

Archaeological Statement

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This statement has been prepared at the request of the Prestonpans 1745 Battlefield Trust, which via the Heritage Lottery Fund sponsored an archaeological assessment of the battlefield. This project was undertaken by the Centre for Battlefield Archaeology at Glasgow University and was directed by Dr Tony Pollard with the assistance of Natasha Ferguson. This statement is not intended to replace the Inventory entry for the battlefield prepared by the author for Historic Scotland in 2008 but may be used to further inform some of the information contained within that document (it was prepared in advance of the fieldwork which forms the basis of this statement). The project, which included documentary research, metal detector surveys, geophysical surveys and limited excavation, was run as a community initiative through the Trust, with local people participating as volunteers on the project and local metal detector clubs providing teams for the metal detector surveys.

The recommendations made in this statement are based on the results of the survey and should be read in conjunction with the full report provided on the work in late 2009 (Pollard and Ferguson 2009). In summary, the project succeeded in locating the position of the initial encounter between the government and Jacobite armies, in fields around Seton West Mains, and several hundred metres further to the east than it was originally assumed to be located. Further survey work is recommended in this area to further define the location and movements of the two armies, as revealed by artefact scatters, but there can be little doubt, on the basis of the material already recovered and plotted, that this area represents the core of the battlefield (i.e. the location at which the two armies formed up, the ground over which the Jacobite charge took place and the main fighting took place – the rout of the government troops took in a greater area, extending as far west as Preston House).

Prestonpans was a mobile action with the government forces quickly routed to the west by the Jacobite charge and earlier elements of the survey attempted to recover evidence for this rapid movement. Unfortunately the ground between the site of the initial encounter and the eastern walls of the parks surrounding Preston House, were covered during the interwar years and after by housing schemes and the power station. Although this has clearly had an impact on the battle terrain, the discovery by residents of musket balls in their own gardens suggested that artefacts do survive in-situ. Accordingly part of the project was given over to a metal detector survey of resident's gardens, in several locations across the housing schemes. While these proved very successful as far as the outreach objectives of the project were concerned little or no material relating to the battle was recovered during this exercise.

Further areas were also subject to metal detector survey and these included: The open fields between the eastern walls of the parks associated with Bankton House; fields immediately to the north of Tranent churchyard - the vicinity of the Dovecote; the open area in the vicinity of Thorntree Mains; an area adjacent to the eastern side of the Preston House park walls and on either side of the route of the 18th century wagon way which has traditionally been associated with the battle.

Only the latter of these areas produced finds which can unequivocally be associated with the battle. Several lead carbine balls were recovered from these two fields, both of which are partially covered by a Scheduled area. The Scheduled Ancient Monument is not related to the battle but a crop mark site thought to perhaps be associated with Iron Age activity (the site has never been tested through excavation). Given that most history books show the Jacobites charging across the wagon way, from the east, toward the government line positioned to the west of this linear feature, it was initially thought that these fields may have contained dense concentrations of material denoting the location of the initial encounter.

However, the recovery of only a very few carbine balls, probably fired by government dragoons, was not in keeping with expected quantity of finds resulting from the main encounter between the two armies. It was then that interest moved to the fields around Seton West Mains, further to the east. Metal detecting in this area resulted in the recovery of a larger assemblage of finds and there can be little doubt that this is associated with the battle. These included Jacobite and government musket balls (the former being slightly smaller than the latter), cannon shot and pieces of broken weaponry (see Pollard and Ferguson 2010).

It is clear from the above that the core of the battlefield is located to the east of the wagon way, and that rather than being crossed only by the Jacobites, as they charged, it was crossed by both armies as the fleeing government troops were pursued to the west by the victorious Jacobites. The extent of the artefact scatter suggests that the battlefield area extends some considerable distance to the east, beyond the farm of Seton West Mains. This area was included within the Historic Scotland Battlefield Inventory but the results do suggest that the battlefield is better preserved than was first assumed.

On the basis of these findings the area of the battlefield as shown on the Historic Scotland Inventory map should perhaps be extended slightly further to the east (though this could be verified by further metal detector survey) but also importantly take in the area of Seton village as it existed at the time of the battle. The Jacobite force entered onto the battlefield after passing through a marsh via the Riggon-Head defile immediately to the east of the former village. The site of the village, which exists between Seton Farm to the west and Seton House to the east is currently undeveloped and so the potential for well preserved archaeological remains relating to the village are very high. It is very rare to find a historic battlefield with an associated settlement which now exists as buried remains and therefore as an archaeological site (though

there has as yet been no attempt to assess this condition through archaeological evaluation).

The only formerly upstanding remains to be examined through excavation were those relating to the former site of Preston House, which today corresponds to an area immediately to the south of the community centre. The small scale excavation, which attracted a large number of visitors during an open day, revealed that the foundations of the house had been removed, leaving only 'robber trenches'. Despite the absence of substantial archaeological deposits it is recommended that on-site signage provide information on the house and its history.

The area to be considered within any management plan should take into account the various elements of the battlefield. These include:

- i. the vantage point at Birslic Brae from which the Hanoverian army was initially viewed below.
- ii. Tranent churchyard and The Manse where Colonel Gardiner died.
- iii. The Riggonhead Defile passing from east of Tranent and emerging just west of Seton village.
- iv. The fields at Seton West Mains where the initial engagement took place. This should include the area already included on the Historic Scotland Battlefield Inventory map and also take in the site of Seton village as it existed in 1756 (see above).
- v. All the area between Seton West Mains and Jacobite Way, Prestonpans, including the Wagon way – being the land across which pursuit took place after the initial engagement.
- vi. The Memorial cairn erected in 1933.
- vii. Bankton House and the Gardiner obelisk to the north of the house.
- viii. Johnnie Cope Road/ Way being the line of escape by Cope's dragoons after defeat (there are local accounts of musket balls being recovered to the west of Bankton House but this area has not been subject to survey).
- ix. Cockenzie House.

For the area immediately to the south of Cockenzie Power Station, across which the pursuit of the fleeing redcoats occurred, the Trust in the first instance seeks an archaeological survey of this area which may lead to the restitution of the field once there is no longer any need for coal trains to pass through the cutting.

The issue of overhead cables is one that has been raised by the Trust but their removal underground will have an archaeological implication which should be considered prior to any such decision.

For the Wagon way across which both sides passed from Seton West Mains to the walls of Preston House, it is recommended that: [a] conservation and interpretation of the Wagon way is undertaken as this is a significant industrial heritage artefact; [b] demolition of the Coal Store which straddles the old route of the Wagon way to Cockenzie Harbour and restitution so far as is

reasonably possible of the Wagon way with northerly connection to the John Muir Way.

The site of the Coal Store should be wholly discontinued as 'industrial land' once no longer required and any development there should be wholly compatible with the proper interpretation of the Wagon way as an 18th century industrial heritage artefact associated with the battle.

Local landowners should be encouraged to deny permission for metal detecting on their properties unless this is as part of an archaeological survey. It is clear from the results of the metal detecting at Seton West Mains that had this been a more informal event, without the GPS recording of finds, then an incredibly important body of evidence would have been lost.