

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 looking east, towards Hammersmith, from this information panel.

What happened here?

By 8am on 13 November 24,000 parliamentarians had formed up on the open land here, facing a royalist army half that size. The numbers involved made this the third largest battle on British soil.

Here you would have been standing in the middle of the battlefield. About 200 metres towards Hammersmith, foot soldiers raised by the **Earl of Essex** that summer, along with the London militia, would have been drawn up. Around 300 metres to the west was the royalist army.

Crowds came from London to watch the battle, bringing food and drink to sustain the parliamentary soldiers. So much was brought that some was left to waste on the battlefield. When the troops cheered or guns fired many spectators ran away, unsettling the soldiers.

In an attempt to outflank the royalists, Essex sent foot and horse troops to the high ground of Acton. But he was worried about splitting his army and quickly recalled them; the battle settled into a stalemate.

John Hassall's 1928 painting shows what might have happened had the royalists managed to break the parliamentarians' ranks.



1642

The Battle of Turnham Green



The Earl of Essex (1591-1646) was one of the highest ranking nobleman to support Parliament. He became Captain General of the Parliamentary armies at the start of the civil war.



What happened next?

After an exchange of cannon fire by the two armies, royalist horse troops tried unsuccessfully to provoke the parliamentarians into breaking their ranks by pretending to charge at them. 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.

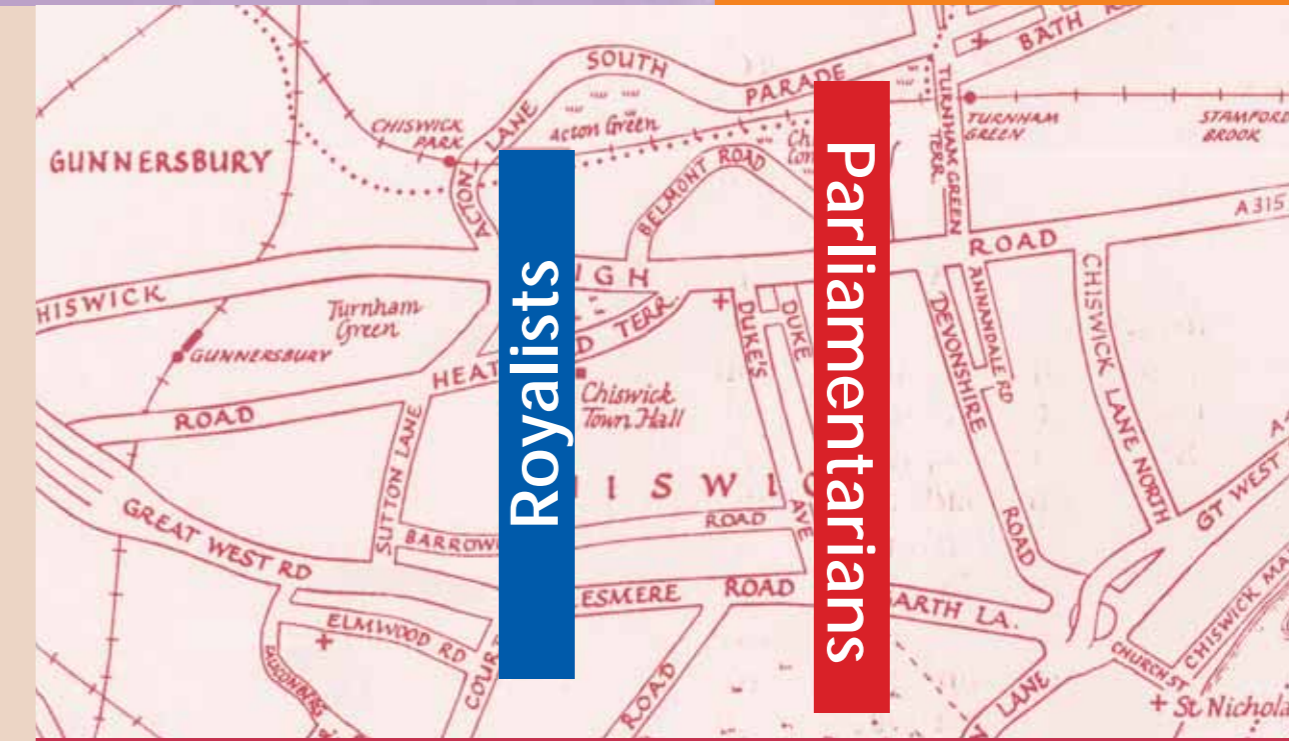
Why were they fighting?

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.

I have heard many KNOWING men, say that if the *king* had advanced and charged that massy body...it had presently given ground. But it would have been MADNESS, which no success could have vindicated, to have made that attempt; and the *king* EASILY DISCERNED that he had brought himself INTO STRAITS AND DIFFICULTIES which would be hardly mastered.

EDWARD, EARL OF CLARENDON, EXPLAINING WHY THE ROYALISTS DID NOT ATTACK AT TURNHAM GREEN.



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
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Designed by Toni Marshall

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



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