

The Inventory of Historic Battlefields

The Battle of Linlithgow Bridge

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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LINLITHGOW BRIDGE

Alternative Names: None

4 September 1526

Local Authority: Falkirk / West Lothian

NGR centred: NS 982 767

Date of Addition to Inventory: 30 November 2011

Date of last update: 14 December 2012

Overview and Statement of Significance

The Battle of Linlithgow Bridge is significant as the largest attempt to free the young James V from the control of the Earl of Angus by military means. James himself was forced to attend the battle on Angus' side, although he was able to delay his own arrival until after the fighting had concluded. The attempt was ultimately unsuccessful, leaving James in the hands of Angus' ever growing power, and leads to the death of the Earl of Lennox, James' close confidante and friend.

The Battle of Linlithgow Bridge was fought between the Earl of Lennox and the Earl of Arran on 4 September 1526 as part of an ongoing struggle for control over the 14-year old King James V. Lennox was marching on Edinburgh to free the King from the control of the Earl of Angus, when he encountered an army under the Earl of Arran at Linlithgow Bridge. As the bridge over the Avon was held against him, he marched downstream to a ford from where he attacked upslope, hoping to deal with Arran's men before reinforcements could arrive from Edinburgh. However, he was unsuccessful and after a long push of pikes, his men broke as Angus arrived with fresh troops.

In the rout that followed, Lennox was taken prisoner, disarmed and then killed. Angus remained in control of the young King for another two years until James escaped from Edinburgh and began to reign directly; Angus was forced to flee to England as his lands were confiscated.

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 Linlithgow Bridge is defined on the accompanying map and includes the following areas:

- Peace/Pace Hill, which was where the eastern end of the bridge was defended by Arran's men.
- Easter Manuel, where Lennox's force approached the bridge initially and where Lennox's potential artillery may have been located.
- The Manuel nunnery, which marks the rough location of Lennox's crossing point of the River Avon at the ford.
- The south-eastern slopes of Manuel Hill and the area around Whitecross, marking Lennox's line of approach and his subsequent movement to the ford.
- The area of the bridge across the Avon, in a similar place to the current bridge of the A803.
- The area around Kettilstoun and Linlithgow Leisure Centre, where some of the fighting between Lennox and Arran's forces may have occurred and through which Angus and his force arrived to the battlefield.

Historical Background to the Battle

The Earl of Lennox advanced from Stirling towards Edinburgh at the head of an army of around 12,000 men. At Linlithgow Bridge, he encountered the Earl of Arran with around 2,000 men, who held the crossing of the River Avon against him. Arran was deployed on the east side of the Avon with his artillery covering the approaches and a guard at the bridge. Lennox decided to outflank Arran and bypass the bridge; he knew that more troops were coming from Edinburgh and he wanted to act before they arrived. He decided, based on the reports of his scouts, to cross at the Manuel nunnery. Once he realised Lennox's intention to ford the river, Arran deployed his troops to face south on Peace Hill (formerly Pace Hill). This left the Earl of Angus, who was racing from Edinburgh with another 2,000 men to support Arran, enough space to deploy his troops on Arran's left when he arrived and to launch a flank attack on Lennox's hemmed-in forces.

Lennox's vanguard made for the ford under heavy fire and crossed by the nunnery; however the difficult crossing slowed them and left them unable to attack the hill quickly. Lennox's main force then crossed the river and formed up into two battles with a screen of arquebusiers and bowmen in front. As the two battles advanced, they began to lose their formation, while the fire on them increased from Arran's men. As Lennox's army struggled up hill, Arran's forces charged down into them and a melee began which would last for some time. Eventually, Arran's men gained the upper hand and Lennox's men broke, possibly with the arrival of Angus, but certainly before the King arrived. Lennox himself was killed, possibly at the hand of Sir James Hamilton of Finnart, the illegitimate son of Arran.

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Events & Participants

Archibald Douglas, Earl of Angus, was one of the most powerful Scottish nobles of the sixteenth century. He first came to prominence on 6 August 1514 when he married Margaret, the Dowager Queen, widow of James IV, mother of James V and elder sister of Henry VIII of England. The marriage was instrumental in breaking the fragile peace in Scotland as Margaret's regency was to last until James V came of age or she re-married. She had been holding a delicate balance between the pro-French and pro-English factions at Court, but her marriage to Angus gave impetus to the pro-French group to push her out and install the Duke of Albany as regent. She eventually fled to England, leaving Angus in Scotland, where he promptly took a mistress and started spending Margaret's money. The ensuing enmity between the couple coloured Scottish politics for years to come. Angus was charged with high treason by the Duke of Albany, and was sent as a prisoner to France in 1522. He escaped to London in 1524 and then returned to Scotland with the support of Henry VIII. In 1524, Margaret made an alliance with the Earl of Arran and Angus had to take refuge in his ancestral home of Tantallon Castle. However, with the influence of Henry VIII from south of the border, Angus was able to force his way back into power and was appointed to the Council of Regency, which looked after the King in rotation despite Margaret's declaration in 1524 of his majority. Angus was the first of the council to have physical custody of the King, but refused to hand him over at the end of his three month period. He imposed himself as the Chancellor of Scotland, filled all positions of authority with Douglas family members and supporters and kept the young King effectively a prisoner. The Battles of Darnick and Linlithgow Bridge were both attempts to wrest control of the King from Angus. Despite his victory in both battles, Angus would only retain his control for another two years. James V escaped his custody in 1528 and began to rule on his own account, with his first order of business the removal of Angus, who had retreated to Tantallon again. Despite considerable effort on the part of James, Angus held out until 1529 when he was able to escape to England under a treaty between James and Henry VIII. Angus remained in England until James' death in 1542, at which point he returned on a mission from Henry to arrange a marriage between the infant Mary Queen of Scots and the future Edward VI. However, in 1544 he was in open conflict with the Earl of Arran, son of his ally in 1526, and imprisoned briefly. The English Rough Wooing (1543-1550), which attempted to coerce the Scots into accepting the marriage between Mary and Edward, hit Douglas lands hard and caused Angus to settle with Arran and the two fought together at the Scottish victory of Ancrum Moor and the defeat at Pinkie in 1547. He eventually died in 1557.

James Hamilton, Earl of Arran, was a significant figure in the politics and wars of James IV. He was a grandson of James II and nephew of James III. He was as much a mariner as a soldier in his early career, commanding a Scottish fleet that helped the Danes defeat a Swedish rebellion in 1502, then led a fleet to put down a rebellion in the Western Isles in 1504. He commanded the Scottish navy in actions against the English in 1513, attacking the main English base in Ulster at Carrickfergus before heading to France to support the French King; however, before he arrived, James IV had

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been killed at Flodden, and Arran had to return home. He was accompanied by the representative of John Stewart, Duke of Albany, who would later become regent, but Arran initially acted against Albany and was besieged and in the end Hamilton had to make terms with the Regent. In 1516, on the death of the infant Alexander, James V's brother, Arran was declared next in line to the throne. He had constant antagonism with Angus, leading to the Cleanse the Causeway incident when Angus and his supporters drove Arran out of Edinburgh on 30 April 1520; however, by the following year, Arran had re-taken control of the city. In 1524, he supported Margaret as she declared James to have reached his majority; he was one of the Council that was to rotate custody of the King, and was supposed to take custody from Angus when the latter refused to hand over James. Despite this, Arran considered that his interests would be best served by allying with Angus and thus it was that he found himself defending the approach to Edinburgh against Lennox on behalf of Angus. Despite this, when James V escaped from Angus in 1528, Arran was a close advisor of the King until the Earl died in 1529.

James V, King of Scots, was crowned on 21 September 1513, at the age of just eighteen months, following the death of his father James IV at the Battle of Flodden on 9 September 1513. He was a pawn in the politics of the period, being moved around as a symbol of the authority of whichever magnate was in the ascendancy. He was variously a guest of his mother Margaret, of his step-father the Earl of Angus and of the Regent, the Earl of Albany, all of whom acted in their own interests but in his name. In 1526, James began to actively seek a means of escape from the control of Angus, who was essentially holding him prisoner. At Darnick, James asked Walter Scott of Buccleuch to attempt to free him, and although James played no part in the subsequent battle, he seems likely to have witnessed it from the safety of a nearby tower. By the time of the Battle of Linlithgow Bridge, the fourteen-year old James was put in charge of 3,000 Edinburgh militia and sent to aid his captors against his friend the Earl of Lennox, again seeking to free him from Angus control. On the way, he was roundly abused by Sir George Douglas of Pittendreich, the Earl of Angus' brother, who was supervising him; this was yet another slight to be avenged once James achieved his independence from Angus. Lennox's defeat and death meant that James was forced to endure a further two years under the control of Angus. In May 1528, he was able to escape from Edinburgh and appeared in Stirling, where his mother Margaret had her powerbase. He now started to rule on his own account, dismissing many of the Douglas partisans from the offices given by Angus, and he ordered Angus to go into ward north of the Spey; when he refused, he was declared a traitor and his lands forfeit. This was ineffectual, however, and the subsequent military action against the Douglas family entirely unproductive. James concluded a treaty with Henry VIII, on whom Angus relied for support, in December 1528 that allowed Angus and his brothers to go into exile in England.

Battlefield Landscape

The battlefield is reasonably well preserved given its proximity to the town of Linlithgow and the presence of a large quarry that has re-sculpted a large part

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of the general landscape into a nature reserve. However, the overall shape of the landscape remains, with the river valley still being crossed by bridges, while the slopes above the haughlands are still capable of indicating the level of difficulty posed to an advancing army. Despite the depredations of the River Avon, the general area of the crossing can be determined, marked by the presence of the Manuel nunnery, giving a good impression of the view presented to Lennox and his troops as they mustered to attack Arran's men.

Archaeological and Physical Remains and Potential

There were discoveries of bodies in the area in 1840, 1926 and 1956, but the way in which they were buried in stone cists suggest they were not the dead from this battle, and the exact locations of the remains are now unclear. It may be that many of the dead were buried at the nunnery, but most of the cemetery at the south side has been washed away by floods. Cannon balls have been found in the river, and a small cross and a spur which may have been lost during the battle have been discovered by metal detecting (Cooper 2004).

Given the nature of the fighting, there is the potential to find small items of military and personal equipment lost during the close quarter fighting; there is also the potential of arquebus balls and arrowheads given the presence of both arquebusiers and archers in Lennox's army. However, extensive quarrying and the action of the river may well have removed some evidence of the battle.

Cultural Association

A cairn is known to have stood on Kettleston Farm in 1856, and was later moved to the entrance of the Kettleston Housing Estate, which was built on what had been the farmland. It serves as a monument of the battle, and more specifically is said to have marked the spot where Lennox was killed; it is unlikely that there is any truth in this suggestion, since the spot was not marked in 1526, and it is unlikely that the idea is anything more than wishful thinking. Many of the roads in the local housing estates are named after the key protagonists in the fighting and legend has it that the property on Linlithgow Bridge High Street named Borestane House has in its back garden the stone where Douglas was said to have raised his banner at the battle (Cooper 2004).

There has been much recent activity devoted to commemorating and interpreting the battle. A book devoted purely to the battle, *The Heart and the Rose* by Jon Cooper, appeared in 2004, and a local group, the Battle of Linlithgow Bridge Project, has a web-site on the battle. A battlefield trail has been established, with a series of display boards explaining and picturing the battle. The Battle of Linlithgow Bridge Project has also planted a 'Lennox rose' on the cairn site and has established a memorial garden round the cairn incorporating plants used as badges by the combatants such as roses, lilies, thistles and hawthorns.

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There are no known ballads, tunes or songs that commemorate the battle. It has left little impact culturally, unlike the later events of the reign of Mary Queen of Scots.

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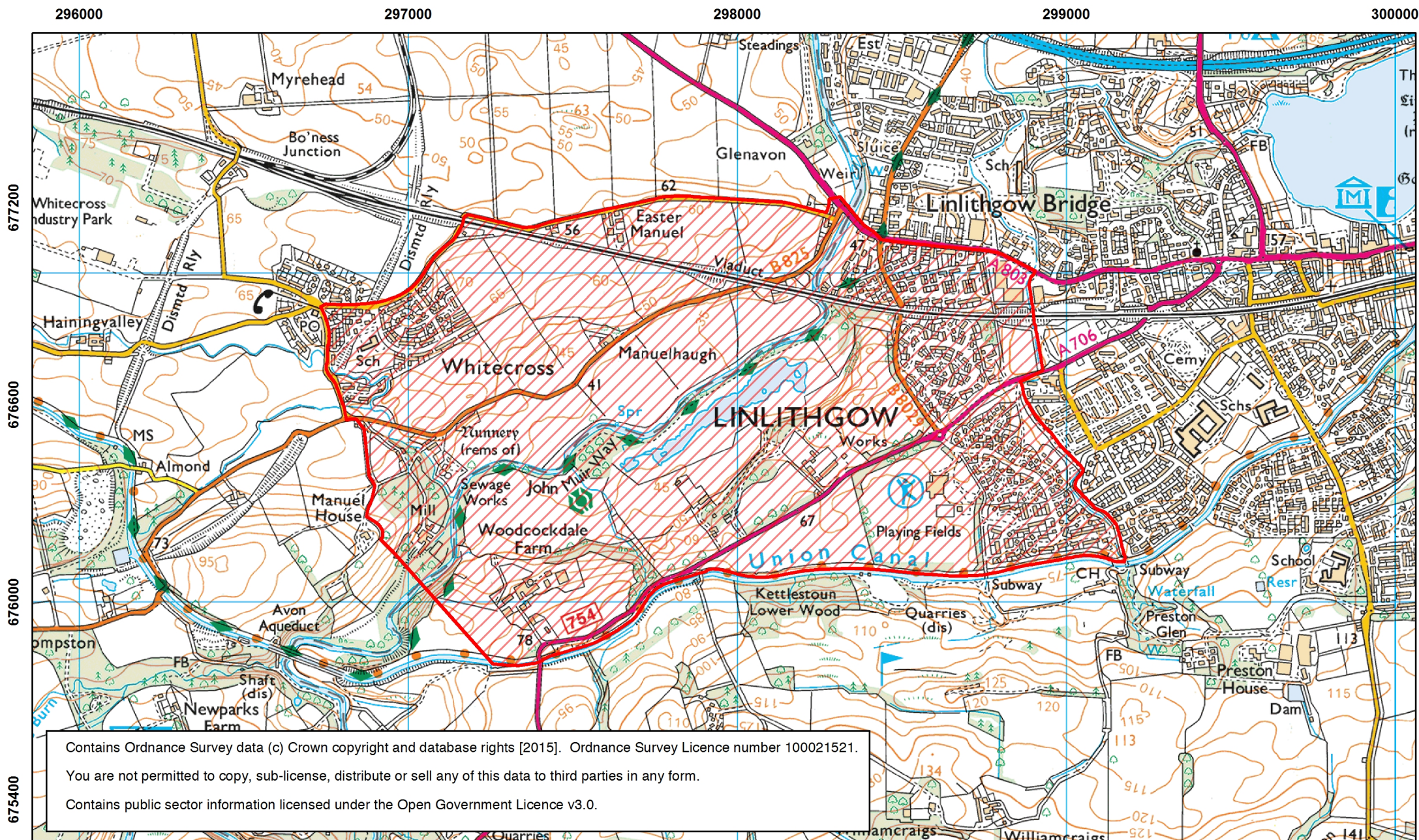
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The Inventory of Historic Battlefields - Boundary

Linlithgow Bridge

4 September 1526

Local Authority: Falkirk / West Lothian



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