

Parliamentarians and royalists confronted each other at Brentford and at Turnham Green over a cold and foggy weekend in November 1642.

As a result of these battles early in the Civil War King Charles I was prevented from capturing London and ending the war. The struggle went on until 1646 but the royalists were never able to attack London again.



John Rocque's map was surveyed 1741-5, a century after the battles. However it shows well the landscape of commons, fields, orchards and commercial gardens across which the battles were fought.



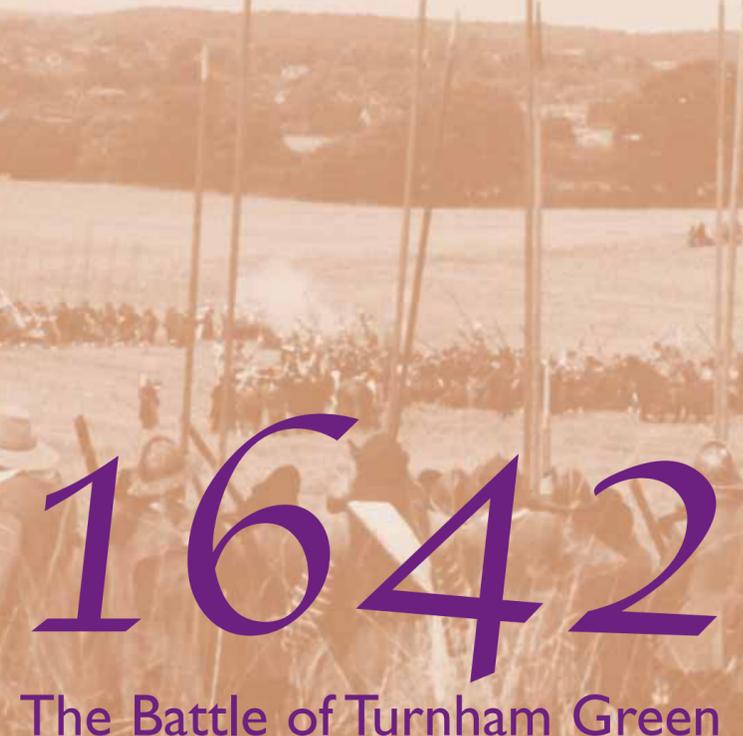
This image is a reconstruction of the 1642 view up towards Acton from the position of this information panel.

What happened here?

Here you would have been standing at the northern flank of the royalist army, which stretched towards today's A4, over what was then flat open fields and common land. About half a kilometre to the east, the parliamentary army was deployed.

To protect the flank of their army royalist foot soldiers were sent north from here into the hedgerows which lined the fields of the rising ground towards Acton. Parliamentary soldiers were sent to force them out and a few were killed and wounded on both sides before the royalists withdrew.

The Earl of Essex, the parliamentary commander, next sent four regiments of foot soldiers and two of horsemen up to the high ground of Acton, trying to outflank the royalists. But, worried about splitting his army, he recalled them after they had travelled about two kilometres.



1642

The Battle of Turnham Green



Colonel John Hampden (1595-1683) commanded one of the regiments sent to Acton to outflank the royalists.



Royalist musketeers were deployed in the hedgerows to protect the King's army.

What happened next?

After Essex recalled his troops the battle settled into a stalemate. Essex was reluctant to move against the King and the royalists had too few men to attack the parliamentarians on such a restricted battlefield.

Late in the afternoon the royalists withdrew skilfully through Brentford to Hounslow Heath and the parliamentarians pursued them only half-heartedly. Afterwards Essex was criticised for failing to take advantage of his strong position.

For both sides Turnham Green ended any prospect of a negotiated settlement or a swift victory and so the Civil War dragged on for another four years.

Sir John Merrick, Major General to Essex came with orders for their return, [Essex] having CHANGED HIS RESOLUTION. *Whitelocke* asked him how this came to pass that they should be recalled & LOOSE SO GREAT AN ADVANTAGE against the enemy, & he said some were false who had given this advice to [Essex], but *Hampden* drolling [joking], bid him HOLD HIS TONGUE least he should be SHOT TO DEATH as a mutineer.

BULSTRODE WHITELOCKE, A GENTLEMAN SERVING IN JOHN HAMPDEN'S REGIMENT.

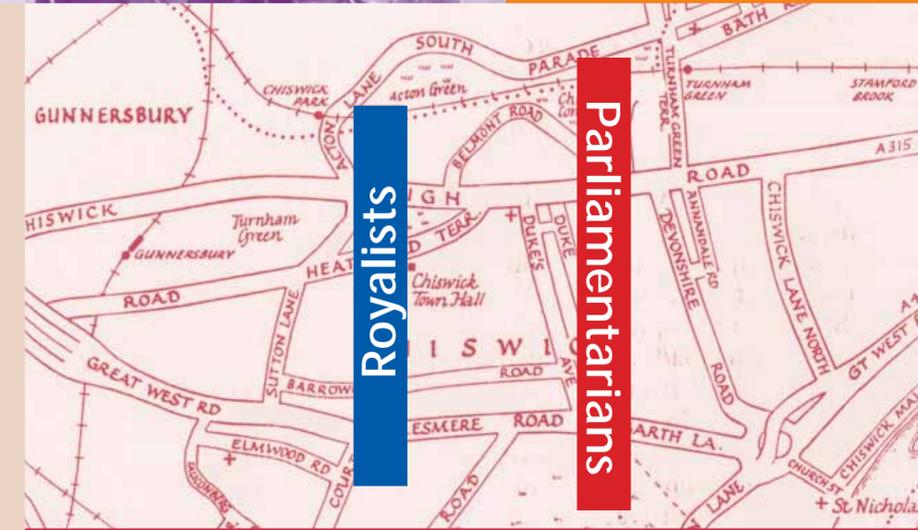


Foot soldiers used pikes or muskets

Why were they fighting?

Strained relations between the King and Parliament, over the constitution, taxation and control of the army, came to a head when the King tried to arrest five MPs.

Parliament began recruiting soldiers in July and by August the Civil War had begun. Everyone thought it would be over quickly but between 1642 and 1646, about a quarter of English men became soldiers and one in 25 of the population died.



The two armies formed up over the open spaces of Turnham Green, Acton Green and Chiswick Common Field, much of which has now been built over.



Heritage
LOTTERY FUNDED

Project supported by the Brentford & Chiswick Local History Society, Hounslow Heritage Guides, Syon Park and the John Hampden Society

Designed by Toni Marshall

This is one of six information panels in Brentford and Chiswick.



www.battlefieldstrust.com/brentfordandturnhamgreen