

3. DEFINING THE RESOURCE

While this project has taken a cross-disciplinary approach to sources for fields of conflict, its primary brief has been for physical evidence for terrain and battle, because this is where management action is called for. The report aims to

- define the character of the resource, its condition and research potential
- review and where practicable refine the methodology for investigation
- identify threats faced and suggest management responses

A rapid assessment has been undertaken to grade the relative potential of individual sites. This requires a record of the location, scale and character of all battlefields. The project therefore began by enhancing the Battlefield Trust's *UK Fields of Conflict* database (UKFoC). This data set consists of two GIS tables in *MapInfo* and one bibliographic file in *Endnote*: UK Fields of Conflict; UKFoC Feature; UK Battlefields bibliography (<http://www.battlefieldstrust.com/resource-centre/battlefieldsuk/index.asp>). The detail for each is provided in a user manual. The UKFoC database is the primary dataset and includes key facts about each site. The features data set includes burials and memorials associated with a particular battle and linked to the main database by the action name and the UKFoC number. The association can be direct, as in the case of mass graves; or secondary, as in the case of monuments and memorials; or by assimilation, as where pre-battle or natural features (e.g. standing stones or trees) have become associated with the battle over time. Bibliographic references are not normally given in the database but all references to a named battle that have been located in the assessment are listed in the bibliographic database, with the relevant battle name recorded in the Notes field for the relevant secondary work.

The enhanced database does not claim to be comprehensive, but it does seek to include all located battles as well as iconic lesser actions. A large number of lesser actions will not have been identified. In defining fields of conflict the younger boundary has been set at the end of the 18th century. All English land battles are thus included, the last being Sedgemoor in 1685; all land skirmishes of later date could also be incorporated, the last genuinely military land action being in 1778 during the American War of Independence when American troops landed in Whitehaven. The database excludes actions of the Industrial era, and all naval or aerial action since, because of its different character.

Enhancement was undertaken from a wide range of secondary published sources. Information so gained was then supplemented with data recorded on the NMR online (Pastscape), from all but one of England's HERs (only York did not supply data) and on ADS. Each site was then classified according to type of action, as far as practicable distinguishing between battles, skirmishes, sieges and episodes of civil unrest.

An online search was undertaken on the finds database of the Portable Antiquities Scheme for potential battle-related artefacts such as lead bullets and roundshot, which might point to sites not already entered on the database. No such sites were identified.

For a rough-and-ready perspective on perceived cultural importance, citations from a selection of 'all period' secondary sources were analysed to establish how many such sources listed each battle (Appendix I).¹ Each battle was scored on the database (under bibliographic quantity) according to the number of these books in which it appeared. The bibliographic score broadly reflects the combination of perceived importance of the action together with the degree of certainty of location, and the quality of documentation and current understanding. With this said, some battles earn a high rating simply because of their historical reputation or legendary status. Mount Badon (c. AD 500) is an example. Likewise, some other battles, like Sedgemoor, have a high score despite being of smaller scale or arguably of lower military importance.

England's fields of conflict belong within a wider tradition of European warfare and should ideally be assessed within that context. There are also regional variations across Europe, as with the English dependence on the longbow as a battle-winning weapon in 14th- and 15th-century campaigns in Ireland, Scotland and France. The relative importance of some English battlefields – in terms of their survival and archaeological potential coupled with the written record – may well be viewed differently when they are placed in a European context. However, until a comparable European database is established such a revaluation will not be practicable. Only in Scotland are there comparable data to those developed here for England.

A small number of individual battlefields outside England was examined in the present project for comparative purposes, including Kalkriese (AD9) in Germany, Oudenaarde (1708) in Belgium and several US sites from the mid 16th and mid 19th centuries.

¹ The sources available differed from those used for Scotland; hence, this assessment does not make for direct comparison between battles in the two countries.

A second stage of enhancement was undertaken on 88 actions that were either Registered, or classified as battles or possible battles, and which dated between 1066 and 1685 and are thus potentially locatable (see below). Each of the 88 battles was searched by name in three online bibliographic databases: COPAC (the academic and national library index), RHist (Royal Historical Society bibliography) and BIAB (British and Irish Bibliography). The relevant entries were then added to the UKFoC bibliography indicating the battle(s) covered. This data set is broadly comparable between English and Scottish battles enabling comparison between the two.

What could not be done as part of this enhancement was systematically to search local historical and archaeological journals, volumes of county philosophical and record societies, society monographs and cognate sources that have proliferated since the 1840s. However, to gain a sense of what such a search might reveal, and also as a control on the effectiveness of enhancement at a national level, two sample areas were examined in such detail. The areas searched were historical administrative units, because most local history literature was and is organised by historic county. One was Cumberland and Westmorland (essentially modern Cumbria), selected as an example of a border region where numerous raids and other lesser actions were to be expected over a long period. The other was the historical West Riding of Yorkshire, which lying as it does well away from a land border during the last millennium was likely to be more representative of England's experience of warfare.

The assessment demonstrated that while more intensive enhancement is unlikely to recover additional battles, it is likely to throw up a significant number of additional sieges and skirmishes. In border regions it may also be expected to add a large number of raids.

While the border region had many more raids, Yorkshire WR had a greater number of lesser actions from the Civil War and Wars of the Roses. However, these differences were tempered by the realisation that inter-county variations in the quantity and range of secondary works will themselves influence the number of new actions revealed. Given the current focus on battles, the decision to concentrate bibliographic searching at the national level thus appears not to have missed significant quantities of information, although should work expand to deal with sieges and lesser actions then local sources should be included. The results of the sampling are discussed in Appendix X.

Using the second stage of bibliographic enhancement, a second assessment was made of the number of bibliographic entries for the 88 battles, to provide a

revised indication of perceived cultural importance. It would be possible, following systematic enhancement of the database for battlefield memorialisation, to provide a parallel assessment of perceived cultural importance through the presence, number and scale of battlefield monuments and commemorative associations. Initial assessment of the latter showed a high degree of correlation with the ordering based on bibliographic score, but the incompleteness of memorialisation data render the analysis of limited value.

The sites' importance and potential were also graded by professional judgement based on quality of sources, locational accuracy, number and survival of associated features, the scale of event and its likely military and political importance.

All 88 battlefields were then assessed (where the sites were sufficiently well understood) with reference to modern Ordnance Survey Explorer mapping and, in January 2008, the vertical aerial photography available on Microsoft Virtual Earth and Google Maps, to assess

- current land use
- state of development
- survival of ridge and furrow and other earthwork features

Each battlefield has also been assessed for land use in the 1930s from Land Utilisation Survey and its underlying geological formations from the BGS 1:10000 scale mapping. For those later medieval battlefields where accuracy of location and extent of action were in doubt, a rudimentary assessment has been made based on a search around the centre point grid reference. In practice a number of the intended data sets, such as Listed Buildings and SAMs, were not used in the assessment, because in initial review they produced little in the way of significant associations. Other attributes required a degree of investigation too detailed to be consistently applicable for battles from 1066 onwards, or would have been too demanding in terms of investigation into primary sources. This included whether the troops were deployed in battle array, and the documentary potential for both military history and terrain.

The scoring yielded a list in which only a handful of surviving sites other than Registered battlefields lay within the upper levels. Given the existence of detailed reports produced to inform the Battlefields Register in 1995, it was therefore unproductive to prepare detailed reports on each action. However, once the database enhancement and initial assessment were completed it became clear that England lacks any reasoned statement as to the character of its battle archaeology in

any period. Without such a statement, the assessment of condition and potential of sites would be impossible.

It also became clear that no battlefield before 1066 is securely located. This is why the second stage enhancement and subsequent attention has concentrated on the later medieval and early modern periods to a greater extent than was intended at the start.

Some themes and sites have been singled out for closer attention than others because they exemplify potentials and problems that are relevant to the furtherance of methodology and thus better management. Thus the transitional period from 1450 to 1600 has been taken to explore the full range of site types from battles of international significance down to border raids and events of civil unrest. For lesser actions, the example of Dussindale has been taken. For sieges the Civil War data set is explored, both generally and through several specific examples.

Specific assessment

Of the 100 actions for which it was possible to enter onto the database the approximate numbers engaged, all those with 2000 or less engaged were listed as skirmishes, except for Lincoln II. These included two Registered battlefields which the Register reports themselves show were little more than skirmishes (Chalgrove and Powick).

Classificatory problems at the lower end of the scale are at their clearest when dealing with early modern battlefields. For example, the action at Middlewich has small numbers and is listed here as a skirmish, but is exceptional in that it has left a surviving contemporary battle plan, which indicates that the troops were organised in battle array not in loose order.² Since there were already 88 actions classed as battles after 1066 it was impractical to address such problems or opportunities within this project. It is suggested that the issue of battle-skirmish boundary be re-visited when a representative sample of lesser actions has been selected for investigation and conservation. The first priority here has been to ensure that the major actions are adequately understood and management requirements identified.

The second stage of assessment was thus restricted to open actions from the later Middle Ages onwards which are generally considered to be battles or for which the numbers engaged were above 2000. Of the 88 battles there were 25, all later medieval, where data for the numbers for the troops engaged were insufficient.

² Liddiard and McGuicken, 2007

The list has also been ordered by numbers engaged (Appendix I.iii). They include 22 actions in which the numbers engaged lay between 2,500 and 5,000, for which archaeological problems are substantial; four of these were Registered.

The graded lists presented in Appendix I indicate whether an action is Registered or not, because this is an important factor in determining whether a field of conflict is currently taken to be of national importance and whether effective management is attempted. It is therefore important that the consistency of inclusion of consideration and informed exclusion, on grounds of condition and adequacy of locational information, is considered. Where not included then the potential of the site should be recorded on HER so that appropriate management measures are taken when necessary. The criteria used for the definition of the Register in 1995 still remain valid, but subsequent research, particularly with regard terrain and to battle archaeology now demands that both the criteria for inclusion and for the extent of the Register boundaries are reviewed. The following discussion provides a partial focus for this.

Both scoring methods demonstrate that few battlefields in the higher levels were excluded from the Register; of those that were, most were left out either because information on their location was inadequate or because the sites were largely destroyed.

If we review the sites with numbers from the largest downward, a small number of exclusions are not accounted for by the published Register documentation. In assessing their importance and potential account has been taken of the rarity of sites for the period of the encounter, and special issues such as the introduction of new weapons and degree of archaeological potential, thus building upon the criteria defined in the Register. A wide range of issues has arisen from this assessment; to illustrate them, a number of unregistered cases is briefly discussed here.

Lostwithiel (Cornwall, 1644) is the clearest example, and requires urgent consideration. At 25,000 and involving the destruction of the main parliamentarian field army, with massive political repercussions that were partly responsible for the creation of the New Model Army and the rise of Cromwell to political power, this was a considerable event. For an English battle it was also unusual, being a complex action spread over several days in a largely enclosed landscape and involving a number of distinct and substantial actions. A number of the locations are well preserved and are likely to have good surviving archaeology and terrain. Definition of a register area would be difficult, but that is not a reason to exclude it. The need is for a comprehensive definition of the whole landscape with its various component

actions so that parts can be addressed by inclusion in the Register and other parts dealt with as appropriate.

Blackheath (Kent, 1497) involved perhaps as many as 20,000 combatants, but the Cornish rebels were easily defeated. The action is adequately understood but the main clash appears to have taken place at the crossing at Deptford bridge. Despite extensive open ground on Blackheath itself, the greater part of the battlefield is thus wholly built over and so, on present evidence, the site can be dismissed as not significant for management purposes.

Turnham Green (Middlesex, 1642) and **Ludford (Shropshire, 1459)** are both excluded as they involved no significant action, while **Penrith (Cumbria, 1715)**, despite the large numbers said to be present, was but a minor engagement of Scottish forces by local militias. The location of the battlefield at **Hilton (Durham, 1644)** is disputed – a problem which might well be resolved by a review of the primary sources in the context of a new terrain reconstruction, but this does not seem justified as, on present evidence, almost all of both alternative areas appear to be built up. Similarly almost the whole area of **Preston I (Lancashire, 1648)**, another complex action with several widely spread component actions, appears to be largely built over.

Winwick Pass (Lancashire, 1648), although only a subsidiary action to the major battle in and around Preston the day before, is of a scale greater than many Registered battlefields. The site is almost completely undeveloped, and apart from small scale mineral extraction most of it seems to be intact. Thus the site should be understandable and have a high research potential as the battle archaeology is likely to be reasonably intact. In addition the church, upon which the royalist forces were driven back, also shows some bullet impact scars.³ The site has a high priority for assessment for inclusion in the Register.

Dussindale (Norfolk, 1549), discussed in chapter 5, is from the critical period of transition in technology of war. A significant part of the potential site is undeveloped. Exact numbers are uncertain but lay somewhere between 5,000 and 10,000. The remaining area is under development threat and requires urgent investigation.

Maidstone (Kent, 1648) was a largely urban fight, with the site wholly built up today and so unlikely to be relevant for management.

Piper Dene (Northumberland, 1435) was one of the larger engagements to develop out of a border raid. The numbers engaged were high, but it is little

³ Information from Michael Rayner

discussed in secondary works. The landscape is intact and this might be one of a series of actions that should be taken into account in investigation of warfare in the borders, lying as it does in close proximity to a whole series of battlefield, siege, skirmish and probably also raid sites from the 11th to the 16th centuries. This site has a high priority for detailed assessment.

Selby (Yorkshire, 1644) was partly fought in an urban area; the whole site now appears to have been built over so there is no need to pursue it.

Alton (Hampshire, 1644) was almost purely a street fight. As such little seems likely to remain with the exception of bullet impact scars on the church, and scatters of bullets that presumably accompany them in the churchyard. Similar evidence may exist elsewhere nearby if other buildings of the period survive.

Case studies and supporting analysis

In a final phase of enhancement, to isolate the best examples for case study, each of the English Heritage battlefield files, including those for the Battle Sites and other sites assessed for the Register but not finally registered, was consulted. Each of the battlefields on the primary list was visited and its condition and potential considered on the ground in the light of the information presented in the relevant Battlefields Register report.

Battlefields on the primary list (Appendix I) have undergone a basic documentary search for historic maps relevant to the reconstruction of the historic terrain of the battlefield. The online catalogues of the British Library, The National Archives and, for all other archives, the A2A catalogue have been consulted. In addition, for selected battlefields a search has been made of the indexes of the relevant County Record Offices. Where significant evidence was forthcoming then new mapping was undertaken to reconstruct relevant historic landscape detail.

All RAF verticals of the 1940s and oblique photography in National Monuments Record have been searched for each battlefield on the primary list. This has enabled an assessment of the survival of earthwork evidence for the historic terrain. The latter focused upon ridge and furrow but also included abandoned drainage systems and other features such as roads and enclosed field systems. The assessment of these data, together with the results of case studies on Bosworth, Edgehill, Sedgemoor and Towton, led to a decision not to conduct new aerial survey, as this was not considered likely to be sufficiently productive of useful new data. However, in several cases such as Lansdown a special potential that may justify future work was identified.

To assist in the quantification of threats, a circular was sent to all Finds Liaison Officers requesting advice on any relevant metal detecting rallies held on battlefields.

Detailed case studies included Sedgemoor, Naseby, Marston Moor, Braddock Down, Edgehill, Bosworth, Towton, Fulford, Heavenfield and the Boudicca battle. Hastings was also considered, but the large quantity of unpublished archaeological reports and data rendered anything beyond a basic assessment of the topography impractical within the current project.

A small number of other types of action has been examined. These included Civil War sieges at Beeston Castle, Sandal Castle, Wareham, Morton Corbet, and Grafton Regis. Prehistoric sites that are briefly reviewed include Crickley Hill, and Danebury.

The big case studies have been subject to the most intensive investigation to explore particular aspects of the resource. Where historic terrain was important then primary written sources, including surveys, terriers and enclosure awards, have been sought. The relevant Record Offices were visited and copies obtained of all significant historic maps and other terrain-related documents. Where battle archaeology was a central theme then the HER was consulted, as was the Portable Antiquities database.