



THE BORESTONE (FIELD OF BANNOCKBURN).

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THE visitor to the Borestone from Stirling passes through a scene of great historic interest. At Randolphfield, the day before the battle of Bannockburn, Randolph, Earl of Moray, met and defeated a party of English under Sir Robert Clifford, who was making a surprise march to relieve Stirling Castle. A few steps further on, the Regent Lennox was killed in 1571, in a skirmish between the adherents of James VI. and those of his mother, Queen Mary. Soon we enter the ancient village of St. Ninians, whose sole antiquity is an old church steeple, standing by itself in the churchyard. In 1746, Prince Charles stored his gunpowder in the St. Ninians Parish Church, and when he had to make a hasty flight on the approach of the Duke of Cumberland, the powder exploded, and the church was blown to pieces, but the steeple escaped.

Immediately beyond St. Ninians is the famous Borestone, where tradition says Bruce fixed his standard at the Battle of Bannockburn. Apart from the historic interest of the spot, it is well worth a visit were it only for the extensive view which it commands. Standing at the Borestone, our backs to the flagstaff, we see the Ochil and Saline Hills; to the left the Grampians: to the right the low, wooded hill of Sauchie, where the battle of that name was fought in 1488; and when we turn and face the flagstaff, we see the Gillies' Hill and the Castle and city of Stirling.

At Milton, a short distance from the Borestone, stands a little house called Beaton's Mill, in which tradition says James III. was murdered immediately after the Battle of Sauchie. On the day of the battle, the miller's wife, filling her pitcher at a spring by the roadside, was startled by the sudden appearance of an armed horseman. Alarmed, she dropped her pitcher; the horse shied, and threw its rider, who was none other than the King. He was badly hurt, and the miller and his wife carried him into their house, and laid him on their humble bed, where his pursuers soon found and killed him with their daggers. The house, though no longer used as a mill, was evidently so used at one time; and on the opposite side of the road is a well, which is doubtless the one from which the woman was drawing water when the King suddenly appeared. James III. was buried at Cambuskenneth, where his grave may still be seen.

What attracts the visitor to the Borestone, however, is the view it commands of one of the world's famous battlefields. It was here that in June, 1314, King Robert Bruce with his small army defeated Edward II. with his 100,000 Englishmen. Since then the face of the country has considerably changed through the draining of a bog which lay in the hollow, into which we look when we stand with the flagstaff on the right, and through which the Bannock Burn flows. When drained, there were two bogs—Milton and Halbert bogs—but probably at the time of the battle the two were one. Edward's object was to reach Stirling Castle, which was held by one of his captains. The road to Stirling lay through Milton, at the extremity of the bog to the left. Beyond that, towards the Forth, the banks of the Bannock Burn are precipitous, and the Carse in the 14th century was marshy and covered with brushwood. Bruce made the road through Milton impassable by digging pits across it, and the English were forced to seek a passage between the other end of the bog and the foot of the Gillies' Hill. There the great battle was fought and won. The little Scottish army withstood the onset of the English like a rock, and just as the latter were beginning to waver, Bruce's camp followers, who had been concealed in a hollow of the Gillies' Hill, suddenly appeared, and struck dismay into the hearts of the English soldiers, who turned and fled. The rout was complete. Thirty thousand of Edward's followers lay dead on the battlefield, while immense booty fell into the hands of the Scots, which is said to have enriched the country for many a day.

Tradition still loves to associate certain localities in the neighbourhood with the battle—the field where Edward stood and witnessed the battle; Coxit Hill, from which Bruce directed the fight; the Bloody Fauld, where a party of the flying English made their last stand; Ingram's Crook, where an English knight of that name was found concealed after the battle; and even the spot where De Bohun was slain by the Scottish king the day before the battle.

The flagstaff was erected by the Oddfellows of Dumbarion in 1870, and the Borestone was covered with an iron grating to protect it from tourists, who would have carried it away piecemeal.

The whole district is redolent of the battle, and is also of great natural beauty. Should the visitor go further, at Torwood he will find the remains of the ancient Caledonian Forest; from Upper Canglour he will obtain a magnificent view of the Firth of Forth, passing on the way the Howietoun Fishery, which owes its existence to the ability and enterprise of Sir James Gibson Maitland, Bart.; and a short walk or drive by Murrayshall will take him through beautiful scenery to the Scottish heather.