

## **The Inventory of Historic Battlefields – Battle of Tippermuir**

**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

## TIPPERMUIR

Alternative Names: Tibbermore; St. Johnstone

1 September 1644

Local Authority: Perth and Kinross

NGR centred: NO 069 232

Date of Addition to Inventory: 14 December 2012

Date of last update: N/A

## Overview and Statement of Significance

The Battle of Tippermuir is significant as the first victory of Montrose's extraordinary campaign within Scotland on behalf of Charles I. The defeat of the much larger and better equipped Covenanter army was a major boost for Montrose's force and the subsequent spoils from the defeated force and from Perth solved Montrose's immediate supply problems, and without which Montrose may well have struggled to continue his efforts. Their defeat also showed the Covenanter commanders that Montrose's efforts were a serious threat, and that, with much of their total force campaigning outside Scotland, their defences were shockingly deficient against the Royalist force.

The Battle of Tippermuir, also known as the Battle of Tibbermore, or St Johnstone, was fought on 1 September 1644 on a wide expanse of ground approximately three miles west of Perth and close to the modern village of Tibbermore. The battle was the first of the Marquis of Montrose's campaign to seize Scotland from the Covenanters on behalf of King Charles I. Despite the lack of cavalry and artillery, the Royalist forces, primarily composed of Irish and Highlander soldiers, won a decisive victory over the larger, yet less experienced, Covenanter army commanded by Lord Elcho. The Covenanters were quickly routed as the Royalists took advantage of disorder in the enemies ranks caused by an earlier attempt to engage in skirmish activity. The Royalists entered Perth and remained there for several days until heading northwards to Aberdeen.

## Inventory Boundary

**The Inventory boundary defines the area in which the main events of the battle are considered to have taken place (landscape context) and where associated physical remains and archaeological evidence occur or may be expected (specific qualities).** The landscape context is described under *battlefield landscape*: it encompasses areas of fighting, key movements of troops across the landscape and other important locations, such as the positions of camps or vantage points. Although the landscape has changed since the time of the battle, key characteristics of the terrain at the time of the battle can normally still be identified, enabling events to be more fully understood and interpreted in their landscape context. Specific qualities are described under *physical remains and potential*: these include landscape features that played a significant role in the battle, other physical remains,

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

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

- Old Gallows Road, which survives as a track running along the edge of fields and can be traced through field boundaries, and which likely formed the focus of both the deployments.
- The village of Tibbermore, which is the modern form of Tippermuir, and surrounding area, through which the Royalists advanced to deploy.
- The high ground of the Lamberkine Ridge and West Lamberkine Wood that Montrose took on the Royalist right flank.
- The area around West Lamberkine farm, where much of the fighting occurred and through which Mac Colla and his Irish troops charged and broke through the Covenanter lines.
- The area west of the modern A9 around Glendevon Farm, where the Covenanter army initially deployed.

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## **Historical Background to the Battle**

On 1 September 1644, the Royalist and Covenanter armies deployed on an expanse of relatively flat ground between Perth and the village of Tippermuir (now Tibbermore). The Marquis of Montrose and Alasdair Mac Colla of Clan Donald commanded the Royalist army with Lord Elcho in overall command of the Covenanters. Mac Colla and his 2,000 Irish soldiers deployed in the Royalist centre facing James Murray, Earl of Tullibardine, at the centre of the Covenanter army.

As the Royalists moved within cannon range, Tullibardine sent forward foot and horse under Lord Drummond to engage the Irish in skirmish, possibly attempting to take advantage of the Royalists low supplies of powder and bullets. The Irish skirmishers drove the Covenanters back into their own lines, causing a great deal of confusion and disruption. Montrose then gave the order to charge, with Mac Colla pressing forward his Irish troops to engage the Covenanters. The Royalists broke the Covenanter centre as the first and second ranks lost their composure, possibly because of a lack of training in platoon firing: undisciplined soldiers attempting to withdraw to the rear too quickly may have caused confusion in the rear ranks, leading them to interpret the disorder as the beginnings of a rout. On the right wing, Montrose advanced and took control of the higher ground. As the Covenanters were routed, attempts were made by their cavalry and some of their infantry to regroup and return to the action; however, they were again beaten back and fled in the direction of Perth. A significant number of Covenanters were killed in the pursuit.

## **Events & Participants**

The Battle of Tippermuir was the opening battle of Montrose's campaign for Charles I against the Covenanter armies of the Scottish Parliament. It was the first time that Montrose fought alongside his Irish ally Alistair Mac Colla. Their partnership was to result in a string of victories in 1644 and 1645 that left Montrose essentially in control of Scotland, with the Covenanter lords having to flee to England to escape him. The victory at Tippermuir provided new supplies of powder and shot, of which Montrose previously had serious shortages, and also provided him with cannon.

James Graham was the fifth Earl of Montrose and the first Marquis of Montrose. He was the chief of Clan Graham. Montrose had been a supporter and signatory of the National Covenant in 1638, but had then become a Royalist, although he was driven by motives other than a desire to impose the Divine Right of Kings upon Scotland. He and Archibald Campbell, the eighth Earl of Argyll, were bitter rivals, and Montrose believed that the Covenant had become nothing more than a vehicle for Argyll's ambition. Always a moderate among the Covenanters, Montrose considered that the agreement in 1641 with Charles that had removed episcopacy from Scotland had fulfilled the demands of the Covenant and that to continue in opposition to him would be breaking that agreement. Following the signing of the Solemn League and Covenant in September 1643, Montrose presented himself to Charles I service at his headquarters in Oxford. On behalf of the King, he then fought a

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campaign intended to draw Covenanter forces away from supporting the Parliamentarians in England, and in this it was a success. Montrose fought a series of seven battles against Covenanter armies across the Highlands in 1644 and 1645, beginning with Tippermuir and ending at Philiphaugh, where he suffered his only defeat. He attempted to do the same on behalf of Charles II in 1650, but on this occasion fought only a single battle at Carbisdale. After his defeat there, he was captured and brought to Edinburgh for trial. On 21 May 1650, he was hanged and then beheaded. His head was fixed to a spike on Edinburgh's Tollbooth, his body quartered, and his limbs were displayed in Stirling, Glasgow, Perth and Aberdeen. Following the Restoration of Charles II as king in 1660, Montrose's remains were collected together once more and were interred in the High Kirk of St Giles in Edinburgh in May 1661.

Alasdair Mac Colla was the son of Coll "Colkitto" MacDonald. He is widely credited with the creation of the "Highland Charge", a tactic used with such devastating effect by Highlanders throughout the subsequent century, although some of the credit should likely also go to his compatriot Manus O' Cahan. He had fled to Ireland in 1638 to escape Campbell depredations in MacDonald territory within Scotland, and he fought for the MacDonnell Earl of Antrim in the Irish Rebellion of 1641. In 1644, he was dispatched to Scotland with between 1500 and 2000 Ulster and MacDonald troops to support Royalist efforts there, and to attempt to draw Covenanter forces out of Ireland and relieve pressure on the Irish Confederacy. Mac Colla gladly accepted the task, as Archibald Campbell, the 8<sup>th</sup> Earl of Argyll, was not only the leading Covenanter in Scotland, he was also the clan chief of the Campbells, giving Mac Colla a chance to strike back against his hated foe. He landed in Argyll lands in July, immediately seizing the castle at Mingary. He continued to build his support in the north-west until he finally moved to Blair Atholl, where he joined his forces with Montrose at the end of August. This was the beginning of an immensely successful partnership, with Mac Colla present at the Royalist victories at Tippermuir, Aberdeen, Inverlochy, Auldearn and Kilsyth. However, Mac Colla's focus remained in his homelands in the north-west, so when Montrose moved south towards England, Mac Colla dispatched Manus O' Cahan with 700 of the Irish troops to go with Montrose while he returned to the north-west. After Montrose's defeat at Philiphaugh, Mac Colla continued to fight against the Campbells and the Covenanters in Scotland, with particular brutality displayed to any Campbells he encountered, until a concerted effort to defeat him in 1647 forced him to withdraw back to Ireland in May 1647. Later that year Mac Colla was serving in the Confederate Army of Munster when he was captured and shot at the Battle of Knocknanuss on 13 November.

David Wemyss, Lord Elcho was an inexperienced commander, certainly no match for the combined skill of Montrose and Mac Colla. He left most of the decision-making to Lord James Murray, Earl of Tullibardine, and Sir James Scott of Rossie. Tullibardine was Colonel of the Perthshire Foot and had fought in the Siege of Newcastle during the Bishops' Wars, while Rossie was a veteran soldier and had fought for the Venetian Republic in his youth.

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### Battlefield Landscape

Contemporary accounts of the battle agree that the Covenanter forces had drawn up their army three miles from Perth on an open expanse of ground in close proximity to the village of Tibbermore. The Royalist army, having marched from their camp at Atholl, arrived from the north and moved to deploy to the west of the Covenanter force. The primary road leading westwards from Perth on to the moor was the Old Gallows Road, as featured on Moll's 1732 map and Roy's 1757 map, which passed south of Tibbermore. As a main communication route from Perth, it is likely that the Covenanters would have deployed in its vicinity. Phillipou and Hands suggest a deployment entirely south of the Old Gallows Road, stretching between it and the Lamberkine Ridge. However, this places the Royalist essentially on the high ground of Lamberkine at the start of the battle, which negates the necessity of the described race between Montrose's and Rossie's men to gain this area first. However, they could very well have been deployed within close proximity of this ultimate destination, allowing them to outpace Rossie's cavalry to the high ground. This final position of the Royalist right wing on the high ground is mentioned within an account of the battle written by Menteith, who describes the rising ground as having upon it, 'some Ruins of Houses' (Menteith 1735, 173). This may refer to several small farms or hamlets which appear on Roy's map of 1757, including West Lamberkine, Mid West Lamberkine and East Lamberkine.

The area of the battlefield comprises primarily enclosed arable land, with little to no impact from suburban development despite its close proximity to Perth. Agricultural development appears to have made the most significant landscape change in the area, with the cutting of drainage ditches that follow the line of several field enclosures. Apart from a small area of quarrying south of Huntingtower, no industrial activity, such as mining, appears to have impacted the landscape. There is an area of forestry called West Lamberkine Wood, which also appears on Roy's map as a neat rectangular feature. A line of small scale pylons crosses the moor close to West Lamberkine in a south-west to north-east orientation.

### Archaeological and Physical Remains and Potential

There appear to be no references in contemporary accounts to any construction of defensive structures or modification of features such as hedges or field banks during the battle. Physical remains of the Covenanter camp may have survived into the early nineteenth century as suggested by an entry in the *New Statistical Account* of 1838 for the Parish of Tibbermore, which states that, 'traces of this encampment are still in some places distinctly visible' (Inglis 1838, 1030). The *Statistical Account* also refers to artefacts recovered from the battlefield, saying that it was, 'no uncommon thing for those engaged in trenching the ground in the neighbourhood to find gun bullets, broken spurs, and many other memorials for this disastrous battle' (Inglis 1838, 1031).

One feature that may have played an important role in the landscape, and still exists in the present landscape, is the Old Gallows Road. This road, situated

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just south of Tibbermore, is present on Roy's 1747 map and appears to represent the main route westwards from Perth. As the main access route to and from Perth the road is likely to have played an important role in the battle, as it would have been essential for the movement of troops, artillery and supplies. Furthermore, as the defence of Perth was a strategic objective of the Covenanter army, they may have felt it necessary to protect the route way by placing their army across it. Only small sections of the road survive between Gateside in the west, and Glendevon Farm in the east, as much of it has been incorporated into field enclosures and drainage ditches.

### Cultural Association

There is no physical monument or memorial associated with the Battle of Tippermuir. It also does not appear to have been commemorated or referenced in song or verse.

The presence of the battle is marked at (NO069232) on the Ordnance Survey with crossed swords and the date 1644.

### Select Bibliography

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# The Inventory of Historic Battlefields - Boundary Map

Tippermuir

1 September 1644

Local Authority: Perth and Kinross



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