

# Inventory of Historic Battlefields

## PINKIE

10 September 1547

Local Authority: East Lothian

NGR centred: NG 357 712

### Overview

The Battle of Pinkie was the last major battle between Scotland and England. It came as the culmination of Henry VIII's campaign known as the Rough Wooing with the objective of forcing the Scots acceptance of a marriage alliance between his son Edward and the infant Mary, Queen of Scots. After Henry's death in January 1547 the Regent, the Duke of Somerset, decided that an invasion was the only way to secure the marriage. In September 1547 he marched his army north along the east coast to Scotland.

The battle was a dramatic defeat for the Scots, causing the virtual destruction of their army. Despite Scotland's heavy losses, the English were unable to achieve their war aims; the marriage did not take place and this led to Mary's swift departure for France and her marriage to the Dauphin, thereby renewing the Auld Alliance.

### The Battle

The Scottish army of 22-23,000 men under the Earl of Arran was camped at Musselburgh, controlling the bridge across the Esk and protected by the steep river bank and an area of marshland to the south. The English army of 15-19,000 men under the Duke of Somerset had advanced up the east coast, keeping close to the coast to maintain contact with the navy. On the night before the battle, the English camped just to the west of Prestonpans.

The initial fighting began on 9 September with a confrontation between cavalry units at Falside Hill, where the Scottish cavalry were heavily mauled and driven west for three miles. As a result, a large part of the Scottish cavalry was not available to Arran the following day when the main battle took place. In the meantime, having gained the high ground above Musselburgh, Somerset established artillery on the slopes.

On the morning of 10 September, the English moved towards Inveresk Church (St Michael's) but discovered that the Scots had broken camp and were already taking control of the church. This meant that the Scots had abandoned a strong defensive position and were now exposed. Indeed, the Scots now continued to advance rapidly, moving faster than the English expected. There are divergent opinions on why the Scots were advancing; it may have been to try to take the high ground, while it has also been suggested that it was an attempt to avoid the threat of artillery on the slopes by coming to close combat before the guns could be brought into use. Whatever the case, Somerset sent in his cavalry to slow down the advance. The Scottish schiltrons (a compact body of troops forming a battle array) worked effectively against the English cavalry and drove them off with what were described as heavy losses. However, the momentum of the Scottish advance had been lost, and they were now static and in open ground. They were within range of the artillery on the slopes and of the naval guns; the ships had already inflicted casualties on Arran's rearguard as they had advanced through Musselburgh. The Highland archers

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in the rearguard had sustained losses from the naval bombardment and some had broken and run as a result.

Nevertheless, the Scottish position still seemed reasonably strong. There was a head-dyke (a turf or stone wall dividing the cultivated lands from the uncultivated) in front of the Earl of Angus's troops (the commander of the Scottish vanguard), protecting against cavalry charges, while the remaining Scots army had a turf wall on the right flank and possibly the Pinkie Burn on the left, both of which guarded against flanking movements by cavalry. However, they were now within 500 m of the English lines, facing archers, arquebusiers (troops carrying arquebuses, a smooth bore small arms which was the smaller calibre precursor of the musket) and artillery; they were also in view of the English ships and in range of their guns. While the Scots had the same types of ordnance, they had far fewer and were unable to respond in kind to the fire that now poured in on them from front and rear. The Scots could not stay where they were under such intense bombardment, and there seems to have been an attempt to pull back and move out of range. At this point, the Scottish discipline that had held so well against the cavalry began to deteriorate and the retreat quickly collapsed into a rout. As the Scottish schiltrons collapsed and men dropped their equipment to run for Musselburgh and Edinburgh, the English cavalry came back into the fray and cut men down for an extended distance. Some sources claim that the pursuit was all the way to the walls of Edinburgh, but even more conservative accounts suggest a very extensive killing zone towards the city.

As a final part of the fighting, the small Scottish garrison that had held out in Falside Castle was all killed when the English set the tower on fire. As the time was now well into the afternoon, the English made camp a little to the east of Inveresk Church; the next morning they collected Scottish artillery and equipment and buried their dead.

### Events & Participants

There had been a long history of English claims to suzerainty (supreme authority) over Scotland before Edward I had taken feudal overlordship over the kingdom. Henry VIII considered that he still retained that claim. He also considered Scotland an active threat due to its links with France at a time when England was involved in constant conflict with the French. Henry's approach to the problem was the Rough Wooing.

The most significant participants in the battle were the respective commanders, Somerset and Arran. Arran was Regent of Scotland and next in line to the Scottish throne after Mary Queen of Scots. He had been a Protestant and one of the negotiators of the original marriage agreement in 1543, but had converted to Catholicism and was pro-French. He had been one of the commanders of the Scottish army that had won the Battle of Ancrum Moor in 1545. In the aftermath of the Battle of Pinkie, he was instrumental in ensuring the escape of Mary to France, preventing the marriage from taking place.

Edward Seymour was the Earl of Hertford, the Duke of Somerset and the Lord Protector of England during the minority of Edward VI. He was the brother of Jane Seymour, the third of Henry VIII's wives; she died from complications in childbirth, which was the reason that Somerset was able to survive the end of that marriage. He had been Warden of the Scottish Marches under Henry, and in this capacity had pursued the Rough Wooing vigorously on Henry's behalf. He was a talented military commander with a strong record of military victories.

The battle itself is significant in terms of tactics. It was the first time in Britain that gunpowder weapons proved decisive in the outcome of a battle; it was also the first time that artillery, infantry, cavalry and naval support had combined in an action

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recognisable in modern terms. While, in these terms Pinkie was comparable to contemporary battles in Europe, the use of naval bombardment as part of the battle was a major innovation; the guns firing from the ships out at sea caused havoc amongst the Scottish rearguard and drove off some of the archers that might have replied to the English fire. Artillery had been present in earlier battles, such as Flodden in 1513, but had never been as effectively employed as it was at Pinkie. The English guns made the Scottish defensive position untenable, ripped great holes in the schiltrons and made it impossible for the Scots to hold position after fending off the cavalry. The standard English medieval tactics of archery and dismounted men-at-arms were replaced by heavy cavalry charging the enemy and pursuing them as they routed, with arquebuses firing into the sides of the schiltrons. As well as being the first time that such a battle had been fought on British soil, it was an early example of such tactics in European terms.

### Physical Remains & Potential

In the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, large quantities of human bones, pieces of spears, swords, horseshoes and 'officers' epaulettes' (an ornamental shoulder piece used as insignia of rank) were recovered on the eastern side of Howe Mire.

Falside Castle, which was burnt by the English towards the end of the battle, is now restored and occupied but still retains the original 15<sup>th</sup> century tower. The tower is now fully rendered so it is not possible to determine whether the structure retains shot impact scars from hagbutt (a portable long-barrelled gun) or artillery fire during the siege.

Material relating to the battle has been recovered through numerous metal detecting surveys. These finds include lead balls, possible case shot (a thin metal case containing a large number of bullets or small projectiles), round shot (a spherical solid projectile fired from a cannon), buttons, buckles and various pieces of horse fittings. A concentration of artefacts has been located to the south-east of Wallyford. A co-ordinated metal detector survey within the context of an archaeological research project will be required to determine if this area was the centre of the battle or one of the flanks.

Although there has been extensive development in parts of the battlefield, the area of the main battle has remained undisturbed and the potential for surviving in-situ evidence is high. As the battle saw extensive use of projectile weapons, both archery and shot, there is a strong likelihood of finding musket balls, arrowheads and artillery shot within the overall area of the battlefield. Given the close-quarters combat that took place both in the cavalry charge and during the rout, there may also be personal effects left in the ground. One of the English officers, William Patten, recorded that the bodies of the Scots were stripped before being disposed. This means that fastenings and other items of personal dress may have been strewn across the ground. As most of the Scottish infantry would have been wearing padded jackets with protective metal plates, the location of these may indicate the main area of the foot-soldiers.

The battle is recorded in a series of contemporary plans which are the earliest and most extensive collection of surviving plans for any battle in Britain. These comprise detailed plans of the various phases of the battle, showing the armies on the move and the topography of the battlefield. They are held in the Bodleian Library.

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## Cultural Association

There is a memorial stone which marks the supposed location of the English camp after the battle in parkland to the east of Inveresk church. An annual commemorative ceremony is held at a modern memorial at Carberry Mains Farm, erected and maintained by the Old Musselburgh Club. Recent local interest has led to the formation of a Pinkie Battlefield Group within the Musselburgh Conservation Society. There is no on-site interpretation but the Musselburgh Conservation Society has a guided battlefield walk on their website.

In Scotland, the battle is almost culturally invisible, particularly when compared to Bannockburn or Culloden. The only ballad that survives comes from England, called *Musselboorowe Ffield*, which survives as a fragment.

## Battlefield Landscape

The landscape of the battlefield was recorded on a series of detailed plans of the phases of the battle which show both the topography of the battlefield and the armies on the move and help identify the location of events across the area.

The Scottish camp is generally shown to lie immediately west of the Esk in the area of Stonyhill; a contemporary English source gives its location as Edminston Edge, possibly the scarp immediately to the west of the Esk. The bridge to the east of the camp is the 'old bridge' on the map of 1824, a little upstream of the later bridges. The English camp from the night before the battle lay on the coast adjacent to Prestonpans at *Salt Preston* two miles from the Scots. It has been suggested that the camp was located in Drommohr Park.

The advance of the Scottish forces on the morning of 10 September was across the Esk by the old bridge on the main road west of Musselburgh and by fording the Esk immediately to the west of Inveresk church. The van and main battle then advanced on the south side and the rearguard on the north side of Inveresk church, then turning and marching south-east. The line of march of the English army was initially immediately west from their camp, perhaps broadly along the course of the later post road, which ran between Musselburgh and Inveresk to the old bridge. When the English saw that the Scots had already taken the high ground of Inveresk, they turned their march south-west towards Falside Hill.

Significant landscape features shown on the plans that indicate the locations of the troops are the *slough* (a low-lying area of soft waterlogged ground and standing water) immediately in front of the Scottish army and the lane that formed the western boundary of the Scottish deployment. The lane was used by Somerset to reconnoitre the Scottish camp and was where he intended to place his artillery to bombard their camp. The *slough* may refer to the stream running on the southern boundary dividing Inveresk fields from Carberry immediately west of Crookstone, while the lane may be the Carberry road.

The pursuit and slaughter began shortly beyond where the Scottish forces stood. From here, the Bodleian drawings makes clear the troops fled across the Esk, some south-west through marshland, others west through the Scottish camp, yet others via the Musselburgh bridge and along the coast. In the aftermath the small garrison of Scots located in Falside Castle were attacked by the English and the castle burnt to the ground.

The cavalry skirmish on 9 September was described by the main English source as being on Falside Brae, and this has had an effect in locating the battlefield. However, on the Bodleian drawings it appears to take place on the summit and north-east slope of Carberry Hill. This matches the source's description that recorded just one

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hill extending to the south-west with Carberry Tower at its foot; this might be explained if the source conflated the two hills into one. If this is the case, then it would push the main fighting further to the south and west than generally thought.

The battle was fought on the open ground to the east of Inveresk, around the Howe Mire. Overall, the general landscape of the battlefield and key features within it have been well preserved so that the events of the battle are still comprehensible. The majority of the main areas of fighting still lie within open fields, though the spread of Inveresk, Musselburgh and Wallyford and the A1 road has encroached on some potential areas of action. The routes of the English army from the lower slopes of Falside Hill and the Scots from Musselburgh and Inveresk to the battlefield can still be traced and understood, and significant landscape features, such as the lane illustrated on contemporary maps and Falside Castle, survive intact.

Important views, such as those looking out to sea from Inveresk Church (where the Scots must have seen the full extent of the English naval force) and from the slopes of Falside and Carberry Hill towards Musselburgh to the north-west, are intact and provide the same outlook as they would have done in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

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

- Land to the west of Esk, now housing estates on the south-west of Musselburgh (Whitehill, Stoneyhill, Stoneybank and Eskview). The probable location of the Scottish camp.
- The slopes and summit of Carberry Hill. The probable location of the cavalry skirmish the day before the battle.
- The River Esk from Musselburgh to Whitecraig and lands to the east including the old bridge, Inveresk, the Carberry Road (A6124), Wallyford and Howe Mire. The location of the advance of the Scottish troops over the Esk and eastward.
- The position of the English troops on the slopes of Falside Hill.
- Landscape features involved in the rout and the aftermath of the battle, notably the route westward of the rout over the old bridge in Musselburgh, St Michael's churchyard where some of the victims of the rout were buried and Falside castle, which was burnt after the battle by the English.
- The well preserved landscape characteristics of the battlefield including the views out and relationship between the lower slopes Falside Hill, the Howe Mire, lands to the west of the Esk and Inveresk Churchyard.

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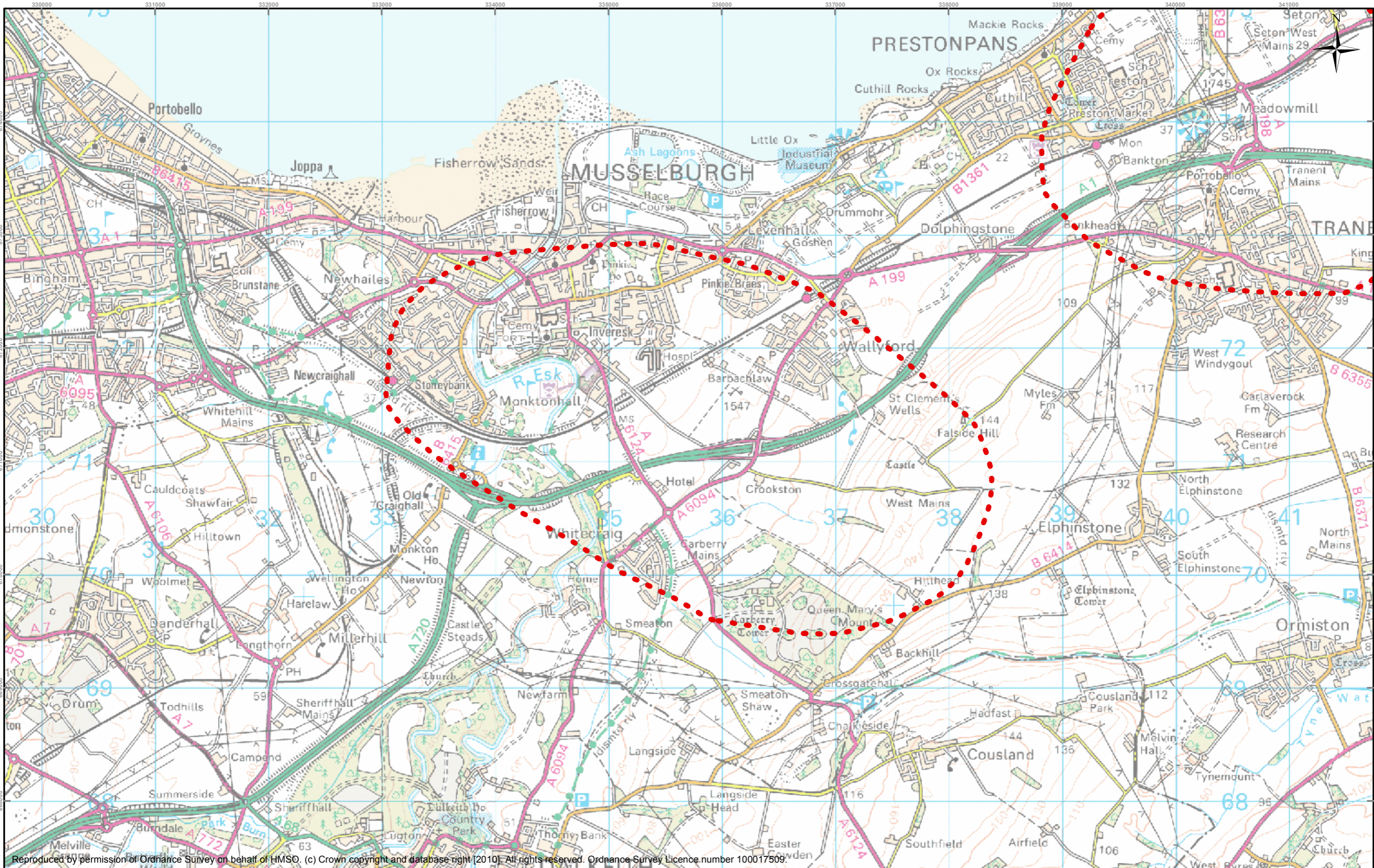
## Relevant Publications

Caldwell, D. H. 1991 'The Battle of Pinkie', in MacDougall, N. (ed.), *Scotland and War, AD 79-1918*. John Donald, Edinburgh. 61-94.

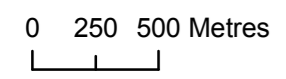
Crookshank, C. W. 1933 'A further note on the Battle of Pinkie', *Archaeol J*, 90 (1933), 18-25.

Oman, C. W. C. 1933 'The Battle of Pinkie, September 10, 1547. As represented in unpublished drawings in the Bodleian Library', *Archaeol J*, 90 (1933), 1-25.

Phillips, G. 1999 *The Anglo-Scots Wars, 1513-1550: a military history*. Boydell Press, Woodbridge.



..... Inventory Boundary



# BATTLE OF PINKIE

## 10th September 1547

East Lothian  
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