



HOLLY HOLY DAY



THE BATTLE OF NANTWICH

Saturday 27th January



Nantwich Town Centre: 10am

Mill Island Battle: 2pm

£10 for family (2 adults & 2 children)

Adults £5, Children £2 (age 15 & under), Concessions £4



Nantwich Museum

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Exhibitions

Millennium Gallery

6 Jan- 17 Feb

Within the Loop by Threadmill

21 Feb - 27 April

Photograph exhibition by Nantwich
Camera Club

1 May - 6 July

The Seasons by Connected Threads

10 July - 21 Sep

Nantwich High Street by Nantwich Museum

Community Gallery

9 Jan - 3 Feb

Civil War Comes to Nantwich by Nantwich
Museum

6 Feb - 16 March

Wildlife Photography by the RSPCA

19 March - 24 April

The Nude by Nantwich Life Drawing Class

7 May - 1 June

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Get Involved

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We are looking for people to join our Education Team but a range of other opportunities are available too. Contact us to find out more.

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Nantwich Museum, Pillory Street, Nantwich, Cheshire, CW5 5BQ

01270 627104

enquiries@nantwichmuseum.org.uk



A NOTE FROM THE ORGANISING COMMITTEE



A warm welcome to Holly Holy Day, the re-enactment of the Civil War Battle of Nantwich, which has been commemorated in Nantwich annually since the tradition was re-established in 1973.

This is an important annual event for our town, which commemorates the lifting of the Siege of Nantwich during the English Civil War in January 1644, is a unique annual event, which serves to remind us of Nantwich's rich history. It is also important in that the Battle of Nantwich has become an increasingly well-known attraction for tourists, bringing much welcome trade for local shops and businesses, as well as providing a fun day out for all the family. We are fortunate to attract sponsorship support from local businesses, without whose vital help, this annual event could not take place.

We also rely on the entry fees we take to enter the Battle itself on Mill Island at 2pm. Please purchase your tickets from the town square or the entrance to Mill Island. If you do not pay to enter Mill Island, we will come round with a bucket for donations to ensure we can keep this vibrant event going.

The Battle of Nantwich is organised by the Holly Holy Day Society, a small group of committed volunteers, whose efforts in raising funds and organising the event continues to provide us all with such an enjoyable and colourful experience. If you would like to learn more, or become involved in the organisation of Holly Holy Day you would be very welcome, please visit www.battleofnantwich.co.uk

We are grateful for your support, and hope you enjoy your day here in Nantwich and take in everything this fabulous event and our floral market town has to offer. If this is your first visit to the area, I do hope you enjoy yourself enough to want to come again!

Enjoy your day!

Now let the battle commence!

Jo Lowry, Chair of the Holly Holy Day Society



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THE SEALED KNOT

The Sealed Knot of Cromwellian times was a Royalist secret society working to bring about the restoration of the monarchy. Its emblem was taken from the great chain of the Order of the Garter, in which “sealed knots” alternate with the Tudor rose.

The Society of Cavaliers and Roundheads was formed in 1968 to arouse interest in the period of the English Civil War, an event with lasting effect on the formation of modern Britain. The organisation was formed by Brigadier Peter Young, with six friends. Today, we number about four thousand members throughout the United Kingdom. Brigadier Young's qualifications, both as a scholar and as a soldier, are well known, and he had long been accepted as a leading authority on the military aspects of the Civil War. As a soldier, he fought with distinction in the second World War, and, eventually, commanded the First Commando Brigade. He was, for ten years, reader in military history at the R.M.A. Sandhurst.

In 1977, the Sealed Knot provided a guard of honour at Windsor Castle for the Queen's Silver Jubilee event. The Sealed Knot, which is registered as a limited company with charitable status, is organised on the lines of a seventeenth century army with horse, foote, dragoons and a train of artillery. Members take pride in their self-reliance, and are responsible



for their own dress, food, transport and quartering.

The Society's aims are:-

- (1) To promote interest in the Civil War
- (2) To operate as an educational charity for schools by recreating 17th century life
- (3) To raise money for both local and national charity
- (4) To publish books and leaflets and place plaques on the sites of Civil War battles and events.



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HOLLY HOLY DAY – WHY WE COMMEMORATE IT

Holly Holy Day, commemorated by the town of Nantwich on the nearest Saturday to 25th January each year, is held to recognise the lifting of the siege of Nantwich carried out during the English Civil War during the winter of 1643-44 and the subsequent Parliamentary victory on the fields below Acton, which resulted in the lifting of the siege and the removal of the threat of the town being sacked and plundered by the besieging forces under the Royalist commander, John, Lord Byron.

At the time of the siege, which lasted from December 27th, 1643 until the Battle of Nantwich on January 25th, 1644, Nantwich was the only remaining Parliamentary garrison in Cheshire and was under threat from Royalist forces under Byron, who had marched from Chester and defeated Sir William Brereton at Middlewich on Boxing Day 1643. The Battle of Nantwich, won by a Parliamentary force under Sir Thomas Fairfax, was a turning point in the war in Cheshire.

Since that day, the townsfolk of Nantwich have celebrated their deliverance from the siege by wearing springs of holly in their hats – hence the name Holly Holy Day.

The modern-day re-enactment of the Battle of Nantwich can trace its history back to 1971, when the Nantwich Historical Society first commemorated the battle in a simple wreath-laying ceremony at the war memorial in The Square.

Around this time, it was suggested by local Sealed Knot member Andrew Gillitt that the UK's largest re-enactment society became involved, and thanks to Gillitt's input and enthusiasm, the first modern re-enactment of the Battle of Nantwich took place in 1973. It has taken place every year since, and is a key part of the annual re-enactment calendar. Today, responsibility for organising the day rests with the Holly Holy Day Society, which is a small group of volunteers, who work with the blessing and support of both the Nantwich Town Council and Cheshire East Council. Sealed Knot participation is managed by the King's Lifeguard of Foote, a Royalist regiment within the Sealed Knot, which has a number of local members.

Andy Gillitt
(photo courtesy of
Rusty Aldwinckle)



The Kings Lifeguard of Foote in action at Nantwich

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR DURING THE BATTLE



A Pike Push

At first sight, a 17th century battle re-enactment can often seem confusing, so here's a simple guide to what you will see during the battle, and the different roles played by the various members of the Sealed Knot.

The Sealed Knot is made up of three armies, the Royalist Army, the Army of Parliament and the Army of Ireland and Scotland. During the Battle of Nantwich, the Scots Brigade fight on the side of Parliament. Each army is made up of a number of different regiments, each wearing different colour uniforms. Only the officers wore sashes to distinguish, which side they were fighting for. Royalist officers wore red sashes, whilst officers from the Army of Parliament wore orange (and sometimes blue) sashes.

During Holly Holy day, the Army of Parliament always take up the end of the field closest to Welsh Row. The Royalist Army are at south end of Mill Island closest to the footbridge by the weir. The majority of the foot soldiers you will see during the battle are either musketeers or pikemen.

Musketeers carry either a matchlock or flintlock musket and will be equipped with bandoliers and/or a powder flask to carry their gunpowder. You will see opposing musket blocks facing each other and firing as a block or engaging in hand to hand combat using their muskets as clubs or a sword. To take part in a battle with a working musket, musketeers need



Drummers marching through Nantwich

Cliff Astles Photography... Albums... www.cliffastles.co.uk



to possess a shotgun licence, black powder licence and need to have passed a Sealed Knot test of competency. New recruits use a dummy musket until they have passed their test.

In addition to their pikes, pikemen are equipped with breast and back plates and helmets known as pikemen's pots. During the battle, you will see opposing regiments engaging in what is known as a pike push, which looks

rather like a rugby scrum. These pike pushes are highly competitive, and you will see each regiment trying to push its rivals backwards.

During the battle, you will also see water carriers, travelling clergy and drummers, as well as opposing artillery units firing field guns. What you will not see on the battlefield at Nantwich due to space limitations on Mill Island is cavalry (you can see



A preacher delivering a sermon to his troops before the battle

cavalry in action at many larger Sealed Knot musters held throughout the year). There will, however, be cavalry riding around Nantwich during the course of the morning.

Cavalry during the civil war there were three types of mounted soldiers – cuirassiers (who wore full metal armour), harquebusiers (who wore a buff coat made from cowhide and a metal helmet) and dragoons (mounted musketeers). At Nantwich, you are most likely to see harquebusiers.

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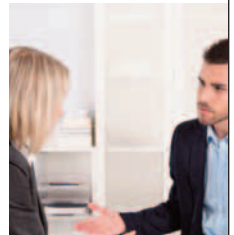
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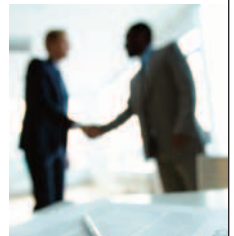
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The Battle of Nantwich

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Saturday 27th January 2024

Our Church will be open on
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11am
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NANTWICH IN THE CIVIL WAR – THE LEAD UP TO THE BATTLE

On the outbreak of Civil War Chester declared in favour of the King but the situation in the county's second most important town, Nantwich, was rather different, with the majority taking the side of "King and Parliament", in opposition to the royalist cause.

Initially, the King tried to bully the town into towing the line. When the war broke out in 1642 some of the most influential landowners in the area were imprisoned to discourage disloyalty – including Richard Wilbraham of Woodhey, Thomas Delves of Doddington and Roger Wilbraham of Dorfold and on September 29, 1642 the town was occupied and subsequently plundered by the royalist leader Lord Grandison.

At the end of 1642 attempts were made to neutralise Cheshire by getting both sides to disband their forces. This culminated in the Bunbury Agreement of December 23rd. The truce, however, was short lived and failed when the royalists in Chester failed to throw down their fortifications as agreed in the treaty.

After this the die was cast and a race ensued to occupy Nantwich. This was brought to a head on January 28th 1643 when the parliamentary leader Sir William Brereton defeated Sir Thomas Aston in a minor battle just outside Nantwich (between the end of Hospital Street and Cheerbrook). Brereton subsequently occupied Nantwich to the delight of the townsfolk and turned it into a garrison town, fortifying it with earthen walls and ditches. During 1643 Nantwich was never far from the action, coming under attack from royalist forces several times. However, a significant development occurred in November when 2,500 royalist forces returning from Ireland landed at Mostyn in Flintshire and headed to Chester to unite under the command of Lord John Byron. Brereton, who at the time was in Wales, was forced to retreat back into Cheshire. By this time it was clear that Nantwich was going to be a key objective for the royalist forces.

On 13 December a small group of firelocks under the command of Thomas Sandford succeeded in a daring raid on Beeston Castle, famously scaling the walls in the dead of night with only eight colleagues. The Governor of Beeston, Captain Thomas Steele surrendered without a fight and subsequently paid for his cowardice (some say treachery) with his life. Meanwhile the pressure grew greater on the inhabitants of Nantwich. On Sunday 17th December churchgoers at St Marys had their sermon interrupted by an attempt to approach the town from the direction of Acton.



The resultant skirmish at Burford resulted in the capture of garrison commander Colonel George Booth's most senior officer, a Scottish mercenary called James Lothian. Following this the royalists continued to march on Nantwich. One group crossed the Weaver at Audlem and plundered several villages to the east of the river including Barthomley, where on December 23rd, twelve villagers were massacred in St Bertoline's church. Things got even worse on December 26th, when Brereton was defeated at Mid-



dlewich removing the possibility of him being able to relieve the garrison at Nantwich on his own. By 30 December Nantwich was completely besieged. Parliament's response was to command Sir Thomas Fairfax to march from Lincolnshire with 2,800 cavalry and 500 dragoons to meet up with Brereton and to reinforce in Manchester before marching on Nantwich to relieve the beleaguered garrison. By early January Byron, now ensconced at Dorfold Hall, was in a race against time to win the siege or to storm Nantwich before Fairfax and Brereton's forces arrived. During the next three weeks Byron gradually increased the pressure on the garrison. On the 10th January

heavy artillery was installed near Dorfold Hall and fired "many gleeed Redd Bullets into the Towne".

This was followed on January 16th by a written ultimatum to the town from Byron, which was rejected in no uncertain terms by Booth.

At daybreak on January 18th Byron launched a full scale assault on Nantwich, attacking the town at five different points simultaneously. The result was a disaster for the royalists. The attacks were repelled at all points and between 3-400 of Byron's men were killed including Thomas Sandford. Only three townsmen died.



Despite the defeat, the siege held but by now Byron was committed to fighting Fairfax's army, which had set off from Manchester, marching via Delamere. They met Byron's forces at Acton on January 25th.

Holly Holy Day events – Nantwich

27 January 2024

10am onwards

General activities:

- Morris Dancers
- Sealed Knot interacting with public
- Tours of St Mary's church with Church Stewards
- Announcements from stage in town centre including the Town Crier

10:15am

Musket, Pike & drum demonstration in town centre before moving onto the Pillory

11:30am - 12.15pm

'The other Battle of Nantwich' talk in St Mary's Church

12-1pm

Forlorn Hope perform 17th century music at the Museum

BATTLE OF NANTWICH

12:45pm Troops leave Malbank School

1.00pm Troops arrive in town square

1.15pm Wreath laying including prayer by Rector of Nantwich.

1.30pm Troop inspection

1.50pm Artillery display on Mill Island

2.00pm Battle on Mill Island

Are you ready to meet new people and have fun while giving back to your community?



Our Rotary club is a diverse mix of men and women aged 32-70 from different backgrounds who have a common interest in supporting their local community and raising money for local and national charities.

We have lively weekly meetings to organise and support local events, fundraise for charities and get to know each other. We are a very sociable and friendly group! Don't worry if you can't attend every week – not all of us can.

If this sounds like you then get in touch or come along to a meeting, with no obligation to join. You will be very welcome!

Email wychmalbankrotary@gmail.com
Website www.wychmalbankrotary.org
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Scars of the Civil war in Nantwich

Volunteers wanted for Nantwich Museum's first community archaeology project

Why were there so many shots fired at the church during the civil war?
This is the question our project hopes to uncover, by exploring the shot profiles in the church of St Mary's.

**So, what's
involved?**

Working in groups, volunteers will be trained to measure and plot shot profiles. A briefing and a pack will be provided. Once trained, the collection of data can be done at a time to suit you.



Want to discover more?

For more details contact: Kerry Kirwan, Learning and Engagement Officer at Nantwich Museum.

learning-nantwichmuseum@outlook.com

Tel: 01270 627104



THE JANUARY 18TH ASSAULT ON NANTWICH

Holly Holy Day celebrates the lifting of the Siege of Nantwich that was precipitated by the military engagement which took place in the fields near Acton on 25th January. However, the battle itself resulted in relatively few casualties, only about three hundred dead, most of which were royalists. It is a little-known fact that Byron's failed assault on the town a week earlier was much bloodier.



Byron's attempt to storm the town arose because he knew that Sir Thomas Fairfax and Sir William Brereton were on their way to try and raise the siege. He also knew he had a relatively short window of opportunity to press home his advantage and capture the town before Fairfax arrived. By this time the townsfolk were getting desperately short of food and Byron had shut the town off so effectively that the news of Fairfax's approach was unable to get through to the garrison.

On Wednesday 17th January Byron ordered a major artillery bombardment, launching "four score and sixteen" cannon shots against the town. It was a prelude for what was to happen an hour before daybreak the following morning.

At 5 am on 18th January, Byron attacked the town at five places simultaneously, targeting the sconces at the ends of Wall Lane, Welsh Row, Beam Street, Hospital Street and Pillory Street. According to papers found on the body of Thomas Sandford, who died in the assault, part of the plan was for firelocks carrying scaling ladders to attack together with dragoons also armed with firelocks or snaphaunches. These were to be backed up with 100 musketeers, supported by pikes and a reserve of musketeers.

Despite the concerted attack, Nantwich was well protected with tall earthen walls and defended by a highly motivated force, which knew it could expect little in the way of quarter if it succumbed. The assault lasted for about an hour but at the end of it the royalists were forced to retreat, leaving their scaling ladders, some of their arms and the bodies of around a hundred of their comrades behind them.

Only three townspeople died in the assault, John Beckett, Robert Goldsmith, a butcher and John Warren. Meanwhile, eyewitnesses recorded the bravery of the townswomen, in particular a heroine named Brett, who poured boiling hot brine onto the attackers.

The attack was a disaster for Byron. The sconces at Wall Lane, Welsh Row, Beam Street, Pillory Street and Hospital Street were piled high with dead. Parliament claimed five hundred royalists had perished in the attack. This figure was probably exaggerated but nonetheless it was a very serious loss for Byron, who retired to Acton to lick his wounds and prepare for the arrival of Fairfax.





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THE BATTLE

Lord Byron was fully aware of Fairfax's approach but he had delayed abandoning the siege in the hope that the garrison would surrender. Late on 24 January, however, he sent an advanced guard to Barbridge and ordered his troops on the eastern side of the Weaver to cross the river and join the rest of his forces. Byron's plan was to force Fairfax to fight at Barbridge, which was far enough away from the town to rule out any intervention from the garrison.



However, on the night of 24th January there was a great thaw, which caused the Weaver to swell, which washed away the temporary wooden bridge built by the royalists at Beambridge, stranding the Eastern forces under Lord Byron's brother Robert on the wrong side of the river and forcing them to make a large detour via Shrewbridge to join up with the rest of the royalist army.

On the morning of 25th January, Fairfax quickly overwhelmed a small Royalist force waiting at Barbridge and continued

towards Nantwich, stopping on high ground at Hurleston, about a mile from Acton Church and village. From here he could see the Royalist concentration around Acton Church. These men were being reinforced by further troops from the East bank of the Weaver. Fairfax, himself delayed by the late arrival of his baggage and rearguard, did not believe that he could force his way through to Nantwich against such strong opposition. He decided that his only option was to leave the road, cut his way through the hedgerows, and bypass Acton across the open fields. Forming his army into column, with his baggage and guns in the van, he set off towards Welshman's Lane, leading towards the town of Nantwich and its garrison. It was now about 3.00 p.m.

In the event, Fairfax did not have enough time to carry out this manoeuvre and he was attacked in the rear by Byron's cavalry and in the front by Colonel Gibson. Fairfax was therefore forced to turn and face the enemy.

At first the parliamentarians were hard pressed by the left and right cavalry wings of the royalist force but because of the many hedgerows in the area, the royalists were unable to effect a proper charge and Sir William Fairfax (Sir Thomas's cousin) and Colonel Lambert, on the parliamentary right and left, respectively, were able to nullify the royalists by thrusting attacks down the narrow lines.

At this point the Nantwich garrison intervened, breaking out from Welsh Row and quickly overwhelming a small guard under the command of Sir Fulk Hunckes. The garrison then attacked the royalist centre from the rear, eventually isolating the two wings of the royalist army from each other. Byron and his brother fled across the fields back to Chester but the royalist centre and right were trapped. Many fled back to Acton church and barricaded themselves in but by the end of the winter's night all had surrendered.

Casualties in the battle were light, less than 300 were killed but 1500 men were captured and imprisoned in St Mary's Church, many of whom switched sides and joined the parliamentary army.

THE KEY PROTAGONISTS

Sir Thomas Fairfax (1612 – 71) was a leading general and served as parliamentary commander-in-chief for much of the Civil War. An adept and talented commander, Fairfax led Parliament to many victories, but he was eventually overshadowed by his subordinate Oliver Cromwell, who was more politically adept and radical in action against Charles I. His dark hair and eyes and a swarthy complexion earned him the nickname Black Tom.



Fairfax was in Lincolnshire in the period immediately prior to the siege of Nantwich and was commanded to march across the Pennines to join with Sir William Brereton's force in Manchester in order to relieve the siege.

Following Nantwich, Fairfax served at the Battle of Marston Moor, after which he was selected as the new lord general with Cromwell as his lieutenant-general and cavalry commander. After a short preliminary campaign the "New Model" justified its existence in the decisive victory of Naseby (14 June 1645).

Fairfax served as an MP in the first parliament of the Protectorate but thereafter lived in retirement until the death of Cromwell in 1658, whereafter he played a significant role in helping secure the restoration of the monarchy.



Sir William Brereton (1604 – 1661) was elected MP for Cheshire in 1628 and subsequently sat in the House of Commons at various times between then and 1659. Unlike Booth and Fairfax, he was also a staunch puritan.

Brereton joined the parliamentary forces in 1642, and in March 1643 was appointed Commander-in-Chief for Parliament's army in Cheshire. He defeated the royalist forces at the First Battle of Middlewich on 13 March and afterwards established the garrison at Nantwich.

However, following his return from a campaign in North Wales on December 26, 1643, he suffered his only major defeat at the Second Battle of Middlewich, forcing him to retire to Manchester to await help from Fairfax in order to be able to relieve Nantwich.

Following his success at the Battle of Nantwich, Brereton spent some time in London and became one of only three officers specifically exempted by Parliament from the provisions of the Self-Denying Ordinance. He consequently played a major role in the Siege of Chester and took part in the first civil war's final major battle at Stow-on-the-Wold.

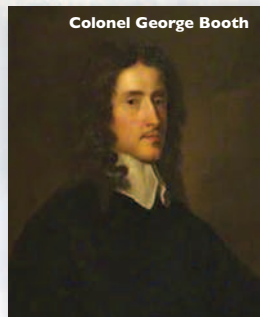
Brereton survived Pride's Purge in 1648 and although he was one of the commissioners on the trial of the King, he did not act with the regicides. He was present in the restored Rump Parliament in 1659.

Colonel George Booth, part of the ancient family from Dunham Massey, was in command of the parliamentary garrison at Nantwich during the siege and Battle of Nantwich. He was responsible to Sir William Brereton and led the sally from the town during the battle, which attacked Byron's forces from the rear, thereby contributing greatly to the successful defence of the town.

George Booth was only 21 at the time and is not to be confused with his grandfather, Sir George Booth the respected 1st Baron Delamere, who was town governor during this period. During the First Civil War the two were often referred to as Old George Booth and Young George Booth.

On the conclusion of the First Civil War in 1645, Booth was returned to the Long Parliament as Member of Parliament for Cheshire. He also served in the Barebones Parliament of 1643 and was the elected MP for Cheshire in the first and second Protectorate Parliaments in 1654 and 1656.

Booth was also a leading player in the restoration. He led an uprising in Cheshire in 1659 in support of Charles II but was defeated by Lambert in the Battle of Winnington Bridge near Northwich in 1659. He escaped disguised as a woman but was arrested in Newport Pagnell and locked in the Tower of London. He was, however, soon freed and was returned to his seat in the Convention Parliament of 1660. On the coronation of King Charles II Booth was created Baron Delamere and lived until 1684.



Colonel George Booth



John Lord Byron

John Lord Byron (1599 – 1652) was the leading royalist in charge of the attacking force at the Battle of Nantwich. In December 1643, on the recommendation of Prince Rupert, Byron was commissioned as Field-Marshal of the Royalist forces in Cheshire, Lancashire and North Wales and given the responsibility of securing a route into England for troops released from service in Ireland to fight for the King. Reinforced with some of the first regiments to return from Ireland, Byron defeated Sir William Brereton at Middlewich on 26 December 1643 and then marched on Nantwich.

He gained a reputation as the "Bloody Braggadoccio" after allegedly boasting in an intercepted letter to the Marquis of Newcastle about the massacre of local Parliamentary supporters at Barthomley Church.

In May 1644, following the defeat at Nantwich, Byron joined Rupert on the "York March" which culminated in the relief of York and the decisive battle of Marston Moor (July 1644). Byron commanded the cavalry on the Royalist right wing at Marston Moor, but his forces were routed by Cromwell's Ironsides.

After Prince Rupert's withdrawal from the region, Byron was defeated at the battle of Montgomery in September 1644, which ended Royalist power in north Wales. He steadily lost control of Cheshire to Brereton and was blockaded in Chester, which he was forced to surrender in February 1646. Byron died in exile in Paris in 1652.



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THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BATTLE OF NANTWICH

The Battle of Nantwich was highly significant because it represented the first clear-cut major victory by Parliamentary forces in the Civil War and, at a stroke, prevented the Royalists from establishing a permanent ascendancy in the North-West. During the previous year, 1643, the Royalists had enjoyed a string of victories across the country and Parliament was under severe pressure. Crucially, however, Parliament never lost control of London. Ever since his enforced departure from the capital in 1642, the major strategic objective for King Charles I had been to win back the city: he realised that without winning back London he could not win the war itself. He needed to establish Royalist control across the rest of the country, in order to amalgamate his regional armies into a larger, unified force with which to march on the capital and knock out the Parliamentarians for good. He hoped to see Nantwich captured by Lord Byron to help place the wider North-West region under lasting Royalist control. The Scots had allied with Parliament and it was known that they were preparing to invade northern England in early 1644. Charles I wanted Byron's army to bolster the Royalist forces which were tasked with the defence of the border regions from the imminent Scottish onslaught. This would enable the King's supporters to defeat the Scots, thereby removing the threat of a two-pronged front and permitting the Royalists to march south, adding more numbers as they went, before a final, decisive assault on London. The Parliamentary triumph at Nantwich, however, dashed the Royalist grand plan.

Whilst Byron did manage to escape to Chester after the battle with a single regiment of cavalry, the strong army he had led would never again constitute a single fighting force.

To add further to the Cavalier setbacks, a large number of the Royalist combatants from the battle actually switched their allegiance to Parliament once captured. This spoke volumes about the King's seriously-weakened position in the region.

It was inevitable that the vanquished Byron received hefty criticism. Some said that rather than invading Cheshire, he should instead have marched his army into Lancashire and seized Liverpool, to provide



the King with another safe port to which reinforcements could be sent. Alternatively, Byron could have wintered at Chester, awaiting a fresh convoy of reinforcements which arrived from Ireland early in 1644. He might then have been in a stronger position to mount successful campaigns in the coming year. Yet with the imminent Scottish invasion of England, in support of Parliament, there was a sense that action needed to be taken sooner rather than later. Byron had hoped that a swift victory in Cheshire would have given him scope to push on into Lancashire afterwards or freedom to pursue a policy of wait and see, confident that Chester faced no realistic threat from Parliament.

Instead he oversaw the destruction of a significant Royalist field army. Byron's campaign in Cheshire had begun well, but the siege of Nantwich tied down his army long enough for the Parliamentarian counter-attack under Fairfax and Brereton to prove successful. The Royalists were therefore unable to present a united front against the Scottish invasion of northern England in late-January 1644. They could only look back on a campaign which promised so much, but ultimately delivered so little. For Parliament, the victory at Nantwich provided a welcome boost to both manpower and morale, whilst heralding a key turning point in the war.

Nantwich Historical Society



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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A-Z of Acknowledgements...

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