



# The Sealed Knot Society

## DISPLAY DESCRIPTION



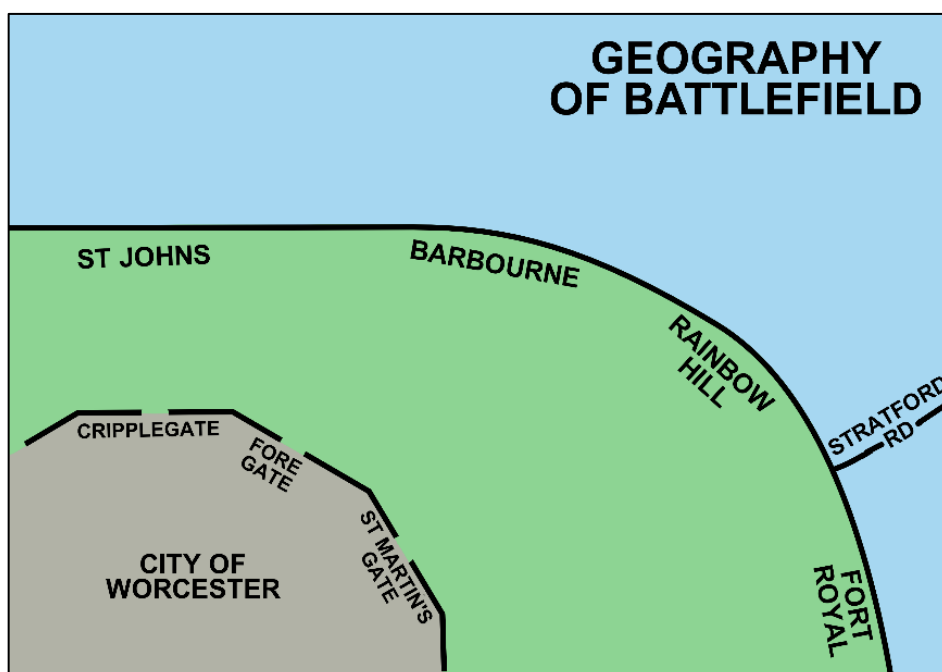
### **Main Battle - WORCESTER UNDER SIEGE - 1646**

Safety Notice: There are 2 sets of blue ropes placed around the battlefield area, these are here for your safety and are positioned a pike's length apart, so that should a pike fall during action, there is no risk of this hitting a member of the public. Please ensure that you do not enter the area between, or beyond the ropes, and be especially vigilant that children and dogs do not enter this area. Please respect the instructions of our marshals at all times.

This battle will be loud and artillery fire may make your ears 'pop'. When cannons are about to fire you will hear the words 'Have a Care' and will see the gun captain standing with one hand over the touch hole, and the other raised in the air. At this point, you may wish to open your mouth slightly and cup your hands over your ears; this equalises the pressure on your eardrums and deflects the shockwaves. It is far more effective than putting your fingers in your ears.

We hope that this short guide will help you follow the action of the afternoon:

'Civitas Fidelis' – our city motto has its origins in the 1646 Siege of Worcester where it appeared as graffiti on the drawbridge of the Severn gate. At August Bank Holiday 2025, the Sealed Knot will bring the story surrounding this siege to life at Bennet's Farms on the outskirts of the city.



## **GEOGRAPHY OF THE BATTLEFIELD**

You will see before you a portion of the walls of Worcester with 3 facades, each one having a large gateway. These represent existing areas of the City where the names used in the English Civil War are still the names in use now, and where there is documentary evidence of fighting having taken place during the siege.

Our overriding aim is to make this engagement relevant and relatable to you, the public so that when your children are playing in Cripplegate park in the week following their visit to us they will be able to say “this is where the Cavalry charge happened” or when they are stood outside Asda (St Martin’s gate) they will point up to Rainbow Hill, knowing that that is where Parliament placed their artillery. Many of our visitors will live, work, and go to school in the areas of St Johns, Barbourne, Rainbow Hill, Fort Royal and Stratford Rd, and will regularly catch the train from Foregate station, so you will be able to place the events of local history into the context of your everyday lives.

## **IDENTITIES**

There is a wealth of documentary evidence about the Siege of Worcester and we will be portraying the original characters (some of whom really were “characters”!) as authentically as is possible.

### **Parliament**

- Edward Whalley – One of the regicides, gained praise for field action at both Edgehill and Naseby.
- Thomas Rainsborough – Political mover, becomes the Governor of Worcester after the siege.
- Edward Dingley (in 1<sup>st</sup> half) – Former Royalist in charge of ~3000 Clubmen turned Parliament militia.
- Nathaniel Nye – Leads Artillery, uses the siege as an example in his future book ‘The Art of Gunnery’.
- Fairfax’s Cavalry (throughout) – Sent ahead to support the local commanders.
- Fairfax’s Infantry (in 2<sup>nd</sup> half) – Arrives at the end causing the city to surrender.

### **Royalist**

- Henry Washington – Governor of Worcester, in charge of Prince Maurice’s dragoons.
- Fitzwilliam Conningsby – Staunch Royalist, very vocal in wanting to refuse surrender.
- Radcliffe Gerard – Leading the remainder of the troops that had been under Charles and Gilbert Gerard.

- William Hodgkins (Wicked Will) – Perpetually drunk, but took a lot of captives on his many forays.
- William Russell – Former Governor of Worcester and MP for Worcestershire.

## **PHASE 1 – LOCAL COMMANDERS ATTEMPT TO TAKE THE CITY**

You will see the Parliament army arrive on the field in 3 distinct groups in turn (Dingley, then Whalley, then Rainsborough) with a short gap between each. As each arrives, their Royalist opposition will march out to meet them and engage. This phase of the battle will look very much like 3 separate engagements and to some extent looks a bit chaotic and disordered. You will see plenty of back and forth but no decisive ground is gained by either side.

You will see action in all areas of the field during this phase of the battle as the troops give their all, seeking victory over their enemy. This is your chance to see how the different divisions manoeuvred and fought.

Pike – You will see pike blocks engage at ‘point’ where they approach one another with the tips of their pikes lowered to attempt to skewer each other on the blades. This attack will often turn into a ‘press’ of pike where the two sides end up face to face and begin to tussle in hand-to-hand combat. You will also see many ‘pushes’ of pike, where the blocks form something resembling a rugby scrum and ram into the opposing side in an attempt to physically force them backwards across the field.

Musket – You will be likely to see four different types of fighting by musket blocks. Firing by ‘salvy’ is where the entire musket block fires their shot at the same time with the front rank kneeling to allow the ranks behind to fire over their heads. Firing by ‘introduction’ and ‘extroduction’ are manoeuvres where 1 rank (line) at a time will fire and then either the rear rank will march forward, or the front rank will march to the back, meaning that the musket block is very slowly moving either forwards or backwards with musketeers firing at all times and no gaps for reloading. The last method you will see musket blocks use in combat is ‘clubbing their butts’ which means that they turn their muskets around to use the blunt end as a weapon as they get up close and fight in hand-to-hand combat, musketeers will often use a sword alongside their musket at this point, but it is a sure sign that musket officers are worrying that they are low on black powder or lead shot.

Cavalry – To begin with the Cavalry will be likely to try to stop the foot soldiers from advancing. You will see the infantry under attack form into “hedgehogs”. This is a formation where the pikemen form a small circle, and the musketeers will go in the centre. The pikes will be lowered to make spikes that the horses won’t want to cross. You might see other people go in the centre like drummers and the Baggage Train, who support the soldiers with water and medical aid. You will normally see them at the back of the fighting area, waiting to offer support when there’s a break in the fighting.

Later, the Cavalry will turn their focus away from causing trouble to the foot soldiers and will instead spend their time attacking each other with swords drawn and sweeping gallops across the field. The aim is for one side to chase the other off the field, forcing them away from the action and preventing them from attacking the infantry troops.

Artillery – The artillery will continue to fire throughout this phase of the battle, but you may notice that the rate of fire starts to slow down as the officers want to conserve the black powder and cannon balls.

Looking towards the city you will see people attempting to repair areas of damaged walls using hurdles, gabions and wooden stakes – documentary evidence suggests that the walls of Worcester were in a state of disrepair at this point and that women were heavily involved in repairing the defences. Watch as the townsfolk repel any attempts to breach the broken areas of wall using make-shift weapons, supported by local militia.

Near the end of this phase the parliament artillery will start to hit their target effectively – with a cannon ball landing in the Bishop's parlour, knocking embers from the grate and starting a fire.

## **PHASE 2 – PARLEY, BOMBARDMENT, CAVALRY ENCOUNTERS**

This phase of the battle is a series of short encounters based on some of the more interesting anecdotes in the documents around the siege. The Royalist troops retire into the city, on the closing of the gates, the graffiti with the city motto will be visible to the public. Civitas Fidelis is a motto that can be seen all over the city of Worcester even to the present day – on your bins, your council tax letters and on various public buildings and monuments throughout the city.

Royalist commanders will re-appear under a flag of truce to recover the body of an officer from the field of battle. A table is brought onto the field along with wine, and a theological debate ensues between the Bishop of Worcester and a Parliamentary Chaplain. The officers will discuss a possible surrender, but no agreement is reached.

As soon as Officers have returned to their lines the Parliament Artillery carryout a synchronised bombardment of the City. In response to this, Royalist horse stream out from Cripplegate accompanied by a trumpeter, loop around the city walls and engage Parliament horse in the centre of the field.

A lone female rider is then sent out from St Martin's gate and will ride past each gate in turn as she is sent to request orders from the King. Little does she know that by this point the King has already surrendered to the Scots and is not available to give those orders. As she rides past each gate, Royalist troops will re-emerge and engage their enemy.

### **PHASE 3 – THE ARRIVAL OF FAIRFAX AND TAKING OF THE CITY**

**NB This phase of the battle is a ‘what would have happened if the city hadn’t surrendered’ scenario, based on other decisive siege action by the New Model Army. The commanders present at the time, knew exactly what damage Fairfax could cause to their city and their troops, and chose to surrender when he was nearing Worcester.**

Fairfax arrives via the Stratford Rd (from Banbury) into the Fort Royal area of the field, we see a sea of red-coats in good order looking very different from the disorderly and muddled local divisions of the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the battle. Whilst other divisions continue to fight without obvious ground being gained, you will see Fairfax push each Royalist brigade back in to the city in turn, beginning with Washington via St Martins gate, moving on to Conningsby via the Foregate, and eventually wrapping around to force Hodgkins in via Cripplegate.

This section of the battle will take some time, the Royalists are still fighting hard to defend their city. It does, however, begin to look decisive, from the moment Fairfax hits each brigade, there is less back and forth and you will see how effective the organised and well drilled troops are when faced with an enemy. You will see Royalist troops taking a steady stream of casualties throughout this phase of the battle.

Parliament artillery will continue to fire at will throughout phase 3, Royalist artillery are beginning to run out of powder and shot, so will fire less frequently. Both Cavalry will engage one another and infantry divisions until Fairfax comes up against Hodgkins, at which point Royalist horse will be chased from the field by Parliament, escaping across the border into Wales.

Fairfax’s standards will replace the Royalist standards with the city’s insignia that have been flying from the city walls for the duration of the engagement, signalling the end of the battle.

We will ask you to join us in a round of applause, which will ‘raise the dead’ from the battlefield, followed by a minute’s silence to remember those who have fallen in wars past and present.

If you wish to join us back on the Living history encampment to find out more information about how you can take part, or where you can come to watch us again, we will look forward to welcoming you at our recruitment stand.

Thank you for coming to see us and have a safe journey home!