

# Inventory of Historic Battlefields

## PHILIPHAUGH

13 September 1645

Local Authority: Scottish Borders

NGR centred: NT 444 283

### Overview

The battle of Philiphaugh was a major defeat for the Scottish Royalist army in the Wars of the Three Kingdoms and signalled the end of the Marquis of Montrose's campaign in Scotland. Montrose had raised the royal standard in Scotland in 1644, in an attempt to secure the kingdom for the king by force of arms. He had won a string of six victories and had crippled the ability of the Covenanters (Scottish Presbyterians opposed to interference by the Stuart Kings in the affairs of the Church of Scotland) to counter him. However, by September his attempts to raise sufficient Lowland forces, or maintain the numbers of his existing troops to sustain his campaign, had failed.

After the crushing defeat at Kilsyth (15 August 1645) no effective Covenanter army remained in Scotland. Consequently, thousands of experienced troops were recalled by the Scottish Government from England and marched north to meet Montrose's depleted Royalists troops positioned in the Borders.

The ill-prepared and out numbered Royalists were quickly defeated by the Government troops at Philiphaugh and the captured soldiers, their families and servants were swiftly executed within a short distance of the battlefield. The Royalist defeat signalled the end of Montrose's campaign in Scotland and effectively marked the end of the Civil War in Scotland. The victory of the Covenanters was secured the following year with the surrender of King Charles to a Covenanter army in England.

### The Battle

At Philiphaugh, Montrose's army was at an even greater disadvantage of numbers than in the other battles of the campaign. With probably less than 2,000 troops, he was outnumbered by the Government army of at least 4,000, under the command of David Leslie. Furthermore, he had little idea of the approaching threat. On the night before the battle, he had his officers billeted in Selkirk, while the body of the army was over a mile away camped in woodland. The alarm was only raised when Leslie was less than 2 miles from Selkirk.

It appears that on the battlefield Montrose, as always, made good use of the opportunities offered by the terrain. However, his army was completely unprepared for the Government attack and many of his troops seem never to have been drawn up or engaged. His forces made good use of ditches and dykes to counter the massive superiority of the Covenanters in cavalry, but the advantage of ground was insufficient to enable them to hold off the sustained attack of Leslie's experienced troops. Leslie's cavalry came across the haugh, the flat ground beside the river, and assaulted the right wing of the Royalists. They were driven back twice before the Royalist infantry advanced from their defensive position, but they were quickly driven back in turn. The Royalist cavalry tried a counter-charge, but they were unable to reach the Government cavalry and instead broke through the rearguard and left the infantry to their fate. There are accounts of Montrose trying to break through to assist the beleaguered Irish regiment, but was unable to do so and made his escape. As

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the right flank was holding firm through the support of the remainder of the Royalist cavalry, Leslie led another cavalry charge on the left flank where there was no cavalry, and quickly broke through. This effectively ended the battle, although the Irish regiment stood and fought to the end. Eventually they surrendered having been offered quarter; however, as they were being marched away, they were all killed. Some of the routed Royalist forces were pursued for several miles, but the main focus was the baggage train (the convoy of servants, tradesmen and soldier's families following along behind the troops) which was looted, with the camp followers that were with it being slaughtered. While Montrose had escaped with some of his cavalry intact, his army had ceased to exist and he was never again able to rally support in Scotland.

### **Events & Participants**

The Battle of Philiphaugh was the end of Royalist hopes in Scotland in the Wars of the Three Kingdoms. Montrose was outnumbered as he always was, and, as so often in the past, had insufficient intelligence of the approach of the Government army. His officers were not with their men, and as Leslie's army approached the Royalists were in some confusion. The battle ended in defeat for Montrose, the first that he had suffered, and it was enough to end the campaign. Montrose escaped the battlefield and carried on guerrilla actions during the winter, but he was unable to gather a new army to continue the campaign. Furthermore, the backbone of his army had always been the Irish O'Cahan's Regiment, and it was destroyed in the battle. Those not killed on the field were taken prisoner and subsequently killed.

The Marquis of Montrose was the leader of the Royalist faction in Scotland. Having initially supported the opposition to Charles I in Scotland, in 1643 he had come out in favour of the Royalist faction in opposition to the governing group in the Scottish Parliament (Covenanters) who had agreed to send troops south to assist the English Parliamentarians against Charles I. He fought a series of seven battles against Covenanter armies across the Highlands in 1644 and 1645, beginning with Tippermuir and ending at Philiphaugh.

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, Montrose's right hand man, but stayed with Montrose after Mac Colla left.

Major-General David Leslie was a very capable and experienced commander who began his military career fighting for Gustavus Adolphus in the Thirty Years War, where he rose to the rank of Colonel. After his return to Scotland in 1640, he was second in command as Major-General of the Scottish armies that were sent to help the English Parliamentarians; it was the despatch of Leslie and his troops that acted as the spark for Montrose's raising of the Royal Standard in Scotland.

### **Physical Remains & Potential**

There are no unequivocal archaeological remains from the battle. Human remains were recorded in 1810 during the construction of a school at Slain Men's Lea (on the western edge of the defined area), which were said to be the remains of some of Montrose's army. A low linear earthwork was recorded within Philiphaugh Park on the Ordnance survey map of 1863. It consisted of a bank about 6 m wide with a parallel ditch along its west side, running from the bank of the Yarrow northward across the valley bottom. It has been tentatively identified by some as the earthwork thrown up by the Royalists prior to the battle.

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Another antiquarian account states that in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century 'in a hollow piece of ground near Harehead Wood, in Leslie's Field .... a quantity of silver plate' was found. Silver coins of the period were also found in this period on a haugh of the Tinnis (Tinnis Farm lies upstream along the Yarrow) and other stray silver coins have been found within the defined area.

A flintlock gun, said to be associated with the battle, was located in Philiphaugh House in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Today, artefacts from the battlefield are displayed in Haliwell House Museum, Selkirk.

The majority of the area of the battle appears to have remained fairly undisturbed and the potential for surviving in-situ evidence associated with the battle is high. Metal detecting on the haugh and the adjacent higher ground has recovered quantities of lead bullets. The cavalry action may be expected to be represented by concentrations of pistol and carbine bullets (the carbine is a lighter, shorter version of a musket carried by cavalry), while the infantry versus dragoon/infantry should be marked by mainly musket balls. Where the cavalry were involved in the assaults on the infantry within the enclosures a mixture of all ammunition may be present.

### Cultural Association

The battle is not particularly well known today. There is one surviving ballad, the *Philiphaugh Ballad* which records the action on the battlefield and may date to pre-1700. There is on-site interpretation at the western end of the battlefield, provided by the Estate, and a monument commemorating the Covenanters within the parkland.

The battlefield is surrounded by place-names associated with the action, including Battlepark Plantation, General's Haugh and Montrose Plantation, though these are likely to be relatively modern as the majority relate to plantations rather than more durable landscape features; the exception to this is the longstanding place-name Slain Men's Field, which traditionally marks the location of a massacre of prisoners after the battle.

### Battlefield Landscape

The general position of the battlefield is well established as the haugh called *Philipshauch*, the low lying ground beside the river immediately to the west of Selkirk. Little work has been undertaken to pinpoint the location of the action and the bloody aftermath of the battle more precisely.

Primary sources make it clear that the Covenanters advanced towards the battlefield from the north-east, along the line of the main road crossing the Linglie Burn. The majority of this approach is now under housing, but the area of the Royalist overnight camp was almost certainly further to the west within the agricultural hinterland of Selkirk. Physical elements of this encampment may still survive.

The probable location of battlefield, immediately to the west of Philiphaugh Farm, survives as enclosed farmland. A group of isolated enclosures shown on Roy's mid 18<sup>th</sup> century map at Philiphaugh Farm may represent the hedges and dykes that the Royalists used for cover. There has been a lot of change in this part of the landscape with the construction of Philiphaugh House and parklands and any surface traces of the enclosures are no longer visible on the ground. However, linear features are present running across the haugh to the river. The purpose and date of these earthworks is unknown but it is possible that they represent the large ditch that acted as both cover and hindrance for the Royalists. There is high potential to locate

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the enclosures and the provenance of the linear features through archaeological fieldwork.

To the north-west of the battlefield is an area known as Slain Men's Lea, traditionally the site where the Irish soldiers and the camp followers were killed. Human remains were recorded at this location during the construction of a school in 1810. The potential for further burials to be located within the defined battlefield area is high due to the level of casualties; several hundred Royalists were reportedly killed during the battle and its aftermath.

Both primary and secondary sources suggest that the direction of the rout was to the north-west, terminating at Newark Castle. This short distance from the battlefield suggests that further burials may be located within the western half of the Inventory boundary.

The battle was fought across the narrow low lying tract of riverside land on the northern banks of the Ettrick Water, overlooked to the north by the Lingle hills and the river to the south. The majority of the plain appears to have been open land and meadow at the time of the battle, with only the lands surrounding Philiphaugh Farm enclosed. Although the landscape has been altered through field enclosure, light industry and the construction of sports grounds on the north-east, the overall character of the battlefield is largely intact and well preserved as open countryside.

The topography of the flat open plain was excellent ground for the Covenanter cavalry to attack Montrose's infantry deployed within the field enclosures. This landscape is very well preserved and the spatial relationship between the plain, the river to the south and the higher ground to the north and west remains clear. The route of the Royalist rout across the southern slopes of Harehead Hill north-west to Newark Castle can still be traced on the ground and key views from the battlefield to Ettrick Water to the south and Selkirk to the west survive intact.

### 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 to some extent 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 Philiphaugh is defined on the accompanying map and includes the following areas:

- The modern A708 and lands to the north and south from the outskirts of Selkirk to Philiphaugh. The approach route of the Covenanters army and their advance on to the Royalist camp located in woodland beyond Philiphaugh.
- The area of enclosures at Philiphaugh as shown on Roy's 18<sup>th</sup> century map. Primary sources indicate that the main battle took place within enclosed ground on the haugh.

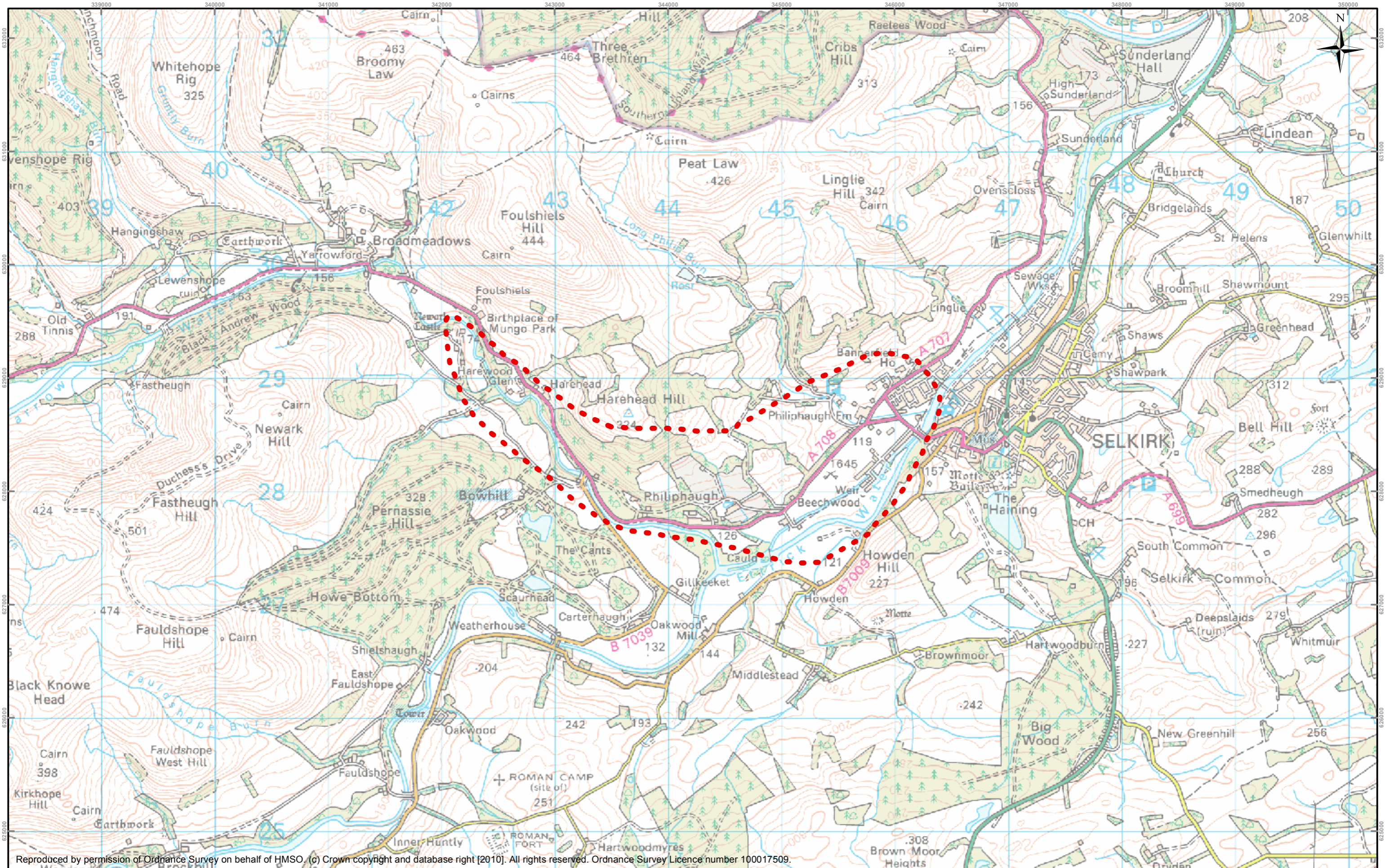
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- Military findspots including Slain Men's Lea where burials were discovered in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and find-spots including silver plate, coins and bullets located throughout the defined area.
- Harewood Glen to Newark Castle. The probable route westward of the rout. Secondary sources indicate that the camp followers were taken to the castle prior to being slaughtered at Slain Men's Lea.
- The Covenanters Monument and earthworks at Harehead Wood. The Ballad of Philiphaugh states that the battle ended at Harehead Wood. The monument was erected in the woods in 1848 overlying an earthwork traditionally associated with the battle.
- The area to the south of the Ettrick Water. The probable route of the flank attack by the Covenanters.
- The well preserved landscape of the battleground including the riverside land on the northern banks of the Ettrick Water, the route of the Royalist rout to the west and the hill slopes to the north.

### Relevant Publications

Elliot, W. F. 1906 *The Trustworthiness of Border Ballads*. William Blackwood, Edinburgh.

Reid, S. 1990 *The Campaigns of Montrose: a military history of the Civil War in Scotland 1639 to 1646*. Mercat Press, Edinburgh.



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## 13th September 1645

Scottish Borders  
NGR: NT444283

