



October 2012

Encounter

The newsletter of the Mercia Region of the Battlefields Trust

Introduction

The past few months have seen a flurry of activity in Mercia Region to try and save the battlefield at Northampton from sports pitches and ancillary facilities development. A detailed report on progress is below and I'd ask for your continuing support to ensure this unique Wars of the Roses battlefield is preserved. Separately at Edgcote, further work has been undertaken to try and find grave pits relating to the battle and initial discussions on the HS2 environmental impact assessment have taken place with the archaeological consultants charged with this work. We have even managed a couple of walks over the summer at Naseby and Evesham with the prospect of more to come in the Autumn. On the latter, I need to point out that the Oxford Garrisons driving tour has had to be switched to 14 October due to circumstances out of our control.

Events

The summer holiday period is often a quiet one for battlefield walks, however, the region's partner organisations, the Simon de Montfort Society and the Naseby Battlefield Project, did organise walks for those that were not away. On 4 August Clive Bostle from the Simon de Montfort Society led a walk across the land managed by the Society at **Evesham** (1265) following the annual wreath laying ceremony. A group of around 10 accompanied Clive who explained the Society's role in looking after the Evesham battlefield. The following day, the **Naseby** Battlefield project ran study event with presentations on the battle and the project in the morning followed lunch and a walk across the battlefield in the afternoon led by Ian Dexter. Groups affiliated to the **Worcester** Battlefield Partnership also arranged a number of events around the battle's anniversary in early September and these were followed by the Three Battles Festival (Worcester, Evesham and Tewkesbury) there later in the month.

Northampton (1460)

The Trust has been campaigning against Northampton Borough Council's mid July decision to agree, in principle, the construction of sports pitches and related facilities for the Saint's rugby club on the registered battlefield near Eagle Drive. An initial Freedom of Information request produced over 100 heavily redacted pages of correspondence relating to the decision and a conclusion that the advice the Council had received on battlefield archaeology was wrong. It was also clear that the Council had not read the National Planning Policy Framework which states that development on registered battlefields should be 'wholly



Simon de Montfort memorial at Evesham

exceptional'. Following a Trust press release about this (see <http://bbc.in/Rsb2fd>) the BBC forced an admission from the Council that it was planning to survey the battlefield archaeologically and wanted to discuss a conservation management plan for the site with the Trust. The Council has since approached the Trust's Northampton battlefield representative, Mike Ingram, to set up a meeting and this should take place in mid-October. As the proposed construction of sports pitches results from a wish by the Saints to sell its existing training pitches to the Asda supermarket chain to secure the rugby club's future, the Trust has also written to the CEOs of Asda and the Saints asking them to use their

influence with the Council to avoid a lengthy planning battle and either undertake a battlefield survey to understand to what extent Eagle Drive is part of the battlefield or to choose an alternative site for the sports pitches. Trust contact with the English Heritage (EH) Chief Executive, Simon Thurley, indicates that EH expects the Council to properly recognise the special status of the battlefield in the planning system. Trust members can help oppose the battlefield development by writing to the Council leader and Chief Executive (cllr.dmackintosh@northampton.gov.uk and dkennedy@northampton.gov.uk) asking them to find an alternative location for the sports pitches or undertake a survey to determine the battlefield's precise boundaries and therefore whether the development will impinge on the site. Separately an interpretation board about the battle is about to be installed by the Mercia Region at a Tourist Information Centre at Becket's Park near the battlefield. This board incorporates, by kind permission, Graham Turner's superb painting of the battle's aftermath (see <http://bit.ly/TMSnwH>).

Edgcote (1469)

The Trust is hopeful that its application to register Edgcote battlefield will be agreed when the English Heritage Battlefield Panel next meets in November. Separately Mercia region contact with Cotswold Archaeology, the consultants undertaking the HS2 rail-link environmental impact assessment (EIA), has ensured that information about the battlefield's likely location will be included in the EIA report. Cotswold Archaeology now intends to undertake an archaeological survey of the part of the route which potentially intrudes on the battlefield. The Trust will work to ensure that this is done to best practice standards. Further efforts in July to discover grave-pits related to the battle were unsuccessful, though work to investigate other possible sites continues.

Mercia Region Meeting

A successful Mercia Region Committee meeting was held on 27 September where the 2013 programme of events was discussed. Walks at Stow, Edgehill, Cropredy, Evesham and Worcester are planned next year as well as ones at less familiar locations such as Radcot Bridge, Nibley Green and Ripple. If Mercia members

have ideas for other walks or would like to lead one themselves, please contact Simon Marsh using the details at the foot of the page. The meeting also agreed that the Mercia Region AGM will be held at The Griffin public house Chipping Warden on 10 November 2012 at 12:30. It will be followed by a short walk around Edgcote battlefield. Anyone wishing to raise business at the meeting should again contact Simon.

Battlefield Trust Events

Forthcoming Mercia events for your diary include:

Saturday 6 October, Powick (1642) and Worcester (1651). For Powick meet 10:30am at Manor Farm, Malvern Rd, Worcester WR2 4BS. For Worcester meet at 2pm at the Ketch Viewpoint by the Ketch roundabout at the junction of the A 38 and A 4440, grid ref: S0853516. Contact Tony Spicer (a.spicer@btinternet.com, 01684-572925) if you are planning to attend.

Sunday 14 October, Oxford Civil War Satellite Garrisons. NOTE CHANGE OF DATE. Gregg Archer will lead a driving tour of the Civil War garrisons around Oxford. Meet 10:30am at All Saints Church, Church End, Hillesden MK18 4DB. Tour to end with lunch at a local pub. Contact Gregg Archer (btmerciabranchsecretary@hotmail.co.uk 01788 833902)

Saturday 27 October, Naseby (1645). A Naseby Battlefield Project led tour of the battlefield by car with some short foot excursions. Meet at the Bull's Head public House Clipston (LE16 9RT) at 11:00 for coffee and morning tour followed by lunch (£10.95) and an afternoon tour starting at 13:30. Places limited. Contact Harvey Watson on 07818 853385 for details.

Saturday 10 November, Mercia AGM and Edgcote (1469). Meet at The Griffin Public House Chipping Warden (OX17 1LB) at 12:30pm for lunch and AGM followed by a short walk across the Edgcote battlefield departing at around 1:45pm. Contact Simon Marsh.

Tower of London Lunchtime Lectures in the Fusilier Museum there continues in the autumn. See <http://bit.ly/OUvVsu> for details.

Simon Marsh