



This battle was researched and assessed against the criteria for inclusion on the Inventory of Historic Battlefields set out in Historic Environment Scotland Policy Statement June 2016 <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/advice-and-support/planning-and-guidance/legislation-and-guidance/historic-environment-scotland-policy-statement/>.

The results of this research are presented in this report.

The site does not meet the criteria at the current time as outlined below (see reason for exclusion).

Carberry Hill

Alternative Names: None

15 June 1567

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Overview

Following the murder of Lord Darnley, the husband of Mary Queen of Scots, the Earl of Bothwell, James Hepburn, married Mary, despite suspicions he was involved in Darnley's killing. Many of the leading nobles of Scotland were bitterly opposed to this development, and it appeared that there would be a rising, particularly aimed against Bothwell. Mary and Bothwell fled from Edinburgh to Dunbar Castle. There they raised a force and marched towards Edinburgh. The nobles who were opposed to Bothwell marched to intercept them and the two forces confronted each other at Carberry Hill near Musselburgh. No fighting took place and Mary gave herself up to the 'Confederate Lords' as they were known, whilst Bothwell fled. This encounter was in effect an 'armed stand-off'. It was not a battle.

Reason for exclusion

Although the forces of the two opposing sides do gather and form in preparation for battle, there is no actual engagement between them, as the situation is peacefully resolved by Mary's voluntary surrender. As the location where Mary is taken into captivity, there is an argument that it is a location of historic significance in its own right, however it lies out with the remit and criteria for inclusion on the Inventory of Historic Battlefields.

Historical Background to the Battle

The marriage of Queen Mary to James Hepburn, the Earl of Bothwell, took place on May 15, 1567 in the Chapel of Holyrood Palace, Edinburgh. For

Inventory of Historic Battlefields

Research report



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Marie Stuart, this union was the first step on the “road to Fotheringhay.” (Fotheringhay Castle being the place of her execution.)

Following the marriage of Queen Mary to the Earl of Bothwell, tensions appeared between the queen and her nobles as there was a suspicion that the Earl of Bothwell and Mary were part of the conspiracy to murder Mary’s first husband, Lord Darnley.

During her first marriage with Lord Darnley, Mary was unhappy as her husband spent his nights carousing with disreputable friends in Edinburgh’s taverns and brothels. Mary turned to her close circle of friends for comfort. Among them was an Italian courtier named David Rizzio. Rizzio was Mary’s private secretary. Darnley grew jealous of the attention that Mary paid to Rizzio and, encouraged by a group of Protestant nobles, came to believe that his wife and Rizzio were having an affair. Darnley and the nobles plotted in secret to murder Rizzio.

In March 1566, when Rizzio was murdered, the Earl of Bothwell helped to plan Mary’s escape from Holyroodhouse to Dunbar Castle. A year later, on the night of 9 February 1567, the Provost’s lodgings at Kirk o’ Field where Lord Darnley was staying were destroyed by a massive explosion. Darnley’s body was found in a neighbouring garden the next morning. The Queen’s husband had been murdered.

Under this suspicion of murder, Mary was therefore unable to raise an army strong enough to cow the opposition into accepting her actions. She eventually raised a small army and marched towards Edinburgh but it encountered a force under the Earl of Moray on 15 June at Carberry Hill.

Negotiations were opened for a single combat between Bothwell and a champion to be chosen by the opposition. That proposition came to nothing and Mary’s forces were so depleted by desertion that she was obliged to surrender. Though there was no battle, the confrontation at Carberry was a significant political and military event, demonstrating clearly that the Queen had lost the support of her subjects.

She was forced to abdicate in favour of her young son James VI on 24 July, appointing the Earl of Moray as regent for the new king.

The Armies

Mary and Bothwell

According to Melville, Bothwell raised support from areas where he had influence, and other forces were raised as a result of a proclamation by Mary, although ‘many of them had no heart to fight in that quarrel.’ He gives no numbers.

Buchanan too gives no numbers, saying only that Mary and Bothwell were joined at Dunbar, ‘by partners in their crimes’ and others hoping to gain the favour of royalty, in such numbers that they felt they had enough men ‘to cope with and subdue their adversaries.’

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Research report



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The Holinshed Chronicles says 'Their whole number was esteemed to be two thousand, but the more part of these were commons and countrymen.' These numbers included 'two hundred Harquebusiers waged' (mercenaries?) and some field pieces.

Birrel's diary says 'they stood upon Carberry Hill with 4 regiments of soldiers and six brass field-pieces.'

The Lords

Melville says that they convened a force of 3,000 men. The Holinshed Chronicles suggests they assembled a similar number of men to the Queen in Edinburgh,

'but for the more part consisting of Gentlemen, although not furnished with anye number of Harquebusiers, except a fewe of the Townesmen of Edenburgh, that willingly ioyned with them in that quarrell'.

It goes on to say that Mary and Bothwell moved to

'Carbarry hill and there choose foorth a plotte of ground of greate aduantage, appoynting to fyghte on foote, bycause the power of the Lordes in number of Horsemenne, was stronger than the Queenes, and of greater experience.'

Numbers

No further information

Losses

No fighting took place, and, therefore, there were no losses.

Action

Mary and Bothwell marched out of Dunbar, aiming for Edinburgh, but were intercepted by the 'Confederate Lords' near Musselburgh and took up position on Carberry Hill, 'in a strength very advantageous', according to Melville, whilst the Lords camped at the foot of the hill.

Buchanan and Melville give the fullest accounts of what happened. Buchanan was opposed to Mary and his stand-point is obvious from the text, as he refers to the Lords as 'the patriots'. He writes that Mary marched for Leith expecting people to join her standard. She was wrong, but if she had stayed in Dunbar three more days 'the patriots' who were 'destitute of the necessities of war' (presumably supplies?) would have been forced to disband. When she marched, the Lords mustered their troops and marched to Musselburgh, aiming to cross the Esk before Mary's army could seize the ford and bridge. Their scouts met some of Mary's men whom they pushed back but did not pursue for fear of ambush. The main army then moved forward, and saw Mary's army standing 'in battle array'. As they thought the hill too steep for a

Inventory of Historic Battlefields

Research report



HISTORIC
ENVIRONMENT
SCOTLAND

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ALBA

successful assault they drew a little to the right, both to have the sun at their backs and to gain an easier ascent and fight upon more advantageous ground. This deceived Mary, who mistakenly thought they had fled to Dalkeith, but they were given supplies by the people of Dalkeith and manoeuvred to 'a more convenient place' where they split into two bodies.

The Earl of Morton commanded the first of these, assisted by Alexander Home. The second was led by the Earls of Glencarne, Mar and Athol. The French ambassador du Crocq put himself forward as an intermediary, saying that the Queen wanted peace and would give an amnesty. However, Morton made it clear that the Lords were not against the Queen, but against the murderer of her late husband, and that if she gave him up and separated herself they would be loyal to her and do their duty 'otherwise no agreement could be made.' Glencarne added 'that they came not thither to receive pardon for taking up arms, but to give it.' At this du Crocq abandoned his attempt to mediate.

Buchanan continues that Mary's army had 'entrenched itself within the ancient camp bounds of the English. It was a place naturally higher than the rest and fortified besides with a work and a ditch'.

Bothwell showed himself, and offered single combat. He first refused James Murray as not a match 'either by dignity or estate'. William Murray, the elder brother, was also refused as being 'but lately made a knight and of the second rank.' Lyndsay took up the challenge, but was refused in turn. At this point the Queen intervened and forbade Bothwell to fight. Then she rode through all the army 'to ascertain by her observation how all the soldiers stood affected'. Bothwell's men seemed eager to fight, but the rest of the nobility were clearly less confident, having seen the strength of their opponents, and many 'common people' were disaffected. They thought Bothwell should defend himself in a duel rather than expose so many men and Mary herself to danger. She was advised that if she wished to fight she should delay until the next day, as the Hamiltons were supposed to be coming with 500 men. Upon this she 'bit her lips with anger, shed tears and after uttering many reproaches against the nobles' despatched a messenger to the opposite army to send Kirkcaldy of Grange to her to discuss peace conditions, promising that her army would not advance in the meantime. On hearing this, 'the patriotic army' halted, but stood 'in a low place' so that they were sheltered should Mary's ordnance fire on them.

Whilst she was talking with Grange, Bothwell was directed to 'shift for himself' for this is what she had been aiming at in demanding a conference, and he fled to Dunbar. When Mary believed he was out of danger, she agreed that her army should be disbanded and return quietly home. As she descended, the van of the Lords' army received her well, but when she said she wanted to go to meet the Hamiltons, but would return, they reacted violently shouting 'Burn the adulteress, burn the parricide', and waving banners showing the dead king (Darnley) with his little son beside him. Mary threatened and reproached them and tried to delay, hoping for help from the Hamiltons, but was taken away to Edinburgh.



Melville's account is broadly similar, although his record of events and their sequence differs somewhat from Buchanan's. Melville was a Privy Counsellor to Mary and later to James VI. His support for Mary and antipathy towards Bothwell is clear;

'Albeit her Majesty was at Carberry Hill, I cannot name it to be her army; for many of them that were with her, were of opinion that she had intelligence with the Lords; chiefly such as understood of the Earl Bothwell's mishandling of her, and many indignities that he had both said and done unto her since their marriage. He was so beastly and suspicious, that he suffered her not to pass a day in patience, or without giving her cause to shed abundance of salt tears. Thus, part of his own company detested him; and the other part believed that her Majesty would fain have been quit of him, but thought shame to be the doer thereof directly herself'.

According to Melville, the Lord of Grange rode about the foot of the hill with 200 horsemen from Dromlenerick, Cefford and Cordonknowes, attempting to get between Bothwell and Dunbar, and was minded to make an assault on the way that was 'plain and even' whilst the other Lords attacked up the hill.

When Mary knew that Grange was there she asked him to come up to speak to her, which he did 'under surety', with the permission of the other Lords. As he was approaching, Bothwell ordered a soldier to shoot him, until the Queen cried out for him to stop as she had promised Grange safe conduct. Grange told her the Lords would 'honour and serve' her, if she would abandon Bothwell, the murderer of her own husband, to whom, he added, she could not be married as he was already married to the Earl of Huntly's sister. On hearing this, Bothwell offered single combat to any man who would maintain he had murdered Darnley. Grange reported this offer to the other Lords who were content that Grange himself should fight, but when Grange challenged Bothwell, Bothwell replied that he was neither 'lord nor earl, but a baron, and so could not be his peer'. He refused to fight Tullibardine for the same reason, but then Lord Lindsay took up the challenge 'which he could not plainly refuse.'

Then Mary sent for Grange and told him that if the Lords would treat her in the way he had promised, she would 'put away' Bothwell and come down to them. The Lords agreed to this, but as Grange was riding back up the hill he saw Bothwell riding off. After informing the other Lords of this he returned to Mary again, who gave herself up to him on the conditions she had agreed with him 'she gave him her hand, which he kissed and led her down by the bridle.' The Lords met her with 'dutiful reverence' but some others cried out 'dispytfully' until Grange and the others drew their swords to silence them. Mary was then conveyed to Edinburgh where she met a hostile reception from the common people.

Holinshed's account is shorter, but it talks of Mary's forces drifting away throughout the day, so that as it came towards evening, Bothwell fled to Dunbar and the Queen surrendered herself to Grange. Holinshed does not



mention Bothwell's challenge to single combat. It records the comments made by Morton and Glencarne, albeit in different words to Buchanan, and puts the Hamilton numbers at 700-800 men.

A letter from du Crocq, the French ambassador, says the stand-off lasted from 11 o'clock in the morning till 5 o'clock in the afternoon. Mary's supporters carried the banner of the Lion of Scotland; the Lords' banner showed Darnley dead under a tree with the infant James VI praying, with the motto, "Judge and Revenge my cause, O Lord."

A contemporary illustration shows the banner mentioned above held up by the foot-soldier at the upper left. Bothwell is behind the four cannons; Mary is being led by three escorts towards the rebel camp. Carberry Tower is depicted right on the edge in the middle on the left-hand side.

Aftermath and Consequences

Although Mary had apparently forsworn Bothwell, a letter supposedly written by her to him and intercepted by the Lords was alleged to prove his complicity in Darnley's murder, and this was sufficient for them to move her to Lochleven Castle. On 24 June 1567 she signed a Deed of Abdication in favour of her son, James. Six weeks later, he was crowned James VI of Scotland at Stirling Castle, and the Earl of Moray was appointed Regent.

In May 1568 she escaped from Lochleven with the help of the Hamiltons, but, although she was able to raise an army, it was defeated by Moray's army at Langside on 13 May, and Mary fled to England, where she remained until her execution in 1587. Bothwell fled initially to Dunbar, and then to Orkney, pursued by Grange, before eventually fleeing to Denmark where he died years later.

Events & Participants

Mary was a Catholic and the wife of Francis II of France, before his death in December 1560. The Protestant Reformation of 1559-60 in Scotland resulted in the rejection of French influence on Scotland and the advance of Protestantism, but when Mary returned to Scotland in 1561 she did not seek to impose Catholicism or restore French influence, but concentrated her efforts on pursuing her claim to the throne of England. She was popular and commanded wide support until she married her cousin, Lord Darnley, in 1565. The Earl of Moray, her half-brother, led a rebellion against her which was swiftly put down and Moray went into exile. However, after Darnley participated in a conspiracy against Mary in which her secretary, Rizzio, was murdered, he too was murdered, in February 1567.

James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell, was suspected of the murder, but found not guilty at a subsequent trial and he and Mary married shortly thereafter, in May 1567. Many of the leading nobles of Scotland were bitterly opposed to this development, and it appeared that there would be an uprising aimed against



Bothwell. Mary and Bothwell fled from Edinburgh to Dunbar Castle. There Bothwell raised support from areas where he had influence, and other forces were raised as a result of a proclamation by Mary, although as Melville put it, 'many of them had no heart to fight in that quarrel.' 'The Confederate Lords' as they were known, had raised their own forces at Edinburgh.

Context

Despite being raised a Catholic, Mary did not seek to impose Catholicism or restore French influence on her return to Scotland. It is generally considered by historians of the period that either course would have been ill-advised given the strength of the Protestant cause and a general distrust of the French (the "Auld alliance" was not always a strong one). Her tolerance of Protestantism, in the face of being preached against by the likes of John Knox, inevitably drew criticism from her Catholic supporters. This lack of support within Scotland led Mary to concentrate on her claim to the English throne - Catholics regarded Elizabeth I as illegitimate due to her mother, Anne Boleyn, being Henry VIII's second wife. However, this was a cause over which she would eventually lose her head.

Mary married Lord Darnley, in July 1565. In the eyes of the Catholic Church their marriage was null and void as they were first cousins and had not acquired a Papal dispensation for such a match. Nor did the marriage please Elizabeth, who saw the coupling of two Catholic Stuarts as an enhanced threat to her own position. Mary's half-brother, the Earl of Moray, was also incensed at this Catholic match and in response he joined with other Protestants and led a rebellion against her. Rather than being put down, though Mary did not lack the forces to achieve this, the rebellion eventually fizzled out for want of support and Moray found sanctuary in England.

Following Moray's failure, Darnley became overawed by his rapid ascendancy and requested equality in status with the Queen which would allow him to take the crown if she died before him. This was turned down by Mary, leading to his disenchantment with Mary, and he subsequently participated in the conspiracy against his wife. Another cause of discontent was his jealousy of Mary's intimacy with her personal secretary, Davide Rizzio, who was rumoured to be the father of her as yet unborn child, James. As a result Rizzio was murdered in front of the pregnant Mary by a party which included her husband, in February 1567.

The royal couple became estranged and it was at this time that Mary renewed her acquaintance with James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell, who had supported her cause during Moray's rebellion. In late 1566 Darnley fell ill (allegedly as a result of suspected poisoning), but Mary remained at his side during his recuperation at his brother's house in Edinburgh through January of 1567. One night Mary was attending a social engagement when an explosion ripped through the house and Darnley was found dead in the garden, apparently smothered. Bothwell was suspected of the murder, and went to trial for the crime. In the absence of evidence against him, largely thanks to Mary hurrying the proceedings on before it could be gathered, he was acquitted. Mary and

Inventory of Historic Battlefields

Research report



HISTORIC
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Bothwell were married in May 1567, just 12 days after his divorce from his previous wife.

As with her marriage to Darnley, the Queen's betrothal to Bothwell was a source of discontent, not least because the man had been implicated in the murder of her previous husband. Catholics also saw the match as an illegal one as they did not recognise Bothwell's divorce, the same reasoning which after all underpinned Mary's claim to the English throne. The Confederate Lords, a faction consisting of 26 peers, rose in opposition to the Queen, and more specifically Bothwell. In response, Mary and Bothwell recruited an army and marched out of Dunbar, where they had taken refuge, and headed for Edinburgh. They were intercepted by the Confederate Lords near Musselburgh and took up position on Carberry Hill. No fighting took place, but, after a prolonged stand-off, Mary gave herself up to the Confederate Lords on the promise that they would honour and serve her if she abandoned Bothwell. Bothwell fled and although pursued he eventually escaped to Denmark where he was imprisoned and subsequently died in 1578.

Although Mary had apparently forsworn Bothwell, a letter, supposedly written by her to him and alleged to prove his complicity in Darnley's murder, was intercepted by the Lords and this was sufficient for them to move her to Lochleven Castle. On 24 June 1567 she signed a Deed of Abdication in favour of her son, James. Six weeks later, he was crowned James VI of Scotland at Stirling Castle, and the Earl of Moray was appointed Regent.

Battlefield Landscape and Location

Carberry Hill is located about two miles outside Musselburgh in the village of Carberry. The top of the hill is wooded, and within these woods are signs of earthworks. Buchanan says Mary's army had

'entrenched itself within the ancient camp bounds of the English. It was a place naturally higher than the rest and fortified besides with a work and a ditch'.

It is not clear what he means by this, although it has been suggested it refers to works constructed at the time of the battle of Pinkie in 1547 even though primary sources for that battle show the English camp on the coast rather than any of the hilltops. However, there are the remains of an Iron Age hill fort on the hill. Aerial photographs show that the fort consisted of 6-8 circular ditches and was over 200 metres across. Ploughing has removed most of the earthworks, apart from these deep ditches, which have been protected by the 18th-century woodland.

Location

No further information.



Terrain

No further information.

Condition

No further information.

Archaeological and Physical Remains and Potential

As there was no battle, no archaeological evidence of any fighting will have been deposited at the time, but small numbers of artefacts may exist which were lost by individuals during the deployment and manoeuvring of the two armies.

Cultural Association

There is a monument to the event at Carberry Hill. The inscription on the monument reads: "M.R. 1567 At this spot Mary Queen of Scots after the escape of Bothwell mounted her horse and surrendered herself to the Confederate Lords 15 June 1567". Access is either from the road through a narrow gateway in the wall, now marked by a small plaque laid here in 2004 by the Marie Stuart Society, or further down, via a 1km walk through the Carberry Woodland.

There is also a related information panel;

"THE SURRENDER OF MARY 15TH JUNE 1567 - Mary, Queen of Scots married the Earl of Bothwell, a union unpopular with the Confederate Lords of Scotland. Both he and Mary had been implicated in the murder of her first husband, Lord Darnley, and because of religious and political intrigue, the Lords tried to break Bothwell's power over the Queen. Mary and Bothwell set out from Dunbar with their army and met the army of the Confederate Lords led by Kirkcaldy of Grange at Carberry Hill on June 15th 1567. Mary was forced or persuaded under promise of Bothwell's safe conduct to surrender herself to the Lords, while he retreated to Dunbar and eventually to exile. Mary was imprisoned in Edinburgh Castle and later in Lochleven. Eventually she was executed by her cousin Elizabeth of England, leaving her infant son (of Lord Darnley) to become her heir to the Realm."

It should be noted that none of the contemporary sources quoted above suggest that Mary surrendered on condition that Bothwell should receive safe-conduct. The fact that he was pursued to Orkney by Grange, before fleeing to Denmark suggests that this was not the case.

Inventory of Historic Battlefields

Research report



HISTORIC
ENVIRONMENT
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Commemoration & Interpretation

No further information

Select Bibliography

Buchanan, G.1843. *History of Scotland*. Fisher, Son &Co. London and Paris pp 457-459.

Melville, Sir James of Hallhill.1827. *Memoirs of his own life 1549-1593*. Bannatyne Club, Edinburgh pp.181-185

Full Bibliography

Information on Sources and Publications

The accounts by Buchanan and Melville give the most detail of the events at Carberry Hill. George Buchanan (1506-1582), a Protestant, was an opponent of Mary. He evolved a concept of 'popular sovereignty' as a safeguard against tyranny. A distinguished scholar in various European universities, he was at various times in his life tutor to James V's son, denounced as a heretic for satires on the friars, which James V encouraged him to write, imprisoned by the Inquisition in Portugal, classical tutor to Mary, against whom he later gave evidence, Moderator of the General Assembly and Lord Privy Seal. His *History* which relates the history of Scotland from its origins to the death of the Regent Lennox in 1571 was dedicated to James VI with whose education he had been entrusted and was completed in the year of his death.

Sir James Melville of Hallhill was a statesman and Privy Counsellor to both Mary and her son James VI. He also acted as ambassador from Mary to Elizabeth of England.

The Holinshed Chronicles were written by a number of authors of diverse religious and political backgrounds. A first edition was published in 1577 and a revised, expanded second edition in 1587.

Primary Sources

The diary of Birrel. <http://www.marie-stuart.co.uk/Castles/Carberry.htm>
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Labanoff, A., *Lettres de Marie Stuart*, vol. 7, London, Dolman, (1852), 212, M. Du Croc to Charles IX, 17 June 1567

Melville, Sir James of Hallhill.1827. *Memoirs of his own life 1549-1593*. Bannatyne Club, Edinburgh pp.181-185

Inventory of Historic Battlefields Research report

Cartographic and Illustrative Sources

N/a

Secondary Sources

Monument- <http://www.marie-stuart.co.uk/Castles/Carberry.htm>

Details about illustration- <http://www.aboutscotland.com/history/carberry.html>

Hillfort - <http://www.elgt.org.uk/uploads/downloads/Iron%20Fort%20panel.pdf>



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