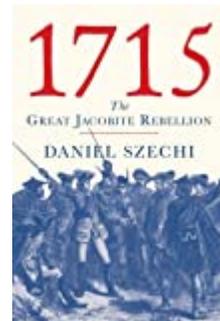




Daniel Szechi. *1715: The Great Jacobite Rebellion.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006. xi + 351 pp. \$50.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-300-11100-2.



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The Fifteen

Those interested in the Jacobite Rebellion of 1715 used to note that not one book had been published that solely covered this subject since John Baynes's *The Jacobite Rising of 1715* in 1970. Baynes's book was a competent and true military account, but it neglected social, political, religious, and economic aspects of the crisis, and it was based on a limited number of published sources. Compared to the vast outpouring of books about the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745, including biographies of Bonnie Prince Charlie and even the Duke of Cumberland, the Fifteen was sadly neglected and largely reduced to marginal consideration in books covering the whole period of the Jacobite rebellions from 1689 to 1746. This neglect was despite the fact that the 1715 rebellion garnered far more support both in Scotland and England than the Forty-five ever achieved.

This complaint can no longer be upheld. Daniel Szechi, a renowned and respected historian of eighteenth-century Britain, has published *1715*, a new work that is highly recommended. He draws on a great deal of primary source material, much of which historians have never used before. Scholars interested in

researching aspects of the Fifteen will find this book helpful, not least for the excellent bibliography which draws attention to many rich hitherto unknown published and manuscript sources. Szechi used archives in both England and Scotland to good effect.

The book is not a traditional military account, though it includes a narrative and analysis of the campaign's military aspects. Szechi places the campaign in the social and political frameworks of eighteenth-century Britain. He includes substantial information about the Scottish dimension of the Fifteen before the advent of the Earl of Mar. Szechi charts the breakdown in civil relations in 1714-1715 prior to open conflict, a subject hitherto neglected. He considers Ireland and Wales, though given the quietude there in this period, he inevitably gives them less attention than Scotland and England.

Szechi puts Scotland center stage. This approach is not unreasonable, since almost twenty thousand Scots rose in support for the Jacobite cause, along with about eleven thousand for the government. Numbers of active English Jacobites are impossible to discern, but the number was certainly less than one-tenth of their Scot-

tish counterparts, though England's population was far higher. It was in Scotland that most of the military maneuvering took place from September 1715 to February 1716, as well as the allegedly indecisive battle at Sheriffmuir. And, it was there that James Francis Stuart arrived on 22 December 1715. Szechi considers the strategy and diplomacy of both Jacobites and the government, and concludes that this campaign was one that saw relatively limited violence.

Szechi gives considerable attention to the aftermath of the rebellion in Britain and the Jacobite exiles, and provides some limited discussion on prisoners and the Forfeited Estates Commission. As with Margaret Sankey in *Jacobite Prisoners of the 1715 Rebellion* (2005), the conclusion reached is that the state was relatively lenient. Szechi examines the knitting together of civil society following the rebellion, and the dynamics of how social and political elites largely reconciled, due to political bargaining and good neighborliness. This, as he points out, was one reason why Jacobitism lost some of its appeal after 1715 and why there was less support for Charles Edward Stuart in 1745.

If there can be criticism for this work, it can be found only in some of the details, and then only by someone who has made a special study of those details. Firstly, the figure given for the Cumberland posse routed at Penrith on 2 November is six thousand to seven thousand, as it is in the source quoted. But this figure, if true, is 40 percent of that country's adult male population and so it seems inconceivable that so many men could have been gathered together in one place (Northumberland's posse by sake of contrast numbered 407). Szechi notes the posse of both Cumberland and Westmorland as present at Penrith (on another page he indicates that it was the Westmorland posse), but in fact only the former were present (the latter were at Kendal). Szechi names Viscount Lonsdale as its leader, but it is not clear that this is accurate, since the county sheriff, the posse's leader, was also present.

John Patten is mentioned when surely Robert Patten is meant.

Szechi gives the figure of forty executions in connection with the rebellion, but this figure is too low. In all, there were fifty-six executions: thirty-four in Lancashire in January and February 1716, five in the autumn of that year, a dozen in London in 1715 and 1716, four military executions, and finally the hanging of the treacherous sergeant Ainslie. This was less than one-half of those executed after the Forty-five and a fraction of those hanged after Monmouth's Rebellion of 1685.

There is also some confusion over terms. Szechi states that General Charles Wills had regiments of Horse and then in the same paragraph he indicates that he had regiments of dragoons. In fact, he led five regiments of dragoons and one of Horse. Furthermore, troops were not left to garrison Manchester when Wills marched to Preston—Colonel Newton's regiment, advancing from Worcestershire, was given that task. Readers, I hope, will not think that I am being pedantic—as Lord Brideshead has said, “Why do people think one is quibbling when one tries to be precise?”[1]

Szechi begins his book with an excellent remark, “One thing it is not, however, is the final word on that great rebellion. The well of sources is so deep and the sweep of the phenomenon is so broad that even this book really constitutes an introduction to the subject. Young scholars come hither; there is a great deal more work for you to do” (p. xiii). This statement is indeed true. But any reader wanting a readable and scholarly overview of the Fifteen should start with this book. It is thoroughly researched and the judgements are sound. I strongly recommend it to the professional and the layman alike.

Note

[1] Evelyn Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited* (New York: Penguin, 2000), 313.

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