

# **SURVIVING THE PEACE: PUBLIC ACCESS, CONSERVATION AND MILITARY HERITAGE**

ALGAO:UK; Centre for Battlefield Archaeology, University of Glasgow

**Conference 30 September – 1 October 2010**

## **Conference notes**

### **International Battlefield Heritage: a personal perspective**

Dr Tony Pollard, Centre for Battlefield Archaeology, University of Glasgow

In order for battlefield heritage to be successful they must be prepared to pay their way.

Culloden is an emotive site with conflict bubbling on the surface

Forestry has had a detrimental affect on the survival of the battlefield of Culloden.

Emotive artefacts are an important part of promoting a battlefield. Artefacts which have the power to tell a story. For example at Culloden the fragment of a broken Brown Bess trigger guard with a musket ball scar in it tells a powerful story. It represents the probable death of a soldier on the battlefield; encapsulating a moment in time.

Memorialisation is another important aspect of battlefield landscapes and this is often a draw for a certain type of visitors. The battlefield of Gettysburg is scattered with monuments, many of them dedicated to regiments who took no part in the battle. Monuments are an element of battlefield landscapes which need to be managed, as too many may have the impact of cluttering the landscape and creating almost a 'theme park' atmosphere.

Media such as television has been important in promoting battlefields, especially as a source of funding and should not be ignored as such. A recent excavation at Mametz, France, led by the Centre for Battlefield Archaeology, was funded by a television production company and will be aired as a Time Team special for Channel Four. There is no doubt that this will generate interest in the Somme battlefield and the archaeology of the First World War in general when it appears in February 2011, however it is important to note how much interest was generated on site during the dig. Every day there were crowds of visitors who were fascinated by seeing archaeology actually take place in front of them.

The ability to interpret battlefields which are in the spotlight is a difficult process, and again, Culloden is a site which has the power to generate much interest and political tension. A recent example is the recent controversy over the excavation of potential Government graves on the battlefield. The very suggestion of this by Dr Tony Pollard caused a great raucous in certain circles who believed that drawing attention to the recovery of 'English' soldiers, who were in their eyes nothing better than war criminals, would be desecrating the memory of the Jacobite soldiers who died there. The Centre's request to carry out an evaluation to establish the presence of a mass grave of Government soldiers within the Field of the English, which had had been identified during geophysical survey, was declined by The National Trust for Scotland. They were concerned by the attention such an excavation may draw and the potential political and media backlash that would ensue. On such as site, is it possible to represent two sides? There is a story that must be told of the Government soldiers who fought there and yet their voices are not being heard.

Should battlefields be led by nationalist aims?

## **Battlefield Sites as Tourist Attractions: Meanings and Interpretations**

Stephen Miles, Crichton Campus, University of Glasgow

Battlefields have increasingly become important subjects for the tourist gaze and are manifestations of the phenomena of 'Dark' Tourism or Thanotourism which is defined by visiting places associated with death and suffering.

Battlefields are places which embody deep emotional feeling from the dramatic events which took place there.

They have a powerful sense of place, something which attracts visitors.

Battlefields enhance the attraction to an area, with a healthy number of tourists reported from battlefield visitor centres in the UK. Where promoted, they make an economic contribution, boosted by anniversaries and events.

There are 500 battlefields in the UK and yet only 4 have been given high visitor status. These include Culloden, Bannockburn, Bosworth and Hastings.

Visitors to heritage sites are stimulated by the visual, battlefields often represent the intangible form of heritage to the untrained eye. Without the interpretation there is no battlefield – therefore some form of interpretation is vital to attract tourists.

Battlefields speak to people on different levels, many different kinds of people attracted to them. The reasons why battlefields are visited might include curiosity, patriotism, contemporary political beliefs, family connection, historical/educational interest or even a voyeuristic interest in death.

The human story of great interest and is a vital element of successfully presenting the battle to visitors. People don't tend to like statistics or wordy information boards. They like small scale personal stories and artefacts and places which have a story attached to them.

**Numinosity** is the relationship between other people, places, and things and the individual and is important in the understanding of the visitor experience to battlefield sites.

Battlefield numinosity can have a powerful affect on people. Battlefields as places have emotional weight.

- Numinosity has close references to places of death.

In terms of visitor empathy and experience – there is something special about Culloden Visitor centre could enhance the feeling of the numin.

- guide boards full of text score lowly but the technology which aids understanding of the battlefield is appreciated by the visitor
- This raises the questions, do visitors need to visit the actual site if there is a good interpretation centre?

Prosthetic meaning – does not care for lived experience. Is this an issue in using technology?

Re-enactment – fun and engaging

- accuracy is important
- the public feel strongly that re-enactment helped the understanding of the site.

Interpretation is in the hand of experts and out of the control of the visitor.

In short, it is far easier to drive a bulldozer through a field than a visitor centre.

. As “fatal attractions” they make a significant contribution to the tourist industry especially when “managed” with interpretative and visitor facilities. Battlefields have varied cultural meanings and can provoke intense emotion even when outside of living memory. They can engage with visitors at many levels and possess multilayered and multifaceted interpretations.

In examining battlefield experiences the role of tourist interpretation is presented as a positive force and one that can enrich the visitor experience through the imaginative and sympathetic communication of professional discourse.

## **Flodden 500 – the anniversary and the community project**

Dr Chris Burgess, Northumberland County Council

Since the completion of the Defence of Britain Project the growth of Volunteer archaeology in Northumberland has been exponential. Projects have looked at Pill Boxes, Coast Gun Batteries, WW1 Trenches and most recently the battlefield of Flodden. In Northumberland they have both participated in projects and taken the initiative to start their own heritage project, an example being Blyth Battery which is a WWII gun emplacement conserved and maintained by a group of volunteers.

In Northumbria there is massive interest in archaeology amongst communities, landowners and contractors.

Flodden 500 committee approached Dr Burgess to set up a community project which included field walking at an intensive level and some excavation.

There are many skills within the community which they brought to the project.

Northumberland has a long history of community and there are a number of active archaeology groups.

These recent projects involved some complex archaeology which is not always suitable for community groups, especially if volunteers have had no experience or are only there for a short time. This can sometimes hamper progress, but the project must have a dual purpose which not only focuses quality of the archaeology but the experience of the volunteers taking part.

An important aspect of the project was visibility and making sure the wider community of Northumberland and beyond were aware of the excavation and its results. The Flodden 500 Archaeology Project website:

<http://web.mac.com/chris.burgess/iFlodden/Home.html> provided that link. The site included daily updates of progress via a blog written by Chris Burgess; photographs of the site and of artefacts found during the project with details of their interpretation.

The project involved 50 volunteers over three weeks and this included a number of training days to provide volunteers with the necessary skills to excavate and conduct walk over survey. Volunteer interaction on various levels as they could participate as little or as much as they liked.

Blyth Battery is a coastal defence artillery battery built in 1916. The building was in much need of conservation. The local community managed to secure £500, 000 to work on the site, which began in 2008. The building itself is open to the public but is managed by the local community, within the auspices of the '*Blyth Battery Volunteers*', which includes maintenance and interpretation of the site. This project is at the centre of a regeneration initiative. Volunteers are also training in giving tours around the site.

This project provides an excellent model for what can be achieved with community engagement.

Community archaeology has an important part to play. Volunteering in projects increases community skills, as well as a sense of place and stewardship for local heritage. Volunteers want to be there and will have an active interest which may be transferred to other forms of heritage.

Some archaeologists may recoil at having inexperienced people excavating, however this is dependant on leadership and a robust project design. Community archaeology projects can produce high quality research and contribute greatly to the archaeological record.

### **Terrible Terrain! – marshalling resources to manage NTS battlefields**

Derek Alexander, National Trust for Scotland and Jill Harden, Freelance consultant

#### **Derek Alexander -**

Scottish battlefields have a long history of being attractive places to visit. They have been the source of inspiration for many people including Robert Burns, who visited Bannockburn in the 1780s and wrote 'Scot's Wa' hae'.

Battlefields at risk is not a recent phenomenon as those visiting Bannockburn from the 18<sup>th</sup> century would chip bits away from the Bore-stone as a souvenir until it practically disappeared. The bore-stone no longer exists but was an important part of the battlefield and an indication of its location. NTS was set up in 1931 coincidentally at the same time that the Borestone site at Bannockburn was protected from development. The National Trust for Scotland looks after more parts of battlefields than any other body in Scotland

Re-enactments regularly took place on the site of the battlefield but this has since ceased.

Bannockburn is the centre of much educational work which ties into the wider landscape of the battlefield. This includes school visits and guided walks as part of Scottish Archaeology Month.

However the visitor centre is not up to task to deal with visitors or to attract them to the site. There are plans now to build a new centre in cooperation with Historic Scotland.

Killiecrankie is another battlefield in which the NTS has some input. However the area which NTS actually owns is not on the battlefield but down at 'Soldier's Leap', a place associated with the aftermath of the battle. This accounts for a very small portion of the battlefield in total. There is a small visitor centre at Killiecrankie, which focuses mainly on natural heritage. There is also an interpretation panel at the 'Grave of the Officers', however this was initially very poorly placed to the point that the monument could not be seen from the panel as it was obscured by trees. The panel has subsequently been relocated. Recently a company of Ghurkhas came to visit the site and took part in a re-enactment of the battle.

There is an interpretation panel at Dunkeld to inform visitors about the skirmishing around Dunkeld and the Cathedral in 1689.

Glenshiel, 1719 battle of the Jacobite Rebellions, is an important battle and involved an international cast of players including Spanish soldiers. This battle also ties in with other elements in the landscape including Eilean Donan Castle.

Auldearn has had new interpretation panels set up. This is an important battle for the Marquis of Montrose during the War of the Three Kingdoms.

Fyvie Castle – the site of another site connected to Montrose and more should be done to link this site with Auldearn. There are re-enactments at the castle but apart from that very little else has been done. This represents a great opportunity to present an important part of Scotland's history and heritage.

Interpretations are what shape people's experience of a place and we have a responsibility to present these sites as comprehensibly as possible.

### **Jill Harden -**

Culloden has been subject to a long term archaeological research, including geophysics, trial trenching and standing building survey, has allowed a much more detailed understanding of the battle. The interpretation inside the new centre now ties in closely with what people experience when they visit the field itself. New footpaths and interpretation points explain the disposition of troops and the progress of the battle. However, one of the biggest ongoing challenges is the continued management of the vegetation cover.

## **Researching, interpreting and conserving battlefields: examples of community involvement**

Dr Glenn Foard, Formerly the Battlefields Trust, now University of Huddersfield

The Battlefields Trust has run two large and several small scale battlefield surveys over the last decade. Recent work by the Battlefields Trust has been Battlefields at Risk in the North East, which includes the Battle of Newburn. The role of the community has been very important in the conservation of the battlefield. Newburn does not sit neatly in the planning process, without a coherent community input this can have a real impact. There have already been some significant changes to the landscape which has altered visibility and setting.

Battle of Boroughbridge - no planning but has an active community group who have campaigned against planning decisions which may affect the battlefield, including the construction of a new village hall.

Community Involvement:

Edgehill surveyed 2004 – 2007

Bosworth surveyed 2005 – 2010 (with Leicestershire County Council)

Edgehill involved a larger landscape study with three battlefields as part of a Battlefields Trust initiative and Heritage Lottery funding. This involved public meetings, lectures and battlefield walks.

This project was almost too successful as too many people wanted to get involved and there just wasn't the resources to deal with it. There were elements in which volunteers could get involved in but not to a suitable level.

Metal detectorists were involved in the project, but not many of them were local.

Metal detectorists had to be screened to get involved and this helped to filter down the numbers and level of skill. A high level of commitment was also required as there were many hours of surveying and a wide area to cover. There also had to be a willingness to follow the systematic method of survey,

In both cases volunteers have formed a core of the survey teams, and not just in the metal detecting but also in other aspects of the studies. On lesser surveys, in England and Belgium, volunteers have again had a crucial role. Without the volunteers the work would have been impossible, but not all aspects of the collaboration have proved successful and certain limitations have to be recognised in what can and can't be expected of volunteers in battlefield investigations.

## **Harvest and Heritage – a working partnership**

Joyce Jagger, Battlefield 1403 Trust

Why would anyone visit a battlefield? It is just an empty field. There is so much expectation now and competition for day out entertainment. There is an expectation of high standards and excitement – partly due to programmes on the television raising our hopes of finding buried treasure.

We need another reason for visiting; one which is sympathetic to the subject but is in line with modern day expectations. We had two key objectives:

Our aim was to provide a dedicated heritage centre for the site of the Battle of Shrewsbury, which over the last few years has enhanced the tourism value of the battlefield. The site now has both a commercial and interpretational focus with education and heritage being a primary focus.

Our farm shop attracts people to the battlefield, it also helps us invest into managing the heritage of the battlefield such as the Battlefield Walk which takes visitors around the battlefield. It is worth mentioning that there was significant red tape in the creation of the battlefield walks. We have a small exhibition presenting the history and archaeology of the battlefield with a display of artefacts which have been recovered from the battlefield. We also have a fully armoured Sir Nicholas and some weaponry within the exhibition which is adjacent to the farm shop.

The most important aspect of our work here was to diversify the existing farm business reducing reliance on income from conventional agricultural sources. It was important to view the battlefield as a fantastic opportunity and not as a hindrance to our success.

[www.battlefield1403.com](http://www.battlefield1403.com)

## **Olivier Hofer**

Philiphaugh Community Trust

### **The Battlefield of Philiphaugh Community Trust: a new initiative**

This project was born with an aim to create a fully-interactive educational programme for local schools and to promote the battlefield to the public; attracting visitors to the battlefield and ultimately the local area. This was done by linking the local community (Selkirk) into the project and encouraging archaeological excavations of this important historical site.

We conducted a series of workshops within schools in the local area. The important thing here was to go to the schools and not to wait for them to come to me and ensure they have the right information.

## **1066 and all that: Interpreting the Battle of Hastings**

Dirk Bennett, English Heritage

The 14 October 1066 is one of the best-known and most important dates in British history. Dirk Bennett describes how the new interpretation at Battle Abbey was planned and implemented and summarizes the underlying concepts and practical solutions.

### **Bridget Simpson**

East Lothian Council Archaeology Service

#### **Losing ground at Pinkie: The Highs the Lows of dealing with a battle landscape under development control pressure**

This short talk takes a look at how one local authority is currently addressing the problems of dealing with an unprotected, major battle site in East Lothian, which is under considerable development pressure. The paper describes the problems involved with the piecemeal development of a battle site; what archaeological work has taken place to date and what lessons have been learnt; how development and fieldwork can provide real opportunities to help understand, and foster greater awareness of, battle landscapes but also why it is so important to have comprehensive development plans and strategies in place in order to manage and conserve the fragile and often intangible remains of battle landscapes, when there is such an increased pressure on land reserves.

### **Natasha Ferguson and Dr Tony Pollard**

Centre for Battlefield Archaeology, University of Glasgow

#### **The Battle and the Vision: experiences of a community project**

The Battle of Prestonpans Archaeology Project is the first investigation to focus on the archaeology of this important battle. The project was carried out by the Centre for Battlefield Archaeology, University of Glasgow on behalf of the Battle of Prestonpans 1745 Heritage Trust with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The project was also part of a wider venture by the Trust to enhance the understanding and presentation of the battlefield; this included the involvement of the local community and local secondary schools which participated in archaeological workshops devised by the Centre. All workshops were based on the core principles of a Curriculum for Excellence and encourages cross curricular learning with a number of subject areas involved, including history, geography and the sciences. Over 200 pupils from S1 – S3 were involved in the workshops over a period of two weeks and were deemed both teachers and pupils to be a great success. The workshops also played a part in inspiring the pupils to enter a BBC Learning competition, which they won earlier this year. The competition was to write a short piece about a place that meant something to them, which for the pupils was the battlefield. The prize was for the BBC to come out to the school and make a short film about the battlefield. I was delighted to be able to play a small part in the film as the archaeologist.

The project also included a metal detector survey of the battlefield, which resulted in a re-interpretation of the position of the battle, moving it approximately 800m westwards from its traditional site. Although the project was undoubtedly an overall success there were certain issues which arose from this community project, including the ability to recruit volunteers. Despite such a success in the school it was very difficult to attract people to the project. Perhaps a factor in this had been the fact that we were not present in the area, but commuted from Glasgow each day during the project. We did have the assistance of local metal detecting clubs to conduct the survey. However one point of contention was the organisation of a 'club outing' on the battlefield out with the survey. This was an unfortunate development as they had ignored our advice not to continue with the outing due to the archaeological sensitivity of the area. Thankfully advice was taken on recording methods, but this only included musket balls and not other important signature artefacts. The issue here in relation the aim of this conference, which is about promoting battlefields, is that the metal detecting clubs felt that they could detect on this land and that there was little local objection to this. Although Culloden is a protected landscape in terms of its ownership by the National Trust, anyone looking to be metal detecting on the site would be reported very quickly as it is seen to be unacceptable. If this battlefield's success as a heritage attraction is to continue as a future aim, there is clearly much work which needs to be done to generate interest locally, not just nationally.