

ART. XIII – *The last siege on English soil: Carlisle, December 1745*

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**I**N December 1745, the Jacobite rebels, having invaded England in the previous month, had reached Derby and then retreated. By 21 December, the Pretender and most of his forces were in Scotland, ahead of their pursuers who were led by the Duke of Cumberland. However, a garrison was left in the town and castle of Carlisle, which had surrendered to the rebels only five weeks previously. The decision to leave men in Carlisle was a highly controversial one, and Cumberland's responses to the garrison he found there have been held up as proof of his barbarity. This article explores the reason why the garrison was left at Carlisle, examines the short siege and its repercussions, and sheds new light on both it and upon the characters of the Pretender and Cumberland.

Far more ink has been spilt on the earlier siege of Carlisle, which fell to the rebels in November 1745. The later siege, which has also been covered by most historians of the "Forty Five", has not been dwelt upon at length. This is perhaps because most writers on the rebellion are sympathetic to the rebels and their leader, so to dwell on the siege would be tactless. There is, however, a useful summary in Mounsey's *Carlisle in the Forty Five*, but his sources are limited.<sup>1</sup> The more recent article by Hepburn and Richardson does not cover the siege as such, but rather the heavy artillery brought from Whitehaven and used by Cumberland's troops.<sup>2</sup>

Historians differ about the Pretender's motives for leaving troops at Carlisle and they seem to fall into two camps. There are those such as Black, Ewald and Petrie who claim valid military reasons for such a decision. There are those who condemn it, such as Charteris, McLynn, Pittock and Tomasson and Buist. Of the latter, only McLynn offers any kind of explanation. He writes, "This egregious error, one of the prince's worst mistakes of the '45 is so out of character that it seems more convincingly explained by an unconscious impulse of self-destruction", coming just after an argument with his general, Lord George Murray. McLynn claims that the Pretender identified Murray, at an unconscious level, with his hated father, and that he could not bear to be thwarted after the attempted invasion of England had failed. It is now time to examine the evidence.<sup>3</sup>

After fighting a rearguard action at Clifton Moor on 18 December, the rebels reached Carlisle a day later. They left no contemporary evidence about the decision to leave men at Carlisle. All the accounts that we have about it are primarily from a number of rebel officers who composed memoirs, written years after the rebellion. In these they are able to employ hindsight and to grind their personal axes, either justifying the decision, condemning it or in trying to provide reasons why it was made.

It seems probable (though not certain – Lord George Murray later denied that this was the case, although it has been suggested that he was not present) that a council of war was held, which was standard military practice. Murray was uncertain as to who advised leaving a garrison there because illness prevented him from being at the Pretender's headquarters on the fateful day.<sup>4</sup> One of the Pretender's Irish



confidants, Colonel O'Sullivan, later recalled, "Some people were for leaving no garrison, at all, wch wou'd be the most unreasonable thing in the world".<sup>5</sup> The Pretender alleged that Murray suggested that the castle be abandoned, then that he would defend it with his own command, yet Murray stated what he actually claimed was, "I was clear for evacuating it, but it seems another resolution was taken . . . if His Royal Highness would order me, I would stay with the Atholl Brigade, though I knew my fate". He suggested blowing up part of the castle in order to make it indefensible for the enemy and throwing out any military stores which could not be easily transported. Another officer, James Maxwell, agreed with this as being the best course of action.<sup>6</sup>

Murray's advice went unheeded. Instead, as O'Sullivan recorded, "It was agreed upon in the Council yt there shou'd be a garrison left".<sup>7</sup> This decision was condemned in some narratives and the Pretender criticised, not least of all by some of his followers, though this was by no means universal. John Daniel, an Englishman, later wrote, "Now some there are, who censure the Prince for leaving them at Carlisle, thinking it was out of disregard and a desire of being rid of them".<sup>8</sup> A stronger remark was made by Lord Elcho (who hated the Pretender), "This was done against the Opinion of almost Everybody".<sup>9</sup>

According to another rebel officer, the Chevalier de Johnstone, "the Prince promised to return to their assistance in the course of a few days, though this appeared morally impossible, as we ourselves were obliged to make every effort to escape from the whole of the forces in England".<sup>10</sup> A contemporary historian, James Ray, who was present at the siege (as a volunteer in the British Army), agrees with this statement, adding that Lord John Drummond with French troops had arrived in Scotland to assist the rebels. Therefore the Pretender asked the garrison to hold out until then "which they promised they would do to the last".<sup>11</sup> James Maxwell claimed the Prince thought he would be able to meet up with Drummond's French troops and Lord Strathallan's Scots and return to their relief.<sup>12</sup>

The actual reasons for leaving the garrison are difficult to fathom. Johnstone wrote, "I could never comprehend the reason for voluntarily sacrificing these unfortunate victims . . . the Prince was not overburdened with men, and it was not supposed they would be able to defend themselves in such an untenable place".<sup>13</sup> However, O'Sullivan justified the decision thus,

we had several rivers to passe and were not sure to find them foardable; if they were not, Cumberland could not passe the river yt runs by Carlisle either, he could not passe the bridge being under the lash of the castle, so yt he'd be obliged to passe by Brampton wch wou'd alwise give us two days march of 'un.<sup>14</sup>

Colonel Joseph Yorke, ADC to the Duke of Cumberland, wrote in a similar vein to his uncle, the Lord Chancellor, Hardwicke, "they have forced a few desperate wretches to stay . . . to keep us in play whilst the main body got clear".<sup>15</sup> Johnstone said that some supposed likewise, but added that there were those who believed that there was a sinister reason. "Others were of opinion, that the measure originated in a spirit of vengeance against the English nation, as no one of all the persons of distinction in it who invited the Prince to make a descent in Great Britain, had declared themselves openly in his favour".<sup>16</sup>

Neither of the reasons advocated by those referred to above, however, holds

water. It could not have been a purely anti-English vendetta, for only one quarter of the garrison was English (as noted below). If the Pretender thought the garrison would hold up Cumberland for any significant period of time, he clearly knew nothing of siege warfare, despite being present at the siege of Gaeta in 1734, or, more pertinently, his more recent experience only five weeks previously, when Carlisle surrendered to his own forces in a matter of days. In any case, only Cumberland's troops were delayed; the second British Army led by General Hawley carried on its march northwards, reaching Edinburgh by late December. As Yorke observed, the idea that the garrisoned town would be a useful delaying force was a delusion, "imagining that our intent was to pursue them further than the borders".<sup>17</sup>

The key player in making this fateful decision was the Pretender himself. He was certainly resolute in his wish to leave a garrison. Murray wrote, "I found he was determined in the thing".<sup>18</sup> Elcho suggests that the Pretender's arrogance lay behind the decision, "the Prince said he would have a town in England and he was sure the Duke could gett no cannon to take it with".<sup>19</sup> Maxwell wrote, "he resolved to leave a garrison at Carlisle to facilitate his entry into that kingdom". He added that the decision concerned "the prince's reputation, upon leaving England to keep one of the keys to it, and he was in hopes of returning before it could be taken, but he could not be absolutely sure of that".<sup>20</sup> According to Maxwell, this was "perhaps the worst decision the Prince had taken hitherto".<sup>21</sup>

Murray claimed it was hard to find troops to man Carlisle's defences, "the prince had some difficulty about those who were to stay at Carlisle, who were very unwilling".<sup>22</sup> Although the Duke of Perth left some of his command there, Murray claims that he was "very unwilling to leave any of his men".<sup>23</sup> According to an early, though not contemporary, historian, Home, it was difficult finding men for the garrison, "for they knew their fate".<sup>24</sup> Yet it would seem that some of the garrison volunteered for service at Carlisle. Daniel later wrote that the decision was that of Francis Townley, commander of the Englishmen who joined the Pretender, who petitioned the Pretender in the name of all his officers to be left there, though none of the latter apparently desired this. Townley told his officers, who wished to follow the Pretender to Scotland, that their remaining at Carlisle was the Pretender's wish. Thinking that this was the case, they acquiesced. Daniel saluted their bravery and loyalty.<sup>25</sup> However, O'Sullivan recorded that "the officers yt stayed there, desired it themselves".<sup>26</sup> This may not have been the case with the men.

Although there seems no good military or political reasoning behind this decision, the outcome of the siege could not have been known for certain at the time it was made. Yet to believe that the garrison could have held out indefinitely seems like wishful thinking. It casts a poor light on the Pretender's judgement and strength of character and it seems that he could not bear the thought of leaving England behind him without any of his forces there. To do otherwise might look like admitting that the whole march into England and back had been an utter failure. Although some wanted to garrison the town and castle, he could have overriden their request. The Pretender was certainly downcast on the retreat from Derby. Perhaps he had become fatalistic, perhaps he distrusted his council (who had advocated retreat from Derby against his wishes) and therefore perhaps he was not thinking as logically as he might. He did not like being thwarted and clearly decided that he would make a defiant gesture against his enemies (in both armies?) in such a fashion.

The garrison had two commanders. There was John Hamilton, a Scotsman, who was the governor of the castle, and Townley, who was commandant of the town. Historians appear to disagree over the numbers and the composition of the garrison. Black and McLynn put it at 350, Buist and Tomasson at 400. Ewald claims the garrison was made up of the French, the Irish and the Englishmen recruited at Manchester. McLynn states that 100 Jacobites in the service of France (presumably French and Irish) and 250 of the Manchester force made up the garrison.<sup>27</sup>

Yet the garrison's strength and composition are easy enough to ascertain if one examines the records. At the time of the surrender they totalled 396; made up of 114 Englishmen (including 20 officers), 274 Scots (including 18 officers) and eight Frenchmen. The English were the men who joined the rebels at Manchester. The Scots were from a number of rebel units, though were mainly of the non-clan forces such as from the Duke of Perth's, Gordon of Glenbucket's, Lord Ogilvie's, Roy Stuart's, Lord Lewis Gordon's, together with a handful of Highland clansmen. Almost all of these were infantrymen, but there were sixteen men who were designated as gunners (though their qualifications may have been dubious) and one man from Pitsligo's Horse, who was probably lacking a horse. There were also a few others who did not surrender – including one man who was killed during the siege and the two who escaped.<sup>28</sup> The Duke of Newcastle thought that they were “probably made up of the worst of their troops”.<sup>29</sup> However, they were certainly well provided with artillery. A count was made after the surrender, revealing that there were 46 guns in the castle and town, all of which were of small calibre – six pounders and below. Yet, save for the few Frenchmen, there was probably no one else trained to handle them.<sup>30</sup>

The British Army arrived outside Carlisle on 21 December and Cumberland made Blackhall his headquarters, sleeping in the same room as the Pretender had during his siege of Carlisle five weeks previously.<sup>31</sup> This was the advance guard, which had been pursuing the tail end of the retreating rebels, so was not equipped for a siege – the guns having been left at Lichfield. The rebel artillery began firing on them as soon as they arrived.<sup>32</sup> The rebels were called upon to surrender by seven soldiers who knocked on the English gate but this was refused and one of the soldiers was wounded by rebel fire.<sup>33</sup> Although the siege proper could not begin until artillery had arrived from Whitehaven, Cumberland was far from idle. The town was surrounded, except for the northern part, which apparently could have been covered in a relatively short time if necessary.<sup>34</sup> Major General Bland and 300 men from St. George's dragoons were posted on the Scottish side with orders to stop anyone leaving. Major Adams, with 200 infantrymen, was stationed in the suburbs near the English gate. Major Meriac's 200 men guarded the Sally Port with similar orders. The remainder of the troops, including Sir Andrew Agnew's 300 men, all the cavalry and the Foot Guards, were cantoned a mile or two from the town.<sup>35</sup> According to Ray, Cumberland had 4,000 troops under his command, though later he was reinforced by Wade to the tune of 1,000 extra infantry and 50 cavalry.<sup>36</sup>

Cumberland was eager to attack, and confident, too. He declared at the onset that the castle was, “An old hen-coop, which he would speedily bring down about their ears, when he should have got artillery.” It had certainly fallen easily enough to the rebels in November, though then the garrison had been composed of only invalids and militia.<sup>37</sup> However, he was not incautious. Ten eighteen pounders were

sent for from Whitehaven. These had been offered as early as 15 December. Marshal Wade at Newcastle despatched twelve cohorn mortars (relatively small and immobile pieces of artillery used for lobbing grenades at the enemy).<sup>38</sup> He wrote to the Duke of Newcastle on 22 December, that once the guns had arrived and had breached the walls, “the town will be ours, by storm I hope, that we may have some revenge on these fellows for the trouble they and the rest have given us”. Yet he did not want to squander the lives of his troops needlessly, writing that to attack without artillery would be only “to expose ourselves to any considerable loss against an enemy such as this”.<sup>39</sup> Since the rebels had plenty of small calibre guns, ineffective enough at long range, but deadly at short range, firing grape shot at attacking infantry, this was certainly sensible.

Newcastle supported Cumberland both practically and sympathetically. He gave orders from the Board of Ordnance to send artillery and other supplies from Chester. He also agreed with Cumberland’s desire to avoid losing too many of his own men. As to the fate of the besieged garrison after the surrender, “His Majesty leaves it to your Royal Highness if you think proper, and judge it to be necessary, to treat, and capitulate with them, on the condition of their being all to be transported to the West Indies: for if they should all be made prisoners at discretion, the greatest part of them must be disposed of in that manner”.<sup>40</sup> According to Yorke, Cumberland did not make overtures towards the rebels because “he is for giving no quarter”.<sup>41</sup>

Cumberland hoped that the artillery would be in place by the 24th and that a breach in the walls would have been made by the next day.<sup>42</sup> Trenches began to be dug and wood was cut to make batteries on 24 December.<sup>43</sup> Newcastle was equally optimistic, “the dispositions your Royal Highness has made, give His Majesty the greatest reason to hope that your Royal Highness is master of that town, the garrison, and almost all the artillery that the rebels had with them”.<sup>44</sup> Later Walter Shairp, an officer with the Liverpool Blues, a volunteer force helping with the siege, learnt that the planned assault was to have comprised of 800 men taken from all units in the besieging army by proportion.<sup>45</sup>

The Duke of Richmond, one of Cumberland’s generals, was pessimistic, writing to Newcastle on 24 December, “Our situation here is a very disagreeable one”. This was because he could not see how Carlisle could be taken, either easily or quickly. Battering away at the walls would be slow, especially as ammunition was scanty and there were few trained gunners. Starving the rebels into surrender would be a lengthy process, too. Taking the town and castle by storm, using scaling ladders was possible, but not without losing “at least 200 of our best grenadiers”.<sup>46</sup> A civilian, one Mr Hutchison, agreed, “their shot will make great havock amongst our troops”.<sup>47</sup> According to Yorke, “We have many inconveniencies to struggle with, the wetness of the season, which makes it difficult to raise the earth, the badness of the ways for conveying the artillery, the want of engineers, ammunition, etc. . .”.<sup>48</sup>

The rebels inside the walls were also busy. The defences were repaired, using sandbags and earthworks. Townley, who had held a commission in the French Army, installed anti-personnel defensive works known as *chevaux de frise*, caused the guns to be mounted and directed their fire. The guns fired “almost incessantly” at anyone who showed himself before the walls. They did little damage; only one man (a gunner) was killed and four or five wounded. Townley also proposed making

sallies against the besiegers, but was overruled.<sup>49</sup>

Their morale was variously estimated. Cumberland noted that they “endeavour to appear resolute”.<sup>50</sup> However, there was at least one attempt made to surrender before the end of the siege, on 26 December, according to Hutchison.<sup>51</sup> This was apparently rejected by Cumberland because he could not accept their request to be dealt with as prisoners of war rather than as captured rebels. One newspaper claimed he wanted to kill them all in return for their plan to murder him, but this cannot be taken as a certainty.<sup>52</sup> Negotiation with the “lousy scoundrels” was also not an option, thought Richmond.<sup>53</sup>

Shairp’s *Memoir* sheds another light upon the siege. The Liverpool Blues marched around Carlisle to relieve St. George’s dragoons and Bligh’s infantry, in order that the regulars could move towards the west side of the city. This was accomplished on 25 December. The companies of the Blues took it in turn to stand guard night and day while others were quartered in nearby villages.<sup>54</sup>

Engineers, artillery men and guns were sent to Carlisle. The first contingent, including six eighteen pounder guns, did not begin to arrive until 25 December. Meanwhile, preparations were being made to start the attack as soon as the guns were in place. Sir George Fleming, the Bishop of Carlisle, lent his horses and some of the country people helped in moving the guns into place and in erecting the batteries.<sup>55</sup> There were also reinforcements from Wade’s command; 1,000 Foot and 50 Horse, as well as the mortars, who departed from Newcastle on 21 December.<sup>56</sup> On the 26th, the trenches were opened and the batteries fixed.<sup>57</sup>

There was also additional help from local countrymen, though their efforts are variously computed. Marchant claimed 500 men with picks and spades assisting in digging trenches.<sup>58</sup> Ray claimed that 10,000 people (a fantastic number) offered help, but most had to be sent home. A few were employed in cutting fascines for the batteries (the bundles of sticks tied together were presumably in order to shield the artillery from any counter battery fire). Payments were made in the following year to men for supplying hay and corn, for carrying cannon balls and for working on the trenches.<sup>59</sup> Sir Everard Fawkener, Cumberland’s secretary, commented on the lukewarm loyalty of some of the country people, presumably because they did not want to expose themselves to artillery fire.<sup>60</sup>

The supply situation for the besiegers was problematic. Fawkener wrote on 25 December, “our greatest want for this siege is fascines which advance slowly . . . we have brought up 12 tons of biscuit”.<sup>61</sup> He thought that the affair should be over four days after the firing began.<sup>62</sup>

On 27 December Cumberland inspected the works and the troops who besieged the town. Shairp noted that, “the Duke came around to our side of the River to reconoyter & went down by himself to view the castle and city which was the first time I saw him”. That night there was an emergency, when it was thought that some of the rebels were slipping over the walls. The Blues fired a few shots to warn them of their presence, and on hearing nothing, sent a patrol forward, which did not meet any of the rebels.<sup>63</sup>

On 27 December, Major Belford, an artilleryman, Captain Scott, an engineer, sixty gunners and several sailors, arrived from Wade’s command at Newcastle upon Tyne and from Chester (a total of 78 or 86 men depending on the source). These included nine Dutchmen.<sup>64</sup> Another four eighteen pounders from Whitehaven had

also arrived. There were also ten cohorn mortars with 300 shells from Newcastle, and these threw about 25 shells into the town and castle, which “brought a very hot fire upon the place”, according to Shairp.<sup>65</sup> At night the guns were mounted ready to fire at first light.<sup>66</sup>

The rebels replied with a rather ineffective fire. Shairp wrote, “while I was going the visiting rounds there they fired a round of grape or case shot which fell very thick about us but no body was hurt as we were pritty well sheltered by the trenches”.<sup>67</sup>

Yorke was concerned for Cumberland’s well being. On 24 December he reported that the rebel artillery had been aiming at the Duke as he reconnoitred, “may the same good Providence always attend him for the sake of his country”. Four days later, Hardwicke wrote, expressing similar concerns, “it is the ardent wish and entreaty of all his faithful servants that he should not expose himself unnecessarily. Carlisle is not an object worth such a hazard”. Cumberland was a brave soldier, a quality that not even his detractors deny, and it should have been no surprise that this was displayed on this relatively minor occasion.<sup>68</sup>

Cumberland did not begin the cannonade which was to bring the siege to an end until 28 December. That same day six eighteen pounders began to batter away at the rebels’ four gun battery, situated to the west of the town on rising ground, starting at either seven or eight in the morning. It was hoped that such a pounding would create a breach and that an assault could begin the next day. Certainly Cumberland was confident, “I persuade myself the thing will now be soon over”.<sup>69</sup> Fire was returned “very briskly from the castle from a 3 Gun Battery which they continued all this day very warmly & now & then they let a shot fly to our side”, according to Shairp.<sup>70</sup> There was a cessation of firing between 11.00 a.m. and 1.00 p.m.<sup>71</sup> This firing, however, exhausted the small supply of ammunition belonging to the British guns, though one account states, “All the day they played hard against the castle walls”.<sup>72</sup> A cohorn mortar fired at the town and castle in the evening.<sup>73</sup> The rebel artillery fired a few shots in the direction of the Blues as soon as any of the men put their head above the trenches. Their leader, Colonel Graham, had a narrow escape when a ball damaged a tree which was nearby.<sup>74</sup>

On the following day, with the arrival of fresh supplies of ammunition for the besiegers, firing by both sides began at daylight.<sup>75</sup> However, by the evening, that of the rebels subsided, almost certainly because their supply of ball was being quickly reduced. Some officers claimed that some of the cannon at the castle had not been firing shots (perhaps only powder charges in order to make a noise), leading Richmond to comment, “their ammunition certainly fails them”.<sup>76</sup> By now there was another British battery in play, as the eighteen pounders began to fire and the bombardment “was renewed very briskly for two hours, which shook the walls very much”.<sup>77</sup> According to Richmond, “there is a good deal of their wall beat down and a great crack made in it”.<sup>78</sup> The rebels’ artillery fired again, this time at the cohorn mortars, but did no damage. This was the final time the rebel artillery fired, signalling, perhaps, that resistance was almost at an end.<sup>79</sup>

The other significant incident that night was the arrest of a man leaving Carlisle. He was found to have letters from the French commanding officer, bidding those Dutch troops with the besiegers to retire, as not to do so would break their parole. At the siege of Tournay in 1745, the Dutch surrendered and were given parole on condition that they did not fight the French for two years. Cumberland claimed that

since there were no Dutch with the British forces, this was a dead letter, though as noted, he was being economical with the truth.<sup>80</sup>

During the night, a new battery of three eighteen pounders was erected and was ready to fire by the morning. On the 30th, one of the earliest established batteries began to fire. As soon as it had done, the rebels hung out a white flag. Although there had been few rebel casualties, perhaps only 16 killed or wounded, an assault might have been close at hand, though Elcho (who was not present at the siege) later claimed, "Their was a sort of breach made in the wall but not sufficient to enter by". Maxwell agreed with Elcho.<sup>81</sup> Yet a breach was not far off, as Richmond, who was there, wrote, "I think the breach will certainly be made . . . and then the whole is our own".<sup>82</sup> The battery ceased firing and the rebels announced that they had two hostages and these would be delivered at the English Gate. Cumberland sent Bury and Conway to investigate. He gave them two messages to be handed to the rebels. Shairp commented "This day was spent in sending of messages to & froe till it was night".<sup>83</sup> These, marked A and B, respectively informed the rebels that Cumberland would not make exchanges and that there were no Dutchmen among the besiegers.<sup>84</sup> These messages were taken to the besiegers by the captured secret agent, John de Vere, who had been taken by the rebels earlier in the rebellion.<sup>85</sup>

The officers returned two hours later, bringing with them a message from Hamilton, who desired to know what terms of surrender Cumberland would grant. Cumberland was quick to respond. He wrote, "All the terms his royal highness will or can grant to the rebel garrison of Carlisle are, that they shall not be put to the sword, but be reserved for the king's pleasure". He added that all arms and military supplies were to be handed over intact and that no damage was to be done to the town.<sup>86</sup> According to Maxwell, a council of the officers was held. "Townley and several others were for defending to the last extremity, rather than give themselves up prisoners at discretion".<sup>87</sup> Townley is alleged to have said, "Better die by the sword, than fall into the hands of these damned Hanoverians".<sup>88</sup> Yet Townley's pleas were overruled and at four o'clock, Cumberland received his reply. Hamilton and his officers agreed to the terms, "recommending themselves to his royal highness' clemency".<sup>89</sup>

Cumberland told Newcastle of his mixed feelings at the result, "I wish I could have blooded the soldiers with these villains, but it would have cost us many brave men and it came to the same end as they have no sort of claim to the King's mercy and I sincerely hope will meet with none".<sup>90</sup> This quotation is used by most historians to discredit Cumberland – Black has condemned Cumberland for his opposition to granting quarter, citing this as evidence. Yet the statement does not necessarily, or even probably, indicate that Cumberland wished to massacre unarmed men. What it is more likely to mean is that Cumberland had seen merits in an assault. Since the rebels had not yet been beaten in battle, they were thought of by some as being invincible. A successful encounter against them would have been a useful morale booster and a possible herald of eventual victory. Yet the preservation of his men's lives was of more importance (surely the view of a humane soldier).

Richmond certainly held severe views upon the fate of the rebels, "I really can't see how he can putt them to the sword after it, tho to be sure they ought all to be hanged".<sup>91</sup> Shairp offers no comment except to say "The City had surrendered to the Duke upon no other Terms than leaving themselves at the King's mercy so that

night a messenger was sent to London to know his pleasure".<sup>92</sup> Yet Johnstone claimed "By capitulation, the Duke of Cumberland had granted to the garrison their lives, with an assurance that they should not be tried for having borne arms".<sup>93</sup> There is no evidence for this and no one else mentions it. Johnstone had a hatred of Cumberland and it is likely that this tale is an invention to further blacken his character. In any case, Cumberland did not have the authority to grant such an amnesty to rebels.

There are a number of sources to suggest that the decision to surrender at the point they did was misguided, and that possibly the rebels were in a stronger position than some thought. Firstly, Thomas Sydall, a Jacobite barber from Manchester and an officer in the garrison, was to remark in his speech at the scaffold in 1746:

I heartily forgive all who had any hand in the scandalous surrender of Carlisle; for as it was the opinion of every one of the garrison who had been in foreign service that the place was tenable many days, and as the Elector's troops then lying before the town were in a bad condition (which I strenuously insisted upon) would have procured us such terms as to have prevented the fate to which we are now consign'd.<sup>94</sup>

Sydall was not the only rebel officer to dissent. O'Sullivan also thought so.

Besides there would be no body sacrificed, if they had not surrendered as they did, for it was Mr Browns and Maxfield's opinion (who served both of them twenty years in France) as well as Geohagan's and Townlys, yt Cumberland could not take the castle with the cannon he had, and the season we were in, in a county where his cavalry cou'd not subsist eight days and if they had held out they could obtain the capitulations they desir'd.<sup>95</sup>

Likewise Maxwell wrote about Townley's desire to fight on

they were in the right. They might have held out several days, perhaps obtained terms, and would at any time have been allowed to lay down their arms.<sup>96</sup>

To an extent, this may be self-justification written after the event, but there were those in the besiegers' camp who were glad to be spared an assault. There was also an element of self-delusion in Maxwell's remark, for had the scheme he advocated been carried out, the garrison might have been slaughtered in the assault. Mercy would have been less likely had the attackers sustained heavy casualties in battle. However, there is additional evidence which backs these sources.

The besiegers included an unknown number of sick, this reducing their offensive power. Shairp reported that "they were now growing sick in great numbers & quite unfit for want of rest". He certainly thought that an assault would have been costly "But thank God that itt happened as it did else a good many lives would have been lost in the attempt".<sup>97</sup> Ray also commented on the less than perfect fighting condition of the besiegers, "not having been in bed nor had my boots off all the Time that we lay before Carlisle, and we had very bad weather; so that the Army in general was very much fatigued".<sup>98</sup> Some of the besiegers died, possibly of smallpox, according to Richard Cumberland. Additional evidence about the besiegers' difficulties came from Yorke, "I shall not be sorry when it is over, for we are miserably off now, in worse villages than ever I almost saw in the mountains of Germany, but as the Duke is as ill off as other people, nobody can repine".<sup>99</sup>

Finally, there are Cumberland's observations following the fall of the castle and

town. On 1 January he observed to Wade, “a fortunate thing it is that it has been taken with so little loss . . . for I look upon it as capable of being made as strong a place as can be necessary in this island”. Likewise, he informed Newcastle, “the strength of the town and castle, but especially the castle, which if the rebels had chose to have held out must have cost us some blood and much time”.<sup>100</sup> Even so, Carlisle was not impregnable. As Murray observed, “as soon as they could bring cannon from Whitehaven, I was sure it was not tenable”.<sup>101</sup> The best that the rebels could have probably hoped for was to delay the end.

Instead, the siege had been a great success for Cumberland, having fallen in nine days time with minimal loss to his own troops. It could have been very different, had the rebels tried to hold out for longer. The evidence above suggests that the besiegers, from Cumberland down, were very much relieved at the cheap outcome. Of course Hamilton was not to know the condition of the besieging army and may have been desirous of avoiding wholesale bloodshed, which a frontal assault would inevitably have entailed. Yet, given the disparity of numbers – the besiegers vastly outnumbering their opponents, even allowing for sickness reducing the ratio a little – the eventual result seems difficult to doubt.

Hamilton’s decision may have been due to some sort of verbal agreement. Daniel later wrote that his action might have been because of “a true fear or promise of his life”, though this was disputed.<sup>102</sup> However, a newspaper report claimed that the lack of ammunition had prompted the surrender, and it was said that very little had been found in the town and castle after the surrender.<sup>103</sup> In fact, though not commented upon by contemporaries, this may have been the most important consideration playing on Hamilton’s mind. Without adequate stores of ammunition, and, unlike Cumberland, with no means of replenishing them, further resistance would have been a desperate affair. This lack of supplies is indicative of the over optimism behind the hasty and ill thought out decision to try and defend Carlisle.

Once the surrender was agreed upon, the town was occupied. Bligh, 400 Foot Guards, 700 infantrymen and 120 cavalry took possession of the town. They were issued with the orders that while they were at liberty to take what arms and ammunition they needed, any looting would be severely punished. The rebels were held in the cathedral. Cumberland entered the town on 31 December and reviewed the troops, including the Liverpool Blues. Graham “gave him a character of us which I believe was fully as good as we deserved”. The Blues then marched off to Liverpool.<sup>104</sup>

Some historians and contemporaries have censured Cumberland and the British state thereafter, for his allegedly barbarous conduct during the capitulation and afterwards, towards the prisoners. McLynn refers to the English prisoners being “led away to trial and barbarous execution”. Ewald states that of the eighteen English officers, seventeen were sentenced to death. Sydall referred to, “his dishonourable and unsoldierly conduct in putting us to death in violation of the laws of nations after a written capitulation to the contrary, and after the garrison, upon the faith of that capitulation, had surrendered the place”.<sup>105</sup> Johnstone remarked “the Duke of Cumberland . . . had so little regard for good faith as to maintain that they were not bound in honour to observe a capitulation with rebels”.<sup>106</sup>

Although an examination of the judicial process is outside the scope of this article, it is worth noting that Ewald’s statement is misleading. Although 17 English

officers (there were actually 20 in total) may have been sentenced to death, only nine (including Hamilton and Townley) were executed; three were transported, three escaped, four released or banished and one died in captivity. As to McLynn's implied statement that prisoners of other ranks were executed, the number was actually less than one in ten. Others were transported, enlisted into the army or were pardoned. This was common practice for rebels in the aftermath of an unsuccessful rebellion, and their fate can hardly be described as being unreasonable. They had rebelled against their King – they were not therefore prisoners of war. As Chesterfield observed in March 1746, “They are not enemies, but criminals, we cannot be at war with ‘em”. Since the penalty for high treason was death and since all those in the garrison were involved in armed resistance against the Crown, one can argue that such treatment was lenient. Yet the men of the “Manchester Regiment” did suffer disproportionately – 27 officers and men (even then a minority, but a large one – about a fifth of their total strength) were executed (nearly a quarter of all the executions after the rebellion), a higher proportion than any Scots unit, probably because as Englishmen their treason was seen by the judiciary as of a blacker dye than that of the Scots and because some were army deserters.<sup>107</sup>

Cumberland's actions cannot be regarded as barbaric. The trials and executions were not his work. He handed the prisoners over to the civil authorities and eventually they were tried by Special Commissions made up of judges. The French prisoners were not rebels but prisoners of war who were eventually repatriated. Cumberland also hanged twelve deserters who had been with the rebels, though this was hardly an atrocity. Desertion on active service carried the death penalty and, as Boyse remarked, they “met the Fate they deserved”.<sup>108</sup>

There was also dissension within the rebel camp in Scotland when news of the surrender arrived. Daniel wrote that the Pretender, on hearing the news, was “exceedingly troubled, and lamented much the loss of his subjects, especially the English”.<sup>109</sup> Johnstone wrote that he [the Pretender] “seemed inclined to disbelieve the report”. Others also dismissed the reports of the surrender, but those with knowledge of fortifications believed them.<sup>110</sup> Murray wrote to his master on 6 January 1746, “Had a Council of War been consulted as to leaving a Garrison at Carlisle it would never have been agreed to, the place not being tenable, and so many brave men would not have been sacrificed, besides the reputation of His Royal Highness' Arms”.<sup>111</sup> Yet as has been noted, it does appear that a council was probably held, with or without Murray. His master gave him the following tart reply:

I wonder much to see myself reproached with the loss of Carlile [*sic*]. Was there a possibility of carrying off the Cannon and baggage, or was there time to destroy them? And wou'd not the doing it have been a greater dishonour to our Arms? After all did not you yrsel instead of proposing to abandon it, offer to stay with the Athol Brigade to defend it?<sup>112</sup>

It seems uncertain whether the Pretender was more concerned about his personal reputation or the lives of his men. Admirers and detractors of the Pretender can both find evidence here which supports their point of view, such are the conflicting evidences about this man who would be king. Yet the decision to leave them there had been his, and it is also worth noting that despite his promises of relieving them, there was no such attempt.

Johnstone finally summed up his thoughts on what had undoubtedly been a

blunder of the first order, though he depicts the Pretender in a kindlier light.

Had the Prince foreseen the fate of those unfortunate victims, he would have undoubtedly have prevented it by evacuating the place on our retreat . . . the only plan reconcilable not merely with humanity . . . but with regard to his own particular interest . . . We must draw a veil over this piece of cruelty, being altogether unable either to discover the motive . . . or to find an excuse for it.<sup>113</sup>

However, it was too late. The decision, fatal in retrospect, had been made long ago. As Maxwell remarked, "Thus the Prince lost Carlisle, with upwards of 300 men, among whom were some good officers and a great many brave fellows".<sup>114</sup>

For the civilians, the siege had been a great potential calamity. Dr John Waugh, chancellor of Carlisle, wrote on 24 December, "God send a happy and speedy end". He feared that the inhabitants might be injured as well as having their property destroyed.<sup>115</sup> Likewise the Earl of Carlisle wrote, "I am heartily sorry for the poor people of Carlisle, who, I am afraid, will be great sufferers".<sup>116</sup> Fleming was concerned about the fate of the inhabitants, too. Cumberland reassured him on this point, writing on 27 December, "I shall give all such orders as may most contribute to the preservation and welfare of His Majesty's good subjects".<sup>117</sup>

As matters transpired, "the town has sustained less damage from the cannonading, than was expected. Very few, if any, of the houses suffered".<sup>118</sup> There was a rumour that the rebels had set one of the suburbs afire, and this was reported in the press, but according to Hutchison, this was merely "idle talk".<sup>119</sup> Many left the town before the siege began. Mr Wardale informed Waugh of such, "We have had but a dismal time this last siege, and very few people left in town".<sup>120</sup> Wardale wrote, "but thank God the good Duke of Cumberland has set us free at last".<sup>121</sup> On 25 March 1746, the corporation paid their respects to Cumberland.<sup>122</sup>

From the view of the British government and the Army, the outcome of the siege had been a great success. As Cumberland wrote, "now we may have the happiness to say, that this part of the kingdom is clear from all rebels".<sup>123</sup> Yet he had to march southwards because of the danger of a French invasion in the south of England. The fall of Carlisle was important. It had provided the first undeniable victory to the British Army in the course of the rebellion (the skirmish at Clifton was inconclusive). Yorke, an admirer of Cumberland, wrote similar sentiments as his leader, adding, "no other person but himself could have smoothed so many difficulties, and have led the troops on with so much spirit".<sup>124</sup>

The episode sheds an unfavourable light on the judgement of the rebel high command, which, in leaving 400 men (nearly a tenth of their forces) at Carlisle, cannot, with hindsight, be justified. The Pretender's decision was probably influenced by his own egotism and was not helped by those such as O'Sullivan. Cumberland can be cleared of the charge of barbarity. Certainly he was a zealous soldier, eager to defeat the rebels, if possible in battle, but he was also concerned for his men's lives. His uncompromising stand in negotiations resulted in the avoidance of a conditional surrender, which would have created an awkward precedent for the government and judiciary. Yet he may have been involved in brinkmanship: the condition of some of the besiegers was less than perfect and it is possible that some form of terms might have been offered by a less resolute British officer, such as Field Marshal Wade. Certainly the defences were not as weak as has often been assumed,

though the defenders' artillery supplies were running low, and further battering by the eighteen pounders would have weakened the walls even more. Had the rebels continued to resist after the breach had been made, the result would have been bloody, but the outcome, given the disparity of numbers, could not have been much different. Instead, it was an almost bloodless victory for the British Army – for the rebels, their first significant defeat in an encounter with their foes, a disaster without a crumb of consolation, and one which they had almost offered to their enemies on a plate.

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