

Siege of Gloucester
August 10th – September 5th, 1643
Notes from Gloucester Besieged.

Reasons for Gloucester being parliamentary

- Tax imposed by Charles for warships was too high
- Royalist Virginian tobacco vs local production
- Sale of FOD by Charles I to Sir John Wyntour – a Catholic

Even before Charles raised his standard in Nottingham on August 22nd, 1642, Gloucester had taken steps to prepare for war. Council set up a Committee of Defence on August 5th. The seven gates were locked from 9pm – sunrise. Ditches were dug to stop cavalry charges. Cannons were bought. King established his HQ at Oxford in Nov. 1642.

Massey had trained as an Engineer and soldier in Holland.

February 1643 Prince Rupert took Cirencester and issued summons to Gloucester to surrender. Massey defied him saying he would never surrender to a foreign prince.

March 1643 skirmishes to the west of the City not far from The Vineyard, the Bishop's Palace. Massey had fortified the remains of the palace and used his small cavalry force to keep back 2000 Welsh men. March 23rd and 24th Massey attacked with 500 infantry and cavalry as colleague Sir William Waller crossed river and came behind them from other side. Welsh refused order to escape and surrendered the next day. 1594 men marched into city and locked up for 10 days, most in St Mary de Lode, a few in Trinity church. Poor treatment – fed raw vegetables (turnips) as City already had food shortage.

Some agreed to join Parliamentary cause and were released. Rest took oath not to fight and were released to go home.

April 12th. Massey took garrison at Tewksbury.

Massey and Waller took Hereford.

Massey returns to take full charge at Gloucester.

July 26th Bristol fell to Royalists.

City defences

2 infantry regiments. 200 horses and dragoons. Total of 1500 soldiers.

40 barrels of gunpowder – weak on artillery.

Massey used the Crown Inn, Westgate street as his headquarters and the Wheat Market, near the Cross as the main guard room for 120 men.

Ammunition stored in St Mary de Crypt and 2 powder mills produced 3 barrels a week.

The Siege

Why did the Royalists think it worthwhile to besiege the city? Gloucester was the only Parliamentary garrison between Bristol and Lancashire. Control of the Severn and its crossing points would be easier without a Roundhead stronghold in

Gloucester. Iron foundries in FOD would be accessible. Customs duties from the inland port would be useful revenue for the Royalist cause.

Various skirmishes took place and siege began in earnest on August 10th

Thursday August 10th.

6000 King's cavalry and infantry faced city from Tredworth field, to north of Robinswood Hill. 2000 horse were drawn up to north side of city were quartered in Longford and Kingsholm. Forces at Llanthony Priory, St Margaret's Hospital, London Road, Barton Street, Bristol Road. Total force of 30,000.

Proclamation read out at the Tolsey. Offered pardon if they would surrender and allow installation of royal governor and moderate garrison. Allowed 2 hours to reply. Four hours later they sent response:

“We the inhabitants, magistrates, officers and soldiers within this garrison of Gloucester, unto his Majesty's gracious message return this humble answer – That we do keep this city according to our oaths and allegiance to and for the use of his Majesty and his royal posterity, and do accordingly conceive ourselves wholly bound to obey the commands of his Majesty, signified by both Houses of Parliament, and are resolved by God's help to keep this city accordingly.”

The messengers defied protocol by turning their backs on the King within 30 yards and replacing their caps with orange ribbons on them.

The garrison burnt down suburbs beyond the walls on the north, east and south sides of the city. One church, 241 houses with barns and stables. Value of property destroyed put at £28,720 in 1646. Only one house belonging to Mr Issold escaped – isolated by its garden in Barton Street. Site of former Argos building.

Friday August 11th

Royalist camp at Gaudy Green – Brunswick Square. Royalists cut water pipes between Robinswood Hill and the city and diverted the water course from Upton St Leonards to the cornmills.

Captain Lieutenant Marcus led sortie from Southgate and stole shovels and pickaxes of the besiegers. He repeated his efforts the next morning, leading his men through a door made for the purpose in a brick house along the south-east side of the wall near Rignall Stile. They crossed the moat with ladder and attacked the trenches in Gaudy Green, driving out the men and taking the weapons and tools.

The defenders lined the wall between the south and east gates with earth.

Royalist's plan of assault

- Artillery bombardment
- Digging of assault trenches
- Mining

Rupert's call for assault was rejected in favour of breaching the walls by mining, using miners from the Forest of Dean. The main attack was from the east and south-east sides of the city. Trenches were dug to try and drain the moat. Very likely that springs in the area prevented trench digging.

Rignall Stile was the centre point of the attack.

Sunday August 13th.

Besiegers moved three cannons to Gaudy Green battery. Pounded wall and brick house near Rignall stile, killing someone who put head out of window.

Monday August 14th.

Gaudy Green battery made breach in wall that was made good with woolsacks and cannon baskets.

Tuesday August 15th

Captain Lieutenant James Marcus killed in Friars Orchard.

Wednesday August 16th

Captain Crispe led 150 musketeers out of Northgate round to Friars Orchard and killed more than 100 men and wounded many. They took spades, shovels and arms and retreated without loss of life with only two wounded.

Friday August 18th

Welsh and Worcester forces united and four cannons moved to Kingsholm. At 7 am 400 musketeers went out of Northgate to tackle this threat. Inflicted heavy casualties with only two killed and four taken prisoner.

Saturday August 19th

Furious battery from besiegers cannons in Gaudy Green and Friars orchard, concentrating on wall near Rignal Stile but earthworks stood firm. Main casualty was a pig that was cooked and eaten.

Sunday August 20th

Meanwhile in London, news of the siege prompted action. Unknown to the defenders, a proclamation was read closing the shops until Gloucester was relieved. The besieged had hoped that Sir William Waller might come to relieve them, but he was in no position to do so. The Earl of Essex gathered two trained bands and three auxiliary regiments besides other forces. Total 8000 infantry and 1000 cavalry. Set off from London on 23rd and marched to Gloucester by September 8th.

Thursday August 24th

Two Royalist lawyers Mr Bell of Sandhurst and Mr Hill of Tewkesbury appeared at Northgate to try and persuade the City of the Royalist strength and the impossibility of relief. They received a resolute negative answer. Tale - King threatened to hang the 12 aldermen from the city's twelve inn signs.

Friday August 25th

Cannonade from Llanthony – one 20lb shot went through a chamber of then Crowne Inn. Significant bombardment but relatively few casualties and little damage. Rain fell at night to annoyance of Royalists in the trenches. A fire on Wainlode hill encouraged the besieged that relief was on its way.

Fireballs, grenades, hot iron bullets and stones rained down from Llanthony. Mr Comelines, the apothecary at 30 Westgate street. Had fled to England to escape religious turmoil in the Netherlands. His building was hit by red-hot cannonballs from Llanthony.

Saturday August 26th

Besiegers began filling in moat before turning to mine under the Eastgate. These efforts were hampered by springs in the area. Despite all this activity, cattle were daily taken out to the Little Mead to feed.

Sunday September 3rd

Besiegers renewed their efforts. Shot arrow into city to proclaim that Waller had forsaken them and Essex was beaten and they should surrender. The arrow was returned with a defiant answer.

Monday 4th

Royalists moved their injured away and withdrew the Cavalry. As a last resort, Dr Chillingworth's Roman-style siege engines were brought up. After the siege they were brought into the city in triumph.

Tuesday September 5th – Relief arrives

The relief force reaches Prestbury Hill in stormy weather. A fire on Wainlode Hill told of the relief force's approach.

Essex made triumphal entry to Gloucester on Thursday 7th. Found that garrison only had three barrels of powder left. Only 30-40 had been killed during the siege, most while peeping at the enemy. at least 1000 Royalists had died.

EVER REMEMBER THE FIFTH OF SEPTEMBER

Essex wrote to the Commons to send £10,000 to cover arrears due to the garrison and to supply them for the coming winter. Massey asked for 1000 foot, 2 troops of horse, 100 cases pistols, 60 carbines and pay arrears.

Commons awarded Massey £1000 for his services. £1000 was to be sent to the garrison with pay arrears and 1000 men were to be sent. Massey only got £250 in August 1644.

A CITY ASSAULTED BY MAN BUT SAVED BY GOD

Rebuilding of city was to be a slow process. Compensation for those whose houses had been burnt down was not easy to solve.

In Numbers:

Population	4,500
Garrison	1,500
Royalists	30,000
Royalist deaths	1000
Lives lost in City	30-40
Barrels of gunpowder at start of siege	40
Barrels of gunpowder at end of siege	3