

# **The Inventory of Historic Battlefields**

## **The Battle of Falkirk 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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# Inventory of Historic Battlefields

## FALKIRK II

Alternative Names: None

17 January 1746

Local Authority: Falkirk

NGR centred: NS 868 787

Date of Addition to Inventory: 21 March 2011

Date of last update: 14 December 2012

## Overview and Statement of Significance

The second battle of Falkirk is significant as the penultimate battle of the period of the Jacobite Risings. The Jacobite army at Falkirk is the largest ever assembled, and it was the first time in the '45 Rising that the Jacobites faced an experienced Government force in battle. It is the last time the Jacobites would win a battle in pursuit of their long standing goal to restore the Stuart dynasty, although it does nothing in the end to improve their fortunes.

The battle of Falkirk was the first battle to be fought in Scotland following the return of the Jacobite army from its unsuccessful invasion of England in 1745. The Jacobite army, led by Bonnie Prince Charlie (grandson of the exiled King James VII and II), returned to Scotland and had reached Stirling by early January where they laid siege to the Castle.

The Hanoverian army, tasked with bringing the Jacobite army to battle, marched from Edinburgh to Falkirk, planning to advance on Stirling. The Jacobites moved first and set out to meet the Government forces. Although the ensuing battle was a victory for the Jacobites, it was clumsy and unsatisfying and marked the beginning of a downturn in their fortunes.

## 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 Falkirk II is defined on the accompanying map and includes the following areas:

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- Lands to the west and south-west of Greenbank. The direction of the advance of the Jacobite army and their initial deployment into battle array.
- South Bantaskine Estate and land to the north of Greenbank. The direction of the approach of the Government troops and their initial deployment into battle array. This land includes the potential remains of buildings which were used as shelter by the Government right.
- Greenbank Farm and lands to the south. The core of the battlefield including the vantage point of Charlie's Hill.
- Lands to the east and south-east of Greenbank, now housing estates on the west of Falkirk. The probable route of the Government retreat. This area includes the possible location of the mass grave at Dumyat Drive and has high potential for burials.
- The terrain of the moor including the Greenbank ravine and the views out from the marshland from the Jacobite position and the steep sloping scarp to the north which the Government troops climbed onto the moor. These well preserved landscape features are key to understanding the manoeuvres of both armies.

## **Historical Background to the Battle**

The Jacobite Risings intermittently spanned more than half a century between 1689 and 1746. Their motivation was the return of the exiled Stuart monarchy to the throne, James II & VII having been ousted in 1688 by the Glorious Revolution. The last of the risings commenced in 1745 when Charles Edward Stuart, grandson of the exiled king, and better known as Bonnie Prince Charlie, arrived in Scotland from France in July, raising his standard at Glenfinnan on 19 August. His aim was to put his father, known by his supporters as King James III and VIII, on the throne in place of the Hanoverian George II.

Following victory at Prestonpans in September, the Jacobite army marched south, hoping to collect support from England before moving on London. Upon arriving at Derby it became clear that advance further south was futile, especially as two Government armies were now in pursuit, one of them led by the George II's son, the Duke of Cumberland. Following a rearguard action at Clifton, the Jacobite army crossed back into Scotland on 20 December. After combining with fresh forces raised in the north and limited numbers of Scots and Irish troops in French service, the Jacobite army began a siege of Stirling Castle. Meanwhile, a strong Government force under Lt-General Hawley began its preparations for a counter-offensive in Edinburgh. Following a foraging raid by Jacobites into Linlithgow, the Government army marched out of Edinburgh and occupied Falkirk, establishing their camp to the west of the town.

Instead of waiting for the Government force to attack them at Stirling, the Jacobites advanced to the high ground to the south of Falkirk, from where they proposed to attack the Government camp. In the absence of effective Government scouting, the Jacobite commander, Lord George Murray, was

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able to take the initiative and approached Falkirk Moor, located to the south of the town, from the west. The Jacobite position on the moor had good flank protection but the topography did not facilitate clear lines of sight. The Government army, under Major General Hawley, responded and marched on to the moor from the north. Due to the wet ground and steepness of the hill the artillery had to be abandoned part way up. The two forces deployed roughly north-south, with a steep slope defining the battlefield on the north side and marshy ground to the south. A deep, steep sided ravine, cutting into the ground from the north, separated the armies but there was open ground in the centre and to the south.

The Jacobite army comprised a combination of Highland clan forces, traditionally dependent on the Highland charge, together with Lowland infantry that included a small body of professional French troops, trained according to contemporary European military practice. The Highlanders were placed in the front line, with the Lowland infantry as support in the second line, together with a small infantry and cavalry reserve. But the Highland charge that was so successful at Prestonpans in 1745 had been against troops that had never seen action. At Falkirk the Government army was made up largely of veterans trained to form up three deep and volley fire muskets at about two rounds a minute. Hawley believed this tactic, when employed by battle hardened troops, would be effective against the Highland charge. He therefore deployed in two lines of infantry, with the dragoons on the front left. He placed his inexperienced troops, the militias (often ordinary citizens), which were well trained but had no combat experience, as a left rear flank guard and on the slopes on the right.

The first engagement came with a left flank Government dragoon attack on the Jacobite right, but this was fought off, initially by the delivery of a musket volley by the Highland troops under Murray. Despite heavy losses to this fusillade, the dragoons crashed into the Jacobite line but were fought back at point of sword and dirk; while fleeing to the east they disordered Government infantry regiments on the left, including the militia. Some of the dragoons fled northward between the lines and suffered flanking fire from the Jacobite centre. The left flank units were unable to reform in time to fire the intended volley before the Highlanders charged and came in to hand to hand combat. The Highlanders had supposedly attacked contrary to Lord George Murray's intentions, forcing him to send the second line of Lowland infantry forward in support. Under this pressure, the Government regiments on the left and centre left broke, carrying the militia reserve with them. Highlanders then rushed on in pursuit. Though it was important to keep the broken Government troops from reforming, the success on the Jacobite right ought to have led to a flank attack on the hard pressed Government left. Instead, many of those troops on the Jacobite right pursued the Government forces off the moor and pillaged their camp.

Meanwhile, Ligonier's regiment on the Government right, which had not been disordered and had the added protection of a steep ravine to prevent enemy attack, held the line against the Jacobites. They were joined by Barrel's and other rallied units, some from the second line, and a strong fighting position was at last adopted, with the left flank anchored on some buildings and the right on the ravine. Just as Hawley had expected from all his infantry, the

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intense musket fire caused the Jacobite left to recoil and some fled. There is some disagreement between several of the secondary accounts as to the detail of the action on the Jacobite left, but it would appear that the lack of effective command and control within the Jacobite forces put them at a severe disadvantage. The failing light and heavy rain precluded a Government offensive at such a late stage, even though so many of the Jacobite forces were disordered or had left the field, and Hawley therefore retreated back to his camp and then back towards Edinburgh.

The battle was relatively short and saw the Jacobites effectively left in command of the field but in reality the victory was a hollow one. The Government forces certainly did not see Falkirk as a defeat, though the round of courts martial and executions which followed suggest that the outcome had caused considerable embarrassment. Faced by the difficulties of a winter campaign and growing numbers of deserters, the Jacobites abandoned the Stirling siege and marched north, with many of the Highlanders dispersing until a new muster in the spring.

## **Events & Participants**

Falkirk represented the first major battle of the 1745-6 rising since the initial overwhelming Jacobite victory at Prestonpans in September of 1745. It was the first time in the campaign that the Jacobites had faced seasoned Government troops in pitched battle and presented both sides with an opportunity to deliver a decisive blow in the campaign before an inevitable winter recess. Interest in the outcome could not have been greater, and it is said that General Cope, commander of the defeated Government force at Prestonpans, had made a heavy bet that the commander of the next major battle would also suffer defeat at the hands of the Jacobites; as it happened he won his bet. This interest also made itself known in the form of a large body of civilian spectators which climbed onto the moor to watch the battle, so many in fact that they were mistaken for enemy troops by the Jacobites and treated accordingly. A number of these spectators were killed, while others were taken into custody for their suspected Government sympathies and locked up in Doune Castle. One of these men was John Witherspoon, who escaped from the castle and eventually found his way to America, where he was later to earn fame as a signatory of the Declaration of Independence.

The battle is notable for the number of Jacobites fielded (around 8,000), probably the largest Jacobite force to fight as a body in the entire sixty year period of the Jacobite risings (Sheriffmuir being a close second). It was also the first time during the '45 that the Jacobites had fought with such a mixed force, including Highlanders, Lowlanders and troops in regular French service.

Many of the participants in the Battle of Culloden on April 16 1746 were at Falkirk, including Charles Edward Stuart and General Hawley. Lord George Murray commanded the Jacobite right and numerous important clan chiefs were present. The same is also true of the Government side, which had among its officers Major James Wolfe.

Charles Edward Stuart, better known as Bonnie Prince Charlie, was born in 1720 and was the grandson of the deposed King James VII & II. His father,

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James Frances Edward Stuart, the Old Pretender, had made previous unsuccessful attempts to restore his line to the British throne, and Charlie, the Young Pretender, subsequently took up the cause. Landing at Glenfinnan on 19 August 1745, he embarked on an eight month campaign which initially met with some success, entering Edinburgh without resistance and then swiftly routing a Government force at Prestonpans, before advancing into England. His army reached as far as Derby by December, but by this point the campaign was already beginning to unravel. The Jacobites withdrew to Scotland, and despite continued attempts to gain the upper hand, including a victory at Falkirk, they were slowly driven back into the Highlands and their final fate at Culloden. After the battle, Charlie was able to escape back to the continent, and would never again openly return to Britain, despite initial attempts to resurrect his cause. As the years passed he grew increasingly bitter about his defeat, before he finally died an overweight alcoholic in Rome in 1788.

Lord George Murray was one of the senior commanders of the Jacobite army in the '45 Rising. Born at Huntingtower Castle near Perth in 1694, at aged 18 he served with the British Army in Flanders. Murray and two of his brothers took part in the Jacobite Rising in 1715, after which he had to flee into exile in Europe. He returned and commanded part of the Jacobite forces at Glenshiel in 1719. Murray was wounded in the battle and again forced to escape to Europe after the Jacobite defeat. After being pardoned for his involvement in 1725, Murray returned to Scotland and in 1728 married Amelia Murray, heiress of Strowan. Murray initially refused to join the 1745 rising, but later sided with the Jacobites once more, being made a lieutenant-general by Charles. He commanded the left wing in the Jacobite victory at Prestonpans, but opposed the subsequent plan to advance into England. During the debate at Derby, Murray was a strong supporter of withdrawing to Scotland. Murray commanded the rearguard during the retreat, but Charles increasingly distrusted him. At Culloden, Murray unsuccessfully attempted to convince Charles of the unsuitability of the location for the Jacobite army. In the aftermath of the defeat Murray attempted to gather the remnants of the force at Ruthven Barracks, but with the failure of the Rising and Charles' flight back to Europe Murray had no choice but to return into exile himself at the end of 1746. This third exile would be his last, and he never returned to Scotland before his death in 1760 in Holland.

The Government Army was commanded by Lieutenant General Henry Hawley. He was known by his own men as Hangman Hawley due to his harsh treatment of the men. Certainly his treatment of the defeated Jacobites after Culloden was very severe when he was tasked with suppressing Highland areas still deemed as hotbeds of dissent.

James Wolfe was an officer in the British Army from 1741 until his death in 1759. He was serving on the continent as Captain in the 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot when it was among the forces recalled to Britain in 1745 to deal with the Jacobite Rising. He was present at the battle of Falkirk, after which he was promoted to serve as aide-de-camp to Lieutenant-General Hawley, and Culloden, where in the aftermath it is said he refused a direct order from Cumberland himself to execute a wounded Jacobite. Although he served in many capacities in his career, including several postings within Scotland after

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Culloden, and was held in high regard for his abilities by many, remaining so today, his most famous accomplishment is undoubtedly the victory over the French at Quebec in 1759. As Major-General, he devised a plan to draw French forces out from the city and fight the British on ground which favoured Wolfe's force. He led the assault himself on 13 September 1759, but was fatally wounded in the early stages of the battle, and Wolfe died shortly afterwards.

Another notable personality was Sir Robert Munro of Foulis who was killed at Falkirk leading his regiment, which had fled behind him. He was tended in the field by his brother who was also cut down and killed by the Jacobites. Both men are buried in the churchyard in Falkirk town.

### **Battlefield Landscape**

The general location of the battlefield is well understood through a series of plans and a large number of written accounts from both sides. The Battle of Falkirk was fought on the high moor which rises up to the south of the town to a height of around 120-125m. The battle lines were arrayed roughly north to south and deployments were heavily influenced by the nature of the landscape. The Jacobites reached the moor first and deployed with their left flank resting against the western side of a deep ravine and their right against marshy ground close to the Glen Burn, some 800 m to the south. Despite existing on the fringes of ongoing urban development, the field of the battle is probably one of the best preserved 18<sup>th</sup> century battlefields in Scotland. The core of the battlefield, where most of the major fighting took place, on both the Jacobite left and right, is still well preserved as farmland and the overall character of the site survives. Although now enclosed by hedges and field walls, the impression of a largely open landscape is broadly retained, in part because coniferous tree plantations are largely confined to the west of the main battlefield area.

Many of the important terrain features of the battle are still visible. The ravine, to the north of the monument, can still be clearly seen, though is heavily wooded. The location of the Government right, including the point at which Ligonier's and Barrel's regiments made their stand probably corresponds to the former grounds of South Bantaskin House (a large 19<sup>th</sup> century house which was demolished in the 1970s; the walled garden still stands). The ground occupied by this 19<sup>th</sup> century complex of structures appears to have been previously occupied by a number of farms, shown on the 1746 map and Roy's map from the 1750s.

To the south of the field there is still some trace of marshy ground in the vicinity of Seafield Farm and the fields to the north of this point retain a sweeping, open aspect and give a good impression of the terrain over which the Jacobites deployed. The Slammanan road existed at the time of the battle, though none of the accounts make mention of it, but this is not an uncommon feature of 18<sup>th</sup> century descriptions of Scottish battles.

The majority of the land within the Inventory boundary is enclosed farmland and the site has not suffered the impact of intensive commercial forestry, though some small pockets of deciduous woodland are present. Much of the

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battlefield has escaped modern development, though housing estates are gradually beginning to encroach on the site from the east. However, some areas on the moor will have been impacted on by the coal mining which took place here from at least the late 18th century until the 20th.

### Archaeological and Physical Remains and Potential

The discovery of burials was noted during the construction of Falkirk High railway station in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, though the provenance of the graves was unproven. Local tradition places a mass grave site (called the 'English graves') on an area of grass surrounded by trees by Dumyat Drive, on the north-east side of the defined area. There are a number of ornate graves of Government officers within Falkirk Parish churchyard.

As the majority of the land within the Inventory boundary is undeveloped farmland, there is good potential for the recovery of artefacts and for the survival of buried remains relating to the buildings which are mentioned in various accounts of the battle and were utilized as an anchor point by the Government right. As the battle had a high number of Government losses, it is likely that burials will also survive within the defined area.

### Cultural Association

There is a monument to the battle at the side of the road at the southern end of the ravine which was paid for by public subscription and unveiled by the Duke of Atholl, an ancestor of Lord George Murray, in June 1927. The brass plaque bears the inscription *The Battle of Falkirk was Fought Around Here 17th January 1746*. Interestingly there is some graffiti stamped into the top left corner of the plaque: *James Dick 6/5/42*. This may have been created by a soldier or Home Guard member who was at the time manning a check point at the nearby road junction.

Like other battles of the '45, the battle of Falkirk has been remembered through stories and songs, though not to the same extent as either Prestonpans or Culloden. One local place name associated with the event is Charlie's Hill located to the south of the monument. This was supposedly the spot from which the prince watched the battle and is marked by two standing stones.

The battlefield has very high interpretive potential and as yet there are no interpretation boards or way markers on the site, despite the entire line between the initial position of the two armies coinciding with a public footpath, which passes along the western side of the ravine and up over the crest of the ridge to drop down toward the Jacobite right toward the Glen Burn. Falkirk Local History society offers a guided historical walk leaflet on their website.

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# The Inventory of Historic Battlefields - Features

Falkirk II

17 January 1746

Local Authority: Falkirk

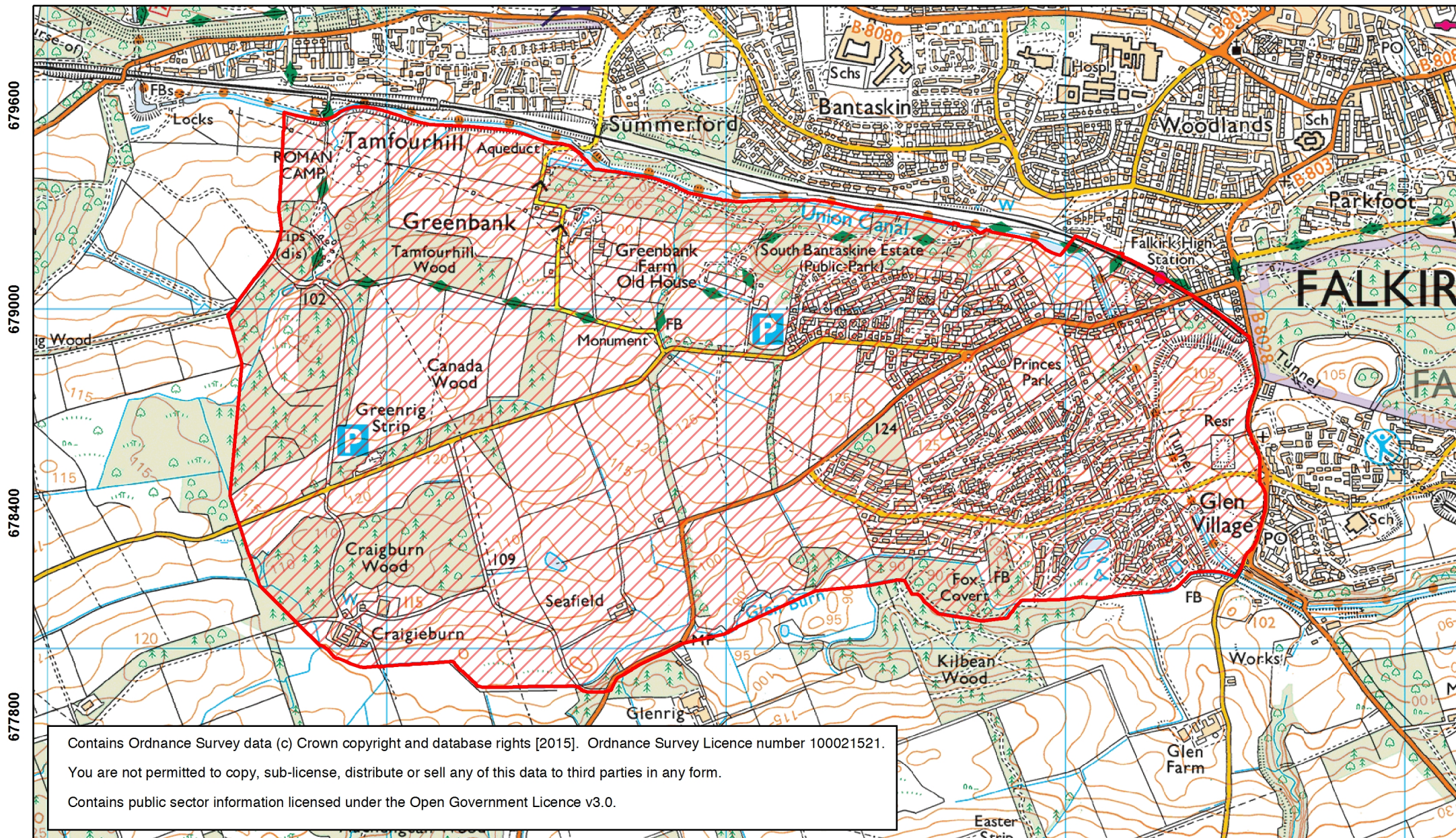
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