



THE TOLBOOTH IMPRISONMENT

Following the 1745 Rising, and its collapse after the defeat of Bonnie Prince Charlie, the Young Pretender, at Culloden in 1746, revenge was taken on all Jacobites, of whom the Episcopalians comprised a large part.

On his way to Culloden in the early part of 1746, the Duke of Cumberland's army burnt down many Episcopal chapels. The Stonehaven chapel was spared being put to the torch because of the proximity of other wooden buildings.

In reaction to the Rising, further penal legislation was enacted in 1746 and 1748 which criminalised any person who "exercised the function of a minister of any Episcopal meeting house ..., without having first qualified himself by taking and subscribing the Oaths...".

In 1748, Revd Alexander Greig of Stonehaven, along with Revd John Troup of Muchalls and Revd John Petrie of Drumlithie, found themselves in Stonehaven Sheriff Court, and were eventually sentenced to 6 months in jail – the Tolbooth jail at Stonehaven harbour – where they spent the winter of 1748-49.

Whilst the priests were imprisoned there, some Episcopalian women from Cowie chose to take their babies along the foreshore (to avoid going through the Old Town) to stand under the prison window and have them baptised. This is the event, recorded in the Muchalls church registers, which was immortalised in 1865 in George Washington Brownlow's iconic painting.



Baptism from the Tolbooth, Stonehaven', a Painting by George Washington Brownlow (1835–1876), belonging to the Diocese of Brechin and now hanging in St Paul's Cathedral, Dundee

Revd Greig's Indictment

Yet true it is and of verity that the said Mr Alexander Greig in manifest contempt of His Majesties Laws and particularly of the Act of Parliament above recited did on Sunday 13 December 1747 and upon Sunday 20 December 1747 and upon Sunday 3 January 1747/1748 or upon one or other of the said days presume to enter upon or exercise the function of a Pastor or Minister of an Episcopal meeting or congregation in a house within the Town of Stonehyve where five or more persons were assembled or met together to hear Divine Service over and beside those of the household there. Divine Service was performed by the said Mr Alexander Greig... to evade the law and particularly the Act of Parliament above narrated.

...the persons within the room to which the closet was open were within the hearing of or did hear the said Mr Alexander Greig perform Divine Service without praying for the Kings Most Excellent Majesty His Heirs and Successors by name and for all the Royal Family in the form of words contained the Liturgy of the Church of England.

...there was set up on the stairhead or at the door of one of the said rooms a Plate or Bason in which the persons that sat in the said room and were met to hear Divine worship did put in collections in money which went to the use and behoof {benefit} of the said Mr Alexander Greig and that the said Mr Alexander Greig is a Pastor or Minister of or professing to be of the Episcopal Communion...