

The Inventory of Historic Battlefields

The Battle of Harlaw

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.

Contents

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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HARLAW

Alternative Names: None

24 July 1411

Local Authority: Aberdeenshire

NGR centred: NJ 753 243

Date of Addition to Inventory: 21 March 2011

Date of last update: 14 December 2012

Overview and Statement of Significance

The Battle of Harlaw is significant as one of the bloodiest medieval battles within Scotland. It is also one of a number of battles between forces serving the Stewart dynasty, as rulers of Scotland from the lowlands, against the Lords of the Isles, the major power in northern Scotland. It is held of particular importance in the Aberdeen area, as the retreat of the MacDonald forces after Harlaw saved the city, and many of the city's important residents were killed at Harlaw in its defence.

The Battle of Harlaw was one of the bloodiest battles of the Medieval period in Scotland. The MacDonald army under the command of Domhnall MacDonald, the Lord of the Isles, was advancing on Aberdeen to defend his control over the Earldom of Ross. The Earl of Mar, Alexander Stewart, was sent by his uncle, the governor Duke of Albany, to stop them. The outcome of the battle was militarily inconclusive, and both sides claimed victory despite each having suffered heavy losses.

The consequence of the battle was to halt MacDonald's advance towards Aberdeen and bring his campaign to an end. The Duke of Albany quickly seized a firm grip on the Earldom of Ross and the Lord of the Isles, who had been the chief internal threat to Stewart control of Scotland, was forced to relinquish his claim in the Treaty of Lochgilphead in 1412. Robert, the Duke of Albany, was left in control of Scotland as governor for the imprisoned James I.

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,

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such as enclosures or built structures, and areas of known or potential archaeological evidence.

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

- Lands adjacent to and to the north of Harlaw. The probable location of MacDonald's camp.
- The hill slopes to the north of Inverurie. The direction of the advance of the Earl of Mar's army uphill from Inverurie.
- The Pley Fauld and adjacent lands. The former location of memorial cairns which has high potential to contain further burials.
- The terrain of the plateau and its slopes and the views out from the higher ground. This landscape feature is key to understanding the restricted nature of the battleground and the limited views from MacDonald's initial deployment of the advancing army.

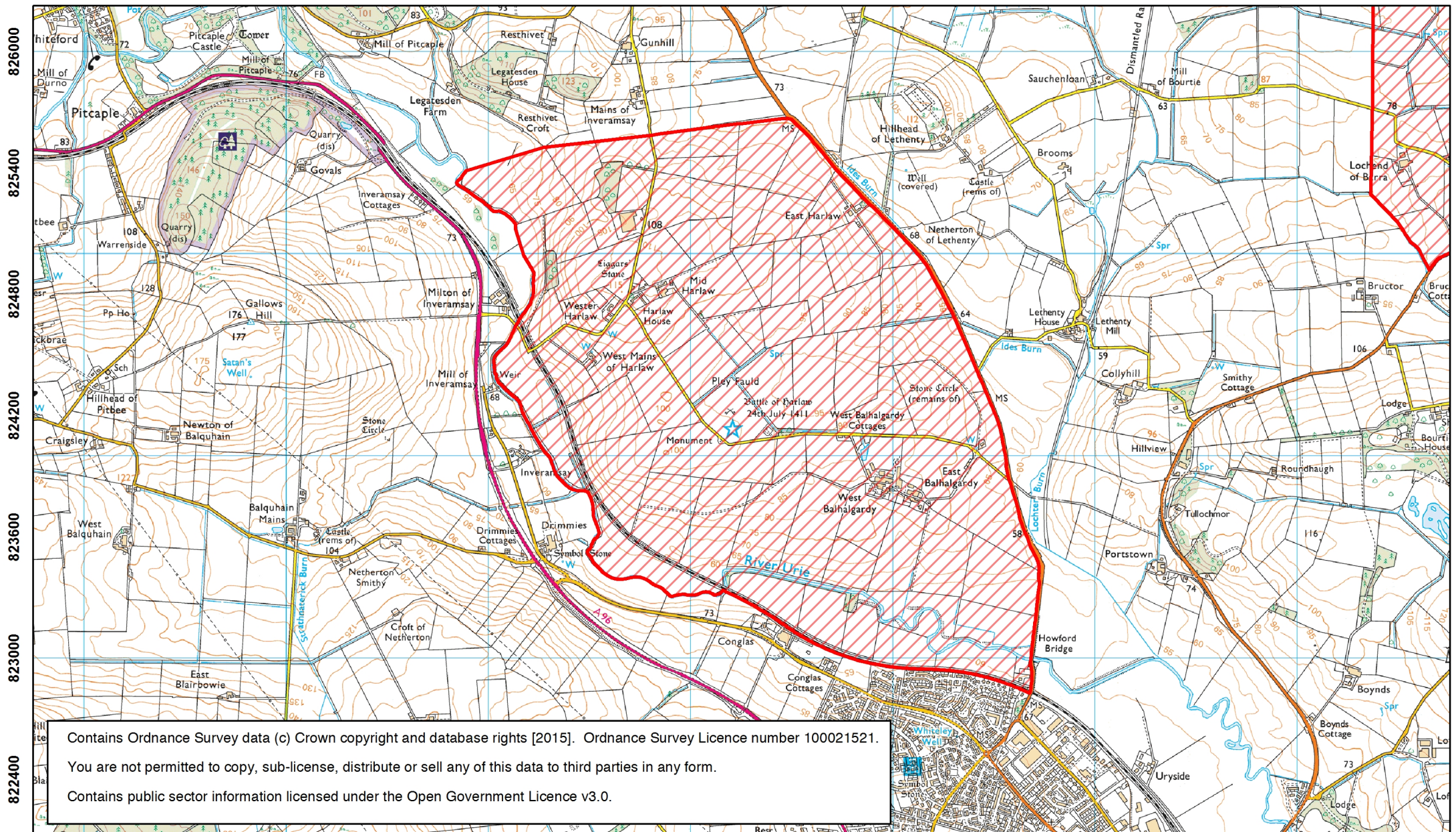
The Inventory of Historic Battlefields - Boundary

Harlaw

24 July 1411

Local Authority: Aberdeenshire

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 Inventory of Historic Battlefields boundary

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