

Hey, Johnny Cope, Are Ye Wauking Yet?

This song commemorates the first battle of the 1745 Jacobite Rising, the Battle of Prestonpans, fought on 21 September 1745. A small Jacobite army, rapidly raised in the Highlands by Prince Charles Edward Stuart, successfully engaged the better-equipped British army of Lieutenant-General Sir John Cope. The battle took place early in the morning and the British army was routed; Cope was forced to escape the field and ride to Berwick. The outcome of the battle was such a shock that many blamed Cope for the defeat.

Adam Skirving, a gentleman farmer who lived a few miles from the battlefield, visited the site later that day and wrote two songs about it. Although not strictly accurate in their details, the lyrics tapped into the popular mood of lampooning the defeated general. Robert Burns later wrote an alternative set of lyrics, but Skirving's originals have proved the more lasting.

Cope sent a challenge frae Dunbar:
'Charlie, meet me an' ye daur,
An' I'll learn you the art o' war
If you'll meet me i' the morning.'

[Chorus:]
Hey, Johnnie Cope, are ye wauking yet?
Or are your drums a-beating yet?
If ye were wauking I wad wait
To gang to the coals i' the morning.

When Charlie looked the letter upon
He drew his sword the scabbard from:
'Come, follow me, my merry men,
And we'll meet Johnnie Cope i' the morning
[Chorus]

'Now Johnnie, be as good's your word;
Come, let us try both fire and sword;
And dinna rin like a frichted bird,
That's chased frae its nest i' the morning.'
[Chorus]

When Johnnie Cope he heard of this,
He thought it wadna be amiss
To hae a horse in readiness,
To flee awa' i' the morning.
[Chorus]

Fye now, Johnnie, get up an' rin;
The Highland bagpipes mak' a din;
It's best to sleep in a hale skin,
For 'twill be a bluidy morning.
[Chorus]

When Johnnie Cope tae Dunbar came,
They speired at him, 'Where's a' your men?'
'The deil confound me gin I ken,
For I left them a' i' the morning.
[Chorus]

'Now Johnnie, troth, ye werena blate
To come wi' news o' your ain defeat,
And leave your men in sic a strait
Sae early in the morning.
[Chorus]