The Inventory of Historic Battlefields – Battle of Dunkeld

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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DUNKELD
Alternative Names:
21 August 1689
Local Authority: Perth and Kinross
NGR centred: NO 003 426
Date of Addition to Inventory: 14 December 2012
Date of last update: N/A

Overview and Statement of Significance
The first Jacobite Rising occurred in 1689, in the wake of the ousting of the Stuart King, James VII and II and his replacement by William of Orange in the so-called Glorious Revolution. The Jacobites (from the Latin for James) were led by Viscount Dundee, John Graham of Claverhouse and won a decisive early victory at the Battle of Killiecrankie on 17 July 1689, although Dundee was killed in the battle. It was followed a month later by the Battle of Dunkeld, fought on 21 August 1689.

Dunkeld was an urban battle, with the town held by a garrison of Government troops from the Cameronian Regiment under Lieutenant-Colonel William Cleland’s command. After a long and bitter struggle, which saw much of the town burned to the ground, the Jacobites withdrew, leaving the Government force the surprised victors.

Dunkeld is an incredibly significant battle in the history of 17th century Scotland, occurring at a time when King William was yet to wholly solidify his position on the throne and on the back of a significant Jacobite victory at Killiecrankie. Had the Jacobites won at Dunkeld, the path would have been open to them to advance on a weakly defended and strongly Jacobite Perth and subsequently continue to Stirling, a situation for which the Privy Council had already made preparations to flee should it occur and which would have been a great boost to the Jacobite cause. The Cameronian’s unyielding defence of the town prevented the Jacobites advancing any further south and turned the tide of a Rising which had thus far gone badly for the Government into one of increasing difficulty for the Jacobites, whose numbers dwindle drastically after Dunkeld and who essentially cease to present the threat they had after Killiecrankie, confined to skirmishing and minor actions in the Highlands until finally being utterly dispersed at Cromdale in May 1690.

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
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since the time of the battle, key characteristics of the terrain at the time of the battle can normally still be identified, enabling events to be more fully understood and interpreted in their landscape context. Specific qualities are described under physical remains and potential: these include landscape features that played a significant role in the battle, other physical remains, such as enclosures or built structures, and areas of known or potential archaeological evidence.

The Inventory boundary for the Battle of Dunkeld is defined on the accompanying map and includes the following areas:

- The north bank of the River Tay, stretching to the east and west of the town to accommodate the routes of the Jacobite advances to attack and the fighting which took place as they did.
- The level ground to the north of the Cathedral, much of which was occupied by Dunkeld House and elements of the town in 1689.
- The hills to the north of the town, including Gallow Hill which provided an important vantage point for the Jacobites and was the location of their cannon.
- Hills to the west of the town, which again provided important vantage points for the Jacobites as they advanced.
- Ground to the east and north-east including Shiochies Hill, the location of some of the early stages of the battle prior to the Cameronians withdrawal into the town.