

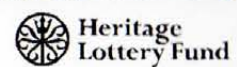


# The Battle of Newburn Ford 1640



Newcastle  
City Council

Produced by the Friends of Tyne Riverside Country Park and  
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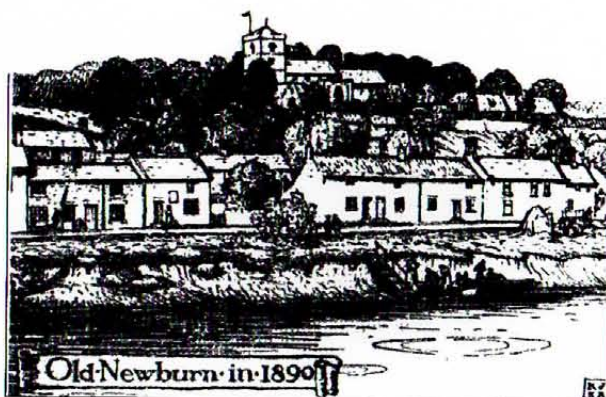
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Compiled by Sandra E Melia

*"When to the Kirk we come,  
We'll pirge it ilka room.  
Frae popish reliques, and a' sic  
innovation, That a' the world may see,  
There's nane in the right but we,  
Of the auld Scottish nation."*

*Played by the Scots army when it marched into England  
under Alexander Lesley, Earl of Leven, in 1640.*

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## Newburn 1640

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*"In this Conflict, which was both sowre, and surely,  
Bones, bloud and brains went in a hurly burly;  
All was made Hodge-podge, some began to croole,  
Who fights for prelats is a beastly foole."*<sup>1</sup>

Stand upon Newburn Bridge and try to envisage a late summer evening in the year of 1640, the evening before the Battle of Newburn Ford. On the north side of the riverbank is the prosperous village of Newburn. It has a long history, having been established as a Royal Demesne in Anglo-Saxon times in the Kingdom of Northumbria. The Church of St. Michael and All Angels, was at the head of the village, high up with the village spread down the hill towards the river. It is referred to in documentary evidence dating from 1067. Even today among many other interesting features it retains its Norman west tower. It was to play a significant role in the ensuing battle.

Close to the church was Newburn Manor House now long gone, but from documentary evidence we know the Manor was granted as a gift by King John to Robert Fitz Roger, Lord of Warkworth in 1204. In 1332 it passed into the hands of the powerful Percy family, Earls (and later Dukes) of Alnwick. It took in a large area between Ouse Burn to the north, the river Tyne to the south, Throckley and Heddon boundary to the west and Denton to the east. Much of the land around Newburn is still owned by the Duke of Northumberland. Another significant house was Newburn Hall, which probably incorporated an earlier Pele tower and was itself incorporated into Spencers Steel Works in 1895, which was demolished in 1966.

There were several watermills for threshing corn; in particular Laman or Laymedon and Thrusse or Thrush mills are both recorded in the Estate records for Newburn Manor. The enclosure of land began in Newburn around 1619. Apart from agriculture there are

numerous old wagon ways that traverse the area and were developed as the mining industry gained in significance. We know from Mayson's Survey of 1613 carried out for the Duke of Northumberland, that much of the woodland in and around Newburn had been denuded of woodland for the mining industry.

"There are no woods or underwoods of any value nowe left within this Manor, for that they have bin greatly wasted and destroyed and others for makeing of Steythes and timbering of colepitts" <sup>2</sup>

The Tyne, a tidal river, with its fertile valley plains, has been an important means of communication and subsistence for people who have lived here since Mesolithic times when Northern Europe was emerging from the last Ice Age. Prior to canalisation in the late nineteenth century there were several crossing places and we know from contemporary accounts that in 1640 there were at least 10 crossing places between Newcastle and Hexham, but Newburn was closest to Newcastle and this is probably why the village sprang up on its northern banks (the southern banks being easily flooded). It is also the reason the Scots chose Newburn as the place to cross the Tyne in 1640. We know that Robert the Bruce crossed the Tyne at Newburn in 1314 and in 1644 Cromwell also made use of the fords at Newburn. In fact Crombie Ford is a corruption of Cromwell Ford.

There were at least three fords at Newburn, two approximately where Newburn Bridge is today and Kershaw Ford which is about half a mile downstream on the Ryton side but wasn't used much, as it was often quite deep, even at low tide.

## Historical Background

The 1st and 2nd Bishop's Wars fought between England and Scotland although often portrayed as religious wars were also deeply political, religion and politics being closely linked at this time. It is quite clear that the Bishops' Wars and in particular the defeat of the king's army at the Battle of Newburn, did contribute to the slide into civil war.

The King upon the throne at this time was Charles Stuart, son of James Stuart, and the three kingdoms he inherited, were England, Ireland and Scotland. Issues of religion and Charles' absolute belief in the Divine Right of Kings, contributed to Parliament's growing unease, as he appeared to disregard the laws of his realm and the established church. This was manifested in different ways and with differing but calamitous results throughout all three kingdoms.

Charles was a weak character, politically and diplomatically inept, and married to a Catholic who imported her Catholicism into the court. The influence of the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud, was causing suspicion among much of the population, but it was keenly felt in Scotland and it was his attempt to impose the Anglican prayer book on the Scottish Kirk which led to direct conflict between England and Scotland.

"The introduction of the new service book was the spark which lighted the conflagration" <sup>3</sup>

The Presbyterianism embraced by Scotland and promoted by the General Assembly of the Scottish Kirk was very different from the pattern of Episcopalianism favoured in England. Riots broke out in churches across Scotland and as a result the National Covenant was signed by 95% of the population, people queuing up to do so. Ostensibly a religious covenant calling on the Scots to resist any interference in the Scottish Kirk, it was inevitably tied into feelings of nationalism and identity as well as politics, and government.

"In effect a crisis of multiple kingdoms became a crisis of religions which in turn led to a crisis of authority." 4

As the opposition to Charles became more vocal and physical, and both England and Scotland began to prepare for armed confrontation Charles sent a High Commissioner, his cousin, the Marquis of Hamilton to negotiate with the Scots Covenanters at Berwick. However it could be argued that the king was already playing a duplicitous game and when the General Assembly met to ratify their terms, Hamilton withdrew.

Before the Scots left Berwick they distributed a Declaration to the officers of the English army making their view of the Treaty clear. In rage Charles ordered the Declaration to be burnt by the public hangman in London and retaliated with a Declaration of his own, denouncing the Scots' Covenanters.

By the spring of 1639 Charles was preparing to lead an army north. The Earl of Strafford, one of Charles' most trusted and influential advisors, ordered Hamilton to muster an army of 5000 to gather at York - he managed less than 200 and few of them knew how to fire a musket! But by May, Hamilton was able to send a sizeable army up to the Border and entered the Firth of Forth with a fleet of 28 ships and 5000 foot soldiers.

The Scots were united in the cause of the Covenant and were well prepared for a confrontation. Military committees had been set up in every county and smiths worked flat out producing ammunition and armaments for the anticipated invasion. In addition arms to the amount of thirty thousand pounds had been purchased from Holland. Their army was under the command of Colonel Alexander Leslie, a seasoned campaigner and veteran of the 30 years war in Europe under the command of the great military strategist and Swedish King, Gustaphus Adolphus. When they gathered at the Links of Leith on the 20th of May they numbered between 12000 and 16000 men all armed in the German military style. On this day they were constituted as a proper army with the articles of war (of

which every man had a copy) modelled on the style developed by Gustaphus Adolphus. This army, swelling in numbers on its way as patriotic Scots rallied to the cause, marched to within 10 miles of the Border at Duns, near Berwick.

The English, outnumbered and ill-prepared decided to negotiate and so The First Bishop's War was over without any significant battle being fought.

However the Pacification of Berwick was a shambles and neither side trusted the other to keep to the peace. Charles decided to muster a better army but for that he needed to reconvene parliament. The Short Parliament was called in the spring of 1640 and was the first for 11 years. He hoped to use it to procure backing for a second campaign against the Scots, but was disappointed in the response he got, and feeling thwarted he dissolved it after just three weeks. He fell back, once again, on the use of the Royal Prerogative to raise taxes to fund the campaign, which only served in alienating more of his subjects and fermenting further unrest. The scene was set for the Second Bishops War, with the only battle of the war, being fought on the Tyne at Newburn.



## The Armies Prepare

### The Scots' Army

"Never on earth, did so religious an army take the field as that of the Scots Covenanters, who invaded England under General David Leslie this year. At every captain's tent door the colours were flying with the Scots arms upon them, and this motto in golden letters, **"FOR CHRIST'S CROWN AND COVENANT"**" <sup>5</sup>

This view of the Scots Covenanters was not one shared by some of those staunch Royalists who fought in the Bishop's Wars however.

"We have had a most cold, wet and long time living in the field, but kept ourselves warm with the hope of fubbing and scrubbing those scurvy, filthy, dirty, nasty, lousy, itchy, scabby, shitten, stinking, slovenly, snotty-nosed, logger-headed, foolish, insolent, proud, beggarly, impertinent, absurd, grout-headed, villainous, barbarous, bestial, false, lying, rougish, devilish, long-eared, short-haired, damnable atheistical, puritanical crew of the Scottish Covenant. But now there is peace in Israel." <sup>6</sup>

So wrote Thomas Windebank at the end of the wars and signing of the Peace Treaty at Ripon. We know the names of several preachers who accompanied the Covenanters' army, most notably Andrew Cant and Alexander Henderson appointed preachers in Newcastle after it was occupied by the Scots. Other ministers acted as chroniclers of the journey of the Covenanters and events at Newburn; one such was Robert Baillie.

By August 1640, the Scots, once again under the command of General Alexander Leslie and comprising around 20 thousand foot and 2,500 horses, are on the move. They must have been an awesome sight. According to one contemporary account, Sir John Clavering of Berwick, writing to Lord Conway at Newcastle said that

they appeared as "a world of men", nearly 30,000 strong and hungry!

"...it is likely that they will eat and fight devilishly". <sup>7</sup>

He also refers to the:

"...Highlanders with bows and arrows, some swords, some none, the nakedest men ever I saw." <sup>8</sup>

This may be one of the last times bows and arrows were ever used in battle. In a letter published in 1892 Mr. Woodman wrote:

"In reading through the Memoirs of the Verney family during the Civil wars, I came upon the following passage:- 'In the returns of arms of the northern counties, the long bow, the cross bow, and the crown bill, are given among the equipments of the men-at-arms. Guns first introduced at the battle of Crecy, but the English cross bow held its own until the beginning of the civil war, and the last arrow shot in warfare was believed to have been at the siege of Devizes, under Cromwell, which was in 1642.'" <sup>9</sup>

We know the Scots had reached the Tweed by the 20th, and were heading for a ford near Hirsell Haugh. They threw dice to decide who would have the honour of leading the vanguard and it was the Earl of Montrose who, alighting from his horse, waded through the river and was the first to step on "enemy" ground at Coldstream.

According to tradition the Scots wore lowland bonnets with a knot of blue ribbon at the left ear. They began crossing the Tweed at four o'clock in the afternoon, but the bells in England were chiming midnight before the rear-guard had crossed, apparently losing only one man in the crossing! They spent their first night in England close to the ford on a hilltop, which had previously been under the control of the English. On the 21st they encamped at Millfield Race pitching tents which had been made by the women of Edinburgh so as to avoid chopping down trees and alienating the Northumbrians, though it must be imagined that many Northumbrians were afraid of this mighty invading Scottish army.

The army divided into 3, under the command of Lieutenant General L. Almond, Major General Baillie and General Leslie brought up the rear. They kept 10 miles apart, but in sight of each other marching through Northumberland by way of Wooler, Eglingham and Netherwitton, following the route of the old Roman road known as The Devil's Causeway. On the 26th they are recorded as having arrived at Eachwick where they drank the wells dry and commandeered all the local cattle, for which they paid.

On the evening of 27th August 1640 *The Solemn League*, (as the Scots army called themselves,) some 25,000 strong, and under the command of Alexander Leslie, are encamped on Heddon or Hadden Law. This rising ground we believe to be at Heddon on the Wall on the south facing aspect of the hill, which gives commanding views down the Tyne to Newburn. Heddon or Haddon is an Old English word meaning heath hill.

Banners and flags declaring "*For Christ's Crown and Covenant*" emblazoned their tents where they held sermons and explained to the people of Northumberland that they bore them no ill-will and nor did they oppose the king but :-

"....the Canterburian faction of Papists, Atheists, Arminians, Prelates and misleaders of the King's Majesty, and the common enemies of both kingdoms." <sup>10</sup>

They lit huge fires using coal which could be found in abundance on the "open moorish ground" and invited the people of Newburn and the surrounding area to their camp.

## The King's Army

The King didn't leave London with his army until the 20th, when the Scots were already approaching the Tweed. He marched for York. In comparison with the Scots the King's army was poorly equipped and less than wholehearted. The king was desperate for funds having dissolved parliament, he was forced to invoke the Royal Prerogative to levy the payment of Ship-money in arrears. This was originally money used to strengthen the English navy. Traditionally a tax on coastal counties it was extended during the 1630's to the whole of England and Wales and became increasingly unpopular. Ironically the very Parliamentarians who had accused Charles of illegal taxation, used the same methods in 1642. Charles makes this clear in a Declaration where he condemns them for their use of ship money after accusing him of exacting it:

"....from his subjects for His and their just defence." <sup>11</sup>

He also failed miserably to raise a loan from the disgruntled Londoners.

Secretary Vane who accompanied the King seems to have believed that Conway had enough troops in Newcastle, and together with Sir Jacob Astley, Governor of Newcastle, was well able to defend the city. This optimism was echoed by Northumberland who headed the King's army at York when he writes to Conway:

"....there is no use thinking of fortifying towns, for we are going upon a conquest with such power, that nothing in that kingdom will be able to resist us." <sup>12</sup>

It was also presumed that help would be forthcoming from the militia troops of Durham who could be deployed along the Tyne to prevent the Scots from crossing. This help was not forthcoming.

"The northern counties, which lay immediately exposed to the invasion, absolutely refused to lend money to pay troops, or furnish horses to mount the musqueteers, and

the train-bands would not stir a foot without pay.”<sup>13</sup>

On the 25th August Conway wrote to Secretary Vane revealing the true peril of the situation in Newcastle, with the Covenanters by this time within easy reach of Newcastle. This is probably the letter which was received in York on the 27th and which stated that:-

“Order was given to cast up works against the fords - Newburn and two more, at Newburn is a regiment to defend it, but what is that? There are more than eight or ten places where the Scots may pass. If you do not take good heed they will take you, the troops being divided, 12,000 foot and 500 horse with the King, and 10,000 troops and the horse here. If they have a mind to take Newcastle, should they come to Gateside, they may do it very quickly.”<sup>14</sup>

And so, as late as the 27th, Charles was issuing orders from York for Conway. By the time his messenger from the Lord of Montgomery's regiment (accompanied by Rushworth, the Historian), reached Newcastle on the morning of the 28th, Lord Conway had already left the previous evening to join his troops at Stella. Meanwhile the regiment at Newburn had retreated back across the Tyne as the formidable Scottish army appeared upon the hills above Newburn.



## The Weaponry and Organisation of the Armies

By the 17th century organisation and armaments for the military was undergoing many changes. This was largely driven by innovations in weaponry, in particular the invention of the cannon, which was to play a crucial role at the Battle of Newburn Ford.

In the seventeenth century cannon were not standardised and they came in a multitude of shapes, sizes and ranges. Both forces would have had, on the main, very similar equipment. Uniform, personal weapons and kit would have differed.

### The musketeer

Musketeers of both sides would have been equipped with matchlock muskets. These were simple muzzle loading weapons with a slow burning fuse or match. An experienced soldier could load and fire within 30 seconds, but we know at the time of the Bishop's Wars many of the soldiers were not familiar with this weaponry. Part of the reason the English were so easily defeated was their lack of adequate equipment, poor training and indecisive leadership. Conway was very aware of this and wrote from Newcastle to the Earl of Strafford, Lieutenant-General of the army in the north, based at York, informing him:

“There are two things which ought to be taken into consideration, the price of pistol-powder, and the extreme naughtiness (badness) of the pistols and carbines. They are patched up, and now that they come to trial they prove unserviceable, and it is not possible to mend them. Should the soldiers buy two case of pistols? I have written of it, but can get no answer. I verily believe that there be some that would be glad if the troops did mutiny; which they will do, if there be no consideration had of what they pay.”<sup>15</sup>

Many of the soldiers were reluctant conscripts. There is evidence of several mutinies and desertions. In Newcastle one soldier was

executed for mutiny. The cause of this seems to have been the deduction of 2d from each soldiers pay to subsidise the provision of arms. The execution took place in the Bigg Market outside the door of Thomas Malabers and is recorded in the parish record of St. Andrews where the prisoner was buried. The Scottish army, on the other hand were well equipped and motivated and under the command of a seasoned general, Commander Leslie. The musket was a long range firearm about 6 feet long and had a range of up to approximately 250 yards. (The Tyne was 250 to 300 yards wide at this time at the point of the fords). However it was notoriously inaccurate and if it rained it simply didn't work! In order to load his musket the soldier positioned it at his waist, poured gunpowder into the flashpan which was located at the trigger end of the barrel. He then placed the butt of the musket on the ground and poured the rest of the gunpowder into the barrel, followed by the musket ball which could have been made of metal or stone and ranged in size from about 0.50inch to 0.75inch. Those found at Newburn are all lead.

In the diary of John Aston, a soldier in the royal army, in 1639, he records an encounter with a Scottish lady at Berwick, a devout Covenanter, who declares to the soldier:

".....Another (miracle) was, when they were in great want of bullets there was accidentally discovered a hill of stones that were naturally round and fittly served some for muskett and some for pistols." <sup>16</sup>

After the musket ball the soldier rammed in wadding with his scouring stick. He was now loaded and ready to fire. The powder was ignited by the slow burning fuse or 'match'. Flints for striking have been found at Newburn. These are from flintlocks, which were available then, but were expensive and were probably only used by officers.

### The Pikeman

The other major component of the foot soldiers in any army was



the Pikemen. By the time of the Battle of Newburn they were beginning to decline in importance, but there still would have been on average one pikeman to every two musketeers. The pikemen were used to protect the musketeers from attack when re-loading their muskets, as this could take some time. In battles and sieges the pikemen were grouped in the centre of a regiment of musketeers. The pike was an effective and deadly weapon in arm to arm combat and were used to lethal effect against the cavalry. When pikemen of opposing armies engaged it was called a "push of pike". When Leslie's army marched down from Scotland they had reduced the length of the pike from eighteen feet to fourteen.

Pikemen also carried pistols and short swords known as "Tucks".

### Artillery

By the end of the 16th century, beginning of the 17th century cast guns were becoming familiar in all armies throughout Europe. By 1640 there was some degree of standardization in calibre's and sizes, enabling certain guns to be given specific names to identify them. The origin of the names are a mystery: mythical birds seem to have provided the inspiration for a lot of them, whilst others have women's names. The largest cannon were probably too heavy for the Scots to transport all the way to Newburn. It has been estimated that a team of 20 horses was needed to pull a cannon with a separate team of 4 to pull the carriages. Nevertheless we know from eyewitness accounts that the Scots brought:

"....11 pieces of cannon, 54 field pieces, little drakes, and 80 frams, alias Sandy Hamilton's guns;" <sup>17</sup>

Cannon Approximate Range	
Falcon	370 yards
Minion	522 yards
Drake	746 yards
Culverin	2688 yards - <i>at an elevation of 10 degrees</i>
Cannon	3,500 - 4,000 yards
Cannon Royal	3,500 - 4,000 yards
<i>The range would be affected by calibre and elevation</i>	

Thus wrote Lieutenant-General Sir John Conyers, Governor of Berwick. Although several contemporary specialist books on artillery were written before 1660 they often give conflicting accounts regarding range and capacity. But the following list gives a general guide to the types of artillery in use at the time of the Battle of Newburn.

Graham Hartley, Lieutenant General of Artillery, The Roundhead Association, has provided us with the following descriptions of the types of cannon used at the battle.

The large cannon, of which the Scots appear to have had 11, were the heaviest and most difficult to move. These had shortish barrels, but had a large bore, between 5 and 8 inches in diameter. They fired roundshot weighing between 30 and 90 pounds.

Field pieces, which, as the name implies, were those most often, used by travelling armies, had longer barrels but a smaller bore between 2 and 4 inches in diameter. They fired roundshot weighing between 1 and 12 pounds.

This covers the range of cannon balls so far discovered at Newburn. In an experiment carried out by Eldred, Master Gunner at Dover Castle at about this time, the test firing of a cannon with a 43/4inch bore, 24 feet in length and with 2 degrees of elevation using 18 pounds of powder could project a 10 pound cannon ball 1200 yards.

In between were a range of long barrelled medium bore guns called culverin which fired round shot between 12 and 30 pounds and have bores between 4 and 5 inches in diameter. A culverin could have a barrel length of up to 120 inches and this together with its high mounting did have some disadvantages as the following quotation from Diago Uffano makes clear:

"General: Then you maintain the Culvering to be more painfull and dangerous than the Cannon?

Captain: I dare say it is: First in that his high mounting and the length of his neck, which he shall alwayes shew more than is needful, shall alwayes be discovered by the Artillery of thee Enemy...." <sup>18</sup>

Drakes were odd guns, the interior bore having been altered to produce a smaller powder chamber at the breech. The effect of this was to produce a lighter gun with a shorter barrel which, when stood upright made them look like 17th century tankards, hence the name "Sandy's Stoupes". They ranged in size from 3, 6, 9 to 12

pounders, firing cannisters, (bags/cans/ boxes of lead musket balls) at short range. They are fast to reload and for the Scots Army they were front line infantry support pieces, rather like World War One machine-guns. The English copied this idea for many of their own guns after 1639.

Frams were even odder, ranging from single to multi- barrel pieces. They were essentially lightweight and easily moved. Some were of an iron core with rope and leather reinforcements. They weren't expected to fire many shots.



Drakes and frams were often carried from place to place on carts and put together when needed.

The leather guns (variously called Sandy's Stoupes, frams or drakes) used to such effect at Newburn though notoriously unreliable and inaccurate and only good for about twelve shots, had the advantage of manoeuvrability.

They had first been put to good effect by the armies of Gustavus Adolphus on the continent, where many of the Scots Covenanters had learnt the art of warfare and it is believed that the use of materials such as leather and rope to have been invented by Sandy himself, though other claims have been made. In the letter from Mr. Woodman referred to earlier he writes:

"...Burton, in his history of Scotland, vii, 107, gives the most detailed account of the engagement (Battle of Newburn) he writes that Lord Conway believed the Scots had no artillery, but they had temporary cannon manufactured at Edinburgh of tin for the bore, with a coating of leather, all secured by tight cordage, two of which a horse could carry." <sup>19</sup>

The inaccuracy of all of the cannon used at the time is well illustrated by the following, rather amusing incident. In a civil war battle at Blackburn, Christmas 1642, an eyewitness observed:

"....most of the night and the day following....the greatest execution it did...(a demi-culverin), a bullet shot out of it entered into a house....and burst the bottom of a fryen pan, after which the Royalists withdrew that they might eat their Christmas pyes at home...." <sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless they would have created a lot of fear and panic as much by the noise and smoke they created as well as the general mayhem when a cannon ball hit a target. When they did hit a target the effect was quite gruesome as Boyd's poem illustrates so graphically:

"Last, in a clap of bals there came a Cluster,  
Which in their tranches made a fearfull muster:...  
Yea, legs and armes which in the air did flee  
Were then cut of (like gibblets) fearfully:  
The Scottish Bals so dash'd them with disdain,  
That hips ov'r head, their skul did spew their brain:  
Both legs and arms and heads, like dust, did flee  
Into the air, with fearfull mutinie:  
The bals their legs, the legs their heads did break,  
The heads their arms, the arms did cleave their necks.." <sup>21</sup>

The weight of a cast iron cannon ball in pounds is 0.136 times the cube of its diameter in inches. Only stone canon balls have been found at Newburn.

A Culverin, 5 1/2 in calibre, (20pounder), has a muzzle velocity of 865 fps or 590mph. The angle of elevation of the barrel would greatly increase the range of fire.

### **The Scots Army at Newburn 1640**

- 19,000 infantry pike and musket
- 2,500 cavalry
- 11 pieces of canon
- 54 field pieces little drakes and 80 frams (leather gun)

### **The English Army at Newburn 1640**

- 3000 infantry pike and musket
- 2,500 cavalry
- 12 cannon (type unknown)

### **Organisation**

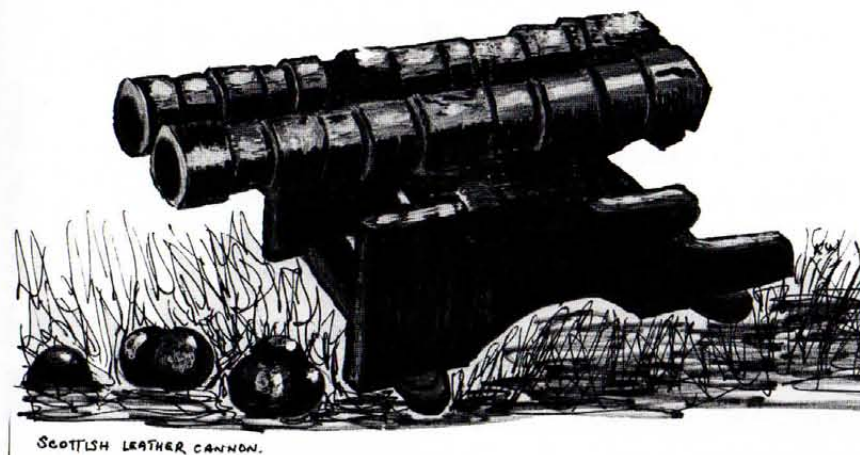
From contemporary military handbooks and accounts we know that the ranks of officers in the army were General, Captain, Lieutenant, and Corporal. There was also a cornet, a quartermaster in charge of provisions, and trumpeters. Clerks were appointed to keep the

accounts and a written record of events. A saddler and a farrier accompanied the cavalry. Surgeons accompanied every army to attend to the wounded. The surgeons had to provide their own medical equipment and were paid 5 shillings a day. Cuts were bandaged, shattered bones were usually amputated, gunshot wounds and burns were treated with salves, quinces and bleeding. Scouts and spies were also employed to monitor the enemies' movements and plans. They also intercepted messages, which were often written in code. We know that both sides in the Second Bishops' War were accompanied by clergymen and that all soldiers were issued with a common prayer book, (from documentary evidence we know that about  $\frac{1}{3}$ rd of the population was able to read).

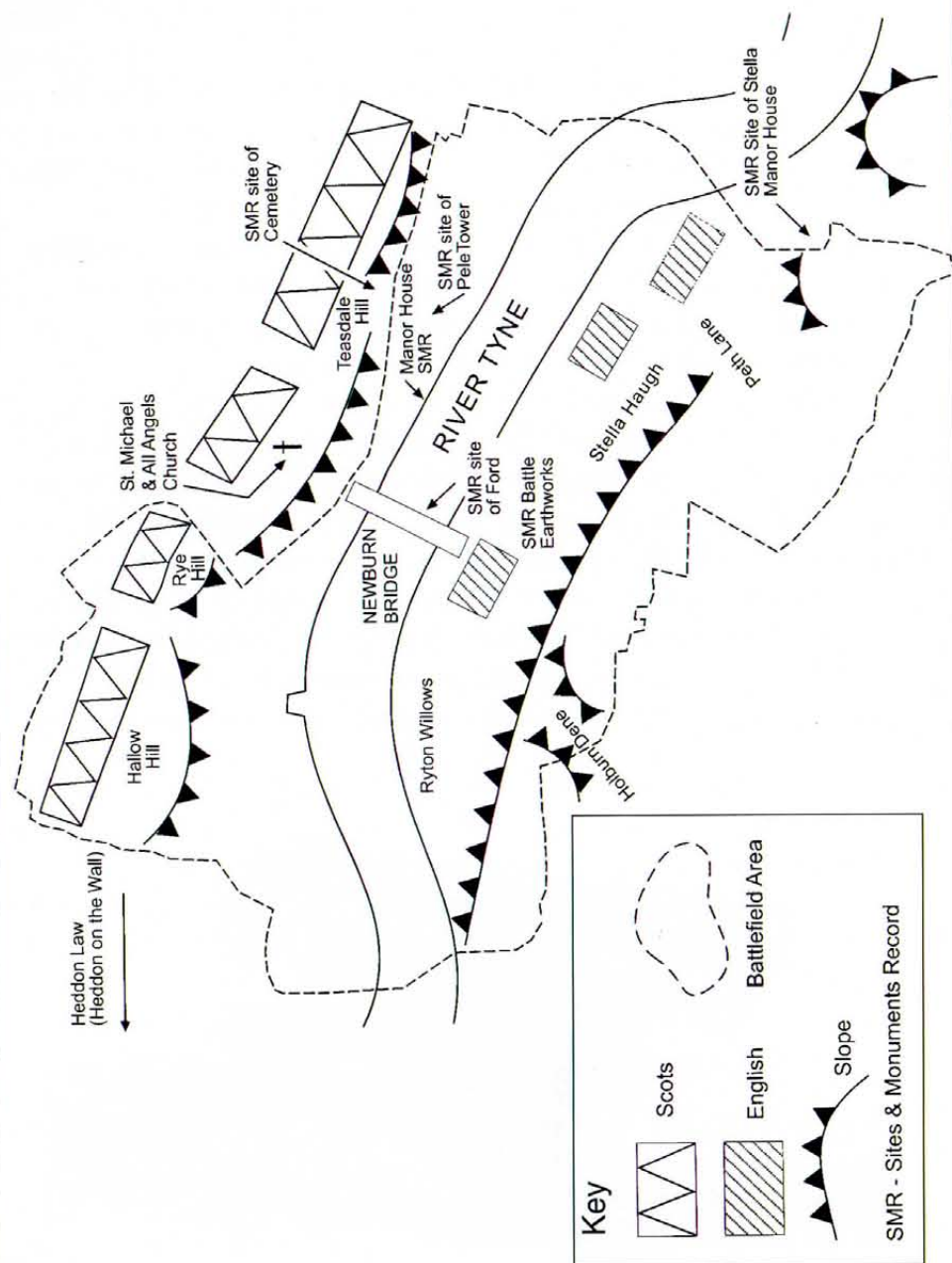
The conduct of soldiers, on and off the battlefield was the subject of numerous treatises in which particular attention was given to swearing, cursing, gambling and licentious behaviour. Punishment included flogging and docking of pay—which in the case of the King's army was hardly relevant as many of the soldiers frequently went without pay! In the Kings' army pay was also sometimes docked for repairs to weapons and there are quite a few recorded incidences of soldiers' mutineering. Women who were caught in sexual acts with soldiers, if unmarried were forced into marriage with the soldier concerned, and it seems that the hangman was sometimes called upon to perform this duty! As for the class content of the armies - officers were earls, lords and landed gentry. Generally gentleman joined the cavalry, frequently providing their own mount. The common soldier was enlisted and, in the case of Charles' army, many were reluctant recruits. The first to be drafted were the unemployed, misfits, vagrants and thieves. Some soldiers actually cut off their big toes to avoid the march north!

Travelling armies brought with them a provisions train which travelled at the rear of the army. Gunpowder was stored on these wagons and so it was essential to keep them at some distance from the bulk of the army in case of sudden engagement. It was also

not untypical for wives and children to travel with them. A typical diet for a soldier included bread, biscuit (probably made with flour, water and salt), peas, cheese, butter, bacon, salt and beer. Daily rations were around two pounds of bread, one pound of meat, two and a half ounces of cheese and two bottles of beer, though whether all the common recruits got this amount is doubtful. It seems the Covenanters probably fared better than the Kings' troops. Soldiers would have supplemented this with gathered fruit, particularly apples of which there were numerous varieties, chestnuts, hazelnuts and walnuts, which were abundant in England until the 1660's. Fresh meat was carried on the hoof, and was often requisitioned or plundered. Leslie's Covenanters army carefully avoided plundering in their march through Northumberland, and paid for their livestock or gave promissory notes. Strict rules governed looting and the distribution of booty. Breaking these rules could be punishable by death. But looting was clearly seen as a legitimate act of war. In the distribution of booty the cavalry and officers were entitled to two thirds and the common soldiers to a third. Prisoners were not to be killed or ill-treated, though whether this particular rule was always observed is doubtful. Certainly it is recorded that General Leslie treated captured officers at Newburn with respect and indeed, set them at liberty.



## Newburn Battlefield Map



## August 27th, the Eve of the Battle

Leslie sent his drum major and trumpeter with 2 messages to Newcastle, one for the mayor and one for Lord Conway, but the Governor Sir Jacob Astley refused to receive them and sent the messengers back. At his camp on Heddow Law the Scots continued to reassure the local population.

"Night and morning they suffered any Englishman to come into their camp, and made them welcome, with expressions of love, and protestations of doing harm to none but those who should oppose them in demanding justice of the king against incendiaries." <sup>22</sup>

As darkness descended Leslie began to deploy his munitions in strategic positions. Having the advantage of the high ground overlooking the Tyne he was able to ascertain the positions of the English troops, and the extent of their defences. They were gathered on the flood plains of the river at Ryton willows, where they had built defensive sconces. Sconces refer specifically to defensive structures constructed at fords.

"The Scots, having the advantage of the rising ground above Newburne, easily discerned the posture and motion of the English army below in the valley on the south side of the river; but the posture of the Scots army the English could not discern, by reason of the houses, hedges, and inclosures, in and about Newburne. The Scots brought some cannon into Newburne town, and planted some in the church steeple, a small distance from the river Tyne: their musqueteers were placed in the church, houses, lanes and hedges, in and about Newburne." <sup>23</sup>

Leslie deployed his heavier cannon upon Hallow Hill and Rye Hill and Teasdale Hill to the east and west of Newburn. In front of the church he also placed his heavy cannon. These pieces would have the greatest range and destructive capacity. They would have been

the weapons of mass destruction of the 17th century. The field pieces were deployed in and around the village, in the hedges and lanes, and it is likely that the cannon that was hoisted onto the top of the church tower was medium range pieces. This was a masterly move on Leslie's part, as it would increase the distance the cannon ball would travel. The 80 frams, variously called leather guns, Swedish pieces or Sandy's Stoupes would have had the shortest range and would have been positioned closer to the river hidden among the rushes. The musketeers were concealed within the cottages, lanes, hedges and enclosures of the village.

Conway, with 3,000 infantry and 1,500 cavalry, set up headquarters at Stella Hall with the officer's mess in the nearby cottage, which was then an inn. He left a covering party of foot encamped below Whickham church. These were probably acting as a rearguard in case the battle didn't go so well for the English. He ordered each defensive work to be garrisoned by four cannon and four hundred musketeers. The English troops were clearly not impressed by their defences or the odds of them winning! As one gloomy soldier wrote in a letter:

"Their army appeared marching on the hills above the ford when we were drawing into our miserable works in the valley, where we lay so exposed." <sup>24</sup>

## The Battle

**"First Canons roard, and after hils did ring,  
The Echoes shouted, and soon back did fling  
Such troubling noise, as was so pert to come  
Within their Caves, the seat of their kingdome.  
Again, the Drums alarums with their sound,  
Made Echoes chambers with great noise rebound,  
Which in great peace at Newburn many years  
Had not beene troubled with such trembling feares."** <sup>25</sup>

As day dawned on that sunny morning with both armies now in position, we can only imagine their thoughts as they waited for the low tide later in the day when the fords would be passable. Conway held a Council of War at Stella to decide what to do - he was seriously considering sounding a retreat - and was occupied thus when the King's messenger and Rushworth arrived with instructions to defend the fords at all costs. He was assured that re-enforcements were on their way (none were!). However it is all immaterial, for events were already overtaking Conway at the fords. Lord George Goring rushed into the room and said that the Lieutenant General (Strafford),:

"....needed not to have sent order to bid them to fight, whatever came of it, for the enemy had begun the work out of their own hands." <sup>26</sup>

Here the accounts of the battle are somewhat contradictory and confusing. This is our interpretation.

Both sides continued to make preparations, and water their horses as time passed towards the inevitable confrontation. As the tide ebbed, tension began to mount, particularly among the King's troops who were outnumbered, largely unenthusiastic, and clearly at a disadvantage. At around midday a Scottish officer, well-mounted:

"having a black feather in his hat, came out of one of the

thatched houses in Newburn, and watered his horse in the Tyne, as had been done all day. An English soldier perceiving that he fixed his eye towards the English trenches on the south side of the river, fired at him - whether in earnest or to affright him could not be known - but the officer was wounded by the shot, and fell from his horse; whereupon the Scottish musqueteers immediately fired upon the English: and so the fight began with small shot, and was continued with great shot as well as small." <sup>27</sup>

And this incident, according to Rushworth, is how the battle began. It is repeated in most of the later accounts, some saying the officers wound was fatal and that the soldier was an English Sentinel. But from other versions the incident, whilst probably resulting in skirmishing and with small shot only being fired, did not result in a full-scale battle. At some point also around midday, Leslie sent a trumpeter across to Conway assuring him his intentions were to present a petition to the King, and asking permission to send a party over the river to do this. Conway agreed to this, but with the proviso that not the whole army could cross the Tyne.

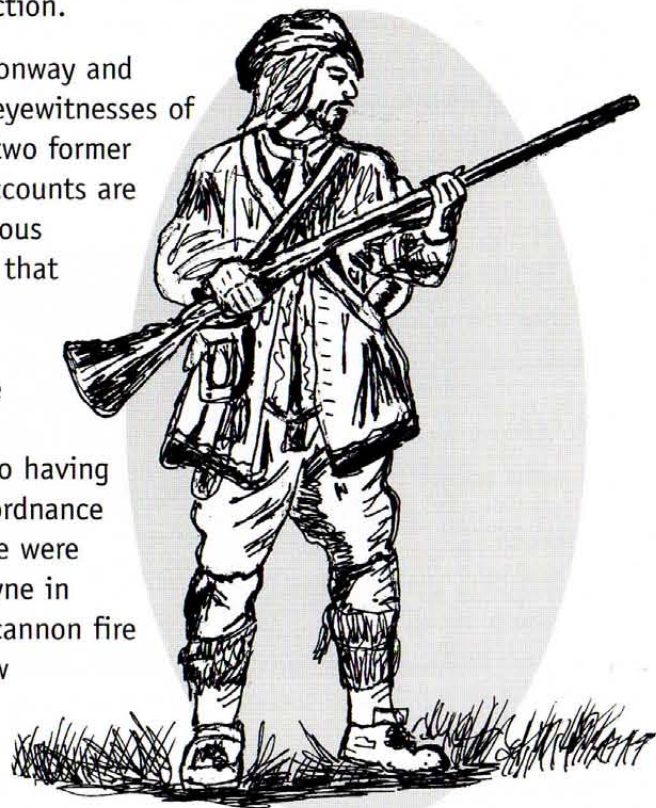
"....Leslie commanded 300 horse to ford the River, which they did, but were soon forced to retire by the musqueteers from behind an Intrenchment; which Leslie perceiving, play'd so furiously upon it with his Cannon, that the soldiers soon abandoned their Post, threw down their Arms, and fled:" <sup>28</sup>

This appears to have been the main or greater defensive sconce, which was under the command of Colonel Lunsford. The bombardment of canon shot killed many soldiers according to Rushworth and the rest, in fear for their lives were ready to flee, but the Colonel managed to rally them. However further deaths, including that of a Captain, a Lieutenant, and other officers appears to have been the final straw:

"Then the soldiers took occasion to complain that they were put upon double duty, and had stood there all night and day to that time, and none were sent from the Army at Newcastle to relieve them. But Colonel Lunsford again prevailed with them not to desert their post, till another canon shot falling in the works amongst the soldiers and killing some more of them, the men threw down their arms and would abide in the fort no longer".<sup>29</sup>

According to the Scotswars web ;- They threw away their arms, abandoned the canon and blew-up the gunpowder in the fort. The King's cannon fired furiously against the cannon in and around the church. The Scots, having now wiped out the main defence, turned their attentions to the second sconce. With the English infantry in disarray and the Scots cavalry preparing to cross the river, the English cavalry positioned on Stella Haughs came into action.

Although Dymock, Conway and Rushworth were all eyewitnesses of the battle, and the two former combatants, their accounts are contradictory at various points, but it seems that the English cavalry, under the command of Lord Wilmot made an attack on the advancing Scots, who having commandeered the ordnance at the greater sconce were already across the Tyne in various places. The cannon fire of the Scots was now focused on the sconce to the east



and Leslie had moved more cannon and troops onto Teasdale Hill where nine cannon now bombarded the defence which was also breached and abandoned by the English. The English, led by Colonel Wilmot, forced the Scots to retreat temporarily. But reinforcements led by Sir Thomas Hope and two foot regiments under the command of Lord Crawford Lindsay and Lord Loudon waded through the Tyne and the English fell back in disarray, retreating, according to Conway to the west and up Peth Lane. The English were now in full retreat. Colonel Lunsford ordered the troops to draw off the cannon, meaning he ordered them to stop firing as the general retreat was sounded. Many of the foot soldiers had fled eastwards across the haughs at Stella and fleeing up Holburn Dene. A final assault was made by Lord Wilmot who rallied his troops and together with Sir John Digby and Daniel O'Neill once more engaged with the Scots, but by now 10,000 Scottish infantry were wading across the Tyne. Despite their bravery all three commanders were surrounded and captured. According to Rushworth they were treated "nobly in the Scottish camp, and afterwards giving them their liberty freely to return to the King's army".<sup>30</sup>



## The Aftermath

"Towards nightfall, the broken remnants of the foot, with two rescued guns, reached Newcastle. The horse routed and in disorder, galloped to Durham. That night the whole Scottish army camped in the fields and cottages of Ryton and after giving thanks for their victory they stood to their arms all night."<sup>31</sup>

However it does seem that General George Monck, Duke of Albemarle, was able to lead his regiment in an orderly retreat retaining his artillery. The battle was a complete disaster for the King and became legendary in the poetry and prose of the Scots. They had abandoned their arms in their haste to escape. What a contrast to the day before when the cavalry, the cream of the English army, led by Lord Wilmot, riding through the streets of Newcastle are described as "wild spirits", riding in "wild disorder":

"...brandishing their swords, waving their plumed beavers, drinking at every other door to the health of the King, swearing they would fight to the last gasp, and each to exterminate at least a dozen Scots."<sup>32</sup>

The retreating troops picked up the ranks, which had been left at Whickham. They left in such haste that they set fire to their camp rather than dismantle it. The fire ignited a coal seam, which is said to have burnt for 30 years. In recent times building work has uncovered a thick layer of ash and old leather army water bottles are supposed to have been found in the Coaly Well before it was filled in.

According to Rushworth, Conway held a Council of War at midnight and it was resolved that the whole army (or those who had not already fled south) should retreat to Durham, effectively leaving Newcastle to the mercy of the Scots. Lord Conway became the scapegoat for the defeat and was accused of cowardice and treachery by Strafford. He made the following comments concerning the Battle of Newburn:

"The army altogether necessitous and unprovided of all necessities. That part which I now bring with me from Durham, the worst I ever saw. Our horse all cowardly: the country from Berwick to York in the power of the Scots; an universal affright in all; a general disaffection to the King's service, none sensible of his dishonour." <sup>33</sup>

Although most of the Scots army spent that night encamped on the south banks of the Tyne, the baggage remained on the north side because the returning tide had prevented it from crossing. On Saturday, learning that the King's army had abandoned Newcastle they marched on to Whiggam (Whickam) and it was on Sunday the 30th of August that Leslie entered Newcastle triumphant.

"Newcastel after, with teares in their eyes,  
Cast up their gates, and gave **Leslie** the keyes." <sup>34</sup>

He left a detachment at Stella as a guard and to collect the abandoned weapons. The Mayor of Newcastle, Sir Nicholas Cole, Knight and Baronet, decided the best option was to welcome Lord Leslie and indeed a banquet was arranged. Leslie appears to have camped outside the city walls at Gateshead and eventually a garrison of 2000 men under the Earl of Lothian took control of the city during the year of occupation.

The English dead were buried by the Scots. According to the Scots the English dead amounted to about 60, fallen largely around the defences. But Rushworth estimates it to have been about 200. According to the website for the Scots Wars these figures are probably an under estimate and may have amounted to 300 from both sides. It would have been in the interest of the Scots to under estimate the number of English dead. Tradition has it that the Scots buried the dead close to the church in Newburn. In 1897 whilst quarrying here, large quantities of bones, horse and human, together with iron musket balls, cannon balls and small projectiles of stone were discovered. In a letter to the Newcastle Daily Journal of 31st May, 1897 it is clear that the skeletons that were unearthed lay in situ as if piled into a mass grave, this was not uncommon in

the Civil war. Another account that was published in 1898 states that:

"Several months ago I secured one of several musket balls that came from the quarry in a load of sand. It is almost spherical and measures from  $\frac{3}{4}$  in at its shortest diameter to  $\frac{7}{8}$  ins at its longest diameter. The material of which it is made is cast iron of a fine close-grained quality. On a recent visit to the quarry, I examined a number of bones of horses and men, principally thigh bones and parts of skulls." <sup>35</sup>

The paper goes on to raise questions as to why the skeletons, if they are from the fallen at the Battle of Newburn were not buried in the churchyard. Whilst some of the skeletal remains appear to have been interred with some care others had clearly not. There seems to be some doubt about assigning these finds to the battle, as there was never any proper excavation.

The long-term effects of the battle were serious for King Charles. The political and financial costs of raising the army left his kingdoms more divided. Furthermore England was now occupied by the Scots and it cost about £200,000 to secure the liberation of Newcastle from the Scots, though figures do vary. During the year of occupation valuable revenue in coal in particular and access to the important port, were lost to the Crown. Charles, humiliated, was forced to recall parliament in November - the famous Long Parliament - that sat until the Restoration, long after Charles had lost his head, and the Monarchy, as an institution, much of its power.

If you take a look in the display cabinets at the Visitor Centre you will see some of the musket balls, and cannon balls used in that famous battle, as well as flints used for producing sparks to fire the flintlock muskets. Coins, both Scottish and English, buttons, and buckles possibly from soldiers clothing are also on display. Some of the clay pipe fragments may have belonged to soldiers who sat on the banks that sunny August evening contemplating the battle to come.

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