

Battle Name:	Dupplin Moor	Council area: Perth & Kinross
Date:	12th August 1332	
UKFOC number:	619	

## ***DUPPLIN MOOR***

### **1 SUMMARY**

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

In 1327 Edward II of England was deposed and replaced by the young Edward III, but with Roger Mortimer as the effective ruler. Robert the Bruce, the Scottish King, took this opportunity to raid into England. The ineffective English response was the disastrous Weardale Campaign of 1327 where a large English army failed to bring the Scottish forces to battle. This led Mortimer to agree, in the Treaty of Northampton, to the English crown renouncing all claims to Scotland. Though in return the Scots were to pay compensation to the various lords for the lands they had lost, these 'dispossessed' still sought the return of their estates in Scotland.

In 1329 Robert the Bruce died and was succeeded by his young son. Now was the opportunity for the dispossessed and for Edward Balliol, who claimed the crown of Scotland by the right of his father King John Balliol, who had reigned in Scotland until 1296. They gained the tacit support of Edward III of England for a 'private' invasion of Scotland. Henry Beaumont was the driving force behind the campaign, together with various other dispossessed lords. In 1332 Balliol's army sailed for Scotland with an expeditionary force comprising largely English troops and some mercenaries. Balliol's intention was to supplant as king of Scotland.

They landed on 6<sup>th</sup> August at Kinghorn (Fife), where they skirmished with and drove off local militia forces. They then marched to Dunfermline to replenish supplies and thence north towards Perth, where the Earl of Mar had mustered the northern Scottish forces in response. Balliol's objective was to engage Mar before he could unite with the Earl of March, who was advancing from the south with another army. (1) (2) (10).

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

The Scottish forces were camped two leagues from Perth and the men at arms held the bridge over the river Earn. The two armies were well aware of each other's positions the day before the battle but in the night the English crossed the river by a nearby ford and attack a Scottish camp near Gask. The English then took up a position to the left of the Scots and holding the Moor (2) (10).

The Scots drew up in either two or three divisions. The English, in an attempt to counterbalance the fact that they were heavily outnumbered, drew up behind a narrow passage which gave frontage of just 200 yards. They may have deployed in three lines with the archers on the flanks, and with the infantry in the centre perhaps 4 deep, with

dismounted men-at-arms in the front three ranks and spearmen in the rear rank. Behind this they maintained a small, mounted cavalry reserve of about 40 German mercenaries. The lessons of Bannockburn, with its destruction of massed English cavalry by schiltrons of spears, had clearly been heeded by Beaumont. But the borrowing of Scottish tactics, with the use of spears, was not new. Harcla, another commander of the northern English Marches, had already applied similar tactics to great effect at Boroughbridge in 1322.

As in so many key battles of the following hundred years, the English forces took a defensive position and it was the Scots who advanced to the attack. They moved forward to engage in a wedge formation, led by Robert Bruce's battalion, in what seems to have been a somewhat disordered attack. The Scots may not have been adequately armoured, for the arrowstorm from the English archers had a significant impact causing many wounds in the faces of the Scots front divisions. Despite this, Bruce's schiltron came to close quarters and began to push back the English infantry, some 20 – 30 yards.

The English counterattacked at pushed of spear and with continuing action by the archers. This forced Mar to commit his rearguard battalion, seconding Bruce's vanguard. But this was done in a disordered fashion, pressing behind them in the confined space rather than relieving them. Combined with the English push of spears and the continuing flights of arrows, Bruce's battalion was squeezed between the enemy and their own reserve. Many of the Scots fell over in the crush. While the English maintained their battle line, the Scottish formation broke. Many of the Scots who had fallen in the crush, if not already suffocated, were now dispatched by the English infantry. Meanwhile the mounted men-at-arms drove forward in pursuit of the rear ranks of Scots, who had begun to retreat or rout. The combined losses to suffocation and the English swords were, according to various sources, exceptionally high. (1) (2)

Though several primary sources say that the battle lasted from sunrise through most of the day, this would be very exceptional as most battles seem to have lasted no more than three hours, some far less.

### **1.3 TROOPS**

Beaumont was the driving force in Balliol's army, a highly capable commander with good combat experience including the battles of Falkirk and Bannockburn, while the army of the dispossessed was clearly highly motivated. The Scottish army was considerably larger than the English, and fairly well equipped, though the losses to English archery may suggest that a considerable number of the Scottish troops lacked adequate head/face protection (2). Rogers argues that the English sources probably fairly accurately record the English troop numbers and the Scottish losses, but that they vastly inflate the Scottish army (10).

#### **Numbers:**

*English:* 500 men at arms, 1000 infantry/archers (1); primary sources range from 500 (3) to 3300 (4), (2); 2076-2500 (10)

Scots: largely infantry, but primary sources vary wildly between 4000–24,000 and so modern authors do not suggest Scottish troop numbers (2);

#### **Losses:**

Scots: 1200 men-at-arms; 800 horse; 58 knights; 18 bannerettes; many common soldiers (1, quoting Bridlington). The Scottish losses, numbered in thousands, were exceptional (2).

English: slight (1); 2 knights, 33 soldiers but no archers (2);

### **1.4 COMMEMORATION & INTERPRETATION**

The Dupplin Cross, a 9<sup>th</sup> century Pictish cross, stood on the traditional site of the battle. It is said on the Historic Scotland website to now be in St Serf's church in Dunning village (5). It could possibly have been moved to the battle site as a memorial or, perhaps more likely, the battle has simply become associated with a pre-existing cross that lay on or near the battlefield.

## **2 ASSESSMENT**

### **2.1 LOCATION**

The exact route followed by the English army is not clear from the secondary works consulted, but if the primary sources enable its accurate identification then this may assist in the interpretation of the exact location of the English army's crossing of the Earn, for the Bridge of Earn is more than 8 km to the east of Dupplin Moor and so it needs to be clarified whether this is the bridge meant. This in turn is likely to assist in the location and orientation of the principal deployments. If Balliol did march first to Dunfermline then the route taken is likely to have been the road recorded in 1776, via Kinross. (5)

According to Wyntoun, the English deployed between the Scots army and the river (2). The Brut describes Bruce advancing to the attack over 'Gaskmoor' meeting the enemy 'on a downward slope of the moor in a narrow passage' (10), which would broadly agree with Wyntoun. However the location of Gaskmoor requires further work, but it is likely to be distinct from and further west than Dupplin Moor, though it may be that action spread across both moors. All the primary sources need to be consulted to establish if further specific topographical detail exists to assist in the accurate placing of the action for without it there is a major problem in the locating of the battlefield and especially of the principal deployments and the action.

The location given by the Ordnance Survey 2<sup>nd</sup> edition map of 1900 is described as the 'supposed site of the battle of Dupplin', and is associated with the Dupplin Cross. The problem with this location is that it sits on the sloping ground on the edge of the fields shown by Roy, with the presumed moor immediately to the north. This is however the traditional site of the battle for Stobie in 1783 records the site as immediately to the at the top of the scarp of the Earn valley, with the Dupplin Den 500m to the north east (7). This is the edge of the area of the moor as depicted by Roy in 1755. But there is no obvious topographical feature that might have created the narrow pass that appears to have played a key role in the action, though some hedged or similar features might have existed.

## **2.2 PRIMARY SOURCES**

Dupplin Moor is well documented, for a medieval battle, and includes sources from both the Scottish as well as the English perspective. Strickland provides useful referencing to many of the primary sources, while DeVries provides a fuller list of primary sources and quotes extensively from them. Extracts in translation of several sources are given by Rogers (10).

## **2.3 SECONDARY WORKS**

Given the importance of the battle in tactical developments, it is inexplicable that Dupplin Moor is omitted by most of the UK and Scottish battlefield books and that there has been no detailed individual study of the battle. It is however discussed in some detail by Strickland, with detailed referencing to primary sources, and DeVries provides even more information, comparing the evidence from different sources in developing his interpretation of the battle. However, none of the works consulted have hazarded a map showing the location of deployments or action. Oman's account, based initially on Morris (1897), includes quotes from Bridlington, Lanercost and Knighton, in the original Latin. It provides a useful outline of the action with some topographical information (11).

## **2.4 BATTLE ARCHAEOLOGY**

One contemporary source says that the dead were buried in a large deep ditch (2). It is also reported that several 'ancient weapons' were found six feet below the surface in Dupplin Parks and presented to Perth Museum in 1814, though whether this has any relevance to the battle is unclear (6).

## **2.5 BATTLEFIELD HISTORIC TERRAIN**

The Roy map of 1755 shows an extensive area of non agricultural land on the higher ground, to the north of a narrow strip of fields on the northern slopes of the Earn valley, but by that date the Dupplin House landscape park had already been laid out across much of this moor and field land (7). Stobie records the Mill of Moor close to where the Dupplin Den is now crossed by the A9 and this may be recognition of the location of Dupplin Moor prior to its conversion into a landscape park. In the open ground on the Ordnance Survey mapping of 1900 there are various moor names relating to adjacent settlements (9).

## **2.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BATTLE**

The immediate political outcome was dramatic but in the medium term effects were limited. Dupplin Moor enabled Edward Balliol to depose Bruce, being crowned king of Scotland on 24<sup>th</sup> September 1332. However he was soon forced to flee to England, on the 17<sup>th</sup> December, by the forces under the Earl of Moray. Edward III then gave support to Balliol, raising forces to besiege Berwick, then in Scottish hands, leading directly to the battle of Halidon Hill. (2)

Dupplin Moor was a long and bloody battle, with a much smaller English army causing substantial Scottish losses. It showed in dramatic fashion that the schiltrons, which had been so effective against massed cavalry at Bannockburn, was extremely vulnerable to a

combination of massed longbow and dismounted men-at-arms, harking back to the English tactics and success in the 1138 battle of Northallerton. Dupplin Moor is thus of the highest importance in military terms because it was the battle which ushered in the dramatic late medieval military supremacy of the English longbow, making English armies a dominant force in Western European warfare for more than a century with victories such as Crecy and Agincourt.

## **2.7 CURRENT STATE OF DEVELOPMENT**

Given the uncertainties of location of the battlefield, it is difficult to define its exact state of development. The A9 crosses the area, though perhaps to the north west of the battlefield. Otherwise the area remains a largely undisturbed designed landscape associated with Dupplin Castle. This post medieval design has dramatically altered the character of the landscape from that of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, while the landscaping works themselves and the Castle together with its ancillary buildings may have caused substantial damage to any battle archaeology in specific areas, depending on the exact location of the action.

## **2.8 CURRENT DESIGNATIONS**

The only Scheduled monument in the area is the ruined remnant of Dupplin Church, which is also listed. Dupplin Cross, a 9<sup>th</sup> century cross that has become associated with the battle, is also listed. All the other listed buildings in the area are of 18<sup>th</sup> century or later date and are associated with the Castle and its park. The landscape park itself is not however included on the inventory of Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes. Dupplin Lakes and the associated woodland, all to the north west of the A9, are an SSSI.

## **2.9 POTENTIAL**

It is essential that further research is undertaken on the historic terrain of the Dupplin area, combined with a re-analysis of all the primary accounts, in an attempt to accurately locate this important battlefield. Given the likelihood that the site lies wholly or partly within the Dupplin parkland, it may prove to be a relatively well preserved site, especially if a large part of the land has remained under pasture.

## **2.10 THREATS**

None have been identified.

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- (3) Skene, F. J. H. (1877) *Liber Pluscardensis*. NOT CONSULTED
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- (5) NMRS: NO01NE 6
- (6) NMRS: NO01NE 14, quoting *Transactions of the Perth Literary and Antiquarian Society*, 1827.

- (7) Stobie, Map of Perth & Clackmananshires, 1783
- (8) Roy, Military Survey of Scotland, 1747-1755
- (9) Ordnance Survey, 6 inch 2<sup>nd</sup> edition mapping, 1900.
- (10) Rogers, C. J. (1999) *The Wars of Edward III: sources and interpretations*, The Boydell Press, Woodbridge.
- (11) Oman, C. W. C. (1924) *A history of the art of war in the Middle Ages*, Methuen, London. 103-6.

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