



The Inventory of Historic Battlefields – Battle of Roslin

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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ROSLIN

Alternative Names: None

24 February 1303

Local Authority: Midlothian

NGR centred: NT 275 641

Date of Addition to Inventory: 14 December 2012

Date of last update: None

Overview and Statement of Significance

The Battle of Roslin is significant as seemingly one of the largest battles within Scotland during the First Scottish War of Independence. The Scottish victory boosted morale for their cause, but in England the defeat enraged Edward I who personally led another campaign into Scotland the following year.

Following the Battle of Dunbar I in 1296, Scotland was in a prolonged period of state of political and economic instability. Contemporary English writers make scant mention of the numerous hostilities during this period, in which the Scots inflicted defeats upon Edward I's forces. Only two battles in this period of the war are relatively well recorded, the Battle of Stirling Bridge, where half of the English army under the command of Hugh Cressingham was slaughtered and the Battle of Roslin, where a Scottish army consisting of around 8,000 men routed a large mounted English army of up to 30,000.

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, such as enclosures or built structures, and areas of known or potential archaeological evidence.

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

- The southern boundary runs to the south of the animal research station at Mountmarle, a site with a possible place name association to the battle.

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- The western boundary crosses the Kill Burn and takes in the Shinbane fields.
- The northern boundary takes in the fields to the east of Shinbane and carries across to the eastern boundary to accommodate the undulating ground which bounds the Hewan Bog.
- The eastern boundary takes in the area known as the Hewan Bog, which again is traditionally associated with the battle.

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Historical Background to the Battle

As the English army advanced through Scotland in another retaliatory campaign for the Guardians earlier expulsion of Edward I's sheriffs and bailiffs, they initially met little opposition. The accounts talk of the army being divided up into three divisions, which entered Roslin in either February or March of 1303. The divisions were commanded by Sir John Segrave (or John de Segrave), Ralph Manton and Sir Robert Neville.

It was while in their respective camps that the English divisions were surprised by an attack led by mounted Scottish knights, led John Comyn and Simon Fraser. The Scots had ridden overnight from Biggar and attacked the occupants of the first camp, the survivors of this assault then warning the occupants of the second camp. The men in the second camp collected their arms and defended themselves against the Scots who had moved on from their first target. There was vicious hand to hand combat, in which the English almost succeeded in gaining the upper hand. However, rallied by their leaders the Scots renewed their assault and took the camp. No sooner had this combat ended than the third English division appeared, presumably better prepared for action than either of the first two. Again with the encouragement of their leaders the Scots re-entered the fray and to the astonishment of all won their third victory, though not before putting the survivors of the first two battles to the sword and taking their horses.

The Armies

English: While the force was acting on behalf of the English king, it is also likely to have contained many Scots loyal to Edward. The English army, in line with normal practice of the time, appears to have been split into three 'battles', or divisions, while on the march, each commanded by Sir John Segrave, the First Lieutenant of Scotland for Edward I, Ralph Manton, the Cofferer (Treasurer) of Edward I, and the third under either Sir William Latimer or Sir Robert Neville. There is unfortunately no information on the reasons behind the army being split in this way. Fordun, who was writing in the 15th century, states that it was simply due to the lack of suitable camping ground to accommodate the entire army, whereas others, such as Buchanan, writing in the 17th century, think it was a tactical disposition. The fact that medieval armies did generally fight in three divisions does suggest that there is more to the decision than the availability of camping space, as does the fact that the army is reported to have arrived in Roslin already divided into three.

Scots: There is very little specific information available on the Scots army, save that the force were mounted, which allowed them to carry out the surprise attack, and that they were under the command of John Comyn and Simon Fraser.

Numbers

The earliest accounts seem to offer unrealistically high numbers, especially for the English army. This inflation is likely to be nothing more than pro-Scottish propaganda geared toward glorifying the scale of the victory, but nevertheless

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this should be remembered when considering the numbers involved. There may, however, also be a case for believing that the battle is actually somewhat under-represented in the Scottish chronicles as the Bruce faction sought to play down the achievements of John Comyn – Robert the Bruce being involved in his murder in 1306.

English: 30,000 men split into three 'battles' which consisted of three brigades of knights and at least 10,000 mercenary soldiers (Craig 1695, 375).

Scots: 8000 men according to Buchanan (1690, 257) and Craig (1695, 375). While the *Statistical Account of Scotland* later slightly inflates this figure to 10,000 (Dalglish 1791-9, 12), the *New Statistical Account* (Brown 1834-45, 339) reverts to the more widely accepted figure of 8000 men.

Losses

All of the historical sources state that the Scottish army slaughtered many of the English force; however, no specific numbers are quoted, though Sir Thomas Gray notes in the *Scalacronica* that Ralph Manton was slain, apparently by Sir Simon Fraser, and Sir Robert Neville is also thought to have been killed during the second Scottish attack. Given the information available from the sources and the surviving place-name evidence, it does appear that the casualties on the day may have been extremely high.

Action

The English army advanced into Scotland in secret on a punitive expedition on behalf of Edward I, although Segrave himself may have had more personal reasons for desiring the opportunity, and Buchanan's *History of Scotland* states that the English had:

“...proceeded, plundering on every side, as far as Roslin, a place in Lothian, about five miles distant from Edinburgh; and there, dividing their army into three parts that they might plunder more extensively, they pitched their separate camps.”

The success of the Scots night march may have been the result of overconfidence in the English forces, perhaps believing the Scots would be unable to mount any organised resistance to them following their defeat and subsequent capitulation at Falkirk in 1298. However, overnight on 22 February, Manton dispatched two men to scout out the Scots at Linlithgow, where they may have been besieging a new peel.

Meanwhile, John Comyn and Simon Fraser had finally learned of the English incursion, and led their party of mounted Scottish knights overnight, arriving in the vicinity of Roslin to find the English still encamped. Upon their arrival the Scots immediately launched into an attack against the first of the English divisions, although they appear to have been unaware that this was merely one part of the larger army. John of Fordun's *Chronicle of the Scottish Nation* describes the night march and opening of the battle as follows:

“...So they entered Scotland, and went about ranging through the land, until they, at Roslyn, pitched their tents, split up into three lines apart, for want of

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free camping room. But the aforesaid John Comyn and Simon, with their abettors, hearing of their arrival, and wishing to steal a march rather than have one stolen upon them, came briskly through from Biggar to Roslyn, in one night, with some chosen men, who chose rather death before unworthy subjection to the English nation; and, all of a sudden, they fearlessly fell upon the enemy. But having been, a little before, roused by the sentries, all those of the first line seized their weapons, and manfully withstood the attacking foe. At length, however, the former were overcome. Some were taken, and some slain ; while some, again, fled to the other line.” (Fordun 1872, 327).

With the first English division routed, the Scots believed themselves victorious. They appear to have taken a number of prisoners in this engagement, including the badly injured Segrave, who may have surrendered with his surviving forces in order to spare their lives. The Scots had even begun to divide the spoils of war when the second English division appeared, ready for battle. They had been roused by the earlier fighting and by fleeing English soldiers from the first camp calling for aid, and had thus had time to properly array for battle, initially in the hope of helping their comrades. It soon became clear it was too late to help the first division and they would be fighting alone, although they were joined for the battle by some of the first division who had managed to withdraw safely to their countrymen.

Upon seeing the advancing English division, the Scots prepared for combat once more, including replacing their own exhausted horses with the much fresher English destriers and arming their vassals with weapons taken from the first English camp. Buchanan suggests that prior to this engagement, the Scots slaughtered their prisoners, but this seems at odds with other information which suggests that many of the knights captured from the first division were freed by the second, including Segrave, rescued by Sir Ralph Neville of Raby.

The second engagement appears to have been a more prolonged and visceral affair than the first. Without the element of surprise, the Scots were now facing a properly deployed and prepared force. The battle was resumed, and hand to hand combat renewed “with tenfold fury”. The second engagement of the battle seems to have lasted much longer than the first, but in the end the Scots were victorious, although undoubtedly with considerably more cost to themselves than in the initial surprise assault.

While this engagement was underway, the third division of the English forces were approaching. Buchanan suggests this group were camped slightly further from the first two, which would explain the delay in their arrival to the field, although they also have been dispatched to Linlithgow to engage the Scots there. Nevertheless, soon after defeating the second force, the Scots sighted the third group, which Fordun suggests was larger than the others.

By this point, the Scots army was tired and hungry from their night march and the fighting they had already done, and the sight of another English host began to prey upon them. Comyn and Fraser immediately realised the danger this presented. They could not withdraw from the English force but their demoralised men were also unlikely to be effective in the fight. The commanders then moved to rouse their weary troops once more. In the words of Fordun:

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“But, when the people were thus thrown into bewilderment, the aforesaid John and Simon, with hearts undismayed, took up, with their weapons, the office of preachers; and, comforting them with their words, cheering them with their promises, and, moreover, reminding them of the nobleness of freedom, and the baseness of thralldom, and of the unwearied toil which their ancestors had willingly undertaken for the deliverance of their country, they, with healthful warnings, heartened them to the fray. So, being greatly emboldened by these and such-like words, the Scots laid aside all cowardice, and got back their strength.”

The Scots once more availed themselves of the supplies and equipment of their enemies, slaughtered those prisoners remaining from the first division along with the new captives from the second, before once more advancing to battle.

The final stage of the fighting appears also to have been the longest, and once again the combat appears to have been a fierce and brutal affair. Fordun states that:

“...they and their armed vassals marched forward most bravely and dashing to battle. The shock was so mighty and fierce, that many were run through, and bereft of life ; and some of either host, after awful spear-thrusts, savage flail-strokes, and hard cudgelling, withdrew from the ranks, by hundreds, forties, and twenties, to the hills, time after time, fagged out and dazed by the day's fighting. There they would throw back their helmets, and let the winds blow upon them; and after having been thus cooled by the breeze, they would put away their wounded horses, and, mounting other fresh ones, would thus be made stronger against the onslaughts of the foe.”

When the final stage of the fighting had come to a close, the Scots had won a remarkable victory. Despite being heavily outnumbered and fighting, in essence, three separate battles in a day, the Scottish forces under Comyn had largely destroyed or routed the entire English army.

Aftermath and Consequences

The Battle of Roslin was a crushing blow to the English, with what was meant to be a punitive raid into Scotland to crush resistance turning into a morale boosting victory for the Scots against the odds. Some sources suggest that fewer than 3000 of the English force returned home, although this number is likely to be an exaggeration. Furious at his army having suffered such a crushing defeat by the Scots, Edward I raised a fresh force of considerable strength and in 1304 he personally led another incursion into Scotland, launching ferocious attacks by land and sea. When he arrived in Scotland:

“...most of the Nobility of *Scotland* joined him, and amongst others *Bruce* with his Forces, which did mightily encrease his Army” (Craig 1695, 376).

Edward would swiftly subdue Scotland, gaining control of all the major fortresses, taking oaths of fealty from most of the nobility of Scotland at an assembly at St. Andrews and reinstating English lords into positions of authority before returning to England. After his return, in 1305, William Wallace was finally captured, before being transported to London and execution. This no doubt satisfied Edward, but even as he ended the life of one enemy, another was soon to arise in Robert the Bruce, whose father had

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been a contender for the Scottish throne along with John Balliol. Having come to an agreement with John Comyn (Balliol's nephew) that he would be given a free path to the throne, Bruce then murdered Comyn in 1306 before the high altar in the church of the Greyfriars in Dumfries, having been convinced that Comyn would renege on his promise and had struck a treacherous pact with the English king.

Walter Bower, in his *Scotichronicon*, also states that after the Battle of Roslin William Wallace sailed to France to build support for the Scots cause, and where he is recorded in various ballads as dealing courageously with pirate attacks on the ocean and with English attacks on the continent. However, this journey seems to have happened several years earlier.

Events & Participants

Following Scottish defeat at the Battle of Falkirk on 22 July 1298 much of Scotland surrendered to Edward I, though some strongholds such as Urquhart Castle held out against him. With what appeared to be a general capitulation Edward established magistrates and governors across Scotland, his aim being to crush any sense of nationhood. To do this he repealed many ancient laws and seized the Stone of Destiny, along with other symbolic items from Scotland. It was within this context that resistance, in the absence of Balliol, continued. Key here was the campaign to expel the new establishment, in the form of governors, justices and sheriffs and it was this which prompted the punitive campaign of 1303, which climaxed with Scottish victory at Roslin. John Comyn played a key role in the battle, along with Simon Fraser being a commander of the Scottish host. It is possible however that there has been an attempt to reduce his achievements during this period by later chroniclers who were eager to please the Bruce faction.

Edward's response to the failure of the 1303 expedition was to once again take personal command a move which once again brought striking results, not least of these being the capture of that still potent symbol of the Scottish struggle for Independence, William Wallace, in 1305. At this point Edward's control of Scotland once again seemed assured, but then, in 1306, Robert the Bruce, grandson of the Competitor and previously a supporter of Edward against the Balliol loyalists, came out in open rebellion and after taking part in the murder of John Comyn had himself inaugurated King of Scots at Scone in March 1306.

John Comyn, was the nephew of John de Balliol, the rightful king of Scotland (the agreed outcome of the Great Cause), and one of the Guardians of Scotland (1296-1306). Comyn support for Balliol's claim to the Scottish crown set the family against the Bruces, who lost out in the competition due to Comyn being a generation closer to David I, albeit being further removed than Robert the Bruce in blood. John Comyn was heavily involved in the first Scottish War of Independence and, along with his father and cousin, took part in an attack on Carlisle in 1296, which at the time was being defended for Edward I by Robert Bruce (father of Robert the Bruce), an action which provided an early cause of animosity between the two families. He was captured by the English following the Battle of Dunbar in 1296 and spent

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several months in the Tower of London, being released only after agreeing to fight for Edward in Flanders. In March 1298 he deserted Edward's service while on the continent and on his return became a confederate of William Wallace, again taking up the sword against the English. It is uncertain as to whether he fought at the Battle of Falkirk but when Wallace's fortunes declined following his defeat in the battle, Comyn, as Guardian, became a dominant force in Scotland and a leading contender to the throne; Balliol was still in exile following the defeat at Dunbar and his submission to Edward. Comyn's main rival for the throne was of course Robert the Bruce, who settled the issue by killing Comyn in Greyfriar's Kirk in Dumfries in 1306 before being crowned King of Scots at Scone later that year.

Simon Fraser was the last in the male line of the Frasers of Tweeddale, the proprietors of Oliver Castle and sheriffs of Peebles, from which the families of Lovat and Saltoun had branched off. He fought alongside Andrew Moray and William Wallace and refused to submit to Edward when others, such as Comyn, did so. He went on to fight for Robert the Bruce and escaped from the debacle of the Battle of Methven in 1306, but was captured later that year and in September was hanged, drawn and quartered in London.

Some sources suggest William Wallace was also present at Roslin, although the truth of this is unclear as he appears to have resigned his role as Guardian following the defeat at Falkirk and allegedly refused command of the army at Roslin as a result.

Sir John Segrave was Edward I's First Lieutenant of Scotland. He commanded one of the English divisions at Roslin and was later involved in the execution of William Wallace (and was given the task of carrying his disembodied limbs back to Scotland for public display).

Ralph Manton was Cofferer, or Treasurer, to Edward I. Several sources place him in overall command of the army which invaded Scotland in 1303 instead of Segrave, and although this is uncertain he was to be one of the most high-profile casualties at Roslin.

Little is known about Sir Robert Neville, as he is rarely mentioned in the historical sources, although he is said to have been killed during the second stage of the battle.

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

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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 claim to overlordship, which Edward could claim as an act of rebellion. 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

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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 VIII, 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 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-

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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 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

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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

Much of the area is occupied by farmland, the majority of fields being given over to grazing. Agricultural activity also extends to a research facility, which represents the most extensive incursion into the battlefield area visible today. The area contains expanses of relatively level open ground to the south and east, though toward the north-eastern part of the Inventory area there are a series of deep defiles which serve to break up the landscape. The Kill Burn, which owes its name to the battle, runs across the site from south-west to north-east and the ground to the northwest of this line slopes up to form a ridge line. There are pockets of forestry but the over-riding impression is of a tapestry of grazed fields.

The English forces were encamped in three divisions prior to the battle, and although the precise position of each camp is unclear, the descriptions of the fighting suggest they were spread across the area. The Scots forces approached from the south-west for a surprise attack against the first English camp, seemingly unaware of the presence of further forces beyond. Given the nature of the battle it is likely that the combat ranged across a large part of the landscape, and this is supported by place-names associated with the battle which are found across the area.

Several of the place names in the area seem connected to the battle, although it is important to note these names are much later designations. Finds of human bones in Shinbanes Fields (NT 270 641), in the south-western quarter of the site obviously suggest an association with the battle. Fighting is also associated with the Hewan Bog, a defile and area of boggy ground over to the eastern part of the area. The Kill Burn (NT 273 640), is said to have run red with blood for three days following the battle. Tradition has it that Mound Marl (or Mount Marl, or Mountmarle NT 279 639), today the site of the animal research centre, also has a strong association with the conflict. This is said to have acquired its name late in the battle, as the English forces began to waver. At this point, one of the English leaders, Marl, was advised by a retainer to flee, crying "Mount Marl, and ride!"

Location

A rich coal-mining area, the name Roslin is said to derive from two Gaelic words *rose* (promontory) and *lynn* (waterfall) in reference to nearby Roslin

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Castle, close to a location where the North Esk river falls over a rugged and sloping channel, still referred to today as 'The Lynn'.

Terrain

The topography of Roslin is characterised by gently sloping lands from north to south and a diverse mixture of features, including the River Esk which has a multitude of clear water springs naturally filtered through deep gravel flowing into it and which cuts through the parish for around 1 mile, and actually forms the parish boundary for 5 miles.

Condition

Much of the central section of the battlefield remains undeveloped, with development in the main restricted to the peripheries of the site, except for a disused section of railway which runs through the eastern section of the battlefield, close to 'The Hewan'.

By the first edition of the Ordnance Survey, the community of Roslin to the south-west of the battlefield had grown with the addition of several buildings. There is also the addition of the Edinburgh, Roslin and Loanhead branch of railway line. The Mountmarle animal research centre and poultry research centre have also more recently been constructed in the southern section of the battlefield.

Coal mining will have had an impact on the area, though this may be less than obvious today. The fields in the north-eastern portion of the battlefield area are shown on twentieth century Ordnance Survey maps as 'disused workings' and therefore may represent an area of pits or even made ground.

Today the community of Roslin extends along the railway line and is bounded by a road that runs west towards Shinbanes Field. There is a patch of forest plantation that covers a swathe of the battlefield area. However, fortunately, most of Shinbanes Field and The Hewan remain undeveloped, as has a good proportion of the ground between these two areas, railway and animal research centre notwithstanding.

Archaeological and Physical Remains and Potential

There are reports of human bones being turned up in Shinbanes Field and it is possible that human remains and other artefacts associated with the battle are contained within the brook at Kill Burn, where the waters are recorded as having run red with blood for three days following the battle. Because of the large numbers involved and the large scale of the engagement, it is probable that further archaeological evidence remains on the battlefield.

The New Statistical Account of Scotland records:

“The Stinking Rig’, where multitudes of the slain were buried, and, not being sufficiently covered, emitted an intolerable stench.”

Because of the potentially large scale of the engagement, it is probable that more archaeological evidence remains on the battlefield. Indeed, even the

Inventory of Historic Battlefields

ballad of the Battle of Roslin testifies that that area known as the Hewan is potentially rich in archaeological remains of the battle:

“An farmers tae this very day,
When they're at the ploo-in,
Still find shinbanes in the clay,
At the place they call 'The Hewin'”

Cultural Association

Several place-names in the vicinity of Roslin commemorate the Battle of Roslin, including Shinbanes Field which contained many bones, Hewan Bog and Hewan Bank, where much of the more fierce fighting occurred, and Stinking Rig where bodies resulting from the battle were buried so poorly that they emitted a rancid smell as they decomposed.

In recent years, a cairn commemorating the battle has been erected on the site of the battle some way along the footpath from the end of Manse Road.

Commemoration & Interpretation

Ballads, poems and novels were also written about the engagement, including the *Ballad of the Battle of Roslin*, of which the first two stanzas give a flavour:

Grey wis the dawnin' ower Rosewell,
When the Englishmen were roosin,
Gay wis Sir Simon Fraser's yell,
"Castail Dhuni" echoed eight thoosan',

Ten thoosan' English, eight thoosan' Scot,
The prior's prayers were spoken,
Ane fiery charge such terror wrought,
That the English lines were broken.

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The Battle of Roslin is documented in both primary and secondary sources. The background to the conflict is recorded in various English and Scottish historical sources, though the tactics employed during the actual fighting is not well documented. Ballads, poems and novels were written about the engagement, passed on through oral tradition and transcribed by later antiquarians and scholars, though these have most commonly been used to

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highlight and memorialise the cause of the first Scottish Wars of Independence.

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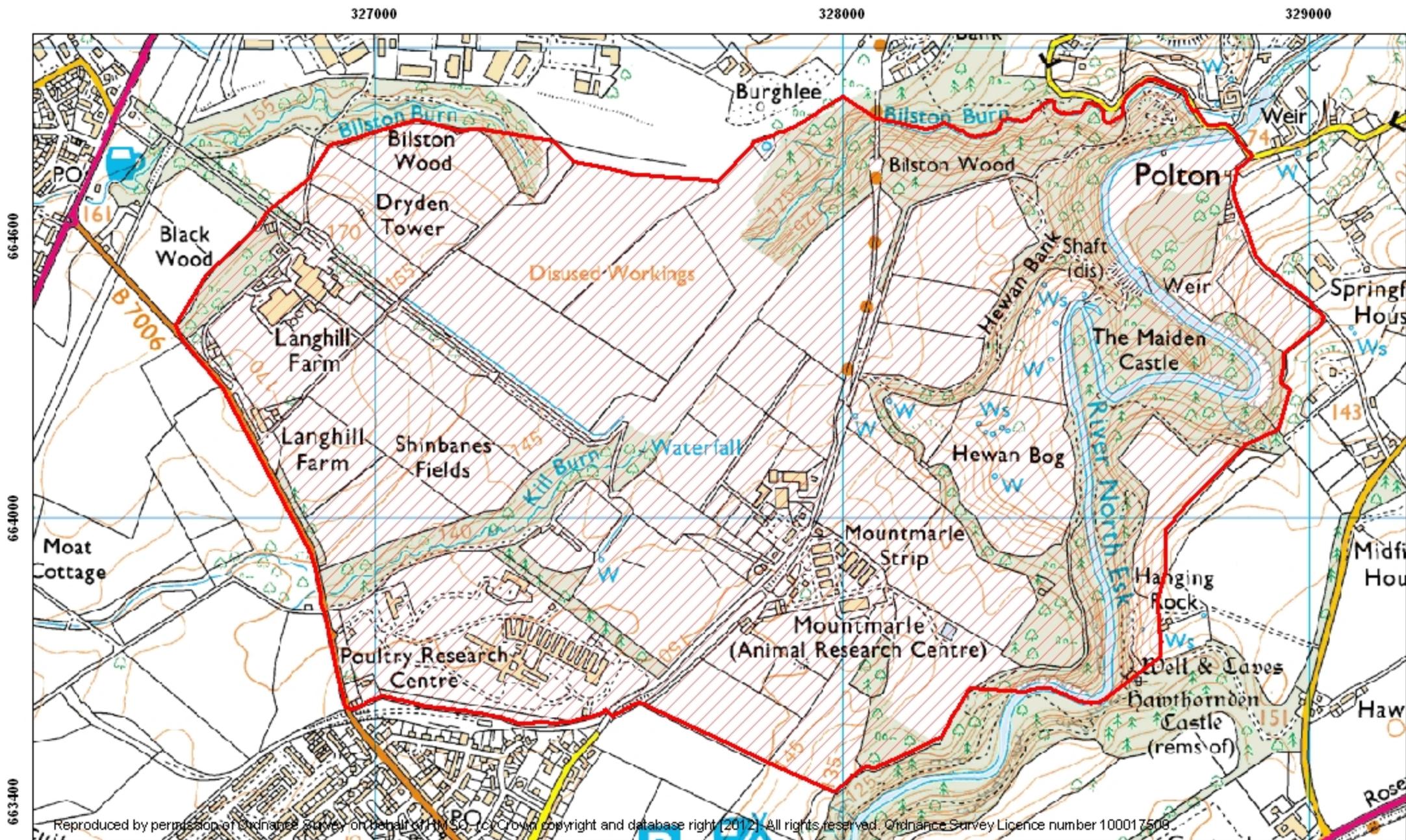
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The Inventory of Historic Battlefields - Boundary Map

Roslin

24 February 1303

Local Authority: Midlothian



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 Inventory of Historic Battlefields boundary

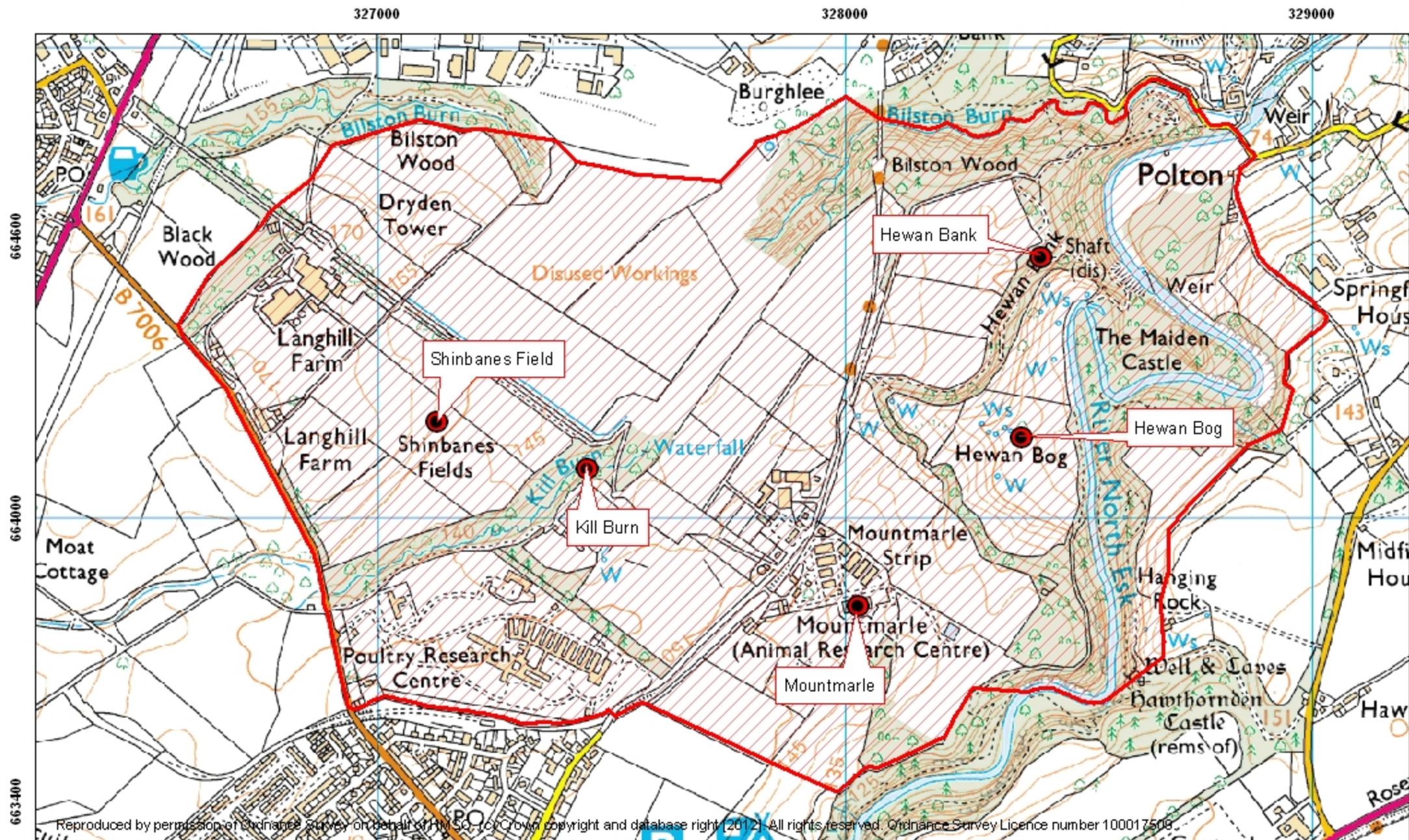


The Inventory of Historic Battlefields - Features

Roslin

24 February 1303

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