



BOROUGHBRIDGE BATTLE AND CAMPAIGN

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THE CAMPAIGN

War: Medieval:

Campaign: Boroughbridge

Dates: 1322

Summary

Background

Edward I's wars for control of both Wales and Scotland had depleted the treasury and when he died, in 1307, his campaign of conquest in Scotland was still not complete. The debts undermined Edward II's ability to prosecute the war as his father had wished. But neither was the new king an effective military commander and when he did finally campaign in Scotland he suffered disastrous defeats, most notably at Bannockburn (Scotland, 1314). But this was just one aspect of his failings as king. Whereas his father had the strength of character to overawe the nobility, Edward II did not. His incompetent and corrupt rule, complicated by his promotion of his male lovers, brought the kingdom close to anarchy.

His first favourite, Piers Gaveston, had even been appointed regent during Edward's absence in France, and was able to wield such power that he caused major conflict with the barons. Attempts to banish Gaveston led to armed conflict and in 1311 he was captured at Scarborough castle and subsequently executed under the orders of the Earl of Lancaster and his allies. Bad blood between Edward and Lancaster then hung over English politics for a decade, with Lancaster even failing to assist the king when Edward resumed the Scottish war.

Defeat at Bannockburn in 1314 was followed by Scottish raids deep into the north of England. This was also a time of great famines and mass starvation, further complicating Edward's situation. In an attempt to restore effective government, in 1316 the barons forced the king to accept a council, led by Lancaster, which would govern the kingdom. But Lancaster proved just as incapable and made as many enemies as Edward, while the conflict with Scotland continued in the same disastrous fashion. In 1318 the Scots captured Berwick and the attempt to recover it in 1319 had to be abandoned due to the defeat at Myton. Edward had also promoted a new favourite, Hugh le Despenser the younger, who was already an enemy of Lancaster. He also rapidly alienated many of the other barons, including the Earl of Hereford and Sir Roger de Mortimer, who felt their estates in the Welsh Marches were threatened by the grants to Despenser.

Campaign

[Map](#)

When Despensers was banished by parliament, in 1321, Edward attempted to regain the initiative, plunging the kingdom into civil war. Thanks to the unpopularity of the Earl of Lancaster and the lack of effective coordination within the baronial opposition, Edward was able to separately tackle his opponents. In the Welsh Marches, where opposition was led by the Mortimers, he besieged the castles held against him. The Mortimers and their allies surrendered before Lancaster and his followers in the north were in arms. This left the king free to tackle the northern lords. The rebels had assembled at Doncaster and sent forces to besiege the royal castle at Tickhill, while Lancaster led an army south to challenge the king in the field.

The two armies faced each other at Burton on Trent. Lancaster's forces held the bridge there for three days but were finally outflanked when the royal forces crossed a ford further along the river. Lancaster fired the town and marched out, intending to meet the king in battle, but when he realised how heavily he was outnumbered he retreated. Lancaster's forces marched north via Tutbury and Pontefract castles, pursued by a detachment of the royal army, under the Earls of Surrey and Kent. With Lancaster in retreat the rebel castles of Kenilworth and Tutbury surrendered as did the 500 troops under Robert de Holland who had been marching to join the Earl.

The rebels' situation was now desperate. But whereas Lancaster wished to hold out in Pontefract, he was persuaded to march north, on the Great North Road, intending for the castle at Dunstanburgh (Northumberland), where there was the potential for Scottish assistance. But royal forces had already been raised in the North. In mid February Sir Andrew de Harcla, warden of Carlisle and the Western Marches, had been ordered by the king to assemble the knights and men at arms of Cumberland and Westmorland. Harcla was now marching south to join the king, having heard of Lancaster's retreat from Burton on Trent. He is likely to have taken the major road cross the Pennines into Yorkshire first mapped in c.1350, via Penrith and Brough, which will have brought him down to Ripon before joining the Great North Road at Boroughbridge, with its important crossing over the River Ure.¹

Consequences

The defeat of the rebel forces at Boroughbridge was important because it finally dealt with the long standing conflict between the Earl of Lancaster and the king. The execution of Lancaster and many other of the rebel leaders cleared away Edward's main opponents. But, rather than this resolving the problems of the reign, the king simply created more enemies. He reneged on all the limitations on royal power that the barons had forced Edward to agree to over the preceding years. He also continued to promote Despensers,

¹ This route is recorded on the Gough map. Hindle Brian, *Medieval roads*, Aylesbury, Shire, 1982. The detailed course of the road on the east side of the Pennines, taking it through Ripon was probably largely that shown by Ogilby in 1675. Ogilby, *Britannia, vol.I : or, An illustration of ye kingdom of England and dominion of Wales, by a geographical & historical description of the principal roads*, (London, A. Duckham, 1939, plate 95.

further alienating the remaining nobility. The Scottish war continued to go badly, with defeats at Myton (Yorkshire, 1322) and then almost capturing the king himself at Byland Abbey (Yorkshire, 1322). These raids saw the Scots plundering at least as far south as York in the east and Lancaster in the west.

While Edward's incompetent rule became increasingly unpopular, the Earl of Lancaster's tomb became a place of pilgrimage and supposedly of miracles. Finally in 1326 Edward's queen, Isabella, and her lover, Roger Mortimer, led an invasion from France. The king's support melted away, Despenser was captured and executed and Edward forced to abdicate in favour of his son.

Further reading

Clark, *Battlefield Walks : North*, 1995 and Warner, *British Battlefields: The Definitive Guide to Warfare in England and Scotland*, 2002, provide a useful if brief context within which to place the Boroughbridge campaign. The campaign is also discussed, in somewhat typical 19th century style, in Leadman, *Battles fought in Yorkshire*, 1891.

THE BATTLE

SUMMARY

The battle of Boroughbridge saw the total defeat of the rebel forces under the Earl of Lancaster. It was a small but dramatic battle, or at least appears so thanks in part to the graphic detail provided in the contemporary accounts. It was achieved by a royal commander who took a strong position, holding a major river crossing, where the rebels had no alternative but to fight for control. He also used a very effective combination of tactics against the heavily armoured rebel force: the defensive wall of pikes copied from the Scots and the offensive arrowstorm provided by his archers, foreshadowing the dramatic success achieved some years later against the French at Crecy.

The action was fought for control of a narrow bridge and a nearby ford by which the Great North Road crossed the River Ure. Today the battlefield has been largely engulfed by the town, but in 1322 Boroughbridge had probably not yet extended as far north as the bridge. The land on either side of the river will have been floodplain meadow. But, while the bridge was probably very close to its present site, it is uncertain exactly where the ford lay, making it difficult to appreciate exactly how all the forces were deployed and where they fought.

The site is easily explored on foot from a car park within the town. Despite urban expansion, the battlefield can still be well appreciated on the ground, because it was a fight across the river and there is somewhat more open ground than might at first appear.

[National location map](#)

KEY FACTS

Name: **Boroughbridge**
Type: **Pitched battle**
Campaign: **Boroughbridge**
War period: **Medieval**
Outcome: **Royal victory**

Country: **England**
County: **North Yorkshire**
Location: **Approximate**
Terrain: **Open field meadow / Urban**

Date: **16th March 1322**
Start: **probably late in the day**
Duration: **probably fairly short**

Armies: **Royal forces under Sir Andrew de Harcla; rebels under Earls of Lancaster & Hereford.**

Numbers: **Royal: circa 4000; Rebels: 700 knights and men at arms with uncertain number of followers.**

Losses: **uncertain**

Grid Reference: **SE 397670**
OS Landranger map: **99**
OS Explorer map: **299 (Boroughbridge & Ripon)**

The Armies

Royal

The royal forces were under the command of Sir Andrew de Harcla, warden of Carlisle and the Western Marches. They were drawn largely from Cumberland and Westmorland and, according to one account, numbered 4000.² It is clear from the various accounts of the battle that they comprised a mix of knights, men at arms, pikemen and archers, but of the 214 knights and nobles listed as engaged in the battle it would appear that just 76 were on the royal side.³

² Rothwell, *English historical documents, 1189-1327*, London, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1975, 275-6. Clark suggests Harcla was outnumbered but gives no reference for this comment. Clark, *Battlefield Walks : North*, 1995.

³ The full list of the 214 knights is printed in Palgrave and Great Britain Record, *The Parliamentary writs and writs of military summons : together with the records and muniments relating to the suit and service due and performed to the King's high court of Parliament and the councils of the realm, or affording*

Rebel

The rebel forces, under the Earl of Lancaster, may have comprised as many as 3000 troops while at Burton on Trent, but some may have deserted before the army reached Boroughbridge.⁴ It does therefore seem likely that the rebels were outnumbered, especially as Lancaster is said to have been greatly concerned by the numbers that Harcla had with him. However the rebel force appears to have been far stronger in heavily armoured troops. Some 700 knights and men at arms being mentioned in one account while another source lists 138 barons and knights, by name, as fighting against the king at the battle, including important figures such as the Earl of Hereford.⁵ The overall size of Lancaster's force will certainly have been much greater than 700, for these will have been accompanied by a significant number of followers.⁶

Losses

There is no record of the numbers killed in the battle, although the accounts do name several individuals on the rebel side who died in the action, most notable the Earl of Hereford.

The Story of the Battle

Manoeuvres

By the night of the 15th March 1318 the royal forces under Sir Andrew de Harcla had reached Ripon. Importantly, he was far better informed of the rebel army's movements than they were of his. While at Ripon he received news from a scout or 'spy' that the Earl of Lancaster's forces were on the march along the Great North Road and could be expected to reach Boroughbridge the next day. So that night Harcla marched the six miles to Boroughbridge, where the road crossed the River Ure. If he could reach and take the bridge before Lancaster arrived then he would be in a very strong tactical position. With his archers and pikemen he would be able to hold a determined charge by Lancaster's forces which, although probably outnumbered, were far stronger in heavily armoured knights and men at arms. In open country such an advantage could more than outweigh any superiority Harcla had in overall numbers but in an opposed river crossing, whether by bridge or by ford, this advantage would be removed.

evidence of attendance given at Parliament and councils, [London, s.n.], 1827, vol.2, pt.2, 194-201, nos.171-191 in appendix; quoted by Leadman, *Battles fought in Yorkshire*, 1891, 59. Leadman lists the 138 who fought for the king, implying that the remaining 76 fought for Harcla.

⁴ Unreferenced statement in Guest and Guest, *British Battles*, 1996, 36.

⁵ A full list of the 138 is provided by Leadman, *Battles fought in Yorkshire*, 1891, 59-60.

⁶ Brie, *The Brut : The chronicles of England*, 1906, 217-20.

Apparently unaware of the threat from the north, or at least its proximity, Lancaster reached Boroughbridge on the 16th March. Indeed so poor was the Earl's scouting that it was only once they had begun to take quarters in the town that the rebels discovered Harcla already held the bridge. Even today the crossings of the Ure are few and far between, but in the 14th century there was no real alternative for a major force than to use the crossing at Boroughbridge. With the army of the Earls of Surrey and Kent in close pursuit, retreat was not an option.

First of all Lancaster sought to negotiate with the commander of the royal forces. But, even though Harcla owed his status as a knight to Lancaster, he would not change sides. Though next year he would be executed as a traitor, as a scapegoat for the failure in the campaign against the Scots, at this point Harcla must have realised that there was little future in the rebel cause. Lancaster's army was far outnumbered by the various royal forces that were in the field. There was now no alternative for the rebels but to fight for control of the bridge, or they would be caught between the two forces and would then have no hope of success.

Deployment

Harcla had sent the horses to the rear and his knights and pikemen were deployed on foot to hold the north part of the bridge. One source claims that Harcla broke the wooden bridge. This would have been a logical action, especially if their primary objective was defensive - to stop Lancaster crossing the river while waiting for the main royal army to arrive from the south. Other pikemen and archers were placed at the ford.⁷ The main problem in interpreting the deployments is the fact that none of the contemporary accounts specify how close to or on what side of the bridge this other crossing was.

The pikemen were deployed in '*schiltron, after the Scottish fashion*', that is in the form of a shield. The Cumbrian troops will have been very familiar with this tactic from their action against the Scots, which the latter had proven was a very effective infantry tactic to hold a cavalry attack, and heavily armoured cavalry was the rebel army's great strength. Soldiers thus deployed in schiltron, like the more famous late medieval Swiss and German pike, seem to have been the precursor of the well disciplined and close order formations of pikemen typical of 16th and 17th century infantry action across Europe.

The use of pikemen in schiltron was an effective defensive answer to cavalry and, according to the Lanercost account, appears to have been the main or first body defending each crossing. However Harcla was also able to deploy the most effective of offensive medieval weapons against cavalry, the longbow. Within a few years it would show its devastating effectiveness in halting cavalry in the famous battle against the

⁷ If the Roman crossing was indeed the location of the ford (see below) then the English Heritage report shows the deployment in the wrong location as the road crossed the river some 200m east of the position they show the deployment at the ford.

French at Crecy, but at Boroughbridge, if on a smaller scale, it was used with the same effect.

The rebel forces left the town in two columns to engage Harcla. One, comprising knights and men at arms under the command of the Earl of Hereford, was to advance on foot with a force to take the bridge, which was too narrow for a mounted attack in battle array. The other, under Lancaster himself, was to mount a cavalry attack on the ford. Only one source implies that both sides deployed archers, while none of the descriptions of the action suggests involvement of a significant number of archers on the rebel side.

The Action

Given that Lancaster's troops had reached Boroughbridge to take up quarters for the night, implies it was late in the day on Tuesday 16th March that the action began.

Harcla had no reason to take the initiative and attack across the bridge or ford, for an opposed crossing would be a difficult and costly assault. All Harcla had to do was to hold his ground and wait for the pursuing royal forces to reach the town. In contrast Lancaster was in a dangerous situation which required desperate measures. He had no choice, negotiations having failed, but to attack and try to force the crossing.

Hereford's with his standard bearer and a few other knights charged across the bridge against the pike, in advance of the rest of his force. Hereford was almost immediately killed by the pikemen. Also killed in the assault were Hereford's standard bearer and two other knights, while the rest were driven back, many of them wounded, including Sir Roger de Clifford who had been seriously injured by both pike and arrow.

One source claims that a single pikeman crept beneath the bridge and thrust his spear upward between the timbers beneath the Earl's armour and killed him. However, as Clark suggests, this may be an elaboration based on the events of the battle of Stamford Bridge (Yorkshire, 1066). This is certainly true of the description of his assailant as a Welshman, something which is purely drawn from local tradition.⁸

The attack across the ford, presumably times to coincide with that across the bridge, fared little better. The river at Boroughbridge is now about 40 metres wide and may have been very little wider in the 14th century. As a result of the heavy rate of fire laid down by Harcla's archers from the northern bank, Lancaster's first cavalry attack, which must have had to cross open meadow ground, did not even reach the waters edge before being forced to retreat. One account suggests that the archers were so effective that the cavalry could not attempt another assault, thus throwing the whole battle array into disorder and effectively ending the action.

⁸ Clark, *Battlefield Walks : North*, 1995. Barrett Charles Raymond and Traill Henry, *Battles and Battlefields in England*, London, Innes & Co., 1896, 64.

After what seems to have been a very short battle, Lancaster negotiated a truce with Harcla to allow his troops to retire into the town for the night, either to surrender or to give battle once more in the morning. Harcla's forces remained deployed at the crossings for the rest of the day and night in case of a surprise attack.

Capture

Harcla's agreement to a truce, rather than taking the initiative and attacking, has been suggested as being due to his sympathy with Lancaster's cause. He is seen as giving Lancaster and his supporters the opportunity to slip away in the night and that it was only the arrival of Ward's troops that forced him to enter the town to take the rebels by force.⁹ However his actions are perhaps more likely to have resulted from a wish not to expose his forces to unnecessary danger, and possible defeat, in an opposed assault on the river crossings.

During the night the High Sheriff of Yorkshire, Sir Simon de Ward, from Givendale which is four miles upstream from Boroughbridge,¹⁰ joined Harcla with reinforcements. Very early the next day, the 17th, Harcla entered Boroughbridge, supported by Ward, and called on Lancaster to surrender. There seems to have been no question of organised resistance, because many of the rebel troops had fled during the night. But Lancaster would not surrender, instead taking refuge in Boroughbridge chapel. But Harcla's men rushed in and took Lancaster prisoner, also capturing his remaining supporters wherever they were founding the town. Though some tried to escape disguised in peasants' clothes, it is claimed that none of the important figures amongst the rebels managed to escape. That same day Lancaster was sent by water to York, the other prisoners by road.¹¹ The king then summoned Pontefract castle which, at the news of their lord's capture, surrendered. Lancaster was brought to the king there, and on the 22nd March was executed on a hill outside the town. He was then buried in the priory church in Pontefract, where a coffin suggested as being his was found in 1828.¹² Some 30 of his followers were also subsequently executed.¹³

Assessment

Although a relatively small action, the battle of Boroughbridge is significant for its comprehensive destruction of the rebel force and subsequent execution of many of the leading figures opposing Edward II.

⁹ Clark, *Battlefield Walks : North*, 1995.

¹⁰ Leadman, *Battles fought in Yorkshire*, 1891, 45 n.5.

¹¹ Leadman gives a list of knights who fought for the Earl of Lancaster at Boroughbridge. Writs and memoranda relating to the battle of Boroughbridge to the sherrif of Northampton. Printed in Parl. Writs 1830, vol.II pt.ii, 194-201, nos.171-191. Quoted by Leadman, p.59-60. The Office of St Thomas of Lancaster – Wright's 'Political Songs of England ...', Camden Society vol.vi 1840, 268-272. – in Latin in Leadman p.61-2.

¹² Leadman, *Battles fought in Yorkshire*, 1891, 49, n.8, quoting

¹³ A list of some of the names is given by Leadman, *Battles fought in Yorkshire*, 1891, 51.

It has also been suggested that the battle was the first example in the 14th century of knights and men at arms dismounting and fighting on foot, as they were to do at Halidon Hill (Northumberland, 1333) and Crecy (France, 1346).¹⁴ However too much should not perhaps be made of this because of the special circumstances of the crossing of a narrow bridge, while the action across the ford was by mounted cavalry. Perhaps more significant and relevant as a precursor to Crecy is the effective use made by Harcla of the longbow against heavily armoured knights and men at arms. Yet even this is presaged by the action two centuries earlier at Northallerton (North Yorkshire, 1138) where, moreover, the men at arms had also dismounted to fight on foot.

Further Reading

Secondary works

Boroughbridge, because such a small action, is omitted by many of the books on British battles. There are however two detailed and reasonably well referenced discussions. That from the late 19th century by Leadman is still the most detailed account of the battle, including references, which also includes a great deal of ancillary information about the context and consequences of the battle. The most important discussion is however that in the unpublished English Heritage battlefield report. The fairly extensive discussion in Barrett is wholly unreferenced but appears to be drawn almost solely from Leadman. The modern works by Clark and by Warner are fairly extensive and readable accounts, but neither are referenced. The Getmapping volume provides an excellent modern aerial view of the battlefield, but one that does not extend far enough eastward to encompass the suggested site of the ford.

- Barrett Charles Raymond and Traill Henry, *Battles and Battlefields in England*, London, Innes & Co., 1896 58-67
- Clark, *Battlefield Walks : North*, 1995 25-36
- English Heritage, *Register of Historic Battlefields*, London, English Heritage, 1995-
- English Heritage, *Battlefield Report: Boroughbridge 1322*, English Heritage, 1995
- Getmapping, *British Battles: Amazing Views*, 2002 34-35

¹⁴ Tout, *The Tactics of the Battles of Boroughbridge and Morlaix*, 1904, quoted by English Heritage, *Battlefield Report: Boroughbridge 1322*, English Heritage, 1995, 6.

- Green, *Guide to the battlefields of Britain and Ireland*, London, Constable, 1973 62-65
- Guest and Guest, *British Battles*, 1996 36-37.
- Kinross, *Discovering battlefields of England*, Princes Risborough, Shire, 1989 23
- Leadman, *Battles fought in Yorkshire*, 1891 32-63
- Marix Evans, *The Military Heritage of Britain & Ireland*, 1998 153
- Warner, *British Battlefields: The Definitive Guide to Warfare in England and Scotland*, 2002 182-189

Other works which are or may be relevant for the battle or the historic terrain but which have not been consulted:

- Anon, *The Stranger's Guide; being a concise history and description of Boroughbridge, the Devil's Arrows, and the Roman antiquities, at Aldborough. [With plates.]*, Boroughbridge, John Mitchell, 1846; Anon, *The tourist's companion : being a concise description and history of Ripon, Studley Park, Fountains Abbey, Hackfall, Brimham Craggs, Newby Hall, Boroughbridge, Aldborough, Knaresbrough, Plumpton, Harrogate, Harewood House and Bolton priory; intended as a guide to persons visiting those places. Illustrated with woodcuts and a ground plan of Fountains abbey*, Ripon, Printed and sold by T. Langdale ... 1818
- Anon, *The Stranger's Guide; being a concise history and description of Boroughbridge, the Devil's Arrows, and the Roman antiquities, at Aldborough. [With plates.]*, Boroughbridge, John Mitchell, 1846
- Cummins, *Forgotten fights*, [Leeds?, s.n., 1900
- Haverfield and Yorkshire Archaeological, *Excursion to Kirkby Hill, Boroughbridge and Aldborough : Wednesday, September 9th, 1903 : programme and arrangements*, Wakefield, Printed by R. Dodgson, 1903
- Lawson-Tancred, *Records of a Yorkshire manor*, London, E. Arnold, 1937
- Lawson-Tancred, *A guide book to the antiquities of Aldborough and Boroughbridge and a short account of their history*, Boroughbridge, J. Topham & Son, 1948
- Tout, *The Tactics of the Battles of Boroughbridge and Morlaix*, 1904, 711-715.
- Turner, *History of Aldborough and Boroughbridge : containing an account of the Roman antiquities, Devil's arrows, churches, halls, and other curiosities*, London ; Boroughbridge, A. Hall Virtue and co. : T. S. Turner, 1853

WEB LINKS

There are various minor sources on the web relating to the battle of Boroughbridge but no resource was identified which was considered sufficiently valuable to provide a direct link apart from the Harrogate District Council report on battlefields in the District which covers Boroughbridge, Marston Moor and Myton, because of its relevance to the conservation of the battlefield:

http://www.harrogate.gov.uk/planning/heritage/pdfs/battle_web.pdf

Contemporary Accounts

For a medieval battle Boroughbridge is reasonably well served by contemporary accounts, several of which give graphic detail of the fighting. Three accounts describe the battle in detail: Lanercost, the Life of Edward II and The Brut. Extracts of all three are reproduced here. The remaining sources add little further detail other than listing those executed after the defeat.

- **Chronicle of Lanercost¹⁵**

A contemporary record compiled in Cumberland.

- **Life of Edward the Second¹⁶:**

Completed before circa 1326.

- **Brut, or the Chronicles of England.¹⁷**

A chronicle updated to 1330 and translated from French later in the century.

- **St Albans Chronicle¹⁸:** written after 1330.

- **Meaux Chronicle¹⁹:**

- **Geoffrey le Baker²⁰:**

Chronicle of Lanercost

¹⁵ Rothwell, *English historical documents, 1189-1327*, London, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1975 275-6.

¹⁶ Denholm-Young, *The life of Edward the Second, by the so-called Monk of Malmesbury*, London, Nelson, 1957

¹⁷ Brie, *The Brut : The chronicles of England*, 1906 217-220.

¹⁸ Riley Henry and Blanford, *Chronica et annales : Regnantibus Henrico tertio, Edwardo primo, Edwardo secundo, Ricardo secundo, et Henrico quarto : A. D. 1259-1296, 1307-1324, 1392-1406*, London, Longman's Green Reader and Dyer, 1866, 121-124.

¹⁹ Bond Edward, *Chronica monasterii de Melsa : a fundatione usque ad annum 1396, auctore Thoma de Burton, abbate. Accedit continuatio ad annum 1406 a monacho quodam ipsius domus*, London, Longmans Green Reader and Dyer, 1867, ii, 342.

²⁰ Thompson Edward and Baker, *Chronicon Galfridi le Baker de Swynebroke*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1889 14.

Now when that valiant and famous knight Sir Andrew de Harcla, sheriff of Carlisle, heard of their approach, believing that they intended to go to Scotland to ally themselves with the Scots against the King of England, acting under the King's commission and authority, he summoned, under very heavy penalties, the knights, esquires and other able men of the two countries, to wit, Cumberland and Westmorland, all who were able to beat arms, to assemble for the King's aid against the oft-mentioned Earl [Lancaster]. But when the said Sir Andrew, on his march towards the King with that somewhat scanty following, had spent the night at Ripon, he learnt from a certain spy that the Earl and his army were going to arrive on the morrow at the town of Boroughbridge, which is only some four miles distant from the town of Ripon. Pressing forward, therefore, at night, he got a start of the Earl, occupying the bridge of Boroughbridge before him, and, sending his horses and those of his men to the rear, he posted all his knights and some pikemen on foot at the northern end of the bridge, and other pikemen he stationed in schiltron, after the Scottish fashion, opposite the ford or passage of the water, to oppose the cavalry wherein the enemy put his trust. Also he directed his archers to keep up a hot and constant discharge upon the enemy as he approached.

On Tuesday, then, after the third Sunday in Lent, being the seventeenth of the kalends of April [16 March 1322], the aforesaid Earls arrived in force, and perceiving that Sir Andrew had anticipated them by occupying the north end of the bridge, they arranged that the Earl of Hereford and Sir Roger de Clifford (a man of great strength who had married his daughter) should advance with their company and seize the bridge from the pikemen stationed there, while the Earl of Lancaster with the rest of the cavalry should attack the ford and seize the water and ford from the pikemen, putting them to flight and killing all who resisted; but matters took a different turn. For when the Earl of Hereford (with his standard-bearer leading the advance, to wit, Sir Ralf de Applinsdene) and Sir Roger de Clifford and some other knights, had entered upon the bridge before the others as bold as lions, charging fiercely upon the enemy, pikes were thrust at the Earl from all sides; he fell immediately and was killed with his standard-bearer and the knights aforesaid, to wit, Sir W de Sule and Sir Roger de Berefield; but Sir Roger de Clifford, though grievously wounded with pikes and arrows, and driven back, escaped with difficulty along with the others.

The Earl [of Lancaster's] cavalry, when they endeavoured to cross the water, could not enter it by reason of the number and density of arrows which the archers discharged upon them and their horses. This affair being thus quickly settled, the Earl of Lancaster and his people retired from the water, nor did they dare to approach it again, and so their whole array was thrown into disorder. Wherefore the Earl sent messengers to Sir Andrew, requesting an armistice until the morning, when he would either give him battle or surrender to him. Andrew agreed to the Earl's proposal; nevertheless he kept his people at the bridge and the river all that day and throughout the night, so as to be ready for battle at any moment.

But during that night the Earl of Hereford's men deserted and fled, because their lord had been killed, also many of the Earl of Lancaster's men and those of my Lord de Clifford and others deserted from them. When morning came, therefore, the Earl of Lancaster,

my Lord de Clifford, my Lord de Mowbray and all who had remained with them, surrendered to Sir Andrew, who himself took them to York as captives, where they were confined in the castle to await there the pleasure of my lord the King.

Extract translated from the Latin in Rothwell, English historical documents, 1189-1327, London, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1975 275-6.

Life of Edward the Second

When they [the rebels] reached Boroughbridge, that there at any rate they might rest for a night, who should be there but Andrew Harclay, that active soldier, already aware of the Earl's flight. He had fully informed himself of the Earl's order of march and his plans, and had arrived with some 4,000 men, whom he had led with all speed to that place. The Earls were settling into their lodgings in the town, when they heard that Andrew and his followers had come to destroy them utterly, so they left the town to meet their opponents in two columns. The Earl of Hereford crossed by the bridge with his men-at-arms, but none of them was mounted. For the bridge was narrow, and offered no path for horsemen in battle array. The Earl of Lancaster with his knights made their way to the ford of the river. But Andrew Harclay, like a prudent knight, had shrewdly stationed a force of men-at-arms opposite each crossing. The Earl of Hereford forthwith attacked the enemy, but at length fell badly wounded in the fighting and died. Three or four knights were killed with the Earl in that conflict. Roger de Clifford and very many others returned to the town badly wounded. Others, trying to cross the ford, were lamentably cut up by a shower of arrows; but after the death of the Earl of Hereford their zeal for battle cooled off, and they at once retreated. But the Earl of Lancaster made a truce with Andrew Harclay to keep the peace until the morrow; and when this was done each returned to his lodging. On the same night the sheriff of York came with a large force to attack the King's enemies; relying on his help Andrew Harclay entered the town very early, and taking the Earl of Lancaster and almost all the other knights and esquires scatheless, led them off to York and imprisoned them. Some left their horses and putting off their armour looked round for ancient worn-out garments, and took to the road as beggars. But their caution was of no avail, for not a single well-known man among them all escaped.

Extract translated from the Latin in Rothwell, English historical documents, 1189-1327, London, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1975 285-6

Brut, or the Chronicles of England.

So went they [Lancaster and his friends] together into the North; and with them they had 700 men of arms, and come to Boroughbridge.

And when Sir Andrew of Harcla - that was in the North Country through ordinance of the King, for to keep the country of Scotland [in check]- heard tell how that Thomas of Lancaster was discomfited, and his company were discomfited at Burton upon Trent, he ordained him a strong power, and Sir Simon Ward also, that was sheriff of York, & come & meet the barons at Boroughbridge; & anon they broke the bridge, that was made of tree. And when Sir Thomas of Lancaster heard that Sir Andrew of Harcla had brought with him such a power, he was sore afraid, & sent for Sir Andrew of Harcla, & with him spake

There might men see archers drawn up on both sides; and knights also fought together wonder[fully] sore; and among others, Sir Humphrey de Bohun, Earl of Hereford, a worthy knight of renown throughout all Christendom, stood and fought with his enemies upon the bridge. And as the noble lord stood and fought upon the bridge, a thief, a worthless creature, skulked under the bridge, and fiercely with a spear smote the noble knight into the fundament, so that his bowels came out there. Alas the sorrow! for there was slain the flower of solace and of comfort, & also of courtesy. And Sir Roger of Clifford, a noble knight, stood ever, and fought, & well and nobly him[self] defended as a worthy baron; but at the last he was sore wounded in the head, & Sir William of Sulley & Sir Roger of Bernesfeld were slain in that battle. And Sir Andrew of Harcla saw Sir Thomas of Lancaster's men left and slain. Anon he & his company came to the gentle knight, Thomas of Lancaster, & said 'Yield, Traitor! Yield!' The gentle Earl answered so, and said: 'Nay, lords! Traitor be we none, and to you will we never us yield while our lives last; but believe we have to be slain in our truth, than yield ourselves to you'. And Sir Andrew again cried upon Sir Thomas's company, yelling as a wolf, and said: 'Yield you, traitor taken! Yield you!' and with a loud voice said: 'Beware sirs, that no man of you be so hardy, upon life and limb, to mishandle Thomas of Lancaster's body'. And with that word, the good Earl Thomas went into a chapel, and said, kneeling down upon his knees, and turning his face towards the Cross: 'Almighty God! To you I yield myself, and put myself into thy mercy'. And with that, the base worthless creatures leapt about him, on every side that Gentle Earl ... and despoiled him of his armour, & clothed him in a robe of Ray, that was his squire's livery, and forth led him unto York by water.

Brie, *The Brut : The chronicles of England*, 1906 i 217-220.

The medieval English has been modernized here. The long exchange between Lancaster and Harcla before the action began is omitted here.

The Battlefield

Location

Leadman does not provide any plan of the battle while Barrett admits that the site of the battle ‘cannot exactly be determined, thanks to the alterations in the ground’.²¹ Despite these reservations, we have a good idea of the general location of the battle. The 13th century bridge can reasonably be assumed, from the plan form of the town, to have been either on the site of the existing bridge or in close proximity. However the ford, which was of equal significance in the action, is not located. Although most authors seem to accept a site at the Roman crossing of the Ure, 800 metres to the east of the present bridge, no convincing evidence has been presented to support this identification, and other alternatives exist.

Historic Terrain

The terrain has changed dramatically since the time of the battle. In particular, there has been expansion of the town of Boroughbridge during the post medieval up to the river and in the 19th and 20th centuries onto the land to the north of the river. In addition there was the digging in the 18th century of the navigation immediately north of the river and beyond that the construction of the railway in the 19th century, as well as the various flood protection works that have taken place in the 19th and 20th century.

River

The river runs on almost exactly the course it did in the 14th century and, because the navigation cut runs to the north of the bridge it means that the character of this short stretch of the river adjacent to Boroughbridge may not have been changed as those sections of river directly affected by the 18th century navigation works.²² The river is some 40 metres wide and may have been little wider in the 14th century. However the river levels may well have been changed by the weir upstream of the bridge and the works further downstream from the bridge. The ground on the south side of the river, at least downstream of the bridge is slightly lower than that on the north bank, which may have made it even easier for Harcla’s archers to drive off Lancaster’s cavalry attack. Adjacent to the town it is possible that ground levels on the town side have been raised since the time of the battle.

Roads

Boroughbridge has been a waypoint on one of the great roads of England throughout the medieval and post medieval period. The Great North Road was first mapped as running through Boroughbridge in circa 1250 and other major routes, including the one across the Pennines to Carlisle, was mapped in circa 1350, while Ogilby provides detailed evidence for these and other routes through Boroughbridge in 1675.²³

²¹ Barrett Charles Raymond and Traill Henry, *Battles and Battlefields in England*, London, Innes & Co., 1896, 67.

²² The cut was made for the navigation under the 1767 Act of Parliament, making the river navigable to Ripon by 1772.

²³ The Matthew Paris and the Gough Maps discussed by Hindle Brian, *Medieval roads*, Aylesbury, Shire, 1982. However the plan of the road system presented by Hindle (p.33, fig.4), which also shows the Roman road alignment, gives no sources to enable the detail to be assessed. Ogilby, *Britannia, vol.I : or, An*

The road alignments to north and south, beyond the town, give the impression of a route which originally crossed the River Ure some 300m upstream from the present bridge. It is possible that this was the site of an original Saxon ford crossing the Ure, though this is pure conjecture. Boroughbridge itself sits just to one side of this alignment, along either side of a small stream that joins the Ure just below the present bridge. It may be that the road was re-aligned in the medieval period when the town was founded or when the first bridge was constructed, a century or more before the battle. The layout of roads and settlement here is however complicated by the confluence of a small stream with the river Ure, extending the floodplain up between the two main roads in the town. As there has apparently been no detailed study of the evolution of the topography of the town it is difficult to be sure about the exact layout of the town or indeed the exact position of the river crossings, either the bridge or indeed the ford, that figures in the accounts of the battle.

Bridge

The bridge of 1322 was built of wood.²⁴ By the time Leland visited in the 1540s it had been replaced in stone and it is also described by Camden in 1582.²⁵ The plaque on the bridge states that it was built in 1562, rebuilt on the upstream side in 1784 and widened in 1949. Despite the extensive rebuilding, remains of the 16th century structure seem to be visible on the downstream side, particularly in the southernmost (town side) arch when viewed from the north bank.

Ford

The major problem of interpretation of the battlefield is the location of the ford. Authors since at least Barrett, who suggested it might lie on the line of the Roman road, have accepted that the ford lay 800 metres to the east of the present bridge and close to Milby, where the Roman road running past the Roman town at Aldborough, crossed the Ure.²⁶ The exact location of the Roman crossing has been established from the cropmark and other evidence.²⁷ However the apparent presence of a paleochannel in this location, visible in the extent of alluvium, may further complicate the issue, if it was open in the medieval or indeed the Roman period.²⁸ The river course is essentially the same on the

illustration of ye kingdom of England and dominion of Wales, by a geographical & historical description of the principal roads. (London, A. Duckham, 1939).

²⁴ Brie, *The Brut : The chronicles of England*, 1906. It is turned by Barrett, without any reference, into a 'rickety structure floored with planks with many a crack and crevice.' Barrett Charles Raymond and Traill Henry, *Battles and Battlefields in England*, London, Innes & Co., 1896, 63.

²⁵ Toulmin Smith, *The itinerary of John Leland in or about the years 1535-1543*, London, Centaur Press, 1964. Camden and Gibson, *Camden's Britannia, newly translated into English: with large additions and improvements. Publish'd by Edmund Gibson*, 1695.

²⁶ This is a good example of the way in which conjecture in one work becomes fact in later, unreferenced works, such as Warner, *British Battlefields: The Definitive Guide to Warfare in England and Scotland*, 2002, 186. Other conjectures gain the status of fact as with Warner's sequence of attacks on bridge then ford and the way in which the bowmen become Welshmen. Similarly, in Green, *Guide to the battlefields of Britain and Ireland*, London, Constable, 1973, the present bridge comes to lie 'on the exact site of the 1322 bridge'.

²⁷ Hindle Brian, *Medieval roads*, Aylesbury, Shire, 1982, p.33, fig.4.

²⁸ BGS 1:50,000 scale geology mapping.

Tithe Map as today, but the navigation works were completed in the 1770s and so earlier course of the river may not have been identical to that seen on the 19th century mapping.

However no clear evidence for this ever seems to have been presented to justify this identification. No evidence for the continuance of such a route has been found on the 19th century mapping consulted for this report, but detailed documentary research is required to resolve the issue. The Roman road will have crossed the river on a bridge and it is possible that here, as in some other Roman river crossings nationally, the Saxon and early medieval road system was diverted from the Roman crossing because it was unsuited to fording.

The early importance of the Great North Road might suggest that in the Saxon period it crossed the Ure by a ford before the construction of the bridge. Indeed, it is possible that, as with some other medieval bridges, a ford was also maintained particularly for heavy traffic or perhaps also because the ford may not have been subject to tolls as bridges often were. The way in which Boroughbridge itself is off-set to the east from the main alignment of the major roads as they approach from both north and south, may imply that the medieval ford lay on an original alignment, to the west of the town. Although this is pure conjecture, it is presented in order to demonstrate the need for a detailed study of the historical topography and archaeology to resolve a fact that is central to the interpretation of the battle. Other locations also need to be considered, including one in close proximity to the bridge, for none of the main contemporary sources specify which side of the bridge the ford lay, let alone what distance from the bridge.

The land of Aldborough was largely open field in the medieval period, much of it remaining open until 1809. If the ford lay well to the east of Boroughbridge, on the Roman crossing, or to the west then it is likely that it lay in open field meadow, which encompassed most or not all of the floodplain until the early 19th century.²⁹

The Town

The settlement took its name from the bridge and is first referred to in 1155, when it was granted borough status. Thereafter it grew to be a substantial market town. The town was a chapelry of Aldborough and was clearly created by taking out a small section of that township on either side of the Great North Road, for Aldborough townships also extends in a very narrow strip along the river's edge to the north of the town and has a detached portion to the west of Boroughbridge.³⁰ The extent of Boroughbridge Common at inclosure, a narrow strip running on either side of the Great North Road as far as the southern edge of the town, gives the impression that the town itself was laid out within

²⁹ Inclosure Act 1808, Award 1809. Of the 2113 acres of the township the unenclosed land comprised four open fields totalling 580 acres, plus pasture, the Ings or meadow and common waste comprising 596 acres. Detailed information is given on the map but distinguishing between ancient and new enclosed land requires detailed analysis using the schedule. Apart from ancient enclosures the pre inclosure landscape is not shown. There may however be more detailed information in the Dean and Chapter records at York as they had a substantial allotment. Aldborough Inclosure Award: NYRO WRRD B27 p.96-122 (microfilm 601). Inclosure map of 1809: NYRO WRRD map vol. 1/1 (microfilm 604).

³⁰ Kain and Oliver, *Historic Parishes of England and Wales: Electronic Map - Gazetteer - Metadata*, Colchester, History Data Service, 2001. Boroughbridge Tithe Map.

the northern part of this common early in the medieval period.³¹ The east-west road from Aldborough to Roecliffe runs just to the south of the edge of the floodplain through Boroughbridge. It is likely that the town was originally laid out around this junction, with the chapel above the floodplain and the market place lying immediately to the north of the chapel, on the floodplain, with any surrounding houses protected by flood defences.

Comments about the battle, particularly in the *Life of Edward II*, would suggest that the town in the medieval period did not extend to the bridge,³² and this is supported by the discovery of archaeological evidence of possible medieval flood defences adjacent to the High Street.³³ It is therefore likely that the majority of the land on the floodplain was open meadow at the time of the battle and was only built over in the post medieval period.³⁴ Then in the 19th century, with the pull of both the navigation and then the railway, the town expanded to the north of the bridge.

Although much of the basic plan form of the town probably survives relatively unchanged from the medieval period, the character of the general character of the settlement has changed dramatically. Only rarely do buildings of 14th century date or earlier, other than churches, survive in our towns and villages. Boroughbridge is no exception. But here even the chapel of St James, within which the Earl of Lancaster took refuge after the battle, was demolished in 1851 and replaced on a completely new site by the church that stands today.³⁵ All that remains of the Norman chapel, that stood on the southern edge of the market place, are a few fragments of carved stone built into the vestry wall of the present church, which were discovered when the chapel was demolished.

Archaeology of the Battle

In 1792 a little below the present bridge, during flood protection works along the river bank, bones, fragments of arms and armour were discovered. Then on the 13th August 1881 workmen excavating for the erection of new machinery in the corn mill of Lothouse and Hammond, on the south bank of the river just to the west of the present bridge, found a pike head 17 inches long, broken below the haft. The 1792 discovery is presumably the same discovery reported by both Turner and by Leadman, as ‘remnants of armour, axe-heads and other arms’ were found within in living memory, before 1870 beneath the bridge. In the 1880s none of the artefacts then remained in the area and so Leadman did

³¹ Inclosure in Award 1857. Comprising 113 acres of Boroughbridge Common . Award: NYRO DC/NID (microfilm 601). Map, NYRO microfilm 604.

³² English Heritage, *Battlefield Report: Boroughbridge 1322*, English Heritage, 1995, 2.

³³ Archaeological evaluation report re 19 High Street, Boroughbridge, in National Monuments Record.

³⁴ The English Heritage report map shows ridge and furrow to the west of the town extending onto the floodplain but the evidence needs to be reviewed as this is extremely unlikely that the open field arable extended onto the floodplain.

³⁵ Leadman, *Battles fought in Yorkshire*, 1891, 58.. North Yorkshire Sites & Monuments Record. The present church is already shown on the 1st edition 6” Ordnance Survey map of 1854-5.

not see them.³⁶ Silver pennies of Edward II were also seen by Leadman, but these need not have any association with the battle.

Other than these 18th and 19th century discoveries no evidence has been identified as to any more recent discoveries or of any metal detecting survey of the battlefield.

Research information

Historic administrative areas [township(parish)]

Boroughbridge (Aldborough)
Aldborough (Aldborough)
Lanthorpe (Kirby Hill)
Milby (Aldborough)
Humberton (Kirby Hill)

Sites and Monuments Record

North Yorkshire SMR, Northallerton.

Portable Antiquities Officer

York Museum.

Record Offices

North Yorkshire Record Office, Northallerton.

Local Studies Collections

A file of information on the battle is said to be in Boroughbridge Library.³⁷

Further reading

Secondary works

No attempt has been made to examine detailed studies of the Great North Road, other than the Ogilby map, Hindle for Gough and Paris. Detail may well exist in such studies.

- Kettlewell, *On a Tithe Map of Boroughbridge*, 1848-51, 397-401.
- Lawson-Tancred, *Records of a Yorkshire manor*, London, E. Arnold, 1937

³⁶ Leadman, *Battles fought in Yorkshire*, 1891, p.58 and n.12. Turner, *History of Aldborough and Boroughbridge : containing an account of the Roman antiquities, Devil's arrows, churches, halls, and other curiosities*, London ; Boroughbridge, A. Hall Virtue and co. : T. S. Turner, 1853, quoted by English Heritage, *Battlefield Report: Boroughbridge 1322*, English Heritage, 1995, 6.

³⁷ Pers. comm. Terence Nixon.

- Turner, *History of Aldborough and Boroughbridge : containing an account of the Roman antiquities, Devil's arrows, churches, halls, and other curiosities*, London ; Boroughbridge, A. Hall Virtue and co. : T. S. Turner, 1853

Primary sources

British Geological Survey maps

Sheet 62, Harrogate: drift geology... no details collected on copyright etc

Historic Maps

Historic Ordnance Survey Maps

OS 1st edition 6" mapping: 1854-5.

Other Historic Maps

The earliest large scale map of Boroughbridge so far identified is of the mid 19th century Tithe map, which shows the town largely as on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey 6" mapping, although it does identify the narrow strip of Aldborough township extending along the riverside on the north edge of the town.

Aldborough

Tithe Map: PRO Tithe map 43/130.

Enclosure Map/Award: NYRO WRRD B27 p.96-122 (microfilm 601). Inclosure map of 1809: NYRO WRRD map vol. 1/1 (microfilm 604).

Boroughbridge

Tithe Map: PRO Tithe map 43/131.

Enclosure Map/Award: Inclosure in Award 1857 of Boroughbridge Common . Award: NYRO DC/NID (microfilm 601). Inclosure Map, NYRO microfilm 604.

Lanthorpe

Tithe Map: PRO 43/575

Humberton

Tithe Map: PRO 43/576

Milby

Tithe map: PRO 43/577

Historic Documents

Management Assessment and Strategy

Assessment

Locating the exact site of the bridge will be significant, but the resolution of the question about the location of the ford is the most fundamental issue with the battle. This would have a major impact on the location of the archaeological evidence and indeed on the interpretation of the nature of the action. The location suggested for the eastern crossing of the ford, on the Roman alignment, is in open countryside, however, if the ford actually lay much closer to the bridge it may still lie within largely undeveloped land. If it is on the Roman crossing then the Registered Battlefield boundary does not encompass a wide enough area as its eastern boundary is located at the river crossing itself. Close to the bridge a more restricted area is registered than that suggested by the English Heritage report as the possible full extent of Harcla's deployment and of the rebel deployment on the south side of the river. The wider area is depicted with a broken line on the plan and should be considered part of the battlefield even though not Registered, as it is believed to have been the area of the original battalia.

Archaeological evidence may be very good for the action at the ford if it lay on the Roman crossing, but in this area navigation works may well have affected the archaeology of the crossing itself, although the vast majority of the arrowheads and other artefacts may be expected immediately to the south of the river. If the crossing was further west then assessment of the archaeological potential will depend on the exact location. But in the short section of river bypassed by the navigation then it is likely, as with the archaeology of the medieval bridge, to be better preserved as not affected by the navigation works which will have straightened and deepened the river, especially at any fords. However the archaeology of the battle was clearly been affected by the 19th century, and possibly also by the 20th century, flood alleviation works.

Military History

Military Archaeology

Historic Landscape

Access

Rights of Way

There are a number of rights of way across the battlefield and its immediate environs. These are depicted on the Ordnance Survey Explorer map extract.

Registered Common Land and Open Country

None has been identified.

Other public access

None has been identified.

Interpretation

The only interpretation is the small plaque on the south side of the bridge.

Research Agenda

A detailed study of the town and the road system, using documentary and archaeological evidence is needed to identify the exact site of the medieval bridge and to locate the ford. There are sufficient areas of open ground for systematic and well recorded metal detecting survey of part of the battlefield, though alluviation since the early 14th century may have buried the artefacts too deeply to allow easy location and recovery. Archaeological evaluation and watching briefs should be required on any development work on either river bank and in the river channel itself in the area of the Roman crossing and between this and the bridge and upstream at least as far as the weir.

Conservation Strategy

Existing Designations

Threats

Management priorities

Conservation Information

Conservation status

Modern administrative areas

Parishes: Boroughbridge. Aldborough, Langthorpe, Milby.

District Council: Harrogate

County: North Yorkshire

Local Archaeological curator

County Archaeological Officer, North Yorkshire County Council.

Visiting the Battlefield

The value of a site visit

Although at first sight a visit to Boroughbridge might seem of little value due to the urbanised nature of the battlefield, this is far from the case. A visit enables one to gain a good grasp of the historical terrain. There is a good network of public footpaths and other access land by which to explore the battlefield. Unfortunately there are however no interpretative facilities related to the battle either on site or in museums in the area.

The visit can also be very effectively combined with a visit to Myton battlefield.

Monuments

A 14th century column 18ft high comprising four shafts banded together was erected as a monument to the battle and stood for centuries within Boroughbridge itself. However on the 21st April 1852 it was moved to Aldborough.³⁸

Interpretation on site

There is no on site interpretation other than a small plaque on the south side of the bridge.

Other locations to visit

Museums

None have been identified with artefacts or interpretation material related to the battle.

Tourist Offices

There is a Tourist Information Office in Boroughbridge.

Nearby battlefields

Myton (2 miles); Marston Moor (11 miles); Northallerton (20 miles)

Other nearby sites of historic military interest

No other important military sites have been identified. Normally we have not identified non military sites but, given their importance and impressive survival there are two monuments in close proximity that are recommended:

Devil's Arrows: signed from the Weatherby Road leading south from Boroughbridge, along the road to Roecliffe. Two of these massive prehistoric standing stones lie in the field on the north side of the road and one immediately on the south side of the road, just before it drops down to the A1 junction. Parking is possible here but it is a dangerous location as it is on the crest of a hill.

Aldborough Roman Town: There is a small museum and access to Roman remains. A sign to the museum lies immediately adjacent to the battle monument in the centre of Aldborough.

³⁸ Leadman, *Battles fought in Yorkshire*, 1891, 57-8 & frontispiece. The cross is depicted, as a 'Column' on the 1st edition 6" OS map in Aldborough where it stands today.

Battlefield visit

Drive

The battlefield itself is a small area and can only be visited on foot. There is parking, also with toilets, in Boroughbridge itself (signed from the town centre along Hall Square, off the High Street). There is also parking at the riverside picnic site accessible from the roundabout just north of the bridge. There are a number of pubs, shops and other facilities within the town.

It is less than half a mile drive from the centre of Boroughbridge to the monument at Aldborough. It stands at the first major road junction within the village on the road from Boroughbridge.

Walk

The recommended walk starts from the car park in the town. Walk down Hall Square and turn right along Fishergate. At the T junction, by the Crown Hotel, turn right to the bridge. A plaque to the battle is on the left hand side of the road on the wall facing you just as you approach the bridge. Although the A1 has long since bypassed the town, the road over the bridge is still quite busy. From the bridge there is a very good view of the ground on either side of the river and as far upstream as the weir. Cross the bridge to the picnic area on the upstream side. From there one gains an excellent view back towards the bridge, from the general area of Harclas deployment defending the bridge.

Returning to wards the bridge, on the left hand side, just before the bridge, is a fingerpost indicates the footpath leading along the north side of the river east towards Milby. This is a pleasant, quiet and very easy walk through pasture fields. With difficulty one can approach the river bank to get a good view of the bridge. Following the path eastward the navigation cut soon runs parallel to the path and river. At the lock one can gain a good view of the whole area surrounding the Roman river crossing, which was about 100 metres downstream of the lock. From the lock retrace your steps to the car park.

It is possible to continue along the riverside path the 3.5 miles to Myton battlefield, but this is not the recommended approach to that battlefield.

Further reading: Battlefield guides

Clark is the only one of the main battlefield guides for England to give details of a substantial battlefield walk at Boroughbridge.

- **Clark, *Battlefield Walks : North*, 1995, 25-36.**

Clark gives a much longer, 4 mile walk along the south side of the river and taking in the battle monument, the Roman town museum at Aldborough as well as the Devil's Arrows. Although undoubtedly a pleasant walk, most of it is away from the battlefield.

- **Green, *Guide to the battlefields of Britain and Ireland*, London, Constable, 1973, 65.**
- **Kinross, *Discovering battlefields of England*, Princes Risborough, Shire, 1989, 25.**

Acknowledgements

English Heritage for the digital copies of the contemporary accounts.

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