



January 2017

Encounter

The newsletter of the Mercia Region of the Battlefields Trust

Introduction

Happy New Year to you all! I hope you had a good Christmas and your New Year resolutions are still intact. It was a busy time for the Region toward the end of the year with a talk on battlefield commemoration and interpretation at a Cromwell Association conference in Leeds in mid-November and another on John Hampden's involvement in the battles of Southam and Edgehill in December. Early 2017 looks like it will be equally busy as the Trust needs to complete a response to Historic England on its review of the registration of Towton (1461) battlefield by mid-January and there is a meeting with the Berkshire County Archaeologist at the end of the month to discuss a project at Newbury. By the time you read this the Mercia Region Committee will also have met at Radcot Bridge to plan the 2017 programme of events and also discuss the possibility of interpretation for the 1387 battle there. There will be more on this in the next issue of the newsletter. I hope to see you on a battlefield somewhere soon.

Recent Events

September saw Gregg Archer lead a walk at **Southam (1642)** in Warwickshire, the site of one of the initial actions during the Civil War. This was a first visit to this battlefield site for the Mercia region and the walk provoked debate on the location of the battlefield as there are at least two different interpretations. In the 1,000th anniversary year, Tony Spicer led another 'first look' for the region at **Deerhurst** in November. Here Edmund Ironside and Canute agreed a peace treaty following Ironside's defeat at Assandun in October 1016, shortly before Ironside's death. Tony provided a fascinating account of the events of 1016 and explained the significance of the site. This was followed by an afternoon walk by Tewkesbury Battlefield Society of nearby **Tewkesbury (1471)**. The region also ran a couple of well-attended talks in conjunction with the Buckinghamshire County Museum in Aylesbury and John Hampden Society on

John Hampden's Battlefields. Professor Ian Beckett provided a lively introductory lecture on Buckinghamshire during the Civil War in November and in early December I spoke about the battles of **Southam and Edgehill (1642)** and Hampden's involvement there.

Northampton (1460)

In October, the Mercia Region and Northampton Battlefield Society raised concerns with the local council about works it had approved to improve gas and electricity supplies to Delapre Abbey, which sits on the registered battlefield, as both organisations judged that there had been insufficient archaeological supervision conditions put in place. The works were necessary for the refurbishment of the Abbey buildings, which will include an exhibition about the 1460 battle, and the Battlefields Trust fully supports this development. But guidance on archaeological supervision of works on registered battlefields is currently lacking and the Trust has therefore separately engaged Historic England to see if this can be rectified. Historic England has replied to say it is working with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists to establish the full range of existing archaeological guidance available and then plans to attempt to fill any gaps from the middle of 2017 onwards.



Northampton battlefield from near the Eleanor Cross

Chalgrove (1643)

In the last edition of *Encounter* I mentioned that Chalgrove battlefield was under threat

from South Oxfordshire District Council's proposals to build 3,500 houses on Chalgrove Airfield, a WWII photo-reconnaissance base, which covers around one third of the Historic England registered battlefield. The Trust has opposed the proposals and continues to monitor the situation. In December the company contracted by the Council to provide a desk based archaeological assessment of the battlefield to inform the proposals contacted the Mercia Region and offered it an opportunity to provide further advice, which was accepted. As part of the exchange, detailed Light Imaging, Detection and Ranging (Lidar) survey data was provided to the region which shows some interesting features, including the old road to Oxford which runs across the airfield and which the royalists under Prince Rupert lined with dragoons whilst he deployed for battle.

Islip Bridge (1645)

At the end of November the region responded to a Cherwell Valley Council consultation on proposed new housing developments to address Oxford's unmet housing needs. This identified three sites around Islip which could potentially impact on the cavalry engagement there involving Lt Gen Oliver Cromwell and the New Model Army in 1645. The region recommended archaeological survey work in advance of any development being given the go ahead.

Mercia Region AGM

The Mercia Region AGM will be held at The Talbot, the Market Square, Stow, GL54 1BQ at 2:15pm following the annual walk of the battlefield on Sunday 19 March 2017. We will have lunch there beforehand and I'd be grateful if you could let me know if you intend to have lunch so we can let the pub know numbers. The current regional committee welcome any applications to join the committee or to stand for election for the officer roles. Please notify these to Gregg Archer (greggyarcher@hotmail.co.uk or 07899 900594) by 28 February. Any substantive issues for the AGM should also be raised with Gregg by this date. After the AGM there may be an opportunity to visit the Christie-Crawford Collection of Civil War portraits in St Edward's Hall, depending on the hall's availability.

Naseby (1645)

The Naseby Battlefield Project has been working hard to complete the initial assessment for a visitors' centre dedicated to the battle in Naseby church following initial

stage Heritage Lottery Funding early in 2016. A new consultant was appointed in September to finalise the work.

Battlefield Trust Events

Forthcoming Mercia events for your diary as follows. More details at <http://bit.ly/faZwki>. Events are correct at the time of going to press. You are advised to check with the point of contact for any last minute changes.

Saturday 21 January 2017, Battles of Brentford and Turnham Green, Simon Marsh and Dr Stephen Porter discuss John Hampden's involvement in halting the 1642 royalist advance on London. The talk starts at 2:30pm at the Bucks County Museum, Aylesbury, HP20 2QP. Tickets are £7.50 from the museum (see <http://bit.ly/24Desy9>).

Battle of Tewkesbury 1471. Sunday 5 Feb, 5 Mar, 2 and 30 April. All walks start at The Crescent, GL20 5PD, next to the Abbey at 2:30pm apart from the 30 April one which starts at 11:00am. If flooding occurs the walk may be cancelled. For details contact Steve Goodchild on 01684 294939.

Saturday 25 February 2017, Siege of Reading and the Battle of Chalgrove 1643, Simon Marsh will discuss John Hampden's involvement in the siege of Reading and his untimely death at Chalgrove in Spring 1643. The talk starts at 2:30pm at the Bucks County Museum, Aylesbury, HP20 2QP. Tickets are £7.50 from the museum (see <http://bit.ly/24Desy9>).

Sunday 19 March 2017, Battle of Stow-on-the-Wold (1646) and Mercia Region AGM. Simon Marsh will lead a walk across the last battle of the first Civil War. Meet at 10:30am in the public car park adjacent to the Tesco store in Stow (GL54 1BX). This will be followed by lunch and then the Mercia Region AGM. Contact Simon on 07742-958888 or merciam@battlefieldstrust.com for further details.

Sunday 23 April 2017, Cromwell's Oxford Raid and the Battle of Islip Bridge (1645). Gregg Archer will lead a walk over the site of the battle of Islip Bridge and look at Cromwell's 1645 Oxford raid. Meet at the information board in the village centre by the church at 1pm. For more details contact Gregg on 07899-900594 or greggyarcher@hotmail.co.uk.

Simon Marsh