

Battle of Solway Moss

24th November 1542

Given the overwhelming odds against them, with just 3000 troops to match a Scottish raiding force of perhaps as many as 18000, one might have expected the English to withdraw behind the defences of Carlisle and prepare for a siege. But the English commander, Wharton, was an experienced, skilled and confident leader and he preferred open battle. Trusting to his lancers, he led out his troops from Carlisle to confront the Scots, who were pillaging and burning through the 'debatable lands', which lay along the border immediately beyond the river Esk.

The battle of Solway Moss was over almost as soon as it had begun. The vastly superior numbers of the Scottish forces should have made short work of the English army. But lack of cohesion amid the Scottish leaders, combined with skilful use of troops and topography on the part of the English, led to a humiliating Scottish defeat. Three weeks later on 14 December 1542 James V died leaving the two week old Mary as Queen.

The area of Arthuret Howe and Arthuret Hill, where the English forces faced the Scots, remains largely undeveloped agricultural land. However, the character of the landscape has changed considerably with the process of enclosure and the draining of the large alluvial floodplain between the hamlet of Arthuret and the River Esk. The development of the town of Longtown in the eighteenth century at the crossing of the Esk has dramatically altered the northern end of the battlefield, while a modern road and a disused railway also cross the battlefield. There is no monument and the interpretation panel, beside the road close to Arthuret church, is unfortunately of little value, but access is possible by the three roads that cross the battlefield and by public footpaths.

KEY FACTS

Name: *Battle of Solway Moss*

Type: *Battle*

Campaign:

War period: *Medieval*

Outcome: *English victory*

Country: *England*

County: *Cumbria*

Place: *Arthuret*

Location: *secure*

Terrain: *floodplain, ?moor*

Date: *24th November 1542*

Start: *?morning*



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Location map

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Duration: *very short*

Armies: *English under Sir Thomas Wharton; Scottish under Lord Maxwell / Lord Sinclair*

Numbers: *English: 3,000; Scottish: circa 18,000*

Losses: *English few; Scottish circa 20 on the battlefield, several hundred drowned, circa 1,200 captured*

Grid Reference: *NY383677 (338388,567766)*

OS Landranger map: *75*

OS Explorer map: *315*

Resource <http://www.battlefieldstrust.com>