



Case information

Case ID	300017081
File Reference	AMI/5/40
Name of Site	Sark

Local Authority	Dumfries and Galloway
National Grid Reference	NY 31400 66200
Designation No. (if any)	BTL40
Case Type	Designation

Received/Start Date	01/07/2012
Decision Date	03/08/2016

1. Decision

The assessment against criteria demonstrates that the battlefield is of national importance. The decision is to add the Battle of Sark to the Inventory of Historic Battlefields.

2. Designation Background and Development Proposals

2.1 Designation Background

The battlefield is currently not designated.

The Lochmaben Stone lies within the area of interest of the battlefield, and is a scheduled monument (SM3378).

2.2 Development Proposals

There are no known development proposals which will affect the decision to add Sark to the Inventory of Battlefields.

3. Assessment

3.1 Assessment information

In July 2012, a member of the public submitted a request to consider Sark for inclusion on the Inventory of Historic Battlefields.

Historic Scotland commissioned the Centre of Battlefields Archaeology to undertake research into the Battle of Sark.

The site was visited by Historic Scotland staff on 24/10/2013.

A proposal to add Sark to the Inventory of Historic Battlefields was subject to public consultation in January 2014.

The proposal documentation was updated to reflect comments received at consultation.

3.2 Assessment against designation criteria

The designation criteria are published in the Historic Environment Scotland policy statement June 2016, Annex 6, pp. 60-61.

<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/advice-and-support/planning-and-guidance/legislation-and-guidance/historic-environment-scotland-policy-statement/>

An assessment against the Inventory criteria has been carried out (see Annex A) and Sark battlefield was found to meet the criteria for inclusion on the Inventory.

3.3 Other considerations

N/A

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ANNEX A – Assessment Against the Criteria

Sark

1 Overview and statement of significance

The Battle of Sark took place in 1448 and was the final pitched battle fought between Scotland and England during the period of the Hundred Years War. It was the last battle of the medieval period between the two countries, and the first Scottish victory in battle over the English since the Battle of Otterburn over 60 years earlier.

Sark is also significant because it clearly demonstrated the weakened authority of the kings of both Scotland and England in the mid-15th century. At this time, increasingly powerful members of the nobility were ignoring the authority of the monarchy and striving to control it for their own ends. Noble houses of the highest echelons in Scotland and England were engaged in dynastic manoeuvring, political and sometimes physical conflict, and these internal struggles would overtake both countries for the remainder of the 15th century, leaving little capacity for major cross-border warfare.

In late 1448, the Earl of Northumberland led an army into Scotland, with the support of King Henry VI, breaking a truce between the two nations. Northumberland's army was met by a Scottish force under the Earl of Ormonde to the south-west of modern Gretna, on the north shore of the River Esk.

The battle was a decisive victory for the Scots, with many of Northumberland's force captured or killed, and apparently very few Scottish casualties in return. The victory of the Douglasses raised their profile in the Scottish power struggles at the time, while simultaneously damaging the Earl of Northumberland's in England.

2 Assessment Against the Battlefields Criteria (Scottish Historic Environment Policy, 2011 pp83-85)

2.1 Association with historical events or figures of national significance

The battle of Sark is a clear demonstration of the socio-political turmoil of the mid to late 15th century, as power struggles between the monarchy and the nobles of both Scotland and England caused major internal strife and even civil war in both kingdoms. Henry Percy, second Earl of Northumberland, led the English army at Sark, backed by King Henry VI. The Scottish force was commanded by Hugh Douglas, the Earl of Ormonde, one of the leading magnates of the Black Douglasses. After the Battle of Sark, as James II came into his authority as king after the end of



his minority in 1449, he began to do everything in his power to shatter the incredible power and influence on the Crown that had been accumulated by the Black Douglases, which by this point represented a growing threat to the authority of James II's kingship. The Battle of Sark represents the final pitched battle fought between Scotland and England during the period of the Hundred Years War, the last battle of the medieval period between the two countries, and the first Scottish victory in battle over the English since the Battle of Otterburn over 60 years earlier.

2.2 Significant physical remains and/or archaeological potential

Although no artefacts relating to the battle have yet been reported, the battlefield has not been significantly disturbed since the time of the battle. There is a high potential for surviving archaeological remains to be located within the soils, including remnants of the archers' equipment and arrows from the heavy archery in use by the English, and also remains relating to the charge as the Scottish right flank drove into the English on the left and the subsequent heavy hand-to-hand combat that occurred. There is also the possibility of survival of rare organic material due to the wet conditions on parts of the site around the River Esk and the Kirtle Water.

2.3 Battlefield landscape

Although there has been some development at the northern periphery of the battlefield and some likely changes in the routes of the watercourses, the landscape where the battle of Sark was fought generally survives well, and has not otherwise been altered significantly since the time of the battle. This makes it easy to appreciate the avenue of approach of the English and Scots armies, their positions and manoeuvres, and the impact of features of the terrain such as the River Sark and Kirtle Water upon the outcome of the battle.

2.4 Definition on a modern map

Based on the documentary research and landscape analysis, the site is capable of definition on a modern map with a degree of confidence. It comprises the north bank of the River Esk, where the documentary sources are clear about the English being pushed back into the high tide, resulting in many of them being drowned; the flat, low-lying ground between the River Sark and the Kirtle Water, encompassing the Lochmaben Stone, where the English were encamped; the fields around Old Graitney where the Scots deployed into formation and advanced into the battle and the area between where the majority of the fighting occurred. The field to the west of the Kirtle Water, to include the former course of the river at the time of the battle, and



its western bank. This was the route by which some of the English force attempted to flee during the rout and where significant archaeological remains may be found.

Selected references (further references are included in the site record)

Brown, M. 2005, *The Black Douglases: War and Lordship in Late Medieval Scotland, 1300-1455*. Birlinn: Edinburgh.

Paterson, R.C. 1997, *My Wound Is Deep: A History Of The Later Anglo-Scots Wars, 1380-1560*. J. Donald Publishers: Edinburgh.

Rose, A. 2002, *Kings in the North: the House of Percy in British history*. Weidenfeld & Nicolson: London.