

Battle Name:	Philiphaugh	Council area: Scottish Borders
Date:	13th September 1645	
UKFOC number:	278	

## ***PHILIPHAUGH***

### **1 SUMMARY**

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

After the success of Kilsyth, Montrose intended to recruit his army before attempting to complete his military control in Scotland. But his Highland troops were disaffected when their plundering of Glasgow was heavily punished and within a few days many had deserted. Aboyne also left with most of the cavalry when Montrose appointed the Earl of Crawford as commander of the horse, while some 800 were sent north to protect their lands, reducing the army to little more than the 500 Irish troops and a few cavalry. Marching east through the Lowlands he was unable to raise significant numbers of new recruits. Not only was much of the area strongly Covenanter, the Highland and Irish troops may also have been unwelcome in the region because of the long trail of plundering and disorder that they had wreaked across Scotland over the preceding year, at places as far apart as Glasgow and Aberdeen.

Montrose marched into the Borders to disrupt the mustering of the Covenanter levies and then, turning south from Kelso to Jedburgh and then west to Selkirk, he camped on the 12<sup>th</sup> September at Philiphaugh. However he suffered from poor intelligence from his scouts, for he was unaware that, on the 6<sup>th</sup> September, Sir David Leslie had marched north from England with a large army. On the 11<sup>th</sup> Leslie had rendezvoused with Lothian forces at Gladsmuir (west of Haddington), and then again unbeknown to Montrose, marched south, approaching Selkirk on the night of the 12th (1) (6) (2).

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

In the night Leslie sent out parties to fall onto the royalist quarters, with the main skirmish said to have been at Sunderland. Though several royalists escaped to Selkirk, their report of Leslie's army being at hand was foolishly dismissed (14). Leslie's forces spent the night in a wooded valley, suggested by the Philiphaugh Ballad as in the area of Linglie Burn or perhaps further north east towards Minglie Hill (18) (16). In the morning when the royalist scouts were sent out they failed to locate the Covenanter army. Early morning mist may provide a partial justification, but this was another fundamental failing on the royalist side. Another serious tactical mistake by Montrose was that while the infantry were at Philiphaugh, he and many of his officers and some cavalry were quartered across the river in Selkirk that night. Thus the officers were more than a kilometre away across the river, and many failed to get to their units before the action began. According to local tradition, recorded in a house name in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Montrose himself stayed in a house close to the West Port of Selkirk (2).

In the morning, shrouded in mist, the Covenanter forces advanced. The alarm was not raised until they were within half a mile of the rebel army. Montrose rushed to his army from Selkirk but when he arrived he found his forces at the rendezvous point in disorder and, in the absence of many officers, had difficulty deploying all his forces effectively. Indeed, many of the royalist cavalry never came into the action, with perhaps as few as 80 troopers being initially deployed on the right wing, while only about 500 foot were deployed in the hedged enclosures (15). But Montrose had at least deployed in a very advantageous position: 'on one hand an unpassable ditch, and on the other Dikes and Hedges, and where these were not strong enough, they further fortified them by casting up ditches, and lined their Hedges with Musketeers.' (6). Reid, quoting Wishart and Gordon, suggests that there were just 200 Irish foot and 100 cavalry (14).

Reid claims that the Ballad, which is followed by Robson and several other secondary works, is wrong in suggesting a detachment of Leslie's army marched around to the north to attack from the hills. Instead, quoting Wishart, he indicates that the outflanking move was across the river to the south. The Covenanter forces advancing directly across the haugh, charged Montrose's right wing and were twice repulsed. Royalist musketeers inexplicably advanced from the enclosures but were driven back. Then a rebel cavalry counter-attack broke through but, having crossed the ditch, they had to continue on away from the field northward, unable to play a further part in the action. Still unable to break the royalist horse, Leslie himself led forward an attack on the left flank of the royal forces and broke their foot. In the meantime the party of some 2000 Covenanter horse sent across the river had outflanked Montrose and, crossing back, attacked the flank and rear of the rebel horse. Assailed on all sides, and galled by musket fire from a distance, the horse now retreated and fled. The foot however could not withdraw, presumably because they dare not abandon the security of the enclosures for the open ground to the west, and so some of them stood and fought a little longer, but finally surrendered (15) (4).

The initial deployment and action began around 10:00 and took up to an hour, while the main action lasted another 1 hour (15). Though Reid remarks upon the length of the action, suggesting that it unusual given the disparity of numbers and may suggest that other battles were somewhat longer than has previously been believed. However it must be remembered that this action was largely one of a cavalry assault against infantry that were securely deployed in enclosures. This meant that the cavalry were at a severe disadvantage and may well explain why the action lasted far longer than the disparity of numbers would lead one to suspect.

Though some accounts suggest less than 20 foot and about 200 royalist horse escaped, others indicate that perhaps as many as 250 later rejoined Montrose at Peebles that night (15). But, though Montrose and some of his foot and horse had escaped, his army was effectively destroyed, with most of the Irish troops either killed in the action or executed after they surrendered, together with some of the camp followers. (3) (6) (13).

### **1.3 TROOPS**

Montrose had perhaps 1500 infantry and a few cavalry but, faced by a cavalry attack by at least five regiments, consisting of some 4000 troops. The Covenanter force not only outnumbered the royalists, but it comprised a large proportion of seasoned troops. Like their highly experienced and capable commander, David Leslie, many had seen service in the war in England and had probably fought in several major actions, most notably Marston Moor. There is unusually detailed and accurate information on the Covenanter regiments present and their strengths, thanks to detailed pay records (14).

#### **Numbers:**

Royalist: 2000 foot, 800-1000 horse (3); 500 Irish foot, 1120 horse (14).

Covenanter: 4500 horse and some dragoons (1); 5000-6000 (2); 700 foot, 400 dragoons, 2940 horse in 6 regiments (14).

#### **Losses:**

Royalist: 1400 foot, some of which were captured but most killed (5); perhaps 250 foot and just a few horse killed (14)

Covenanter: only 15 common soldiers and 1 captain killed (6)

### **1.4 COMMEMORATION & INTERPRETATION**

There is a monument commemorating the Covenanters who fought at Philiphaugh. It is a stone-cobbled cairn which is about 20 foot high and 18 yards around the base (16). It stands close to Harehead Wood (NT 4399 2779), on an earthwork which some have associated with the battle. Associated with it are two 13th century moulded bases, parts of a 17th century tombstone, and an armorial panel bearing the arms of Sir John Murray, who erected the monument in 1848 (11) (7) (8). An illustration and transcript of the inscription is given by Robson (2).

## **2 ASSESSMENT**

### **2.1 LOCATION**

Various sources indicate that the battle was fought in Tividale (3) at Philiphaugh (1). The ballad suggests that Leslie's forces approached the battlefield along the Tweed valley and then south-west up the Etterick, crossing Linglie Burn (16). This implies a Covenanter approach along the north side of the Etterick and an attack from the north east.

In 1897 Robson suggests that the action took place in the area of Lauriston Villa and the Cricket Field (345850 628310). He also locates action in the area of the Covenanter memorial, which had been erected in 1848, presumably in the belief that this marked the main area of the action and the earthwork part of the defence thrown up by the royalists. Craig-Brown also identifies Leslie Cottage, near Beechwood and Thirladean (344630 627840) as lying within the action (2). Such interpretations may derive from the ballad of Philiphaugh which says that the battle began at Philiphaugh but ended at Harehead Wood, 2km to the west (16).

The presence of enclosures on Roy's map of the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century gives an approximate location for the action, which accords well with the traditional location for the battle recorded on Mitchell's map of Selkirkshire in 1851. The last stand of the Irish is said in some secondary accounts to have been at Philiphaugh Farm, though this is not in the primary accounts consulted, while the camp followers (in some secondary accounts the Irish soldiers) are said to have been marched to Newark Castle and dispatched in the adjacent Slain Mens Lea. The latter are however some 3km to the north west along the Yarrow valley from Philiphaugh and, unless there was a long rout and pursuit to this location, or it was the site of the royalist camp or baggage train, it seems too great a long distance from the main action.

Though the general area of the principal deployments seem clear from the enclosures on the Roy map, the detail of the deployments is far from certain. Reid suggests the Irish foot were deployed facing northward but with the flank of the army on the Philhope Burn, and the cavalry covering the right flank between the river and the enclosures. It is difficult to match such a disposition within the detail of topography indicated by Roy (14). What is clear is that the royalist foot were deployed in the centre in enclosures, that the cavalry were all on the right wing adjacent to the river and that there was no cavalry on the royalist left wing. There appear two possible orientations for these deployments, one with the royalist forces facing north, the other with them facing east. The latter seems more likely as it is easier to relate to the terrain from Roy, while it also makes more sensible the traditions of action, presumably the rout and pursuit, extending westward into the valley of the Yarrow to Harehead Wood and beyond to Newark Castle.

## **2.2 PRIMARY SOURCES**

There are a good series of primary accounts of the battle, representing both sides of the conflict, and providing significant topographical detail. Of these, Campbell provides only a list of prisoners taken. Wishart is reprinted in Robson. Wishart was Montrose's chaplain and was present at the battle and this is likely to be a reliable witness on many details (14). The official Covenanter report, the so called Haddington report, is reprinted in Elliot and, together with Thompson, is also available online from Early English Books Online. Gordon (sometimes described as Ruthven) provides another detailed account of the action (not consulted here). The Ballad of Philiphaugh is used by various authors to provide detail that is missing from the other accounts, but it must be treated with care as it must have been compiled long after 1650, and grossly distorts the troop numbers while various other details such as the references to Dunbar and Solway Moss are clearly in error (16).

## **2.3 SECONDARY WORKS**

According to Reid, the best secondary account is by Elliot, but by far the most useful and detailed modern account of the battle is that by Reid himself. He also provides a discussion of the preceding and succeeding events of the campaign (14). Robson's work is largely unreferenced but he does provide some significant supporting notes. The accounts by Seymour, Kinross and Warner are of little value, the latter being the only secondary work

to provide a plan of the battle, but a plan which shows Leslie attacking from the south west not the north or north east, which seems to be the broad consensus of other authors. None of the more extensive and detailed battle accounts hazard a plan of the battle.

#### **2.4 BATTLE ARCHAEOLOGY**

None of the archaeological finds that have been associated with the battle can be securely related to the battle. Firstly there are the human remains recorded in 1810 where a school was being at Slain Mens Lea (NT 424 288), said to be the remains of some of Montrose's army who fought at Philiphaugh (1) (11). Then there is the low linear earthwork recorded within Philiphaugh park on the Ordnance survey map of 1863 (at NT 4399 2776 - NT 4399 2782), consisting of a bank about 20ft wide with a ditch of similar width along its W side, running from the bank of the Yarrow northward across the valley bottom. It has been identified by some as the earthwork thrown up by the royalists prior to the battle. Robson states it was more extensive but many years before 1897 having been largely levelled by ploughing (2) (12). The identification seem unlikely, not only because it is more than 1km from the Philiphaugh enclosures, but also because the earthwork formerly extended on the other side of the Yarrow (12).

Several years before 1897 'in a hollow piece of ground near Harehead Wood, in 'Leslie's Field', 'a quantity of silver plate' was found. Robson associates this with the battle (2, 112). Silver coins of the period were also reported as having been found in the 19<sup>th</sup> century on a haugh of the Tinnis (Tinnis Farm lies upstream along the Yarrow) and given to Sir Walter Scott. More likely to be associated with the battle may be other finds of contemporary silver coins in the general area of the battlefield (2). A flintlock gun, also said to be associated with the battle, was in 1897 in Philiphaugh House (2, 112), but today artefacts from the battlefield are in Haliwell House Museum, Selkirk (17).

#### **2.5 BATTLEFIELD HISTORIC TERRAIN**

Philiphaugh is a farm or hamlet that lies on the north-west side of the River Ettrick, 1.5km across the river from the town of Selkirk, where a bridge took the Selkirk to Edinburgh road across the river. It lies on a narrow plain between the river and the hills to the north, extending about 3km from the confluence with the Yarrow stream on the south west to what was in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century the site of the bridge, 1km to the north east of the present bridge, where the Linglie hills extend right up to the river. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the main road from Edinburgh and the north approached along the Tweed valley and then, from Sunderland, along the Etterick, crossing the river into Selkirk downstream of the present bridge (13).

In the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century Roy shows a very narrow, fragmentary stretch of meadow beside the river. At that time most of the plain was unenclosed field land, with open and apparently uncultivated ground on the slopes and hills to the north. In just one location, round an isolated farm immediately south west of Philiphaugh Farm, there was a significant area of enclosed fields. These stretched almost the whole way across the plain from meadow on the south to the lower slopes of the hills to the north (7). There were no other enclosed fields in the surrounding area at that time and thus probably also in 1645, hence

these enclosures would seem to accord with the hedges used by the royalists for their principal deployment.

On the battlefield map presented here the enclosures from Roy have been crudely plotted, but far more accurate mapping is required to securely place these enclosures, which are critical to the accurate placing of the battle.

## **2.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BATTLE**

There is some argument as to how completely the defeat at Philiphaugh was in destroying Montrose's army. However, even if he did manage to salvage the core of an army about which he could potential recruit a new force, the defeat had shattered his aura of invincibility. This was perhaps more than anything else the most important outcome of the battle. After Philiphaugh he found it impossible to build another army capable of challenging the Covenanters in open battle; all he could do was to maintain a guerrilla war through the winter. Hence Philiphaugh was thus the decisive battle of the Civil War in Scotland, and marked the end of the end of any slight chance that Charles I still had, in the autumn of 1645, of salvaging something by force of arms in the Civil War anywhere in his three kingdoms.

## **2.7 CURRENT STATE OF DEVELOPMENT**

There has been piecemeal development across the battlefield since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but the vast majority of the land still remains undeveloped, with intensive development restricted to the north east side of the A707, beside the bridge. It appears likely that the latter has only affected the area of Leslie's advance, in battle array, rather than any part of the action, though this needs confirmation. A late 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century realignment of the mill leat, the modern fish farm and earthmoving associated with the construction of the sports ground have also caused damage, while Martin's reports rubble being dumped on a field behind the site of the mill (17). Depending on the exact location of the enclosures depicted by Roy, and the exact position of deployments, it may be that the leat, fish farm and houses have cause substantial if restricted damage in a critical area of the battlefield, where the cavalry action was focussed, but this cannot be confirmed at present.

## **2.8 CURRENT DESIGNATIONS**

The earthwork bank and ditch adjacent to the Covenanter monument is scheduled but, despite various claims to the contrary, it seems unlikely that it is in any way related to the battle. The Covenanter monument is listed, as is an adjacent fragment of a late 18<sup>th</sup> century bridge and the sawmill on the western part of the battlefield, but all these post date the battle. Newark Castle, which by tradition is associated with the battle, is both scheduled and listed and is the one building which pre-dates the battle. Bowhill, on the west side of the Yarrow and thus beyond the battlefield, is included on the Inventory of Historic Gardens and Designed landscapes, but Philiphaugh Park, which encompasses part of the battlefield is not on the Inventory. The River Etterick itself, which forms the southern boundary of the battlefield, is an SSSI, but although downstream small areas of floodplain are also included, none of the adjacent land is included in the designation in the area of the battlefield.

## **2.9 POTENTIAL**

The crude analysis of the historic terrain presented here suggests that it should be possible to accurately locate the principal deployments and the action. Of particular importance for this is the terrain evidence from Roy.

The interpretation could then be tested with survey of the battle archaeology, for there is a high potential for the survival of good battle archaeology, particularly in terms of unstratified bullet distributions, as long as there has not been intensive, unsystematic and unrecorded metal detecting across the area. The cavalry action may be expected to be represented by a concentration of pistol and carbine bullets, while the infantry versus dragoon/infantry should be marked by mainly musket bullets, or a mixture of all types where cavalry were also involved in the assaults on the enclosures, as in Leslie's flanking attack. The pattern, when taken with a detailed reconstruction of the terrain should enable resolution of the conflict between the secondary interpretations as to the orientation of the deployments and direction of the attacks. An intensive survey of the battle archaeology should make it possible to establish the degree to which, if at all, the later action extended westward from Philiphaugh towards Slain Mens Lea (near Newark Castle), where human remains have been found, suggested as related to the execution of the routed royalist infantry or of camp followers.

Since the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century a substantial area has been emparked in a newly created landscape park around the newly constructed Philiphaugh House. This involved extensive planting of trees in an area where no woodland previously existed. Some if not all of the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century enclosures have been removed or replanned, and the major (and possibly the minor) road system has been realigned, most notably with the moving of the bridge over the Etterick. The course of the river itself seems to have been significantly altered, as have the mill leats. This all makes very difficult the accurate location let alone accurate mapping of the enclosures shown by Roy. However, given that these and the associated stream and river courses are critical to the accurate location of the principal deployments and main action, so they require accurate reconstruction through detailed historic map regression, complemented with existing evidence from landscape archaeology, including from early vertical aerial photography, and also field inspection. This would also enable any features, particularly the critical hedgerows, that survive from 1645, to be identified and included in a conservation strategy for the battlefield.

## **2.10 THREATS**

No major threats have been identified, but there is the potential for development and other land use change in and around the various existing 20<sup>th</sup> century building and other facilities, such as cricket field and fish farm, scattered across particularly the south eastern part of the battlefield.

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- (9) Mitchell's map of Selkirkshire, 1851
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- (11) NMRS: NT42NE3 & NT42NW 22
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