



The Culloden Battlefield Memorial Project as at Summer 2006

by Professor Christopher Duffy

At recent meetings the BCMH pledged its support for the National Trust for Scotland's (NTS) plans to present and conserve the battlefield at Culloden (16 April 1746). The present newsletter provides an opportunity to explain the project in more detail and to keep BCMH members up to date with happenings.

The Recent History and Current Needs of the Site

The first of the NTS's acquisitions dates from 1937, when Alexander Munro of Leanach gave the present Leanach Cottage. In 1943 Hector Forbes presented the Clan Graves and the 19th-century Memorial Cairn. In the 1980s a first programme of rehabilitation resulted in the clearing of trees from further land purchased from the Forestry Commission, together with the re-routing of the B9006 from the Graves and Cairn area to a line further to the north (1982-3), and the opening of the present Visitor Centre (1984). But standing still in the new century is no option. In essence:

1. The much-loved existing Visitor Centre is often overcrowded, and will not be able to meet the numbers and expectations of the public even in the near future. Some of its displays are looking rather tired, and it cannot show loan collections and archaeological finds to the best advantage. Finally it sits on an important part of the field, as identified by the most recent research.
2. The Project embraces a re-presentation of the battlefield.
3. The Project gives the spur for archaeological and other research, which in turn is already informing the plans for the site.
4. A viable Project will reinforce the efforts of the NTS to protect the whole area of the fighting, and (just as importantly) conserve the wider views which add so much to the public's experience of the site.

Concepts and Features

The Memorial will convey an understanding of the wider context of the battle, and its course, aftermath and place in Gaelic culture. In addition to artefacts and interactive displays, the public will be drawn into the subject matter by a careful deployment of lighting, space, sound and surface textures, and by being encouraged to identify with historical characters and follow them through the events of 16 April and their eventual fate. The Visitor Management Programme (a rather sinister title) will guide the public through the displays and the battlefield in a way which will emphasise and respect the solemnity of the site.

The new car park and Visitor Centre will be located to the south-east of the present sites, which can then be opened to archaeology and re-instated as part of the field. The Visitor Centre as a whole will be a low-lying affair, much more attuned to the landscape than the present object, and the roof will take the form of a grassed ramp affording an overall view of



the field, which will provide an excellent means of giving a first orientation. Members of the public who do not wish to enter the displays will continue to enjoy free access to the field, and will be at liberty to patronise the shop and café. Paying visitors will be urged to choose their real-life character and take a hand-held computer which will be actuated at appropriate points in the displays and on the field. It all sounds complicated, but it is a tried and tested technique, and is the means of making every visit a fresh experience.

The display area proper will occupy 18,800 square metres, which is more than the size of the whole of the present Visitor Centre. The galleries as a whole will adopt a W-shaped conformation (beginning at the top right-hand corner of the 'W'), and for the most part will follow the geographical route taken by the '45, with the Jacobite and government's aspects on facing walls, and a common chronological explanation ('timeline' in the current jargon) running down the middle. The successive themes relate to the background of the Rising, the campaign of the '45 in England and Scotland, the overnight march of the Jacobites to Nairn on 15/16 April, and the culminating battle as represented in a number of larger spaces - a visually and aurally overwhelming Battle Immersion (which can be avoided by those of a sensitive disposition), and areas devoted to artefacts, specialised displays, living history and an interactive battle map.

An exit at a corner of the Centre will give access to the battlefield. Newly-designed paths, information panels and Front Line markers and banners will present the course of the battle in the light of the latest researches. Ticket-holders can return to the Visitor Centre by way of the 'exit' and make their way towards the retail area along a sloping corridor which will present the Aftermath in both symbolic and factual terms.

Current Progress

Work on the new Visitor Centre was delayed on account of difficulties with the original contractor (R.J. MacLeod). On 17 March 2006 an understanding was reached with a new contractor (Morrison Construction Group), who broke ground in the second week of June.

Other activities are proceeding regardless. The formal religious dedication of the battlefield will take place on 14 April 2007. The site has already been transformed, since the work of clearing scrub and other obstructions is going well, which is an important step towards restoring the landscape to its state in 1746. The NTS is negotiating to purchase 45.8 acres from the owner of Viewhill Farm, Mr. Keistra, which would take in all the right wing of the government battle line north of the present B9006, together with a path to lead to the Prisoners' Stone further north in Forestry Commission Land. This acquisition would be of the highest importance, since it is likely to hold much intact archaeology, and was the ground most at risk from development (a supermarket).

In 2001 archaeologists from Glasgow University (now acting as Dr. Tony Pollard's Centre for Battlefield Archaeology) investigated a 'transect' of part of the field already in NTS possession, corresponding with the charge of the Jacobite right wing. The work was continued in 2005 with significant results, and is likely to extend over decades. It confirmed the alignment of the Leanach and Culchunaig enclosures, as they had been reconstituted earlier by the NTS on the evidence of documentary evidence and ground penetrating radar, but



suggested that the Leanach Enclosure was already in decay at the time of the battle, and that significant infantry fighting took place inside that compound. A number of finds pointed to close-quarter fighting of a savage nature, with musket butts being used as clubs, and bullets being cloven almost in two, probably on impact with the edges of broadswords. Oddly enough the numbers of bullets from identifiable Jacobite weapons so far corresponds almost exactly to those from Brown Besses. The finds of grapeshot and canister testify to the work of the Duke of Cumberland's artillery, and researchers at the US Army School of Artillery at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, are fascinated by the fragments of 5 ½ inch Coehoorn mortar bombs, as evidence of very early (and possibly the earliest-ever) use of indirect fire on a field of battle.

Glasgow University is among the world leaders in the fast-developing science of battlefield archaeology, and the relationship between research and presentation is illustrated by the current efforts to identify the grave sites in the Field of the English. Two possible locations have come to light, but will probably not be verified without resort (however reluctantly) to intrusive archaeology. The NTS wishes to protect the sites and commemorate the redcoat fallen in an appropriate way, and Bonnie Prince Charlie, as the most chivalrous of enemies, would certainly have approved.

Support for the Project

We can all associate ourselves with the work of the NTS at Culloden, most immediately by contributing to the Culloden Battlefield Memorial Project's appeal for the new Visitor Centre and presentation of the field. The target of the appeal, which opened in the spring of 2006, is £1.95 million, which is the difference between the sums already raised from public sources and the total cost of £7,986,740. The appeal is going well. It passed the one million mark in early June, and now is just the time to keep up the momentum

The acquisitions at Viewhill Farm were funded separately, and in the longer term members of the BCMH should consider support for a '*restricted land purchase fund*', an interest-bearing account which will be set up at the suggestion of the 1745 Association. Cheques can be channelled in that direction simply by indicating your wishes in your covering letter, and legacies would seem to be a particularly appropriate means of lending support. Even with the Viewhill Farm purchase the land in NTS possession would amount to less than 100 acres of the estimated 550 acres of the combat (which is much more extensive than previously thought), and direct ownership is one of the most secure means of protection against the encroachments of fast-expanding Inverness. Even then the wider landscapes will be at risk, which is why the NTS is supporting Historic Scotland in its ambition to establish a new category of legal protection, 'The Protected Battlefield' or such like, which will preserve the environment of this and other Scottish battle sites.

Individuals who wish to support the project should make out any cheques to 'NTS Culloden Battlefield Memorial Project', and copy or post with their covering letters the following passage:

'I am a UK taxpayer and would like the National Trust for Scotland to treat this and all my future contributions to the Culloden Battlefield Memorial Project as Gift Aid. I confirm that I



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have paid an amount of income tax or capital gains tax at least to the value to the tax that the National Trust for Scotland will reclaim on my donations in the last and future years'

Editor adds:

Further information is at <http://www.culloden.org/> and particularly at the National Trust for Scotland website <http://www.nts.org.uk> ; go to visits and then Culloden.

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