



The Langport Campaign

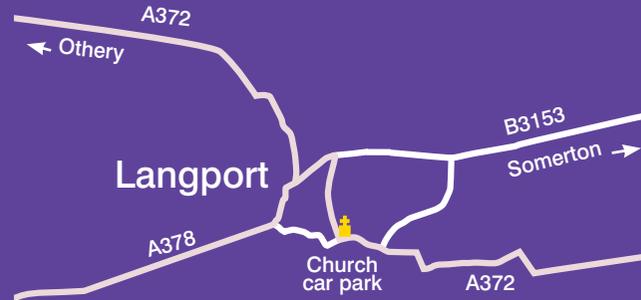
After his crushing victory over the Royalists at Naseby in Northamptonshire on 14 June 1645, Parliamentarian general Sir Thomas Fairfax led his army into the south-west. His aim was to relieve Taunton, which was besieged by the Royalists, but his way was blocked by a Royalist army under Lord George Goring. Goring's plan was to cover a retreat to Bridgwater by fighting a delaying action outside Langport.

Goring drew up his troops on the slopes of Picts Hill with two regiments of Welsh musketeers strung out along Wagg Rhyne at the bottom. Protected by hedges and light woods, they covered the ford that the Parliamentarians would have to cross if they wanted to attack. Goring had sent most of his artillery on to Bridgwater but kept two guns facing down the lane that led to the ford.

Fairfax had camped with his forces at Long Sutton on the night before the battle. Oliver Cromwell commanded his highly-disciplined cavalry. In the morning the Parliamentarians advanced towards Langport, wheeling onto the hillside above Wagg Rhyne to face the Royalists on the opposite hill. Learning that Goring was planning to withdraw, Fairfax resolved to attack...

Finding the battlefield

The battlefield lies between the B3153 to the north and the A372 to the south. There is a public car park opposite St Mary's Church, Huish Episcopi (TA10 9QR). Why not combine your walk with a visit to one of the best pubs in the area? The Rose and Crown (*locally known as Eli's*) is famous for its historic bar area.



Most of the walk is on well-surfaced footpaths but mud can be a problem in wet weather. Please take great care as some roads have no pavements. High visibility clothing and stout shoes are strongly recommended.

This leaflet has been jointly produced by the Battlefields Trust (www.battlefieldstrust.com) and the Langport and District History Society.

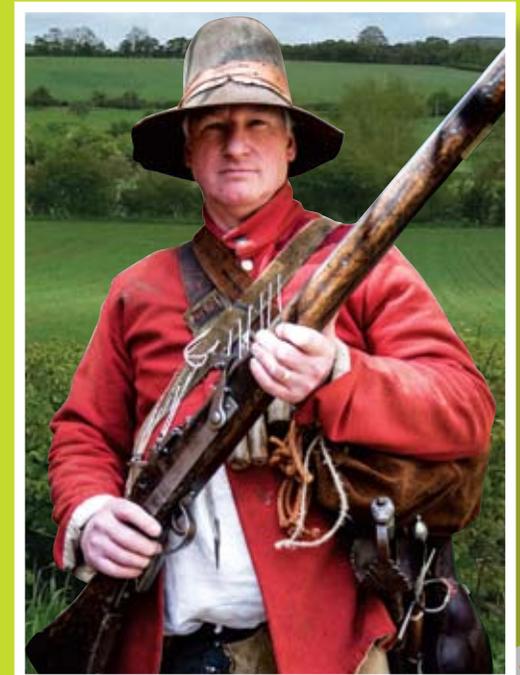


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The Battle of Langport

10th July 1645



Walking Trail

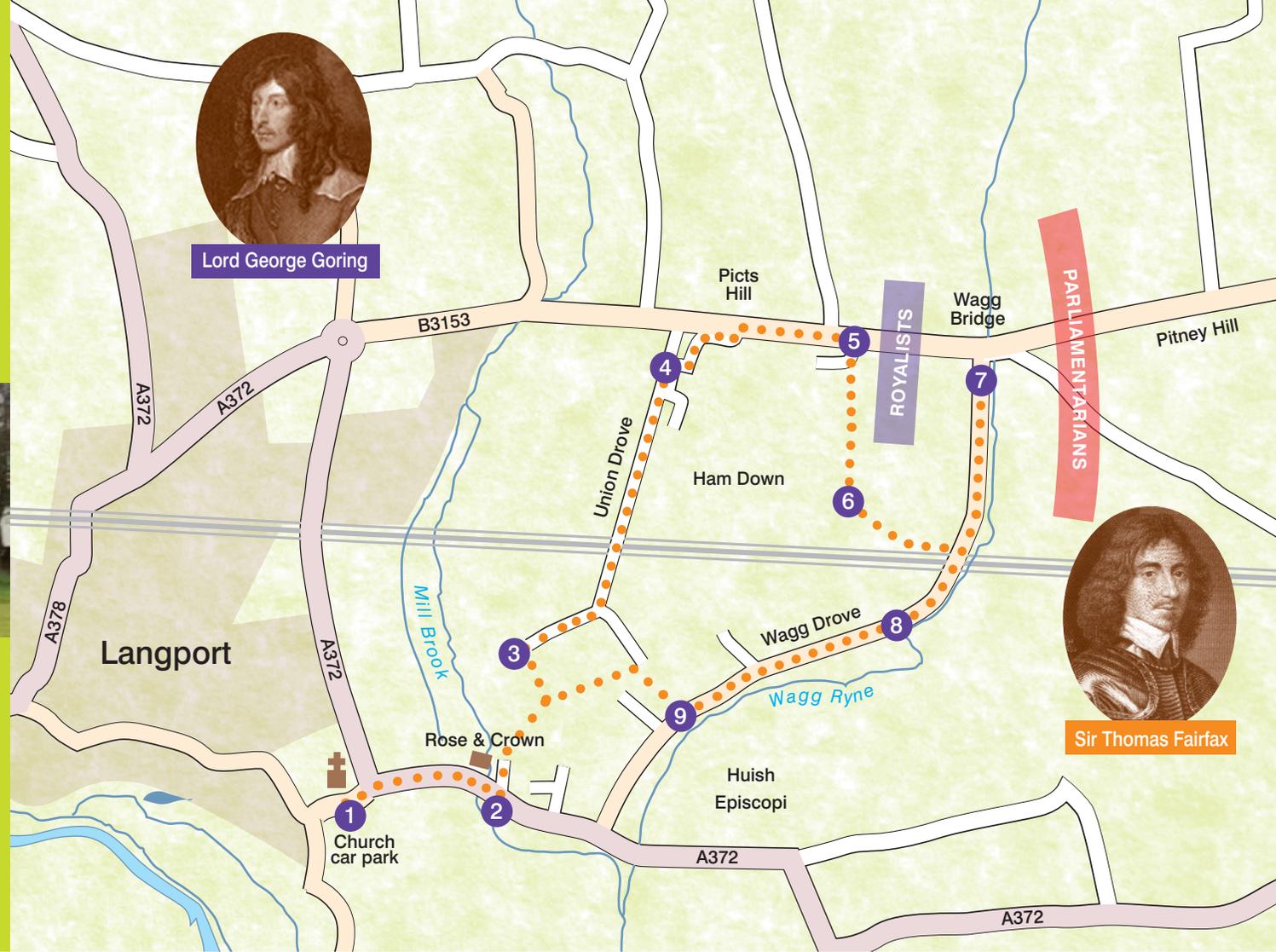
Explore the site of one of the most decisive battles of the Civil War in England.

The Battle of Langport 1645

The fighting began when Fairfax ordered musketeers down the hill to drive the Welsh from their defensive positions. Meanwhile his artillery opened fire, easily silencing the Royalist guns. The way was now clear for the Parliamentary cavalry to advance. Major Bethel led a troop of horse across the ford and attacked the Royalist cavalry facing him while Major Desborough followed behind him with a second troop of horse. Between them they drove back the Royalists, enabling the rest of the Parliamentary cavalry to cross the ford and deploy.



The Royalist army started to disintegrate. Musketeers dropped their weapons and ran for their lives while the remaining Royalist cavalry fled through Langport. Hoping to hinder the Parliamentary pursuit, they set fire to the west end of the town and the bridge there. Cromwell now came into his own, personally leading his cavalry through the burning street, into the river and onto the other bank, hacking down the fleeing royalists as they went. The battle had been a crushing blow to Royalists morale and Goring's army was to all intents and purposes a spent force.



Trail

1. Leave the church car park and turn right.
2. Just after the Rose and Crown pub turn left up Pounsell Lane. Go through a kissing gate and walk diagonally up the field.
3. Walk along Union Drove, crossing the railway bridge.
4. Shortly before the main road turn into Hamdown Court and follow the road round (there are good views of Long Sutton to the south east from the farm gate). At the main road turn right and, taking great care, walk down the verge. (The defeated Royalists retreated up the road behind you)

5. Turn right at Hamdown Farm and go through the gate onto a grass track (You are now in the middle of the Royalist lines with the Parliamentarians on the high ground opposite and Wagg Rhyne in the valley below you)

6. At the end of the grass track walk diagonally down the field and go through a kissing gate near the railway line. Walk down to Wagg Drove. Turn left and walk along the Drove (the ford where the Parliamentarians crossed Wagg Rhyne is believed to have been a short distance this side of the current bridge).

7. Retrace your steps and walk along Wagg Drove.

8. The place where a footpath crosses the Rhyne has sometimes been suggested as an alternative site for the main action

9. Shortly after Wagg House turn right up a fenced path. Turn left at the end and follow the path round the back of the houses and return to Pounsell Lane.

Walk distance: 2.8 miles (4.5km)