

# EVIDENCE OF THE CIVIL WAR

WESTGATE

OXFORD



In the middle part of the 17th century (1642–1651) the country was in the grip of the English Civil Wars, a series of battles between the Royalist forces of the Crown (the Cavaliers led by Charles I) and the Parliamentary forces (the Roundheads led by Oliver Cromwell).

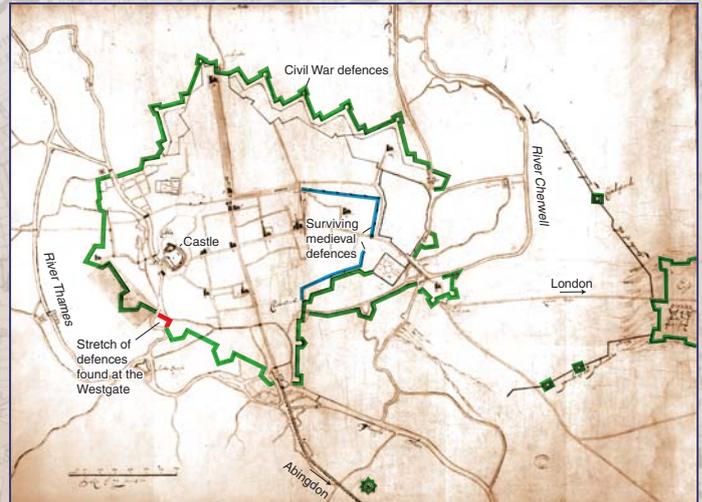


Charles I



Oliver Cromwell

Oxford was loyal to Charles I and was effectively used as a secondary capital city (London being under Cromwell's control). It was also a refuge for the King, and significantly used as the Royalists' military base.



De Gomme's Map, 1644

The city had extended well beyond its medieval limits, and space was needed to encamp and move troops and equipment, which required the construction of extensive new fortifications. These were built by the soldiers and inhabitants of Oxford and are clearly shown on a map drawn in 1644 by Sir Bernard De Gomme.



We found the line of a large flat-bottomed ditch earlier this year; it conformed to the line on De Gomme's map almost exactly. This discovery has finally settled the question as to whether or not De Gomme, who used a dotted line at this point, was showing a stretch that had actually been built.

Just behind the line of the defences a remarkably well-preserved halberd was recovered. This weapon was carried by non-commissioned officers. The metal head would have been attached to the wooden shaft by a socket and had iron strips running from the socket down the shaft to prevent the shaft being hacked through.

The weapon would have been 2.4 or 3.66 meters long in its entirety.

Soldiers were carrying these types of weapons alongside the musketeers on each side of a battlefield their primary purpose being to protect the musketeers from cavalry charges.

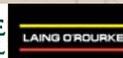


The corner of the gun emplacement uncovered at the Westgate



Our halberd may have been an accidental loss, but more significantly may indicate the site of a battle during one of the three occasions the Royalist troops came under siege from the surrounding Roundhead forces. The third siege in 1646 saw a victory for the Parliamentarians after the disguised King took flight on 27th April. Royalist troops finally left Oxford in June of that year. Charles was found guilty as a "tyrant, traitor, murderer and public enemy" and beheaded in 1649.

The Civil Wars led to the establishment of the precedent that an English monarch cannot govern without Parliament's consent.



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