



## **The Inventory of Historic Battlefields – Battle of Stirling Bridge**

**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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# Inventory of Historic Battlefields

## STIRLING BRIDGE

Alternative Names: Stirling Brig

11 September 1297

Local Authority: Stirling

NGR centred: NS 800 949

Date of Addition to Inventory: 30 November 2011

Date of last update: 14 December 2012

### Overview and Statement of Significance

The Battle of Stirling Bridge is significant as one of the most prominent Scottish victories of the Wars of Independence. It is the high point of the campaign of William Wallace and Andrew Moray on behalf of the exiled John Balliol, and leads to Wallace's appointment as Guardian of the Realm of Scotland. It also holds a prominent cultural legacy, both in its connection to Wallace and in the wider legacy of the Wars of Independence within Scotland. Finally, the heavy nature of their defeat is an immense shock to the English, and Edward I himself returns to Scotland the following year in another attempt to crush the Scot's resistance.

A large English army, moving north to deal with Moray's successes, attempted to cross the Forth at Stirling using the single narrow bridge. Moray and Wallace were a little to the north-east at Abbey Craig awaiting them, from where they allowed some of the English troops to cross, and then swept down on them.

One of the English commanders, Hugh de Cressingham, was killed, along with many of his men. The victory bolstered Wallace's position, particularly as Moray later died of wounds received in the battle, while the English drew back temporarily. However, the following year, Edward's armies returned and defeated Wallace at the Battle of Falkirk.

### 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.

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

- The area of the bridges across the River Forth, including the location of the known wooden Medieval bridge, as the likely crossing point for the English army.
- The floodplain of the Forth on the northern side, where the rugby club and surrounding development now lie and where much of the fighting is likely to have occurred.
- Causewayhead Road, which was the route the English intended to take northwards.
- Abbey Craig, at the foot of which Wallace and Moray were mustered.
- The area on the south side of the river at Raploch where de Warenne had camped with his army.
- The area of Riverside where Lundie intended to ford the river to attack Wallace in the rear.

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## **Historical Background to the Battle**

The English army was assembled on the south side of the River Forth at Stirling, and the Scots were positioned on the north of the river at Abbey Craig. The only bridge across, which stood half a mile below Stirling Castle, was a narrow, wooden structure and was situated at the bottom of the closed end of a huge horseshoe loop in the river, with a causeway running north-east from the bridge across the horseshoe from bottom left and almost touching the top right of the horseshoe as it ran on towards the hill now called the Abbey Craig a mile north-east of the bridge. The land it crossed was flat and soft, very unsuitable terrain for heavily armoured horses and riders. Once across the bridge, the English army would be surrounded on all sides by the river except for the north where the Scots army awaited them.

The English began to cross the bridge in the morning of 11 September 1297, probably moving east from the bridge to muster on the northern side of the river. When the Scots saw as many had crossed as they could deal with, they came down from the high ground and sent spearmen to occupy the foot of the bridge so that no passage or retreat remained open; this would suggest that the English had moved into the area east of the bridge as they crossed. As the English turned back and tried to escape over the bridge, many were thrown headlong and drowned. About 100 men-at-arms and 5,000 foot soldiers fell, including 300 Welshmen. Some of the English escaped by swimming the river. Cressingham was killed and the Scots divided his skin into small parts, not as relics but as an insult. The Steward of Scotland and the Earl of Lennox, who had been negotiating with the English and were not part of Wallace and Moray's army, when they saw the way the battle was going, joined their men who were hidden in woods nearby on the Carse. They killed many of the fleeing English and took the army's baggage train.

### ***The Armies***

The English army was commanded by John de Warenne, Earl of Surrey and Hugh de Cressingham, Treasurer of Scotland. The army consisted of mounted knights and men-at-arms and foot soldiers, together with Welsh archers and crossbowmen from the Stirling Castle garrison. They were experienced troops and expected little difficulty on their journey north. The Scots were commanded by William Wallace and Andrew Moray. The Scottish army included armoured knights and light horsemen, while the infantry consisted of spearmen and archers.

### ***Numbers***

Walter of Guisborough says that the Scots had 180 horsemen and 40000 foot and the English 1000 horse and 50000 foot. These figures are not, however consistent with a statement he makes in his account of the battle

'Nor was there a more appropriate place in the kingdom of Scotland for shutting the English into the hands of the Scots, and the many into the hands of the few'.

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Armstrong argues that Guisborough's figures are a wild exaggeration, and that Cressingham, the accountant, had written to the King from Roxburgh in July stating that he mustered 300 horse and 10000 foot. The King himself was in Flanders with 822 paid cavalry and 8500 foot and it is very unlikely that Cressingham had more foot than Edward himself. Armstrong also points out that if Cressingham's numbers had dwindled as quickly between July and September as the troops enrolled at Caerlaverock three years later, his 10000 foot would have been down to about 5500 by the time of the battle. Only four prominent bannerets, experienced professional soldiers, were with Cressingham at Stirling Bridge whereas there were 115 at Falkirk, which suggests that numbers at Stirling Bridge were relatively modest (Armstrong 2003). Reid follows the same logic as Armstrong and concludes that the English forces would have numbered little more than 6000 foot and 300 horse. He puts the Scots foot at a similar size, but adds that the majority, 4-5000, were probably Moray's men, raised in the north, which in later years regularly raised levies of about this size, and that Wallace's men probably numbered about 1000. He uses Guisborough's number of 180 for the Scots horse (Reid 2004).

**English:** 350 cavalry, 6350 infantry, made up of the vanguard under Cressingham, which consisted of 150 knights and troopers on armoured horses under Sir Marmaduke Thweng and 1000 spearmen and 800 longbow men, plus 50 crossbowmen from the castle garrison; and the main-battle and rear-battle, under William Latimer and Walter Huntercombe, which did not cross the bridge: 200 knights and troopers, 4500 spearmen and archers.

**Scots:** 180 knights, troopers and light horsemen with 6000 spearmen and 400 longbow men.

### Losses

Guisborough says that roughly 100 English men-at-arms and about 5000 foot-soldiers, including 300 Welshmen, fell in the battle. However, Burns argued that Guisborough's figures were too low: Guisborough's numbers for the English army would still leave at least 40000 foot and 900 horse able to continue the fight under the command of de Warenne rather than fleeing. Burns says that the Scots writers agree that the English lost 20000 and this is confirmed by English writers who talk of half the English army crossing the river and being cut to pieces. As already discussed, he also suggests that the bridge was not destroyed by de Warenne, and that the Scots attacked across it, presumably inflicting more casualties (Burns 1874). This argument of course has to be seen in a different light if the figures used by Armstrong and Reid for each side's forces are taken as much more likely than those of Guisborough. Langtoft does not give figures but laments the deaths of a number of the Vavasor family, and of Robert de Somerville and his eldest son.

Reid says that there is no record that any prisoners were taken and that, apart from de Thweng and his followers, the only survivors were 300 English billmen and archers who swam to safety (Reid 2004). If this is so, and the vanguard numbered around 2000 as Armstrong suggests, the English losses in the battle itself must have been around 1650, to which would have to be

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added those killed or wounded in the harrying of the fleeing army by Stewart and Lennox. No figures for Scots losses are given in any of the sources quoted, although, as has been mentioned the wounding of Moray is recorded; he appears to have died as a result before the end of the year.

### **Action**

The key point about this battle is the way in which the Scots took advantage of the terrain, and, by contrast the way in which the English commanders allowed themselves to be put at such an obvious and fatal disadvantage.

Walter of Guisborough, an English monk, gives the fullest contemporary account. In Guisborough's account, once the English army reached Stirling, Stewart, the Steward of Scotland, and the Earl of Lennox, amongst others, came and asked the English to hold off attacking whilst they sought to bring about peace with the Scots. This delay was granted but they returned the next day, saying that they could not answer for the Scots, but promised to support the English army the next day with forty horse. However, as they were leaving, Lennox attacked and stabbed an English soldier. The English army, hearing of this, demanded revenge and accused Lennox of treachery. Warenne placated them but said that if Lennox did not fulfil his promise of support the next day they could take revenge. He then gave the order to cross the bridge to give battle to the Scots. Early the next morning 5000 Welsh foot soldiers crossed, but had to return, because Warenne was still asleep; this seems remarkably unlikely, given that the English had difficulty getting men across the bridge later in the day and its mention is probably there to discredit John de Warenne. When he awoke and was fully armed, he knighted a number of squires, as was the custom before a battle. Meanwhile, Stewart had returned without the promised support, explaining that they had been unable to detach any men from the Scottish army. Warenne then sent two Dominican friars to 'the robber' Wallace to see if they would accept peace terms. Wallace refused, saying 'Take back this reply, that we are not here to make peace but to do battle to defend ourselves and liberate our kingdom. Let them come on and we shall prove this in their very beards'.

Lundie, a Scots knight who had joined the English after Irvine, warned Warenne that using the bridge would be disastrous as only two men at a time could cross, with the enemy on the flank and able to attack as they pleased on one front. He asked to be allowed to take 500 horsemen plus large numbers of foot to a ford nearby (presumably at the crossing from Riverside into Cambuskenneth) which would allow sixty abreast to cross, so that he could take the enemy in the rear whilst the main army crossed the bridge. The council turned down this proposal because they thought it was too dangerous to divide their forces. Ironically, Cressingham had earlier refused the reinforcements of 300 horse and 8000 picked infantry, offered by Percy, because he believed the army was already big enough and he did not want to spend any more of the King's money. There was an angry reaction to this, with some apparently willing to stone Cressingham. Dispute raged as to whether to cross the bridge or not and Cressingham urged Warenne to delay no longer and spend the King's treasure in vain, but to attack. The Earl, moved by these words, gave the command to cross.

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'It was astonishing to say, and terrible in its consequence, that such a large number of individual men, though they knew the enemy was at hand, should go up to a narrow bridge which a pair of horsemen could scarcely and with difficulty cross at the same time'...'if they had crossed from the earliest morning until the eleventh hour, without interruption or hindrance, the last part of the army would have remained in great part until then.'

Guisborough summarises the situation perfectly:

'Nor was there a more appropriate place in the kingdom of Scotland for shutting the English into the hands of the Scots, and the many into the hands of the few'.

The King's and the Earl's standard bearers were amongst the first across, as was Sir Marmaduke de Thweng. When the Scots saw as many had crossed as they could deal with, they came down from the high ground and sent spearmen to occupy the foot of the bridge so that no passage or retreat remained open; this would suggest that the English had moved into the area east of the bridge as they crossed. As the English turned back and tried to escape over the bridge, many were thrown headlong and drowned. De Thweng had been fighting hard but his men realised that the bulk of the army was falling back and the standard bearers were down. Leading his men, he cut his way through to the bridge, with his nephew who had been unhorsed being saved by de Thweng's shield bearer. De Thweng captured the bridge, but about 100 men-at-arms and 5000 foot soldiers fell, including 300 Welshmen. Some of the English escaped by swimming the river, and one knight, with great difficulty, swam the river on his horse, both fully armoured. Cressingham was killed and the Scots divided his skin into small parts, not as relics but as an insult; Guisborough had no sympathy for the unfortunate Cressingham:

'they called him not the King's treasurer, but the "King's Treacherer", and this was truer than they believed. For he led many astray that day, but he too, who was smooth and slippery, exalted with pride and given over to avarice, was himself led astray.'

Guisborough concludes his account by saying that the Steward of Scotland, and Lennox, when they saw the way the battle was going, joined their men, who were hidden in woods near the 'Pows', slow-running streams on the Carse, and killed many of the fugitives and took the English baggage train. Warenne, who had not crossed the bridge, ordered it destroyed, and left de Thweng to hold the castle, promising to return to his aid within ten weeks. He then set out for Berwick in such haste that his horse 'nowhere tasted its fodder', and proceeded to join the King's son in the south, failing to honour his promise to de Thweng (Guisborough 1957).

Other contemporary sources agree in the essentials of the action, but there are some interesting differences. *The Lanercost Chronicle* (which describes Wallace as 'a certain bloody man.....who had formerly been a chief of brigands in Scotland') records that the Steward of Scotland treacherously persuaded the English that he could bring Wallace down with a small hand-picked force. As a result the greater part of the army was dismissed. The Steward then brought the remainder to the bridge of Stirling, where on the other side of the water the army of Scotland was posted. The Scots allowed as many of the English to cross the bridge as they could hope to overcome,

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and then, having blocked the bridge, they slaughtered all who had crossed over, among them the Treasurer of England, Hugh de Cressingham,

'of whose skin William Wallace caused a broad strip to be taken from the head to the heel, to make therewith a baldric for his sword' (Lanercost 1913).

Cotton also suggests that treachery played a key part in the defeat, saying that Warenne and Cressingham had only a small army because they had been

'deceived by a promise of the magnates of Scotland that the Scots would make peace, and since the army of the Scots was large they nearly all hid themselves in the mountains. When the English crossed the bridge, before they were drawn up for battle, the Scots with their lines of battle drawn up already fell upon the English and killed Cressingham and many others, both knights and squires, including some clerks.' (Cotton 2002).

Another English chronicle says simply that the Scots rose against the English because they had been informed that the King of England had crossed the sea. In the clash, Hugh of Cressingham, who had lately been made Treasurer of Scotland, was captured and beheaded (Bury St Edmunds 2002).

Langtoft, in his verse chronicle, blames Cressingham for having been so parsimonious with the Royal purse that many of the army had deserted before they reached Stirling. In his account, Wallace 'discomfited' Warenne by laying siege to the bridge when Warenne through his own folly was asleep

'Of spears and gavelokes none ever saw before so thick an Assemblage:  
the earl fled, The English died there, the Scot pass there quit.'

He lists a number of the nobles who died, including Cressingham who 'was cut to pieces by the ribalds of Scotland and his skin taken off in small pieces as an insult to the King, whose clerk he was called'. He too singles out Marmaduke de Thweng, as the outstanding English knight who 'behaved like a lion in all combats' (Langtoft 2002).

By way of contrast to these English chroniclers, the Scots chronicler Fordun recounts simply,

'A battle was then fought, on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September, near Strivelyn (Stirling) at the bridge over the Forth. Hugh of Clissingham was killed, and all his army put to flight; some of them were slain with the sword, others taken, others drowned in the waters. But, through God they were all overcome, and the aforesaid William gained a victory, with no little praise. Of the nobles, on his side, the noble Andrew of Moray alone... fell wounded' (Fordun 1872).

Burns adds a different perspective. He suggests that the bridge was not destroyed by Warenne, since if it had been there would have been no need for the remainder of the English army to flee as the Scots could not have pursued them easily or quickly. He believes that the bridge was seized by the Scots who attacked across it (Burns 1874). If he is correct, the English must have been in considerable disorder since the bridge would still have constituted a bottleneck constraining the Scots attack and making it easy to defend against it.

Armstrong (2003) and Reid (2004) both give very clear explanations of the battle with the use of maps. Reid suggest that the Scots spear-formations, or schiltrons, advanced into the mouth of the horse-shoe, wheeled round caving

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in the left flank of the out-numbered English vanguard, drove them past the bridge-end and into the 'cul-de-sac' formed by the loop of the river, and secured the bridge to cut off both retreat and reinforcements. What followed, he says, 'was more of a massacre than a battle.'

### ***Aftermath and Consequences***

With the major English army dispersed, Wallace mounted a raid into the north of England in October 1297, wreaking havoc in Northumberland and Cumberland, particularly around Carlisle, before returning to Scotland in December. The wounding and subsequent death of Moray had left Wallace as the *de facto* leader of Scotland and his leadership was recognised when he was knighted and elected as Guardian of the Realm, still seen to be acting on behalf of the exiled Balliol. The castles of Dundee and Stirling surrendered in early 1298, and only Edinburgh and Roxburgh held out for the English. However, Edward was determined to regain control of Scotland, and in July 1298 inflicted a crushing defeat on Wallace at Falkirk. Wallace resigned his guardianship after the battle and his standing and the support of the nobility, which had both depended on his military success, declined rapidly. Wallace largely faded from view until his capture and execution in 1305.

Barrow argues that from the long-term point of view, the battle was not a decisive one, but it was a major shock to the English. A cavalry army of gentlemen-professionals had been defeated by an infantry army of peasant-amateurs in a way which anticipated the much better known Battle of Courtrai in 1302. Secondly, an English army had been beaten by the Scots. Such a thing had not happened on this scale since the early eleventh century (Barrow 1988). Burns emphasises that, for the first time in Europe, during a period of centuries, a purely national army had opposed, and signally defeated, a powerful feudal array in defence of national integrity (Burns 1874).

### **Events & Participants**

The battle was fought as Edward I of England attempted to quell rebellion across Scotland. He was busy with France and could not come north himself, instead sending an army led by the Viceroy of Scotland, John de Warenne. Separate rebellions in south-west Scotland under William Wallace and the north-east under Andrew Moray had coalesced into a nationwide rebellion that brought most of the Scottish nobility out in defiance of Edward. The main effect of this was to bring Wallace and Moray together in the north, waiting for the English assault. The English army headed towards Stirling, intending to cross the Forth and head north to confront the Scottish troops. However, the crossing of the Forth was across a narrow wooden bridge leading onto a causeway towards the Ochil hills to the north. It was at this bottleneck that Wallace and Moray decided to hit the English army, the bridge negating the advantage in numbers of the English.

John de Warenne, 6th Earl of Surrey, was an efficient military commander, and had served in Edward's Welsh campaigns in 1277, 1282 and 1283, for which he was well rewarded with estates and titles in Wales. He was also an

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able diplomat and had served as a negotiator for the treaties of Salisbury and of Bigham in 1298 and 1290 respectively, both of which ensured independent status for Scotland on the death of Alexander III, with the proviso that his heir, Margaret, the Maid of Norway, marry Edward's son (later to be Edward II). Following his success at both the battle and siege of Dunbar he was appointed Warden of the Kingdom and Land of Scotland by Edward. Alas, the Scottish climate did not agree with him and he returned to England just a few months later citing ill health caused by the damp climate. Much against his will, even to the point of initially defying the king's orders, he was back in early 1297 at the head of an army tasked with putting down Wallace's rebellion. He suffered defeat at Stirling Bridge on 11 September 1297 and fled to York. He was re-appointed for the next Scottish campaign in early 1298 and had better luck raising the siege of Roxburgh and retaking Berwick Castle. Edward joined the campaign and Warenne's return to form was further underscored by his role as a commander in the victorious English army at the Battle of Falkirk on 22 July 1298. He finally died in Kent in 1304, at the age of around 73.

Hugh de Cressingham was appointed Treasurer of Scotland after the Battle of Dunbar. He was tasked with raising funds for Edward's war against France, which he did by taxation and sequestration. He was naturally hated by the Scots, which probably explains the gruesome treatment of his body after the battle, but none of the chroniclers on the English side were very complimentary about him either and generally blamed him for the defeat.

Andrew Moray was from a baronial family in Morayshire, who fought against Edward I at Dunbar alongside his father. Both were captured in the battle, although the elder Sir Andrew was sent to the Tower of London where he eventually died. The younger Andrew was held at Chester Castle, but was able to escape in the winter of 1296. He made his way home to north-east Scotland, where he proclaimed his defiance of Edward at Avoch. He quickly gained support and brought open warfare to the north-east, taking control of many major castles in the area around his homeland. John Comyn, Earl of Buchan, was released from captivity to suppress Moray; when they encountered one another, Buchan made no attempt to attack him and allowed Moray to march away. His efforts soon brought Moray into contact with William Wallace, and Moray and Wallace would fight together at Stirling Bridge in September 1297. Moray was badly wounded in the battle however, and he appears to have died of these wounds before the end of the year.

William Wallace was from a minor noble family in either Ayrshire or Renfrewshire. He first came to prominence as being responsible for the killing of the High Sheriff of Lanark in May 1297; there are traditions of earlier activities but none is historically attested. The killing of the High Sheriff was recorded by Thomas Grey in the *Scalachronicon*, and the veracity of the account is underlined by the fact that Grey's father was present and barely escaped with his life. Wallace went on from this to attack targets across the south-west, although his relatively low social status appears to have made it difficult for him to be accepted by the leading Scottish nobles such as the Comyns or the Stewarts. However, this was not a problem for Andrew Moray, and the two joined forces in the summer of 1297. Following their success at Stirling Bridge, Wallace was made Guardian of the Realm of Scotland. However, with his heavy defeat by Edward I at Falkirk in July the following, he

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resigned this position, although he continued to oppose Edward's rule. In 1299, he is recorded as spending time in France petitioning Philip IV for aid, and in his time there he is said to have made a name for himself in France fighting both pirates and the English. He returned to Scotland unable to secure any real aid, although he was able to secure the release of John Balliol from Pope Boniface's custody into Philip's. He subsequently returned to Scotland and may have fought in the Battle of Roslin in 1303. However, Edward I by this stage had long held a personal enmity for Wallace, and never ceased hunting him. The English King gained his prize in 1305 when Wallace was captured at Robroyston by Sir John Menteith, the warden of Dumbarton Castle. Wallace was first sent to Carlisle before being marched to London. He was found guilty of treason in a sham trial on 23 August 1305 before being brutally executed.

### **Context**

Scotland's history in the late 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> 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').

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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 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

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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-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

## **Inventory of Historic Battlefields**

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 recaptured 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 battlefield has been heavily developed with the spread of Stirling through Causewayhead towards Bridge of Allan. The location of the English camp now lies under the eastern end of Raploch, while the Scottish position will have been covered by the houses of Causewayhead. The likely location of the English once they had crossed the bridge was to the east of the bridge, which would mean that the main area of fighting may now be under the current Stirling County rugby ground. This may have preserved part of the battlefield, although there has been ground disturbance here as well. There are some open spaces closer to the bridge, in particular between the A9 road

## **Inventory of Historic Battlefields**

bridge and the 15/16<sup>th</sup> century foot bridge. This is an area that has been flooded on occasion.

### ***Location***

The Medieval wooden bridge was sited just upstream of the stone 15/16<sup>th</sup> century bridge, and Causewayhead Road essentially follows the line of the old causeway. Much of the area is built up, but there is open ground to the east of Causewayhead Road and the railway which runs alongside it. It is reasonable to assume that the English troops formed up in this eastern area because it allowed them to form up without blocking troops still crossing the bridge, and there is also the reference in Guisborough's account to Scottish spearmen taking the foot of the bridge to cut off escape. This would imply that the English host sat to the side of the bridge rather than in front of it.

Interestingly, Burns discounts what he says was a local view that the bridge was at Kildean, about one mile to the west. As he points out, the terrain and the course of the river is very different there and the Scots advancing from Abbey Craig would have had a greater distance to cross and been much more exposed to the English (Burns 1974).

### ***Terrain***

The terrain of the battlefield is difficult to assess because of the urban development that has taken place in the area. However, the general location is still comprehensible. The River Forth at this point is non-tidal, and there are currently three bridges in close proximity: the 15/16<sup>th</sup> century foot bridge, the current A9 road bridge and the railway bridge. The main reason for the concentration of bridges here is Causewayhead, which is the land in a large bend of the Forth that leads up to the Ochil hills. Abbey Craig can be seen from this point, particularly with the Wallace Monument that now crowns it. Causewayhead is quite densely settled, but the eastern side of the area has been partially preserved by being used for the Stirling County Rugby club. The likeliest location for the crossing point that Lundie wanted to use to avoid the bridge is over in Riverside, where there is a modern bridge to Cambuskenneth, but the river is quite shallow and could be forded. Coming across at this point would have allowed Lundie to come behind Wallace and Moray, who were at Abbey Craig.

### ***Condition***

No further information.

## **Archaeological and Physical Remains and Potential**

The only remains associated with the battle relate to a bridge that is assumed to be the one standing in 1297. This was first located in 1905 about 60 m upstream of the current old bridge, built in the late 15<sup>th</sup> or early 16<sup>th</sup> century.. Stone piers survive on the bed of the River Forth that relate to the earlier

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bridge; there are four of these that form a straight line across the river, and an area of large mortared stones was revealed through excavation at NS 7966 9456 that lies on line with the piers (Page & Main 1997). No artefacts relating to the battle have been found in association with the remains of the bridge, and indeed none is reported elsewhere in the vicinity.

The fighting is likely to have left artefactual remains in the soil. It was a hand to hand fight, where spearmen and swordsmen fought at close quarters. As men struggled with one another and fell to the ground, pieces of armour and fittings would have become detached and lost. For the nobles, much of this will be non-ferrous, while the foot soldiers will have had more in the way of ferrous objects. Much of this will have been collected at the time when the bodies were removed after the battle, but some will have been trampled into the soil and will have been missed. There is no indication in the sources of there having been any major archery exchanges, so there is a low probability of finding arrowheads.

## Cultural Association

The battle has been incorporated into Stirling's corporate imagery, with a Medieval seal of the town depicting the bridge with soldiers. The battle is also an important part of the story of Wallace that is portrayed in the displays in the Wallace Monument.

The battle was described in Blind Harry's *The Wallace*, which is a late fifteenth century hagiography of Wallace of doubtful veracity. There are numerous songs about the battle by authors varying from Robert Burns to William Sinclair, and songs about the battle are still being written in the modern era.

There is a depiction of the Battle of Stirling Bridge in the film *Braveheart*, although it presents a version of events that is not supported by the contemporary chroniclers; in a piece of cinematic licence, the battle is shown as taking place in an open field with the bridge playing no part in events. Despite the major inaccuracies, the depiction of the battle in this film has undoubtedly kept the battle well-known and has given it a level of recognition far in excess of many other, later battles.

## Commemoration & Interpretation

Although it does not solely commemorate the battle, the 67m high National Wallace Monument positioned on the top of the Abbey Craig can be seen from many miles away across the flat Carse of Stirling. There are extensive displays in the tower that explain the career of Wallace and which include information about the battle; there is an account of the action given by a simulacrum of Moray. However, it goes beyond the period of the battle and includes an account of Wallace's trial and execution in 1305.

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Most of the English contemporary accounts were written by Anglo-Norman monks in areas of the north of England which had suffered from Scottish raids, and have to be read in this context. Gransden (2005) discusses each of the sources used above.

Walter of Guisborough, an Augustinian monk whose chronicle covers the period 1066-1312, drew his information from three main sources: his own priory; other religious houses; and from people connected with important laymen. However, he particularly liked to dramatise events, making free use of direct speech; he was a good historian with access to good information, but his love of the dramatic undermines him slightly.

*The Lanercost Chronicle* which covers the period 1201-1346, was written by a canon of the Augustinian priory of Lanercost who copied the Chronicle of Roger of Howden and two Franciscan chronicles. In 1296, the invading Scots burnt some of the houses of the monastery but not the church, and also burnt the priory of Hexham and the nunnery of Lambley. The tone of the references to Wallace, and the statement that the English lost the battle because of the treachery of the Scots magnates, are not therefore too surprising.

Peter Langtoft was an Augustinian canon of Bridlington, who wrote in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century. His chronicle, a verse chronicle in the romance tradition, is in three parts, with the third volume covering the reign of Edward I. Gransden warns that he has a violently anti-Scottish bias as well as royalist attitudes and a romantic tone. Bridlington was in a region which suffered from Scottish raids and he saw Edward I as the King who would settle this problem once and for all.

Gransden points out that there are strong similarities of information and attitudes between Guisborough and Langtoft. Both praise Marmaduke de Thweng's role, both condemn the Scots as perjurers and robbers, and both criticise Cressingham and de Warenne. Guisborough calls Cressingham 'a pompous man, a son of death' and, both blame him in part him for the defeat. Both accuse de Warenne of inaction during the battle and of taking flight afterwards.

Bartholomew Cotton was a monk in Norwich. His *English History* is in three books, the second of which covers the period of the battle. He seems to have started writing about 1292 and it is thought that until 1298 he seems to have written fairly close to the events he recorded. Unlike Guisborough and Langtoft, he adopted a much more objective approach and avoided value judgements.

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The main Scots source is John of Fordun, a priest in the cathedral of Aberdeen who died in 1385. His *Chronica Gentis Scotorum* [Chronicle of the Scottish Nation] was an attempt at national history, and he was attempting to create a national identity from Scotland's history. Fordun died before bringing his history down to his own time, though in the 1440s Walter Bower incorporated the *Chronica* into his *Scotichronicon*, in which he continued the story to the murder of James I (McClure 2000). An example of Fordun's attitudes is seen in his recording of the death of Edward I:

'This King stirred up war as soon as he had become a knight, and lashed the English with awful scourgings; he troubled the whole world by his wickedness and roused it by his cruelty; by his wiles he hindered the passage to the Holy Land; he invaded Wales; he treacherously subdued unto himself the Scots and their kingdom; John of Balliol, the King thereof and his son he cast into prison; he overthrew churches, fettered prelates, and to some he put an end in filthy dungeons; he slew the people and committed other misdeeds without end' (Fordun 1872).

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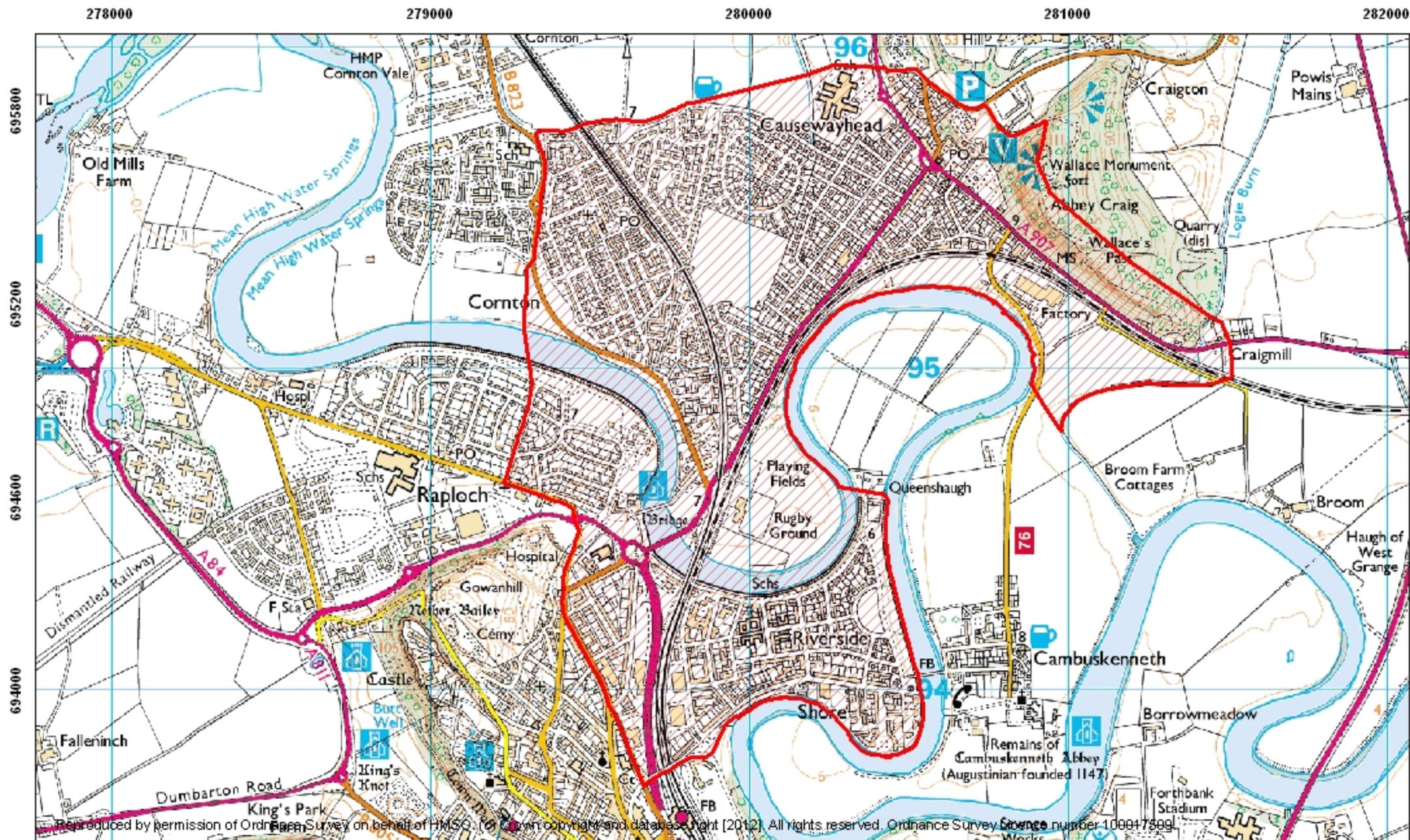
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# The Inventory of Historic Battlefields - Boundary Map

Stirling Bridge

11 September 1297

Local Authority: Stirling



 Inventory of Historic Battlefields boundary

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Meters

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# The Inventory of Historic Battlefields - Deployments

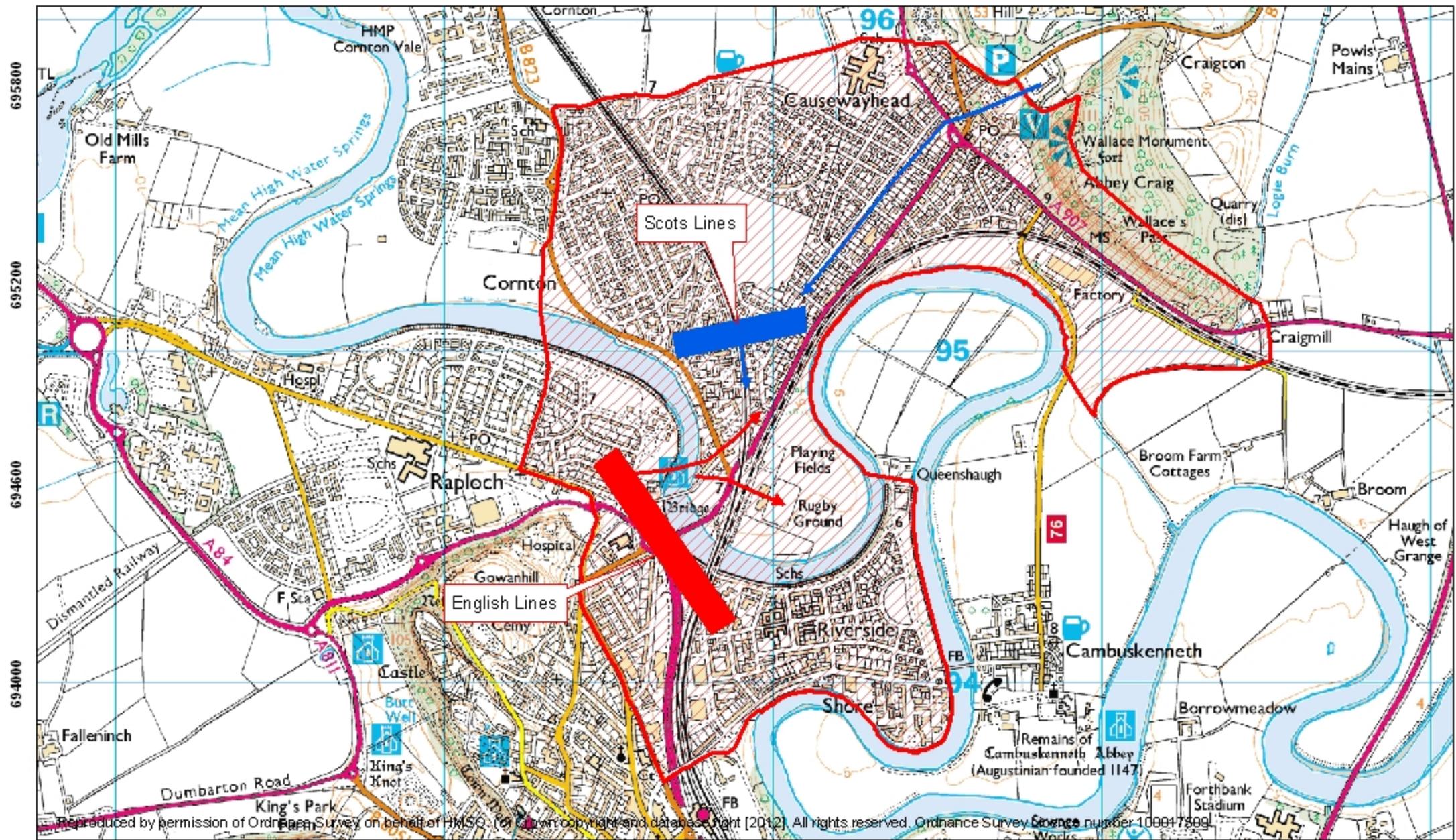
Stirling Bridge

11 September 1297

Local Authority: Stirling



278000 279000 280000 281000 282000



- Inventory of Historic Battlefields boundary
- English Movement
- Scots Movement



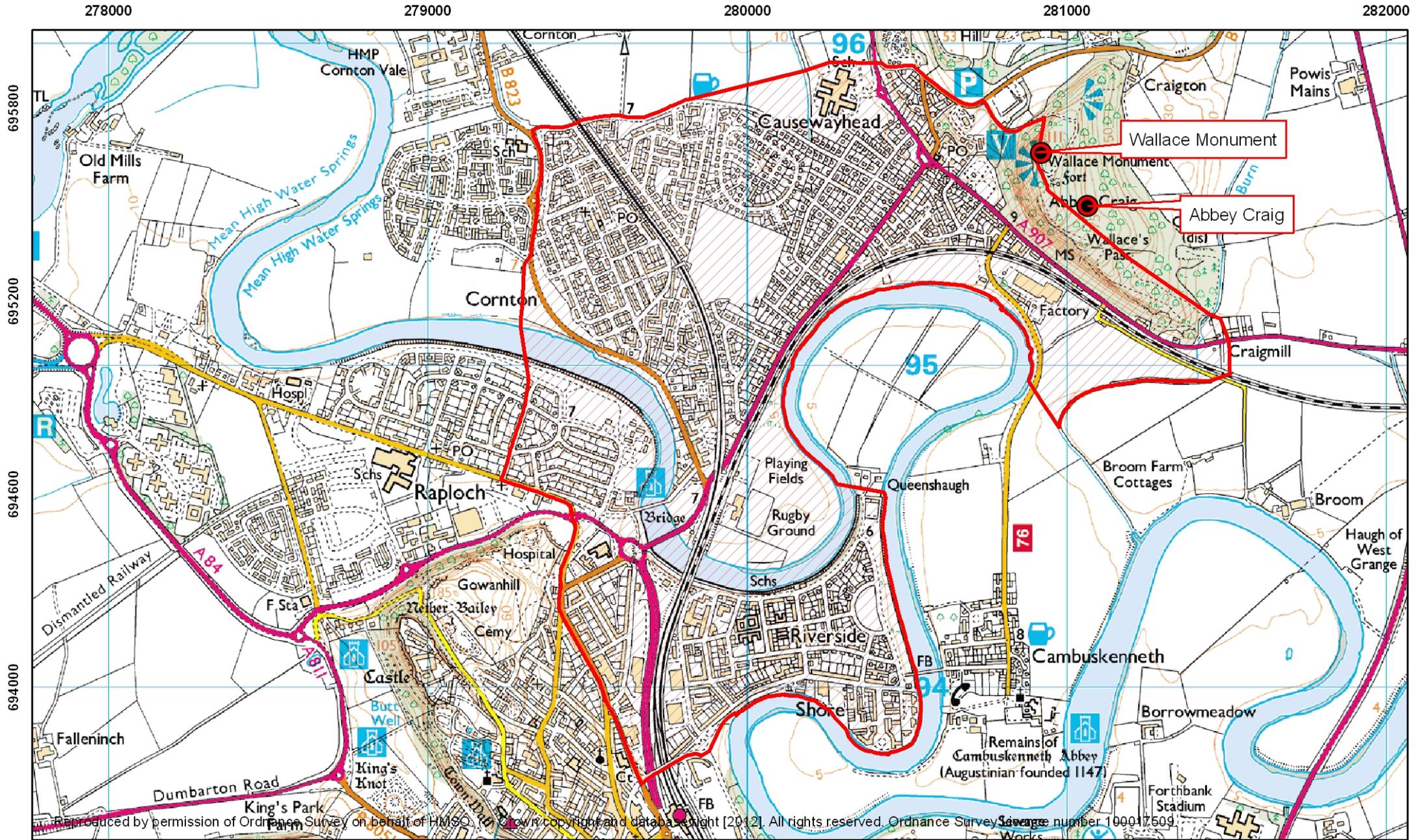
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# The Inventory of Historic Battlefields - Features

Stirling Bridge

11 September 1297

Local Authority: Stirling



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 Inventory of Historic Battlefields boundary

