

The Inventory of Historic Battlefields

The Battle of Darnick

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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Name	Date of Addition to Inventory
Alternative Name(s)	Date of Last Update
Date of Battle	Overview and Statement of
Local Authority	Significance
NGR Centred	Inventory Boundary

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DARNICK

Alternative Names: Melrose; Skirmish Hill; Skirmish Field

29 July 1526

Local Authority: Scottish Borders

NGR centred: NT 533 346

Date of Addition to Inventory: 14 Dec 2012

Date of last update: N/A

Overview and Statement of Significance

The Battle of Melrose was fought between Archibald Douglas, 6th Earl of Angus, supported by the Kerrs and Maxwells, and Walter Scott of Buccleuch supported by the Elliots. The Earl of Angus had secured guardianship of the young King James V in what was supposed to be a three monthly arrangement where James would be cared for by each of the four members of the Council of Regency; however, having taken James into his care, Angus refused to hand him on to the Earl of Arran whose turn was next. After over a year with Angus and having grown weary of what amounted to his informal imprisonment, James sent a message to Sir Walter Scott of Buccleuch, pleading for him to launch an attempt to secure his liberty. After a visit to Jedburgh to participate in a Justice ayre, the king had begun his journey towards Edinburgh, escorted by Angus and his men, when they were intercepted by a large body of reivers led by Scott of Buccleuch at Melrose. Angus' troop, predominantly Kerrs, stood its ground and was able to drive off its attackers, inflicting relatively heavy losses.

The Battle of Darnick is significant against the backdrop of political turmoil in Scotland following the death of James IV. It comes at the point where James V is attempting to free himself from the control of Angus by any means necessary, Darnick being the first of two battles fought in 1526 for this aim. The King himself likely witnessed the battle from nearby Darnick Tower. Although only a small battle in terms of combatant numbers, it also showed Angus that his enemies were growing, and that other members of the nobility were now an active threat to him. Finally, the battle is also significant as an example of border warfare and politics in the period. Both armies consisted mainly of border reivers and the conflict undoubtedly also had some basis in the complex system of feuds and alliances that characterised relationships between border families at this time. As such, Darnick presents an opportunity to uncover physical evidence of border warfare at the time and to place it in the wider context of 16th century warfare.

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

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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 Darnick is defined on the accompanying map and includes the following areas:

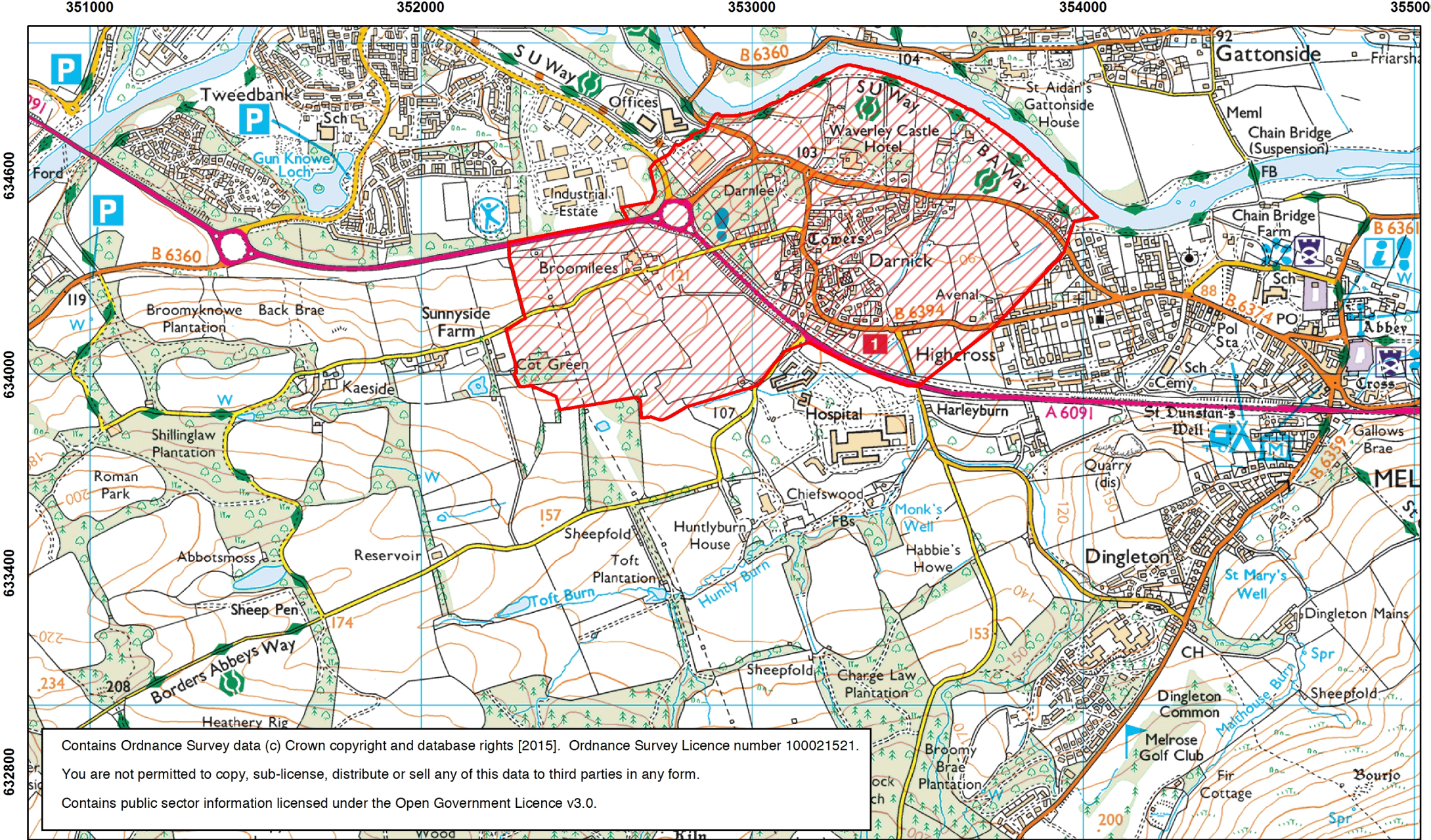
- The field known as Skirmish Field that lies between the Tweed and Darnick Tower.
- Darnick Tower, where James V was positioned for safety, and from where he likely watched the battle.
- Skirmish Hill, where the Hydropathic Hotel was built and which is now the Waverley Castle Hotel.
- Land to the east of Darnick, through which Buccleuch's men advanced from the Eildon Hills to meet Angus.
- Land to the south-west of Darnick, the route which Buccleuch's men fled, pursued by Angus' forces.

The Inventory of Historic Battlefields - Features


Darnick

29 July 1526

Local Authority: Scottish Borders



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