

Working for you



Historic Battlefields

in Harrogate District



THE REGISTER OF HISTORIC BATTLEFIELDS

Battles have played an important, and at times decisive, role in the history of England. Many were fought by English (or British) armies on continental or colonial soil, but many others took place at home. Of these, most occurred as a result of baronial resistance to royal autocracy, endemic hostility between the English and Scottish kingdoms during the middle ages, or during the Wars of the Roses and the Civil War. Some have had a profound dynastic, cultural or constitutional significance, whilst others have reflected important advances in tactics or the involvement of famous military or political leaders. In 1995 English Heritage recognised the significance of battlefields and decided to establish a Register. This initially identified 43 battlefields in England and more have been added since. Of these, three Registered Battlefields lie wholly or partly within the Harrogate District: **Myton (1319)**, **Boroughbridge (1322)** and **Marston Moor (1644)**.

English Heritage's own leaflet on the Register identifies the four-fold importance of historic battlefields:

- Their setting for crucial historical turning points, for example the Norman Conquest which followed the Battle of Hastings in 1066, or the turmoil of the Civil Wars in the seventeenth century which changed the constitutional roles of the monarchy and parliament.
- The reputations of great political and military leaders were frequently built on battlefield success.
- Tactics and skills of war still relevant to the defence of the country were evolved on the medieval battlefield.
- Battlefields are the final resting places for thousands of unknown soldiers, nobles and commoners alike, whose lives were sacrificed in making the history of England.

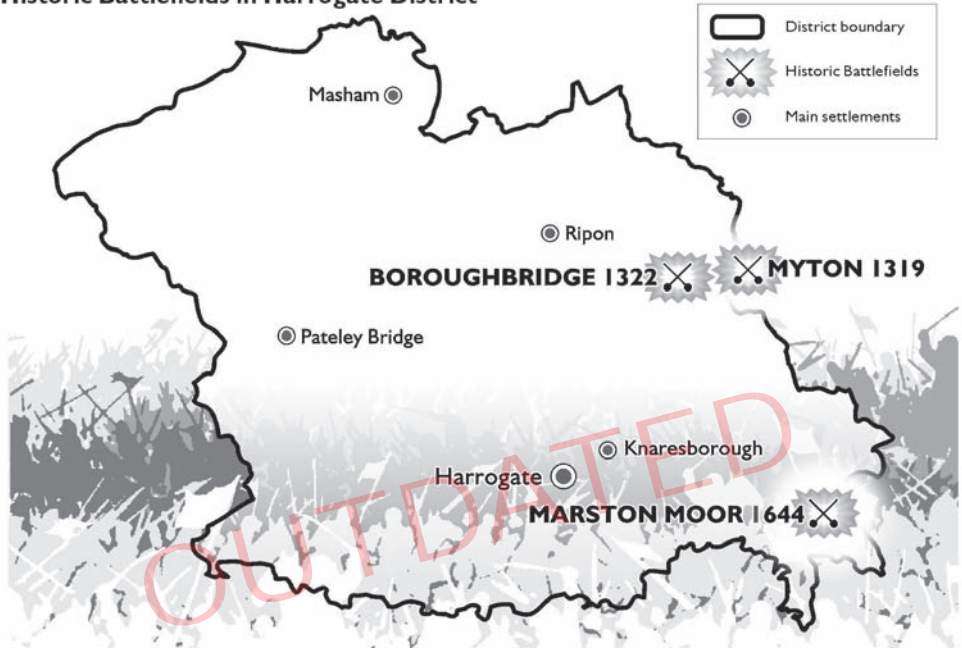
The aim of the Register is to provide expert guidance for planning authorities, landowners and other interested parties who have a role in conserving battlefield sites on both the extent of the area of historical significance and the most important features within and around them. The need to take account of the effect of development on historic battlefields is recognised in PPG15 (Planning and the Historic Environment) and policies in respect of the three sites within Harrogate District are set out in Policy HD6 of the Harrogate District Local Plan (Saved Policies) and Policy EQ2 of the LDF Core Strategy. However, inclusion in the Register does not confer any statutory controls on development other than normal planning control.

How are Historic Battlefields identified and selected?

Battlefields for selection are researched by the National Army Museum and each is then considered by a small panel of experts. For each battlefield they consider whether the fighting constituted a battle, rather than a lesser level of engagement, and whether the geographical area of the battle can be determined by physical or documentary evidence. To be considered,

Historic Battlefields in Harrogate District

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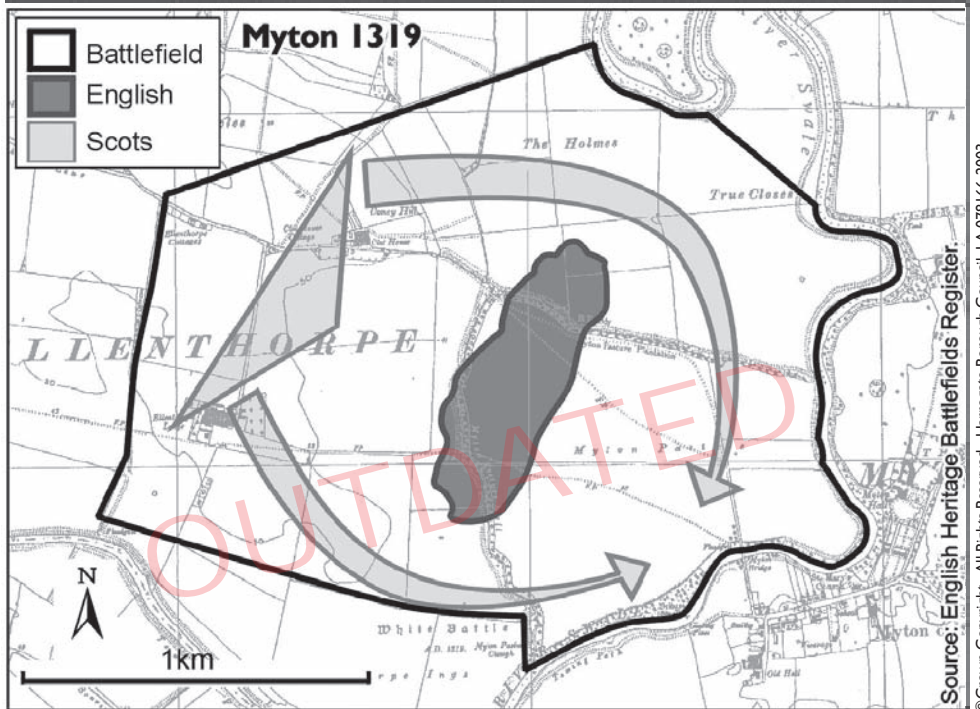
an engagement must have involved recognised military units (as opposed to incidents of civil unrest whose boundaries are difficult to define and where documentation is often poor). Mere skirmishes are not included. Sieges are better considered separately from battles because they are usually associated with physical remains which can be conserved through listing or scheduling.

For an engagement to qualify as a battle, three criteria are used:

- The political significance of the engagement - was its importance merely local or can its impact be traced nationwide?
- Were the tactics employed of particular note, with significance in terms of military history?
- Did it have a biographical significance? Was it important in the military or political career of a famous individual or was an important leader killed or captured?

THE BATTLE OF MYTON 1319

The Battle of Myton took place within the context of the Anglo-Scottish wars of the early fourteenth century which gained Edward I the sobriquet of 'Hammer of the Scots'. After their defeat at the Battle of Bannockburn (1314), the English were expelled from Scotland and in 1318 the Scots captured Berwick-upon-Tweed, which had been expensively fortified by Edward.



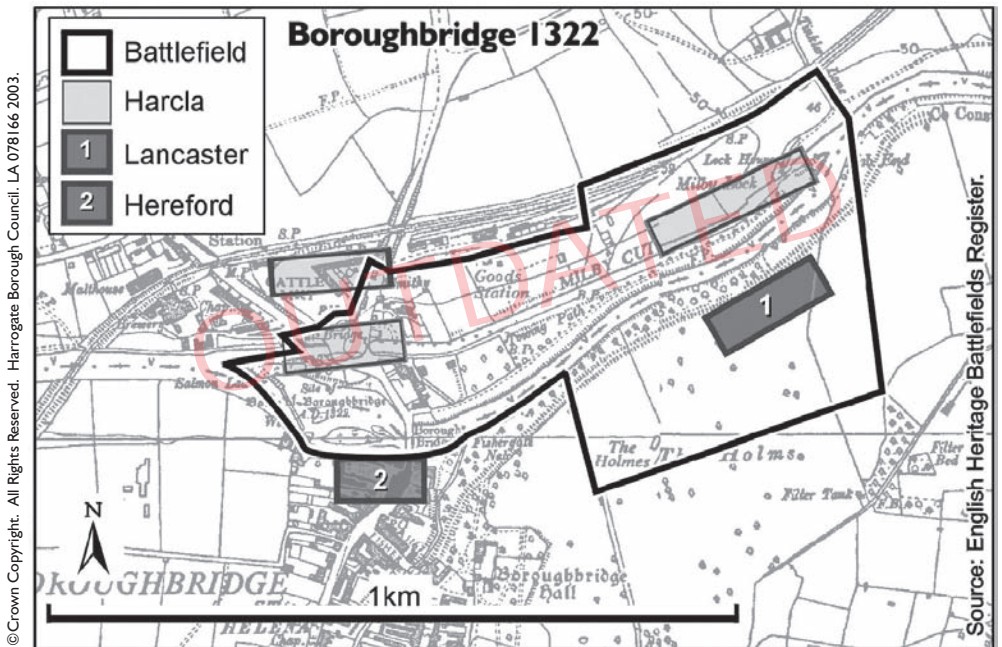
To prosecute the war against the Scots, Edward II moved his court to York and in 1319 laid siege to Berwick. Rather than attempt to relieve the town, the Scots sent a diversionary expedition to ravage the north of England which eventually reached Boroughbridge and Myton-on-Swale. Tipped off by a captured spy, William de Melton (Archbishop of York), John de Hotham (Bishop of Ely and Chancellor of England) and Nicholas Fleming (Mayor of York) led a motley force of York townspeople, clerics and peasants from the surrounding countryside towards Myton where they hoped to surprise and defeat the invaders.

They were, however, no match for the Scots. Crossing a small bridge over the Swale, they were blinded by burning hay, encircled in a pincer movement and decisively routed. The leaders and those who were not slain or drowned in the river fled back to York in disorder. The defeat was followed by the raising of the siege of Berwick and a two year truce.

THE BATTLE OF BOROUGHBIDGE 1322

The Battle of Boroughbridge was the outcome of a feud between Edward II and his cousin, Thomas Earl of Lancaster, the most powerful noble in the land, who had played a prominent part in the murder of the royal favourite, Piers Gaveston, in 1311.

At the end of 1321 Edward led an army into the Welsh marches to quell a baronial rebellion headed by Roger de Mortimer and Humphrey de Bohun, Earl of Hereford, who, not having received the support they expected from Lancaster, surrendered, leaving him free to turn against their northern confederates. Lancaster led an army to confront the King at Burton-on-Trent but the numerically superior royal forces managed to cross the river. Lancaster, now joined by Hereford, retreated northwards, reaching Boroughbridge on 16 March 1322, only to discover that Sir Andrew de Harcla, Sheriff of Carlisle, commanded the bridge across the River Ure. With the King in hot pursuit behind them, the barons had either to negotiate with Harcla or fight their way past him.



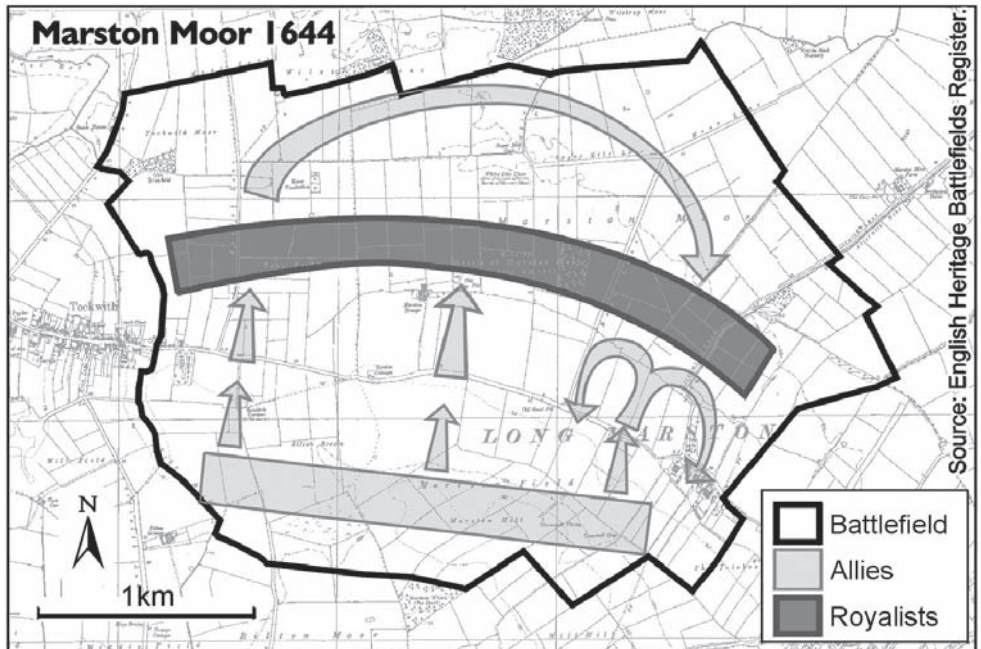
Harcla's forces were drawn up in two contingents: on the higher ground to the north of the river between the Kirby Hill and Dishforth roads and to the north of the ford in the vicinity of Aldborough where the original Roman road probably crossed the river. When Lancaster's forces attempted to cross the Ure at the ford and Hereford's men at the Borough Bridge, they were stoutly resisted by Harcla's troops. Hereford and three or four knights were killed in the action and many others badly wounded, leading them to withdraw to Boroughbridge. Lancaster had no greater success and made an overnight truce with Harcla, but during the night the Sheriff of York arrived to attack the rebels from the south. This enabled Harcla to enter the town the next morning when Lancaster and most of his knights were captured without serious resistance and imprisoned at York. He was subsequently executed.

THE BATTLE OF MARSTON MOOR 1644

The Battle of Marston Moor was the largest and most decisive battle of the English Civil War. The balance of forces was transformed at the beginning of 1644 by the intervention on the Parliamentary side of a Scottish army over 20,000 strong. The hitherto victorious royal commander, the Marquess of Newcastle, was suddenly faced with a war on two fronts and by April 1644 was besieged in York. To prevent the fall of York and the loss of the north of England to the Royalist cause, Prince Rupert led a relieving force from the main Royalist army in the Midlands, successfully raising the siege at the end of June. Two days later, on 2 July, he offered battle to the Allied (combined Scottish and Parliamentary) armies on Marston Moor, situated midway between the villages of Long Marston and Tockwith, some five miles west of York.

Having previously abandoned their position near Long Marston, the Allies hastily recalled their forces and took up new positions on the rising ground of Marston Hill to the south of the Long Marston-Tockwith road. The Allied forces, numbering about 28,000, comprised the Scottish army under the Earl of Leven, the army of the Eastern Association under the Earl of Manchester and local Yorkshire forces under Lord Fairfax. Facing them to the north were Prince Rupert's army, some 14,000 strong, and 4,000 infantrymen under the Marquess of Newcastle.

The battle began sometime before 7pm when Leven, the Allied commander, launched a sudden attack on the Royalist lines. The Allied right wing under Fairfax was repulsed by the Royalist cavalry under Goring, but on the left wing the Eastern Association cavalry under Cromwell (who was wounded in the engagement) drove back the Royalist horse commanded by Byron, whose forces turned and fled. Rupert then led his reserves against Cromwell but, after fierce fighting, Cromwell's men broke through, 'scattering [the enemy] before him like a little dust'. Cromwell then led his cavalry behind the Royalist lines to complete their encirclement.



Most of the Royalist forces surrendered or fled, the only remaining resistance being given by Newcastle's infantry, the Whitecoats, who refused to yield and perished almost to a man. Some 4,000 Royalists and several hundred Allied troops lost their lives in the battle, most of them being buried in mass graves on the field.

Marston Moor is an immensely significant battle. It was by far the largest of the Civil War, bringing together three Allied and two Royalist armies. Defeat cost the Royalists the north of England with serious consequences for their ability to carry on the war. Newcastle's army ceased to exist and he himself went into exile. Prince Rupert's reputation for invincibility was destroyed, while Cromwell's prestige, in both the military and political spheres, was greatly enhanced.

Planning protection for Historic Battlefields

The three battlefields in Harrogate District (part of Myton is within Hambleton District) are covered by Policy HD6 of the Harrogate District Local Plan (Saved Policies) and that part of Myton within Hambleton District by Policy L9 of the Hambleton District-wide Local Plan. Policy HD6 of the Harrogate District Local Plan states that:

"Development affecting Historic Battlefield sites, as identified on the Proposals Map, will only be permitted where the proposal:

- (a) does not adversely affect the historic, archaeological & landscape interest of the site &*
- (b) does not prejudice any potential for interpretation of the site."*

Policy L9 of the Hambleton District-wide Local Plan (which covers landscape in general rather than battlefields specifically) confers similar protection on that part of Myton battlefield within Hambleton District. These policies are considered to provide adequate protection in respect of any pressures for development which are likely to arise.

Conserving Battlefields

Battlefields rarely have identifiable remains. The land on which they took place was usually farmland and generally remains in agricultural use, though in many cases its appearance will have been radically changed by enclosure and subsequent changes. Continuing management of the land is both desirable and necessary and there is no intention that battlefields should be 'restored' to their, inevitably conjectural, appearance at the time the battle took place. English Heritage suggest four themes which can guide the conservation of battlefields for future generations:

Authenticity - an essential part of the experience of visiting battlefields is the knowledge that the landscape essentially reflects that in which the battle took place. Superficial changes, such as enclosure or the more recent loss of hedgerows, do not diminish authenticity, but this would be severely harmed by major changes such as quarrying, the creation of a golf course or major residential development. Cumulative small changes occurring over time can have a similarly damaging effect.

Visual amenity - the best preserved battlefields are those where the visitor's appreciation of history is least distracted by inappropriate elements in the landscape, including buildings sited in key views, plantations of trees or road embankments which disrupt the ability to appreciate the course of a battle. Conversely, carefully placed screening to minimise the impact of such distractions can greatly enhance the appreciation of a battlefield. The grouping of any necessary new buildings with existing ones can reduce their impact on the landscape.

Integrity - archaeology, especially combined with historical research, can greatly increase our understanding of battles, but such activities as the unscientific use of metal detectors or the laying of pipelines can remove or destroy valuable information. Only planned field research should be carried out.

Accessibility & interpretation - increasing public access to battlefields, whilst respecting the interests of owners and occupiers, is to be encouraged as the best prospect for their conservation lies in the recognition of their value to the local community and tourism. Where local initiatives coincide with broader conservation and interpretation priorities, English Heritage may be able to give assistance.

Possibilities for Interpretation

English Heritage have drawn attention in their general leaflet on Historic Battlefields to the value to the local community and tourism to be gained from modest local initiatives to improve the interpretation of battlefields and the maps published with the individual Register entries suggest possibilities in the way of improving and linking footpaths, developing viewpoints, etc.

The Battle of Marston Moor has, as might be expected, enjoyed much greater attention than either the Battle of Myton or the Battle of Boroughbridge. In the 1930s the Cromwell Society erected a concrete obelisk to the north of the Long Marston-Tockwith road and an interpretative panel was added in the early 1990s. About this time a proposal was put forward for a battlefield interpretation centre adjacent to the intersection of the Hole Beck with the Harrogate -York railway line to the north of the battlefield, but the idea was not taken further. The setting of the obelisk has recently been greatly improved, and a gravelled lay-by for the use of visitors has been constructed on the south side of the road, opposite the monument.

As regards the Battle of Boroughbridge, the town council had erected a commemorative plaque on the south-western end of the bridge and propose that an interpretative panel be erected in the town's car park. The Boroughbridge Historical Society has suggested a similar panel adjacent to the weir on Milby Island.

As far as is known, no specific proposals have been put forward to commemorate the Battle of Myton. However, in view of its close relationship to the Battle of Boroughbridge, there would seem to be scope for a correlated interpretation of both battles and the creation of a trail linking the two battlefields via the riverside footpath.

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