2. THE VALUE OF THE RESOURCE

Classifications

Battle

A battle is here taken to be an action involving wholly or largely military forces, present on each side in numbers comprising battalion strength (i.e. totaling c.1000 or more), and normally deployed and engaged on the field in formal battle array.

Defining the lower limit can be difficult, particularly with regard to the many actions of the Civil War in which less than 5000 troops were engaged. There are, therefore, a number of lesser actions that have not been assessed here but should be once the methodology of investigation is fully developed and the chief actions have been adequately addressed.

The *battlefield* is that area where the troops deployed and fought while in battle formation. Once the formations were lost, as in a rout and pursuit, then it can be argued that the action becomes a subsidiary skirmish, because such action was typically piecemeal and could be scattered widely. For management purposes a rout is thus to be distinguished from the typically more consolidated area of the battle proper. The area covered by such subsequent action, together with preliminary deployment and manoeuvres which influenced the location of the main action, is described here as the *immediate context* of the battlefield.

Subsidiary action often had a dramatic influence on the outcome and significance of a battle, for it was typically in the pursuit and 'execution', after battle formations had collapsed, that the greatest numbers of troops were killed or captured. It is here, too, that attacks on baggage trains will normally be found. It is in this wider area, and probably especially where major obstacles were encountered, as much as in the concentrated area where the two armies first engaged, that the potential exists for mass graves. The definition of this wider area may be problematic, although for post-medieval actions unstratified artefact distributions will often help in the placing of key elements of subsidiary action, as now demonstrated by the Edgehill survey. In defining the battlefield for management purposes the extent of immediate context needs to be properly delineated to take in the main elements of subsidiary action alongside the main action.

Skirmish

A skirmish was an engagement between military forces not in battle array. Typically, though not always, this occurred when small numbers of troops were involved, because the rigid order of a battle array was not essential for the control of numbers substantially less than battalion strength. Skirmishes could be subsidiary to a battle but most often they formed part of a wider military campaign. Generally, skirmish sites tend to be much less extensive than battlefields, though as a category skirmishes are in the nature of a continuum of scale with no rigid divisions. Skirmishing involving large numbers, which need to be dealt with together with battles as defined above, may also have occurred when action took place in an enclosed landscape, as for example with elements of the complex action at Lostwithiel in 1644 or the urban action at Alton in 1643.

Border conflict (raid)

Smaller cross-border actions, often by irregular or civilian forces, are here distinguished from actions which were part of a large military campaign by regular forces (sometimes termed a 'chevauchee')[1], such as the major punitive action that ended in the battle of Solway Moss (Cumbria, 1542). Up to the early 17th

[1] Prestwich, 1996, 10

century security in the Scottish Marches was poor, reliance on direct action correspondingly large. The more intensive pilot work for Cumbria has revealed such border raids to be heavily underrepresented on the UK Fields of Conflict (FoC) database – a factor which will be particularly significant in Northumberland. In the later medieval period similar actions may be identifiable in the Welsh Marches.

Unverified sites

Various sites are identified on the database as 'unverified' because of the limited or dubious nature of the evidence upon which they rest. Most are based on local tradition, including associations with finds of human remains, cairns and standing stones, and apparently lacking any contemporary written record. These sites are likely to be spurious, although continuing research may establish some as genuine.

Other actions

Also on the FoC database is a small number of sites that were the scene of non-typical events, as where large armies faced each other but no significant action took place, as at Turnham Green in 1642.

Sieges

Sieges are actions against fixed positions, where substantial defences were constructed to modify the strategic landscape and give tactical advantage to the defenders.

Potential

Potential can be assessed in relation to research, interpretive and commemorative value. Research value and investigative methodology are summarised here but dealt with more fully in Chapter 5. Interpretive potential will extend across different kinds of audience – for instance, from children through to battlefield specialists. Although interpretation and memorialization were not a central part of the project brief, they are nevertheless considered amongst other more core elements.

Research Potential

A battlefield's research values lie in their potential to contribute to understanding of the event itself and warfare in general. Work over the last twenty years in Europe and the USA has revealed the degree to which the physical evidence of battlefields can contribute to this, in some cases transforming our understanding of the location and character of major and lesser actions. Most battlefields pose a challenge of how to locate events within their contemporary landscape. Interdisciplinary research has proven increasingly effective at doing this, so enabling assessment of the effects of terrain upon the course and outcome of the action, and revealing – for example – the success or failures of a commander in exploiting the opportunities provided by the terrain.

Physical evidence may also contribute to the understanding of the nature of warfare of a particular period. Thus the distribution of bullets, arrowheads or other artefacts across a battlefield, investigated through systematic archaeological metal detecting survey, may assist in estimating the size of the armies involved, determining the way in which they were deployed, their composition and how they were equipped. As an example, the calibre of bullets will indicate the bore of the firearms used and hence their type, which may in turn show where on the battlefield different types of forces were engaged and with what intensity.

The graves in which battle dead were buried may be spread across a number of square miles. Being so, in the absence of secure tradition, place-name or antiquarian reference, no reliable method yet exists to locate them. While geophysics may be effective when a target area has been identified such survey is not practicable on a battlefield-wide scale. However, if a mass grave is located then it can inform on a number of issues: in addition to its location and the numbers buried, palaeo-pathological data can illuminate the use and effectiveness of different weapon types, the distribution of troops on the battlefield and may even provide evidence of battlefield surgery.[2]

Investigation of battlefields with well preserved documentary and physical evidence may advance more than the understanding of those particular actions. Comparison of written and archaeological records, complemented by experimental work, may bring advances in the methodology of recording and analysis. It may enable assessment of the effectiveness of particular survey techniques, or reveal archaeological signatures of different types of action, as at Edgehill where recognition of the distributions of bullets fired as case shot from artillery indicates the potential to reconstruct the exact placement of battalions in a battle array. In exceptional conditions, for instance where colluvium or alluvium preserves a battlefield surface, light may be cast on the nature of the original resource, enabling a better understanding of what has been lost elsewhere.[3]

Many battlefield investigations, particularly into early medieval actions, will fall at the first hurdle of identifying the general location of the site. In contrast, for later medieval battles, with the exception of Towton, there are obstacles to our ability to validate hypotheses about specific site locations and the exact placement of deployments and action. This problem has been encountered in the Bosworth survey, in part because of a misunderstanding amongst battlefield archaeologists as to the likely potential of late medieval battle archaeology.

[2] Fiorato *et al*, 2000
[3] Foard, 2008a

Interpretation

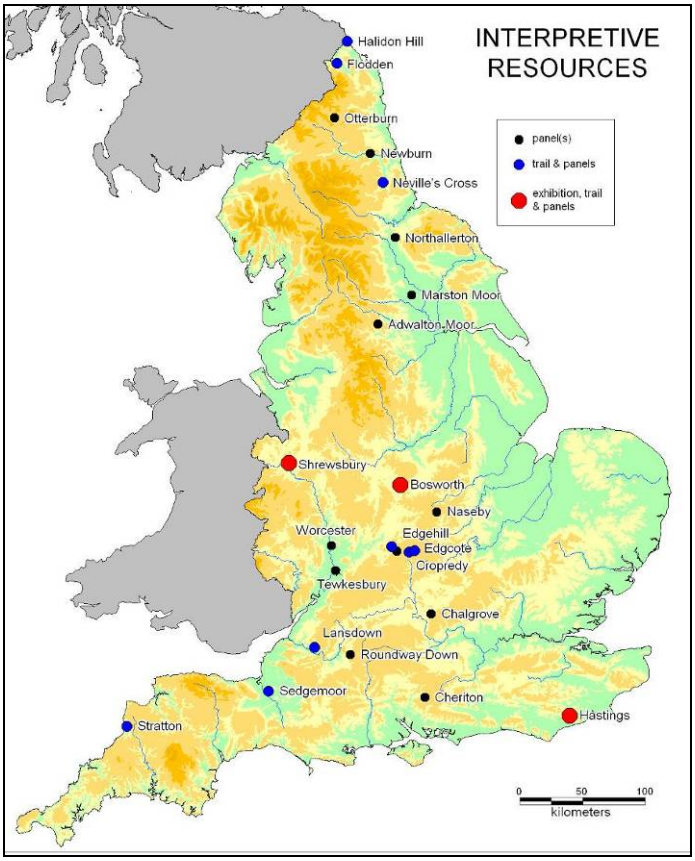

Figure 1: Interpretive resources on battlefields in England

There is substantial public and educational interest in battlefields and other fields of conflict.[4] Bosworth and Hastings, both turning points in English national history, have interpretive facilities. Another, on a smaller scale, has been established by private enterprise at Shrewsbury, and the potential for development of a large scale interpretive facility is being explored at Naseby. Although these facilities are more modest than those found on major battlefields in the USA, with a few exceptions such as Kalkriese and Culloden[5] they are more substantial than those met with elsewhere in Europe.

The extent of interest on the part of particular audiences is reflected in the number of published books and guides. Individual battles tend to be valued by local communities, some of which have established battlefield trails and interpretive panels, as at Flodden and Lansdown.

Effective interpretation requires secure understanding of the battle and battlefield, for which the research focus of this report has direct relevance. It is important to ensure that the battlefield resources, particularly as they relate to terrain, are effectively managed to sustain the interpretation. Without this, conservation may focus on the wrong area of landscape, and so overlook significant survivals from the time of the battle such as fine detail of landform, hedgerow patterns, walls or other features. Such knowledge is the best defence against uninformed land use change. It was, in part, for these reasons that the Heritage Lottery Fund called for the renewed interpretation in the Bosworth Battlefield Visitor Centre to be underpinned by a new study of the battle and battlefield.

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[4] Pollard, 2003

[5] Sked, 1987. For a survey of preservation and interpretation in the USA see http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/abpp/

In addition to the existing and planned interpretive facilities, a further 20 battlefields were found to have one or more interpretive panels on site. Of these, 12 have battlefield trails, the most elaborate being at Hastings (which includes an audio tour), Lansdown and Shrewsbury. At Towton interpretive material is provided in the grounds of the nearby Crooked Billet Pub.

At least two further interpretive schemes have fallen into decay: at Stoke the trail and panels set up in the anniversary year of 1985 have long since disappeared, with the remaining panels now on display in the church. At Tewkesbury at least one decayed and illegible panel can be seen. While the need for continuing maintenance of interpretation schemes is obvious, such cases remind us that the need is not always observed as it has been at Worcester, where vandalized panels were recently replaced.

Commemoration

Monuments, chapels and crosses have been constructed on battlefields at least from the early Middle Ages through to the present – a phenomenon that incidentally demonstrates a continuing interest in England's fields of conflict. Memorialization is important for the management of the historic environment, and is reflected by the number of monuments that are scheduled or listed. Since this theme was not a priority for the present study, such features have only been recorded on an incidental basis. The bibliographic search discussed below provides a crude guide to the perceived cultural importance of fields of conflict; in due course the database would merit systematic enhancement to embrace battlefield memorialization, with an assessment of the presence, number and scale of battlefield monuments and other commemorative associations. The brief listing that follows is restricted to battles, and is not definitive.

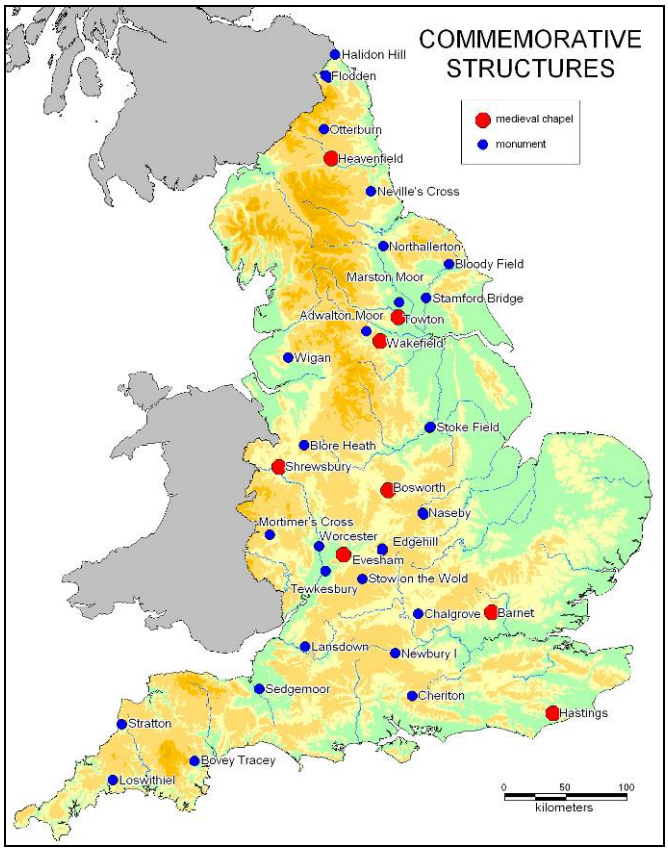

Figure 2: Commemorative structures on English fields of conflict

Most monuments were erected in the 19th and 20th centuries, and in their location thus reflect the prevailing interpretations of the day. The small number of earlier monuments, such as those at Blore Heath and Lansdown, may represent the surviving physical embodiment of a genuine oral tradition that derived from the battle itself. For medieval and especially pre-Conquest battles such monuments may thus be of considerable significance.

Where crosses or chapels are known to have been locationally stable, and (with springs) the association with the battlefield is certain, then they represent one of the strongest indicators as to the vicinity in which an action took place. However, as can be seen at Towton where the chapel lies in the village, more than 1 km (0.62 mile) from the centre of the action, the site need not be on the battlefield itself and must accordingly be treated with care. Indeed, in some cases the association may spurious, as with the so-called battle of Heavenfield, an action dated by Bede (writing almost a century later) in the mid 630s. The chapel there is certainly of medieval origin, but stands not on the site of the battle but where Oswald set up a cross in his camp beforehand. The battlefield itself lies somewhere beside Denisesburn, several miles to the south.

Figure 3: Modern art recollecting 17th-century themes adds interest to the battlefield trail at Lansdown

Fifty-one commemorative features have been identified here, ranging from chapels and monuments to features such as prehistoric standing stones and isolated trees which have become linked with battles in local tradition.

At least nine medieval chapels or religious houses stand upon or were associated with battles. The earliest is to the battle of Ashingdon, but this site is now disputed. The greatest is Battle Abbey, constructed by William I on the site of and in memory of those killed in the battle of Hastings. A collegiate church was constructed on the battlefield at Shrewsbury; known as Battlefield church, it had its own parish; the church survives today though heavily restored. Lesser chapels are documented at Towton, Barnet, Wakefield and probably Evesham. Those at Wakefield and Shrewsbury survive; the others are located with varying degrees of accuracy.

The last battlefield chapel to be projected was meant for Bosworth, but apparently this was never built, and a chantry was established instead in the parish church at Dadlington.[6]

[6] Parry,1993

There are also a number of chapels for which links have been claimed with battles or to kings killed in battle, where the chapel does not stand on the battlefield itself. Examples are the chapel to Edwin near Edwinstowe and that at Heavenfield, discussed above. To them can be added religious houses that were founded in expiation for acts of violence, like the monastery established in the 650s by Oswiu at Gilling, where he had ordered the murder of his rival Oswine.

Also falling into this context is a number of wells associated with medieval battles. There is a well at Evesham, said to be close to where Simon de Montfort fell, which afterwards became a place of pilgrimage and a scene of miracles, where a chapel was subsequently constructed. The earliest of this kind is Oswald's Well, said to lie on or close to the site of the battle of Maserfield (641) where King Oswald of Northumbria was killed. Others are Malcolm's Well at Alnwick and King Richard's well at Bosworth, though the latter seems to lack the religious associations seen elsewhere.

Figure 4: Medieval cross which supposedly marks the location where Lord Audley was killed on the battlefield at Blore Heath

At least seven crosses stand or stood in supposedly significant relationship to English battlefields. Several others have come to be associated with a battle where the battle name derives from the cross, as with Neville's Cross, where presumably the structure was already there at the time of the action.

Most battlefield-related crosses are believed to have been erected as memorials. On Stainmore the stump of a medieval cross, traditionally associated with the violent death of Eric Bloodaxe in 950 or 954, survived into the 20th century but is said to have since been lost in road works. Perhaps more secure is Malcolm's Cross on the battlefield at Alnwick which commemorates King Malcolm's death there in1093. On that site there was also a Malcolm's Well, where a medieval leper hospital was later set up. While it is unclear if the hospital was actually associated with the battlefield, the positioning of leper hospitals on or close to major thoroughfares, to attract alms and prayers, is a phenomenon to which attention has been drawn,[7] and which in turn would fit with a tendency for battle sites to have a close relationship with the geography of communications.

[7] Gilchrist,1995

Most crosses appear to be linked to the deaths of important individuals, as with the Percy Cross on Hedgeley Moor (1464). Probably the most useful is that at Blore Heath (1459) which is said to mark the place where Lord Audley fell. Equally, the cross on the battlefield of Otterburn (1388) provides an important lesson. Before it was moved in the 19th century from alongside the old road, it supposedly marked the place where Douglas died. However, the cross of 1777 may not have had a precursor and thus may not reflect any secure link in local tradition to the event itself. At North Walsham, indeed, there are remains of three medieval crosses associated with the battle of 1381, separated in all by more than 1 km (0.6 mile). The most substantial cross, said to have been erected in the 14th century as a memorial to the battle of Boroughbridge, is an 18ft (5.48m) column comprising four shafts banded together which in 1852 was moved a mile or so to the centre of nearby Aldborough.

In all, 43 battlefield monuments and 11 memorial plaques have been here identified. Of the early monuments three are to individuals: one, already mentioned, is the cross to Audley at Blore Heath; a second is the 17th-century monument on Wigan battlefield that marks the place where the royalist commander Sir Thomas Tyldesley died; and the 18th-century monument which recollects the place where Sir Bevil Grenville fell on Lansdown battlefield in 1643. These early constructions, which have a good chance of representing direct knowledge from the events themselves, appear to be useful indicators of key moments in battle action. In contrast, later monuments, such as that to Colonel John Hampden at Chalgrove or to Falkland at Newbury, lack such a link and often add confusion to the understanding of the events. The best example of this is the obelisk at Naseby which was erected in 1826 on the windmill mound in Naseby, more than a mile from the battlefield. Of these general monuments that commemorate the battle rather than an individual, the earliest may be that erected in the 18th century at Mortimer's Cross. Most belong to the 19th or 20th century.

Alongside them are a number of genuine funerary monuments to individuals who fell in a particular battle and which were erected within living memory. Six have been identified here. Some lie in churches and churchyards close to the battlefield; others are more distant. Hence at Edgehill the monument and effigy to Captain Kingsmill lies in Radway church, for Kingsmill fell in that parish. In contrast the gravestone to Captain Gourdon, who also died at Edgehill, is in Warmington churchyard 3.7 miles (6 km) from the centre of the action, presumably because he was taken back to the village and died there of his wounds. Others are at Stow on the Wold, in Saxton churchyard beside Towton battlefield, the church at Willoughby on the Wolds, and Middlezoy church near Sedgemoor.

Other features that have come to be treated as memorials to battles include prehistoric standing stones, natural erratics, and some trees. Standing stones (already recorded on Armstrong's map of Northumberland in the 18th century) include those at Homildon Hill (1415), at nearby Yeavering (Geteryne, 1415), and the so called (King) James's 'chair' and 'stone' at Flodden. The trees seem most often to be oaks, such as the Battle Oak at Mortimer's Cross, Wardington Oak at Cropredy and Charles's Oak at Naseby. While most are now lost they have occasionally been replaced by memorial stones, as with the Burrand Bush Stone on Stoke Field.[8] In most cases the association is probably spurious, as with the tradition of Charles's Oak in Sibbertoft, though it may be more than coincidence that this tree stood on an ancient enclosure boundary in an area that was otherwise extensive open field in 1645 and is close to a bullet scatter indicating an intense fire-fight.

[8] Barrett, 1896, 149