

The Inventory of Historic Battlefields

Blar na Léine

Designation Record

The Inventory of Historic Battlefields is a list of nationally important battlefields in Scotland. A battlefield is of national importance if it makes a contribution to the understanding of the archaeology and history of the nation as a whole, or has the potential to do so, or holds a particularly significant place in the national consciousness. For a battlefield to be included in the Inventory, it must be considered to be of national importance either for its association with key historical events or figures; or for the physical remains and/or archaeological potential it contains; or for its landscape context. In addition, it must be possible to define the site on a modern map with a reasonable degree of accuracy.

The aim of the Inventory is to raise awareness of the significance of these nationally important battlefield sites and to assist in their protection and management for the future. Inventory battlefields are a material consideration in the planning process. The Inventory is also a major resource for enhancing the understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of historic battlefields, for promoting education and stimulating further research, and for developing their potential as attractions for visitors.

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Alternative Name(s)	Date of Last Update
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Inventory of Historic Battlefields

BLAR NA LÉINE

Alternative Names: Battle of the Shirts

15 July 1544

Local Authority: Highland

NGR centred: NN 289 967

Date of Addition to Inventory: 14 December 2012

Date of last update: N/A

Overview and Statement of Significance

The Blar na Léine is significant as a classic example of the internecine tribal warfare which characterises so much of Scotland's internal history. The violent and merciless nature of the battle shows the bitter enmity which clans could hold against their enemies, in some cases lasting for centuries, along with the inherent martial aspects of Highland culture and the respect they were held in. It also highlights the difficulties which many Scottish monarchs had in keeping the Highland regions in line and under the control of a distant throne, and some of the efforts they were required to make in this quest.

The Blar na Léine took place on 15 July 1544 between a group of Frasers and Macintoshes under Lord Lovat and Ranald Gallda (pretender to the chieftdom of Clanranald) and a group of MacDonalds and Camerons under John Moidartach of Moidart, chief of Clan MacDonald of Clanranald. Lovat and Ranald Gallda were returning home along the Great Glen, having assisted the Earl of Huntly and his armies to penetrate MacDonald territory as far as Inverlochy, when they were ambushed and defeated by the MacDonalds. John of Moidart was supported by the Camerons, led by Ewen Cameron of Lochiel, together with the MacDonalds of Keppoch. The battle settled the issue of the leadership of Clanranald in favour of the MacDonalds.

Inventory Boundary

The Inventory boundary defines the area in which the main events of the battle are considered to have taken place (landscape context) and where associated physical remains and archaeological evidence occur or may be expected (specific qualities). The landscape context is described under *battlefield landscape*: it encompasses areas of fighting, key movements of troops across the landscape and other important locations, such as the positions of camps or vantage points. Although the landscape has changed since the time of the battle, key characteristics of the terrain at the time of the battle can normally still be identified, enabling events to be more fully understood and interpreted in their landscape context. Specific qualities are described under *physical remains and potential*: these include landscape features that played a significant role in the battle, other physical remains, such as enclosures or built structures, and areas of known or potential archaeological evidence.

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The Inventory boundary for the Blar na Léine is defined on the accompanying map and includes the following areas:

- The flat plain at the northern end of Loch Lochy, where the main fighting took place.
- The A82, which marks the general route of the Frasers along the shore of the loch and which roughly overlies Wade's Military Road.
- The lower slopes of Ben Tigh, down which Clanranald advanced to attack the Frasers.
- The area around Kilfinan Church, where bodies from the battle may have been buried.

The Inventory of Historic Battlefields - Boundary

Blar na Léine 15 July 1544 Local Authority: Highland

