

The Inventory of Historic Battlefields

The Battle of Dunbar II

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.

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DUNBAR II

Alternative Names: None

3 September 1650

Local Authority: East Lothian

NGR centred: NT 690 767

Date of Addition to Inventory: 21 March 2011

Date of last update: 14 December 2012

Overview and Statement of Significance

The battle of Dunbar is significant as the most influential battle fought in Scotland during the Wars of the Three Kingdoms. It one of the largest and bloodiest battles in Scottish history and had substantial military and political consequences. It is also significant as one of Oliver Cromwell's finest battlefield victories.

The English Parliamentarian army (supporters of the Commonwealth of England) under the command of Oliver Cromwell succeeded in defeating the larger Scottish Royalist army. A large number of Scots were killed during the battle and over half the army was captured and marched to England to be imprisoned at Durham Cathedral.

Victory for the English Parliamentarians at Dunbar left southern Scotland open to Cromwell. He marched unopposed to Edinburgh and captured the city by December 1650. Dunbar was one of Cromwell's greatest military successes and played a key role in completing his rise to political power. The following two Scottish defeats at Inverkeithing (July 1651) and Worcester (September 1651) destroyed any serious Scottish bid for the restoration of Charles II and signalled the end of Scotland's role in the Wars of the Three Kingdoms.

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 Battle of Dunbar II is defined on the accompanying map and includes the following areas:

- The slopes and summit of Doon Hill where the Scots camped and initially deployed.
- Broxmouth House and designed landscape and the southern part of Dunbar. The locations of the English camps including the graveyard of Queen's Road Parish Church in Dunbar where the baggage train and artillery were located.
- The Brox/Spott Burn and lands adjacent to the north, south and east. The general location of the main battle and the crossing point of the English army.
- Meikle Pinkerton Farm and lands to the north and south. The location of the Scottish right flank as shown on Fisher's contemporary map.
- The well preserved landscape characteristics of the battlefield including the views out and relationship between the summit and the lower slopes of Doon Hill, along with the Brox Burn and Broxmouth House and grounds.

Historical Background to the Battle

Since entering Scotland in July 1650 Cromwell had played a cat and mouse game with the Scottish army under the command of General David Leslie. By August the campaign was taking its toll on the English army and they moved south down the east coast towards Berwick. Leslie intercepted them at Dunbar and took up position on high ground to the south of the town on the slopes and summit of Doon Hill. This effectively blocked off the path of the English army's retreat to England, leaving Cromwell with limited choices. He could attempt withdrawal by sea, but there was little prospect of relief by forces from Berwick because of the deployment of Scottish troops at Cockburnspath. Instead, Cromwell decided to fight. There was a fatal weakness in the Scottish deployment: the right flank had come down to the lower slopes of Doon Hill and was within reach of the English if they could cross the Brox Burn. A concentrated attack on the right flank would be largely unhindered by Leslie's left flank because the defensive strength of their position restricted their ability to manoeuvre. Breaking the right flank would leave the centre and left exposed. At the same time, Leslie had left gaps in his deployment that meant a strike could get in amongst his lines and make it relatively easy to break through.

In the afternoon before the battle, Cromwell sent a small detachment across the burn where they briefly occupied a 'poor house' before being driven off by a Scottish unit. Just before dawn, the English crossed the burn and defeated a largely unprepared Scottish detachment that had been sent forward, possibly to attack Broxmouth House, the location of the English camp. Having crossed the burn, Cromwell marshalled his forces and attacked the Scottish right wing with John Lambert's cavalry; he threw assaults against the rest of the Scottish line but these were not intended to break through. Cromwell concentrated his main assault on the Scottish right, bringing in supporting troops under George

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Monck as well. This tactic enabled Cromwell to break through the Scottish battalions, and divisions of Lambert's cavalry reached the top of the lower slopes of Doon Hill; here they were able to stop the Scottish forces reforming. Many of the defeated troops surrendered, while others fled in all directions with the English cavalry in pursuit. After the battle the Scottish camp at Doon Hill was plundered and most of the dead were stripped and serviceable weapons recovered.

The numbers involved are open to question. There is general agreement amongst the secondary sources that the English army numbered between 11,000 and 12,000 and that they took very light casualties (c300 killed). In contrast, there is less agreement about Scottish numbers. The standing army was around 5,500 men, but the prospect of war had led to a muster for a new army. The requirement on the different districts should have produced an army of well over 20,000 and, as Cromwell recorded that Leslie's army was around 22,000, this has been the generally accepted figure. However, more recently questions have been raised about the response to the muster, leading to a revised proposal of 15,000 troops. This seems more likely in the context of raising a new army in a period of constant warfare and the decimation of Scottish armies in the campaigns against Montrose, but this does not mean that it is right and the higher figure could in fact be correct. Scottish casualties are similarly unclear. Cromwell recorded that 3,000 Scots were killed in the battle and 10,000 taken prisoner; of these, roughly half were released and the rest marched to Durham. In contrast, contemporary Scottish accounts talk of 800 dead; this may reflect the number killed on the battlefield, while Cromwell's figure includes those killed in the rout.

Events & Participants

After Montrose's final defeat at the Battle of Carbisdale on 27 April and his execution on 21 May 1650, Scotland might have been able to settle into some form of peace after twelve years of conflict. However, the Scottish Parliament had been generally unhappy about the execution of Charles I in 1649 and, despite their opposition to Charles II's champion Montrose, had opened negotiations with Charles; they also suspected strongly that the English Parliamentarians would try to annex Scotland. The combination of anger over the execution and fear over the English Parliament's intentions culminated in the Treaty of Breda on 1 May 1650, where Charles II guaranteed to establish Presbyterianism as the state religion and to recognise the authority of the Kirk in civil law across Britain.

The English Parliamentarians were already mobilising to deal with the threat from Scotland, and Cromwell was marching north with an army within five days of Charles signing the Covenant. The English army, which initially numbered around 16,000, had some successes in taking Scottish strongholds, but had to rely on supply from the sea as the Scots used a scorched earth tactic against them. Disease also began to affect the army and by August, Cromwell's army of around 12,000 men was quite dispirited. Edinburgh was held against them, and Leslie was countering any manoeuvres they tried. Cromwell withdrew to his supply base at Dunbar, but Leslie arrived first and took up position along Doon Hill. Cromwell had little choice but to

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fight, as his route back to England was now cut; his only alternative would be a difficult evacuation by sea. However, the initiative swung to Cromwell as the Scottish army came down from the heights onto lower ground, making an assault against them feasible.

The historically significant figures at Dunbar are a roll call of the English Civil War. Oliver Cromwell commanded the English army, and the battle is one frequently cited by later authors to illustrate his tactical brilliance. He was accompanied by other leading figures of the New Model Army and subsequent political developments in the Protectorate and Restoration. His son-in-law Charles Fleetwood was his Lieutenant-General; Fleetwood later served as Commander-in-Chief in Ireland, where he was known for being particularly repressive and later resisted the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, and afterwards lost all rank and privilege as a result.

The English cavalry was commanded by Major-General John Lambert. He was at Marston Moor and later at Preston as Cromwell's second-in-command. In 1651, he went on to win the Battle of Inverkeithing, which made the Royalist position in Scotland untenable, and was with Cromwell at Worcester, the battle that ended Scotland's role in the Wars of the Three Kingdoms.

The English infantry were led by Major-General George Monck. He went on to finish the conquest of Scotland, which included a massacre at Dundee. In the collapse of the Protectorate after Cromwell's death, Monck took the lead in preparing for the Restoration and was highly decorated by Charles II. He also is significant as being the commander of the Coldstream Guards, the only unit of the New Model Army to be incorporated into the Royalist army after the Restoration.

Major-General David Leslie, born in 1601, was a very capable and experienced commander who began his military career fighting for Gustavus Adolphus in the Thirty Years War, where he rose to the rank of Colonel. After his return to Scotland in 1640, he was second in command as Major-General of the Scottish armies that were sent to help the English Parliamentarians in 1644; it was the despatch of Leslie and his troops that acted as the spark for Montrose's raising of the Royal Standard in Scotland. He was recalled to Scotland in 1645 to deal with Montrose, which he achieved in a single battle at Philiphaugh, before returning to the war in England in 1646. Later that year, it was Leslie who received Charles I surrender at Newark. He returned to Scotland in 1647, where he helped Argyll against Alasdair Mac Colla, Montrose's former ally, finally forcing Mac Colla to withdraw to Ireland. With the Scot's support for Charles II in 1650 after his father's execution, Leslie again found himself in command of the Scottish army against his former ally Oliver Cromwell. He successfully frustrated Cromwell throughout the summer of 1650 until he finally faced him in battle at Dunbar, where Cromwell inflicted a crushing defeat on the Scots force. Leslie opposed Charles II decision to invade England in 1651, and played little part in the Battle of Worcester, where the Scottish army was again defeated, and Leslie was captured and imprisoned in the Tower of London until the Restoration in 1660. In 1661, in recognition of his earlier service to the Royalist cause, Charles II made Leslie the first Baron Newark. Leslie finally died in 1682.

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Battlefield Landscape

The general location of the battlefield is well established by a series of primary sources, including eyewitness accounts and a contemporary map drawn by Fitz-Payne Fisher. However, the exact location of the main deployment across the Brox Burn and the lower slopes of the Doon Hill will only be resolved through archaeological fieldwork.

On the night of 1 September the English camped in the fields to the south of Dunbar, with the baggage train and artillery located in a churchyard south of the town. The site of the English camp may have been lost under the southern expansion of Dunbar but the churchyard is likely to be the burial ground of the 16th century Town Kirk, now subsumed within grounds of the 19th century Queen's Road Parish Church.

Broxmouth House, where Cromwell was moved to on the 2 September, has been redeveloped but the grounds are largely intact. The point where the English crossed the burn and prepared to assault the Scottish right flank lies out-with the grounds of Broxmouth House but has remained relatively unchanged, while Doon Hill, where the Scots camped and initially deployed, survives as open farmland.

The battle was fought on open land on the outskirts of Dunbar. The main action took place on the lower slopes of Doon Hill and beside the narrow steep gorge created by the Brox Burn. This landscape has been significantly altered since the time of the battle through the enclosure of the land. Extensive mineral extraction and the construction of major transport links within the battlefield have divided the area into separate zones, making it difficult to read the land as a single entity. However, significant landscape features identified on Fisher's map including the Brox Burn, Doon Hill and the grounds of Broxmouth House survive intact and are well preserved.

The spatial and topographic relationships between these features played key roles in the battle and their preservation allows the landscape of the battlefield to continue to be read and understood. Important views such as those looking from the summit of Doon Hill towards Broxmouth House and Dunbar in the north are intact and provide the same outlook as it would have done in the 17th century.

The southern half of the defined area is mainly farmland with Broxmouth Park Garden and designed landscape, Dunbar Cement Works and part of Dunbar town located in the north. The mainline railway and A1 road running east-west through the site and the former limestone quarry located on the east side of the defined area may have impacted on surviving battlefield evidence.

Archaeological and Physical Remains and Potential

No artefacts or archaeological features associated with the battle are known to have been recovered. However, given the nature of the weapons of the period and the character of the action and the intact nature of a high percentage of the battlefield, it is likely that considerable quantities of lead

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bullets could survive within the defined battlefield area. The use of artillery by both armies, including smaller field pieces deployed with the regiments, means that in addition to round shot (a spherical solid projectile fired from cannons), a distinctive distribution of case shot (a thin metal case containing a large number of bullets or small projectiles used in close range warfare) could survive.

The 'poor house' outpost occupied by a small detachment of the English soldiers and attacked by the Scots on the afternoon before the battle may be identifiable archaeologically and/or from documentary sources.

The location of the plundered Scottish camp, on the slopes and summit of Doon Hill, may well be recognisable archaeologically as a concentrated artefact scatter. As the English camp at Broxmouth House was not affected by the action it may have left little archaeological trace.

Individual burials and mass graves may well be located on the battlefield. In the absence of reports of any past discoveries these may remain largely undisturbed. The only burial known to relate to the battle is the grave of Sir William Douglas, who fought in the Scottish army, which is located within the grounds of Broxmouth House.

Cultural Association

The Battle of Dunbar has very few Scottish cultural associations and has left little impact. It is mentioned in the ballad *The Battle of Philiphaugh* and in *The Song of the Bass Rock* and is named within poems written in honour of Cromwell in England, such as a 1652 poem by John Milton entitled *To Cromwell; Jockie's Lamentation* and the triumphal *Our Glory Roll*.

The battle is remembered by the community of Dunbar with an annual wreath laying ceremony at the modern commemorative monument located beside the former main road to England. Within the grounds of Broxmouth House is the grave of Sir William Douglas and an earthwork mound called 'Cromwell's Mount', though its association with the battle is presently unproven.

Select Bibliography

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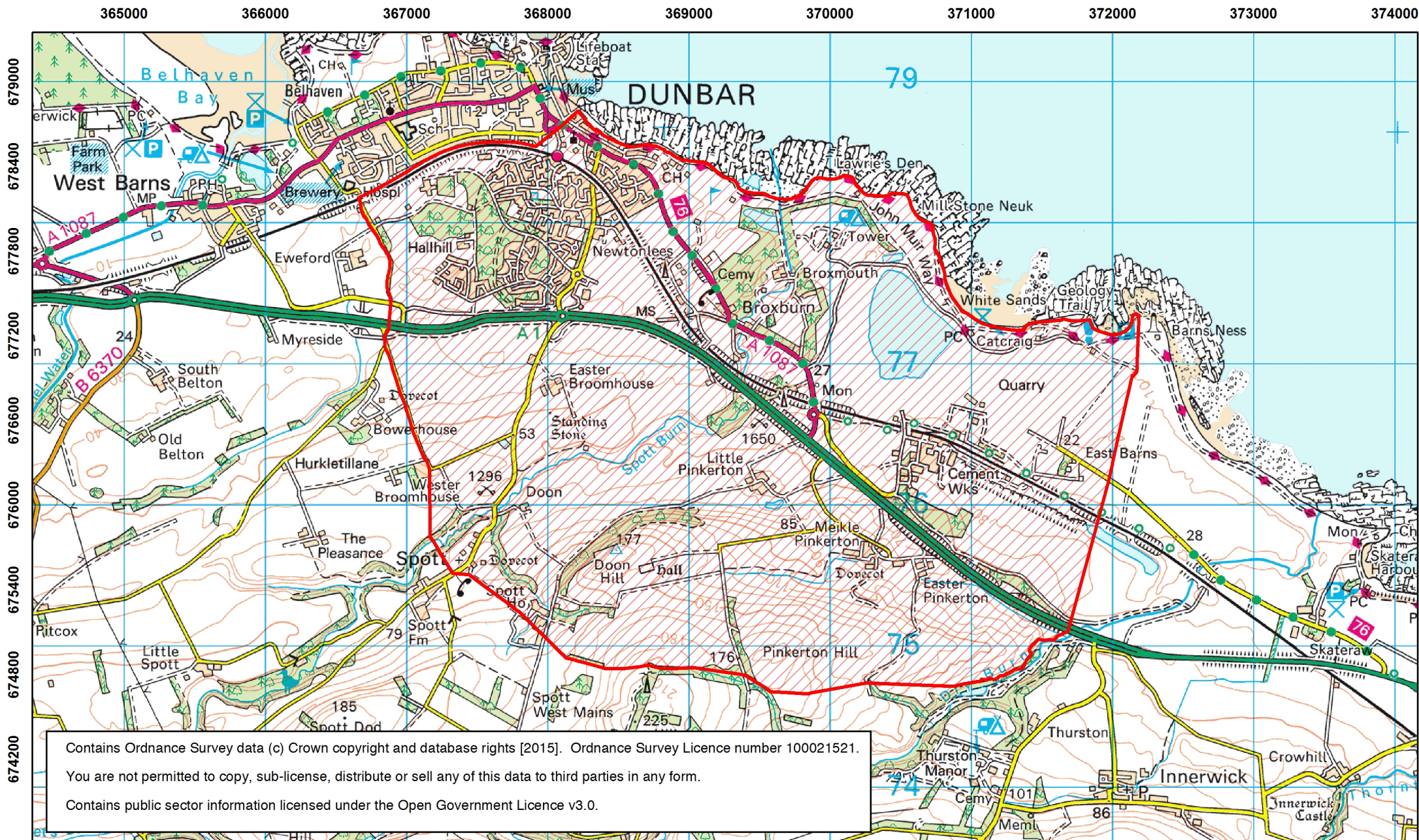
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The Inventory of Historic Battlefields - Boundary

Dunbar II

3 September 1650

Local Authority: East Lothian



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