# The Inventory of Historic Battlefields

# The Battle of Rullion Green

## 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

## RULLION GREEN

Alternative Names: None

28 November 1666

Local Authority: Midlothian

NGR centred: NT 223 629

Date of Addition to Inventory: 30 November 2011

Date of last update: 14 December 2012

## Overview and Statement of Significance

The Battle of Rullion Green is significant as the only battle 1666 Covenanter rebellion, also known as the Pentland Rising. It ends the uprising and results in a period of violent repression against the Covenanters.

The battle of Rullion Green was the first and only battle of the Pentland Rising. A Covenanter army under the command of Colonel James Wallace had risen in south-west Scotland and had advanced to Edinburgh to attempt to win support, all the while pursued by a Government army sent after them under Sir Thomas Dalziel. The Government finally caught up to the Covenanters at Rullion Green and defeated them after a stiff fight.

## 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 Rullion Green is defined on the accompanying map and includes the following areas:

- The low ground which takes in the route of the A702 and which in part follows a Roman Road. This is most likely the route followed by Wallace's Covenanters prior to their arrival at Rullion Green and their subsequent move onto the higher ground.
- The southern end of Glencorse where the Glencorse Burn debouches into a more open plain, though still overlooked by hills to the north and south. Dalziel's force advanced to contact through the glen and a

preliminary skirmish was fought somewhere within this area prior to the retreat of Dalziel's vanguard onto the low ground on the north side of the burn, where they awaited the arrival of the main force.

- The southern and eastern flanks of Turnhouse Hill, which may have accommodated the skirmish but were also occupied by the left flank of the Covenanter army.
- The western flank of Lawhead Hill was occupied by the main body of the Covenanter force, and is now the location of the Marytyr's Monument, while the terrace centred on the 70 metre contour accommodated Dalziel's troops once they had moved uphill from the valley floor to the east. The area to the west of these locations, within the vicinity of the farm of Rullion Green may have been the location of the Covenanter camp prior to the battle.
- The Covenanters are likely to have fled to the west and possibly to the north over the summit of Turnhouse Hill.

## Historical Background to the Battle

Wallace and the Covenanter army had marched to Edinburgh with the hope of being reinforced with supplies and volunteers. The Covenanters halted at Colinton, south west of the city, on 27 November. However, no support was forthcoming from Edinburgh, which was raised in alarm against a rumoured invasion and Wallace's army reluctantly turned from the capital, wishing to retreat to the safety of the west, their staunchest support base. The way west, however, was blocked by Dalziel's army and the insurgent force headed east and then south toward Biggar via the Linton Road (roughly the direction of the current A702), using the line of the Pentland Hills as cover. Major General William Drummond, who commanded the vanguard of Dalziel's army, had intended to engage the insurgents outside Edinburgh but upon learning of their directional change, he was able to anticipate their new objective. He intercepted the Covenanter force in Glencorse Parish, where Wallace's army had halted at Rullion Green to rest and to wait for stragglers. Having sighted a small forward party of government cavalry, Wallace arranged his infantry on the eastern slope of Turnhouse Hill flanked on either side by troops of horse.

A skirmish with Dalziel's vangaurd occurred to the north-east of Wallace's main position. Repelling this attack, the Covenanters waited on their strong, high ground as Dalziel's full force assembled across the glen. Once Dalziel's vanguard and his main body of cavalry and infantry were united, they forded the Glencorse River and arrayed themselves against the Covenanters at the bottom of Turnhouse Hill. From this position Dalziel attacked Wallace's left three times, only managing to turn the line in the final attempt by pushing forward his full force along the entirety of Wallace's line. The Covenanters, unable to reinforce their weak right side and thrown into confusion, broke and fled into the night.

## Events & Participants

Sir Thomas Dalziel had a long and illustrious military career behind him by the time of Rullion Green. He accompanied Charles I to La Rochelle in 1628 to aid the Huguenots at the age of 13, fought on the Royalist side through the Wars of the Three Kingdoms in Ulster and was captured at the Battle of Worcester in 1651. He had to flee Scotland in 1654 after being involved in a Highland rising against Cromwell after which a price of 200 guineas was offered for him dead or alive. He went to Russia and saw service for the Tsar of Russia in the Russo-Polish War and against the Turks and the Tartars. He returned to Scotland on the restoration of Charles II in 1660, becoming Commander-in-Chief of the army in Scotland in 1666 with orders to suppress the Covenanters. His actions in the wake of the Pentland Rising earned him the sobriquet 'Bluidy Tam'. According to one story, Sir Thomas on one occasion played cards with the Devil and won. He was replaced as Commander-in-Chief by the Duke of Monmouth in 1679, and despite being reinstated by Charles II, did not appear at the Battle of Bothwell Bridge until after the fighting was over. In 1681, he was the first Colonel of the Royal Scots Greys Regiment, which was originally constituted as a dragoon regiment.

James Wallace, commander of the Covenanter forces at Rullion Green, also had a long military career, first serving in the Parliamentarian and then Covenanter armies during the Wars of the Three Kingdoms. He was captured during the Battle of Kilsyth in 1645 while fighting against Montrose and then again at the Battle of Dunbar in 1650, where he was serving in the Scottish army of the restored Charles II. The Pentland Rising brought Wallace out of retirement and after escaping the field of Rullion Green he went into exile in Holland, where he died in 1678.

## Battlefield Landscape

A detailed analysis of the contemporary accounts, first attempted by Terry places the location of the action on Turnhouse Hill (1905). Although he was very confident about the various positions the location of the main battle is perhaps more readily identifiable than the initial skirmish, which took place on the lower slopes, somewhere in the vicinity of the mouth of the valley of Glencorse and saw Dalziel's advanced party beaten back across the river.

The Covenanters had the advantage of high ground but Dalziel was able to establish a firm footing on a terrace below Wallace's position, but this was only gained after a stiff climb from the valley bottom after leaving the enclosed surroundings of Glencorse. The Covenanters appear to have been deployed in an almost semi-circular formation distributed across the flanks of Turnhouse Hill to the north and Lawhead Hill to the west.

At the time of the battle the area was largely free of enclosure but today much of the battlefield is given over to fenced fields, which represent a mix of arable, on the lower slopes, and grazing on the upper. Blocks of forestry occupy the upper slopes and these may in part cover the Covenanter positions.

## Archaeological and Physical Remains and Potential

Though several excavations of prehistoric sites have been conducted in the immediate vicinity of Rullion Green, (Stevenson 1971, Watkins 1984, Watkins et al 1986) the battlefield itself has never been subjected to formal survey. The engagement at Rullion Green involved a total of 2000-3000 combatants. The government forces initiated repeated attacks on the Covenanter position and there were several instances of hand-to-hand fighting. Because of this, one would expect to find a variety of physical remains such as spent and dropped ammunition, damaged weapons (i.e. pistols, swords, and the various makeshift weapons used by the Covenanters), personal accoutrements like buckles and buttons, and cavalry items like horseshoes, nails and other hardware. The Covenanter army had marched rapidly with their camp equipment and other items that would have been abandoned upon their desperate flight into the dark, hilly terrain. It is probable that artefacts remain in the ploughsoil, which organised metal detector surveying and other archaeological methods could recover. Though there is a fringe of later plantation, the area of the battlefield remains largely undeveloped. It is not currently under cultivation and it is probable that artefacts remain in the topsoil.

## Cultural Association

The battle is an important event in the history of the Kirk of Scotland's dissenting religious tradition and is particularly important in the history of southern and western Scotland. The persecution and martyrdom of Covenanters in the Pentland Rising and the 'Killing Times' of the later seventeenth-century are deeply embedded in the religious identity of Scottish Presbyterianism. The Covenanters are integral to understanding the history of popular protest and religious intolerance in Scotland. The repercussions of Stuart policies towards dissenters in Scotland, which fuelled Covenanter anti-government sentiment, echo throughout the later Glorious Revolution, Jacobitism and even in opposition to the Treaty of Union. The Battle of Rullion Green highlights the instability of seventeenth-century socio-political life in Scotland and the Restoration government's tenuous and difficult grasp on civil order.

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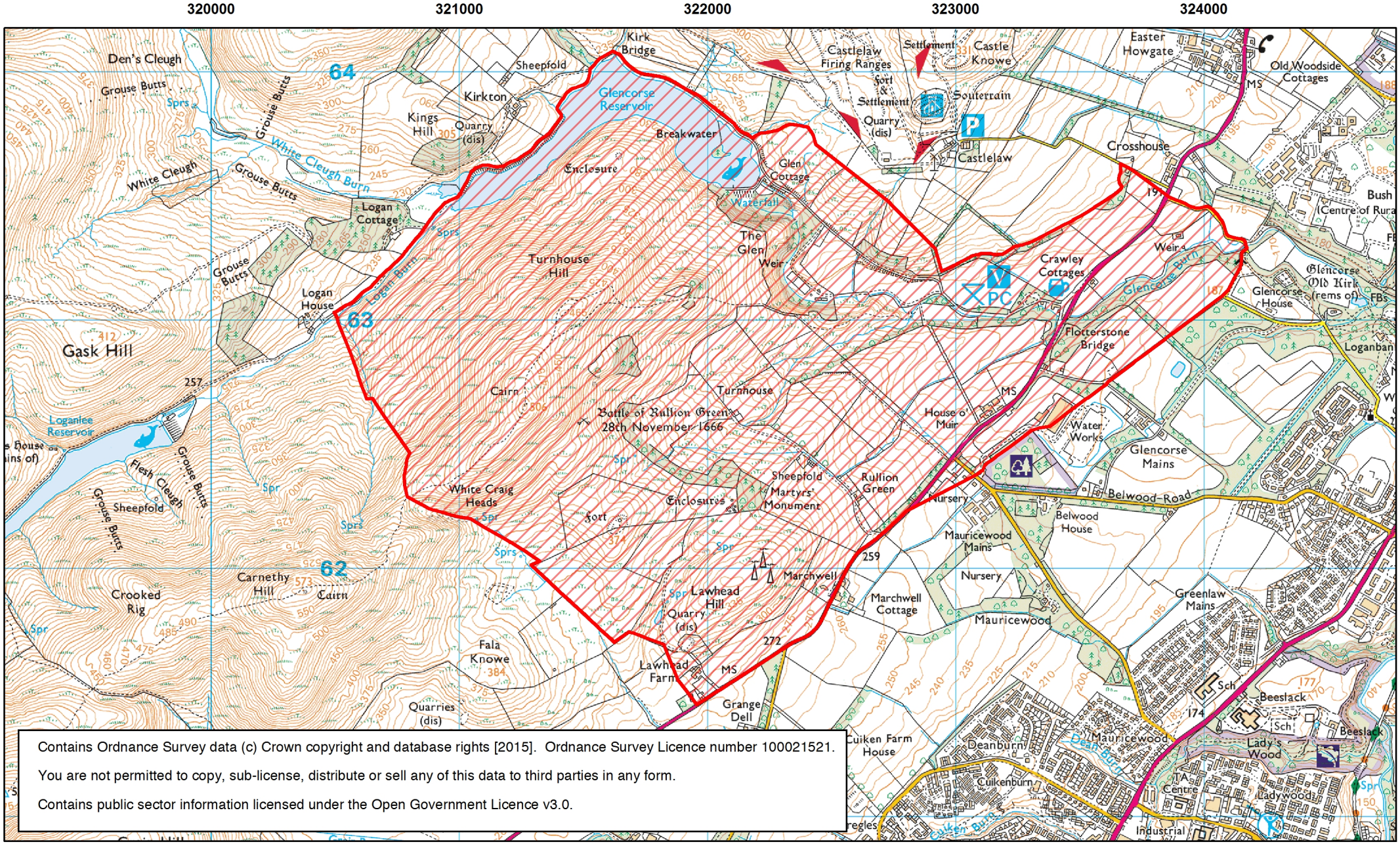
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# The Inventory of Historic Battlefields - Boundary

Rullion Green 28 November 1666 Local Authority: Midlothian




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Inventory of Historic Battlefields boundary

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