

English Heritage Battlefield Report: Braddock 1643

Braddock Down (19 January 1643)

Parish: St Pinnock, Broadoak

District: Caradon

County: Cornwall

Grid Ref: SX 176629

Historical Context

In the Autumn of 1642 Sir Ralph Hopton began raising a Royalist army of volunteers in Cornwall. The Trained Bands of the county were reluctant to leave their home areas and Hopton realised that his main hope of exerting sustained pressure on the Parliamentarians in Devon lay with a force of volunteer regiments. By December 1642 Hopton was ready to move against the Parliamentary garrison of Plymouth, but the Royalist plan was frustrated by the spirited resistance of Colonel Ruthin, a Scots officer in Parliament's service. Hopton next attempted to crush the enemy in Exeter, but once again he was outmanoeuvred by Ruthin. Faced with an acute shortage of men, food and ammunition, and by mutiny amongst those who remained under his command, Hopton was forced to fall back into Cornwall.

Ruthin pursued, clashing with the Royalists at Bridestowe before eventually crossing the Tamar and occupying Liskeard. Hopton, now at Bodmin, was menaced not only by Ruthin's force but also by a second Parliamentary army, commanded by the Earl of Stamford, which was now active in the West. If the Royalist position in Cornwall was to be preserved Hopton must strike at Ruthin before the Parliamentarians joined forces. Fortunately for Hopton the condition of his army, now mutinous for lack of pay and food, was transformed by an accident which befell the Parliamentary cause. On 17 January 1643 a fierce storm drove three Parliamentary warships into the Royalist port of Falmouth. The warships were amply provisioned with arms and money and their supplies were quickly distributed amongst Hopton's army. With their stomachs full and their morale high the Cornishmen set forth to find and defeat Ruthin.

Location and Description of the Battlefield

There are alternative sites for the battlefield of Braddock Down. Traditionally it has been located between Boconnoc and Braddock Church and the majority of Civil War historians reflect this view.¹ Indeed until the late 1980s the Ordnance Survey also supported this location by marking the battlefield on Sheet 201 at National Grid reference SX 159619, close to Braddock Church. As a result of research into the site of the battle carried out by Mr R Wilton, and published² in 1985, the Ordnance Survey (Pathfinder 1347. SX 06/16. 1:25000) has moved the location of the battlefield approximately one mile to the north-east of Braddock Church to a position close to Middle Taphouse in the triangle formed by the A390 and the B3359. Wilton presented a cogent argument for the new site and there are a number of topographical and historical factors which support his revisionist view.

On 18 January 1643 Hopton summoned his forces to a rendezvous on 'Moysborough Downe' before advancing south-eastwards:

that night without cannon or baggage into Bocunoke Parke: where they lodg'd that night, keeping

parties of horse abroad, to gett what intelligence they could of the Enemy.³

Colonel Sir Bevil Grenville, writing to his wife after the battle, was equally specific:

We advanc'd yesterday from Bodmyn to find the Enimy which we heard was abrode, or if we miss'd him in the field, we were resolv'd to unhous them in Liskeard, or leave our boddies in the highway. We were not above 3 mile from Bodmyn when we had view of two troopes of their horse to whom we sent some of ours, whch chas'd them out of the field, while our foote marchd after our horse. but night coming on, we could march no farther than Boconnock Parke, where (upon my lo: Mohuns and motion) we quartered all our Army that night by good fires under the hedges.⁴

Having marched from Bodmin and briefly encountered a Parliamentary patrol, Hopton's force quartered in Boconnoc Park as night fell. Boconnoc lies approximately 6 miles to the south-east of Bodmin and 2.5 miles to the east of Lostwithiel and it is on ground between here and Braddock Church that the site of the battle has been traditionally located.

Early on 19 January the Royalists resumed their march towards Liskeard:

The next morning early (upon the resolucion of a Councill of warr taken that night) they advanced determining to find the Enimie wheresoever hee was, and if hee should keepe himself still in Liskard to fall upon him there. In the morning as they were drawing out, their dragoone that had the Van of all, were beaten in by the Enymies horse which were already drawn up upon the east side of Bradock Downe at the end of the Lane coming out from Lyskard...⁵

Having spent the night in Boconnock Park the Royalists threw out a screen of dragoons who clashed with Parliamentarian Horse already drawn up on the east side of Braddock Down near the end of the road from Liskeard. Joel Gascoyne's 'Map of the County of Cornwall, Newly Surveyed'⁶ published in 1699 shows the road from Liskeard turning into a track at East Taphouse, becoming more substantial at Middle Taphouse, turning back into track for a short distance towards Taphouse, and then becoming substantial again. There are also the beginnings of three lanes shown leading from the Lostwithiel to Liskeard road towards Braddock between Middle Taphouse and Taphouse. With this range of options to choose from it may be too simplistic to assume that Hopton was referring to the point at which the Liskeard road became track at East Taphouse. If this was the case, however, it supports the Ordnance Survey location of the battlefield between East Taphouse and Middle Taphouse.

Part of the problem of locating the battlefield is establishing the site and extent of Braddock Down itself. Neither Joel Gascoyne nor the modern Ordnance Survey map mark Braddock Down, but the original one inch OS Map Lostwithiel-Braddock (north) published in 1809 shows 'Broadoak Common' to the east of 'Broadoak' close to Middle Taphouse and slightly west of East Taphouse. We know that the Parliamentarian army was drawn up 'upon the east side of Bradock Downe' and also that Hopton deployed his Foot 'on the west syde of Bradock Downe'⁷, and therefore that if 'Broadoak Common' can be clearly identified as Braddock Down the latest OS location is the more probable. Confusingly, Richard Symonds, a gentleman in the King's Lifeguard, included the following entry in his diary during the Lostwithiel Campaign in August 1644:

The whole army of the King's lay upon Brodock Downe, about 16,000 horse and foot....The forlorne of 1,000 foot, commanded by Colonel Apleyard, went off the heath through a lane between inclosures to another heath called by the same name, nearer the enemy.⁸

This seems to imply that there was another area of Down further west towards Lostwithiel which was also known, in the seventeenth century at least, as Braddock Down, or more probably that the area of the Down itself had never been fully delineated.

Hopton refers to the deployment of two cannon 'upon a litle Borough within randome-shott of the Enymies bodyes, which then were drawn up intirely, both horse and foote.' If the new OS location of the battlefield is correct it is possible that Hopton's 'litle Borough' was one of the tumuli sited between Middle and East Taphouse. As the battle was fought in an east-west orientation and given the nature of the ground at this point it would seem that the tumulus to the east of the B3359 between Middle Taphouse and East Lodge could possibly indicate the site of the Royalist cannon. This assertion would, of course, need to be supported by a survey showing that the tumulus could have accommodated the cannon.

The OS location accords well with the tactics of the battle which centred upon the fact that both sides held what we can construe as a military crest. In the words of the Royalist Colonel Sir Bevil Grenville:

they were possed of a pritty rising ground wch was in the way towards Liskeard, and we plant'd ouselves upon such another against them within muskett shott and we saluted each other with bullitts about two howers or more each side being willing to keep their ground of advantage, and to have the other to come over to his prejudice.⁹

Not wishing to surrender the advantage of ground which they believed they held, the two armies remained in position skirmishing. Only when Hopton lost patience and decided to order salvo from his two guns followed by a general advance of the Royalist line was the stalemate broken. Grenville's regiment led the charge down the slope in front of Hopton's position and up that on which the Parliamentarians were deployed:

I had the van and so following prayers in the head of ever division I ledd my part away, who followed me with so good courage, both downe the one hill and up the other, that it strook a terror in them, while the seconds came up gallantly after me, and the wings of horse charged on both sides. but their Courage so faild them, as they stood not our first Charge of the foot but fledd in great disorder, and we chast them divers miles.¹⁰

Grenville, however, provides the main impediment to accepting the new OS location for the battlefield as he states categorically that:

the next morning (being this day) we march'd forth, about noone, came in full view of the Enimies whole Army, upon a faire heath between Bocon: and Braddock Church.¹¹

Grenville was a Cornishman, who we might reasonably expect to have known the area, and he clearly places the battle on ground between Boconnoc and Braddock Church. This location is now richly covered in plantations and it is difficult to follow exactly those features of the ground mentioned by participants in the battle. Certainly from what can be seen today at Braddock Church there is a military crest facing west which could have been occupied by Ruthin's force; but nothing, viewed from a preliminary inspection, in the area between Boconnoc and Braddock Church accords so well with Grenville's description of the two hills in close proximity....'we plant'd ouselves upon such another against them within muskett shott'....as the revised OS site. Moreover, as at Middle Taphouse, the valley between the two armies must have been relatively narrow since the Royalist pikeman and musketeers could not have maintained a full-blown charge for any great distance.

While acknowledging that Sir Bevil probably had some local knowledge, even though his home was 30 miles away, Wilton deals with the Colonel's statement by arguing that the Royalists confused the churches of St Pinnock and Braddock. They were misled by John Speed's map of Cornwall published in 1612, the only map that would have been readily available to them in planning their advance upon Ruthin. Although Speed does not map the roads in the area he does show rivers, towns and churches. Unfortunately, Speed placed St Pinnock Church approximately three miles north of its true position. Thus when the Royalists encountered the church itself during the pursuit of the beaten enemy they would automatically assume that it was Braddock Church.

If this argument is accepted, and it is a plausible explanation, then Grenville's letter can be taken to mean that the Royalists 'came in full view of the Enimies whole Army, uppon a faire heath between Bocon: and *St Pinnock Church*'. If it is not accepted then it becomes difficult to explain why it took the Royalists, who left their camp 'the next morning early' until 'about noone', to come into full view of the enemy's 'whole Army'. For if Ruthin had deployed to the west of Braddock Church he would have been just over a mile from Hopton's camp and in full view of the Royalists before they began their march. This in turn makes nonsense of Hopton's statement that the Royalists advanced from Boconnoc on 19 January determined 'to find the Enimie wheresoever hee was, and if hee should keepe himself still in Liskard to fall upon him there'. Certainly the preliminaries to the fighting and the battle itself make greater sense if the battlefield is located close to Middle Taphouse rather than on the ground between Boconnoc and Braddock Church.

The Landscape Evolution

In 1643 the landscape would have been one of open downland with already ancient land divisions marked by earthen banks topped by hedges. Many of these survive today and are rich in plant species, indicating considerable age. Middle Taphouse would have been established on the Liskeard road and around it, on the downland, the Bronze Age barrows were prominent features. It was also referred to locally, and apparently indiscriminately, as Braddock (Broadoak) or Pinnock Down.¹²

By the 18th century Braddock Down had started to be enclosed and, by a century later fully enclosed. The new field boundaries filled in the open space between the massive banks. The land is now mainly pasture with some arable on the west facing slopes. The formerly marshy ground in the valley has now become wooded.

The Battle: its sources and interpretation

The official views of the Battle of Braddock Down, which came from both the Royalist and Parliamentary sides, are at best confused and at worst misleading. Fortunately their errors are illuminated by the personal accounts penned by Hopton and Grenville. The Royalists made three attempts at describing the battle and its preliminaries before they finally published a version which bore more than a passing relationship to the events of 19 January 1643. The initial Royalist account¹³ published in *Mercurius Aulicus* placed the battle between Bodmin and Lostwithiel, stated that it came about as the result of a direct challenge from Ruthin to Hopton, and claimed that of the 4,000 Parliamentarians involved, 'three parts' were lost 'of which 200 only were taken prisoner; the rest being killed either in the battaile, or the chase.' Supplements to this account published, respectively, on 24 and 31 January 1643 reduced the Parliamentarian dead to 2,000 and then to between 20-30 plus 1,400 prisoners. The fourth Royalist version¹⁴ of the battle placed it on Braddock Down between Boconnoc Park and Liskeard and claimed that Ruthin had lost 200 dead and 700 captured.

The Parliamentary news-books claimed that Ruthin had been ambushed by the Royalists:

Yesterday in the morning, our forces marched towards the enemy, all the way being narrow and very dirty lanes, and, as it appears, had neither the help of guides nor scouts, so that on a sudden after their march of 3 miles they fell into an ambush of great disadvantage unto them, which the enemy had laid in a thick wood of a park of my Lord Mohun's joining to the way. As our forces marched beside a dangerous bog and a very high hill and the enemy in number treble beyond ours besides their ordnance, which we wanted, and I fear encouraged by some intelligence of the height of our strength: having all these advantages, the enemy charged furiously upon our forces, and they as magnanimously resolutely them, but in a short time the courage of our forces was abated, and surprised with such a panic fear that both our horse and foot were suddenly routed, and every man divided and dispersed, and ran and rode as fast as fear could carry them towards Saltash. The enemy pursued them eagerly, and in this chase got no small number of our arms, which the fugitives let fall in their flight, and the

commanders as well as others tried the goodness of their horses in this chase. Four choice pieces of ordnance we have lost; what number of men is not yet certainly known, but I doubt not a few are taken prisoners; yet it is thought there are but three or four slain. Had our forces delayed this enterprise one day longer, four good pieces ordnance, which came yesterday too late, with more soldiers had come up to them, and then I am confident that through God's assistance and good advice we had had a glorious victory on the Hoptonian rebels.¹⁵

Having marched three miles out of Liskeard the Parliamentarians were suddenly attacked in flank by a vastly more numerous Royalist force which had been concealed in a wood at the side of the road. Unable to manoeuvre because of the proximity of a bog and a steep hill Ruthin's men had resisted stoutly until, seized by a sudden panic, they had fled to Saltash with minimal casualties.

The personal accounts of two Royalist officers, Hopton and Grenville, both participants in the battle, provide a more sustainable view of the detail of the fighting. Hopton sums up the events of battle economically and clearly:

...having drawn the foote in the best order hee (Hopton) could on the west syde of Bradock Downe and having had publique Prayers in the head of every squadron (which the Enemy observing stiled Masse, as was afterwards confest by some of the prisoners) and having placed a forlorne of muskettiers in little inclosures that lay before him, and winged all with the few horse and dragoons hee had, hee caused to bee speedily and secretly fetcht from the Lord Mohun's house, two little iron Minion-drakes, which with litle parties of horse were cover'd from the Enemy, so that they were placed upon a litle Borough within randome-shott of the Enymies bodyes, which then were drawn up intirely, both horse and foote, but their cannon was not as yett come up, which advantage Sir Ralph Hopton espying plac'd a reserve of foote behind him, after two shott with the drakes advanced upon the Enemy with all the rest, and quickly beate them off that ground, but they having likewise with their reserve lyn'd the hedges behind them thought thereby to make good their retreat, but being prest on all sides, they quickly quitted that ground likewise, and put all their army into a rowte, and gave the Cornish army the execution of them, which they performed verie sparinglie, but tooke twelve hundred and fyftie prisoners most of their coulours all their cannon, being fower brasse gunnes upon carryages, (whereof two were 12 pounders) and one iron saker, besides divers of brasse, all their ammunicion, and most of their armes, and march'd that night to Liskeard, where the next day they rested their men, and gave publique thanks.¹⁶

When Hopton discovered the Parliamentary army deployed on the east side of Braddock Down he drew up his own force with the infantry in the centre and cavalry and dragoons on the wings. He strengthened his front with musketeers deployed along the hedges and reinforced his centre with two cannon positioned on higher ground and a reserve of infantry. Hopton's cannon fired two rounds and his entire force then advanced to contact with the Parliamentarians. As the Royalists swept forward Ruthin's troops fell back upon their own musketeers who were lining the hedges to the rear. As the enemy's cohesion weakened the Cornishmen overlapped their flanks and the Parliamentary retreat degenerated into rout. In the pursuit the Royalists took 1,250 prisoners, captured arms, ammunition and cannon and drove Ruthin's army through Liskeard.

Even though it was his first battle, Sir Bevil Grenville played a significant part in the Royalist victory:

...they were in horse much stronger than we, but in foote we were superior as I thinke. they were possed of a pritty rising ground wch was in the way towards Liskeard, and we plant'd ourselves upon such another against them within muskett shott and we saluted each other with bullitts about two howers or more each side being willing to [defend?] their ground of advantage, and to have the other to come over to his prejudice. But after so long delay they standing still firme, and being obstinate to hould their advantage, Sir Ra: Hopton resolv'd to

march over to them, and so leave all to the mercy of God and valour of our side. I had the van and so following prayers in the head of ever division I ledd my part away, who followed me with so good courage, both downe the one hill and up the other, that it strook a terror in them, while the seconds came up gallantly after me, and the wings of horse charged on both sides. But their Courage so faild them, as they stood not our first Charge of the foot but fledd in great disorder, and we chast them divers miles. many were not slaine because of their quick disordering, but we have taken above 600 prisoners, among wch Sir Shilston Calmady is one, and many are still brought in by the soldiers. much armes they have lost, 8 Collours we have won, and 4 pieces of ordnance from them. - without rest we marched to Liskeard, and tooke it without delay, all their men flying from it before we came. and so I hope we are now againe in the way to settle the Countrey in peace.¹⁷

Reluctant to leave their respective ridges, and while their commanders waited for the artillery to come up, the two armies exchanged musket fire for two hours. The Royalists broke the stalemate, with Grenville and his men leading the charge across to the Parliamentary position. Without pause they carried the enemy before them as far as and beyond Liskeard taking some 600 prisoners. It was a signal victory achieved with minimal Royalist casualties.

Indication of Importance

Cornwall was important to the Royalists throughout the First Civil War, not merely because it was a source of steadfast infantry but because of the support it provided to the King's war effort through the revenue gained from the mining and export of tin. Through Cornwall also munitions could be shipped to the Royalists from France. Hopton's victory at Braddock Down averted a serious threat to the county, for had Ruthin and Stamford joined forces it would have required dedicated work from the Royalists to retain their hold on Cornwall.

The victory of Braddock Down did much to restore the Cornish army after the misery of the retreat from Exeter. Hopton gained increased respect for his leadership and his men gained a new belief in their own effectiveness. Henceforth, Parliamentary armies would treat the Cornish infantry with circumspection, for their prowess had been largely responsible for the Royalist triumph.

Battlefield Area

The battlefield area boundary defines the outer reasonable limit of the battle, taking into account the positions of the combatants at the outset of fighting and the focal area of the battle itself. It does not include areas over which fighting took place subsequent to the main battle. Wherever possible, the boundary has been drawn so that it is easily appreciated on the ground.

The battlefield area encompasses the deployment of both armies on the facing high ground by Middle Taphouse, allowing space to the east for the positioning of the Parliamentary musketeers at the rear of Ruthin's main line, and in the west for Hopton's reserve. Thus it uses the present main road for its northern border and north-south lanes on either side. To the south an ancient hedgebank forms the boundary because the battle is unlikely to have spanned it.

The area has been extended to the east behind the principal Parliamentary position to accommodate the initial flight and dispersal of the army as it fled into the lane to Liskeard.

Notes

1. For example, Alfred Burne and Peter Young in *The Great Civil War* (1959), F T R Edgar in *The King's Man in the West*, Peter Young and Richard Holmes in *The English Civil War* (1974).
2. Wilton, R 'Some Notes on the Battle of Braddock Down' in *Devon and Cornwall Notes and Queries* Vol. XXXV, Part VII, Spring 1985 pp246-253
3. *Bellum Civile. Hopton's Narrative of his Campaign in the West 1642-1644.* ed. C E H Chadwyck Healey. Somerset Record Society 18, p29 (1902)
4. Colonel Sir Bevil Grenville in a letter to his wife dated 19 January 1643. Victoria & Albert Museum MSS
5. Hopton *Op. cit.* p29
6. *A Map of the County of Cornwall, Newly Surveyed by Joel Gascoyne* (1699). Devon and Cornwall Record Society New Series, 34 (1991)
7. Hopton *Op. cit.* p29
8. Symonds, Richard *Diary of the Marches of the Royal Army during the Great Civil war....* ed. C E Long, Camden Society 74 (1859)
9. Grenville *Op. cit.*
10. Grenville *Ibid.*
11. Grenville *Ibid.*
12. Lysons, Daniel and Samuel *Magna Britannia, Vol 3, Cornwall* (1814)
13. *A True and Briefe Relation of the Great Victory Obtained by Sir Ralph Hopton neare Bodmin, in the County of Cornwall, January 19*
14. *A Second but More Perfect Relation of the Great Victory Obtained by Sir Ralph Hopton Neare Bodmin*
15. Sir T Wrothe to John Pym 20 January 1643. *13th Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts* Appendix Part 1 Portland MSS (1892)
16. Hopton *Op. cit.*
17. Grenville *Op. cit.*