

THE BATTLES of BRENTFORD & TURNHAM GREEN Battlefield Trail



Battlefield Trail Panels

Find the six information panels in Brentford and Chiswick



ROYALISTS
V
PARLIAMENTARIANS



Top row, left to right: King Charles I, General Sir Patrick Ruthven, and Prince Rupert. Bottom row, left to right: Major General Philip Skippon, Colonel John Hampden and Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex.

General Sir Patrick Ruthven, then aged 69, was a very experienced soldier who commanded the royalist army with Prince Rupert. He was made Earl of Brentford in 1644.

Prince Rupert commanded the royalist cavalry. He was the King's nephew and had been involved in military actions since the age of 14.

Major General Philip Skippon, a professional soldier who had fought in Europe during the Thirty Years' War, commanded the London militia at Turnham Green.

Colonel John Hampden was one of the five MPs Charles I tried to arrest in January 1642, and led a regiment of foot at the battles.

The Earl of Essex was one of the highest ranking noblemen to support Parliament. He became Captain General of the Parliamentarian armies at the start of the English Civil War.

Battlefields Trust

The Battlefields Trust aims to preserve and interpret battlefields as educational and historical resources. Registered charity number 1017387

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Local History Society,
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Designed by Toni Marshall



1642

*Follow in the footsteps
of the Civil War soldiers
who fought here*

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What was the THE ENGLISH CIVIL WAR?

Strained relations between the King and Parliament, over the constitution, taxation and control of the army, came to a head when Charles I tried to arrest five MPs. Parliament began recruiting soldiers in July and by August the Civil War had begun. Everyone thought it would be over quickly but between 1642 and 1646 about a quarter of English men became soldiers and one in 25 of the population had died.

Why do the battles matter?

These battles, which took place over a cold and foggy weekend early in the Civil War, represent a defining moment in the development of parliamentary democracy in England. They were the closest the royalists, the King's supporters, came to taking London, which would have won them the war.

What happened before the battles?

After fighting an inconclusive battle at Edgehill on 23 October, the parliamentary army under the Earl of Essex retreated to London, arriving there on 7 November. The King's army advanced on the capital and by 11 November they were west of London. Parliament opened peace negotiations with the King, who agreed to talks at Windsor. But before the meeting, he had already decided to march on London the next day.

The Battlefields in 1642

The prosperous market town of **Brentford** had one main street lined with houses and shops, with a number of alleys running between them. On the north side of the street stood the market place and many properties had enclosed gardens behind them. On the south the buildings backed onto the Brent and the Thames. St Lawrence's church stood, as now, on the south side of the road. West of Brentford was Syon House and fields bounded by hedges and ditches. To the north-east of the town was the open common field, but along the road toward Turnham Green were further enclosures.

In the 1640s, 100 acres of **Turnham Green** lay within the parish of Chiswick and a further 30 acres in Acton. The modern open spaces of Turnham Green, Chiswick Back Common, Acton Common and Acton Green are the remnants of ancient common land which then extended as far east as Stamford Brook. On the north side were hedged fields on the rising ground towards Acton's common fields, and there were also enclosures on the west and east side of the Green. To the south was Chiswick common field, extending almost to the walled gardens of the Jacobean Chiswick House.



Battle of BRENTFORD



Guildhall Library, City of London

House of the royalist, Sir Richard Wynn.

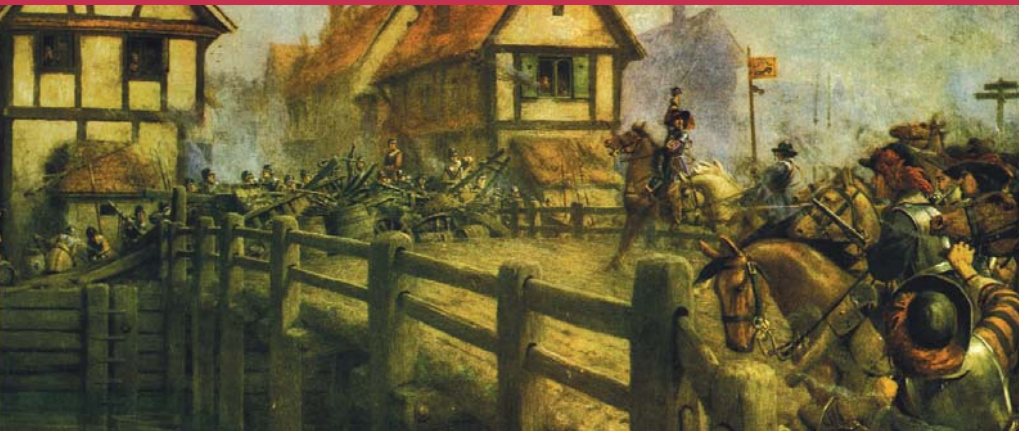
Wynn's House

The Royalists advanced from Hounslow Heath on the morning of 12 November. Their cavalry first encountered the red-coated soldiers of Denzil Holles' parliamentary regiment at Sir Richard Wynn's house, west of Brentford. They had to wait until foot soldiers came up to clear Holles' men from behind a hedge.

Brentford Bridge

Pursuing the retreating parliamentarians, the royalists next met a barricade at Brentford bridge defended by more of Holles' soldiers. It took about an hour for the royalists to overcome this position.

John Hassall painted this reconstruction of the scene in 1928.



This map was drawn by Moses Glover in 1635.

After *once firing* [we] advanced to PUSH OF PIKE and the *butt-end* of MUSKETS...

JOHN GWYN, A ROYALIST SOLDIER, WHO FOUGHT AT BRENTFORD

Second Barricade

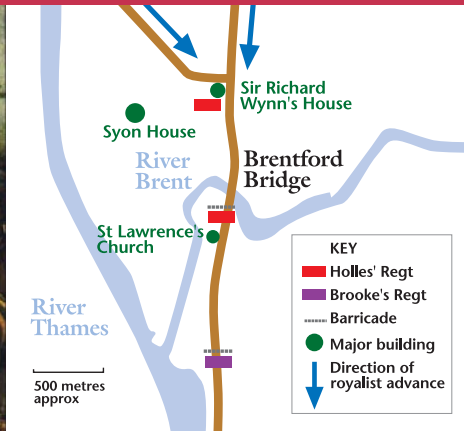
Pressing on, the royalists were faced with a second barricade, defended by troops from Lord Brooke's parliamentary regiment of foot. The royalists were delayed for two or three hours until parliament's soldiers, by now almost surrounded, were routed. Some ran back towards London, but others tried to swim the River Thames; many drowned.

Aftermath

John Hampden's parliamentary regiment covered the retreat of their fleeing comrades, probably on Turnham Green. Around 50 parliamentary soldiers, including many officers, were killed and more drowned during the rout. A further 327 were captured. Royalist losses were less than 20. After the battle, Brentford was severely looted by the royalists.

Syon House

On the night of 12/13 November, parliament tried to move cannon and ammunition from Kingston-upon-Thames to London by barge down the Thames. But these vessels were scuttled after being fired upon from Syon House and threatened by royalist cannon located near to the modern day Kew Bridge.



Battle of TURNHAM GREEN

Come my boys, MY BRAVE BOYS, let us PRAY heartily and FIGHT heartily.

MAJOR GENERAL PHILIP SKIPPON, ENCOURAGING HIS TROOPS AT TURNHAM GREEN

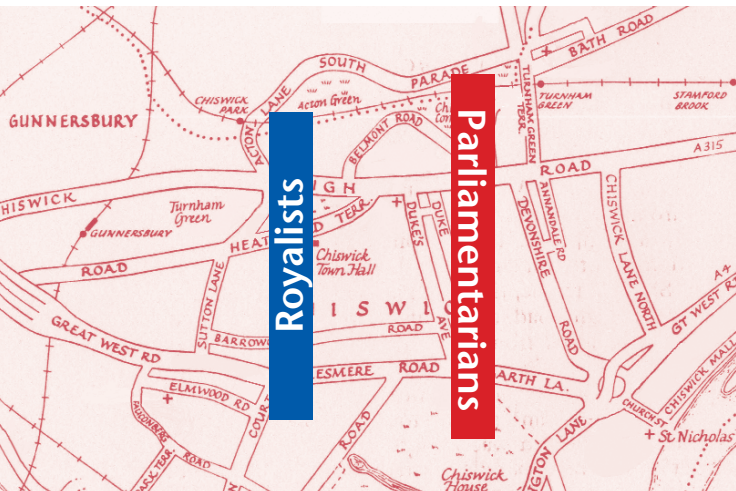
Parliament's Army

By 8am on 13 November an army of 24,000 parliamentarians had formed up on the open land of Turnham Green and Chiswick common field. It consisted of regiments of the field army commanded by the Earl of Essex, the London militia under Major General Philip Skippon, sailors and volunteers, some of whom came from both houses of parliament.

Skippon and Essex arranged the army so that the inexperienced militia foot regiments were with Essex's more seasoned foot troops in the centre. This bolstered the militia and showed the royalists that London's soldiers supported parliament.



John Rocque's map was surveyed 1741-45, a century after the battles. However it shows well the landscape of commons, fields, orchards and gardens, across which the battles were fought.



The two armies formed up over the open spaces of Turnham Green, Acton Green and Chiswick Common Field, much of which has now been built over.

The Royal Army

The royalist army of about 12,000 men had taken part in the previous day's battle at Brentford. To protect their left flank, the royalists sent troops into the hedgerows on the rising ground towards Acton.

Outflanking Move

The parliamentarians drove the royalists out of the hedges, leaving a few killed and wounded on both sides. Essex then ordered four regiments of foot soldiers and two of horsemen to march to Acton to outflank the royalists. But, fearful of splitting his army, he soon recalled these regiments.

Stalemate

The battle settled into a stalemate, punctuated by exchanges of artillery fire and failed royalist attempts to provoke the inexperienced parliamentary troops to break ranks.

Aftermath

Late in the afternoon, the royalists withdrew skilfully through Brentford to Hounslow Heath. Essex's men pursued half-heartedly. Afterwards Essex was criticised for failing to take advantage of his strong position. For both sides Turnham Green ended prospects of either a negotiated settlement or a swift victory, and so the Civil War dragged on for a further four years.

