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BANNOCKBURN

1 SUMMARY

1.1 CONTEXT

Robert Bruce had been elected guardian of Scotland in 1298, replacing William Wallace as the leader of the long campaign against the English King Edward I's attempt to conquer Scotland. The War of Independence dragged on after Edward's death in 1306, but the incompetent reign of his son Edward II, was a disastrous period of division in England and this weakness was very effectively exploited by Bruce. After the devastating defeat of Wallace at Falkirk (Falkirk, 1298) and then Bruce's own defeat at Methven (Perth & Kinross, 1306) by English forces spearheaded by cavalry, much of Bruce's campaign took the form of guerrilla warfare, avoiding as far as possible major set piece battles. He completely changed the balance of power in Scotland through the progressive reduction of English garrisons, even beginning to harry the north of England. Through the application of tactics to effectively counter the English heavy cavalry, he also began to have success in open battle, most notably at Loudon Hill. This all bolstered his credibility as a military commander and prepared the ground for the Bannockburn campaign.

Edward II fought several abortive campaigns in Scotland but by 1314 just two major strategic fortresses remained in English hands: that on the border Berwick at that controlling the crossing of the Forth at Stirling. In 1313 the Stirling garrison finally agreed to surrender if the English king did not arrive with a relieving force by 24th June 1314. In response, in early summer Edward II summoned some 26,000 troops for a new campaign although, as in 1319, the greater part of these troops were probably not mustered. His final strength in the forthcoming battle may have been no more than 12-13,000. He marshalled his forces at Berwick and marched north in May, reaching Falkirk on the 22nd June.

Bruce had originally marshalled his forces at Torwood, the forest straddling the major road from Falkirk to Stirling, some 6 km to the south east of the English objective. This was the only logical route of approach for Edward's army, because with a major army with an extensive baggage train it was normally only practicable to travel by major roads with substantial bridges or well established fords. Bruce withdrew his forces to the woodland of the New Park 2km south west of Stirling, through which the major road approached Stirling. While Bruce carefully prepared his chosen ground for the coming fight, the approaching English army was suffering from the inabilities of Edward II as a military commander and the resulting divisions and disputes over tactics and over position within his senior command.

1.2   ACTION

Day 1:

The English army arrived near Torwood after dinner (Lanercost), 6 km from the New Park. The army, led by the vanguard under the Earl of Goucester, continued along the main road, the only major route to Stirling from the south east.

Bruce had carefully chosen his ground where the road passed through the woodland of the New Park as it gave the Scots a substantial advantage of terrain. His forces were in the wood (Lanercost), although the English did have intelligence that their enemy had blocked the narrow roads there (Scalacronica). If the English went beneath the New Park, across the marshes, then Bruce would have advantage, just as he would if the enemy went via the wooded area, for in either location the English cavalry would be at a disadvantage (Barbour). To strengthen their position further, the previous night they had dug ditches (pits) 3ft deep and broad in front of their army from right to left flank (Baker) in the 'plain field' beside the way along which the English had to pass. These were 'a contrivance full of evils… formed for the feet of horses/holes with stakes, so that they may not pass without disasters…'(Baston). Thus in the one place where the English heavy cavalry might feel themselves secure in attack Bruce had prepared an invisible trap for them. Bruce had learned important lessons from the defeats at Falkirk and Methven and had applied very effective anti-cavalry tactics, probably learned in part from the Flemish success at Courtrai, in his victory at Loudon Hill. Here he was applying these tactics on a grand scale, combining the use of highly organised schiltrons of densely packed 'pikes' with the careful defensive preparation of the ground to enhance the natural defensive features of the site. While Bruce held the entrance to the woodland, the Earl of Moray with the vanguard, which would be on the Scottish right wing, was instructed to defend 'The Way' to stop up that pass to the castle (Barbour).

The English vanguard, under the Earl of Gloucester, were far ahead of the main body (Lanercost) and as they passed by a certain wood the Scots were seen straggling under the trees as if in flight (Vita).[1] It is possible that the feigned flight of the Scots forces at this time was actually an attempt to draw the English vanguard away from an approach to the 'pits', the discovery of which in an initial skirmish would remove their key tactical advantage in any subsequent main engagement. The main body of the English vanguard entered the road within the park and was engaged by the Scots (Scalacronica). The Earl of Bohun in advance of the main body pursued to the entrance of the wood, but this was in effect an ambush and Bohun was killed (Vita) and the Scots cut off the vanguard from the main and the rear columns (Lanercost). It was quite normal for the vanguard of a major army, which would be expected to comprise a full battle formation in its own right, to be some distance to the fore in the march, especially if all mounted, and to engage the enemy in advance of the arrival of the main body and rearguard. This was the case at Stoke Field

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[1] This wood Duncan interprets as Torwood but almost all authors agree lay within the New Park just to the south of Stirling.

(Nottinghamshire, 1487), but was even more likely if the enemy troops involved were or were believed to be merely a detachment of the main army, as at on the first day at Towton (Yorkshire, 1461). If comprising at least a third of the English army, at perhaps 4500 the vanguard will not have been dramatically smaller than Bruce's whole force.

Figure 1: Bannockburn (1314) - battlefield plan: day 1

Probably at the same time and as part of a combined action, Clifford and Beaumont with a detachment of 300 mounted men at arms skirted the wood 'on the other side', keeping to the open ground (Scalacronica), making a circuit of the wood to prevent the Scots escaping (Lanercost). This would have been a logical move, for Scottish forces had often before (and would in following centuries) avoid open battle when outnumbered by English armies. The Scots typically followed a campaign strategy and specific tactics of 'hit and run', avoiding open battle except when they believed they had a substantial advantage or, in extremis, when the English army had cut off their opportunity for retreat. Clifford went 'below' the New Park and 'well below the kirk' [agreed by all as St Ninians church], taking the plain and following 'The Way', which Morray had been ordered to guard. In response Moray took to the level field (Barbour), issuing out of the wood and crossing the open ground (Scalacronica). These skirmishes on the first day are described as a sharp action in which Gloucester was unhorsed and Clifford routed (Vita).

Some of the English fled to Stirling Castle and some to the King's army, which had left the road through the wood and gone onto a plain near the Forth 'beyond the Bannockburn', [2] into an evil, deep wet marsh. There they remained in arms all night (Scalacronica), expecting the Scots to attack (Vita). Their camp was down in the Carse, where there were streams or pools (Barbour), while the Scots remained in the wood overnight (Scalacronica).

Day 2:

In the morning the English appear to have taken the field, apparently crossing a 'great ditch' called Bannock, into which the tide flows (Lanercost) advancing towards the battlefield from the west (Baker).[3] At sunrise, when Bruce learned that the English battle array had occupied the field he led his whole army from the wood. The Scots deployed in three schiltrons or *battles*,[4] tightly formed with their shields locked (Trokelowe) and possibly with two battles to the fore and one in reserve under Bruce himself (Lanercost), although other accounts say all three were in a single line. They were all fighting on foot (Vita) (Scalacronica) although it is suggested that, as was typical in earlier and later

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[2] The description of the army passing over the Bannock Burn into the Carse is taken by most authors to place the camp on the north west side of the burn. However, if that description is taken to represent the direction in relation to the retreating vanguard forces, which had already crossed the burn, then it may be possible to support Miller's interpretation of an English camp on the south east side of the burn in Skeoch Carse.
[3] This direction of approach is only possible if the battle was fought close to the traditional site with the English army crossing the Bannock Burn by the same route taken on the first day.
[4] Just one source specifies four *battles*.

centuries for a dismounted army, they had as small light cavalry reserve (5). The Scottish army took the plain openly, leaving the baggage train in the wood.

The battlefield is variously described as a great broad field and plain hard field (Barbour). Perhaps most significantly Baston describes it as the dry ground, which some authors contend means very specifically the 'Dryfield' of Balqhidderock. The English are said to have been surprised that the Scottish army chose to take the open ground, for this should have been ideal cavalry country. This would have been a very strange tactic for the Scots, for in open ground the cavalry was master, even against schiltrons of pike.[5] At key battle of Courtrai (Belgium, 1302) the Flemings' pike formations had only won because they had defensive ditches to their fore to break up the cavalry charge of the French knights. However, if one sees the action as being fought on the traditional site, close to the action of the first day, then this makes perfect sense, for it would be Bruce exploiting the prepared position behind the pits, of which the English were still wholly unaware. By taking such an open position he could draw on the English into the pits, placed in the plain field beside the way. This would blunt the cavalry charge enough to enable the schiltrons to hold and destroy what survived of the English cavalry.

Clifford's failure on day 1 had shown the vulnerability of heavy cavalry fighting against a well drilled schiltron of 'pikes' when lacking the support of their own infantry. This may have caused some of the dispute within the English high command as to whether and if so then how to fight on the second day. But the English deployment on day 2 saw no such problem of deployment, with infantry, including large numbers of archers in close support of the cavalry. The English still had confidence in the superiority in cavalry when combined with archery.

Figure 2: Bannockburn (1314) – battlefield plan: day 2

Battle was joined about the 3rd hour (Trokelowe) , i.e. at 9:00am.[6] The Scots had chosen the ground well because the English were jammed together and could not operate effectively (Scalacronica),[7] the field being too narrow for the English (Barbour). Using the terrain Bruce had it seems achieved a similar funnelling of the English forces as he had managed at Loudon Hill. There are some differences between the primary accounts as to the exact English formation and the sequence of action and it is important therefore to take the earliest accounts, not that by Barbour. Other than in Baker's account, the English infantry are said to have been in the first line, with bows and lances, with the cavalry behind in two wings (Trokelowe). These archers seem to have been placed to the fore as the engagement began, with the English having the better of the archery exchange with the smaller number

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[5] Vegetius Renatus, circa 400, bk III, 13.
[6] The ecclesiastical day began with prime, being 6:00am, then terce, the third hour, being 9:00am.
[7] DeVries, p.80, n.70, translates the wording as the Scots schiltron being jammed together, i.e. tightly formed in battle array.

of Scottish archers (Lanercost). Though some accounts suggest all the Scottish forces were dismounted, several do indicate that what may have been a small detachment of Scottish light cavalry engaged the English archers and suppressed their threat to the schiltrons. It seems likely that it was now that the English cavalry charged.

According to Baker, in a critical statement which most authors now suggest is a conflation of the events of the first day or simply invention, the English charge is said to have foundered in the hidden pits prepared by the Scottish forces. This can only be true if the battle was fought in the same broad area as the action on the first day, which almost all authors deny. The combined effects of the pits and the strong schiltrons of pikes was that the English cavalry charge was broken and then defeated in dramatic fashion. Baker says the archers tried to support the fallen and stalled cavalry by firing over their heads at the schiltrons, but with little effect. As the Scottish schiltrons advanced the English began to falter. Due to the narrowness of the ground the English rearguard could not engage to support the vanguard and main battle and instead, as the whole army was driven back, they were driven back on the ditch of Bannockburn (Scalacronica).

It is said that it was now that the 'small folk', the less well equipped and trained local forces, marched up from the wood and were mistaken for a substantial Scottish reinforcement. This was the final blow. Now the English King quitted the field and rode first towards Stirling Castle, though he later fled south via Torwood (Vita). The English troops, now in retreat or rout, needed to re-cross the Bannockburn and it was there it seems that the English army was effectively destroyed. Many fell in this great ditch and others only escaped it with difficulty (Lanercost), and there a great part of the army perished (Vita), with the Bannockburn between the hills being stuck full of men and horses (Barbour). Others had been drowned or were done to death in pits (Fordun) while a great party are also said to have fled towards the Forth and were drowned (Barbour). The English army as an organised fighting force has ceased to exist.

1.3   TROOPS
The English force was large and very well equipped force with a substantial body of heavy cavalry, but they were operating at a great distance from their base, thus providing significant logistical problems. In addition Edward II lacked the military prowess of his father. In contrast the smaller Scottish force was battle hardened from years of warfare and very ably commanded by Bruce, who had built up a significant military reputation.

Numbers:
English: A large and well equipped army of up to 18,000 including up to 1000 heavy cavalry (1) Absurdly large troop numbers running into the hundreds of thousands are claimed by some contemporary chronicles, with Barbour stating 100,000. Most modern accounts consider 17,000- 20,000 likely(2). The muster records have not survived but current best estimates give 11,000 infantry and 2000 cavalry (5).
Scottish: probably circa 6000 reinforced by circa 3000 poorly trained and equipped local forces; possibly up to 500 cavalry (1). 7000 - 10,000 but lack good evidence (2). Recent estimates suggest 5-6000, plus a detachment of light cavalry (5).

Losses:
English: heavy; Barbour gives an impossible 30,000; totals of nobles killed range from 154 (Walsingham); 300 (Eulogium); 700 Barbour (2).
Scottish: probably few (2)

1.4 COMMEMORATION & INTERPRETATION

On the edge of the New Park a block of land was acquired in the late 19th century, on what was then believed to be the battlefield of both the first and the second days, to commemorate this most iconic of Scottish victories. This is now managed by the National Trust for Scotland. A monument to Bruce was unveiled at the Borestone site in 1964, and nearby the Trust now maintains a visitor centre.

In the absence of a new detailed study of the battlefield, as defined in 2.9 below, then it will remain impossible to develop an adequate interpretation of the battlefield of what is arguably the most important battle in Scottish history.

2 ASSESSMENT

2.1 LOCATION

Bannockburn is the most disputed of Scottish battlefields with at least five main alternative sites which have at one time or other been proposed as the battlefield.

The battle is normally named in primary sources as the battle of Bannockburn, though to Baston it was the battle of Stirling. It is variously described as having been fought on Bannock Moor (Trokelowe); near a stream called Bannock (Bower); in the field of Bannock (Melsa Chronicle); beside Skeoch mill (Habbakkuk 1626).[8] These names give only a very general location for the action.

Day 1

Surprisingly there is almost unanimous agreement among secondary works as to the location of the wood and thus the action between the English vanguard and the main Scottish forces on the first day. Only Duncan places this action at Torwood, some 6km to the south of Bannockburn, but Miller has already provided a clear explanation for such misidentification, a result of conflation within just one account, the detail in other accounts making it clear that Torwood is not meant (7). Almost all other authors identify the wood as lying within the New Park, 2km to the south of Stirling. The action was fought, immediately to the north of the area where the Roman road crosses the Bannockburn, near to the Borestone, where Miller identifies and area of open ground lying between park boundary and the burn. In this area were two small tracts of marshland, identified on various historic maps, such as Roy's of circa 1750, and confirmed by the extent of isolated

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[8] though there are primary sources which suggest the settlement of Bannockburn was formerly named Skeoch (Scott, p.92).

alluvial deposits identified on the BGS mapping. If the woodland broadly corresponded to the New Park then this left a relatively small area for the English advance, with these two small marshes, Milton's Bog and Halbert's Bog, bordering the road to the west. To further strengthen their position the Scots had constructed covered pits in the open ground to protect themselves from English cavalry attack.

The site of the other action that day, between the Scottish vanguard and a large cavalry detachment from the English vanguard, under Clifford, is not agreed. Almost all authors place it on one or other area of dryfield between Stirling and the Bannock Burn, but sites vary from the periphery of the Old Park in the north, close to Stirling town (Miller, 1933), through an area immediately north of St Ninians (National Trust, 1999), but DeVries interestingly places it well to the west of St Ninians and off the dryfield. The route for Clifford's advance, along 'The Way', favoured by most current authors is along the edge of the Carse, immediately below the Balquhidderock scarp, although there is no road running all the way through the Carse here to St Ninians on Roy's map of c.1750, due to the very wet nature of the ground with various streams and drains crossing the suggested line. Indeed it is also surprising that Barbour did not refer to the Carse in this context as he otherwise provides detailed reference to the terrain, and he instead defines the area of the advance as across a plain, although Scalacronica does describe the land near the Forth as a plain. More importantly the Carse edge is more than 1.5 km from the main route into the Park and this seems dangerously distant for a concerted flanking move, as is implied by the Lanercost Chronicle. It would also place the action well beyond the view of Bruce, on the south side of the wood in the New Park. Moreover, Clifford is said to have skirted the wood, which seems to require the advance to be far closer than the Carse edge.

In complete contrast, DeVries places Clifford's advance to the west, within the New Park but west of the main action. The Roman Road does appear likely to cross the Bannock Burn to the west of the post mediaeval and probable medieval route, and could be considered to run below the park, as one account implies 'The Way' ran. In addition the reference to the difficulty of the marshy grounds below the wood (Barbour), could then be related to the adjacent Milton and Halbert's bogs. Equally such a western course would resolve the problem posed by Morray's command of the Scottish vanguard, which one would expect to be placed n the right wing of the Scottish deployment. Only a westerly advance by Clifford would place Morray on the Scottish right and also still in close proximity to the other two battles. However, only if a fairly restricted area of woodland could be demonstrated within the New Park, lying towards its eastern perimeter, could such an interpretation stand.

Figure 3: Bannockburn: Alternative sites & conservation boundary suggested by Martin (red line)

The location of the English camp on the night of the 23rd is also disputed. Barbour specifies that the marshy area was on the Carse. Most authors consider that the English crossed the Bannock Burn immediately downstream of the gorge, where Roy in c.1750 shows a crossing of the burn, to camp on the Carse of Balquhidderock. This is what the Scalachronicon seems to indicate. However Lanercost implies that it was on the following

day, just before the armies engaged, that the English crossed the Bannock Burn. Miller took this to mean that the English camp was on the Carse on the south east side of the burn, perhaps a far more sensible location if the ground was being chosen for its defensive capabilities, using the burn itself as part of that defence.

Day 2

For the main battle, on the second day, there is wild variation between secondary works, the five main alternative sites being separated by more than 4km.

Bannockburn Muir: site 5

This location to the south east of the Bannock Burn and derives solely from Trokelowe's description of the battle being fought on Bannock Moor, which lies south of Bannockburn. In all other respects this location is contradicted by key statements the other primary accounts of the battle and is not treated as a serious contender for the battlefield.

Carse: site 3

In the early 20th century Mackenzie moved the battle down onto the Carse with the English camp lying right out on the Carse at or beyond Kerse Mills. He brought the New Park boundary east to encompass Balqhidderock Wood in order to make the terrain fit the primary accounts. This was countered by Miller, with a well researched contribution to the reconstruction of the historic terrain broadly in support of the traditional site. However most subsequent authors have supported the Carse interpretation. Mackenzie's interpretation is broadly followed by Matthews' recent account.

Carse: site: 4

The Carse interpretation was modified by Christison in 1960 who moved the action to the middle of the Carse, bounded on the south east by the Bannock Burn and the north west by the Pelstream. This has been followed by most subsequent authors, such as Reid, Nusbacher, and Scott. Others show a more extensive spread of the deployments to the north west across the Carse, as for example Young and Adair, but these completely ignore the intervening streams such as the Pelstream and give far to large a frontage for the armies (see below).

Miller provided arguments as to why the English army were unlikely to have camped right out in the heart of the Carse and why they would not have deployed to fight there, based on his interpretation of the very wet character of that part of the Carse in the medieval and post medieval. Whether the 'moss' character he proposed for most of that land can be sustained is unclear, but requires detailed consideration. He claims that no part of the Carse could have been a dry plain on which the accounts say the battle was fought. It also seems improbable, as Watson and Anderson argue, that an army strong in cavalry would seek to fight a major engagement in a landscape so unsuitable to cavalry action. Miller also argues that the eastern boundary of the New Park and the woodland it encompassed was much further to the west than Balqhidderock Wood, again causing a major problem for the Carse interpretation.

Eastern Dryfield: Site 1

An intermediate placing has also now developed between the Carse and the traditional site, with some authors, including Barrow as well as Watson and Anderson, arguing for action on the south eastern side of the Dryfield.

Eastern Dryfield: Site 6

However it should be noted that there were only two locations where the English army could take so many troops, including thousands of cavalry, across the burn with sufficient speed. One lay immediately below the gorge, leading out onto the Carse, the other immediately above the gorge, where the main road ran and the vanguard had crossed on the first day. Any action on the eastern side of the Dryfield raises the problem of the English force scaling the high scarp in Balquhidderock Wood from a camp down on the Carse, posing a substantial problem for the south eastern location. This in part explains why Armstrong suggests a further variation, placing the action on the north east corner of the Dryfield, to the east of St Ninians and south of the gorge of the adjacent burn, where the ground rises far less steeply from Carse to Dryfield.

Traditional site: site 2:

From the late medieval through to the 19th century the interpretation of the battle was that it was fought near to the Roman road, close to the area where the action was fought on the first day. Both Edgar's map of 1745 in Nimmo, and Arrowsmith's map of Scotland of 1807 show this location.

Traditional site: site 8

On the 1st edition 6" Ordnance Survey mapping the battlefield is placed a little further to the north west within the New Park, to the north west of the Borestone. This corresponds to the deployment of the Scottish army given by Nimmo in 1817 and is merely a variation of the traditional site.

Traditional site: site 7

Miller re-assessed the documentary evidence for the historic landscape and found this in broad support of the traditional site, but moved the action slightly to the east on to the south western edge of the Dryfield. The site of the battle is described as dry ground (Baston) and the English army deploys in battle array on the hard field (Barbour). Miller took this to mean the Dryfield. However, since the proposal of the Carse site there has been little support for the traditional site and of modern authors only DeVries takes the main battle as being fought on this same site as the action on the first day.

There are a number of cases where one finds that traditional sites of battles have been disputed by authors from the late 18th century to 20th century and new sites proposed. Often one finds that the traditional site has been later vindicated by more detailed research on the documentary or the archaeological record. Examples include Cheriton (Hampshire, 1644), Barnet (Hertfordshire, 1471), Naseby (Northamptonshire, 1645), while the

reinterpretation of Bosworth (Leicestershire, 1485) appears to be following the same pattern.[9]

There is limited additional support for a modified form of Miller's interpretation and the traditional site of the battle. Trokelowe describes the battle as being fought on Bannock moor. This has been dismissed as Bannockburn Muir which lies to the south of the burn (site 5). However it should be noted that the large triangle of land defined on Miller's map of 1931 between the Dryfield, the New Park and the Bannock Burn, is named as the Whins of Milton on Grassom's map of 1817. This area of furze is identified on Roy's map of c.1750 as moor, compared to the surrounding cultivated land on the Dryfield and in the New Park. According to Miller this tongue of land, associated with Milton, lay in Bannockburn Barony. Thus it might conceivably have been described as Bannock moor. This ground would provide an open plain bounded on the west by the marshy ground of Milton and Halberts bogs and the pale and woods of the park, with the gorge of the Bannock Burn to on the east, thus representing the sort of constrained site that prevented the English reserve from engaging.

In addition, Baker's account describes the English army advancing from the west. Most secondary sources treat this as being in error. However if the English army did approach the battlefield along the main road into the Park then this would indeed have resulted in them approaching the Scottish army from the south west if the latter had deployed on the Dryfield. Such a deployment would make a great deal of sense in terms of the tactics that Bruce had applied at Loudon Hill and seems to have been planning for Bannockburn, with his construction of the pits. It would also help to explain how Bannockburn could be such a dramatic victory, something that is difficult to explain by the effectiveness of the schiltron of pikes alone, for even with the perfected pike formations of much later centuries infantry in open country was always at a severe disadvantage. But on this site the Scots would be deployment facing south west on the slightly higher ground with the wood of the New park protecting their right flank and the steep scarp of the Bannock Burn gorge protecting their left flank. Before their army would be the concealed pits, which had been dug across the whole frontage on the dry field to trap the English cavalry. Such a combination of terrain and hidden defence not only would have funnelled the English forces, as at Loudon Hill, but the appearance of the Scottish army out on the plain in an apparently highly vulnerable location would have encouraged the English to attack with a false sense of confidence. Lastly, as Watson and Anderson point out in support of a Dryfield location, only the gorge through which the Bannock Burn flows immediately to the south east of the Dryfield answers to the description of a great ditch of the burn between the hills in which the primary sources say the English army was destroyed in the rout.

The area available at the traditional location is sufficient for the estimated size of the Scottish army. One can use the calculation of frontages provided by Vegetius, in use during the medieval period as a guide to military practice, as a very rough guide to the likely

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[9] Foard, in preparation.

frontages of the armies.[10] At very most the Scots had 10,000 troops almost all fighting on foot. With the troops deployed with two battles to the fore followed by a rearguard, with the troops 10 deep, a width of 3ft per man and a maximum of 250ft between battles this would give a frontage of some 2250ft, or 3500ft if deployed in a single line. This gives a maximum possible frontage of some 700-1000m. But as Bruce probably had no more than 7000 troops this reduces further to 500-780m. Though the detail may be disputed, this calculation does provide an order of scale for the frontage of the Scottish army.

2.2   PRIMARY SOURCES

There are, for a medieval battle, a significant number of accounts of the battle of Bannockburn, although all those written within a reasonable time of the action are from an English perspective. Several of these, most notably the Lanercost Chronicle and Gray's Scalachronica (which is particularly valuable for the first day as his father fought in that action) were written by people who had close access to veterans of the battle. There is no contemporary Scottish account of the battle, the earliest Scottish source being Barbour's late 14th century poem, then the Scoticronicon of c.1384, and finally several early to mid 15th century accounts. Barbour's account, although detailed, should be treated with great care because of the distance of its connection, much if not all deriving from other written accounts. However it must be acknowledged that Barbour had good local knowledge of the site.

DeVries provides a brief summary and listing of the primary sources. A more extensive but somewhat dubious assessment and reprinting is provided by Scott.

2.3   SECONDARY WORKS

There is a vast array of secondary works on the battle and its context and more continue to appear. It has been possible to examine only a very few of these in the present assessment. These works are extremely variable in their quality and content and provide a widely varying range of interpretations of the battle. The greater bulk of the works are however very largely if not wholly derivative and add little or nothing to the debate over the actual location and nature of the events. A number of key works can de identified which include:

Miller's various papers, in 1913, 1931 and 1933, which provide key information on the historic terrain based on primary research on medieval sources for the landscape. His interpretation is well argued and both reinforces and defends the traditional placing of the battle.

Mackenzie was responsible for the transfer of the battlefield to the Carse. The detail of his placing is now largely abandoned by most authors in favour of that by Christison, with his positioning between the Pelstream and the Bannock Burn on the Carse. This has started to become the standard modern interpretation, followed by many derivative works.

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[10] Vegetius Renatus, circa 400, bk III, 15.

The compilation by Scott is long and confused but does provide access to a wide range of material, including map sources of the 18th and 19th century as well as fragmented translations of all the main primary sources. Valuable reviews of the evidence are provided by both Duncan and by Barrow, also of interest because they provide some more novel interpretations of the battlefield location. Duncan puts the action of the first day 6 km to the south at Torwood. Barrow places the main battle on the south east part of the Dryfield of Balqhidderock, just to the east of the traditional site.

For a short overview which is valuable in placing the events in a very effective context of the evolution of warfare and tactics of the period, there is Strickland and Hardy. For a fuller and more popular recent account there is Armstrong's short and essentially derivative book.

The discussion by DeVries is of particular value because he goes back to the primary accounts and provides a discussion wholly independent of all the previous secondary works. This leads to a number of interesting observations as to the placing of events, which demand a reconsideration of both the traditional site of the battle and the exact direction of the advances. However, given his concern to work from the best, primary evidence, it is surprising he gives greatest weight to the account by Barbour, because of the greater intricacy of his discussion of the battle, even though it is late and derivative, in preference to the earlier sources such as Scalacronica and Treklowe, which most authors consider more reliable.

For a review of the key issues surrounding the location and future management of the battlefield Watson and Anderson is essential reading, while the Stirling Green Belt Appraisal is a key planning document which will contribute to the critical planning decisions over the site.

2.4   BATTLE ARCHAEOLOGY

There is as yet no secure battle archaeology relating to Bannockburn. There were a number of finds, including pits and stakes, reported in the 19th century on the traditional site, but none has been substantiated. Investigations by Pollard and Oliver on site 1 and site 4 failed to produce any evidence of the battle.

The enormous difficulty of recovering battle archaeology of the medieval period must be accepted, but work at Towton (Yorkshire, 1461) has shown that battle archaeology does survive on suitable sites. Metal detecting survey has proved effective there in locating unstratified artefact scatters indicative of the main area of action and also possibly the line of retreat/rout. It is clear that, as at Towton, large numbers of iron arrowheads were deposited during the battle at Bannockburn. Until an assessment of the soil pH is conducted here, on all the various geological situations, then it will remain unclear as to whether survival of iron arrowheads is to be expected. However it should be noted that the scatter of unstratified non ferrous items, also recovered at Towton through metal detecting survey, ought to be repeated at Bannockburn in metal detecting survey if the correct location of the

battlefield is identified, as even aggressive soil pH should not have destroyed all trace of such objects.

Also from Bannockburn there should be the evidence of the pits dug by the Scots. The failure of Pollard and Oliver to locate these pits in the trial excavations is probably because they were looking to the south of the burn, where DeVries also places them. This location makes little sense in terms of the tactics of the period and the descriptions in the primary accounts. The pits should be expected immediately to the fore of the Scottish deployment and probably on the Dryfield on the north west side of the Bannock Burn.

The other major element of battle archaeology should be the presence of mass graves, especially somewhere in the valley of the Bannock Burn. However locating such burials is likely to be a very difficult challenge, unless the search can be clearly focussed by the presence of a distribution of potentially battle related artefacts from metal detecting survey, possibly in association with or close to a contemporary road crossing of the burn.

2.5 *BATTLEFIELD HISTORIC TERRAIN*

A key element in the resolution of the problems of locating the Bannockburn battlefield will be the reconstruction of the historic landscape between Stirling, the Forth, Gillies Hill and the Bannock Burn. This landscape is divided into three main zones, trending south east to north west, determined largely by the underlying geological and geomorphological formations, to which the boundaries of early modern tenurial units identified by Miller correspond closely:

- CARSE: On the lower, post glacial raised beach deposits and associated marine and estuarine alluvium was an area known as the Carse which was poorly drained with areas of bog and 'moss' (particularly to the east of Bannock Burn, where the Wester Moss is an extensive area defined by peat deposits) as well as wet low lying moor. This area was progressively drained and improved in the post medieval and early modern periods.
- DRYFIELD: On the upper, post glacial raised beach deposits etc, separated from the lower deposits by a steep scarp, was an area know as the Dryfield. This is identified by Miller as the main area of cultivated field in the medieval. In the post medieval and early modern period this scarp was in part wooded, most notably in Balqhidderock Wood.
- PARKS & WOODLAND: Finally to the south west was a zone of largely boulder clay where most of the woodland appears to have been located. It was here that the Kings Park and the New Park were established in the medieval period. But Watson and Anderson suggest that west of the Park there was open cultivated ground between it and the ground rising steeply up onto the moorland to the west. They also suggest a substantial part of the park itself will have been open, as lawns and ridings. According to Miller the great road ran across the eastern part of this area, running north west to Stirling with St Ninians church on the east side and the New Park on the west.

The landscape has been transformed between 1314 and today, and even by the time of the first detailed mapping, in circa 1750 by Roy. By then for example all the woodland in the New Park had gone.

Elements of the terrain can be reconstructed from detailed documentary research, continuing the work of Miller, but this can also be supported through archaeological investigation. For example, the exact course of the Roman road has been identified to the west of St Ninians but its exact alignment across the Bannock Burn has yet to be established (6).

The position of the communications routes is critical to the interpretation of the battle. The westerly route of both the great road, beside St Ninians, discussed by Miller, and the Roman road, avoiding the Dryfield must surely be because of the deep gorges through which the Bannock Burn and the burn below St Ninians both cross these raised beach deposits. Similarly the problems of the very wet ground of the lower raised beach depots of the Carse also seem to explain why no major route crossed that area towards Stirling.

The exact character of the relevant areas of the Carse in 1314 has never been established. It seems unlikely from the geological mapping that extensive areas of peat existed across that part to the north west of the Bannock Burn, unlike the area to the south east of it, but this needs to be determined. But even if not a moss, this is likely to have been very wet with numerous stream. However these streams had certainly been altered in the medieval and post medieval, for several mill lets had been constructed by the time of the Roy map (c.1750).

Also critical to the understanding of the battle is the detail of land use, particularly the extent of wooded ground. Reconstructions showing woodland running across the Dryfield to the Carse edge are clearly wrong. But the exact extent of woodland, as well as of marsh and moor will greatly assist in the resolution of the problems of the battlefield identification.

2.6   SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BATTLE

Bannockburn was one of the greatest defeats of a major English army in the medieval period. It was a decisive victory where infantry fought in open ground using the schiltrons of 'pikes' to defeat a superior force including a substantial body of heavy cavalry. Together with the victory of the Flemings over the French at Courtrai (Belgium, 1302), as well as the minor action at Loudon Hill, it demanded a fundamental tactical rethink in which English armies returned to the use of dismounted cavalry, a way of fighting that had been abandoned in the mid 12th century. This was a tactical change which would in following decades rebound dramatically upon Scottish as well as continental armies, in battles such as Dupplin Moor, Halidon Hill, Crecy and Agincourt.

Bannockburn shows the effectiveness of a well trained force under a highly competent commander with military skills honed by years of warfare, fighting on their chosen ground.

Bruce had built up these skills and developed and learned tactics suitable to the conditions and the balance of military power, in the long period of the War of Independence. At Loudon Hill similar tactics had allowed him to beat a smaller English force, but it was at Bannockburn that it reached its crowning success. This was built in part on Bruce's careful selection and, most importantly, preparation of the ground on which the English would be forced to fight if they wished to secure the relief of Stirling Castle. Unfortunately the true nature and brilliance of Bruce's tactics cannot be properly understood until the exact site of the battle is securely identified and the detail of the battle revealed.

Edward II's army suffered very heavy losses, was effectively destroyed as a fighting force and driven back into England. The victory secured Scotland, enabling Bruce to take not only Stirling but also the fortress of Berwick, and thus the whole of Scotland was regained. It also opened up much of the north of England to major Scottish raids. It did not end the war, which continued for a long period, with Bruce carrying the campaign into England in defence of his gains, with victories at Myton (Yorkshire, 1319) and Byland (Yorkshire, 1322). The war was finally ended with the Treaty of Northampton in 1328.

2.7   CURRENT STATE OF DEVELOPMENT

Substantial areas of the main contending sites have already been developed during the 20th century, with some other limited areas having been buried under coal mine waste. In each case there are however still significant areas which remain undeveloped. Even within the urban areas there are a few small windows of open ground that could be of great potential in terms of the investigation of the battle archaeology.

2.8   CURRENT DESIGNATIONS

There are a handful of listed buildings in both Bannockburn and in St Ninians but none have any relevance for the management of the battlefield. The site of St Ninians church is a scheduled Ancient Monument, though its association with the battle is only very peripheral and so again on no substantial relevance to battlefield management. Of potential relevance is the Conservation Area which encompasses part of Bannockburn and most importantly crosses over the Burn itself, including the line of the pre-modern main road across the gorge. Of most direct relevance is the National Trust ownership of land around and immediately adjacent to the Borestone.

The area defined for conservation by Martin encompasses the greater part of the traditional (site 2) and the Carse sites (site 4), but inexplicably excludes key areas on the Dryfield (sites 1 and 6), particularly around Balquhidderock Wood and Broomridge, as well as part of site 3. In contrast it encompasses a vast area to the south of the Bannock Burn, though excluding site 5, where at best there may be evidence the destruction of routed troops in the pursuit. Some land identified by Martin has subsequently been built over.

2.9   POTENTIAL

There are several statement and principles defined in the Watson & Anderson important discussion that cannot be supported:[11]

- 'it has always been envisaged [for their review] that no definitive statement on the exact location of the battle either could or should be given.'
- 'If there has been no agreement on the location of the second day of the battle to date, it is highly unlikely that there ever will be…'
- 'Given the strength of feeling in support of two sites in particular… it is just as important to seek to conserve and interpret what is generally held to be true, rather than squabbling about what might be the one and only truth.'
- 'It is firmly asserted that no definitive statement can now ever be made, or at least not one that will find wholesale agreement.'

If the site of a battle is not securely located then interpretation of the events within the landscape is severely devalued. This is because, apart from the issue of commemoration, the central purpose of visiting a battlefield is to appreciate the influence of terrain upon the nature of the action. If one is not visiting the correct location then it will confuse rather than enhance understanding of the event, both in terms of academic research and popular appreciation.

The rapid advances that are being made in battlefield studies, through the integration of the techniques and evidence of military history, historical geography and landscape archaeology, do offer the very real possibility that the events of 1314 can be securely located and placed within a reasonably detailed reconstruction of the terrain as it was on the day of the battle.[12] However the potential to achieve such a resolution of this long standing debate grows ever more difficult to realise with the construction of every new building, road or other destructive changes in the landscape.

Watson & Anderson claim the problems arise partly from the wide ranging nature of medieval battle and also the lack of primary evidence for Bannockburn. In fact medieval battle was typically well ordered and with tight battle formations, which the primary accounts certainly confirm at Bannockburn. Moreover, Bannockburn is one of the better documented of high medieval battles. There are a series of primary accounts, some written reasonably close to the event by individuals who had access to correspondents who were present, and which provide a significant range of topographical detail for individual elements of the action on the two days of fighting. In addition the battle did generate well documented defensive features which should have left major archaeological deposits, while the fighting itself should have left substantial unstratified battle archaeology.

The absence to date of any substantiated physical evidence for the battle, in the form of battle archaeology, is probably as much a result of the failure to look in the correct location as to the absence of such evidence. One thing that might indicate that the battlefield has not

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[11] Watson and Anderson, 2001
[12] Foard et al., 2003; Foard, forthcoming; Fiorato et al., 2000.

been wholly lost beneath 19th and 20th century housing is the apparent absence of any record of mass graves, which must exist on the battlefield and in the areas of the rout and pursuit across the Bannock Burn.

If this matter is to be resolved, thus enabling the relevant areas of the battlefield and its immediate context that have not yet been lost, to be secured for their historic value in the face of development or other destructive land use change, then there is the urgent need for a detailed, adequately funded interdisciplinary project to apply current best practice and to further push the boundaries of battlefield studies.[13] Of all the battles of the medieval period in Scotland, the combination of major threat to the sites and the international significance and impact of the event itself on the nature of warfare in succeeding centuries, justifies such urgent and substantial investigation.

A clear methodology for such a study can be proposed. It is essential when reviewing any battle, but especially one as contentious as Bannockburn, to go back to the primary evidence, as DeVries argues. But one must do this with all evidence, not just the primary accounts of the battle. All the secondary works need to be initially ignored, other than for references to primary sources for terrain and battle. In this way it is possible to remove the many years of accretion of interpretation which are currently confusing our understanding of the battle.

Task 1: the primary documentary sources for the battle:
- Bring together in digital form all the primary accounts in parallel texts of transcription as well as translation, with annotation and commentary regarding specific important elements of interpretation of the terminology, such as for aspects of deployment and of terrain.
- These then need to be processed to produce a concordance of the events and of the terrain and related locational evidence in those accounts.
- Define deployments of the two armies as if in a flat plain, using the evidence in the primary accounts and evidence of contemporary military practice.
- Using this a bald narrative of the events should be produced, with alternatives as necessary for particular elements, and these events then reconstructed as if on a flat plain with only the locational elements provided by the primary accounts themselves being represented. The primary accounts of the battle provide a whole series of pieces topographical evidence which appear to clearly define the terrain within which the action was fought and these need to be isolated and carefully analysed for meaning.

Task 2: reconstruction of the historic terrain as it was at the time of the battle:
Miller's work shows the presence and relevance of primary sources for the medieval and post medieval to enable map regression enhanced with written documentary sources. But

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[13] The principles as defined for England in Foard, forthcoming, are equally applicable to Scottish battlefields.

Miller did not have access to the techniques of landscape archaeology and historical geography, which have been dramatically developed in the last 50 years.

- Define the element of the physical geography, including geology/soils, relief and drainage, to provide the natural skeleton on which to drape the evolving human geography.
- Examine the human geography using primarily documentary evidence but supported by key existing archaeological data and, where essential, through the testing of key elements of terrain through new archaeological investigation. This should define the evolving patterns of enclosed or open fields, roads and settlement an also including the modifications of elements such as moor, marsh and wood.[14]

Task 3: place the deployments and action within the historic terrain
In digital form use the topographical clues in the primary accounts to link to the historic terrain features to create one or more detailed hypotheses as to the location of the principal deployments and of the action.

Task 4: test the hypotheses through investigation of battle archaeology
The various hypotheses can then be assessed in detail through new archaeological work to explore the battle archaeology, which alone can provide wholly independent evidence as to the exact location and character of the events.

2.10   THREATS

Given the difficulties so far encountered in accurately locating the battlefield, it is particularly important that any potential threats on any of alternative sites are seriously assessed. The alternatives for the expansion of Stirling on the south west and south east have been considered in the Stirling Green Belt Appraisal. In the absence of an adequate battlefield investigation, as defined above, it will be impossible for a sufficiently informed planning decision to be taken, either at this wide strategic level or over individual planning applications. What is clear is that the development pressure on the remaining undeveloped areas is in most cases very high and so there is urgent need for a substantial battlefield study to resolve the fundamental issues over the location of both days action of the battle of Bannockburn.

3   REFERENCES
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(1)   Smurthwaite, 1993, 76-79.
(2)   DeVries, 1996, 66-85.
(3)   Watson and Anderson, 2001.
(4)   Scott, 2000
(5)   Strickland and Hardy, 2005

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[14] See Foard, 2003

(6)   NMRS
(7)   Miller, 1931
(8)   Armstrong and Turner, 2002

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- Barbour's poem on Bruce: circa 1375
- Fordun: *Scotichronicon*: c.1384
- *Liber Pluscardensis*: early-mid C15th
- Bower's continuation of the *Scotichronicon*, containing new material: early-mid C15th
- *Brevis cronica*: early C15th

English:
- Trokelowe's *Annales*, c.1330
- Baker's *Chronicon*, started 1341
- *Lanercost Chronicle*, c1346; claiming access to a veteran of the battle.
- *Vita Edwardi Secundi*: c.1348
- Gray's *Scalachronica*, c 1355; his father fought on the first day, while Gray himself was a soldier.
- *Melsa Chronicle*, late 14th century
- Walsingham's *Historia Anglicana*, early 15th century

Three poems:
- Baston, pre 1352
- Minot
- Anon

There are various other lesser accounts of a later date.

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