

Battle Name:	Drumclog	Council area: S Lanarkshire
Date:	1 <sup>st</sup> June 1679	
UKFOC number:	276	

## ***DRUMCLOG***

### **1 SUMMARY**

#### ***1.1 CONTEXT***

As his reign progressed Charles II imposed increasingly extreme controls on non-conformity throughout his kingdoms. In 1679 this led to open revolt by Covenanters in south west Scotland, following the murder of Archbishop Sharp on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1679. The assassins were pursued by John Graham of Claverhouse with a small detachment of horse and dragoons. Claverhouse marched south from Glasgow but, warned of his intention to intercept them at Loudon Hill, the rebels deployed near to the farm of Drumclog, 2km NE of Loudon Hill.(1)

#### ***1.2 ACTION***

Although described as a battle, given the numbers involved, particularly on the government side, this can be considered little more than a skirmish, despite the significance of its repercussions. According to Smurthwaite the rebels deployed behind a marsh. According to Black, and supported by the limited terrain evidence collected for this report, they were behind a ditch and with marshes all around.(1) This effective selection of terrain by the rebels precluded a cavalry attack and so Claverhouse's dragoons dismounted and advanced on foot to within pistol shot. In response the rebels charged against the centre and left flank of the government deployment. Heavily outnumbered, the government forces broke and fled.(2)

In the pursuit there was apparently further fighting. At least two sites are associated with the action: a skirmish at Drumclog bridge, 1.5km north east of the main action, and the claimed graves of government soldiers 4km to the north east at Caldermill. Both these sites lie on the road leading north east from the battlefield towards Glasgow.(3)

#### **Figure 1: Drumclog (1679) - battlefield plan**

#### ***1.3 TROOPS***

Numbers:

*Rebel*: possibly 1500;(2) 4 battalions of foot & 3 squadrons of horse: possibly 1000.(1)  
*Government*: 150.(2)

Losses:

*Government*: c.40;(2) 36 killed.(1)

#### ***1.4 COMMEMORATION & INTERPRETATION***

A battle monument stands immediately to the east of Drumclog.

## **2 ASSESSMENT**

### **2.1 LOCATION**

The general area of the action is known but the exact deployment of the troops is less clear. The marsh provides a clear boundary to the north, while it appears likely that the government forces advanced along the road from the north east via Low Drumclog. What is uncertain is where the ditch lay, behind which the rebel forces deployed. There are also several small areas of marsh to the east as well as to the south, so determining the position of the deployments from the available terrain evidence is difficult. The presence of burials near to the monument may assist in the interpretation, but it is not certain that they do derive from the conflict. From map based assessment of the relief and geology the ditch mentioned by Black may prove to be the stream, lying in a small valley, draining south west from Coldwakning marsh, this would appear the most likely location behind which the rebels might have deployed, with the marsh providing flank protection. However the 1000m frontage this would represent seems inconceivable with the small numbers of troops involved. Without a reconstruction of the pattern of fields in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century it is impossible to determine with confidence behind which hedges or ditches the rebels deployed.

### **2.2 PRIMARY SOURCES**

### **2.3 SECONDARY WORKS**

No modern work has been identified which deals in detail with this action. It is discussed only briefly in the few 20<sup>th</sup> century works on military history in which it is mentioned. There are however a handful of 19<sup>th</sup> century publications which discuss the battle. There are differences between both Black and Smurthwaite as to the terrain and how the events played out within it. There is therefore need for reference back to the primary accounts.

### **2.4 BATTLE ARCHAEOLOGY**

The battle archaeology is likely to be very limited in extent and density, given the small scale of the action. Human bones are recorded close the centre of the battlefield on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey mapping (1860s) and a potential site of a mass grave of government soldiers is reported 4km to the north east at Caldermill.

### **2.5 BATTLEFIELD HISTORIC TERRAIN**

Peat deposits encompass Drumclog on the north side. The modern road, possibly still on the same course as in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, runs from the north east and skirts around to the south east of the Coldwakning marsh. 800m to the south another area of peat appears to define another marsh while another small area lies a shorter distance to the east.

### **2.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BATTLE**

The individual bibliographic scoring appears to give this 'battle' a far higher priority than it deserves in military terms, probably because the political and social importance of the action is far greater than its military significance. Given the small number of troops engaged, particularly on the government side, this can be considered no more than a skirmish. It was however significant in terms of the events of the rebellion, for it

emboldened the rebel forces and led them to attempt to face a far stronger force at Bothwell Bridge (UKFOC 275) later in the month.

## **2.7 CURRENT STATE OF DEVELOPMENT**

There has been some degree of disturbance of the landscape by mineral extraction as there are several shafts of coal mines recorded on the south western side and a tile works and gravel pit on the south east, on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition 6 inch Ordnance Survey mapping. However these may be fairly restricted in impact and the landscape as no extensive areas of made ground are recorded on the geological mapping. The area appears little affected by any other form of development.

## **2.8 CURRENT DESIGNATIONS**

The battle monument is listed. There are no other designations.

## **2.9 POTENTIAL**

The battle archaeology is likely to be very limited in extent and density given the small scale of the action. There is also some evidence which would seem to locate action within the pursuit and there may be battle archaeology associated with these skirmishes as well as with the main action.

Given the relative clarity of the terrain and its apparent good state of preservation it may be that the archaeology of both the terrain and battle represent a good example of a skirmish between regular and essentially civilian forces. The reported human remains were located a short distance to the south of the marsh, but if any of the action did take place within the marsh area then there may be the potential for exceptional preservation of military equipment etc of the period, both in terms of organic material which would normally have decayed on dry sites and as military assemblages of exactly known date. Any such remains are likely to be of high importance in their own right.

Reconstruction of the historic terrain from documentary and archaeological evidence, complemented by a review of the primary documentary sources for the action should enable the more accurate placing of the events in the landscape. This could then be tested by the systematic investigation for battle archaeology. Investigation of the battle archaeology might be of some value in giving an indication of the scale and nature of the pursuit. Although such study may add little substantially to our understanding of the events, only with such investigation would it be possible to identify features in the modern landscape which should be conserved because they were significant terrain features in the action. Also, study of the pursuit in such a relatively undisturbed landscape might enable some more general lessons to be drawn about such small scale actions and the battle archaeology associated with them, which may be quite different in scale and character to that of large scale actions.

## **2.10 THREATS**

The presence of non ferrous battle archaeology renders the site particularly vulnerable to treasure hunting and unrecorded/poorly recorded metal detecting.

## **3 REFERENCES**

(1)Black, C. Stewart. *Scottish battles*. Glasgow: Brown Son & Ferguson, 1936.

(2)Smurthwaite, David. *The Complete Guide to the Battlefields of Britain*. London: Michael Joseph, 1993. p.187.

(3)NMRS

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