



April 2017

Encounter

The newsletter of the Mercia Region of the Battlefields Trust

Introduction

Welcome to the Spring edition of Encounter. As the weather improves we enter the battlefield walking season. Traditionally the Mercia Region's first walk of the year is Stow and this took place on 19 March, two days before the anniversary of the battle. The conditions are never the same from one year to the next; as I said to someone on this year's walk, I have led it with snow on the ground and a wind chill of about -4 degrees and also in glorious sunshine in the low 20s centigrade. I'm hoping for more of the latter for the remainder of our walks this year!

Recent Events

Over the Autumn and Winter a successful series of talks focused on John Hampden's battlefields took place at the Buckinghamshire County Museum in Aylesbury. This was a collaboration between the Mercia region, John Hampden Society and the museum which saw takings from the talks shared between these organisations. After an initial talk about Buckinghamshire in the Civil War by Professor Ian Beckett, subsequent presentations focused on Southam and Edgehill, Brentford and Turnham Green, and the siege of Reading and Chalgrove field. The **Stow (1646)** walk mentioned above saw a 25 strong party visit the traditional site of the battle and heard competing theories about where it was most likely fought, including what the archaeology undertaken recently by the Region tells us. The group also gamely deployed as a seventeenth century army with participants forming cavalry and infantry regiments and then practiced the firing and counter-march of a block of musketeers.

Mercia Region AGM

Following the Stow walk the Mercia Region AGM took place. The Chairman and Treasurer's reports were both accepted and the current committee elected to serve another year. Tony Spicer then briefed the meeting on the proposed information board at the Teme and Severn rivers confluence at Worcester to commemorate and inform

about the bridge of boats deployed by Cromwell there during the battle of **Worcester (1651)**. The region has committed £500 to the project and the meeting was pleased with the progress made in identifying a site. Phil Steele separately told the meeting about a proposed community archaeological project at **Northampton (1460)** and asked if the region was interested in offering support. The meeting confirmed that in principle it was willing to offer support, but needed to understand more about the project to enable it to judge how best to achieve this.

Radcot Bridge Information Board

The Region has been progressing the production of an information board at Radcot bridge, which saw battles there between supporters and opponents of Richard II in December 1387 and between royalists and parliamentarians in May 1645. Alan Watkins, the landlord of The Swan public house which is adjacent to the bridge is sponsoring the project. An initial draft board has been developed and is currently out for comment.



Radcot Bridge, the site of military actions in 1387 and 1645/6

Chalgrove 1643 Update

I reported in January on South Oxfordshire District Council's plans to build over 3,000 homes on the site of Chalgrove airfield, a WWII photo-reconnaissance base, part of which covers the Historic England registered battlefield of Chalgrove. It was here that

John Hampden, a leading parliamentary statesman and colonel of a regiment of foot, was mortally wounded. The Battlefields Trust, John Hampden Society and Historic England all objected to the proposal. In response the Council has amended its plans, with the latest version showing no intention now to build on the registered battlefield area and natural screening to be put in place between the part of the airfield that will be built on and the battlefield to protect the latter's setting. The region is monitoring the situation closely.

Tewkesbury 1471

In late January the petition organised by the Tewkesbury Battlefield Society to support its campaign to purchase the Gastons site on the registered battlefield was discussed by the Borough Council. The meeting supported the protection of the site against development and the desire to do this through constructive engagement with all parties. The Council agreed it was committed to developing the battlefield as a heritage, cultural and economic asset and asked that its officers look at doing this through its planning policy and by exploring with the main parties locally how the battlefield can be improved as a cultural and heritage resource.

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.

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.

Battle of Tewkesbury 1471. Sunday 30 April and Sunday 7 May 2017. The April walk starts at Gloucester Road (GL20 5SG) at 11:00am and the May walk at The Crescent, (GL20 5PD), next to the Abbey at 2:00pm. If flooding occurs the walk may be cancelled. For details contact Steve Goodchild on 01684 294939.

Saturday 6 May 2017, Mortimer's Cross 1461, A joint event with NW and Marches

Region. Battlefield walks, re-enactors, lunch and afternoon tea. A £15 donation from Trust members is requested (£20 non-members) to cover costs and to support the Mortimer's Cross project. Meet 9:30am Mortimer's Cross Inn (HR6 9PD). Contact Anthony Rich on 0121 2499292 or anthonyrich@virginmedia.com for further details and to book.

Tuesday 9 May 2017, Civil War at the Royal Oak Naseby, The first of a monthly series of get-togethers organised by the Naseby Battlefield Project to talk about Civil War matters at the Royal Oak public house Naseby (NN6 6DA) at 7:30pm. This month some re-enactors will be on hand to discuss Civil War soldiers. Further information contact Mike Ingram on 07738 908808 or mikeingram2000@yahoo.co.uk.

Sunday 4 June 2017, Battle of Naseby 1645. A Naseby Battlefield project walk and drive led by Mike Ingram and Phil Steele. Meet outside All Saints church Naseby (NN6 6DA) at 11:00am. The tour will last about four hours. A £5 charge will be made on the day to support the Project, but this is a ticketed event and pre booking is essential via <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/naseby-battlefield-walk-tickets-31458020787>. For more details contact Mike Ingram as above.

Sunday 2 July, Battle of Cropredy Bridge 1644. One of the few encounter battles during the Civil War and a victory for the royalists. Join Anthony Rich for a walk across the battlefield. Meet at the car park by the cricket ground (OX17 1PG) at 2:15pm. For further details contact Anthony Rich as above for the Mortimer's Cross event.

Saturday and Sunday 8/9 July 2017, Tewkesbury Medieval Festival. See <http://bit.ly/2p9v1qr> for information on the festival. For further details contact Steve Goodchild on 01684 294939. The Trust intends to have a stand at the festival and any regional members who are interested in helping should contact David Austin on daustin.bt@btinternet.com.

Saturday and Sunday 15/16 July 2017 Battle of Northampton 1460, A two day event exploring the battle, involving re-enactments and guided walks of the battlefield. For more information contact Mike Ingram as above.

Simon Marsh