

# Bonnie Prince Charlie



The Catholic king of England, James II (James VII of Scotland), was deposed after his second wife, Mary of Modena,<sup>1</sup> gave birth to a son in 1688. Known as “the Old Pretender,” James Francis Edward Stuart (1688-1766) was raised in France.

When his father, James II, died in 1701, James Francis Edward Stuart declared himself to be king of England and Scotland. This claim was recognized by France, Modena, the Papal States, and Spain. Those who supported James Francis Edward Stuart as the rightful king of England and Scotland became known as Jacobites.<sup>2</sup>

Charles Edward Stuart, commonly called “Bonnie<sup>3</sup> Prince Charlie,” was the son of James Francis Edward Stuart. In 1745, Bonnie Prince Charlie led an invasion to take the throne of Great Britain for his father. Bonnie Prince Charlie sailed to Scotland, where many of the highlanders were Jacobites, and raised an army. Charlie’s troops reached as far south as Derbyshire in England, but retreated due to a lack of English support.

Charlie was eventually defeated by Prince William, Duke of Cumberland, at the Battle of Culloden in 1746. Prince William was a son of the current British monarch, George II. Prince William viciously pursued Jacobite supporters of the battle, which

earned him the nickname “the Butcher” from Scottish highlanders.

Charlie was forced to flee Scotland and return to France. According to legend, a Scottish Jacobite named Flora MacDonald helped Charlie to escape from Scotland’s Isle of Skye by disguising him as her Irish maid, “Betty Burke,” on a small boat. This boat trip was later immortalized in “The Skye Boat Song.”

Bonnie Prince Charlie spent the rest of his life hoping to gain the British throne, without any success. The Jacobite movement eventually fell away. Charlie died in Rome in 1788, where his remains are buried in St. Peter’s Basilica.

Imagine that you are a Catholic living in England in 1745. Would you support the Jacobite movement? Why or why not? Would your thoughts be different if you lived in Ireland? Scotland?

<sup>1</sup> Modena was a duchy (an area under the control of a duke) in northern Italy.

<sup>2</sup> *Jacob* is another form of the name *James*, which is how the term *Jacobite* was created.

<sup>3</sup> *Bonnie* is a Scottish term that means *handsome* or *pretty*.