

The Inventory of Historic Battlefields

The Battle of Drumclog

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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DRUMCLOG

Alternative Names:

1 June 1679

Local Authority: South Lanarkshire

NGR centred: NS 628 399

Date of Addition to Inventory: 30 November 2011

Date of last update: 14 December 2012

Overview and Statement of Significance

The Battle of Drumclog is significant as the opening battle of the 1679 Covenanter uprising. It was a resounding victory for the Covenanters, boosting recruitment to their cause, but the uprising would be quickly suppressed at Bothwell Bridge a few weeks later, sparking a period of brutal reprisal against the Covenanters.

The Battle of Drumclog was fought between an army of Covenanters gathered at a conventicle and a force of Dragoons under John Graham of Claverhouse. While the dragoons were aiming to break up the conventicle, they were instead themselves driven off by the Covenanters.

The Covenanter victory bolstered their cause, and their numbers rapidly grew, although the Government also increased the size of their army to deal with the new Covenanter rebellion, which was swiftly crushed by the Government forces at Bothwell Bridge a few weeks later.

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

- The area of Stobieside, which is on the hill on which the conventicle took place.

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- The area of the wet ground to the north, known as Coldwakening moss.
- The area around the monument which is where Claverhouse was positioned.
- The areas to the south and south-east which accommodate possible lines of government advance and rout.
- The possible location of the ditch where the stream runs between the initial position of the armies.

Historical Background to the Battle

Upon his restoration to the throne in 1660, Charles II imposed increasingly strict regulations on religious non-conformity. Despite his initial recognition of the Covenant, Charles II reinstated episcopacy in Scotland and the legal protections for Scottish Presbyterianism were revoked. Covenanters were forced to convene in secret to worship - often gathering in remote locations in the hills to escape government persecution in secret meetings that were known as conventicles. This period of persecution was at times to give way to open rebellion during what were known as the 'killing times,' with the last of these flaring up in 1679.

Arriving at Drumclog on 1 June 1679, having heard that a conventicle was taking place, John Graham of Claverhouse, a government officer and later Viscount of Dundee, found an armed force of Covenanters arrayed against him on good ground across a ditch and marsh. After two rounds of skirmishing, the whole of the Covenanter force charged down from their high ground and across the marsh to engage the government troops, who were overwhelmed and fled. The Covenanter victory at Drumclog buoyed the hopes of even moderate non-conformists and their ranks swelled with volunteers from all over south western Scotland. The stunned government quickly organised a much larger force to deal with the Covenanters. The two armies met again on 22 June at Bothwell Bridge, where a resounding government victory ended the nascent rebellion.

Events & Participants

Socio-political tensions related to the Covenanter movement and the Royal imposition of episcopacy, particularly in the south-west of Scotland, flared in 1666 with the brief Pentland Rising, which was quickly repressed. In response to continued religious persecution throughout the 1660s and 1670s, Covenanters in the Presbyterian stronghold of south western Scotland again entered into open revolt in 1679 following the assassination of Archbishop James Sharp by the Covenanting extremists Hackston of Rathillet and John Balfour (Burley) of Kinloch on 3 May 1679.

This act of aggression and the anticipation of harsh government reprisal sparked an organised Covenanter resistance that gave vent to widespread socio-political discontent in the Scottish Presbyterian community. On Restoration Day (29 May) a group of Covenanters burnt acts of parliament at the Mercat Cross in Rutherglen. Such organised anti-government activity,

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which was attracting increasing numbers of participants, could not be ignored and John Graham of Claverhouse (later Viscount Dundee) led a small force of horse and dragoons from Glasgow to break up the threatened insurgency.

Though the Covenanting army was soundly beaten at Bothwell Bridge just weeks after the encounter at Drumclog, the 1679 rebellion remains a key moment in the history of the Kirk of Scotland. Severe repression at the hands of government agents like Graham of Claverhouse led to an organised expression of popular discontent in which thousands of Covenanters took up arms against the ruling establishment. The victims of 'The Killing Times' of the late seventeenth century became Presbyterian martyrs and the political discontent created under Stuart rule had wide ranging political repercussions in Scotland throughout the following century, perhaps most notably by fostering anti-Stuart sentiment in the Glorious Revolution and the Jacobite Rebellions.

The Covenanter force at Drumclog is thought to have been 1000-1500 men led by Robert Hamilton and including several other high-profile organisers, such as the assassins Hackston and Balfour of Burley. Robert Hamilton of Preston, a native of Prestonpans and later the second Baronet of Preston, was a hardliner who rejected any form of compromise with the government and before the battle decreed that no quarter was to be given to the enemy. He went on to command the Covenanter army at Bothwell Bridge three weeks later, where his uncompromising approach led to a last-minute purge of the so-called Indulged who favoured compromise with the government, which would accept his civil authority but not his church. This was a contributing factor in the subsequent defeat in the battle, after which Hamilton took refuge in Holland. He was attainted in 1683 because of his activities in 1679, and he continued to raise money and plot insurrection through the United Societies (a seventeenth century Presbyterian fundamentalist group). Although he was allowed to return to Scotland in 1688 after the Glorious Revolution, he refused to recognise the authority of William and Mary and was imprisoned on suspicion of sedition. He was released from jail in 1693 and he died in 1701.

Among Hamilton's force was the eighteen year old William Cleland, who acquitted himself well in the battle, almost killing or capturing Claverhouse at one point. He was a Covenanter captain at the Battle of Bothwell Bridge later that month and was named in a proclamation denouncing Covenanters after the battle. He escaped to Holland where he became involved in the Duke of Argyll's expedition in 1685 to support the Monmouth Rebellion. He went to Scotland ahead of Argyll and thus escaped capture but was forced into hiding. He escaped once more to Holland but returned in 1688 to gather information for the Scottish exiles ahead of William of Orange's arrival. He was part of a group of Covenanters who formed a regiment to resist Popery and Prelacy in 1689, which came to be known as the Cameronians. As Lieutenant-Colonel of the regiment under Douglas, the Earl of Angus, he commanded the regiment that held Dunkeld against the Jacobites in August 1689 after the Battle of Killiecrankie. He was killed in the fighting, shot in the head and the liver while encouraging his men.

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John Graham, Earl of Claverhouse and Viscount Dundee, commonly known now as Bonnie Dundee, was an experienced soldier with a history of fighting for the Crown. He had led the suppression of the conventicles in south-west Scotland for Charles II with particular zeal. He had been defeated by a Covenanter force at Drumclog, nearly being killed during the engagement, before being involved in the subsequent Government victory at Bothwell Bridge on 22 June 1679. His actions against them earned him the lasting hatred of the Covenanters, who nicknamed him as 'Bluidy Clavers', while his Highland allies knew him as 'Black John of the Battles'. He was one of the first of the Scottish nobility to reject the ascendancy of William and Mary, and had been declared a traitor even before William and Mary accepted the throne of Scotland on 11 April 1689. Graham raised the standard for James at Dundee Law in early 1689, before embarking into the Highlands to build support for the cause, all the while evading General Mackay's pursuing army. Killiecrankie was Graham's first and last battle for the Jacobite cause, as he was fatally wounded by gunfire during the charge. Sources differ on whether he died on the field or of his wounds a short while later, but without his leadership the Jacobite cause in Scotland was irrevocably weakened.

Battlefield Landscape

The contemporary accounts and the nature of the terrain make the identification of the battlefield, which is set within a rural area of low hills and marshland, readily identifiable. The Conventicle appears to have been held on the terrace on which the large house of Stobieside now stands, perhaps also on the slopes above and below this terrace. A possible line of the ditch described in the accounts can still be seen where a stream runs along the foot of the slope to the east of the house. Claverhouse's men were positioned to the east of the ditch, in the area now occupied by the monument to the battle.

While there has been some agricultural development and small-scale mining and quarrying in the area of Drumclog over the intervening centuries, there has been no large-scale industrial or commercial activity. The terrain and its seemingly favourable state of preservation mean that a successful archaeological investigation of the site is probable. The site could yield valuable information about the realities of skirmish activity between government forces and the largely civilian Covenanters. Furthermore, the marshy condition of the soil gives the potential for exceptional preservation of military equipment and other objects of the period, including organic material which would not last in a dry environment. Remains are likely to be of high importance in their own right as well as illustrative of an important moment in Scottish history.

Archaeological and Physical Remains and Potential

According to the 1860 1st edition 6 inch map human bones were found in the area presumed to have been occupied by government troops, at a location around 100m to the north of the monument, which today places it in an area of forestry. There is also a potential mass grave for government soldiers at Caldermill 4km to the north-east.

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Though a relatively small number of individuals were involved in the battle of Drumclog, the nature of hand-to-hand fighting and the presence of mounted troops would deposit a variety of physical remains such as spent and dropped ammunition, damaged weapons (i.e. pistols, swords, and the various makeshift weapons used by the Covenanters), personal accoutrements like buckles and buttons, and cavalry items like horseshoes, nails and other hardware. The area is still largely agricultural and has not been extensively developed and it is probable that archaeological evidence from the battle remains.

Cultural Association

For such a brief encounter, the battle of Drumclog is highly represented in historic and cultural tradition. There is also a large corpus of Covenanter literature, including numerous church histories, memoirs, ballads and fictional accounts that appeared throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The battles of Drumclog and Bothwell Bridge both figure prominently among these. The most well-known example of this is Walter Scott's *Old Mortality* which offers fictionalised accounts of the fighting, as well as the assassination of Archbishop Sharp and a sketch of the character of John Balfour of Burley. Scott also collected folk ballads in works such as 1802's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, which featured *The Battle of Loudon Hill, or Drumclog*. The ballad does not discuss detailed battle action, but rather celebrates the bravery of the Covenanters, especially the 'noble' Burley (Brander 1993: 171), 'a man of honour, birth, an fame' (ibid.: 172) and decries the 'wicked' Claverhouse (ibid.: 171).

Select Bibliography

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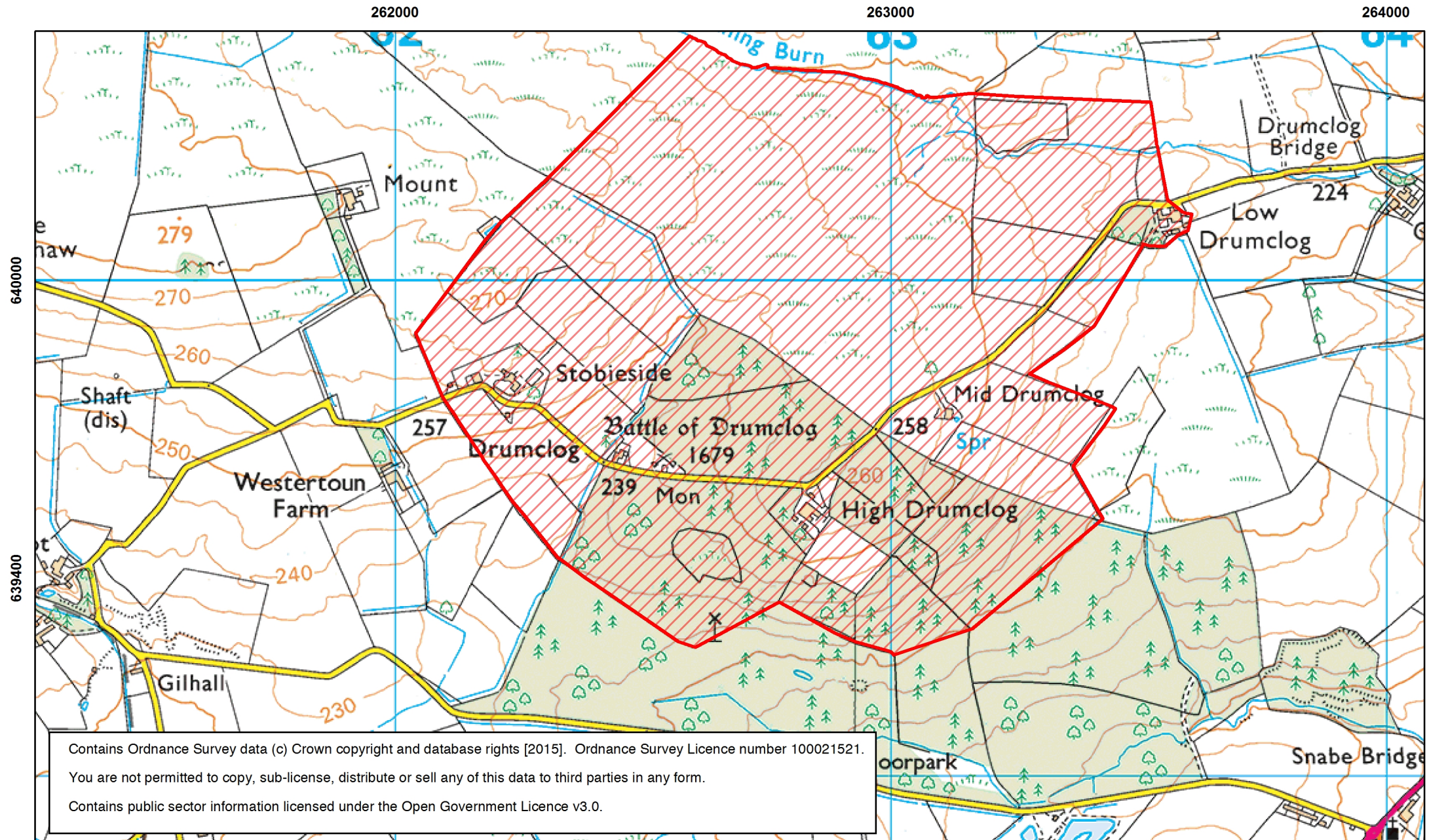
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The Inventory of Historic Battlefields - Boundary

Drumclog

1 June 1679

Local Authority: South Lanarkshire



 Inventory of Historic Battlefields boundary

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