

Newburn Ford 1640

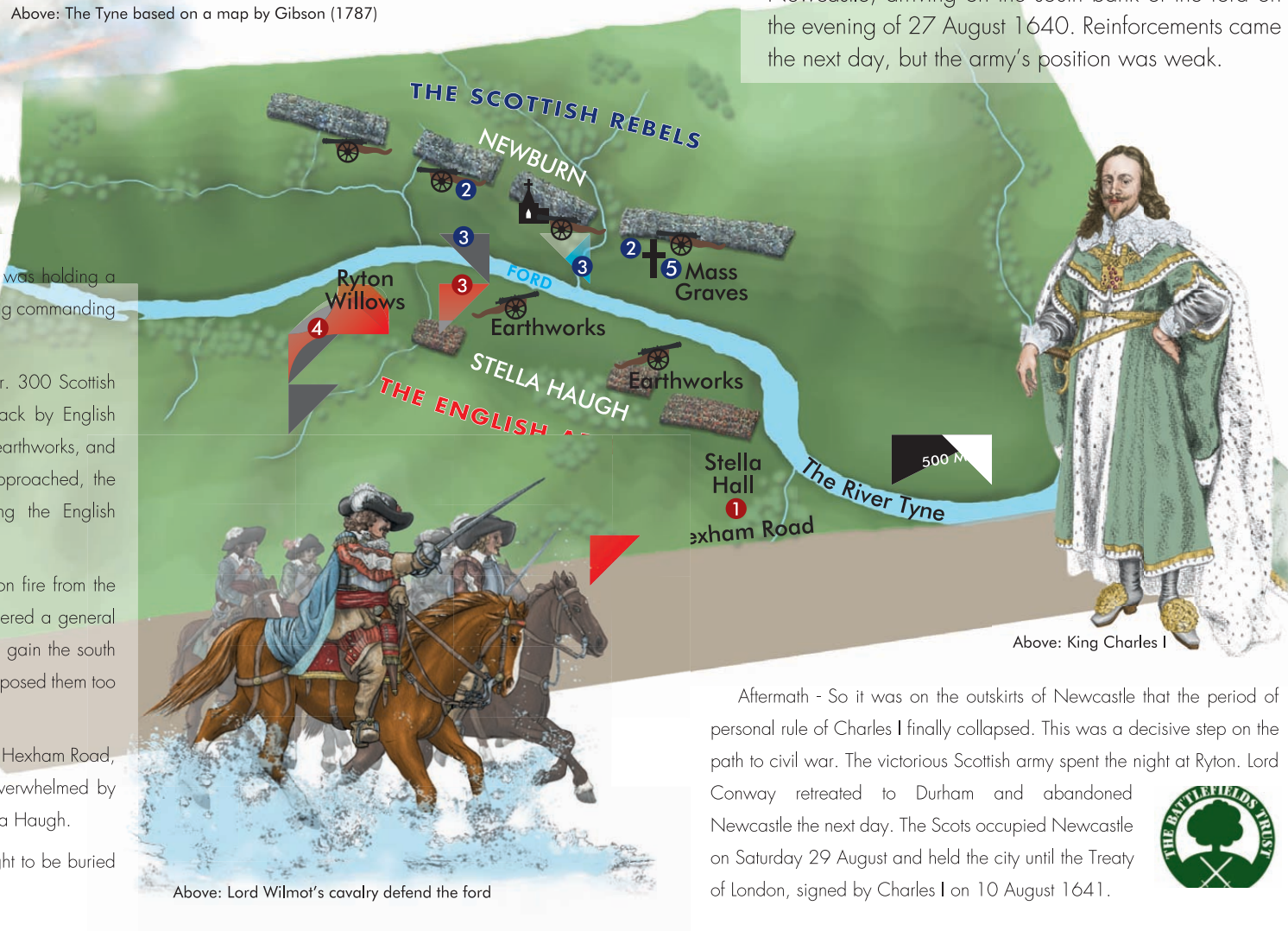


Above : General Leslie and the Scottish cannon

- 1 On the morning of 28th August 1640, Lord Conway was holding a council of war in Stella Hall when a letter came from the King commanding him to engage with the Scots.
- 2 1pm, the first shot was fired at a Scots cavalry officer. 300 Scottish cavalry attempted to cross the ford but were beaten back by English cannon-fire. Scottish cannon then bombarded the English earthworks, and the artillery duel was intense. As the crucial low tide approached, the Scots cannon breached the larger fortification, causing the English musketeers to retreat.
- 3 4pm, the smaller fortification was destroyed by cannon fire from the Scots' eastern battery. It was now low tide and Leslie ordered a general advance. 3,000 Scottish Life Guards crossed the Tyne to gain the south bank. 12 squads of English Cavalry led by Lord Wilmot opposed them too late as 10,000 Scottish Infantry waded across.
- 4 The English Infantry fled east up Stella Banks to the Old Hexham Road, reaching Newcastle by nightfall. The English Cavalry, overwhelmed by gunfire from the Scottish musketeers, retreated west of Stella Haugh.
- 5 An estimated 300 men were killed in the battle, thought to be buried at the site of the Scottish battery on the eastern hill.



Above: The Tyne based on a map by Gibson (1787)



Above: Lord Wilmot's cavalry defend the ford

Prior to the battle ...

On 20 August 1640, Scottish general Alexander Leslie crossed the River Tweed and marched into England. His army of 20,000 men, with an artillery train of 60 guns, marched to the nearest ford upstream of Newcastle at Newburn, taking up positions in and around the town. The English commander, Lord Conway, took 3,000 infantry and 1,500 cavalry from Newcastle, arriving on the south bank of the ford on the evening of 27 August 1640. Reinforcements came the next day, but the army's position was weak.



Above: King Charles I

Aftermath - So it was on the outskirts of Newcastle that the period of personal rule of Charles I finally collapsed. This was a decisive step on the path to civil war. The victorious Scottish army spent the night at Ryton. Lord Conway retreated to Durham and abandoned Newcastle the next day. The Scots occupied Newcastle on Saturday 29 August and held the city until the Treaty of London, signed by Charles I on 10 August 1641.

