



LANSDOWN BATTLE AND CAMPAIGN

Information from *The UK Battlefields Resource Centre*

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Lansdown Hill 5th July 1643

By late May 1643 Sir William Waller's army, based around Bath, was parliament's main defence against the advance out of the South West of a royalist army under Sir Ralph Hopton. After several probing moves to the south and east of the city, the armies finally engaged on the 5th July.

Waller had taken a commanding position on Lansdown Hill. He sent troops forward to skirmish with the royalist cavalry detachments and finally forced the royalists to deploy and then to engage. After initial success on Tog Hill, a mile or more to the north, his forces were eventually forced to retreat. Now Hopton took the initiative and made direct and flanking attacks up the steep slopes of Lansdown Hill. Despite heavy losses amongst the regiments of horse and foot in the centre, under musket and artillery fire, the royalists finally gained a foothold on the scarp edge. Repeated cavalry charges failed to dislodge them and Waller was finally forced to retire, as he was outflanked by attacks through the woods on either side.

He retreated a few hundred yards to the cover of a wall across the narrowest point of the plateau. As darkness fell the fire-fight continued. Neither army would move from the cover they had found and both armies contemplated retreat. Late that night, under the cover of darkness, it was the parliamentarians who abandoned their position. Though the royalists were left in control of the field and of Bath, they had bought the ground at a high cost. Waller in contrast had lost very few killed or wounded and was ready to fight another day.

KEY FACTS

Name: Lansdown

Type: battle

Campaign: 1643 campaign for the South West

War period: First Civil War

Outcome: inconclusive

Country: England

County: Gloucestershire / Somerset

Place: Lansdown

Location: accurate

Terrain: open field, enclosed field and open downland; plateau and steep scarps

Date: 5th July 1643

Start: morning

Duration: all day

Armies: Royalist under Sir Ralph Hopton; Parliamentarian under Sir William Waller

Numbers: Parliamentarian: about 1500 foot; 2500 horse; Royalist: about 4000 foot, 2000 horse, 300 dragoons

Losses: Royalist: possibly 200-300 killed & many wounded; Parliamentarian: possibly just 20 killed and less than 60 wounded

Grid Reference: ST721703 (372100170300)

OS Landranger map: 172

OS Explorer map: 155

RESOURCES IN THE MEDIA STORE

In the media store there are maps as Adobe Acrobat files and air photos as jpeg images:

Context map: extract of out of copyright Ordnance survey one inch (1:63360) scale New Popular edition maps of 1946.

Explorer map: extract of Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 scale mapping with battle deployments and action superimposed.

Terrain map: contour map (based on 1" mapping) with key historic terrain features and with deployments and action superimposed.

Air photo key map: air photo coverage on 1" map base.

Air photos: RAF vertical air photos of 1946.

For a location map follow this link:

<http://www.multimap.com/p/browse.cgi?local=h&scale=100,000&gride=372100&gridn=170300>

IMAGE: Location map

The Armies & the losses

The royalist army of the South West under the command of Sir Ralph Hopton had been supplemented by additional forces under Prince Maurice and the Marquis of Hertford. However Hopton remained in effective command while Maurice commanded the horse. In all they had about 4000 foot, 2000 horse and 300 dragoons

The parliamentarian army was commanded by Sir William Waller, Major General of the Western Association. He was significantly outnumbered, having only about 1500 foot and 2500 horse.

In the action the royalist may have lost up to 200-300 killed & many more wounded. In contrast the parliamentarian losses were very low, possibly as few as 20 killed and less than 60 wounded.

IMAGE: Waller's effigy on the pre war tomb of his first wife, in Bath abbey.

The Battle

After skirmishing, at Chewton Mendip and elsewhere, at the beginning of July the royalists advanced towards and began to probe Waller's position at Bath. He countered them first on Claverton Down to the south east of the city. The next day the forces faced each other on the south east side of Lansdown Hill, to the north east of the city, as the royalists moved around Bath on the east. Again Waller's position was too strong for the royalists to engage. Finally on the night of the 4th July they quartered at Marshfield, five miles to the north of the city.

On the morning of the 5th July 1643 Waller deployed his 4000 strong parliamentary army on the northern edge of Lansdown Hill. Although he probably had a few more cavalry than Hopton, he was heavily outnumbered in infantry. Because this was a largely enclosed landscape, and thus most advantageous to infantry action, he was potentially at a severe disadvantage and so 'the fox' needed to use all his skills to even the odds.

He had therefore taken a commanding position on the scarp edge and made it even stronger by the construction of temporary defences, which he lined with musketeers and artillery. On either side of this there were woods, on the steep slopes of the hill, where he deployed further musketeers. Yet more were deployed on the flanks, probably where lanes led up onto the hilltop. On the level ground behind the defences he deployed what reserves of horse and foot he had available.

IMAGE: The view from Hanging Hill to Freezing Hill. Waller took a commanding position on the northern edge of Lansdown Hill. From here he overlooked all the surrounding land, even Freezing Hill to the north where the royalists would later form their battle array.

Map of terrain, deployments and action.

Attack

Waller now sent out cavalry to skirmish with detachments of royalist cavalry in the valley below and hills beyond. This forced Hopton, whose army of more than 6000 was over 4 miles away at Marshfield, to march out to counter the parliamentarians in the open fields on the hilltop which stretched from Freezing Hill to Tog Hill and on towards Marshfield.

Skirmishing in the hedged enclosures on either side caused the royalists to retreat once more. Waller saw a half chance for his weaker army to defeat the royalists, for though he had far less infantry he was at least as strong in cavalry as the royalists. So about 3:00 in the afternoon he threw more cavalry and dragoons into the action. Such an attack against the whole royalist army and a mile and a half from his main battle array on Lansdown Hill was a risky move. This was typical of Waller's approach to battle and at Lansdown he had some success, but at Cropredy in 1644 a similarly daring move would prove his undoing. This phase of the battle must have taken place somewhere on Tog Hill, near to the Bristol to Chippenham road.

At first Waller's men had some success but, faced infantry, under artillery fire and countered by royalist cavalry charges, the parliamentarians were forced to retreat. While their cavalry quit the field, being driven at great disadvantage down the narrow lane from Freezing Hill, the musketeers fought a rearguard action through the hedged and in places walled enclosures which lay on the slopes and valley between the open fields of Freezing Hill and Waller's main position on Lansdown Hill.

This had been no mere skirmish. It was a major phase of the action, lasting some two hours and spreading across a mile or more of the hilltop and slopes of Tog Hill and Freezing Hill.

IMAGE: Freezing Hill, across the open fields of which Waller's men were driven back to Lansdown Hill.

In the early fighting Waller's forces drove the royalists back onto Tog Hill.

Counter Attack

Waller tried to encourage a royalist attack by feigning retreat, and then by artillery fire on the royalists as they stood in battle array on Freezing Hill. Hopton responded, advancing in an all out attack on Waller's almost impregnable hilltop position. Parties of commanded musketeers attacked on either flank, advancing across the valley and up the slope under the cover of the hedged enclosures. The main body of pike, horse and remaining musketeers advanced along the 'broad way' which approached the centre of the scarp, perhaps close to the line of the main road which ascends the hill today.

The flanking attacks by the royalist musketeers were through the woods but may also have taken advantage of several small embanked lanes which ascent the east and west extremities of the hill. Eventually they drove back the parliamentarians and gained the hilltop. In the centre the royalist main body faced a far harder task because of the steepness of the hill, the fire from the musketeers and artillery along the defences and, once the royalists reached the brow of the hill, from cavalry charges. There was some cover provided by a stone wall where the road ascended the hill but little as they reached the top of the hill. After being repulsed five times, the royalists finally gained a foothold on the plateau edge. The Cornish infantry regiment of Sir Bevill Grenvile in particular took heavy casualties and their commander was mortally wounded holding the brow of the hill against heavy fire and repeated cavalry charges. But other regiments, including the cavalry, also suffered serious losses.

IMAGE: Several lanes give access through the hedged fields on either flank of Waller's position. They probably existed in 1643 and may have been used by royalist forces in their attack.

A lane on the royalist right leading up from Beach Farm onto Hanging Hill. The royalist flank attack may have made use of this lane, which probably already existed in 1643.

Grenville's monument lies on the very brow of the hill. It probably marks where he fell and where his troops finally, and at great cost, grasped a tenuous hold on the edge of Lansdown Hill.

There are various earthworks in Beach Wood, on the upper slopes of Lansdown Hill. However it seems likely that Waller's defences were constructed a little further back from the edge.

Retreat

Late in the day, as Waller's forces were outflanked and in danger of being overrun in the centre, he was finally forced to retreat. But about 350 metres (400 yards) from his defences the plateau narrowed and there was a stone wall. This provided much needed cover, for the royalists now had artillery as well as musketeers on the plateau, sheltering behind the cover of Waller's original defences. Openings broken through the wall, covered by artillery fire, enabled the parliamentarian cavalry to attack and retreat while the musketeers could fire in relative security from behind the wall.

As darkness fell royalist musketeers on Hopton's right pushed further forward under the cover of the quarry pits and spoil heaps, which still remain as earthworks today between the wall and the wood. Here the two armies stood and exchanged fire into the night, neither able to take the initiative. Both armies were however on the verge of retreat. Under the cover of darkness at about 11:0pm it was Waller who withdrew from the field, because he was outnumbered and had lost his advantage of position. But the royalist admitted later that had Waller given one more charge they had determined to retreat, because their hold on the hill was still so tenuous, at the very edge of the scarp, and also perhaps because they were short of powder and their losses so great.

IMAGE: Today a stone wall crosses the narrowest point of the Lansdown plateau. It may prove to be the wall behind which Waller's men took shelter when forced to retreat.

Assessment

Though detachments of Waller's army were at a disadvantage at times in the early phases of the fighting, during the second phase they all had the protection of defences and later of a wall. Thus they suffered only a small number of casualties, perhaps as few as 20 killed and 60 wounded. In contrast in this stage of the action the royalists were often in open ground under intense artillery and musket fire and repeated cavalry charges. Not surprisingly they took far heavier casualties, with perhaps several hundred killed, including a number of senior officers, and many more wounded. The next day Hopton himself became a casualty, in an accident with one of the powder wagons which exploded while the royalist commander stood nearby.

Though Waller had been forced to abandon Bath, despite his smaller numbers he had inflicted serious losses on Hopton's army. He withdrew along the main road, closer to London to regroup and be ready to engage the royalists once more in an attempt to halt the ascendancy of the king's forces in the south west. This he was to do a few weeks later at Roundway Down near Devizes.

As with various of Waller's actions, this was not a conventional set piece battle. He and his opponent, good friends in peacetime, were both willing to take the offensive, even against difficult odds, when they saw an opportunity. But at Lansdown it was the terrain as much as the intentions of the commanders which determined the character of the action. The distribution of open and enclosed land, as well as of steep slopes and flat plateau, decided how and where the different types of troops could be most profitably used – the infantry under the cover of the enclosures, the cavalry in the open ground.

IMAGE: Waller was known for the way in which he exploited the terrain. At Lansdown he had made good use of the steep slopes, woods, hedgerows and walls to cover his weakness in infantry.

Recommended reading on the battle

These web pages are largely based on the information in Adair 1997 and in the English Heritage report. The English Heritage report provides by far the most detailed discussion of the battle. Significant plans of the possible deployments and action are given in Burne & Young, Adair, Smurthwaite and English Heritage, though none is wholly satisfactory. The deployments mapped in these web pages are broadly based on Adair.

- Adair, John. *Roundhead general: The Campaigns of Sir William Waller*, 1997.
- Barrett, Charles Raymond Booth. *Battles and Battlefields in England*. London: Innes & Co., 1896.
- Burne, Alfred H. *The battlefields of England*. London: Greenhill Books, 1996.
- Burne, Alfred Higgins, and Peter Young. *The Great Civil War : a military history of the first Civil War, 1642-1646*. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1959.
- Clark, David. *Battlefield Walks : The South*, 1996.
- Edgar, F T R. *Sir Ralph Hopton: The King's Man in the West*, 1968.
- English Heritage. "Battlefield Report: Lansdown Hill." English Heritage, 1995.
- Getmapping. *British Battles: Amazing Views*, 2002.
- Morris, Robert. *The battles of Lansdown and Roundway 1643, English Civil War battles*. Bristol: Stuart, 1993.
- Rogers, H C B. *Battles and Generals of the Civil Wars 1642 - 1651*, 1968.
- Smurthwaite, David. *The Complete Guide to the Battlefields of Britain*. London: Michael Joseph, 1993.
- Walters, John. *Bygone Somerset*. London: W. Andrews & co., 1897.
- Warner, Philip. *British Battlefields: The Definitive Guide to Warfare in England and Scotland*, 2002.
- Wroughton, John. "Civil War Trail Around Bath (leaflet)." The Lansdown Press, 1993.
- Wroughton, John. "An Iron Cannon Ball." *Archaeology (South Gloucestershire Council Newsletter)*, no. 3 (2002).

IMAGE: Grenville monument on Lansdown Hill, as depicted by Barrett, 1896.

Contemporary Accounts

ROYALIST

- **Atkyns: Young, Peter, and Norman Tucker.** *The Civil War (The Military Memoirs of Richard Atkyns and John Gwynne)*. London: Longmans, 1967.
- **Hopton: Hopton, R,** *Bellum Civile*, ed. C E H Chadwyck Healey, Somerset Record Society 18 (1902).
- **Slingsby: 'Colonel Slingsby's relation of the battle of Lansdown and Roundway Down, July 5th'.** Clarendon MSS., Vol. 23, No.1738 (2). Printed in Hopton, Ralph. *Bellum Civile*, ed. C E H Chadwyck Healey, Somerset Record Society 18 (1902).
- Clarendon, 1702, The history of the rebellion and civil wars in England, begun in the year 1641.
- Mercurius Aulicus, 27th week.

PARLIAMENTARIAN

- **Harley: Harley, E 'Captain Edward Harley to Sir Robert Harley at Westminster'.** Historical Manuscripts Commission Report on the Duke of Portland's MSS vol.iii, p112 113 (1894).
- Waller: Letter from Waller to the Speaker, 12 July 1643. Tanner MS 62 f.164.
- Mercurius Civicus, no.7.
- **A true Relation of the great and glorious victory, through God's Providence, obtained by Sir William Waller, Sir Arthur Haslerig, and others, London, Printed for Edward Husbands, July 14, 1643. Thomason Tracts E. 60 (12).**

The Battlefield

The general character and location of the action is well known and is not open to dispute. The mapping of the deployments and attacks presented here is broadly based on Adair's interpretation, with some modifications relating to our cursory analysis of the earlier character of the terrain. However what is missing at Lansdown is an effective understanding of the fine detail of the terrain as it was in 1643, to be able to place some of the events accurately within the landscape and to fully understand them.

It would appear from the accounts of the battle that the hilltops and plateau were where the open fields tended to remain in 1643, while the slopes and lower ground seem mainly to have been enclosed. Where field boundaries did exist on the plateau and on the upper slopes they were typically stone walls, not surprising as limestone geology lies beneath the whole of the plateau and hilltops of Lansdown, Freezing and Tog Hills. The lower slopes and valleys are almost all on clay, and here the anciently enclosed fields were enclosed with hedges, in a few places set atop high banks. In several locations the upper slopes of Lansdown Hill were wooded and, although it is unclear exactly how extensive the woodland was, apart perhaps from much of Beach Wood, its distribution may have changed somewhat since 1643. In part this is because on the east side of the main road there is the landscape park of Battlefields House, laid out in the 18th and 19th

centuries. It is clear that the road pattern itself has also been altered, particularly where the roads ascend Lansdown Hill and possibly also Freezing Hill. There is also good evidence to show that the pattern of hedged fields has seen significant change.

Hence although we can all see very clearly the effects that the natural topography, the steep scarps and areas of plateau, had on the action, it is far from clear exactly how the enclosed fields, roads and other aspects of the man made terrain influenced the action. The first phase of the action in particular, the fighting on Tog & Freezing Hill, will only be understood when we have a detailed reconstruction of what was open and what enclosed land in 1643. Yet even on Lansdown Hill itself the pattern of walls of 1643, the exact extent of woodland and the character and extent of the quarry pits, which provided royalist musketeers with some cover to advance on Waller's final position, remain uncertain.

IMAGE: Terrain and action

The steep slopes of and valley between the two hills were, and still are, divided by a complex pattern of small hedged fields and lanes

Visiting the battlefield

Lansdown is one of the most spectacular of all English battlefield landscapes and so a visit will be enjoyed for much more than the military interest alone. This is however a site that can only be effectively explored on foot. Much can be appreciated by an easy walk along the plateau edge, a trail which is well served by battlefield interpretation panels. If however the wider battlefield is to be explored then two very steep descents and ascents are involved along less clearly marked footpaths, but the far better understanding this provides more than justifies the effort.

The broad phases of the action and the way in which it fitted into and was influenced by the natural topography can be immediately grasped, because the story is so clear and the pattern of hill and vale is so dramatic. However the visitor must also realise that the detail of the story remains tentative, for although the general pattern and location of the action is not open to dispute, the finer detail is. Despite appearances, the landscape has in some places changed significantly since 1643 and we are thus far from certain exactly where some key parts of the action took place. These problems will remain until there is a comprehensive investigation of the landscape and the battle.

For a location map follow this link:

<http://www.multimap.com/p/browse.cgi?local=h&scale=100,000&gride=372100&gridn=170300>

IMAGE: The steep scarp of Freezing Hill on the left and the slightly less steep lower slopes on the right rising to Lansdown Hill where the 1 steeper upper slopes now more extensively wooded than in 1643

Though the starting point of the walk, like the parking area, is rather unkempt, this and the constant stream of traffic should not put one off from doing the walk. Elsewhere the walk is pleasant and at times the views dramatic.

Battlefield Monuments

Lansdown boasts one of our earliest battlefield monuments although, unlike most, it commemorates the death of a single individual rather than marking the battle as a whole. The monument, which is in the care of English Heritage, was erected in 1720 for Lord Lansdown in memory of his grandfather, Sir Bevill Grenvile, a Cornish royalist commander. The inscription on the monument gives a different spelling of his name because the family name was changed to Granville later in the 17th century. The monument probably lies close to where Grenvile fell. As this occurred at the turning point of the battle and at the heart of the fighting, so the monument almost certainly marks the centre of the main action.

In 2003 a series of three modern marker stones, carved with designs derived from contemporary 17th century publications, have also been added. Each is placed alongside the new interpretation panels on the battlefield trail which follows the scarp edge.

IMAGE: New markers commemorating the battle were placed along the northern edge of Lansdown Hill in 2003.

The Grenvile Monument.

Gryphon on the Grenvile monument.

Interpretation

A new interpretation scheme was implemented on part of the Lansdown battlefield in 2003. It is associated with the Cotswold Way, which traverses the northern edge of the Lansdown plateau. There are a series of 10 metal markers (orange coloured 'standards' on blue poles) that mark the trail along the edge of the scarp. There are also four interpretation panels: two beside road near the Grenvile monument; another on the summit at the west end of Hanging Hill and one at the eastern edge of the scarp. Two small plaques have also been erected by English Heritage at the monument which give a few words about the battle, Grenvile and the construction of the monument.

IMAGE: One of the interpretation panels erected in 2003.

Interpretation panel, trail marker and modern monument on the eastern side end of the scarp where Waller deployed.

Driving to the battlefield

This is not a battlefield that can be toured safely by car because the roads are too narrow, the traffic too fast and there are no suitable parking places. However the drive to Lansdown Hill can provide (at least for the passengers) a good introduction to the character of the broader landscape over which the action was fought.

The battlefield lies on and beyond the northern edge of Lansdown Hill. The Grenville monument, the best starting point for a battlefield walk lies alongside the minor road from Bath to Wick, which passes by Bath Racecourse, and lies a little over two miles north of Bath and about one mile north of the Racecourse. The best approach is however from the north, travelling west along the A420 Chippenham to Bath road. This takes you through Marshfield, the royalist headquarters prior to the battle, and then on past Cold Ashton, the village where the mortally wounded Sir Bevill Grenville was taken after the battle.

About one mile west of the junction with the A46 there is a picnic site immediately adjacent to and signed from the A420. This is a good stopping off point. There are toilets at the car park and, on a clear day, from the picnic area one gets stunning views of the valley of the Severn. Gaining control of this wealthy agricultural territory and England's second most important mid 17th century town and port, Bristol, was the main focus of the royalist campaign in the west in 1643. The battle of Lansdown was a vital part of that campaign.

Leaving the picnic area, with care, turn right and cross over the A420 travelling south towards Bath. After 200 metres you pass Tog Hill House Farm. This used to lie on the main London to Bristol road but the modern course of the A420 has long since abandoned the 17th century alignment over Tog Hill that the royalist army would have followed. Your route continues along the ridge extending south onto Freezing Hill, giving excellent views to east and west. Much of this hilltop was open field in 1643 but today it is enclosed by a pattern of rectilinear hedged fields. From the edge of the scarp there is a good view of Lansdown Hill, but now the road plunges down the steep slope as a narrow winding lane entering the anciently enclosed and irregular pattern of small hedged fields that determined the character of the action in the early stages of the battle.

The road now rises again up Lansdown Hill. Whereas on the right the upper slopes are wooded as they probably were in 1643, on the left the character has changed considerably, with the landscaped ground of the house known as Battlefields and trees now covering the upper slopes. The roads have also changed, for half way up the hill you join the Wick to Bath road, but in the 17th and 18th centuries it took a higher course to join at the brow of the hill. It was as they ascended this slope and in trying to take and hold the edge of the plateau that the greater number of the royalists were cut down.

The only location recommended for parking is on the left about 100 metres after reaching the top of the hill, where there is a rough, potholed piece of ground which will accommodate two or three cars. Given the high volume of fast traffic using this road care needs to be taken when parking and when leaving. This is a good location to start a walk over the battlefield.

For those with little time to walk there are two interpretation panels adjacent to the road and it is just 200 metres to the Grenville Monument. But this will not give a good understanding of the action, for at this point the views from the scarp are wholly obscured by trees.

IMAGE: Though it is possible, with care, to get your car safely off the road, there is a real need for improvement to the parking arrangements at the Grenville Monument.

Battlefield Walks

The two walks described here are meant to be used in conjunction with the Battlefield OS Explorer map, which can be downloaded from the Media Store.

The traffic on the main roads that cross the battlefield is very heavy and fast and so great care must be taken when crossing these roads. There are no toilets pubs or shops anywhere on the battlefield. The nearest toilets will be found at the picnic site car park on Tog Hill, off the A420. Bath, though always busy, is the nearest location for refreshments.

Scarp edge walk: 5km (3 ml): an easy walk over fairly level ground on a well marked path with well maintained gates and stiles, providing stunning views across the whole battlefield.

Circular walk: 7.5 km (4.5ml): a more demanding walk involving two long steep descents and ascents of Freezing Hill and Lansdown Hill and including 2km on narrow but very quiet minor roads.

IMAGE: The trail along the scarp edge is an easy walk, well marked and with good stiles and gates.

Scarp Edge Walk

5km (3 ml): an easy walk over fairly level ground on a well marked path with well maintained gates and stiles, providing stunning views across the whole battlefield. In order to avoid the steep descents and ascents involved in the longer circular walk, on this route it is necessary to retrace ones steps from the two extremities of Lansdown Hill.

From the interpretation panels by the parking area walk across the road and follow the clearly waymarked Cotswold Way westward. Note that up here on the plateau the fields are bounded by stone walls rather than hedges, because limestone forms the plateau here and on Freezing Hill whereas the lower ground is largely on clay. Stone walls figured significantly in the action, but it is not yet clear which existed at the time of the battle and which are more recent in origin. Where the path follows the service road to the Fire Brigade Training Centre, before entering the gate next to Beach Wood, look to the left. There is a field of hills and hollows that is being rapidly encroached by small trees and scrub. These are the quarry pits into which the royalist musketeers threw themselves for cover on the evening of the battle, once the parliamentarians had retreated from their defensive work close to the scarp edge. We do not know whether there has been any further quarrying here since the battle or if, apart from the encroaching scrub, it is today very

much as it was in 1643. This area is identified as Open Country in the new Access mapping and, although not at present (2004) publicly accessible, hopefully it will become so in the near future.

Follow alongside Beach Wood where parliamentary musketeers were deployed to harry the royalist advance up the hill, but through which the royalist musketeers finally drove back Waller's men. Continue down the lane past the Fire Station and out onto the open pasture field, which is also identified for future open access. Follow along the scarp edge, noting the uneven ground on the hilltop and towards the further end of the field running down the slope. These are yet more quarries, not as some say the gun emplacements for Waller's artillery. Near the quarry pits there is also what appears to be a hollow way, a now abandoned lane, leading off obliquely down the slope to the west. This may have been one of the routes which the royalists took to ascend the hill and outflank Waller's forces.

At the western end of the field, known as Hanging Hill from the steepness of its slopes, is an interpretation panel and marker. Across the wall to the south east the plateau is almost perfectly flat, in contrast to the steepness of the slope to the north where it plunges down into the valley. From this scarp edge there are dramatic if somewhat distant views across the northern part of the battlefield in the valley and on Freezing Hill. It is clear how much higher Lansdown Hill is and thus how much more knowledge Waller would have had of the royalists troop deployments than they would have had of his. Now retrace your steps along the trail to the starting point.

Having crossed the main road, walk to the Grenville monument, clearly visible 100m to the north east, walking along the earlier route of the main road, which used to follow close to the wall. It is in this central area of the battlefield, just a short distance from the edge of the scarp, that the Waller must have constructed the defences, between Beach Wood on the west and possibly another area of woodland to the east. The Grenville monument, located on the very brow of the hill probably does represent the location where the Cornish commander fell as his troops finally managed to secure their hold on the scarp edge against intense fire and cavalry charges.

Follow the Cotswold Way down slope and to the right over a stile, then skirting eastward just below the brow of the hill. Brief glimpses can be gained, looking north, across the landscaped grounds of Battlefields house, to Freezing Hill and beyond it the summit of Tog Hill. The path turns south back on to the hilltop, giving an excellent view of the ground across which Waller's men retreated to their second defensive position, possibly the wall which still crosses the plateau from east to west, a couple of hundred metres away.

Just over the stone stile, where the ground falls steeply south eastward from the plateau, there is a new interpretation panel and monument. Continue eastward along the Cotswold Way into a small lane leading gradually down the hill towards Lower Hamswell. This winding Lane may have been one of the routes which royalist forces took in their flanking attack. Follow the Cotswold Way as it leaves the lane, north eastward. From here there is an excellent panorama, from the upper slopes of Freezing Hill right around to Tog Hill running on as a ridge eastward towards Marshfield. If you continue down to the next gate there are even clearer views across this area where the early phases of the battle were fought. Also looking back up slope the steepness of the front scarp of Lansdown Hill becomes very apparent.

Now retrace your steps to the interpretation panel beside the stone stile, but do not cross the stile. Instead continue on beside the wall and through the gate, then bearing right to cross the field diagonally to the opposite corner. It has been suggested that the northern wall of this field is the

one behind which Waller's troops took cover after their initial retreat. However as you approach the other corner of the field, if the grass is cropped low, it is just possible to see the slight earthwork traces of an enclosure which spans the main road. It is slightly clearer in the field on the other side of the road. Was this a prehistoric enclosure or was it a walled sheepcote still standing in 1643 within which some of the parliamentarians took cover?

Cross the road using the wide verge to walk north back to the starting point, noting the proximity of the quarry pits (which you passed at the beginning of the walk) to Waller's possible position at the stone wall.

IMAGE: The views from the walk are dramatic, giving wide vistas across the valley of the Severn with Bristol and, in the distance, the hills of Wales.

The quarry pits, now being encroached by scrub, from which royalist musketeers fired on Waller's forces sheltering behind their stone wall just a short distance away.

A stone wall crossing the narrowest point of the plateau may be that to which Waller retreated towards the end of the battle.

Circular Walk

7.5 km (4.5ml): a more demanding walk which covers much of the scarp edge walk but also involves two long steep descents and ascents of Freezing Hill and Lansdown Hill and 2km of walking on narrow but very quiet minor roads. To avoid the very dangerous, busy and fast road from Freezing Hill to Tog Hill, which is narrow and lacks any verge, this walk requires a retracing of ones steps to and from Freezing Hill.

From the interpretation panels by the parking area walk to the Grenville monument, clearly visible 100m to the north east. The path leads along the earlier route of the main road, which used to follow close to the wall. It is in this central area of the battlefield, just a short distance from the edge of the scarp, that Waller must have constructed the defences, between Beach Wood on the west and possibly another area of woodland to the east. The Grenville monument, located on the very brow of the hill probably does represent the location where the Cornish commander fell in the second phase of the battle as his troops finally managed to secure their hold on the scarp edge against intense fire and cavalry charges.

Now retrace your steps, cross the road and follow the clearly waymarked Cotswold Way westward. Note that up here on the plateau the fields are bounded by stone walls rather than hedges, because limestone forms the plateau here and on Freezing Hill whereas the lower ground is largely on clay. Stone walls figured significantly in the action, but it is not yet clear which existed at the time of the battle and which are more recent in origin. Where the path follows the service road to the Fire Brigade Training Centre, before entering the gate next to Beach Wood, look to the left. There is a field of hills and hollows that is being rapidly encroached by small trees and scrub. These are the quarry pits into which the royalist musketeers threw themselves for cover on the evening of the battle, once the parliamentarians had retreated from their defensive work close to the scarp edge. We do not know whether there has been any further quarrying here since the battle or if, apart from the encroaching scrub, it is today very much as it was in 1643.

This area is identified as Open Country in the new Access mapping and, although not at present (2004) publicly accessible, hopefully it will become so in the near future.

Follow alongside Beach Wood where parliamentary musketeers were deployed to harry the royalist advance up the hill, but through which the royalist musketeers finally drove back Waller's men. Continue down the lane past the Fire Station and out onto the open pasture field, which is also identified for future open access. Follow along the scarp edge, noting the uneven ground on the hilltop and towards the further end of the field running down the slope. These are yet more quarries, not as some say the gun emplacements for Waller's artillery. Near the quarry pits there is also what appears to be a hollow way, a now abandoned lane, leading off obliquely down the slope to the west. This may have been one of the routes which the royalists took to ascend the hill and outflank Waller's forces.

At the western end of the field, known as Hanging Hill from the steepness of its slopes, is an interpretation panel and marker. Across the wall to the south east the plateau is almost perfectly flat, in contrast to the steepness of the slope to the north where it plunges down into the valley. From this scarp edge there are dramatic if somewhat distant views across the northern part of the battlefield in the valley and on Freezing Hill. It is clear how much higher Lansdown Hill is and thus how much more knowledge Waller would have had of the royalists troop deployments than they would have had of his.

Now descend by the edge of the spinney towards the end of Slaughter Lane. It is unclear whether this is one of the routes by which the royalists outflanked Waller, but the name may prove to be spurious later creation. From the bottom end of the wood cut across diagonally to the opposite side of the field to the top of the lane to Beach Farm. This lane also once gave access to the top of the plateau and may have been another route taken by royalist forces. At the bottom of the lane turn right along the road. This has very little traffic but is narrow and in parts lacks a verge. At the crossroads take great care as this is a busy, fast road. A stile on the opposite side of the crossroad leads across the fields towards Freezing Hill. This valley landscape between the two hills is still today one of small fields, high hedges and narrow roads as it did in 1643. This was ideal for infantry action and it was through this area that the royalists, in their counter attack, forced Waller's men back onto Lansdown Hill in the first phase of the battle. In 1643 there may have been yet more small fields, for there is archaeological evidence of various former field boundaries, roads and other features in the surrounding pasture fields.

Cross the field and through the gate, heading towards the hill. In the next field, half way up the hedgerow on the right, there is a stile where the path crosses into the adjacent field. Now ascend directly by the hedge. Note the high bank with veteran trees which runs up from the next gate. Stay inside the field and follow the hedgerow up the steepest part of the hill. Just before the next stile you cross the ditch and bank of the prehistoric rampart which runs around the edge of the plateau. It is cut by a hollow way or deep ditch which is followed by your path. From here there are excellent views back to Lansdown Hill. Cross the stile and the flat top of Freezing Hill comes into view. It is possible to cross this arable field to the road, but it is too dangerous to take this road to link to the footpath which leads down into Lower Hamswell, to complete the walk. Instead retrace your steps to the lane at the bottom of the hill.

When you reach the crossroad turn left along the lane which runs eastward in the valley bottom between the two hills. It is quiet but narrow and so care must be taken, as it must at the next crossroads. There are good views here of the slopes of Lansdown Hill running up to Beach Wood.

Cross the main road and continue on to Lower Hamswell. This landscape is one of narrow roads, high hedges and small fields, but there may have been even more hedgerows here in 1643. Pass through the straggling hamlet. At the end of the road take the path that leads on bearing right towards Lansdown Hill and on to the ford. Your path now joins the Cotswold Way, which leads you up onto Lansdown Hill and right back to the monument. As you ascend the hill there are excellent views across to Freezing and Tog Hills. At the top of the first ascent onto the spur you join a narrow lane, which might be one of the routes by which the royalist troops made their outflanking attack on Waller's position on the hilltop. A little beyond the far end of the lane you will find an interpretation panel by a stone stile.

Do not cross the stile. Instead continue on beside the wall and through the gate, then bearing right cross the field diagonally to the opposite corner. It has been suggested that the northern wall of this field is the one behind which Waller's troops took cover after their initial retreat. However as you approach the other corner of the field, if the grass is cropped low, it is just possible to see the slight earthwork traces of an enclosure which spans the main road. It is slightly clearer in the field on the other side of the road. Was this a prehistoric enclosure or was it a walled sheepcote still standing in 1643 within which some of the parliamentarians took cover?

Cross the road using the wide verge to walk north back to the starting point, noting the proximity of the quarry pits (which you passed at the beginning of the walk) to Waller's possible position at the stone wall.

IMAGE: The fast and busy road ascending Freezing Hill is probably the 'narrow and ill passage' where Waller's cavalry were 'cruelly galled' by the royalist musketeers as they tried to retreat to the safety of Lansdown Hill at the end of the first phase of the battle.

The walk across the valley and onto Freezing Hill gives a good feel for the character of the enclosed landscape through which some of the action was fought.

The flat top of Freezing Hill, where the royalist forces formed in battle array before their attack on Lansdown Hill, remained open ground as late as the early 19th century. The road should not be walked to shorten the trail for it is almost as dangerous today as it had proved for the retreating parliamentarian forces at the end of the first phase of the battle!

Further Reading: Battlefield Guides

Of the various published battlefield guides only Clark provides a detailed description of a battlefield walk at Lansdown. However his suggestion that the visitor walks down the road which descends Freezing Hill is not recommended here due to the narrowness of the road and the volume and speed of the traffic.

Clark, David. *Battlefield Walks : The South*, 1996.