

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 towards the west, beyond 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.

The parliamentarian army consisted of regiments raised by the Earl of Essex that summer, the London militia commanded by **Major General Philip Skippon**, sailors from the fleet and volunteers from both houses of Parliament.

Skippon and Essex arranged their men so that the inexperienced militia foot regiments were with Essex's more seasoned foot troops in the centre. This showed the royalists clearly that the soldiers of London supported Parliament.

Essex's horse troops were positioned on the flanks of each army, some close to where you are standing.



Image from Elite 27 Soldiers of the English Civil War (2) by John Tincey © Osprey Publishing Ltd www.ospreypublishing.com

A parliamentary cavalryman. They were deployed near here during the battle.



Major General Philip Skippon commanded the London militia at Turnham Green.



What happened next?

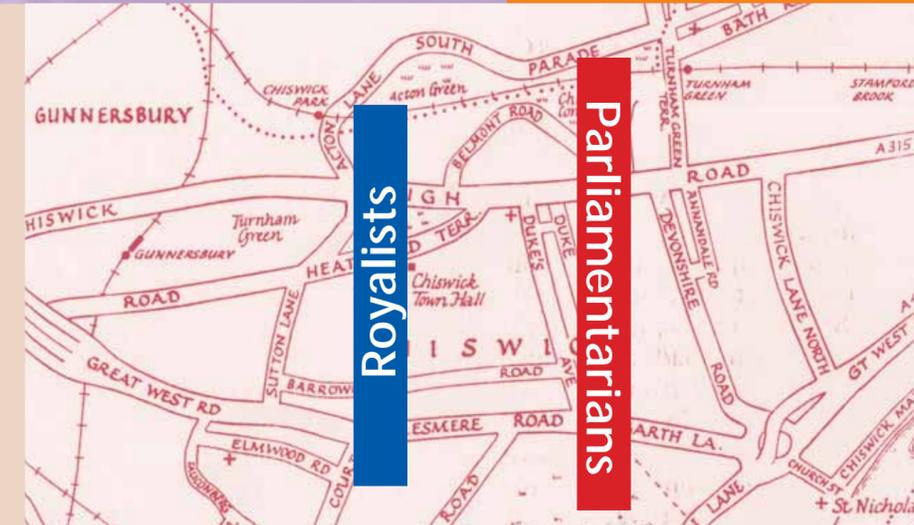
In an attempt to outflank the royalists, Essex sent foot and horse troops to the high ground of Acton. But he was worried about splitting his army and quickly recalled them; the battle settled into a stalemate. Essex was reluctant to move against the King and the royalists had too few men to attack the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

Come my boys, MY BRAVE BOYS, let us pray heartily and fight heartily. I will run the same FORTUNES AND HAZARDS with you. Remember the cause is for God and for the defence of yourselves, your wives and children

MAJOR GENERAL PHILIP SKIPPON, ENCOURAGING THE LONDON MILITIA 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.

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.



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.

