



May 2008

Encounter

The newsletter of the Mid-Anglia Branch of the Battlefields Trust

Introduction

Spring is here and the battlefield walking season is moving into full swing. The branch has undertaken walks at Radcot Bridge and Chalgrove since the last newsletter and following the Chalgrove walk another branch meeting was held. The Trust's AGM was held at the National Army Museum in early March, sandwiched between two days of presentations which made up the London and South East branch's annual battlefield conference. No Mid-Anglia battlefields were discussed at the event, although First Newbury, formerly in our region, was given good coverage by Jon Day and Malcolm Wanklyn. Please support future walks and feel free to suggest things you think the branch should be doing.

Walks

In early April, between sunshine, showers and gusts of icy wind, eighteen hardy souls, including members of the River Thames Trust and Battlefields Trust, enjoyed a walk of around ten miles covering almost 500 years of military history. Dr John Turner, who led the walk, first discussed the Battle of **Radcot Bridge** (1387) that sealed the fate of Richard II and the future Henry IV. The walk then passed two of Queen Matilda's 12th century civil war fortresses, the last on Faringdon's Folly Hill. From there the party continued to Gaunt House a moated farmhouse garrisoned by the Royalists in a later Civil War.

In glorious sunshine on 12 May, Derek Lester led a walk at **Chalgrove** (1643), the battle in which John Hampden was mortally wounded. Not content to cover just the battle, Derek

had put together three consecutive walks with commendable military planning and preparation. Starting 6 miles from Chalgrove on the Lower Icknield Way, seven walkers followed the footsteps of Prince Rupert's retreat from his raid on Chinnor in June 1643. At Golder Manor, still over a mile from the battlefield, others joined the party and, making light of several hedgerows, continued to follow the royalist retreat to Chalgrove Field. Here Derek provided a detailed description of the battle and made a strong case for an alternate location for the battlefield.



The end of the Chalgrove Walk

Branch Meeting

Following the Chalgrove walk branch members retired to The Red Lion for lunch and short branch meeting. Points of discussion included the threat to views across the Naseby battlefield from a proposed wind farm at Kelmarsh; the possibility of an event to commemorate the 550th anniversary of the battle of Northampton (1460); and the inclusion of new information on Chalgrove on the Trust's Resource Centre website. No comments had been received about the proposed change of name from Mid-

Anglia to Mercia and the issue was due to be examined by the Trustees in late May. The branch was reported to have a large numbers of the free Edgehill-Edgcote trail leaflets remaining and it was agreed that these should be distributed before new leaflets, for which the branch would charge, would be printed.

Naseby Project

The Naseby Battlefield Project has appointed Attract Marketing Limited to undertake a feasibility study of a potential visitor centre adjacent to the battlefield, following the purchase, by the Project, of a 36 acre site. This appointment has been made possible with a grant of £20,000 from Northamptonshire Enterprise Limited and the work is scheduled to be completed by October 2008. A potential wind farm development, although not on the battlefield itself, is of concern to the Trust, which has already stated its opposition in writing. For those interested, further details, including how to register your opposition, can be found at: www.stopkelmarshwindfarm.com. A one day conference on the battle is to be held at Kelmarsh Hall on 29 June. Full details can be found at: www.le.ac.uk/hi/news/documents/NasebyProgramme.doc. The project continues to need funding support. To find out how you can donate, visit the website www.naseby.com and look under 'The Project' - 'how you can help'

Longer Term Plans

Following the re-launch of the branch in September 2007, the main aim has been to re-establish a regular programme of walks and a newsletter, whilst ensuring that existing projects in the region, at Naseby and the Edgcote to Edgehill trail, received the necessary support. However, in the longer term the branch may wish to become more active elsewhere. At Northampton the proposed renovation of the Delapre Abbey site, the enthusiasm of the Friends of Delapre Abbey, and the proximity to the 550th anniversary of the

battle, make it a strong contender for a future branch project. Derek Lester's enthusiasm about and knowledge of Chalgrove, along with questions about the precise location of the action, make this a possible candidate for a professional battlefield survey. With the expansion of the branch's area of responsibility to include Worcestershire, Gloucestershire and Leicestershire, major battlefields at Evesham (1265), Tewkesbury (1471), Bosworth (1485), Stow-on-the-Wold (1646) and Worcester (1651) and many smaller actions now fall in our region. I am sure the Tewkesbury Battlefield Society, Simon de Montfort Society and Worcester Battlefield Society will be walking some of these battlefields over the coming year and that Tony Spicer can be persuaded to lead some elsewhere, but if you are interested in leading a walk next year, participating in or proposing a project, then let me know.

Battlefield Events

Forthcoming Mid-Anglia events for your diary include:

Saturday 14 June 2008: Battle of Naseby 1645: On the anniversary of the battle, meet at the Old Red Lion at Clipston at 10:30am to tour by car the new viewing platforms for the battlefield.

Sunday 20 July: Battle of Cropredy Bridge 1644: Meet at the Brasenose Public House at Cropredy at 1:00pm.

Saturday 23 August: Edgcote-Edgehill battlefield trail: A 5 mile taster focused on the battle of **Edgcote**. Meet outside the church at Chipping Warden at 10:00am.

Sunday 7 September: Boudicca Defeat AD 61. Meet at the Folly Inn, west of the A5 south of Towcester near the gates to the racecourse at 2pm.

Simon Marsh