

Inventory of Historic Battlefields

DUPPLIN MOOR

10-11 August 1332

Local Authority: Perth & Kinross

NGR centred: NO 039 197

Overview

The Battle of Dupplin Moor heralded the start of the Second War of Scottish Independence. It was the first attempt of Edward Balliol (son of King John Balliol) to take the throne of Scotland and restore the lands of the nobles that had been on the losing side at Bannockburn, known collectively as the Disinherited. He was secretly supported by the English King Edward III, both financially and militarily.

The battle was a heavy defeat for the larger Scots army and many of the most significant Scottish nobles died on the field, including the Earl of Mar, the Scottish guardian, leaving Scotland effectively leaderless. Balliol quickly seized the throne and was crowned in September 1332 but fled the country in December due to lack of support. The victory brought English ambitions back to Scotland and Edward III now felt able to ignore the peace treaty with Scotland signed in 1328 (the Treaty of Northampton) and resumed his attempted subjugation of Scotland.

The Battle

The Disinherited army was led by Henry de Beaumont, a survivor of Falkirk and Bannockburn. The army consisted of around 500 men-at-arms, over 1,000 infantry and archers and 40 German mercenaries. They arrived in Kinghorn in Fife from England by sea (to preserve England's appearance of neutrality and avoid breaking the Treaty of Northampton) and marched westwards towards Dunfermline before turning north for Perth. On 10 August 1332, they reached the River Earn at Forteviot, encountering a large Scottish army under the Earl of Mar, the new guardian, drawn up on the high ground at Dupplin. With the aid of a Scottish sympathiser, Murray of Tulbardine, the Disinherited crossed the river under cover of darkness and attacked what they thought was the Scottish camp (at a place referred to as *Gask* in the sources). However, this was the Scots baggage train (the convoy of servants, tradesmen and soldier's families) and, as dawn broke on 11 August 1332, the Disinherited realised that the Scottish army, consisting of a battle led by Mar and one led by Lord Robert Bruce (the illegitimate son of Robert the Bruce), was untouched and still awaiting them. Estimates of the Scottish army vary between 4,000 and 24,000, but the fact that the army consisted of two battles suggests the lower.

The battle started at daybreak and continued until midday. There are few indications of the precise location of the fighting in the primary sources, but what little information does appear would suggest that the Disinherited were drawn up across the head of a small valley: the *Brut* chronicle (a history of England completed in the 15th century), talks of a 'streite passage' that restricted the frontage of the Disinherited to c200 yards (180 m). With a front line of dismounted men-at-arms, the army of the Disinherited was supplemented by archers on both flanks, with the 40 German mercenaries in reserve as a mounted unit. Facing them were two battles of Scots, who were advancing on the Disinherited as the dawn broke. The two battles were separately commanded by Lord Robert Bruce and the Earl of Mar; the two men were not good colleagues, and Bruce is said to have accused Mar of treachery for having

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allowed the Disinherited to cross the river unopposed. As a result, both men tried to be the first to engage the enemy.

Bruce made contact first, the sheer numbers of his schiltrons (a compact body of spearmen forming a battle array) pushing the Disinherited back around 30 yards. However, the charge was less effective than it could have been because the schiltrons were not properly organised and cohesive, while the relentless hail of arrows from the archers on the wings meant that the Scots pressed into the centre of the line. As the Disinherited line held, the momentum of the Scots faltered. This need not have been disastrous, but Mar's battalion then came into the fight. Unfortunately, rather than attacking on the flanks, the second battalion was as disorganised as the first and instead came in behind Bruce's men, preventing them from moving backwards. As the arrows rained down on them, the Scots continued to bunch towards the centre, making it virtually impossible to get away, or even to fight. The chronicles record that many of the Scottish casualties were caused through suffocation rather than military wounds, although the troops of the Disinherited were able to stab and shoot any signs of life in the crush.

A retreat was attempted by the Earl of Fife, but the men-at-arms on the Disinherited side were able to mount up and turn the retreat into a rout, causing considerable extra casualties as men were cut down as they fled.

Events & Participants

The Second War of Independence (1332–1357) was a protracted period of campaigning by Edward Balliol and the other anti-Bruce nobility (the Disinherited), to regain the lands and honours lost to them after the Battle of Bannockburn. In pursuit of their claims, the Disinherited mustered an army with the tacit support of the English crown and invaded Scotland; after Dupplin Moor, they returned several times but now openly on behalf of Edward III. These campaigns were militarily successful, but were transitory because of a lack of support within Scotland itself. The Second War of Independence was ultimately unsuccessful for Balliol and the Disinherited, with Balliol ceding his claim to Edward III on January 20, 1356.

Figures of national significance involved in the Battle of Dupplin Moor include Edward Balliol, the son of King John Balliol; Lord Robert fitz Bruce, illegitimate son of Robert the Bruce; Sir William Keith, Great Marischal of Scotland; and the Earl of Mar, then Protector of Scotland. Bruce, Keith and Mar were all killed in the battle.

The battle is of national significance because it was the first use of the dismounted men-at-arms alongside archers by an English army, a formation that was to prove so successful in future battles against the Scots (e.g. Halidon Hill) and the French (Agincourt). While the later battles are more famous, Henry V certainly owed his victory at Agincourt to the tactics that Henry Beaumont developed at Dupplin Moor. The archers caused the initial damage as the enemy advanced, while the men-at-arms delivered the *coup de grace* as the offensive formations collapsed. This was to bring English success throughout the Hundred Years War.

Physical Remains & Potential

There are a number of records of Medieval artefacts being found in the general area of the battle. There is a 19th century record of weapons associated with the battle being recovered on the Dupplin Estate, but the artefacts are no longer extant and their provenance unproven. A copper alloy pendant from a horse of Sir William Keith's retinue was recovered by a metal detectorist within the vicinity of the battlefield in 2007. The vague four figure grid reference for the find places it to the

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south-west of Forteviot, which is on the valley floor, and thus well away from the high ground above the scarp, where the fighting most probably took place.

Given the 14th century date of the battle it is likely that any ferrous material associated with the battle will be poorly preserved and difficult to locate. Given the cramped nature of the main battle there may be non-ferrous personal items located within a fairly confined area on the battlefield. As a large number of the Scots were killed during the battle the potential for graves within the defined area is high.

Cultural Associations

The battle of Dupplin Moor has very limited cultural associations and has left no trace in popular culture. There are no traditional songs or poems about the battle and no on-site commemoration or interpretation. The lack of popularity of this highly significant battle may relate to the fact that it was a terrible defeat for Scotland in a campaign that was ultimately unsuccessful.

Battlefield Landscape

The general location of the battle is well established through primary and secondary sources. However, due to the lack of detail within these sources, the precise location of the fighting is uncertain and a programme of archaeological field work and the recovery of associated artefacts will be required to accurately pinpoint the site of the battle.

Accounts of the battle record that the Disinherited marched from Dunfermline to the south towards Perth, crossing the River Earn under cover of darkness near Forteviot. They then climbed the steep scarp in front of them up to Dupplin Moor where the fighting took place. The Scottish army had marched down from Perth, and were encamped somewhere on the high ground where the Disinherited could see them; the primary sources record that the mood amongst the Disinherited was grim when they saw the size of the army confronting them. There was a Scottish camp at a place described as *Gaskmoor*, which suggests that it was to the west in the direction of the Gask Ridge. However, this was the baggage train's camp and not the main camp, as the Disinherited discovered when they attacked.

The texts talk about a 'streite passage', where the Disinherited were drawn up across the head of a small valley; this meant that the Disinherited had a frontage of only c200 yards to cover in their deployment, with little chance of being outflanked by the larger Scottish army. Several areas have been suggested for this, in particular Dupplin Castle and Cairnie Wood. This latter location, however, does not have any resemblance to a 'streite passage' that would constrict the movement of the Scots and provide protection from flanking for the Disinherited; it would also require the Scots to be marching up from the valley bottom, which does not match the accounts. The Dupplin Castle possibility has a better fit; the castle sits in a small valley running uphill north-west from the scarp; this is relatively narrow and could match the description of the location. However, it is difficult to see how this would work if the Scots camped overnight somewhere on the high ground to the east of the Disinherited. In order to advance on the Disinherited moving roughly east to west, this location would require the Scots to move to a position where they were had to charge uphill.

A more likely location would be higher up on the plateau at Backhill Park, where a dip runs east-west to the south of Windygates Cottage. The sides of this dip are quite high, almost a half-pipe with a flat base and a U-shaped side profile, and would certainly match the 'streite passage' and the likely relative positions of the two

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armies. Again, the problem with this location is that it also requires the Scots to have attacked uphill.

The direction of the rout is uncertain although it is likely that the Scots fled to the west and north-west along the Gask ridge.

The battle was fought on a plateau above Strathearn to the south-west of Perth. The topography of the steep slope up from the River Earn, which presents a serious obstacle to a manoeuvring army, has remained essentially unchanged; it is still easy to understand on the ground why Lord Robert Bruce was angry that Mar had allowed the English to gain the higher ground without a fight. The overall character of the landscape is sufficiently well preserved to give a good sense of the approach of the Disinherited and their climb to the high ground where the fighting took place. The slope leads up to flatter ground that is suitable for manoeuvring; there are a couple of small lochs on this higher ground, while the area is largely undisturbed flat open moorland. Important views from the Scots position on the plateau out over the valley of the Earn to the approaching Disinherited army survive intact.

There has been relatively little development in the area and the rural nature of the valley and the plateau is well preserved. The landscape around Dupplin Castle has changed since the time of the battle with the addition agricultural land and forestry on the high ground to the west making it impossible to see the open moorland of the plateau from the top of the scarp. It is also probable that other key locations, such as the position of the Scottish camp, has been covered by the forestry and will be difficult to find.

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 the position 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 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 Dupplin Moor is defined on the accompanying map and includes the following areas:

- The northern slopes of the valley of the Earn. The direction of the advance of the Disinherited and their approach to the plateau.
- The Dupplin plateau. The location of the Scots camp and the scene of the battle. Given the difficulties in placing the fighting precisely the boundary has been widely drawn to incorporate the three main suggested locations.
- The terrain of the slopes and plateau and the views to and from the plateau, over the valley below and up the steep slopes to the summit above. The slope was a key landscape feature in the initial deployment manoeuvres of the Disinherited.

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Relevant Publications

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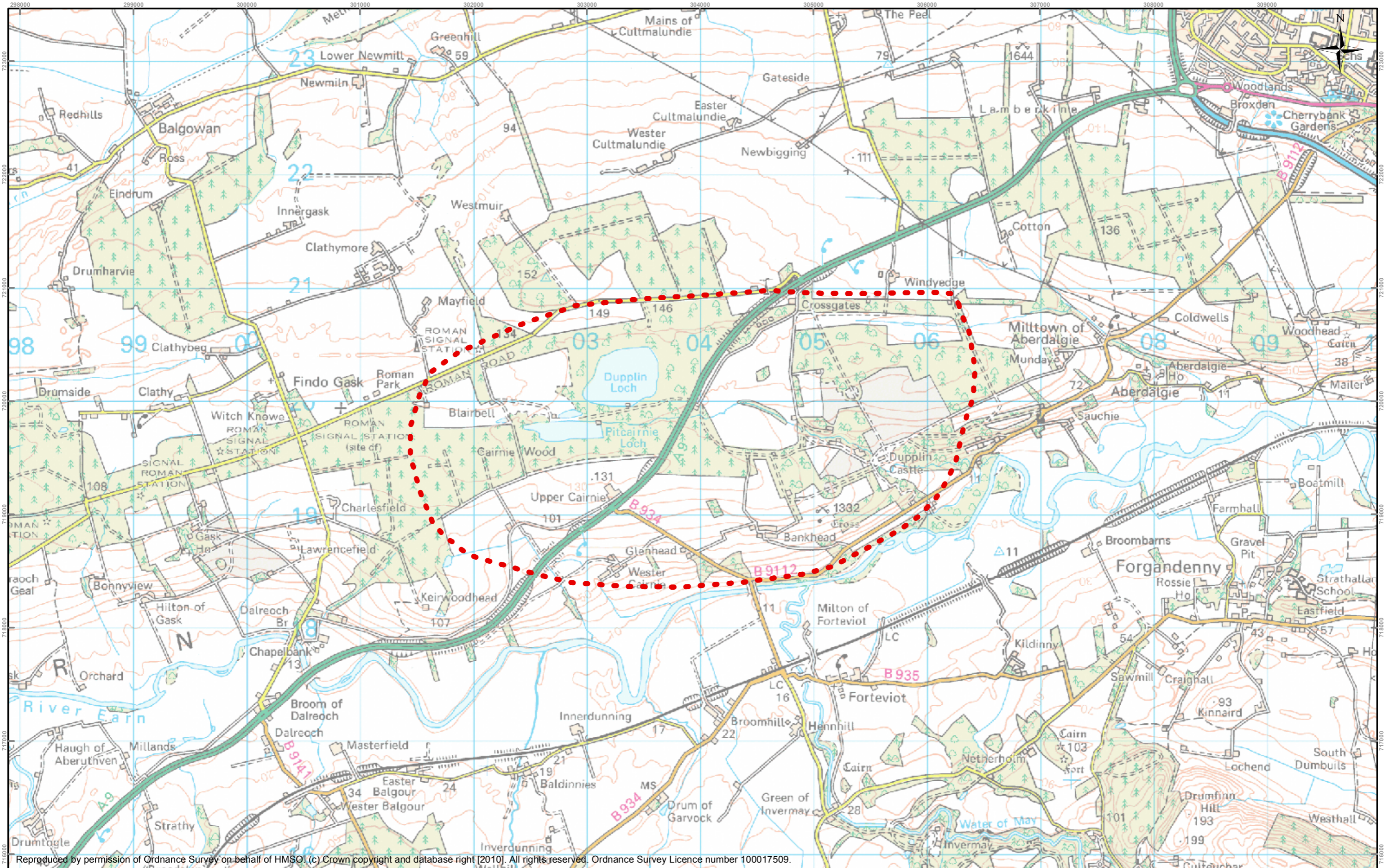
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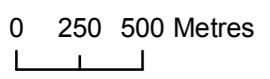
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12th August 1332

Perth and Kinross
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