

# After Roundway

The Royalist victory at Roundway Down scattered the army of Parliament to the four winds. The Royalists went on to capture Bristol, taking first the area outside the walls; the following day the rest of the city surrendered. Then they drew the King with his army over from Oxford to besiege Gloucester, planning thus to secure communications with Wales. Parliament responded by sending another army, under **Lord Essex**, with the Trained Bands from London and their presence was enough to raise the siege. This army then started to retire towards London, pursued by the Royalists. Pursuers overtook pursued at Newbury and on 20th September, battle was joined again with the two armies fighting each other for twelve hours. Both sides were exhausted and the Royalists, being particularly short of powder and shot, retired to Oxford and **Lord Essex** to London. Generals Hopton and **Waller** went on to fight each other again the following year at Cheriton in Hampshire where Parliament had the victory. **Lord Haselrigg**, who had raised and equipped the most heavily armoured unit of the war, and had been wounded at Roundway, had recovered and led his troop again at Cheriton. By the end of the year both sides knew full well there was no more chance of a negotiated settlement. There had to be Victor and Vanquished.

Visit the Wiltshire Heritage Museum and it's Library at Long Street.

## Primary Sources

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Capt. Richard Atkins, see below.  
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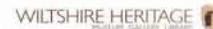
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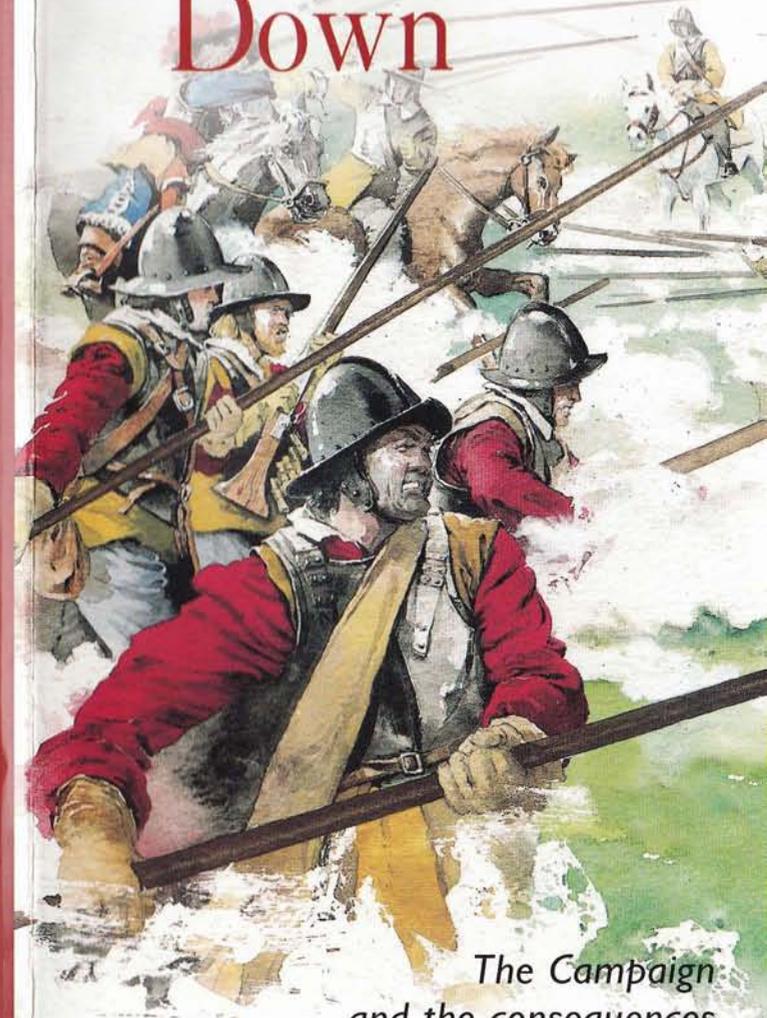


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BEFORE AND AFTER



# the Battle of Roundway Down



The Campaign  
and the consequences  
of the battle

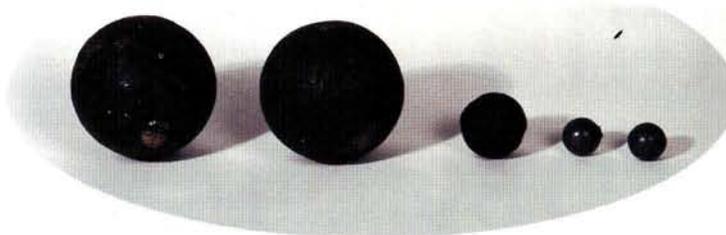
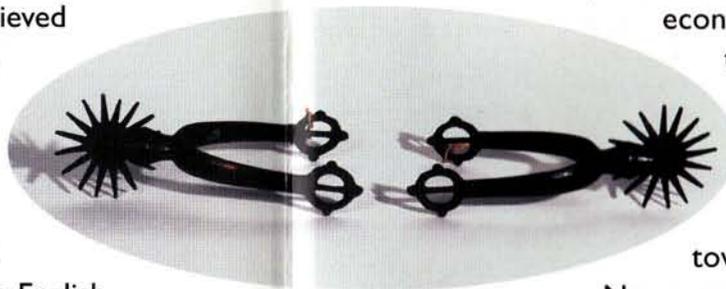
The Great Civil War Battle at Devizes

# Origins of the War

Charles I (1625-1649) inherited a difficult situation from his father James I (1603-1625). He was king of two countries which had been at war sporadically for centuries. Each had its own traditions and forms of worship which James had respected. Unfortunately both kings believed in the Divine Right of Kings, that is they were appointed by God and answerable to no man. Charles' obstinacy and expensive wars with France and Spain drained his coffers and he had to ask the English Parliament to finance his military activities. Distrustful of the King's policies, they refused, so he dispensed with Parliament for eleven years from 1629 to 1640. This could work if he was careful with expenditure but when he tried to force the English Prayer Book on Scotland, he provoked war with the Scots and so was forced to recall Parliament who were now in a strong position to impose conditions on the King in return for finance. They forced him to execute his chief minister, the Earl of Strafford, who had provoked rebellion in Ireland with his strong policies, and passed laws to restrict the King's power. As relations deteriorated, both sides knew that compromise was no longer possible.

# The War to Date

The King raised his standard at Nottingham in 1642 and both sides busied themselves raising and equipping troops. The country became a patchwork of Royalist or Parliamentary allegiances, based on religion, local influences or economic factors, though many areas remained neutral. Generally, London, the towns and the Navy were for Parliament while rural and Celtic areas were for the King. In the first year of the war, the Royalists had the better cavalry and Parliament the better infantry. The first major clash came at Edgehill in October 1642 and although the King held the field, his troops failed to destroy the **Earl of Essex's** army, which escaped to London.



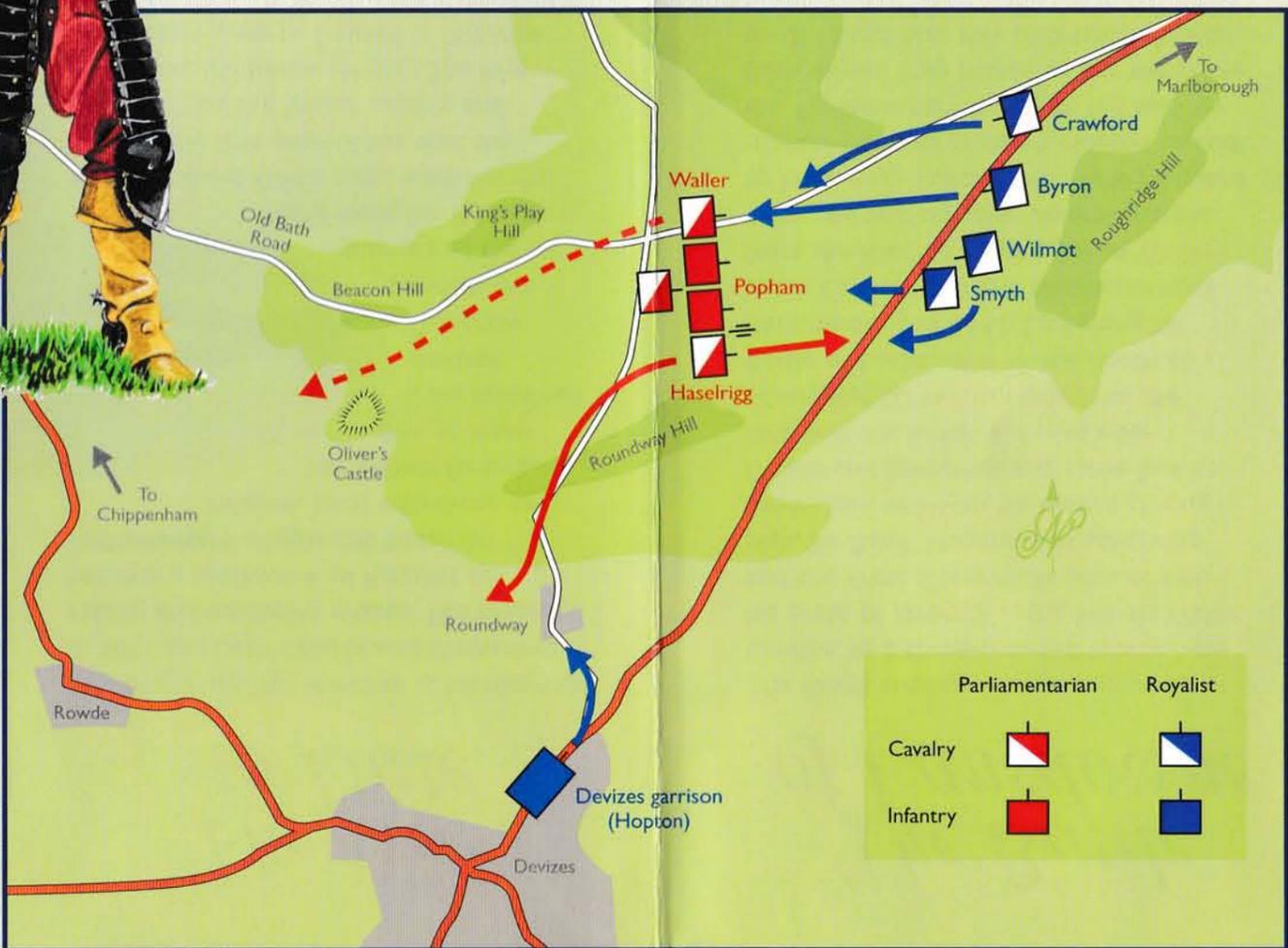
# The Battle of Lansdowne

The King's strategy was to recapture London by a three-pronged attack from his areas of strength – the North, Wales and the West Country. As part of this plan, Sir Ralph Hopton was advancing from Cornwall with his troops through Devon and Somerset and came face to face with his old friend (and now adversary) **Sir William Waller** at the Battle of Lansdowne to the north of Bath on 5th July 1643. Launching his brave Cornishmen and reinforcements from the King up a steep hill at **Waller's** army and withstanding several charges by **Haselrigg's** 'Lobsters' (so called because of their encasing armour), Hopton caused the Parliamentary forces to fall back to Bath, where they hoped to bar the route to the important city of Bristol. Hopton, however, had been badly wounded when a wagon of gunpowder was accidentally ignited by some prisoners smoking their pipes. The Royalists therefore decided to march to the loyal town of Devizes, carrying Hopton in a litter, and take refuge in the castle to give their leader time to recuperate. They were pursued by **Waller** and his forces and several skirmishes took place along the road from Chippenham.

**Waller** had received news of the relief column from his scouts. By the time he had drawn his army away from Devizes and formed in battle array on Roundway Down the relief column was only 1 1/2 miles away. **Waller** deployed in traditional fashion with infantry and two small guns in the centre and cavalry on the wings. Meanwhile **Hopton's** subordinates in Devizes felt this movement might be a trap and sat tight. The newly arrived Royalist horse aimed to immediately attack their counterparts. **Haselrigg's** cavalry six ranks deep met **Smyth's** followed by **Wilmot's** men only three ranks deep, and coming slightly down hill. **Haselrigg** was outflanked on both sides and, having less momentum, was pushed back. This turned to a rout as **Byron's** brigade came up. **Waller** now advanced his own brigade on the other flank. There was a hesitation in the Parliamentary movement to allow the guns and muskets of their foot to fire while **Byron's** brigade charged vigorously. **Waller's** men discharged their pistols too early and to no effect, but **Byron's** men saved their fire and "gave them ours in their teeth". Even so **Waller's** men pushed the Royalists back but then gave ground; this turned into a rout and they fled in panic towards the west, **Oliver's Castle** and **Tumble Down Hill**. Here some of them fell to their deaths down the steep slopes. When **Byron's** men rallied from their pursuit they captured the light guns and some ammunition wagons, leaving only the Parliamentary foot and cavalry reserve on Roundway Down. **Waller** and his commanders escaped with this unit, abandoning the foot who were pinned by **Crawford's** horse. These repulsed a charge by **Byron's** cavalry and started to withdraw when their own captured guns were fired against them. Their position was then untenable and they surrendered when **Hopton's** foot arrived from Devizes.



# the Battle of Roundway Down 13th July 1643



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**7th July:** The next day the **Royalist** army moved to Chippenham, with the severely wounded **Hopton** taken by carriage. The **Parliamentary** army followed, camping in the fields outside the town.

**8th July:** The **Royalists** fought a rearguard action on the road from Chippenham to Devizes. The **Royalist** cavalry was on the point of being broken by **Waller's** and had to be rallied by **Prince Maurice**. The **Parliamentary** army stopped at Rowde, the **Royalists** went on to Devizes. The **Royalists** were so short of the match necessary to fire their muskets that they commandeered all the bed cords in the town to make more.

**10th July:** Despite wet weather the assault was renewed, some outer defences were captured and there was determined fighting in the streets. The **Parliamentary** soldiers penetrated as far as **Morris Lane** near the Market Place.

On the **9th July:** The **Parliamentary** army formed for battle on Beacon Hill, but **Hopton's** army stayed in Devizes. From the camp on Beacon Hill, **Waller** and his army descended to lay siege to the outer defences of the town. There was a parley in the afternoon, then the assault was renewed in the evening. That night there was another skirmish with a **Royalist** relief force losing both colours and some captured soldiers and perhaps more importantly cart loads of much needed powder. Under cover of this mêlée, **Prince Maurice** and the **Marquis of Hertford** managed to escape with the cavalry, losing 17 or 18 men in a rearguard action and headed for Oxford to obtain reinforcements.

**6th July:** After discovering the **Parliamentary** army had left overnight for Bath, the **Royalists** retired to camp at Marshfield. **Waller** was keeping track and had scouts within two miles of the village. He was also getting reinforcements from Bristol in the form of **Popham's** foot and part of **Fiennes'** regiment, bringing his infantry to 2,000-2,500.

**12th July:** The **Royalist** relief force assembled at Marlborough, 1,800 cavalry and two light guns. They were commanded by **Lord Wilmot**, Lieutenant-General of Horse.

**13th July:** The column arrived at Roughridge Hill and fired the light guns as a signal to the beleaguered troops in Devizes to sally forth.

