Fanning the Flames of Rebellion: The Worthing Jacobite Fan

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Fan. Ivory guard stick and 19 other sticks. Paper mount bearing hand coloured engraving showing Charles Edward Stuart and a range of allegorical figures. C 1745.

The rule of the Stuart dynasty ended with the overthrow of James II during the 'Glorious and Bloodless Revolution' of 1688, yet attempts to restore his descendants to the throne by those dedicated to the 'Jacobite Cause' continued well into the following century. This fan celebrates the claim to the throne made by Charles James Stuart (1720-1788), known as 'Bonnie Prince Charlie' or 'The Young Pretender'. Charles James led a Jacobite Rebellion in 1745, by which time Great Britain was ruled by the Hanover King George II; Worthing Museum and Art Gallery attributes that date to this fan. It was donated to the Museum in 1999 and had previously been in the ownership of the donor's family since the eighteenth century.

The fan's illustration shows Charles dressed in armour, with raised sword; an altar nearby is topped with burning hearts. Fame holds a laurel wreath, the symbol of victory, over his head. Mars and Belladonna stand to his left, alongside Envy and Discord, at whom Jupiter,

shown in the sky, directs a thunderbolt. In the background, the Hanover family flees. To Charles' right, a lion is shown having overpowered a doe, an assertion of the supposed warrior-like supremacy of the Stuart over the Hanover dynasty. Venus is seated with Cupid at her knee. Britannia rests at the edge of the scene, as a dove brings her an olive branch. The print is handcoloured and was reproduced from an engraving by Sir Robert Strange (1721-1792), a leading artist of the day who was associated with the Jacobite cause and was close to Charles Edward Stuart throughout the 1745 rising.[1]

The Jacobite cause produced many objects that served as propaganda. By 1745, they often bore a portrait of Charles James Stuart. As decorative and functional items that were widely used, fans were a popular way to publicise images of the 'Bonnie Prince' that celebrated his claim to royal status. Owning such items, which suggested allegiance to the Stuart claims to the Crown, could be considered treasonous.[2] Nevertheless they were produced in considerable numbers and in materials that made them easily accessible. Neil Guthrie, in his analysis of the material culture of the period, reports that "'Great quantities' of a paper fan with a portrait of a king and the motto 'chacun à son tour' were distributed in England in 1713".[3] In the case of this fan, the main materials are wood and paper, with only the end 'guard stick' in more precious ivory. Paper was a fairly fragile option for the decorative fan mount; ivory guard sticks were often reused in new fans when the decorative mount tore. This particular fan has tears to the paper which are known to have been expertly repaired in London at some time in its life.

A number of examples of fans in this design survive.[4] The fans were commonly been believed to have been produced in Edinburgh and were given to ladies who attended a ball, thought to have been held at Holyrood House, to celebrate the Jacobite victory at the Battle of Prestonpans on 21 September 1745. Fans of this type were commonly given to ladies attending society occasions. The fan historian Hélène Alexander speculates that whilst some fans in this design were printed in Edinburgh during the Prince's residence there, a further batch may have been printed in Paris and carried with him when he returned to exile in Europe, perhaps even being presented to ladies attending his wedding in Rome in 1772.[5] As

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[1] Lionel Cust, *Catalogue of the Collection of Fans and Fan-Leaves: Presented to the British Museum by Lady Charlotte Schreiber* (London: Forgotten Books, 2017) 2.

[2] Neil Guthrie, *The Material Culture of the Jacobites* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013) 20 - 21. Guthrie suggests that a charge of high treason, which carried the death penalty, was more likely to be brought in response to "conspiracies, acts of force and actual rebellion rather than to something relatively innocuous like the distribution or possession of material culture…. More often than not, however, offences involving Jacobite material culture would have been prosecuted as misdemeanours, for which the penalty might be a fine, time in the pillory, flogging or imprisonment."

[3] Richard Sharp, "'Our Common Mother, the Church of England': Nonjurors, High Churchmen, and the Evidence of Subscription Lists", *Loyalty and Identity: Jacobites at Home and Abroad*, ed. Paul Monod et al. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) 57 qtd in Guthrie, *The Material Culture of the Jacobites*, 28.

[4] Helene Alexander, "The Prince and The Fan," *Fan Association of North America* 6.2 (1987): 16. Examples with the same engraving, but variations in the sticks and guards, are also held at the Victoria and Albert Museum, the British Museum and the West Highland Museum.

[5] Alexander , "The Prince and The Fan," 17.

for the Holyrood ball, the historian Jacqueline Riding has questioned whether it ever took place, since the only possible date for it would have been Sunday, 22 September 1745 and "a Victory 'Ball' on the Sabbath would have been a stretch".[6] If it did not take place, then the fan is an object that illustrates not only how the image of Charles James Stuart as the rightful king of Great Britain was constructed and disseminated during his lifetime, but also how his failure to win the throne was romanticised. The victory ball at the Edinburgh court of the doomed 'Bonnie Prince Charlie', and the fans given away there as favours, are perhaps part of the mythology of the Jacobite 'Lost Cause'.

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[6] Jacqueline Riding, *A New History of the '45 Rebellion* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).