The Inventory of Historic Battlefields – Battle of Bannockburn

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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BANNOCKBURN
Alternative Names: None
23 / 24 June 1314
Local Authority: Stirling
NGR centred: NS 808 913
Date of Addition to Inventory: 21 March 2011
Date of last update: 14 December 2012

Overview and Statement of Significance

Bannockburn is significant as one of the most iconic battles of Scottish history and as a key battle in the Scottish Wars of Independence. It gives King Robert I (the Bruce) effective control of Scotland and essentially removes both English forces and his own internal enemies from within the country, and in the longer term helps secure papal recognition of the nation. It is also of incredible significance in the historical and cultural identity of Scotland even today.

The battle was a continuation of Robert the Bruce’s campaign to take control of the Kingdom of Scotland that he claimed in 1306. Fought over two days, the battle was a resounding victory for Bruce over a larger English army led by Edward II. A large number of English were killed during the battle and significant nobles taken prisoner. Edward was forced to flee Scotland by boat, leaving behind the valuable English baggage train.

The victory helped establish Bruce as *de facto* King of Scotland and essentially ended any realistic claims of the Plantagenets to the Scottish throne. Bannockburn helped define Scotland’s identity in Europe and, although it would be another 14 years until the war ended, Edward II never fully recovered from the defeat which undermined his authority to rule Scotland. In the longer term the victory signalled a new era of confidence in the Scottish nation and in Bruce as its leader.

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 Bannockburn is defined on the accompanying map and includes the following areas:

- The former area of New Park hunting park incorporating the Whins of Milton, Borestone, Coxet Hill, Gillies Hill, St Ninian's and the line of the Roman road. The location of the Scottish camp and advance of the English army. The first day of the battle was fought within this area.

- The Carse of Stirling and the Dryfield incorporating the Pelstream and Bannock Burns, Bannockburn Moor, Broomridge, Bannockburn village and Balquhidderock Wood. The location of the English camp and the potential locations for the second day of fighting.

- Cambuskenneth Abbey and grounds. The location of the Scottish baggage train which was sacked by the Earl of Atholl in the aftermath of the battle.

- Bannockburn Wood. An area known as Bloody Fould which was possibly the location of a massacre of the English and has potential to contain human remains associated with the aftermath of the battle.

- The well preserved landscape characteristics of the battlefield including the surviving open ground of New Park, the views from and the spatial relationship between the Carse, Stirling Castle and the hill terraces to the south-west.
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Historical Background to the Battle

By 1314 Robert the Bruce was in control of large parts of Scotland. This position had been gained after a long struggle to take control of the Kingdom of Scotland, firstly against Edward I, and after the latter’s death in 1307, against his Scottish enemies and the castles held by the English. Edinburgh Castle and Roxburgh had been taken from the English and Stirling Castle was under siege. A pact had been made that the castle would be surrendered to the Scots if the siege were not raised by midsummer 1314. Bruce gathered a large army to defend against any English relief force, and had time to drill the schiltrons to a high state of preparedness. Edward II raised a far larger army of the greatest of English chivalry, thousands of men-at-arms and archers. He marched on Stirling from Falkirk along the line of the Roman road.

The events of the battle took place over two days. On the first day, 23rd June, the action took place around the New Park (a royal parkland) located to the south-west of St Ninians on the road from Falkirk to Stirling. The Scots were drawn up here in a naturally defended position that was improved by the digging of pits filled with sharpened stakes to defend against a frontal cavalry charge. The fighting was between the English vanguard of c. 4,000 men and Robert the Bruce’s slightly larger army. According to John Barbour’s later account (a 14th century Scottish poet who wrote The Brus, a long narrative poem celebrating the First War of Scottish Independence), as the English vanguard came in sight of the Scots Henry de Bohun (nephew of the Earl of Hereford, who was joint commander of the vanguard) saw Bruce isolated and forward of the Scottish lines and charged at him. Bruce avoided his charge and killed him as he passed with a blow of his axe that broke the haft, an incident commemorated on the old Clydesdale Bank £1 note. After this initial encounter, the English vanguard charged the Scottish lines, but could not break through and had to retreat; the lack of archers in the English vanguard undoubtedly contributed to the success of the Scottish schiltrons in this engagement.

A small detachment of around 300 English under Sir Robert Clifford and Henry de Beaumont attempted to reach Stirling Castle by skirting the high ground to the east along the edge of the Carse, but they were intercepted by the Earl of Moray’s schiltron and driven off with heavy losses. Repeated charges were unable to disrupt the schiltron; at this point, Sir James Douglas appeared with a second schiltron, while Moray started to advance his schiltron on the English. The English force broke, some heading for Stirling Castle and the remainder returning to the main army, which now moved down onto the Carse of Stirling (the marshland to the south-east of the castle) for the night.

On the second day, 24th June, the Scots advanced to meet the English, who had spent the night on the low ground and were not expecting a Scottish assault; rather, Edward II seems to have been convinced that the Scottish army would avoid battle, and many of his actions on the first day make most sense in terms of preparing to intercept Bruce when he tried to escape. Instead, Bruce marched out of the shelter of the woods (presumed to be Balquhidderock Wood) and began to march steadily forward in three battles.

The English cavalry responded with a charge led by the Earl of Gloucester. However, they seem to have mounted up with little formation, while the rest of
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the army were ill prepared for the battle, according to Barbour. These actions appear to reflect the strength of Edward II's belief that the Scots would not fight. The charge was unsuccessful, partly because of the lack of organisation of the cavalry and partly because part of Bruce’s strategy appears to have been to reduce the amount of ground available to the cavalry and therefore the effectiveness of any charge.

There was also a great deal of tension in the English command. As the Scots began their advance, there was a bad-tempered exchange between Edward II and the Earl of Gloucester, partly over tactics and partly in recrimination of the English vanguard’s failures on the previous day. The impression given by the primary sources is that Gloucester was angry with Edward II and acting rashly as he charged the Scottish line. Gloucester was amongst the English losses as the schiltrons held.

There seems to have been little contribution from the English archers, normally such an important part of English military tactics. The only source to talk about archery was Barbour, who referred to the English archers attempting to break up the Scottish ranks and beginning to have some success, before Bruce sent Sir William Keith at the head of the 500 strong Scottish cavalry to disperse them. If this happened, then it would be one of the few successes that Scottish cavalry ever recorded. However, there is no other record of this element of the fighting and it has been argued that at the time Barbour was writing, Keith’s family were still important members of the Stewart court and therefore his participation in the battle was embellished to enhance his status. The archers would not have shot once the two armies had closed, which implies that the archers were never brought into action. If this argument is correct, then there was virtually no archery during the battle.

The Scottish schiltrons continued to advance and drove the English cavalry back, while the English men-at-arms were unable to come into the fighting because they were enclosed by the burns and bogs on both sides and the vanguard in front of them. As the vanguard was driven back, they collided with their own infantry, causing the English lines to collapse in confusion. At the same time, Bruce ordered in his reserve of Highland troops and the English broke. The tradition of the Sma’ Folk relates to this, when the camp followers who were watching came running down the slopes to finish off the armoured soldiers who were struggling in the mud of the Carse; the English thought that they were fresh reserves, increasing the panic in their ranks.

Edward II’s army collapsed and began fleeing in several directions. Edward went to Stirling Castle, but then turned aside and headed for Falkirk and Linlithgow, eventually reaching Dunbar, pursued all the way by a small force under Sir James Douglas; he was taken in a small open boat to Bamburgh and then to Berwick, from where he was able to get a ship that took him away to safety. Many of the English army fled towards Stirling Castle as well, but were denied access and taken prisoner. A group under the Earl of Hereford headed to Bothwell Castle near Hamilton, where they were taken prisoner and handed over. Others tried to reach the Forth, with some apparently drowning in the river. Many were caught in a great ditch and slaughtered; this ditch has caused a great deal of the controversy over the location of the battle as attempts have been made to identify it. Many writers have assumed that it is
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the gorge through which the Bannock Burn emerges onto the Carse, but it could instead be any part of the Pelstream Burn or the Bannock Burn as they cross the Carse towards the river. There is also a location known as Bloody Fould, which is traditionally in the vicinity of Bannockburn House and is the supposed location of a massacre of English fugitives. However, according to the English Annals of Trokelowe, those who were taken prisoner were apparently well treated on Bruce’s orders.

The Armies

The English force was much larger than Bruce’s army and was a well-equipped force. It had a large cavalry element but also included archers and infantry. The army was substantially English, but the archers included a large body of Welshmen and there was a contingent of Irishmen under the command of Richard De Burgh, Earl of Ulster and Bruce’s father-in-law. The army also was a very experienced force, many of whom had been engaged in campaigns in Scotland over the past few years, so they knew their enemy. There were also groups of disaffected Scots, including Comyns, Anglo-Norman cross-border lords and MacDougalls from Lorn.

Bruce had an army of mainly spearmen, which he had been gathering at Torwood since May, and had trained to act in schiltrons. In addition to these spearmen, he had a relatively small body of cavalry and archers. His troops were drawn from all over Scotland, including a group of MacDonalds from Islay; as much as settling Bruce’s claim to the throne of Scotland, the battle was also to settle the Lordship of the Isles on the MacDonalds. The troops were a mixture of battle-hardened troops from the preceding years of warfare and men that had answered the call to arms for the first time; Bruce is said to have turned away any that were not fully equipped.

Numbers

Scots: Bruce had around 6-7,000 spearmen and 500 cavalry. There was also a group of irregulars, known as the sma’ folk in popular history, of unknown numbers but who would have been lightly armed and armoured.

English: Edward had a large force of heavy cavalry, somewhere around 2-3,000, all of whom were highly experienced from fighting in France, in Scotland and also in England. The infantry numbered around 16,000, and consisted of men-at-arms and archers; some accounts suggest that there were up to 2,000 archers present. There was also a substantial baggage train bringing supplies for the army.

Losses

Losses are very difficult to estimate. There was certainly a high death toll amongst the English, but this appears to have been largely confined to the fighting and the rout, with Bruce keeping control over his troops’ desire for slaughter. There are mentions of areas in which the fleeing troops were cut down, such as at Bloody Foulds or in the gorge of the burn, but there was not
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the mass slaughter that accompanied the Flemish victory at Courtrai in 1302 or the English victory at Dunbar in 1306. The chronicles all accept that the English nobility that were taken prisoner had been well treated before being exchanged for ransom.

Barbour claimed that 30,000 English were killed, which is far too high as the army was no more than around 20,000 strong. Barbour’s estimate of the strength of the English army was 100,000, and it may be fair to consider that the rough proportion of losses may be correct: roughly 30% of the army. However, the only mention of a large body of troops being able to return south relates to the retreat of the Earl of Pembroke with a large body of Welsh archers, who were mistaken for Scots in Cumbria and attacked. English losses may have been a much higher proportion. Certainly, there were a lot of significant figures killed, including the Earl of Gloucester, Sir Robert Clifford and Giles d’Argentan. Scottish losses were much lower; the schiltrons held formation, which would protect the majority of the troops; on the first day, Moray’s schiltron is said to have suffered only one death in the action against Clifford and Beaumont. The Scottish army certainly took losses from the archers on the second day, but these losses were not a major factor in the course of events.

Action

Bruce had assembled his army somewhere in the area of Torwood, which was much larger than its modern extent. On 22 June, he moved towards the New Park and was camped somewhere in the area of the modern NTS visitor centre, drawn up across the line of the Falkirk-Stirling road that ran on the line of the Roman road. This was the route used by the English advance, and was the most likely route for any army to use. Bruce had prepared carefully and had chosen to fight in an area with plentiful natural protection. The fighting took place over two days, with an initial series of skirmishes on the first day, followed by the main battle on the second day.

Day 1

According to the Lanercost Chronicle, the English army arrived near Torwood after dinner, led by the vanguard under the Earl of Gloucester. The army continued along the main road, the only major route to Stirling from the south-east. This was the old Roman road, which appears to run along the current A872 into Stirling. The vanguard encountered the Scottish positions in front of the woods of the New Park; this was a position of some considerable strength. There is a ridge of high ground above the levels of the marshes and of the Carse that runs through St Ninians to Stirling Castle; Bruce was drawn up to block this route. The ground seems to have been prepared with pits being dug, as Bruce had previously done at the Battle of Loudoun Hill in 1307. This had the effect of reducing the width of passable ground, and reducing the risk of being outflanked by the much larger English army, but also meant that any English mass cavalry charge would be broken up. To an extent, this was the same sort of preparation that Wallace had made at Falkirk in 1298, where the
The English vanguard crossed the Bannock burn and came within sight of the Scottish forces that were drawn up in schiltrons. The Scottish vanguard was positioned to the east at St Ninians, under the command of Thomas Randolph, Earl of Moray. Bruce was commanding the reserve units, largely comprising Highlanders, but at the time that the English arrive, appears to have been out in front of the Scottish lines, checking the troop disposition. What happened next is the stuff of legend, but as the different sources from both Scotland and England relate the story, it does appear to be true. Sir Henry de Bohun, who was a relatively inexperienced soldier, charged Bruce in order to kill him before the battle started; Bruce could be recognized because he had a gold circlet around his helmet. The heavy cavalry charge of de Bohun was easily avoided by Bruce on a much lighter horse, and Bruce killed de Bohun as he passed by with a single axe-blow to the head. The English cavalry then charged the Scottish line, but the line held and the English fell back. Because this was an engagement of the vanguard, the main body of archers was not present to make an impact on the fighting.

A detachment of around 300 mounted men-at-arms went round to the east of the New Park under the command of Sir Robert Clifford and Henry Beaumont, who was to become the victor at the Battle of Dupplin Moor in 1332. This may have been an attempt to cut off the line of retreat of the Scots in the event that they broke and ran, or it might have been an attempt to relieve the siege by reaching the castle. However, the English detachment was intercepted by Moray with a schiltron of men. The English knights were unable to penetrate the spears of the schiltron and were unable to rely on the power of archery to break up the formation. They were reduced to throwing lances, maces and other weapons at the schiltron to try to break it. At this point, Douglas appeared with another schiltron after persuading Bruce to let him go to help Moray. However, seeing that the schiltron was holding, he stood back and allowed Moray to finish the matter on his own. The English, seeing that there was a fresh body of enemies, were even further discomfited when Moray made the schiltron advance on them. This was an unexpected move, as schiltrons had previously been static. The English broke, some making for Stirling Castle, while others headed back to the vanguard. Clifford lay amongst the dead.

The English then moved onto the Carse to camp for the night. Their location is not clear, but they seem to have crossed the Bannock burn and camped with the burn and the Pelstream covering two sides of approach. The night was uncomfortable, and the English chroniclers talk of the poor morale of the English troops at this stage. However, one significant action that is recorded during the night is that the Earl of Atholl, who was one of Bruce’s enemies (being both Bruce’s nephew and John Comyn’s son-in-law), attacked the Scots supply camp at Cambuskenneth and killed the Scottish defenders.

Day 2
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The dawn brought the two sides into conflict again. The location of the battle is discussed in the section below, but it appears that the English crossed the Bannockburn (according to the Lanercost Chronicle). Bruce then moved to meet them in open battle, and the sources talk of the Scottish troops appearing from amongst the trees, to the surprise of the English who did not expect such direct confrontation. It also appears that the archers were not in the forefront of the fighting, and there is some confusion amongst the sources about when the archers entered the fighting; the English accounts state that there was an initial exchange of arrows, but this does not explain why the large body of Edward’s archers did not have the effect that might have been expected. Barbour’s account does not mention this initial archery, but talks about the English archers shooting after the initial cavalry charge. Given that the archers did not have much of an influence on the result of the battle, it seems reasonable to suggest that the later account of Barbour is more accurate than the English accounts.

At the same time, the English command was divided on tactics. The Earl of Gloucester argued that the cavalry should hold back, presumably to let the archers break up the Scottish schiltrons, but Edward II accused him of cowardice and urged a cavalry attack. Many of the knights were eager to reverse the events of the previous day, which meant that Gloucester (in a temper) led a charge of the vanguard against the schiltron commanded by Edward Bruce. Despite the shock of the cavalry charge, the schiltron held firm and Gloucester was one of the first English casualties. At this point, the English archers did start to shoot, with Barbour stating that

‘the English archers loosed so fast that if their shooting had persisted, it would have gone hard for the Scotsmen.’

In response, Bruce sent Sir Robert Keith with a force of 500 cavalry to break up the body of archers, which they did with great success. They appear to have killed a great number, with the rest fleeing and taking no further part in the battle.

The Scottish schiltrons were now advancing on the English positions, despite repeated cavalry charges. The Scottish archers, normally a minor part of any Anglo-Scottish battle, were shooting to great effect amongst the English cavalry, and the advance of the schiltrons was driving the English cavalry back onto the remainder of their forces, who were held in check by the streams and bogs behind them. Bruce brought his Highlander reserve into action, again driving hard against the English, and their appearance on the battlefield, together with that of the Sma’ Folk, caused English morale and discipline to collapse as groups and individuals started to flee. There were various points at which the fleeing troops came to grief: in the gorge of the Bannock burn (presumably as they sought the road back to Falkirk), at the Bloody Fould to the south and in the river Forth (where men are said to have drowned, dragged down by the weight of their armour as they tried to swim away).

The schiltrons drove deep into the English lines, and Edward is said to have defended himself from assault with his mace. However, his high command could see that the battle was lost, and he was sent off the field to ensure that he did not fall into Scottish hands. He made for Stirling Castle, but was denied
entry by de Mowbray on the grounds that the castle would now fall to the Scots and Edward would then be captured. He moved on, keeping to the coast, until he was able to take ship at Dunbar.

One of the key elements to note is that the English were hampered by the ground on which they fought, as they could not manoeuvre. Despite the massive advantage of numbers, the English were overwhelmed. It seems clear that accounts may be correct when they suggest that the infantry were unable to get past the cavalry to deploy. There were around 16,000 English infantry, yet there is no mention of their involvement in the main body of the fighting. They appear to have been hampered by the cavalry ahead of them and the burns and boggy ground either side of them.

Aftermath and Consequences

The significance of the battle can scarcely be overstated. It is the centre of Scottish national consciousness and a major element in the definition of Scotland as an independent entity rather than North Britain, as the Act of Union of 1707 would have defined the geographical area. In recent times, it has been a cornerstone of Scottish nationalism, and has been used as a rallying point for nationalist groups.

Within Scotland, the establishment of Bruce as king meant that the anti-Bruce opposition had been quelled. His major enemies, essentially those who identified with the Comyns, had to leave the country. At the same time, the Lord of the Isles was now a MacDonald and a supporter of Bruce, meaning that there was less of a threat from the western edge of the kingdom. While the MacDougalls had dominated the Lordship, they had been supporters of the English crown but they were now displaced by Bruce’s supporters.

The battle also had the effect of settling, at least for a while, the issue of the cross-border lordships. On November 6 1314, Bruce held court at Cambuskenneth, where he made an Act of Parliament that any man who had died in the service of Edward at Bannockburn or who had survived but not presented themselves at Cambuskenneth to swear fealty to Bruce would forfeit their lands. Although this act led directly to the Second War of Independence from 1332, where Edward Balliol and the Disinherited tried to regain their lands, for the immediate future it meant that the fifth column of cross-border lordships was removed. This helped to preserve the stability of the Scottish kingdom during Bruce’s lifetime.

A longer term effect was that the result of the battle led to the recognition of the kingdom by Pope John XXII, who insisted on referring to Bruce as Governor of Scotland rather than king. Bruce had been absolved of the murder of Comyn in 1310, but John XXII was angered by Bruce’s refusal to keep a truce with England after the battle; John wanted peace in Europe to aid the crusades in the Middle East. However, in 1324, he finally had to concede the point and recognise Bruce as king of Scots. Overall, there was a general recognition of the legitimacy of the independent kingdom by European monarchs, because if nothing else, Bruce was able to claim Scotland as an independent possession by force of arms.
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Events & Participants

Bannockburn involves many major figures from both Scotland and England at the time, and are far too numerous to list in detail here. On the Scottish side, King Robert I (the Bruce) led the army of around 6,000 infantry armed with spears, with the assistance of Sir James Douglas (the Black Douglas), the Earl of Moray, Edward Bruce (Robert’s brother) and Sir William Keith who commanded the 500 cavalry. Edward II’s army consisted of around 3,000 heavy cavalry, 14-15,000 infantry and up to 2,000 archers. Apart from the Earl of Lancaster, the majority of the nobility of England were either present or had sent men to the army. These included the Earl of Pembroke, the Earl of Gloucester, the Earl of Hereford, Sir Robert Clifford and Henry de Beaumont. The latter two were highly experienced commanders that had fought the Scots throughout the campaigns of Edward I; de Beaumont survived the battle and gained revenge in 1332 by destroying a large Scottish army at Dupplin Moor. A number of significant English figures were killed in the battle including the Earl of Gloucester, Sir Robert Clifford and Giles d’Argentan, the Earl of Pembroke.

The most important figures for either side are undoubtedly their respective Kings. King Robert I (the Bruce) is one of Scotland’s most famous historical figures. His grandfather was one of the claimants to the Scottish throne in the dispute following the death of Alexander III. Bruce was crowned King of Scots on 25 March 1306 at Perth, after murdering his rival John Comyn, Lord of Badenoch, also known as the Red Comyn, at Greyfriars Kirk in Dumfries. Although Bruce had authored his own coronation, he would become the focus of Scottish resistance to the English occupation. However, his initial efforts were less impressive than his later accomplishments. He suffered defeat to an English army under Aymer de Valence at Methven in June 1306 and again by the forces of John of Lorn, a relative of John Comyn, at Dail Righ in August, and Bruce was forced to flee mainland Scotland, while many of his family were killed or imprisoned. While in hiding that winter, the legend of the spider spinning a web is said to have inspired him to return in 1307, where he met with more success. He won an important victory against de Valence at Loudoun Hill in May, and gained further advantage when Edward I died at Burgh-by-Sands, near the Scottish border, in July 1307. With the English threat now drastically reduced, Bruce turned to deal with his internal enemies. All of Comyn’s supporters opposed Bruce, at least initially, and he faced a long struggle against them in the south-west and in the north-east. The Battle of Barra two years after his coronation was the critical victory of this campaign, leaving him a relatively free hand to deal with his last few Scottish enemies and then to pick off English garrisons one by one, destroying the captured castles in his wake to prevent the English returning to them. After his overwhelming victory in 1314 at Bannockburn, Bruce was able to turn onto the offensive, raiding into England until a settlement was finally signed in 1328 under the Treaty of Edinburgh-Northampton.

King Edward II of commanded the English army at Bannockburn. He succeeded to the throne after his father, Edward I, died in 1307. Although he appears to have been a capable warrior in a personal capacity, he was little like his father in character. Throughout his reign Edward suffered from internal strife within England, frequently coming into conflict with his barons over his
policies and his support for his own favourites, such as Piers Gaveston. In the end, he was deposed by his wife Isabella, with his own son becoming Edward III in 1326. The deposed king was imprisoned at Berkeley Castle, where he was murdered in 1327.

The battle was significant tactically by showing that not only could a disciplined infantry force use the schiltron to withstand heavy cavalry, but that they could act as a mobile force rather than defending a position. The lessons that Henry de Beaumont learnt at Bannockburn were used to great effect against the Scots in the Second War of Independence and against the French in the Hundred Years War, where dismounted men-at-arms, supported by massed archery and using the terrain defensively, were able to destroy large armies of schiltrons and of French heavy cavalry.

**Context**

Scotland's history in the late 13th and 14th century was one of turmoil and conflict. Following the accidental death of King Alexander III in 1286, the heir to the throne was his three-year-old granddaughter, Margaret of Norway (the Maid of Norway). King Edward I of England proposed that she should marry his son and a treaty of marriage was signed in 1290. A ship was sent to fetch Margaret that same year, but she died in Orkney while on her way to Scotland for her inauguration, thereby scuppering Edward’s plans.

Many of the Scottish nobility had some claim to the throne in the absence of a clear successor. The two candidates with the strongest claim were John Balliol and Robert Bruce the Competitor. To settle the position, Edward I of England was asked to decide who should succeed. This process was known as the Great Cause and resulted in a total of 14 claimants competing for the Scottish crown, including Balliol and Bruce.

This situation provided Edward I with a new opportunity to bring Scotland within Plantagenet control. He was asked to preside over the court of inquiry to the dispute, but first insisted on recognition of his overlordship. The Scottish nobility would not agree to his overlordship of the country, unwilling to compromise the rights of the Scottish crown, but they were prepared to accept him as overlord on a personal basis. This was sufficient for Edward, together with control of several royal castles, and he led the court that finally decided on 17 November 1292 in favour of John Balliol.

John’s inauguration as king was the start of his downfall. Edward clearly saw the election process as a way to bring Scotland under his control. He behaved towards John like a feudal overlord, repeatedly humiliating John and refusing to treat him as a fellow monarch.

The breaking point for the Scots came in 1294 when Edward summoned John and the Scottish lords to join his army in France as his feudal vassals. This rejection of the sovereignty of the Scottish nation was unacceptable to king and nobility alike. In 1295, the Scottish nobility concluded that John was totally compromised and they elected a council of twelve to run the affairs of the kingdom. In an attempt to counter Edward’s power, the council made an alliance with Philip the Fair of France (this was the start of the ‘Auld Alliance’). This was effectively a declaration of war against Edward and a rejection of his
In support of their new allies, the Scots launched an attack against Carlisle in March 1296.

Edward responded by invading Scotland in 1296, razing Berwick and massacring its inhabitants. His army, under John de Warenne, Earl of Surrey, went on to defeat the Scots army at Dunbar, effectively ending organised resistance. It is important to note that, although the armies were nominally serving the respective English and Scottish Kings, many of the Scots nobility served within the English army in this campaign, including Robert the Bruce, and in other campaigns throughout the Wars of Independence. This reflected both the shifting balance of power between various factions within Scotland, and the fact that the English King compelled some Scottish lords to serve him. After the Battle of Dunbar, Edward advanced through Scotland with almost no opposition. John Balliol was forced to surrender, abdicate his throne and renounce his alliance with France, and was stripped of the royal insignia. Edward also removed the Stone of Destiny from Scone to England, together with the Holy Rood of St Margaret and other symbols of the Scottish crown.

With Balliol removed and his own position strengthened by his victory, Edward again requested Scottish support for his ongoing war with France, but the outcome was not as he hoped. Resistance to his rule remained, but Edward’s delegates in Scotland believed the Scots were no longer in a position to oppose him. Consequently they were taken largely by surprise when the Scots rose against English authority in earnest, in spring 1297. Among the notable figures leading the cause this time were William Douglas, Andrew Moray and William Wallace. William Douglas was soon captured following the Capitulation of Irvine, when a number of Scots nobles negotiated a peace with the English king. Wallace and Moray, however, continued the fight against Edward and resisted quite effectively, particularly with the victory at Stirling Bridge in 1297. Moray died in November 1297, but Wallace was knighted and made Guardian of the Realm, and led a punitive raid south into England in early 1298.

These successes came to nought as Philip of France provided no assistance and instead made peace with Edward, leaving the English king free to concentrate on suppressing Scotland. Edward’s view was that the Scots were rebels against his authority; this was the terminology he used throughout. He personally led a force to Scotland later that year, inflicting a catastrophic defeat on Wallace’s force at Falkirk. Wallace then resigned his position as Guardian, but continued to resist Edward’s rule. He sailed to France in 1299 to petition Philip for support, who introduced him to Pope Boniface VII, who had been given custody of John Balliol by Edward. Balliol was released to Philip’s custody in 1301, but he was never to return to Scotland - unlike Wallace.

Meanwhile, the debacle of the Scottish defeat at Falkirk had given Edward I the opportunity to conduct several leisurely campaigns over the next few seasons. He consolidated his control over central and southern Scotland by taking numerous strongholds, including Caerlaverock (1300) and Bothwell (1301). By 1302, most of the successes of Wallace and Moray’s uprising had been reversed. The majority of strongholds (such as Edinburgh, Berwick and
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Roxburgh) had remained in English hands, while Stirling was retaken by the English directly after their victory at Falkirk. With central and southern Scotland being pacified, Edward I returned to England leaving garrisons, sheriffs and a lord lieutenant of Scotland in the person of John Segrave to maintain his authority.

The Scots were still unwilling to bow to Edward’s authority. John Comyn was chosen as Guardian in 1302 and began a guerrilla campaign against the English king’s forces in Scotland. In 1303, a Scottish army under Comyn destroyed a much larger English force at Roslin. However, the war remained in Edward’s favour, and Comyn and his supporters negotiated terms with Edward in 1304. After Comyn’s submission, Edward adopted a more pragmatic approach to Scotland, realising he needed support within the country if he was to retain his grasp. He restored dispossessed lands to many nobles and placed Scots in positions of authority, but he exiled many others whose loyalty could not be guaranteed. Finally, in 1305, Edward’s bitter enemy Wallace was captured by John Stewart of Mentieth, the Keeper of Dumbarton Castle, and surrendered to Edward. Wallace was tried and brutally executed in London – and Edward’s control of Scotland seemed assured.

In 1306, Robert the Bruce, grandson of the Competitor and previously a supporter of Edward against the Balliol loyalists, began to move against Edward. Bruce murdered John ‘the Red’ Comyn in Greyfriars Kirk, Dumfries, and had himself inaugurated as King Robert I of Scotland at Scone in March 1306. Edward was enraged, again treating it as a rebellion, and declared that there would be no quarter for Bruce or his supporters. He despatched Aymer de Valence with an army to deal with Bruce. Valence, who was a brother-in-law of the murdered Comyn, inflicted a heavy but largely bloodless defeat on Bruce at Methven in June 1306. Bruce was then defeated a second time at Dail Righ by a force of Macdougalls, losing most of his men. Following this, the remainder of Bruce’s army was dispersed and many of his family members were captured, each facing execution or long periods of imprisonment for their part. Bruce himself was forced to flee the mainland and went into hiding, possibly on Rathlin Island or in the Western Isles. This is the point at which the legend of the spider spinning a web is said to have inspired him to continue his efforts.

Bruce returned to the Scottish mainland in early 1307 at Turnberry. He now switched to a guerrilla campaign, engaging English forces at Glen Trool and, finally, in the Battle of Loudoun Hill, where he put Valence’s army to flight in April 1307. Edward then mounted another invasion, but the English king died at Burgh-by-Sands in Cumbria in July, before crossing the border. Although his son, Edward II, continued the campaign briefly, it soon came to an end. Edward was too distracted by internal difficulties in England to deal effectively with Bruce, including problems at home caused by the hostility of the English barons to Edward’s favourite, Piers Gaveston.

Edward’s domestic problems provided an opportunity for Bruce to solidify his position in Scotland. He began a campaign to remove his internal enemies, taking control of castles at Inverlochy, Urquhart, Inverness and Nairn, and defeating the forces of the Comyns at the Battle of Barra and the MacDougalls at the Pass of Brander, at the same time as he was building his own support.
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and strength. Once he had secured his own position among the Scots, he turned his attention again to the English. Most Scottish castles remained in English hands and Bruce began to seize these one by one, before destroying them to prevent their reoccupation by his enemies. By the end of 1309, Bruce was in control of much of Scotland, and was finally able to hold his first parliament at St Andrews. Edward launched a retaliatory expedition to Scotland in 1310, but it achieved nothing of note before he withdrew.

Over the next few years, Bruce continued a ‘scorched earth’ campaign to strengthen his position and weaken the English forces within Scotland. By 1313, only a few Scottish castles remained in English hands. This included Stirling, which was besieged by Bruce's brother Edward in June 1313. Edward Bruce came to an agreement with the governor of the Castle, Philip de Mowbray, by which Mowbray would surrender the castle if not relieved before 24 June 1314.

Meanwhile, King Edward II’s political problems had been partially resolved by the killing of Gaveston in 1312 and the submission of the earls of Lancaster, Arundel, Warwick and Hereford in September 1312. The agreement made by de Mowbray made it politically unacceptable for Edward to leave the castle to its fate, while Bruce had also added Roxburgh and Edinburgh to the re-captured castles. The English King raised a large army and marched north to relieve the siege, although many of those present in the army had recently been his enemies.

Edward's army met Bruce's at Bannockburn, just outside Stirling. The Scottish scored a famous victory, which effectively gave Bruce complete control of Scotland while crippling Edward's authority in England. This in turn allowed Bruce to begin raiding into England in an attempt to force Edward to accept Scotland's status as a nation, and he recaptured Berwick in 1318. He appealed to the Pope for support with the Declaration of Arbroath in 1320, and gained papal recognition as king in 1324. However, the English king did not relinquish his claim to Scotland, despite his defeat at Bannockburn and his ongoing struggles in England. Edward II was deposed by his queen in 1327 and replaced by his 14 year old son Edward III. Finally, in 1328, with the Treaty of Edinburgh-Northampton, which recognised Scotland as an independent nation and relinquished any English claim to the throne, the First Scottish War of Independence came to a close.

Battlefield Landscape

The general location of the battlefield is well established and the broad area of the first day of the conflict is defined. However, the exact location of the main deployments on the second day of the battle is a matter of considerable debate.

It is widely acknowledged that the general area of the first day of fighting was around New Park, roughly in the area where the NTS visitor centre stands. This was an area of hunting reserve that was largely wooded and was, according to Barbour, the Scots camp and the location of the pits and traps dug to reduce the ability of cavalry to manoeuvre. As the English advanced along the Roman Road from Falkirk through Tor Wood, Clifford and Beaumont
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attempted to reach Stirling Castle by skirting the edge of the Carse towards St Ninians Church and were driven back by Moray’s schiltron.

Parts of the landscape of the first day of the battle have been covered with housing estates, and it is possible that the location of the fighting has been substantially redeveloped with the loss of any military artefacts or physical remains. Consequently, any remaining undeveloped open ground within this area has important potential for the survival of associated material of the first day of the battle. The location of the Roman road is known from aerial photographs, and its route can be traced to the southern edge of Bannockburn where it is lost in urban development. Another key surviving landscape feature is the location of the main supply train for the Scots at Cambuskenneth Abbey. The abbey and grounds are undeveloped and the abbey is in the care of Scottish Ministers.

The topography of a substantial area of the first day of battle and the Scot’s camp near the Whins of Milton survive as open land, now within the ownership of the NTS. This undulating landscape appears to have been key to Bruce’s choice for a camp on the higher ground overlooking the castle to the north and the line of the Roman road to the west. The spatial relationships between these key landscape features can still be interpreted on the ground.

The English overnight camp is likely to have been somewhere on the Carse, located to prevent night attacks by the Scots. Barbour talks of the English army as being on the ‘hard feld’, which implies that they were not on a peat bog. However, the confined space they occupied, mentioned by sources from both sides, where they were crushed together because of the streams and pools of the Carse, fits the Pelstream/Bannock Burn location best. In the absence of physical evidence neither location can be ruled out.

There are currently eight alternative areas proposed for the location of the fighting on the second day, all originating from details given in the primary sources or secondary accounts of the battle. The two most viable locations appear to be the areas around the Dryfield and the Carse but no location has yet been supported by the recovery of artefactual evidence; it is likely that the exact area of fighting will remain unknown until detailed archaeological fieldwork is undertaken.

The Carse of Stirling is a low lying floodplain of the River Forth overlooked by a series of hill terraces to the north-east forming a ridge of higher ground running north-west/south-east. The Carse was marshland at the time of the battle, surrounded by small hamlets, farms and areas of woodland. It was historically an area of peat, pools and burns with several tributaries (including the Pelstream and the Bannockburn) running across it and emptying into the Forth. Accounts of Edward’s army crossing the Carse claim that the men used walls and roofs taken from local houses to cross an area of deep peat; boggy, treacherous, and certainly not conducive to heavy cavalry or wagon trains. However, the level of peat cover is debatable, and it would be a mistake to consider the Carse as a uniform peat bog. While the underlying soils are all heavy clays, at the edges of the Carse there may have been areas of peat clearance or agriculture. The reference to the use of thatched roofs from houses as bridges may suggest that there was some level of
settlement on this lower ground; it suggests an army using what was at hand to deal with localised problems.

Much of the Carse, where the English camped and at least some of the action of the second day took place, remains open and undeveloped and important views out towards Stirling Castle and the location of the Scot’s camp to the south-west are intact. There has been some building along the base of the scarp; it also features the rail line to Stirling and the A907. There is also the remains of a bing that has been largely removed.

The Dryfield refers to the area of drier land to the south-west of the Carse. As the chronicles largely talk of hard ground on which the fighting took place, the Dryfield, as its name suggests, fits that description. The Dryfield has seen a lot of development, and there is a considerable amount of housing in this area. It is now occupied mainly by the district of Broomridge, the more recent developments of the old village of Bannockburn and Bannockburn High School.

Open areas do survive within the Dryfield area which have very high potential to add further knowledge for the action of the second day of battle through further archaeological investigation. The relationship between the Carse and the Dryfield, both locations of action on the second day, can still be traced on the ground, while the current Balquhidderock Wood may coincide, at least in part, with the area wooded at the time of the battle.

The accuracy of the legend of the Sma’ folk running down a slope to the English on the Carse is uncertain. Traditionally the location of the Sma’ folk is in the area of Gillies Hill, but the distance from the main probable area of battle may make this unlikely. However, if the tradition is genuine a possible location of the camp followers is the high ground to the east of the proposed battleground, adjacent to the Scottish camp within the New Park. Coxet Hill is elevated ground to the north of the Scottish camp which overlooks both the Carse and the Dryfield. As it is a short distance from the proposed locations of the action of the second day it has high potential to be the position of the Sma’ folk prior to their advance into the battleground.

The entire potential battleground landscape has been significantly altered through drainage and peat extraction on the Carse, the modern spread of Bannockburn and Stirling along the terraces and the disappearance of wooded areas, such as New Park, and extensive field enclosure. Overall, the defined area is a mix of housing and industrial estates, farmland and open countryside. Nevertheless, significant open areas remain, enabling the events of the battle to be understood despite the amount of development and offering the potential of archaeological deposits.

**Location**

The location of the battle is a very controversial subject, and was the subject of a major historical review in 2001 (Watson & Anderson 2001). There has been general agreement of the site of the first day, which is roughly in the area of the NTS visitor centre, but the site of the second day has been vigorously debated for a considerable period of time. There have been several attempts to synthesise the arguments and produce a definitive location, but in
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the absence of verifiable artefacts relating to the battle, it is difficult to offer more than opinion.

The first day’s action took place at the New Park, a hunting park created by Alexander III. This seems to have been on the north side of Haberts Bog and Milton Bog, leading off towards Coxit Hill. The visitor centre stands at the probable southern edge of the New Park.

There are currently eight suggestions for the location of the second day of the battle, marked on the accompanying maps by the numbers here; some of these are less likely than others. It should be noted that, at the time of writing, none of these locations has been supported by artefactual evidence.

1. Eastern Dryfield – this location is in the area of the present Bannockburn High School, close to the scarp above the Carse.

2. Whins of Milton – this location is in essentially the same area as the action of the first day.

3. Springkerse – this location is out on the Carse, near the Springkerse Estate.

4. Pelstrem/Bannock burn – this location is in the area of land lying between the Pelstrem and the Bannock burn.

5. Bannock Moor – this location is on the Bannock moor, around the former Bannockburn Hospital.

6. Broomridge – this location is at the north end of the Dryfield, near to St Ninians.

7. Bannockburn – this location is on the SW edge of the Dryfield where the more recent parts of Bannockburn village stand.

8. New Park/Borestone – this location is to the west of Borestone and NW of the visitor centre; it was the location of the New Park.

Of these various suggestions, some are quite unlikely. Location 5 relies upon one source that talks of the fighting having taken place on Bannock Moor; this source was an English cleric writing after the event, and it would be an exceptional circumstance if he were to be the only one of all the chroniclers that got the placename correct. Location 3, which is the suggestion of a secondary account, seems unlikely because it would place the English camp well beyond the action of the first day, and much closer to Stirling Castle than to the Scots. It seems unlikely that they would have delayed the relief of the castle to await the advance of the Scots across water courses; it is scarcely credible that the schiltrons would have been able to advance that far in good order when having to ford the streams. Location 8 is based upon the New Park; the 1st edition OS map put the crossed swords symbol here at the New Park, but it is likely merely to mean that the action was all being put into the same (incorrect) location for both days. Finally, location 2 puts the action in the same place as the first day, which again is not supported by the sources.

The other suggestions are more difficult to dismiss. Locations 1, 6 and 7 all relate to the Dryfield. One of the driving factors behind these suggestions is the issue of the nature of the ground on which the second day was fought. The chronicles largely talk of hard ground on which the fighting took place,
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and the Dryfield, as its name suggests, fits that description. The other major concern is the description of the Bannock burn as being a great ditch or gorge; this is easily apparent where it cuts through the higher ground on which the modern village stands, but is less clear for the burn as it crosses the Carse. For these reasons, various recent authors have favoured the Dryfield.

In consideration of these factors, the issue of the hard ground raises the whole question of the nature of the Carse. It is generally discussed as being a swamp, and it is known that there was extensive peat extraction from the Carse in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, the Carse is a very extensive area, with widely varying conditions. Furthermore, the term ‘carse’ actually means land adjacent to a river, and therefore does not mean that it has to be a peat bog. By the time of Roy’s map, in the period 1745-55, the Carse in the vicinity of the Bannock burn was ploughed land with extensive numbers of fermtouns scattered across it. This might mean that peat extraction was very early here, but it may also indicate that it is a mistake to consider the Carse as a single large peat bog. There is a satirical poem, *The Scots Hudibras*, by Samuel Colvill of Culross and published in 1681 (before the reclamation of the Carse), which says of the Carse in summer that

‘Now mires grow hard as toasted breid
That men might through the Carses ride’

It may have been the case that the ground on the Carse was indeed hard and usable for cavalry, at least in parts.

The issue of the gorge or Great Ditch is more difficult, but two things need to be considered. Firstly, the Bannock burn was not a major impediment on the evening of the first day, when the English retired to make camp. It is inconceivable that they would have crossed a gorge in the course of establishing the camp. Secondly, the gorge only became a major problem at the time of the English flight from the field, which does not require the Dryfield location.

There is also a problem with the Dryfield locations. The sources are fairly clear that the English retreated to the Carse during the night, probably intending to use the waterways as defences. It is clear that, whether or not there were dry areas of the Carse, it was covered with burns and with pools of water, and this cannot be said for any of the areas in the vicinity of the Dryfield. If the English army were on the Carse overnight, a Dryfield location for the second day would require them to have scaled the scarp to engage with the Scots: none of the sources mentions this, while it would also require Bruce to have sat back and allowed the English to leave a disadvantageous location for a more advantageous one.

Location 4 places the fighting of the second day on the Carse, and essentially in the parcel of land between the Pelstream and the Bannock burn. The English camp may have been within this area, or it may have been on the eastern side of the Bannock burn; some of the sources talk of the English crossing the burn in the morning of the first day. The fighting would then have been in the area between the burns, with Bruce advancing his men down the scarp at Balquhiderrock Wood, emerging from the trees in the way described in the sources. This location would mean that the English were confined by the water courses that they had used as a defence in the night, and that there
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was a narrow area within which to fight; this would have negated the numerical advantage straight away.

The main problem for this location is that the obvious gorge of the Bannockburn lies south of the area and thus behind the arena of conflict. The modern burn is not particularly deep or wide at this point, as mentioned above, but it must be remembered that some of the sources talk of a Great Ditch rather than a gorge, and it may be the case that the scale of the feature has been overestimated. Again, as previously mentioned, the feature only became significant when the rout was taking place, which could easily encompass a stream rather than a gorge.

The absolute location of the fighting will only be proven by artefacts, and both the Dryfield and the Carse have strong reasons to be considered. It may be considered that the Carse has a stronger case, but neither can be ruled out on the basis of present knowledge.

Terrain

Bannockburn is located on a series of terraces, which to the west give way to high ground largely covered with forest plantation, while the lower slopes are agricultural land. To the east, the most striking feature, and possibly an important one in relation to the battle, is the Carse of Stirling. This area corresponds to the extensive floodplain of the River Forth and consists largely of low lying level ground, occupied in the main by farms and fields. The area is today skirted to the west by the railway and major roads. Several tributaries run across the Carse, emptying into the Forth, the most important of these being the Bannock Burn, which itself is joined by the Pelstream Burn midway between the high ground of Bannockburn and the River Forth.

There has been some debate regarding changes in the landscape that may have occurred in the 688 years since the battle. Apart from the obvious transformation caused by modern development - houses, roads etc - there are other changes that should be taken into account. Important here is the suggestion that the level of the Carse has in some places been considerably lowered by the removal of peat (Watson and Anderson 2001, 6). While there has undoubtedly been considerable peat removal from the Carse, it does not mean that the entire Carse was covered by several metres of peat. Indeed, the metal detecting from the Carse during the Two Men in a Trench fieldwork produced musket balls that probably date from 1745/6, suggesting that there was not a build up of peat at that time. At roughly the same date, Roy’s map of the area indicates the presence of arable fields across much of the Carse, suggesting that the area has been extensively drained over the past centuries. The implication is then that there is little chance that, if the fighting took place on the Carse, the artefacts were removed during peat stripping, as this is unlikely to be an area of peat growth.

There is little sign of any woodland today on the Carse, with the notable exception of Balquhidderock Wood, which occupies the slope where the higher terrace drops down onto the lower ground of the Carse. This is today preserved as park land, and it has been suggested that this represents a remnant of woodland which was here at the time of the battle - extrapolated
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by Scott from the presence of woodland here as long ago as the time of Roy’s map produced in the 18th century (2000). However, as Watson and Anderson have pointed out, the presence of woodland here in the 18th century does not necessarily mean that it was here several centuries before then (2001, 23). New Park, which at the time of the battle was sufficiently wooded to provide Bruce’s army with cover and potential refuge is now treeless and open.

Condition

Much of the Bannockburn area has become urbanised, with considerable development in the latter half of the 20th century. There are areas of open ground that survive, particularly along the side of the A872 as it crosses the Bannock burn. The Carse is largely open, but has been extensively impacted over the centuries. In addition to the communication routes crossing the area (road and rail), there is the base of a bing that has been largely removed, while the development of industrial estates in the Springkerse area has spread across areas of the riverside Carse.

Archaeological and Physical Remains and Potential

A single military artefact has been recovered from the defined area; a probable 14th century arrowhead found by the National Trust for Scotland (NTS) in the vicinity of the visitor centre in 2004. Extensive programmes of metal detecting on potential locations of the fighting on the second day (the Carse, surrounding area and Dryfield) have recovered no artefacts which could be associated with the battle. Due to the nature of the fighting (with relatively little archery activity) and the early date of the battle, it is possible that the battleground has relatively low potential for the recovery of military artefacts.

There is potential for physical features relating to the battle to survive, such as the pits which were said to be dug by the Scots to break up English attacks. However, to date none of these has been found and excavations in 2002 of crop-mark pit features to the south of Bannockburn Wood revealed only activities relating to mining in the 18th and 19th centuries. Wooden stakes recovered from Milton Bog in the 19th century, initially seen as the stakes from the Scottish pits, have been identified as Scots Pine roots dating to the Mesolithic period, and therefore with no connection to the battle.

No human remains or items of personal equipment have been recovered from the battlefield or the surrounding area. The potential for individual burials and mass graves to be located within the defined area, particularly from the areas of the Carse which have seen less construction, is high. The Annales of Trokelowe stated that the dead were buried on the battlefield, with the majority being buried in ‘gret pyttis’ [large pits].

Cultural Association

There are a huge number of cultural associations to the battle, in keeping with its iconic status. The battle is mentioned in a wide range of poems, ballads
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and songs; Scots Wha’ Hae and Flower of Scotland are the most famous examples. It has been depicted in film and television and has featured on Scottish currency, most notably with the old £1 notes that featured the incident where Bruce killed de Bohun, the £20 Clydesdale banknote showing Robert the Bruce and the Monymusk Reliquary.

Bannockburn possesses a National Trust for Scotland visitor centre, opened in 1967, which is in the area of the events of the first day. This land was purchased by the Earl of Elgin (head of the Bruce family) in 1932, and was centred on a flag pole that was erected in 1870 to commemorate the battle. The flag pole is now enclosed within a concrete rotunda, built in 1962, which is close to the statue of Bruce. This bronze statue was the work of sculptor Charles d’Orville Pilkington Jackson in 1964, who had produced a model of Bruce’s face from his skull in 1957. There is no commemoration at the site of the events of the second day, largely because of the difficulty in determining exactly where the events took place.

The NTS visitor centre has a large display on the battle, which provides interpretation for the visitor. There is a plan for new visitor facilities by the National Trust for Scotland, to be completed by 2014.

At some stage in the provision of memorial features in the 1960s, there was fairly extensive remodelling of the summit of the hill; this was probably connected to the construction of the rotunda. In this process, the level of the ground on the eastern side was raised by around 1.5 m, and the course of the A872 was changed to its current line.

There is a plethora of place-names associated with the battle, from traditional field names, such as Bloody Fould, to modern street names, such as Targe Wynd.

Commemoration & Interpretation

No further information.

Select Bibliography


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Full Bibliography

**Information on Sources and Publications**

Bannockburn is one of the most frequently mentioned Scottish battles, as befits its iconic status. There are a variety of primary sources, some Scots and some English. The main Scottish source is John Barbour’s *The Bruce*, published in 1375, which is later than the events and written by a pro-Bruce Stewart sympathiser. From the English side, the main sources are the Lanercost Chronicle and the *Scalachronica*, written by the son of one of the English participants. These are more contemporary with the battle, but do not have the knowledge of the area that Barbour displays.

The secondary sources come largely from the late 19th/early 20th centuries and of the 20th century, possibly reflecting the ebb and flow of nationalist consciousness within the body politic. Most recently, there has been an increase in interest in the battle because of a potential for housing development encroaching further on areas that may contain physical evidence of the battlefield.

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