

BATTLE OF WORCESTER CITY CENTRE TRAIL

The leaflet refers to 'Royalist' throughout. The Royalist army comprised of around 10,000 Scottish and 2,000 English troops.

OVERVIEW

The first and last battles of the English Civil Wars (the Battle of Powick Bridge on the outskirts of Worcester, 23 September 1642, and the Battle of Worcester, 3 September 1651) were fought here. Powick Bridge was a small skirmish, though it heralded greater battles to come. The Battle of Worcester in 1651 was one of the largest land battles ever fought in England; a conservative estimate of the numbers suggests the Parliamentarians outnumbered the Royalists by 28000 to 12000. The action raged over the fields and hills to the south of Worcester and culminated with street fighting in the city centre. The armies were commanded by King Charles II and Oliver Cromwell. By the end of the day over 3000 Royalists were dead and much of the remaining Royalist army taken prisoner.

The Battle of Worcester City Centre Trail is concerned with the last part of the Battle. In the late afternoon, the part of the Royalist army under the command of Charles and the Duke of Hamilton, which had been attacking Red Hill and Perry Wood, was broken and in retreat. Cromwell's men advanced towards Fort Royal where this trail begins.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information on the Battle of Worcester, visit the Battle of Worcester Partnership webpage:
www.worcester.gov.uk/index.php?id=1911
 or www.battleofworcestersociety.org.uk

From time to time The Battlefields Trust do walks of the wider battlefield. Website: www.battlefieldstrust.com

For a guided tour of the city on the Battle of Worcester, please contact Discover History. (Charges apply).
 Email: discoverhistory@aol.com
 Website: www.discover-history.co.uk
 Or visit the Tourist Information Office located next to the Guildhall.



BATTLE OF WORCESTER TIMELINE



The whole walk takes about an hour. Allow extra time for visiting the attractions etc.

This trail has been produced by the Battle of Worcester Partnership
 If you have any feedback on the trail then please email
visits@worcestercathedral.org.uk

BATTLE OF WORCESTER CITY CENTRE TRAIL

1. FORT ROYAL PARK

This is on a hill to the south-east of Wyld's Lane. When the Royalists arrived in Worcester on 22nd August 1651 they started work on re-fortifying the city. The earthworks of the existing fort on Fort Royal Hill were reconstructed and cannon positioned to protect the city.

Although the fort was in a strong position, the works were probably unfinished, and the defenders were no match for Cromwell's superior numbers who swiftly overran it and turned the cannon onto the city. The fort was slighted after the battle and the earthworks are now hard to distinguish. However there are fine views of the Malvern Hills, of Worcester city centre and the Cathedral. It is also just possible to see Perry Wood from the east side.

Over 100 years after the battle, in April 1786, two of the founding fathers of the new American state (John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, the future 2nd and 3rd Presidents) visited Fort Royal and are quoted as saying that this is 'the ground where liberty was fought for'.



2. THE COMMANDERY AND SIDBURY

Go back down to Wyld's Lane, turn left and then right into Sidbury. The Commandery is on the right, just outside the city defences.

This medieval building was the lodging place of the Duke of Hamilton (Royalist) and we therefore suppose that it served as the command post for the forces on the east side of the city during the battle. It was here that the badly wounded Duke of Hamilton was brought.

Nearby is the bridge over the canal (then the city ditch). The spot is marked by pikes on the parapet and an inscription to the right underneath. The old Sidbury Gate was a few paces beyond between the bridge and a blue plaque on the King's Head. The fighting outside Sidbury Gate was intense and the Royalist casualties severe. Charles was nearly captured but the remnant of the Royalist cavalry made a charge down through Sidbury and forced the Parliamentary infantry back long enough for Charles to get back into the city.



Opening Times

Monday-Saturday 10am-5pm, Sundays 1.30pm-5pm.
Admission charges apply.

3. KING CHARLES HOUSE

Cross City Walls Road at the traffic lights and then fork right into Friar Street continuing into New Street. These picturesque streets give some idea of what 17th century Worcester must have been like and you can imagine Charles pounding along them on a borrowed horse back to his lodgings (King Charles House). At the time the house occupied the whole of the corner of New Street and the Cornmarket but now two separate parts of the timber-framed building are left, one in New Street and one in the Cornmarket. The story goes that Charles, having changed out of his armour, left by a side door in the Cornmarket just as the Parliamentary soldiers were banging on the front door in New Street, although this is probably an exaggeration as the area was still in Royalist hands.



4. ST MARTIN'S GATE

There is a grey plaque on the right on the site of St Martin's Gate, another part of the city defences. Through this gate not only Charles but the remnants of the Royalist army escaped, although not for long as a Royalist officer tells us that "falling in pieces by bad conduct they came every mother's son in the hands of the enemy". The famous exception was Charles himself who escaped, eventually to France. ***From the Cornmarket turn right into City Walls Road and about 50 yards on the right*** are the remains of a bastion with a panel explaining the city walls.

In 1643, earthwork defences were added outside the city walls. Archaeologists have recently excavated a ditch, 9m wide and 3.7m deep, which would have formed part of an earthwork bastion protecting St Martin's Gate.



To return to Fort Royal Park, go down College Street, cross at the traffic lights into Sidbury and then left into Wyld's Lane. Fort Royal Park is on the right.

5. THE GUILDHALL

Retrace your steps to the Cornmarket, go along Mealcheapen Street and Church Street and turn left into the High Street. The Guildhall is about 200 yards on the right. The present building is 18th century, but on the same site as the medieval timber-framed Guildhall. Here Royalists held out well into the evening. The Guildhall is graced by statues of Charles I and Charles II on each side of the door. On the arch over the door is another figure whose origin is debatable, but according to an old Worcester tradition which can be traced back to at least the 19th century, there, pinned by his ears by the angry citizens of Worcester, is the head of Cromwell.

Opening Times

Monday-Saturday 9am-5pm

Admission free

The Tourist Information Centre is located to the left of the Guildhall



6. WORCESTER CATHEDRAL

Continue to the end of the High Street and the Cathedral is facing you. The Cathedral tower could claim to be the battle headquarters where Charles watched the progress of the battle and planned tactics with his commanders from the top of the tower. After the battle the Cathedral received little mercy. Prisoners were kept in the Cathedral and further damage was done to the building compounding that which had taken place earlier in the Civil Wars. The Cathedral is the burial place of the Duke of Hamilton who died of his wounds.

Opening Times

7.30am to 6pm daily.

Admission free

Cathedral Tower

The tower offers great panoramic views of the battlefield sites. Open from Easter to the end of October on Saturdays, Bank Hols and during School Summer Hols. Admission charges apply.
Website: www.worcestercathedral.co.uk

