

Battle Name:	Brunanburh	Council area: Dumfries & Galloway
Date:	late 937	
UKFOC number:	361	

BRUNANBURH

1 SUMMARY

Athelstan, having created a united kingdom of England by completing the re-conquest from the Danes, attempted to extend his authority over the northernmost territories of Britain. In response an alliance of British, Scots and Norse under Olaf Guthfrithson invaded England by ship via the Humber. In late 937 Athelstan responded, meeting the invaders in battle at Brunanburh. The joint Mercian and West Saxon army broke, pursued and destroyed the allied forces.

2 ASSESSMENT

2.1 LOCATION

The site of the battle has not been established and a number of alternatives have been suggested. One of these lies in southern Scotland, close to the hillfort at Burnswark, south east of Lockerbie. However, according to Smurthwaite 'it seems inconceivable that the battle was fought north of the border, particularly if we accept that Olaf landed on the Humber.'⁽¹⁾

2.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BATTLE

This was a major battle of great military significance and also political importance, for it reinforced the sense of English national unity.

2.9 POTENTIAL

Given that the location in Scotland is highly speculative and that significant battle archaeology (other than burials) has yet to be demonstrated on battlefields in Britain before the late medieval, the potential of the site would seem to be very low. This assessment should however be reviewed if new information comes to light on the location of the battle, and especially once investigation has been undertaken on one or more well located early medieval battles with good preservation conditions, where the primary issues of battle archaeology for this period can be resolved.

3 REFERENCES

(1)Smurthwaite, David. *The Complete Guide to the Battlefields of Britain*. London: Michael Joseph, 1993.

4 BIBLIOGRAPHY

4.1 PRIMARY SOURCES

4.2 SECONDARY SOURCES

Black, C. Stewart. *Scottish battles*. Glasgow: Brown Son & Ferguson, 1936.

Bryant H E. "A lost battlefield: the site of the battle of Brunanburh." *Lincolnshire magazine* 1.

Burne, Alfred. *The Battlefields of England*. London: Greenhill Books, 1998.

Campbell Alistair. *The battle of Brunanburgh*, 1938.

Cockburn, John Henry. *The battle of Brunanburgh and its period elucidated by place-names*. London ; Sheffield: Leng 1931, 1931.

Garnett James, Mercer. *Elene [by Cynewulf]; Judith; Athelstan, or the Fight at Brunanburgh; Byhrtnoth, or the fight at Maldon and the Dream of the Rood: Anglo-Saxon poems*. Translated [and edited] by J. M. Garnett ... Enlarged edition. Boston, U.S.A.: Ginn & Co. 1901., 1901.

Hamilton, J. *Scottish Battles*. New Lanark: Geddes & Grosset, 2004.

Harrison Kenneth. "A note on the battle of Brunanburh (in Browney Valley?)." *Durham Archaeology* 1 (1983): 63-65.

Norwood John, Charles. *Brunanburgh. [An attempt to identify the site.]*. Glasgow: J. C. Norwood [1922.], 1922.

Rodrigues, Louis J. *The Battles of Maldon and Brunanburh*. Felinfach, Lampeter: Llanerch 1991, 1991.

Smurthwaite, David. *The Complete Guide to the Battlefields of Britain*. London: Michael Joseph, 1993.

Todd Charles Spilman. *The Battle of Brunanburgh: its cause, history and site*. Hull, 1875.

Whistler Charles, Watts. *Dragon Osmund. A story of Athelstan and of Brunanburgh*. London: Thomas Nelson & Sons [1914.], 1914.

Wilkinson T T. "On the Battle of Brunanburh: and the probable locality of the conflict." *Hist Soc Lancashire Cheshire* 9: 21-42.

Wood Michael. "Brunanburh revisited." *Sagabook* 20 (1979): 200-17.