

On This Day – 9th May 1732

John Erskine, 23rd/6th Earl of Mar, dies in Paris



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John Erskine was born in 1675, and by the age of 14 he had inherited the estate of Alloa from his father Charles, which at the time was loaded with debts. Erskine combated this by taking advantage of the increased demand for coal, which came in abundance from mines in Sauchie. He also oversaw the building of Gartmorn Dam, which at the time was the largest artificial body of water in the country. Outside of this, Erskine became known as ‘Bobbing John’ for his tendency to flit between political allegiances – between Tory and Whig, depending on which allegiance would benefit and his business him at the time, and between Hanoverian and Jacobite.

It was his politics that eventually led to his downfall, taking part in a failed Jacobean uprising, where his indecisiveness after a victory at the Battle of Sheriffmuir (1715) cost the movement dearly. Although Erskine was the secretary of state for Scotland under Queen Anne and a key negotiator in the 1707 Act of Union, he was dismissed from office by her successor George I, leading to his support for the Jacobite cause.

Mar led a force in the battle which hugely outnumbered the forces of John Campbell, 2nd Duke of Argyll, but refused to risk his own men pursuing what may have been a decisive victory and opened a route to meet with other Jacobite forces in the North of England. The rebellion failed, and in 1716 Erskine fled to France, and then Rome. Although he continued to raise funds for further Jacobite uprisings while in exile, they soon turned against him after it was revealed he was still receiving a pension from King George.

His decedents continued to work in Alloa, introducing both railway lines and the Glassworks throughout the 18th and 19th centuries.

More information:

[Erskine’s entry on Undiscovered Scotland](#)

[Bobbing John burial place marked at last](#)

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