

## **Siege of Gloucester Tour** **August 10<sup>th</sup> – September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1643**

### **The Tower**

- Check local/visitor make-up of party
- H&S
- Walk roughly following line of City Wall highlighting places and stories involved in 26-day siege

### **Background.**

Charles I came to throne in 1625 but Parliament was at loggerheads with the King. Charles dissolved parliament 1629 – 40 – period know as the King's Rule. Parliament recalled 1640 but by 1642, Parliament declared to be in rebellion. Charles raises standard in August 1642.

### **Why did Gloucester – a city with proud history of royal connections, take Parliaments side?**

- Opposition to ship money tax
- Tobacco production locally in Cheltenham and Winchcombe
- Clothing industry in decline and increasingly controlled by London
- Sale of Forest of Dean by Charles to Sir John Wyntour – a Catholic. Local bitterness at policy of enclosure and felling
- Religion – predominantly protestant and many puritans.

### **Why did Royalists think it worthwhile to besiege the city?**

- Strategic importance of Gloucester in controlling Severn and crossing points to Wales
- Control and routes south to north and east to west.
- Importance of access to FoD for timber and coal.

### **Time to prepare for war**

#### **At Cross**

Point out size of city. Show map

Before declaration of war, Gloucester had taken steps to prepare for war.

- Committee of Defence
- Gates locked at night
- Diches were dug
- Walls repaired with earthworks
- City acquired spades, canons, gun-powder, and other weaponry

Dec 1642 Edward Massie appointed as garrison commander. 23 years old. Trained in Netherlands. Brought 1400 – 1500 troops. Local population was about 4,500 and were required to quarter the troops.

#### **St Mary de Crypt**

Point out South gate – sealed during siege.

**Feb 1643** Prince Rupert took Cirencester and issued summons demanding Gloucester surrender. Massey refused, stating that he would never surrender to a foreign Prince.

**March 1643** Massey undertook several skirmishes with Sir William Waller, capturing >1500 men at Highnam.

**April 1643** Tewkesbury and Hereford were taken.

**July 1643** Bristol fell to the Royalists. Gloucester was isolated with Royalists to the west (FOD), the east (Oxford) and nothing north until Lancashire.

City defences: 1500 soldiers, 40 barrels gunpowder and 2 powder mills producing 3 barrels a day.

### **10<sup>th</sup> August 1643**

King Charles arrives at the head of 6000 troops based at Tredworth. King and two sons (Charles and James) were at Matson.

Royalist forces at Llanthony Priory, St Margaret's hospital, Barton Hill and Tredworth. Batteries at Kingsholm, Gaudy Green and Llanthony Priory. The city was surrounded.

Proclamation from King to surrender – 2 hours deadline for reply. 4 hours later, allegiance was pledged to the King and promise to obey commands – subject to approval of parliament.

**“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.

### **Rear of St Mary de Crypt**

Royalist plan of assault:

- Artillery bombardment
- Digging of assault trenches
- Mining

City defences:

- Refurbishment of walls
- Digging ditches to 4m
- Internal defences
- Scorched earth policy – demolition of 1 church, 241 houses with barns and stables.

Mary de Crypt was used as ammunition store

Library corner at Brunswick Road

Point out site of Gaudy Green

- Royalist bombardment focussed in this area. 3 cannons.

- Water supplies were cut off from Robinswood
- 2 children first deaths peeping over the wall

August 19<sup>th</sup>. Furious battery from cannons in Gaudy Green and Friars Orchard. The main casualty was a pig.

### **Boots Mural.**

Point out depiction of siege. The city ditches proved to be a major obstacle to the besiegers. Chillingworth developed siege engine but was unsuccessful.

'Humpty Dumpty fell in a beck,  
with all his sinews round his neck,  
forty surgeons and forty knights,  
couldn't put Humpty Dumpty to rights.'

Point out Barton area. Area cleared apart from Mr Issold's house.

East gate pummelled by cannon fire. Miners from FoD brought in to dig under the walls – not successful. Water table high; presence of springs. Rain flooded tunnels. Massey took the offensive in his defence of the city with raiding parties that successfully disrupted the Royalists plan.

### **Chambers Corner**

Show medieval wall deviation from Roman Wall. River Twyver was diverted by Royalists, cutting off power to the corn mills. Used horses instead. Fresh water supplies from Robinswood Hill were cut off. Water was taken from Severn or wells were dug. Well water often contaminated by seepage of ammonia from cesspits.

### **St John's Northgate**

Indicate location of gates – refer to map.

Massey ordered many raiding parties and the largest, 400 men, sallied out the North gate on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> August, to seize the 4 cannons that were recently installed at Kingsholm. They inflicted heavy casualties with only 2 killed and 4 taken prisoner. August 24<sup>th</sup> – 2 Royalist lawyers, Mr Bell of Sandhurst and Mr Hill of Tewkesbury, appeared at the North gate to try and persuade the city of the Royalist strength and the impossibility of relief.

Not all citizens were supporters of Parliament. A list of 104 names was drawn up of Royalist supporters. They included Thomas Price, the Wagstaffe family and Mr Snell – landlord of the New Inn – a malignant Royalist. Their allegiance was rewarded after the Restoration.

3-4 Royalist sympathisers – including the City Mace Bearer - climbed the tower and shot at Massey and his lieutenants. They missed but were easily rounded up. The leader was hanged, and the Mace Bearer had all his fingers and thumbs cut off.

### **Cathedral**

Remains of earth work bank. This was last line of defence after the medieval wall. Women and children were used in such work.

Cathedral was used as a watchtower during the siege and sustained little or no damage. Horses were stabled in the cloisters in 1645, causing damage to the stained glass. A powder mill was located in a Cathedral outbuilding.

### **St Mary de Lode**

Refer to pre-siege skirmishes. Massey and Sir William Waller out-manoeuvred 2000 Welsh Royalists at Highnam. 1594 prisoners were rounded up and held in Mary de Lode for 10 days. They were fed on a diet of turnips and cabbage tops. They were released after taking an oath not to fight. Some joined the parliamentary cause.

### **King Charles II statue.**

Originally erected in Southgate street in 1662. Removed in 18<sup>th</sup> c when Wheat market demolished. Found in garden in Chaxhill in 1945. Restored and moved to present location in 1960.

Charles dealt harshly with City.

### **The Old Crown**

Massey's headquarters. On August 25<sup>th</sup>, a 20lb cannon ball fired from Llanthony came through a window and landed on a pillow.

### **Berkeley Street**

Point out line of Roman wall. Westgate was relying largely on river for protection. Even during the siege, the women and children would take the cattle to the water meadows to graze.

### **30 Westgate street**

James Commeline – Apothecary. Fled religious persecution in Netherlands. House struck by red-hot cannon balls.

### **Back to Tower.**

Fires were lit on Wainlodes Hill on 24<sup>th</sup> that alerted the city that relief was on its way. Essex mustered an army on 25<sup>th</sup> and on 26<sup>th</sup> set out from London with 15,000 men. 4<sup>th</sup> Sept – Royalists moved their injured away from the city.

5<sup>th</sup> September – Essex marched his men down Prestbury Hill and Cavalry were removed from City.

The siege had ended.

Essex entered Gloucester on Thursday September 7<sup>th</sup>.

### **Aftermath**

This was the end of King Charles I glorious summer. He tracked Essex back to London but was defeated by him at Newbury.

Massey remained in Gloucester, continuing the skirmishes, but struggled to pay the troops. He petitioned Parliament for funds.

Parliament awarded Massey £1000 for his services. He received £250 in Aug 1644. £10,000 was requested by Essex to cover arrears. £1000 awarded top garrison.

Massey fell out with Cromwell's New Model army and changed sides, fighting for Charles II.  
He returned to Gloucester as an MP.

### **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
Number barrels made per week	3
Barrels of gunpowder at end of siege	3

Cost of war to ordinary people in human suffering was immeasurable. Bled dry with taxes, had also endured the compulsory billeting of uncouth youths in their houses, the plundering of their animals, the theft of their food, the disruption of their markets, the vandalism of their churches and the destruction of their property. One third of the people of Gloucester were homeless.