

The Inventory of Historic Battlefields

The Battle of Cromdale

Designation Record and Summary Report

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.

Designation Record and Summary Report Contents

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CROMDALE

Alternative Names: None

1 May 1690

Local Authority: Highland

NGR centred: NJ 091 280

Date of Addition to Inventory: 30 November 2011

Date of last update: 14 December 2012

Overview and Statement of Significance

Cromdale is significant as the final battle of the first Jacobite Rising within Scotland. It brings to an end the first attempt to restore James VII through force of arms within Scotland, although in Ireland Jacobite efforts continue until 1691. Cromdale is also the final major battle within Scotland in the 1600s, a period during which the entire British Isles had suffered greatly through conflict for much of the century.

Cromdale was the final battle fought on the British mainland in support of the first Jacobite Rising. It was fought between a small force of Jacobite Highlanders under the command of Major-General Thomas Buchan and a Government army of dragoons and infantry under Sir Thomas Livingstone. The Government troops inflicted a crushing defeat upon the Jacobite forces, and they would subsequently disperse. Although James' Irish campaign was to continue for another year, the Jacobites in Scotland were unable to mount another major campaign of resistance until 1715.

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.

The Inventory boundary for the Battle of Cromdale is defined on the accompanying map and includes the following areas:

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- Cromdale kirk, where a Jacobite outpost was attacked and taken as the Government army crossed the Spey; the kirk's bells sounded the alarm, but with too little time for the Jacobites to react effectively.
- Lethendry Castle, where a Jacobite outpost was attacked by Government troops using grenades.
- The area of high ground where the bulk of the Jacobite army camped near Claggersnich and Ballachule.
- Clach nam Pìobar, a stone on the slopes of Cromdale above Claggersnich Wood, which is associated with the battle.
- Dalchapple where Keppoch is said to have camped with his men, who preferred to camp below Tom an Uird away from the main body of Jacobites.

Historical Background to the Battle

With the usurpation of James VII & II following the arrival of William of Orange during the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688, the exiled King's supporters in Scotland (the Jacobites) rose under John Graham of Claverhouse, otherwise known as Bonnie Dundee by his supporters or as Bloody Clavers, by those with Covenanter sympathies who had suffered at his hands during the 'Killing Times' of the 1670s. The first battle of the rising took place at Killiecrankie in July 1689, and saw the Jacobites inflict a resounding victory against the government army under Major-General Hugh MacKay. Dundee was killed in the battle, however, and with his loss the Jacobite cause began to flounder, with defeat at the Battle of Dunkeld on 21 August revitalising government fortunes.

Over the winter of 1689 and the early months of 1690, the Jacobite army lost many men to desertion as it moved itinerantly throughout northern Scotland, plundering civilian resources. At the beginning of the spring campaign in April, General Thomas Buchan replaced Cannon as commander of what remained of the Jacobite force. The army was largely a Highland one, comprised of soldiers from the clans MacDonald, MacLean, Cameron, MacPherson and the Invermoriston Grants. Buchan led 1500 of these Highlanders into Strathspey, where they encamped at an exposed position on the Haughs of Cromdale. The Laird of Grant, a strong supporter of William and who was displeased that rebel soldiers harassed his lands and were quartered in plain sight of Castle Grant, sent for Sir Thomas Livingstone, the commander of the garrison at Inverness. The government force arrived in the area on 28 April. Under the cover of darkness in the early hours of 1 May, Livingstone's force attacked the Jacobite encampment. The surprised Jacobites were quickly overwhelmed and fled into the mist of the early morning hours, leaving several hundred of their force dead on the field.

Events & Participants

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Cromdale is not noted for the calibre of the participants, coming at a point that the Jacobite cause was faltering after its initial success. The Jacobites were commanded by Major-General Thomas Buchan. He was a professional soldier who had fought in France and Holland for Charles II in Hugh Mackay's regiment, and in 1686 was commissioned as Colonel in the Earl of Mar's Regiment by James VII & II. He remained loyal to James, taking over command of the Jacobite cause in Scotland after the defeat at Dunkeld in August 1689. Surviving the debacle at Cromdale, he tried to re-ignite the rising several times, including attempts to take Inverness, but in 1692 when the Highland chiefs settled with William, he went into exile in France but returned to Scotland at Inverlochy in 1707, plotting a new Jacobite rising (Buchan 1925). He died in 1721, a Jacobite till the end.

The government force was commanded by Sir Thomas Livingstone, Viscount Teviot, who was Lieutenant-General in the Army and General of the Scots Force. He was born in Holland and spent most of his career fighting for William of Orange, coming to Britain with William in 1688. He was later a Privy Counsellor and died in 1710.

There were various high ranking Jacobite chiefs present, the most notable of whom was probably Coll MacDonald, fifteenth Chief of Keppoch. He was a committed supporter of James, who also commanded the army of highlanders at Mulroy in 1688 and was with the Jacobite armies at Killiecrankie the previous year and at Sheriffmuir in 1715. He had been Chief since the death of his father Archibald in 1682 and inherited from him the dispute of land and tenancy which had first caused Lachlan MacKintosh to successfully press the Privy Council for a commission of fire and sword in 1681. Coll was studying at the University of St Andrews at the time of his succession, a clear indication that the upper strata of the highland clans were not the uncultivated mountain men which Lowlanders generally regarded them to be. Initially, he sought to resolve the situation through negotiation but when this failed, and indeed led to him spending some time in jail, he was equally capable of demonstrating that there was also warrior's blood flowing through his scholar's veins.

Battlefield Landscape

Following the encounter at Cromdale kirk, which accompanied the fording of the Spey by Livingstone's men, the mounted arm of the government force advanced rapidly on the Jacobite camp on the Haughs of Cromdale. The kirk stands on haughland down by the river, lying lower than the modern village of Cromdale. The Jacobite troops were camped on the high ground above the village, in a rural area at the foot of the Hills of Cromdale. Streams run down from the granite and limestone hills and meander across the level, boggy ground. Aside from ruined field boundaries and the foundations of a longhouse, the landscape is still largely uninterrupted and marshy. A track runs through the battlefield area on its eastern side, winding across the nearby hills.

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Archaeological and Physical Remains and Potential

The buildings of Cromdale Kirk and Lethendry Castle are still standing, though the ruined tower at Lethendry is in a state of semi-collapse (which worsened significantly through the winter of 2010-2011). Action related to the government attack on the Jacobite camp took place at both of these locations. Indeed, at Lethendry Castle, grenades were recorded as having been used against the defenders and evidence may survive of this early use of the weapon.

It is reasonable to expect to find remains from the engagement. The Jacobites were encamped in the area which would allow for the deposition of materials over a period of time. The surprise attack by the government force led to disorganised hand-to-hand fighting between foot soldiers and mounted troops. In the confusion of the surprise attack and retreat into the hills, a variety of physical remains would have been lost, dropped or abandoned, including items of camp equipment as well as spent and dropped ammunition, damaged weapons, personal accoutrements like buckles and buttons, and cavalry items like horseshoes, nails and other hardware. Furthermore, the naturally boggy soil conditions might have allowed for the preservation of organic materials not often found on drier sites.

Cultural Association

Although there is no formal monument to the battle a large boulder to the east of Glaggersnich Wood (NJ 1026) is known as Clach nam Piobair (the Piper's Stone) and according to local lore is associated with a Jacobite piper called Hugh who played his pipes on the rock despite being wounded.

Another stone, this time possibly a prehistoric standing stone is located close to the confluence of the Gonglass Water and the River Avon, over 5 km to the east of the battlefield. The stone bears the inscription 1690 and is traditionally held to mark the site where a fleeing Jacobite soldier succumbed to his wounds.

The battle is remembered in a ballad popular throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Prints and reprints of *The Haughs of Cromdale* are widely available in numerous archives as well as collected editions of Scottish ballads, such as Hogg's *Jacobite Relics*. The ballad tells the tale of the surprise attack on the Jacobites and their defeat, but curiously conflates the 1690 battle with the earlier 1645 battle of Auldearn, fought between Montrose and a Covenanter army – a battle in which a Highland force was victorious. Brander has suggested that the sudden shift to Auldearn allows the tune to end on a note of celebration, instead of defeat (Brander 1993).

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The Inventory of Historic Battlefields - Boundary

Cromdale

1 May 1690

Local Authority: Highland

306000

307000

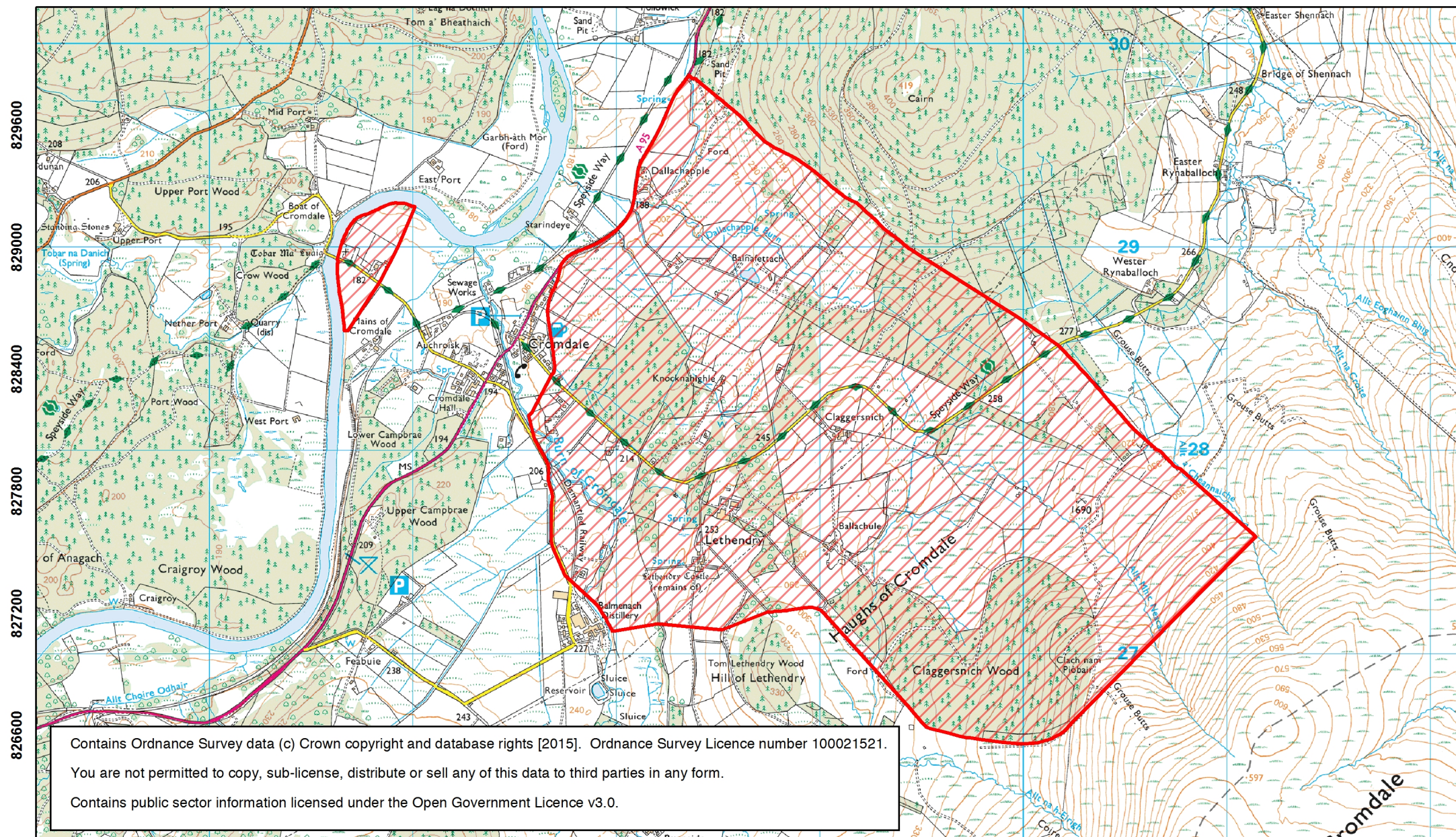
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