The Inventory of Historic Battlefields

The Battle of Inverkeithing II

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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Date of Battle
Local Authority
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INVERKEITHING II

Alternative Names: None

20 July 1651

Local Authority: Fife

NGR centred: NT 125 819

Date of Addition to Inventory: 30 November 2011

Date of last update: 14 December 2012

Overview and Statement of Significance

The second battle of Inverkeithing is significant as the final battle within Scotland of the period of destructive conflict within the British Isles known as the Wars of the Three Kingdoms and brings Scotland within the complete control of the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell.

The proclamation of Charles II as the new king by the Scottish Parliament on 6 February 1649 set England and Scotland on a collision course. Cromwell invaded Scotland in July 1650; after a period of unproductive manoeuvring, Cromwell inflicted a heavy defeat on the Scottish army under David Leslie at Dunbar on 3 September 1650. However, Cromwell was still blocked by Leslie and unable to advance further into Scotland.

Cromwell realised that Fife was the key to outflanking Leslie, and prepared for a sea-borne assault on the Fife coast at North Queensferry. On the night of 16/17 July 1651, Colonel Overton led around 2,000 men to a landing on the north shore of the Forth, possibly at Inverkeithing Bay or Port Laing; by 20 July, the Parliamentarian force numbered around 4,500 men and was dug in on the Ferry Hills looking north towards roughly the same number of Scots at Castland Hill.

On hearing a report of Scottish reinforcements coming from Stirling, the Parliamentarians attacked. After a cavalry action that saw losses on both sides, the Scottish infantry retreated north towards Pitreavie Castle, with the fighting raging all the way there. At Pitreavie, the infantry made a final stand but were overwhelmed by the more experienced Parliamentarians who had the additional advantage of cavalry. The Scots took heavy losses, including many prisoners. This was the last major battle of the Wars of the Three Kingdoms in Scotland, and from 1652 Scotland was wholly under the control of the Protectorate.

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

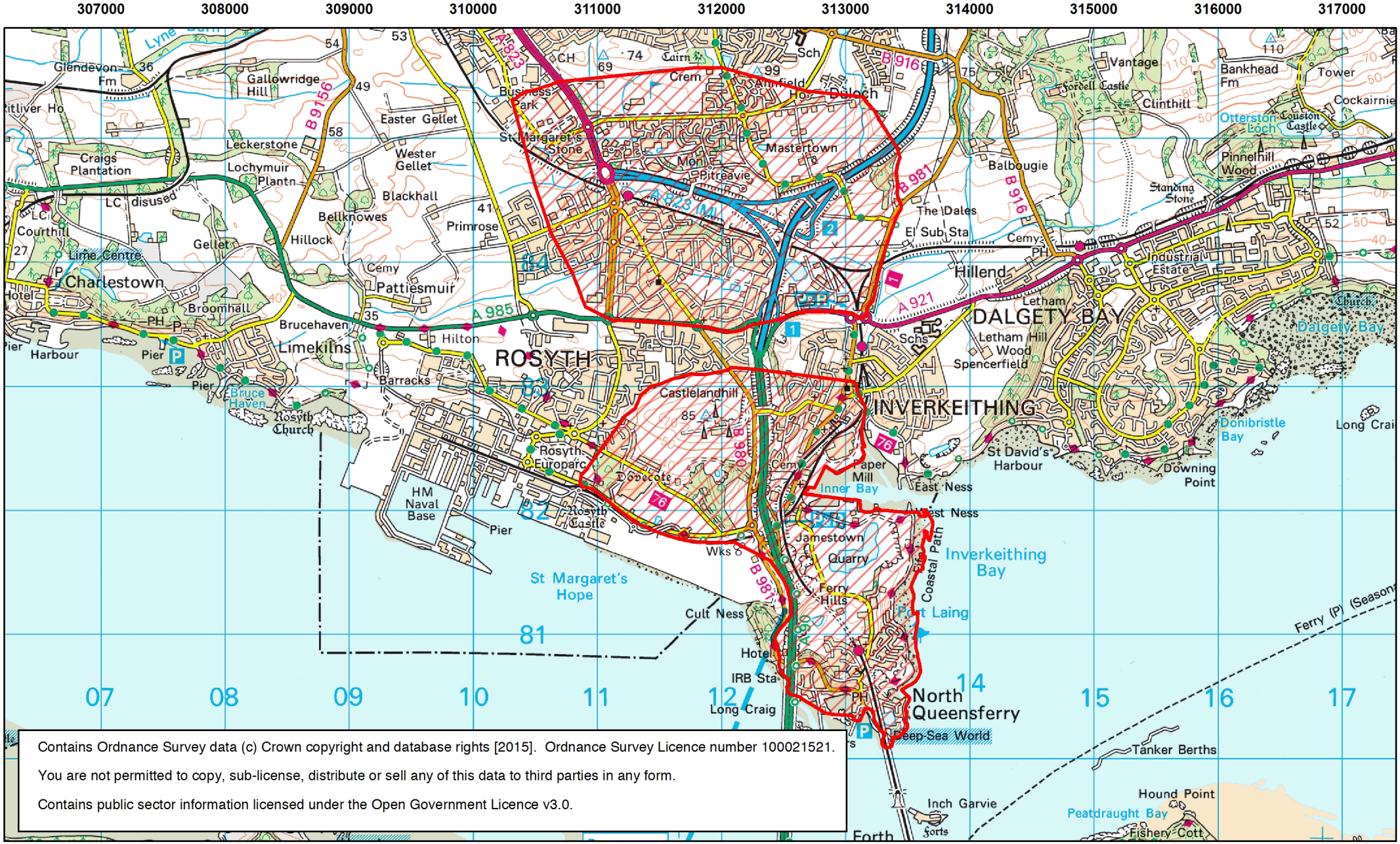
positions of camps or vantage points. Although the landscape has changed since the time of the battle, key characteristics of the terrain at the time of the battle can normally still be identified, enabling events to be more fully understood and interpreted in their landscape context. Specific qualities 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 Inverkeithing II is defined on the accompanying map and includes the following areas:

- The possible landing points for the Parliamentarian beachhead in or near North Queensferry.
- The Ferry Hills where the Parliamentarian camp lay, together with field fortifications.
- Whinny Hill and Castland Hill where the initial Scottish deployment was made.
- The area north of Castland Hill where the fighting retreat took place.
- Pitreavie Castle where the Macleans made their last stand.
- The fields between the railway and the A823 where the last and bloodiest part of the battle took place.
- The land between the two areas has been specifically excluded, as very little action of the fighting retreat appears to have occurred within this area, becoming far more intense as the armies approached Pitreavie Castle to the north.

The Inventory of Historic Battlefields - Boundary

Inverkeithing II 20 July 1651 Local Authority: Fife



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Inventory of Historic Battlefields boundary

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Meters