

The Inventory of Historic Battlefields

The Battle of Inverlochy 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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INVERLOCHY II

Alternative Names: None

2 February 1645

Local Authority: Highland

NGR centred: NN 125 753

Date of Addition to Inventory: 30 November 2011

Date of last update: 14 December 2012

Overview and Statement of Significance

The second battle of Inverlochy is significant as one of the Marquis of Montrose's greatest victories, utilising a daring and gruelling forced march to surprise his enemies. His success at Inverlochy also boosts recruitment to his army. Among the new recruits was Lord Gordon, bringing his own cavalry regiments and handing Elgin to Royalist control. Conversely, Argyll's second defeat at Montrose's hands weakens his position, both amongst the Covenanters and his own people. After Inverlochy, the Covenanters also established the Committee of Estates. Its purpose was to support Baillie in future efforts, but this proved to be a disaster in the long run.

Inverlochy II was fought between the supporters of the Royalist cause under James Graham, the Marquis of Montrose, and the Covenanters under the command of Archibald Campbell, Marquis of Argyll, although he did not take direct command of his forces on the day. The battle was a resounding victory for the Royalists, destroying the Covenanter army and crippling their cause, along with Argyll's own strength in the region.

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

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- The southern bank of the River Lochy, on which is located Inverlochy Castle and which provided the northern limit of the battlefield.
- The foot of the steep slopes of the Ben Nevis massif to the south-east and across the mouth of Glen Nevis, as the line of approach of Montrose's forces.
- The area to the north-west of Tom na Faire, as the direction Argyll's forces were driven back.
- To the east the approach of Montrose's army from the direction of Torlundy is accommodated, as is the ridge of higher ground which may have provided a slope for the Highland army to charge down.

Historical Background to the Battle

Following his victory at Fyvie on 28 October, Montrose and his army had made a bold move into Campbell territory in Argyll, burning the capital of the Marquis of Argyll's heartland at Inveraray and sacking the surrounding lands over several weeks in December 1644 and January 1645. On 14 January 1645 Montrose decided it was time to leave the Campbell lands and moved north and soon he and his Irish ally Alasdair Mac Colla were moving up the Great Glen towards Inverness.

By the time the Royalists reached Kilchummin (now Fort Augustus) on 31 January 1645 Montrose had only 2000 men. To add to his problems the Earl of Seaforth had reinforced the Inverness garrison at the north of the Great Glen whilst Argyll was behind him at the south end in Inverlochy. Although there was an escape route over the Corrieyairack pass to Speyside, Montrose instead decided to go on the offensive and turn to attack Argyll (Reid 2003).

They arrived at Torlundy overlooking Inverlochy in the early hours of 2 February 1645, exhausted and hungry, having marched 36 miles in 36 hours over broken, mountainous terrain. By this time the Covenanters were alerted and deployed for battle. Argyll placed some of his men inside the shell of Inverlochy Castle, the rest on a ridge of firm ground, and then watched the battle unfold from the safety of a galley in Loch Linnhe.

The Royalists attacked down the hillside at dawn, with the Irish advancing faster than the Highlanders and thus making the first contact. They came under fire from Roughe and Cockburn's men, but held their fire until very close when they fired a volley, and they followed this up with a charge using swords and pikes. At this point, the Covenanters broke and ran. Montrose, commanding the Highlanders, attacked the Covenanter centre, in which Argyll's regiment fired a single volley at long range then also broke, taking the levies with them. In the ensuing rout, many clansmen were killed by the Royalist Highlanders.

Williams states that some of the Covenanter forces were camped on the far side of the River Lochy in the angle between Loch Linnhe and Loch Eil and could not get across the swollen river in time for the battle. He also argues that Auchinbreck's deployment of his battle-line on a ridge of firm ground

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seriously restricted his troops, the centre being too tightly packed to move or fight effectively.

Many of the Covenanters were said to have died where the waters of Nevis enter the loch, while some tried to escape into Glen Nevis, where they were killed and subsequently buried. Others fled towards what is now Fort William, only to be cut down at the foot of the Cow Hill. MacColla pursued the defeated along the upper Auchintore road which skirts the Mamores on its way to Loch Leven. Covenanter losses are generally given as 1,500, a figure quoted by three contemporary sources and repeated by most of the secondary sources. So far as Royalist losses are concerned, claims of fatalities in single figures do not seem credible, given that the Irish troops were subjected to unopposed Covenanter musket fire for some time before they fired their own close quarter volley.

Events & Participants

Following the engagement at Fyvie Montrose's army fragmented, and Argyll, who had continued to pursue him, returned to Edinburgh, assuming that the arrival of winter would mean that the Royalist threat would disappear. However, towards the end of November, Montrose's major-general, Alasdair MacColla of the Clan MacDonald, who had not been at Fyvie because he had taken 500 men to relieve his Highland garrisons, rejoined Montrose at Blair Atholl with his Irish troops and up to 1,000 Highlanders (Reid 2003). Another source says that MacColla actually brought in 5,000 men (Sadler 1996), although Wishart only mentions that MacColla returned with the chief of Clanranald together with 500 of his men (Wishart 1893). Whilst it appears that Montrose wanted to take up winter quarters, MacColla, who, as a MacDonald shared a deep mutual enmity with the Campbell Duke of Argyll, persuaded Montrose to raid Inverary, the seat of Clan Campbell. Mild weather meant that the combined force was able to reach Inverary through the mountain passes, and, although the castle held out, the town was captured, and Argyll fled in his galley (Reid 2003). Montrose's forces ravaged Argyll's lands, 'an act of retaliation on Argyll, who had been the first of all to wage this cruel war of fire and sword upon his countrymen' (Wishart 1893).

Argyll then decided to retaliate in turn, seeking support from Lieutenant-General William Baillie, an experienced commander, who had just been recalled from England with his troops. Baillie rejected Argyll's plan to march into the highlands in pursuit of Montrose, because of the difficulty of supporting the army in winter conditions, and it was agreed that Baillie would base himself and his men at Perth, while Argyll pursued the Royalists, who were moving north into Lorne and Lochaber. The Royalists, as usual, were constantly losing men, and by the time they reached Kilchummin (now Fort Augustus) on 31 January 1645 Montrose had only 2,000 men. To add to his problems the Earl of Seaforth had reinforced the Inverness garrison at the north of the Great Glen, whilst Argyll was behind him at the south end in Inverlochy. Although there was an escape route over the Corrieyairack pass to Speyside, Montrose instead decided to go on the offensive and turn to attack Argyll (Reid 2003). It is possible that part of his motivation was that the

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lands of some of his key commanders, Keppoch, Lochiel, Glengarry and Clan Ranald, were particularly threatened (Roberts 2000).

Avoiding the obvious route Montrose led a daring and arduous march through the midwinter hills with few provisions. The route took the Royalists due south up Glen Tarff as far as Culachy and then moved parallel to the Great Glen as far as Glen Buck, shielded by the long ridges of Meall a Cholumain and Druim Laragan. They then had to cross the gorge of the Calder Burn to reach the head of the glen, some 1,000 feet above sea level. From here they climbed another 1,000 feet to reach the col at Carn na Larach. Crossing the Teanga plateau they then descended steeply into Glen Turret and from there down Glen Roy to Keppoch, where they chased off one of Argyll's outposts, before crossing the Spean at Corriechoille, reaching Torlundy, overlooking Inverlochy, in the early hours of 2 February 1645. They arrived exhausted and hungry, having marched 36 miles in 36 hours (Reid 2003). 'The most part had not tasted bread these two days, marching over high mountains in knee-deep snow, wading brooks and rivers up to their girdle' (Patrick Gordon of Ruthven 1844). By this time the Covenanters were alerted and deployed for battle, having been alerted by those fleeing the outpost (Spalding 1851).

James Graham was the fifth Earl of Montrose and the first Marquis of Montrose. He was the chief of Clan Graham. Montrose had been a supporter and signatory of the National Covenant in 1638, but had then become a Royalist, although he was driven by motives other than a desire to impose the Divine Right of Kings upon Scotland. He and Archibald Campbell, the eighth Earl of Argyll, were bitter rivals, and Montrose believed that the Covenant had become nothing more than a vehicle for Argyll's ambition. Always a moderate among the Covenanters, Montrose considered that the agreement in 1641 with Charles that had removed episcopacy from Scotland had fulfilled the demands of the Covenant and that to continue in opposition to him would be breaking that agreement. Following the signing of the Solemn League and Covenant in September 1643, Montrose presented himself to Charles I in service at his headquarters in Oxford. On behalf of the King, he then fought a campaign intended to draw Covenanter forces away from supporting the Parliamentarians in England, and in this it was a success. Montrose fought a series of seven battles against Covenanter armies across the Highlands in 1644 and 1645, beginning with Tippermuir and ending at Philiphaugh, where he suffered his only defeat. He attempted to do the same on behalf of Charles II in 1650, but on this occasion fought only a single battle at Carbisdale. After his defeat there, he was captured and brought to Edinburgh for trial. On 21 May 1650, he was hanged and then beheaded. His head was fixed to a spike on Edinburgh's Tollbooth, his body quartered, and his limbs were displayed in Stirling, Glasgow, Perth and Aberdeen. Following the Restoration of Charles II as king in 1660, Montrose's remains were collected together once more and were interred in the High Kirk of St Giles in Edinburgh in May 1661.

Alasdair Mac Colla was the son of Coll "Colkitto" MacDonald. He is widely credited with the creation of the "Highland Charge", a tactic used with such devastating effect by Highlanders throughout the subsequent century, although some of the credit should likely also go to his compatriot Manus O' Cahan. He had fled to Ireland in 1638 to escape Campbell depredations in MacDonald territory within Scotland, and he fought for the MacDonnell Earl of

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Antrim in the Irish Rebellion of 1641. In 1644, he was dispatched to Scotland with between 1500 and 2000 Ulster and MacDonald troops to support Royalist efforts there, and to attempt to draw Covenanter forces out of Ireland and relieve pressure on the Irish Confederacy. Mac Colla gladly accepted the task, as Archibald Campbell, the Earl of Argyll, was not only the leading Covenanter in Scotland, he was also the clan chief of the Campbells, giving Mac Colla a chance to strike back against his hated foe. He landed in Argyll lands in July, immediately seizing the castle at Mingary. He continued to build his support in the north-west until he finally moved to Blair Atholl, where he joined his forces with Montrose at the end of August. This was the beginning of an immensely successful partnership, with Mac Colla present at the Royalist victories at Tippermuir, Aberdeen, Inverlochy, Auldearn and Kilsyth. However, Mac Colla's focus remained in his homelands in the north-west, so when Montrose moved south towards England, Mac Colla dispatched Manus O' Cahan with 700 of the Irish troops to go with Montrose while he returned to the north-west. After Montrose's defeat at Philiphaugh, Mac Colla continued to fight against the Campbells and the Covenanters in Scotland, with particular brutality displayed to any Campbells he encountered, until a concerted effort to defeat him in 1647 forced him to withdraw back to Ireland in May 1647. Later that year Mac Colla was serving in the Confederate Army of Munster when he was captured and shot at the Battle of Knocknanuss on 13 November.

Manus O'Cahan was the colonel of the Irish regiment that fought in all of Montrose's battles and which was the backbone of all his victories. He was a cousin of Mac Colla, and came over from Ireland with him. He and his regiment were sent to Scotland to ease pressure on the Irish Confederacy, who were fighting Scottish Covenanters and English Parliamentarians in Ireland. As Mac Colla had a recruiting role for the Royalist cause throughout 1644-5, he was occasionally absent in the west seeking fresh troops, but O'Cahan remained with Montrose throughout and was with Montrose for the Battle of Philiphaugh. He was captured after the defeat, his men were executed and he was taken to Edinburgh where he was hanged without trial. He was responsible for the invention of the Highland charge along with Mac Colla, although it is Mac Colla who is generally given sole credit.

Archibald Campbell, 1st Marquis of Argyll, was one of the leading Covenanters in Scotland. He had been opposed to Charles I's absolutism but had not been particularly in favour of Presbyterianism until 1638, when his refusal to support Charles led the King to send the MacDonnell Earl of Antrim to invade Argyll and raise the MacDonalds against the Marquis of Argyll. Although this was a failure, the Earl of Antrim was to later send his kinsmen Mac Colla and O'Cahan to support Montrose. Argyll became the most influential of the Covenanter lords, and was instrumental in the Solemn League and Covenant that sent Scottish Covenanters into England in support of the Parliamentarians. He was present at several of the battles fought by Montrose, being personally defeated by him at Fyvie and at Inverlochy, but was also the head of the Commission of Estates that had such a deleterious effect on Baillie at Alford and at Kilsyth. In later years, he led the Parliament that crowned Charles II as King of Scotland in 1651, but had lost control of events in Scotland and was reluctantly dragged into the invasion of England.

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He was imprisoned several times under the Protectorate for debt, and arrested for treason on the Restoration in 1660. He was cleared of any involvement in the execution of Charles I, but letters he had sent to Monck showed the extent of his cooperation with Cromwell and he was executed even before Charles had signed the death warrant.

Battlefield Landscape

As noted above, the castle at Inverlochy serves as an important anchor point for the battlefield, with the Covenanter left supposedly positioned nearby. The distance between the castle and the very steep slopes of the Ben Nevis Massif, well over a kilometre to the south east, make it highly unlikely that these were the slopes down which the Royalists charged. The Royalist advance into battle, once their epic march had been completed, is more likely to have come from the north-east, from the direction of Torlundy. The ground here is higher than the floor of the valley and the flood plain/raised beach on which the castle is located and may have given just enough of a slope to give a charge added momentum. However, it should be noted that none of the contemporary sources actually make mention of the Highland charge taking place down a hill. Indeed if the Covenanters were positioned on the ridge then it was the Royalists who had to charge uphill in order to come to sword strokes.

The impression that Montrose's men charged down hill has been passed on by historians but may have derived from an assumption that the Royalist march across high hills climaxed with a charge down hill rather than a descent onto the low ground prior to the charge, though Lom appears to have stayed at altitude in order to maintain a view down on Inverlochy. On the basis of our current knowledge it is difficult to place the lines with total confidence, hence on the maps two optional alignments have been offered. The first of these has the Covenanters facing north-east to face an attack from Torlundy while the other has them facing east to meet an attack coming from the direction of Glen Nevis. In both cases the Covenanter left is located close to the castle.

Archaeological and Physical Remains and Potential

Given the nature of the fighting with musket volleys followed by hand to hand fighting, one might expect to find musket balls and small items of personal or military gear and clothing. Also, given the apparent numbers of dead, one might expect some evidence of disposal of the bodies, but no mention is made of this in the primary sources. It is said, however, that there are graves in Glen Nevis (Cowan 1977).

Pinpointing the location of the battle should be straightforward as most of the accounts make mention of Inverlochy Castle and its role in the battle; Covenanter musketeers were placed within it and the Covenanter left was anchored upon it. Traditionally, the main part of the Covenanter line was positioned on the ridge which runs roughly east to west, with its western tip around 300 m to the south west of the castle. A limited metal detector survey was carried out on the south facing slope of the ridge and the lower ground to

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the east of it in 2007 as part of an archaeological project centred on Fort William. However, only a single musket ball was recovered during this exercise. This may suggest that the main part of the Covenanter force was actually located away from the ridge, perhaps further to the east, with the Royalists initially taking up position on the higher ground toward Torlundy.

Although there has been development in the area, in the form of roads, housing and facilities related to the Aluminium works, open areas do still exist and there is the potential for more artefacts related to the battle to come to light.

Cultural Association

Montrose's campaigns have left a strong legacy of cultural associations in the form of ballads, folk tales and the like. The Campbell versus MacDonald dimension to the battle has additionally ensured that the event was memorialised in verse and song. Perhaps most notably the battle was witnessed by the warrior poet John MacDonald, otherwise known as Ian Lom (c. 1625-1707), after which he penned 'The Battle of Inverlochy' (*Latha Inbher-Lochaidh* or *Hi Rim Horo, Horo Leatha*). Ian Lom is reputed to have been the messenger who warned Montrose that Argyll was at his rear, and led the Royalists through the mountains to Inverlochy; he did not take part in the fighting because his role was to record the battle whether as a glorious victory for Clan Donald or as a grievous defeat (Williams 2001). *Cumh Mhic Dhonnchaidh Ghlinne* (Lament of a Campbell Widow) is a lament about the losses in the battle from the perspective a widowed Campbell woman, and there is an associated pibroch, *Ceann na Drochaide Bige* (The End of the Little Bridge).

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The Inventory of Historic Battlefields - Boundary

Inverlochy II

2 February 1645

Local Authority: Highland

