

Battle Name:	Ancrum Moor	Council area: Scottish Borders
Date:	27 <sup>th</sup> January 1545	
UKFOC number:	281	

## ***ANCRUM MOOR***

### **1 SUMMARY**

#### ***1.1 CONTEXT***

In the period following the battle of Flodden (1513) an uneasy truce existed between Scotland and England, but in 1542 the tensions once more erupted into open conflict. Following its Reformation in 1534, England stood independent from Catholic Europe. In response Pope Paul III sought an alliance between Scotland, France and the Holy Roman Empire against England. This caused Henry VIII to pour huge sums of money into projects for England's coastal and border fortification. Henry also considered an invasion of France, but his northern border would then be vulnerable to Scottish invasion in support of their ally. Henry therefore encouraged his barons in the north to raid into Scotland, to further undermine the Scottish king, James V, who was facing internal dissention. In October 1542 Henry sent an army some 20,000 into Scotland, where they burnt Kelso and Roxburgh. In reply, James raised an army of some 18,000 troops in the west and headed for Carlisle, being defeated in November at Solway Moss by a much smaller local English force.

After the death of James, with Queen Mary just one year old, Scotland was ruled by a regent, the Earl of Arran. This simply exacerbated the internal divisions. With Scotland thus weakened, Henry aimed to unify the two kingdoms by seeking the marriage of Queen Mary to his own son, Prince Edward. The situation was complicated by religious differences in Scotland, some Protestants being more sympathetic to the protestant English crown, while Catholic support was clearly for alliance with France. When negotiation failed, with the Regent pursuing a course of double dealing, Henry again pressed his case by force of arms – the so called 'rough wooing'. In 1544 English troops sacked Leith and Edinburgh. Later in the year, under the leadership of Sir Ralph Euer, Warden of the English Middle March, and Sir Brian Laiton, governor of Norham, there followed further ravaging of the Borders. The destruction is detailed in the so called Bloody Ledger, leaving much of the border lands effectively under English control (5).

In February 1545 Euer and Laiton again crossed the border, this time with some 5000 troops, comprising 3000 foreign mercenaries, 1500 borderers and 700 Scots (border reivers from Teviotdale and Liddesdale who would change sides according to who was in the ascendancy). The army plundered Melrose town and abbey, then returned towards Jedburgh. In response the Earl of Angus raised local forces. At first outnumbered, he manoeuvred but would not engage the invaders. Once joined by other forces, including the

Earl of Aran, he had more than 1200 troops. The Scots now considered their army strong enough to act.

## ***1.2 ACTION***

Robson places the English camp north of the river Teviot, below Ancrum village. He has the Scottish forces standing on Peniel Haugh and then withdrawing to deploy out of view on the lower ground to the north west, between this and Lilliard's Edge, feigning retreat. This caused the cavalry of the English vanguard to pursue, well in advance of the English foot, a mistake which would prove decisive. Once the cavalry reached the rise, blinded by the setting sun, they were attacked by the full Scottish force in battle formation. The main body of English infantry were men at arms in the centre, flanked by archers on one side and harquebusier on the other.

The English had to deal with a deep marsh across which the Roman road provided the only effective route. The Scots are said to have dug pits and covered them with vegetation to further disorder the English cavalry, though whether they will have had sufficient time to prepare the ground in this way may be questioned.

The Scots had the advantage of the wind, which blew the arquebus smoke back into the faces of the English troops, while it is also said that the Scottish pikes were an ell (*a Scottish ell was 37 inches*) longer than the English pikes. As the Scottish forces attacked the English fell back: Latoun's vanguard was repulsed and fell back on the main battle and these in turn upon Euer's rearguard. Then the 700 Scottish borderers in the English army changed sides, seeing which way the battle was going. The English battalions then broke and there was then great execution in the pursuit, with both Evers and Latoun being killed.

## ***1.3 TROOPS***

The Scots were outnumbered 2:1 (1). The secondary works are consistent about the number of English troops, less so about the exact numbers of Scottish troops.

### **Numbers:**

Scottish: no more than 2500, including 700 Fife lances as well as reivers under Scott (6);

English: 3000 foreign mercenaries; 1500 Borderers; 700 Scots, including some Highlanders (6);

### **Losses:**

English: >600 killed and 1000 taken prisoner (1); 500 killed (Tytler)

Scottish: few

## ***1.4 COMMEMORATION & INTERPRETATION***

There is no monument on the battlefield, but the battle is commemorated in the ballad of Lilliard, a maiden who supposedly fought and died in the battle. Overlooking the battlefield is the 'Maiden's Tomb', which is in effect a monument to the battle (1) (2). The location of

Lilliard's Stone is recorded on the map of 1863 (8). The monument was in a very poor state of repair in 1983 (3) but is now repaired. The battlefield and the monument are accessible via the footpath along Dere Street Roman Road (part of St Cuthbert's Way).

## **2 ASSESSMENT**

### **2.1 LOCATION**

The general location of the battle is not in dispute, having been generally agreed to have been fought about 1.5 miles north of the village of Ancrum (9). However the exact position and the orientation of the deployments and action is in dispute. Matthews and Warner both have the action fought from north east to south west across Gersit Law. Logan-Home has the English advancing towards the setting sun, with a south west wind in their faces. Fairbairn has the English returning from plundering Melrose, with Angus outmanoeuvring them and getting between them and the Teviot. Phillips has the English camped near Ancrum, with the Scots first advancing to Peniel Heugh Hill, overlooking Ancrum Moor, then withdrawing to the north west with the English in pursuit. He has the action fought from south east to north west along the line of Dere Street.

Despite the comment about the sun being in the eyes of the English, given the direction of the main route, position of the potential marshland and the trend of the hills, it seems most likely that the action was fought to the south west of Lilliard's Stone across Lilliard's Edge, either from south east to north west, or vice versa. It is here that the battlefield is located on the 1863 mapping, presumably reflecting the traditional site of the action (8). If the English did attack down hill, as Logan-Home suggests, then as the likely marsh area is to the south east of Lilliard's Edge, then they would have to have attacked south eastward.

### **2.2 PRIMARY SOURCES**

Logan-Home provides extracts from *Haynes State Papers* in British Library regarding the raids from 1 July 1544 to 17<sup>th</sup> Nov 1544, but not of accounts of the battle. None of the secondary works consulted provide extracts from the primary sources.

### **2.3 SECONDARY WORKS**

Robson (1897) provides a very partisan account and, although he has clearly drawn upon a range of primary sources, he provides little direct referencing, even in the notes section. Logan-Home again works from various primary sources but most of his discussion is of the context of the action rather than the battle itself, and again referencing is largely absent.

Only Matthews and Warner hazard plans showing deployments and action, but neither is wholly convincing. Indeed none of the secondary works consulted provide an adequately referenced account to enable any of their slightly varying interpretations to be demonstrated as correct and none provide significant extracts from the primary accounts of the battle.

#### **2.4 BATTLE ARCHAEOLOGY**

Various stray finds of armour and equipment, suggested as being related to the battle, were found in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the south west of Ancrum Moor, such as a ‘burgonet’, a 16<sup>th</sup> century helmet, found on the slopes near to the river Ale (6) (7).

#### **2.5 BATTLEFIELD HISTORIC TERRAIN**

There are three key elements to the terrain of the battlefield:

- the Roman road (Dere Street), the course of which is well known and which may still have been in use at the time of the battle, though had certainly been replaced before the early 19<sup>th</sup> century by the present road.
- Ancrum Moor
- marshland, which may be indicated by the two areas of alluvial deposits on either side of Dere Street, immediately south east of Lilliard’s Edge.

#### **2.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BATTLE**

Though a significant defeat, involving the death of two English commanders from the Marches, Ancrum Moor was not a major battle and it did not change the balance of power in the region. The English border regions were readied for a major Scottish incursion in the wake of Ancrum. The French dispatched 3500 troops to Scotland for such an initiative, but they only led some minor incursions because the Regent was unwilling to risk a major invasion. The only significant outcome of Ancrum was to force Henry VIII to escalate his military action against Scotland, which ultimately led, after Henry’s death, to the battle at Pinkie in 1547 (6).

In terms of battle archaeology Ancrum may be a significant action because it involved the use of both the harquebus and the bow, one of the earliest battles in the Britain to have seen the use of significant numbers of these weapons, though in no way comparable in scale and significance to their use at Pinkie.

#### **2.7 CURRENT STATE OF DEVELOPMENT**

A caravan park may lie across a small part of the battlefield, depending on the exact extent of the action. There has also been a significant degree of planting of belts of coniferous woodland, though the greater part of the presumed battlefield area remains as open land. The coniferous woodland is likely to have altered the soil chemistry creating far more acidic conditions, which may have caused far higher rates of decay in particularly ferrous artefacts.

#### **2.8 CURRENT DESIGNATIONS**

The Monteath Mausoleum, a listed structure, lies in the general area of the battlefield, but it has no relationship to the battle. Woodhead Moss, the south-western of the two alluvial areas is an SSSI. A scheduled moated site lies adjacent to Muirhouselaw to the north east of the battlefield.

## **2.9 POTENTIAL**

The battlefield may have a high potential for battle archaeology, particularly important because of the combined use of firearms and archery. In this sense it is comparable to Pinkie, but the Ancrum battlefield will be much smaller than Pinkie and appears to have suffered little or no destruction. Given the lack of modern development and disturbance, Ancrum may provide well preserved unstratified battle archaeology. However, the underlying geology appears to be sandstone, so acidic soil conditions may be expected and this will have been exacerbated in places by the conifer plantations. However the history of land use may also be a significant factor, and if it has been a largely pastoral land use then this will have resulted in minimal mechanical damage to artefacts.

The scale of the action should mean that the site could be relatively easily surveyed, to provide a good guide as to what may be achieved on sites of this transitional period in the history of warfare. In particular there should be the potential for the recovery of a lead bullet distribution pattern through a metal detecting survey in discrimination mode. This should give a good indication of the location and extent of the action. With this information it would be possible to undertake an intensive all metal search for iron arrows in the heart of the action, to determine whether arrowheads survive and, if they do, whether the distribution pattern correlates in any way with the pattern provided by the bullets. If arrowheads are to be used on medieval battlefields to examine the detail of battle action then such control evidence from a transitional battle could prove critical to enabling the understanding of the taphonomy of iron arrowheads and the interpretation of the distribution patterns they provide. There is also the existence of a remnant of the marshy ground, which was relevant to the action, and might contain some exceptionally well preserved waterlogged deposits from the battle.

In order to resolve the differences of view over the exact location, extent and direction of the action further research is essential, for without such information it will be impossible to define appropriate management. Firstly there should be a search for secondary local historical works, which may provide information on the battle and the battlefield. Most importantly, copies of the primary sources for the action must be collected, so that the events can be more accurately reconsidered. This could then be supported by a basic historic terrain reconstruction, to enable the events to be placed more securely within the landscape. In this process the location of the marsh will be a key topographical guide.

## **2.10 THREATS**

None identified.

## **3 REFERENCES**

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- (2) Saddler, John. *Scottish Battles: From Mons Graupius to Culloden*. Edinburgh: Canongate, 1996.

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- (4) Dent, John, Rory McDonald, and Council Scottish Borders. *Warfare and fortifications in the Borders*. Melrose: Borders Council, 2000.
- (5) Logan-Home G. J. N. "Battle of Ancrum Moor, 1545." *History of the Berwickshire Naturalists' Club*, no. 28:2 (1933): 159-65
- (6) Phillips, Gervase. *The Anglo-Scots wars, 1513-1550: a military history, Warfare in history*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1999.
- (7) Duns (1895-6) 'Notes on a Helmet found at Ancrum Moor', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 6, 3rd series, 317-322.
- (8) OS 1<sup>st</sup> edition 6 inch Ordnance Survey mapping (1863)
- (9) Anon, 1845 *The New statistical account of Scotland.*, Blackwood, Edinburgh.

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