwick claiming it was bound for Barbados.⁶³ On Thursday 10 December 1691, the council heard that a French ship laden with guns and provisions had been docked at the Bass since Monday and had 'putt out their reid flag'.⁶⁴ Since the revolt, the troops ousted from the island had been stationed at a make-shift garrison at Castleton.⁶⁵ This was commanded by the Bass's erstwhile governor, Henry Fletcher, but he resigned his post in March 1692.⁶⁶ Troops from Colonel George Lauder's regiment in Linlithgow were then brought to Prestonpans and Dunbar, with the council expecting an imminent attack from a combined force of French troops and the Bass Jacobites.⁶⁷ On 24 December, troops from Colonel William Beveridge's regiment (the 14th regiment of foot of the English army, which had been posted to Edinburgh in 1689) were ordered to be stationed all along the east coast 'for the securitie therof against the rebels in the Bass'.⁶⁸ However, the privy council had to recall this order when Livingston reminded them that Beveridge's regiment was to go to Flanders soon; Livingston was then ordered to find sufficient troops from his own regiment to guard the east coast.⁶⁹ Scottish resources were therefore stretched incredibly thin, with Williamite forces at that time fighting on three different fronts, in Scotland, Ireland, and on the continent. The turmoil of a protracted effort to subdue the Jacobites on the Bass Rock would thus present the government with significant and unexpected challenges.

II

In 1692, the privy council's strategy against the Bass Jacobites shifted from defence to attack. The council developed a multi-dimensional approach against the 'rebels', consisting of intelligence gathering, bombardment, and judicial retribution. In January, a committee met with Livingston to organise a suitable vessel with men and munitions to patrol the Firth of Forth, watch the Bass, and protect legitimate trading ships from attack.⁷⁰ This was to counter the 'rebels' who had by now amassed some other vessels, including three captured fishing boats. In the spring, the council turned to full-frontal attack. The board signed

63. *SPCR*, A1692/1/33.

64. *RPCS*, XVI, 601.

65. Army Muster Rolls, Bass Garrison, 1691–2, NRS, Bass Garrison, E100/39/1/15; E100/39/1/16; E100/39/1/17.

66. *SPCR*, A1692/3/361.

67. *RPCS*, XVI, 601.

68. *Ibid.*, 633; Hopkins, *Glencoe*, 267.

69. *Ibid.*, 651.

70. *SPCR*, A1692/1/42.

a death warrant for two Bass ‘rebels’ who had been seized onshore: Alexander Halyburton and William Fraser. Both men had served in the Jacobite forces at the Battle of Cromdale in 1690. Fraser expressed contrition for his role in the siege while Halyburton, despite his refusal to swear the oath of allegiance, promised not to take up arms against the government. The council nevertheless granted them both a reprieve.⁷¹ However, this had to be temporary as King William was on campaign in Flanders, meaning he was unable to grant Crown approval for an indemnity, which speaks to the fact that the government was hamstrung by the ongoing war effort abroad. Several other people were sentenced to death and later reprieved during the debacle, including Alexander McLeish, ‘a poor simple fisher’, who had exchanged correspondence with and come to the aid of the ‘rebels’ at the command of the former Jacobite governor, Charles Maitland.⁷² As Allan Kennedy outlines, such strategic deployments of mercy (which the privy council often utilised in the 1690s) served simultaneously to display royal authority and compassion as well as acting as restraints to potential unrest.⁷³ In this context they are demonstrative of the bipartite policy the council employed in trying to end the siege, comprising demonstrations of martial power and governmental authority combined with legal clemency and an attempt to subdue further Jacobite agitation.

In April 1692, two English naval ships bombarded the island on the orders of the privy council; this was partially successful in that it destroyed some buildings, but this took up significant resources and it was an ineffective deterrent.⁷⁴ Later that month, two men-of-war, some long boats and a ‘dogar’, or fishing boat were fitted out to patrol the Bass and suppress the ‘rebels’.⁷⁵ This did not deter the Jacobites either, since they continued to receive supplies from French privateers, including in July, when a French ship ‘Livered some things in three great boatts to the Bass And there was a doggar Lyeing befor the Bass which since yesternight at seven of the clock hes Lyen Closs to it’.⁷⁶ In August, the council requisitioned the Isle of May as Livingston’s base of command and commanded the landowner to remove his sheep from the island as they had previously been subject to Jacobite plunder.⁷⁷ In the winter, the long boats were relieved of their duties and seven foot soldiers sent to defend the area were sent to Flanders, but

71. *Ibid.*, A1692/4/32; A1692/6/60.

72. *Ibid.*, A1694/3/26; A1694/4/2.

73. Allan Kennedy, *Serious Crime in Late Seventeenth-Century Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2025), 104–5, <https://doi.org/10.3366/edinburgh/9781399533164.001.0001>.

74. *SPCR*, A1692/4/9.

75. *Ibid.*, A1692/4/17.

76. *Ibid.*, A1692/7/56.

77. *Ibid.*, A1692/8/6.

there was still a dogger provided to patrol the firth and ensure safe passage of trading ships.⁷⁸

The privy council continued to imprison people on account of their suspected involvement in the siege or for helping the 'rebels'. In February 1693, a coal boat belonging to a skipper called James Jarvie from Alloa was seized at Dunbar, since it was alleged to have supplied coal to the Rock.⁷⁹ Jarvie and the man who sold him the vessel were held in custody in Edinburgh for questioning by the privy council. A merchant named James Bruce who was 'Concerned in the manadgement and disposeall of the Coall at Alloway [*sic*]' was imprisoned as a suspected accomplice, though the vessel was soon returned to Jarvie and both parties were liberated.⁸⁰ The following month, a Captain Robert Dunbar who served Louis XIV had been found to have recently attended the Bass, for which he was suspected of treason, although he too was granted bail.⁸¹ William Smith, an 'inhabitant' and 'denizen' of Poland, along with his wife Elizabeth Thomas and family had been seized in Dunbar while apparently attempting to buy a vessel in Leith following their own ship being wrecked on its way from Norway to Dublin. While in Dunbar, Smith had employed several seamen who, it turned out, were suspected Jacobites and he was himself implicated in aiding a French ship that had attended the Rock. He insisted that he was neutral in the conflict, but the council refused to grant bail on account of 'severall badd Informations Given against him', although no further action was taken, and he was ultimately released from custody.⁸²

The siege thus ran deep, involving international and local groups; it affected local as well as national government and impacted trade in addition to government policies. For example, in another interesting turn of events, an English ship was seized at Eyemouth in January 1693, which had been found planning to go to the Bass Rock. The Scot and two Englishmen on board had since escaped, so the council imprisoned but later released one of the town's bailies who was accused of helping them.⁸³ Busy shipping channels around the east coast were severely impacted: a council committee was forced to meet with frustrated east coast merchants in March 1693 to come to an agreement 'for the security of trade'.⁸⁴ A ship was equipped to patrol the area and protect trading vessels and other ships were diverted from their normal course into the Forth. These reactions to the events in and around the Bass Rock display the efforts of an anxious government caught

78. *Ibid.*, A1692/10/31; A1692/12/38; A1692/12/45.

79. *Ibid.*, A1693/2/33; A1693/2/36.

80. *Ibid.*, A1693/2/32.

81. *Ibid.*, A1693/3/68; D1693/4/7.

82. *Ibid.*, A1692/8/13; A1692/8/43.

83. *Ibid.*, A1693/1/2.

84. *Ibid.*, A1693/3/72; A1693/1/16.

off guard by the situation even as they attempted to pursue more proactive strategies against a small group of so-called ‘rebels’.

The privy council then turned to diplomacy in an attempt to break the deadlock. On 13 April 1693, the council gave an order for a herald and trumpeter to visit the island and treat with the ‘rebels’. This measure also named the ‘rebels’ on the island, who by this point numbered about twenty-seven individuals. They included Michael Middleton, one of the original actors in the revolt, and his two brothers, John and William, together with several Scottish Jacobite combatants, a Scot who had been in Spanish service in Flanders, three Irish Jacobites, one English Jacobite, and some soldiers previously in government service who were presumably from Orkney since they were described as ‘Hoy boyes that belonged to the Earle of Leven’.⁸⁵ That same day the council ordered the treasury to prepare two large boats similar to those employed in 1692 to join the frigate that was already in the Firth of Forth.⁸⁶ This was to make sure both that the ‘rebels’ did not move from the island or plunder and to deter people from going to their aid. The cost of this protection flotilla, which was to remain until October, was to be no more than £10 sterling per month. Another council act was required to attempt to suppress ships going to the Bass, which were so numerous that Livingston was forced to investigate ‘How it comes to pass that boats doe Come from and returne to the Island of the Bass uthout Interruptione’.⁸⁷ The letters against ‘intercomuning with the rebels’, in May 1693, again declared them traitors and stated that any treating with them or giving them succour would be considered complicit in their crimes.⁸⁸

Throughout late 1693 and early 1694, the council apprehended and tried a number of individuals. Some of these had been seized when they came to the mainland, such as Captain James Wilson, William Wotham, and William Nicolson. Others were captured and imprisoned for helping the ‘rebels’. For example, vessels from East Lothian, Fife, Dundee, and Angus were captured on these grounds in early 1694; in February that year, John Trotter, Gavin Johnstone and two others were indicted for treason.⁸⁹ A second and then a third boat were ordered to patrol the seas around the island in February, with the government beginning to gain the upper hand and their opponents struggling for provisions. While several people were sentenced to death for their involvement in the episode, it was only John Trotter who ultimately met this fate, regardless of his relatively minor involvement in the affair. His execution was planned to take

85. *Ibid.*, A1693/4/25.

86. *Ibid.*, A1693/4/26.

87. *Ibid.*, A1693/5/50.

88. Letters of Intercommunings against rebels in Bass, 13 May 1693, NRS, Proclamations and other public announcements, RH14/412; *SPCR*, A1693/5/22.

89. *SPCR*, A1694/2/3; A1694/2/44; A1694/2/58.

place in Edinburgh, but the council ordered a change of location to 'the toune of Castletoune upon a Gibbett or Galloues [...] at the place best seen by the rebels in the Bass'.⁹⁰ The Jacobites on the Rock allegedly fired cannon shot towards these gallows at the time of execution.⁹¹ Trotter's exemplary slaughter demonstrates the government's desire to force the 'rebels' to the negotiating table; the council's actions originated not from a position of strength, but from one of disadvantage and anxiety.

III

An impasse having been reached, necessity and fatigue led both sides to seek a diplomatic end to the siege by 1694. On 18 April 1694, the privy council considered 'proposalls sent from the Bass to the Lord Chancellor' by Michael Middleton.⁹² Unfortunately these proposals do not survive and it is only possible to speculate on their contents, but it is likely that Middleton desired indemnity, release and freedom from prosecution. The council responded by granting a commission to Major Robert Reid, who was ordered to attend the Rock and treat with the governor there. On the same day, the council approved the initial conditions of release to be offered to the 'rebels'.⁹³ The conditions consisted of nine clauses. First, the Jacobites on the Rock were offered an indemnity and they were absolved of past wrongdoing against the government. The council promised that the Jacobites would not be questioned about their actions on the Bass in the future. Second, all prisoners and former prisoners held by the government under suspicion of involvement in the siege were also to be indemnified. Third, the Jacobites on the Rock were ordered to march out of the Bass garrison twenty-four hours after signing the capitulation holding just their personal swords. They were to be met by vessels to take them ashore. The fourth clause stated that, twelve hours after their capitulation, all the 'rebels' were to surrender their entire stock of munitions, keeping only their personal swords. Fifthly, Middleton was ordered to compile a list of those in his company who were going to travel on to France after their capitulation in order to obtain passes for their safe transport. Those staying in Scotland would also be granted protection. According to the sixth clause, eight days after the signing of the capitulation, their goods would be transported off the island on a vessel provided by the government. The seventh clause provided an indemnity for the French troops on the Rock: 'Captain Ferdinando's men not exceeding the number of Ten are to be allowed a competent aliment [...] And a

90. Ibid., A1694/3/36.

91. M'Crie (ed.), *Bass Rock*, 35–6.

92. SPCR, A1694/4/44.

93. Ibid., A1694/4/46.

sufficient ship with provisions shall be ordered for their transport to Dunkirk or Haverdegrace Gratis'.⁹⁴ The eighth condition stipulated that, upon acceptance of the capitulation, the men would be carried ashore and taken to Edinburgh until their safe passage was organised. Finally, the list mentioned in the second article of capitulation was to be sent to the Lord Chancellor, John Hay, first Marquis of Tweeddale (1625–97) 'before it be accorded to or the treaty Concluded'.⁹⁵

On receipt of his orders, Reid immediately attended the Rock. Subsequent accounts describe that the Jacobites camouflaged their dire living situation by offering the best food and wine to the government plenipotentiaries sent there, so as to appear more comfortable than they were in reality.⁹⁶ However, this cannot be corroborated from contemporary evidence, save for one narrative reproduced in a nineteenth-century collection.⁹⁷ Regardless, Reid sent word to Livingston about his visit, which was conveyed to the government in the council chamber on 20 April.⁹⁸ The 'rebels' had enough bargaining power that they proposed amendments to the conditions they were offered. One of the amendments was to the third clause: Middleton proposed that he and his men should be allowed leave the garrison in their own boat rather than one prepared by the government. Evidently, they feared false promises or subterfuge by the government. They also bargained that the option to go to France would be extended to those imprisoned under suspicion of helping the rebels. The terms of the fifth clause were also challenged: boats were to be sent before the capitulation to take away the islanders' goods, rather than eight days after, which was the initial offer. The sixth and seventh proposed amendments to the articles of capitulation concerned payments to Middleton and the other officers and proposed that money should also be offered to the French Captain Ferdinando's ten men. The penultimate and final conditions were acceptable enough to the 'rebels' that they did not propose any changes thereto. Furthermore, the council produced a list of fifteen men who were either kept in prison or were on bail in Dunbar who were to be liberated according to these articles.⁹⁹ On 24 April 1694 the Privy Council appointed George Bailie of Jerviswood, the collector of Crown rents, to find a ship with which they could transport the rebels. The ship, which was charged with their transportation, on 14 May, to Havre de Grace was the *Barbara* of Leith, commanded by James Carin.¹⁰⁰

94. Ibid.

95. Ibid.

96. Phillimore, *Bass Rock*, 114; Burton, *History of Scotland*, VII, 418; M'Crie (ed.), *Bass Rock*, 36.

97. *Miscellanea Scotica: A Collection of Tracts Relating to the History, Antiquities, Topography, and Literature of Scotland*, 4 vols (Glasgow, 1820) III, 35.

98. *SPCR*, A1694/4/50.

99. Ibid., A1694/4/51.

100. Orders to James Carin, 14 May 1694, NRS, Hamilton-Dalrymple papers, GD110/564.

The articles of capitulation proposed to, amended by, and finally accepted by the Bass 'rebels' in 1694 signalled the conclusion of the conflict often referred to as the 'first Jacobite rising' or 'the Highland War', three years after the peace at Achallader, which ostensibly brought the fighting to an end. The terms were similar, but far greater in scope, than those offered by the government in August 1689 to the Rock's then governor, Charles Maitland. Interestingly, these conciliations also closely resembled the military articles of the Treaty of Limerick (1691), which brought an end to the Williamite Wars in Ireland. The military articles at Limerick provided free passage for thousands of Irish Jacobites who wished to fight under James VII and II in French service.¹⁰¹ Smaller numbers of Irish Jacobites transferred to the Williamite army and others laid down arms altogether to return home. Even though it was negotiated with far greater ease than the civil articles, the treaty in general proved highly unpopular with the Protestant minority in Ireland, partly due to the questionable loyalty of those forces who had previously served under James.¹⁰² The Bass Rock 'rebels', though they were far smaller in number—at about thirty compared to the some 16,000 combatants and 4–5,000 family members who went to France on account of the Articles of Limerick—were granted similarly favourable terms, which essentially amounted to a wholesale indemnity and the option to go into French military service.¹⁰³ The Jacobites in this instance were able to play on the government's fears and anxieties to bring the siege to a swift conclusion as they successfully bargained with the state to ensure their freedom.

It is unclear how many of the Bass Rock Jacobites accepted transportation, but it seems likely that most travelled to France on Carin's vessel. Those doing so would have joined a burgeoning exile community in St Germain and elsewhere which, as Edward Corp points out, came to include the family of John Trotter, who resided in Boulogne-sur-Mer.¹⁰⁴ However, at least one of the Jacobites on the Rock remained in Scotland after the capitulation. In April 1696, John Turring petitioned the privy council pleading his case to be set at liberty from imprisonment. Turring had served in the cavalry prior to the revolution and had, at some point after 15 June 1691, gone to join the Jacobites on the Bass Rock; he was among those recorded on the island in April 1693. Turring was liberated in 1694 under the terms outlined above, 'And by vertue of the same Chooosed to stay at home in the kingdome of Scotland'.¹⁰⁵ Having been apprehended six weeks

101. D.W. Hayton and Gerard O'Brien (eds), J. G. Simms, *War and Politics in Ireland 1649–1730* (London, 1986), 209.

102. C. I. McGrath, 'English Ministers, Irish Politicians and the Making of a Parliamentary Settlement in Ireland, 1692–5', *English Historical Review*, 119 (2004), 585–613, at 585, 588, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ehr/119.482.585>.

103. Szechi, *Jacobites*, 220.

104. Corp, 'Scottish Jacobite Community', 37.

105. *SPCR*, A1696/4/81.

before this petition, he was interrogated and committed as a prisoner in Canon-gate tolbooth seemingly as a suspected Jacobite, but he offered military service to the privy council. The council set him at liberty after he had sworn the oath of allegiance and signed the assurance, though he remained in custody for a short while due to arrears owed to the tolbooth keepers and it is unclear whether he then engaged himself in military service for the government.¹⁰⁶

In assessing the significance of this episode, it is instructive to contextualise the government's response to the Jacobite siege of the Bass Rock with other contemporary policy decisions. The infamous Massacre of Glencoe in February 1692 provides a particularly glaring contrast with what is outlined here. Allan Kennedy has argued that the massacre and its fallout urged the Williamite government to rethink its militaristic and interventionist Highland policy, but this was offset by a continuing belief in central government that the region posed a law-and-order problem to the regime.¹⁰⁷ Kennedy maintains that Highlanders were subject to 'a more domineering policy matrix' in the 1690s than they had been during the Restoration, as evidenced by highland judicial commissions, which were 'imperialist' in outlook.¹⁰⁸ Why, then, was the full might of an interventionist government policy not employed to put down this siege? First, we must look towards the perennial centre-periphery problem: put simply, the prospect of a Lowland Jacobite uprising was less concerning to the government than one north of the river Tay. This is intertwined with the question of governmental priorities. By 1692, there had been several changes in the administration: King William made numerous appointments to his privy council, which can be explained as an attempt at forming a cross-confessional and arguably more moderate ministry.¹⁰⁹ Solid Presbyterians and former Scots-Dutch exiles James Steuart of Goodtrees (1635–1713) and James Johnston (c. 1655–1737) were rewarded with seats at the council table and soon took up ministerial posts. They were joined by Episcopalians George Mackenzie, Viscount Tarbat (1630–1714) and John Campbell, 1st earl of Breadalbane (1636–1717). The reintroduction of both John Dalrymple, Master of Stair (1648–1707) and William Annandale, 2nd earl of Annandale and Hartfell (1664–1721) substantiates William's more conciliatory approach after 1692, the latter having been removed from the council in 1690 on account of his involvement with the 'Club' opposition and the former having served as lord advocate under James VII in 1687–8. Such changes in the administration led Hopkins to describe the 1692 ministry as considerably more

106. Ibid., A1696/6/55.

107. Allan Kennedy, 'Managing the Early-Modern Periphery: Highland Policy and the Highland Judicial Commission, c.1692–c.1705', *Scottish Historical Review*, 96 (2017), 32–60, at 36–7, <https://doi.org/10.3366/shr.2017.0313>.

108. Ibid., 59–60.

109. Tree, 'Jura Majestatis', 59–61.

Episcopalian than its predecessor.¹¹⁰ It is therefore critical to recognise that at this time, the balance of power within the administration was shifting: cabals formed, which blocked their opponents' attempts at policy reform; popular trust in the government was fading; and, as Hopkins shows, rumours of 4,000 troops amassing at Dunkirk for a French invasion of Scotland were circulating by May 1692.¹¹¹

Furthermore, while the revolution is often tidily packaged as occurring in 1688–9, the revolutionary moment was followed by an extended period of consolidation, stagnation and severe government challenges. As Steve Pincus argues, it was not until 1696, following a failed plot to assassinate King William, that the Whig regime managed to 'consolidate their radical revolution' in England.¹¹² This was no different in Scotland, where the government's consolidation and implementation of revolution principles was a dynamic and ongoing process into the mid-1690s. For example, despite the re-establishment of Presbyterian government in 1690, the Church question remained far from decisively settled. In 1693, the Scottish parliament passed an act which stated that admittance to preach in the established Church hinged upon subscription of the allegiance and assurance in addition to the Westminster Confession of Faith.¹¹³ However, in many ways this act created more confusion in Church government. An act of 1695 allowed certain Episcopalian ministers who were sympathetic to the revolution to preach in parishes they had previously occupied.¹¹⁴ While attempting to combat political and military opposition in the form of Jacobitism, the government was thus also attempting to battle religious opposition with policies ranging from comprehension and accommodation to depositions and deprivations of nonconformist clergy.¹¹⁵ The privy council, moreover, was concurrently engaged in a campaign to recruit forces to send to fight on the continent. In-fighting within the administration had also surfaced and, with prominent politicians vying for control and embryonic political parties emerging, this was a period of significant instability. Strategic considerations were such that, when it came to the siege of the Bass, a delicate touch was favoured. Finally, as Kennedy noted, it is likely that Glencoe served as a lesson to the government that heavy-handedness

110. Hopkins, *Glencoe*, 351–81.

111. *Ibid.*, 356.

112. Steve Pincus, *1688: The First Modern Revolution* (New Haven, CT, and London, 2009), 473.

113. *RPS*, 1693/4/89; Tree, 'Jura Majestatis', 94–5.

114. *Ibid.*, 1695/5/155.

115. Tree, 'Jura Majestatis', 110–23; Alasdair Raffae, *The Culture of Controversy: Religious Arguments in Scotland, 1660–1714* (Woodbridge, 2012), 193, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781782040187>; Tristram Clarke, 'The Williamite Episcopalians and the Glorious Revolution in Scotland', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, 24 (1990), 33–51, at 50; Ben Rogers, 'Religious Comprehension in Scotland, 1689–1695', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 74 (October 2023), 795–98, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046923000118>.

was unlikely to encourage popular support. The Bass Rock siege might, in this context, be viewed as a minor headache to the government and a distraction from other issues. At the same time, however, the incident stands as evidence of an overloaded regime that lacked a clear anti-Jacobite policy even into the mid-1690s.

IV

The outcome of the siege left the future of the Bass uncertain. An order in 1694 to strip the garrison of munitions and demolish its buildings was not carried out immediately and until 1697 the Bass Rock remained a state-run garrison and prison.¹¹⁶ In 1695, troops were still stationed there at the king's command and, as they understood, they would be there indefinitely.¹¹⁷ In June 1696, Andrew Harlaw (or Harlay), one of several 'Coatmuir folk'—a radical Presbyterian and anti-government group that emerged in the years around the revolution—who had been tried for various public order offences was sent to the Bass Rock, where he was imprisoned until late 1697.¹¹⁸ By this point, the government had still not fully attended to the consequences of the siege. A council committee tasked with attending to military arrears in 1695 found that money was owed by the soldiers formerly stationed at the Bass garrison to the inhabitants of North Berwick and funds amounting to over £700 Scots were found wanting as late as 1699 for rental of accommodation and expenditure accrued in seizing goods between 1691 and 1694.¹¹⁹ A warrant to dismantle the Bass garrison arrived in 1697 but its complete demolition was not carried out until 1701, following which it was stripped of its ordnance and sold to Hugh Dalrymple, Lord North Berwick (1652–1737) in 1706.¹²⁰

This episode provides important insights into both Jacobitism and anti-Jacobitism in Scotland in the immediate post-revolution period.¹²¹ First, it demonstrates that Jacobites in the early 1690s were to some extent willing to

116. *SPCR*, A1694/5/25; Privy Council Miscellaneous Documents, 30 April 1694, NRS, PC12/1692–5 (box 1).

117. *Ibid.*, A1695/4/14.

118. *Ibid.*, A1696/6/18; A1696/6/38; Letterbook by [Andrew Harlay?], January–October 1697, NRS, Episcopalian Papers, CH12/22/13.

119. *SPCR*, D1695/7/23; Vouchers relating to the Bass garrison, 1699–1701, NRS, Army accounts, E95/42; Account of proceeds of wherry and goods seized 'going to the Bass', 1693–4, NRS, Exchequer records, E75/70.

120. *SPCR*, A1699/2/5, A1706/7/5; *RPS*, A1706/10/50.

121. On the still under-studied phenomenon of anti-Jacobitism in Scotland, see Christopher A. Whatley, 'Reformed Religion, Regime Change, Scottish Whigs and the Struggle for the "Soul" of Scotland, c.1688–c.1788', *Scottish Historical Review*, 92 (2013), 66–99, <https://doi.org/10.3366/shr.2013.0138>.

engage with the state. This might suggest a contrast with later Jacobites, some of whom were far more reluctant to want to cut a deal with the government. Evidently, there were ideologically committed Jacobites, ‘politically embittered’ Jacobites and opportunistic ‘adventurers’ who were opposed to the revolution involved in this debacle, which chimes with Szechi’s categorisation of 1690s Jacobitism.¹²² However, it would be inaccurate to place responsibility for this entirely at the door of an incompetent government. On the government side, Jacobitism was not yet sufficiently criminalised for the Scottish state to have a developed or coherent system for pursuing and trying these individuals. The siege was therefore a test case that showed the government the broader impact Jacobitism might have: it threatened local and international trade, it posed a risk to national security, and it diverted government attention and resources. The privy council’s response also speaks to Calum Cunningham’s observation that the government’s punishment of Jacobitism oscillated between retribution and clemency.¹²³ The siege of the Bass Rock taught the privy council to tread lightly with Jacobites. The government ultimately favoured a policy of conciliation since harsh retribution and attempts at blockading had failed. This concurs with Ziegler’s findings regarding the customs department in contemporary England.¹²⁴ In this case, the Scottish government’s policies towards trade, national security, and rebellion or treason in the 1690s were, in some ways, shaped by a response to the internal and external Jacobite threat. This also reinforces Macinnes’ assertion that the 1690s was a period of government experimentation and opportunity, rather than one of abject failure.¹²⁵

The Bass Rock siege therefore influenced government policy, diverted much-needed attention and money from the ongoing continental war effort and domestic issues, and it was feared by the government that it could in fact act as a staging post for a French-backed Jacobite invasion of mainland Scotland. That these threats never materialised is not as important as the fact they existed. The privy council of the 1690s was not privileged with the hindsight offered to the historian; we must therefore take seriously the potential threat posed by this siege. Also important is the fact that when the siege ended, it was brought to conclusion terms through dialogue and negotiation rather than state-sanctioned violence and, crucially, at least in part on the terms demanded by the Jacobite ‘rebels’. This does not, however, signal that the post-revolution Scottish state was completely weak. Rather, the government’s response to this relatively small-scale siege demonstrates how heavily overburdened the government was

122. Szechi, *Jacobites*, 24–5.

123. Calum E. Cunningham, ‘Lawful Sovereignty: The Political Criminalisation and Decriminalisation of Jacobitism, 1688–1788’ (Ph.D. thesis, University of Stirling, 2023), 223–4.

124. Ziegler, ‘Jacobitism, Coastal Policing, and Fiscal-Military Reform’, 292.

125. Macinnes, ‘William of Orange’, 201–3.

in its drive to consolidate the revolution. Jacobitism was a persistent nuisance distracting the authorities from their other responsibilities. Against this backdrop, evolving policy decisions over government inertia would be the only road to success, the realisation of which took some time.

While it was neither as long nor as intense as the near-contemporary sieges of Ceuta (1694–1727) or Candia (1648–69), the Bass Rock siege was perhaps as influential to the final outcome of the conflicts within which it was fought. The completion of the siege led to the defeat of the early Jacobite cause in its military form. As such, while Szechi avers that the clans' surrender stymied the government's appetite for a 'military solution' to Jacobitism after 1692, this study suggests extending this to 1694, at which time the privy council preferred diplomacy to martial conflict.¹²⁶ Jacobites managed successfully to negotiate with the Williamite state to secure their freedoms, which in turn helped to expose political Jacobitism to a wider range of people, beyond those who were 'out' in the field. That the siege also involved clandestine Jacobite networks across the eastern-central Lowlands, Ireland, and northern England, and engaged French troops also speaks to the relatively broad support base of early Jacobitism and highlights the wider geopolitical context in which it operated. To engage briefly with counter-factual history, it seems plausible to suggest that, had the outcome of the siege differed, then King William's northern kingdom would have been under serious threat of full-scale French and Jacobite invasion, which many in the country looked willing to support.

126. Szechi, *Jacobites*, 114–22.