

THE BATTLE OF BRENTFORD, 12TH NOVEMBER 1642

THE HUMBLE PETITION OF OLD BRAINTFORD

The Royalist forces heralded the outbreak of the English Civil War with an inconclusive victory at the Battle of Edgehill on 23rd October. Following this, the King advanced to Oxford securing it as his capital for the duration of the war and Prince Rupert marched his troops down the Thames Valley and on towards London. Rupert, one of Charles' most experienced generals despite his relative youth, advocated an aggressive advance on London, to pre-empt the Earl of Essex's retreat on the capital, plus it would secure the docks and huge resources for the Crown.

Charles, not for the first time, dithered and didn't agree to an advance on London until the 10th of November, with Royalist troops moving towards London, securing Colnbrook (near present day Heathrow Airport) and a scant 15 kilometres from Brentford and its key position commanding the approaches of the Thames, below the weirs and locks, to London. The rationale behind this was to put increased pressure on Parliament to negotiate a peace, and that this peace would be heavily weighted in favour of the King. Charles ordered Rupert to continue his advance and to move his advanced guard forward towards London, and to aim to blockade the Thames by seizing Brentford and its commanding position on the northern banks of the river itself.

Whilst the Royalists advanced towards London, the Earl of Essex, showing an unusual level of energy and activity, had not been idle, and having marched the bruised remnants of his army back towards the capital, arriving to a hero's welcome on the 7th of November. On the way he ensured that the Western approaches were well furnished with scouts and lookouts. In this way he was alerted well in advance of the approaching Royalists and the general route of their advance. These scouts were detached from small garrison units designed to cover key crossing points, and whilst he could not decide as to which route Charles and Rupert were aiming for he was forced to maintain two such units, one defending the crossing of the river at Kingston upon Thames (the first crossing of the river to the west of London Bridge) whilst a similar force was stationed

at Brentford, which lay to the west, and closer to the Royalists. Kingston received four regiments totalling 3,000 foot under the command of Sir James Ramsay, but Ramsay was not a risk taker and he understood his orders to be the defence of Kingston above all else.

Brentford was divided into a 'New' and an 'Old' town and these were stationed on either side of the Thames, connected by a bridge. Both Kingston and Brentford were barricaded, but the forces were small and too far apart to support each other. There was another garrison stationed at Acton in order to block the Uxbridge Road, another key route into the city, but this was an unlikely route due to hostile towns north



Royalists take the bridge.



Hold the line firm men!

of the route itself. In Brentford, there were two regiments of foot, one was commanded by Denzil Holles, a colourful and key parliamentarian, one of the five Charles tried to arrest in the events that precipitated the outbreak of the Civil War, but he was not present on the morning of the 12th as he was away on parliamentary business. The second regiment was commanded by its Colonel, Robert the Lord Brooke.

The forces dedicated to this were raised by the Earl of Warwick as part of his drive to raise a defence for the capital, a move which saw seven new regiments of foot raised, as well as significant numbers of troops (reportedly over 6,000) for the soon to be famous Trained Bands. These were part of the old Elizabethan defence network, and were infamous for their lack of training, discipline and poor equipment – in general they were well known for being very poor – but not the London Trained Bands – and these contributed to the troops raised by Warwick to defend the city.

THE BATTLE

The Royalists advanced down the Great West Road towards Brentford and as they entered the town at 1000 they encountered a barricade across the road held by Holles' Regiment. Further back behind a bridge Brooke's regiment held another barricade, this one supported by two small field pieces. Rupert ordered his forces forward in an attempt to drive through the small garrison – the battle had commenced.....

RULES

This battle works well with *Pike and Shotte* or several other game systems, although players are recommended to adjust the combat values for the ECW downwards as this took place very early on in the war when equipment and training were at a premium – combats had relatively few casualties before one or the other side broke. Units should be at Company/Squadron level in order to reflect the small combats that took place in this battle. Company Commanders should have a rating of 7 if Average and adjusted accordingly depending on the rating of the commander. I would add 1 to the values for Regimental commander's equivalents. The numbers below can always be scaled down.

- Impetuous Leaders will advance unless given an order to stop them.
- Steady leaders roll twice on morale tests and can choose the result.
- Inspirational Commanders can lend a point of their command value to any other leader within their range.
- Reliable Commanders do not test for units breaking within range.
- Unreliable commanders test when any friendly unit within range tests for morale – regardless of the outcome of the friendly units test. *Note: Artillery hits do not automatically cause a morale test – the guns were of far too small a calibre.*
- Troops are roughly 50/50 Pike and Matchlock musket. There are no Firelocks.
- Cavalry are buff coated and wear breast plates. Armed with pistols and sword.



Defend the town at all costs.

- Each turn is one hour of time. Sunset is at 1800 – combat will end at this point.

THE FORCES

All infantry are effectively average unless otherwise noted, the commanders were the real difference in performances of troops – the men followed them for the most part and not the notional causes they had recently started to fight for.

Royalist

Rupert commanded two regiments of horse and one full strength regiment of foot in the initial thrust on Brentford. The foot regiment (Lunsford's) had broken and ran at Edgehill and was keen to redeem itself under the brother of its former commander. Reserves were coming up but these were regiments who had lost troops at Edgehill and through subsequent desertions. All arrive on the western board edge.

Overall commander: Prince Rupert of the Rhine (Inspirational, Excellent)

- Prince of Wales' Regiment of Horse (400 Medium Cavalry in 4 Squadrons) - Commander: Henry Clifford, 5th Earl of Cumberland (Average, Reliable)
- Lord Grandison's Regiment of Horse (400 Medium Cavalry in 4 Squadrons) - William Villiers, Second Viscount Grandison (Good, Impetuous)
- Sir Thomas Lunsford's Regiment of Foot (1,000 men in 10 companies) - Commander: Colonel Henry Lunsford (Good, Impetuous)

Reserves arriving after 14:00 under the command of the Patrick Ruthven, 1st Earl of Forth (Good)

Colonel Henry Wentworth's (Good) Brigade

- Sir Thomas Salisbury's Regiment of Foot (500 Men in 5 Companies, Grey Coats) - Colonel Sir Thomas Salisbury (Average, Unreliable)
- Lord Molyneux's Regiment of Foot (500 Men in 5 Companies, Blue Coats) - Colonel Richard Molyneux, 2nd Viscount Molyneux (Good)
- Sir Gilbert Gerard's Regiment of Foot (500 Men in 5 Companies, Red Coats) - Colonel Sir Gilbert Gerard (Average)

Colonel Richard Feilding's (Average) Brigade

- John Belasyse's Regiment of Foot (500 Men in 5 Companies, Red Coats) - Colonel Sir John Belasyse, 1st Baron Belasyse (Good)
- Earl Rivers' Regiment of Foot (500 Men in 5 Companies, Blue Coats) - Colonel John Savage, 2nd Earl Rivers (Good)
- Sir Edward Fitton's Regiment of Foot (500 Men in 5 Companies, Blue Coats) - Lieutenant-Colonel Anthony Thelwall (Average)
- Thomas Blagge's Regiment of Foot (500 Men in 5 Companies) - Lieutenant-Colonel Sir William Lower (Average)

Parliament

There was no overall commander of the Parliamentary forces. Each regiment was deployed separately and acted accordingly. Holles and Brooke were both absent and so command devolved to the officers listed below.

Denzil Holles' Regiment of Foot (1,100 men in 10 Companies, Red Coats) - Commander: Captain-Lieutenant Richard Parker (Excellent, Reliable, Inspirational). Deputy Commander: Lieutenant Colonel James Quayle (Good, Impulsive)

- 1st Company: Sergeant Major Timothy Neale (110 Men) (Average)
- 2nd Company: Captain Alan Povey (110 Men) (Good)
- 3rd Company: Captain Richard Lacey (110 Men) (Good)
- 4th Company: Captain George Hurlock (110 Men) (Poor)
- 6th Company: Captain John Francis (110 Men) (Poor)
- 7th Company: Captain William Bennett (110 Men) (Unreliable)
- 8th Company: Captain William Burles (110 Men) (Average)
- 9th Company: Captain Richard Beaton (110 Men) (Average)
- 10th Company: Captain Nathaniel Smith (110 Men) (Poor)

Lord Brooke's Regiment of Foot (480 men in 4 Companies, Purple Coats) - Commander: Captain-Lieutenant John Ashfield (Good, Reliable, Inspirational). Deputy Commander: Lieutenant Colonel Edward Peyto (Average, Reliable). Artillery Commander: Sergeant Major Walter Aylworth (Poor, Artillery Commander)

- 2nd Company: Captain John Lilburne (120 Men) (Good)
- 3rd Company: Captain Ralph Coatsforde (120 Men) (Good)
- 4th Company: Captain Scowcroft (120 Men) (Poor)
- 6th Company: Captain John Bridges (120 Men) (Average)
- Artillery Battery: One battery of two light guns

Reserves Arriving at 1500 from Northern board edge

John Hampden's Regiment of Foot (Good, 720 Men in 6 Companies, Green Coats with Yellow Linings) - Commander: Colonel John Hampden (Good, Steady)

Historical action

The Royalists pushed back Holles' regiment first from the initial barricade and then from the second barricade. As Rupert brought up new troops, Hampden's regiment appeared following its march from Uxbridge, bringing respite to Brooke's hard pressed troops and enabled the garrison to escape eastwards towards friendly forces. Royalists captured 11 colours and about 500 troops, including several leading officers. There were some impressive claims about guns captured, but the realistic outcome was they captured the two small pieces that Brooke's force used to defend the final barricade and also some old pieces at Syon House which were used to sink several barges carrying goods to London.

Holles' regiment never recovered and was disbanded shortly after the action and Brooke's regi-

Terrain

The table size will depend on the scale you are playing at. For 28mm, this will require a large table – 8' x 6'. The table should be divided into three sections. Going West to East the sections are open countryside, the outskirts of Brentford and the river crossing with the town of Brentford itself. The river Brent snakes runs down the board north to south 2/3rds of the way in from the west side. A road runs from west to east across the board, with a bridge crossing the river Brent. Crossing the river anywhere but via the bridge should be very difficult terrain.

The road into Brentford had several stone built houses as befitting an affluent trading town. There were some walled gardens and hedges lining the road. One company may occupy a building at a time only. Parliament gets two barricades. Holles first barricade extended across the road and into a field at Sir Richard Wynne's house (on the edge of the outskirts of Brentford). Wynne's house was extensively fortified in advance of the action. They also erected a second barricade in front of the bridge over the river into the Town itself. Barricades and buildings count as hard cover.

Environment

Clear and dry, no mist or fog and the weather held fine.

VICTORY

If the Royalists have driven all enemy forces from the board then they have a major victory. If Parliament still holds all of Brentford, then they have a major victory. If the board is contested then the victory points are as follows:

- Eliminated Royalist Regiment (in its entirety): 3 points
- Eliminated Parliamentary Regiment (in its entirety): 5 points
- Barricade Held (Parliament only): 2 points
- Brentford outskirts occupied: 5 points
- Brentford occupied: 7 points

ment continued in action up to his death leading the regiment in 1643, after which it was broken up and troops served in other regiments.

Rupert gave his troops free reign to sack the town and the outrage of this firmly drove the citizens of London into the Parliamentary camp. This allowed Warwick to galvanise the population into action. Some 24,000 volunteers turned out on Chelsea Field and on the 13th November this new army advanced to Turnham Green and faced down the Royalist Army. Charles lost his one true chance to seize the capital and end the war.....

As a final aside, the capture by Rupert's forces of, and the subsequent threat to execute John Lilburne lead to the Declaration of Lex Talionis restoring some modicum of humanity to the conflict.