

# Battlefields Trail

Edgcote  
Cropredy  
Bridge  
Edgehill

A 20-mile walk over  
three English  
battlefields



The Battlefields Trail is a long distance footpath running 20 miles through beautiful countryside in the heart of England. The trail starts in Chipping Warden, Northamptonshire and ends in Kineton, Warwickshire. The trail links three of Britain's most important battlefields:

- Edgcote (1469) in Northamptonshire
- Cropredy Bridge (1644) in Oxfordshire
- Edgehill (1642) in Warwickshire

You can tackle the trail in three parts, or all in one go. As you visit these battlefields, you will be following the general route taken by King Charles and his entourage as they rode towards Edgehill on the morning of the battle.

Use the walk directions in conjunction with OS Landranger 151 or OS Explorer 206. The Edgcote walk is the easiest, and is fairly friendly to dogs and children (although it does include one steep climb and some stiles). The Cropredy Bridge and Edgehill routes contain many stiles and the Edgehill route in particular includes steep climbs and descents.

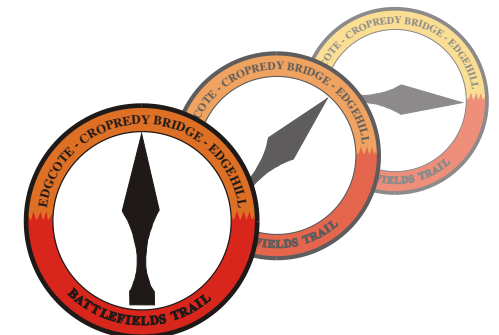
The trail is waymarked throughout, and there are information boards on the route.

This leaflet also includes details of a car route and a cycle route around the battlefields; these take in several places of interest and offer some spectacular views.

The Battlefields Trust exists to:

- save battlefields from destruction by motorways, housing developments etc.
- provide a range of battlefield-related activities and information, including the quarterly journal 'Battlefield', battlefield walks and conferences
- liaise with local and national organisations to preserve battlefields for posterity
- improve the interpretation and presentation of battlefields

For more details, and to find out how you can help, visit:  
[www.battlefieldstrust.com](http://www.battlefieldstrust.com)



The Battle of Edgcote (or Danesmoor) was fought during the Wars of the Roses in July 1469. An army commanded by the Earl of Pembroke was marching to join King Edward IV at Nottingham. Edward was threatened by a rebellion in the North led by a mysterious 'Robin of Redesdale'. Unknown to Pembroke, the rebels were marching south to join forces with the Earl of Warwick, 'the Kingmaker', a former ally of King Edward who was now plotting against him.

Pembroke encountered the rebel army at Edgcote on the 26<sup>th</sup> of July. Pembroke's army had been dangerously weakened because, supposedly after an argument the night before, the Earl of Devon had withdrawn his troops. This left Pembroke's mainly Welsh army both outnumbered and seriously short of archers.

The initial position of the rebel army is uncertain, the battlefield map overleaf shows the two most likely deployments: one the rebels advancing from Trafford Bridge, and the other the rebels advancing from Thorpe Mandeville.

Pembroke's army had occupied a strong defensive position on Edgcote Hill. Attacked by the rebel archers the Welsh were forced to move down onto Danesmoor, where they engaged the rebel army in fierce hand-to-hand fighting. When rebel reinforcements unexpectedly appeared from the direction of Culworth they were mistaken for the vanguard of Warwick's army and Pembroke's army broke and fled.

The Battle of Edgcote was a black day for Wales, 168 Welsh noblemen were killed as well as many hundreds of common soldiers. The Earl of Pembroke was captured and executed. After the battle the King himself was captured and Warwick had effective control of the Kingdom. However, just two years later Warwick was defeated and killed and Edward IV was able to re-establish his authority.

# Edgcote

Chipping Warden - Upper Wardington  
5 miles (8 km)

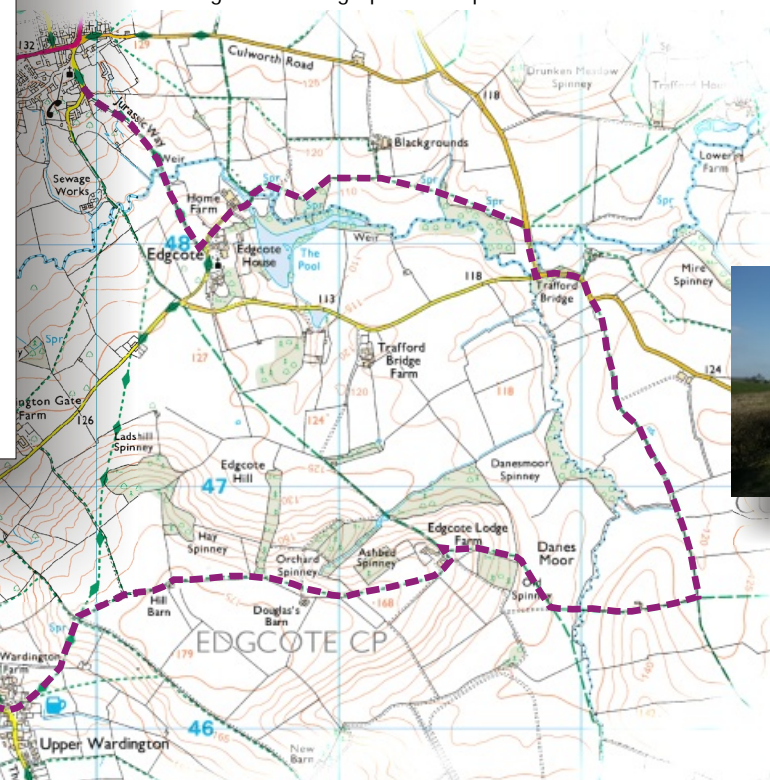
This leg of the walk starts in Mill Lane, Chipping Warden. Through the stone gateposts, follow the track to Edgcote House. Turn left along lane in front of house. Cross stone bridge and turn right onto track. Shortly afterwards follow footpath through gate on right. Cross field to next gate and follow track at wood edge. Through double gates and ahead to stile. Cross field keeping hedge to left. Cross stile and onto next stile, over footbridge. Ahead over field bearing slightly right through gateway. Through gate on right then look for stile on left onto road. Turn right. Follow lane to Trafford Bridge. Follow road round to left and after a few yards, turn right onto bridleway.

Where field boundary turns left carry straight on, crossing the stream. Cross open field diagonally, heading for bottom right hand corner of covert on opposite hillside. Pick up track to right of this covert and follow up steep hill to Edgcote Lodge Farm.

At top of hill, turn left just in front of farm buildings. Turn right to pick up footpath, keeping silos immediately to your right. Follow footpath along field boundary. When you reach barn, take track to the right (keeping barn on your left).

Follow bridleway for approximately half a mile. Look out for ruined barn on hillside on your right. Take grass track to left of hedgerow leading up the hill past this barn.

Follow track to stile, overlooking Upper Wardington. Over stile, head down hill, bearing slightly left, to gateway. At gateway cross next field diagonally, heading to metal gate to left of cottage. A narrow footpath takes you into the village.



Edgcote



Welsh Road



Start of walk





The battle was fought during the First English Civil War in June 1644. The Royalist Army was commanded by King Charles I and Parliament's by Sir William Waller.

There were approximately 9,000 men per side. Each army comprised infantry (pikemen and musketeers), dragoons (mounted infantry), cavalry and a number of cannon.

The King had lured the two Parliamentary armies of Waller and the Earl of Essex away from besieging the Royalist capital at Oxford. On the morning of the 29<sup>th</sup> of June, having been followed by Waller to Banbury, the King marched along the line of the modern A361.

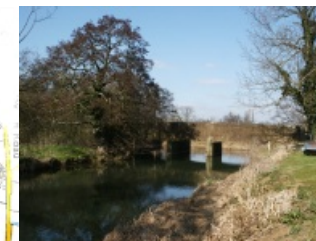
Waller marched in parallel along the line of the A423, and from across the River Cherwell saw the Royalist army becoming strung out over some 1½ miles. The Parliamentarians attacked across the river using Cropredy Bridge, Slat Mill Ford and other crossings, intending to split and annihilate the separated parts of the Royalist army.

The Earl of Northampton's brigade of Royalist cavalry threw back the 1000 Roundhead horse which had crossed at Slat Mill. Another Royalist cavalry brigade, under the Earl of Cleveland, fiercely attacked the Parliamentary force which had crossed at Cropredy Bridge. Cleveland's troopers drove them back towards the bridge and captured a significant number of their cannon.

The King's men were stopped from crossing Cropredy Bridge by the prompt action of two Parliamentary infantry regiments. The battle ended in a stalemate, with both armies facing each other across the Cherwell for the remainder of the day.

However, in the weeks that followed, a significant part of Waller's army mutinied and over half his men deserted as a result of their setback at Cropredy. This left the King free to pursue and defeat the Earl of Essex.

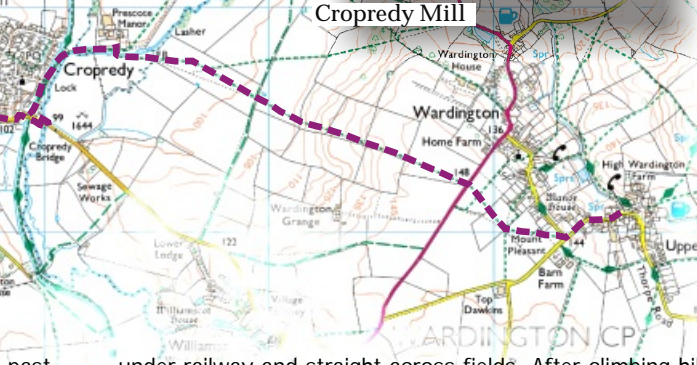
In the longer term, the defeat at Cropredy Bridge contributed to the formation by Parliament of a 'regular' force lead by professional officers. This 'New Model Army' would decide the war in Parliament's favour the following year.



Cropredy Bridge



Cropredy Mill



From Upper Warrington, head towards the main road, past the pub. Where side road joins on right take footpath opposite bus shelter into playing field (there is also a gate twenty yards to the right). Cross field diagonally, go through gap in hedge and straight on towards main road. Cross road with care to footpath opposite. Follow footpath, keeping to right of hedge when you reach it. Proceed down hill and, towards bottom of field, bear slightly right through gap in hedge and on towards copse.

Go through copse, then over field towards Cropredy (keeping church in view slightly to your left). Just after you pass Prestcote Manor, cross over the bridge on your right. Turn left and follow concrete track into the village. After crossing the canal, turn left onto lane. At T- junction turn left along main road to visit Cropredy Bridge and see the interpretation panel.

Double back and follow main road through village. Where road bends sharp left, bear right past pub. Turn left into road called 'Cup and Saucer', bear right through gate into parking area then take footpath on right immediately before entrance to recreation ground. Follow footpath

under railway and straight across fields. After climbing hill through paddock, footpath turns diagonally left across arable field to bridge. Cross bridge and turn right then follow track where it bears left across field and takes you to the road.

Turn right along road then take footpath through hedge on left, after the layby. Cross field diagonally right to gap in hedge, then carry line on to bottom left corner of next field. At bottom of hill, left across bridge then cross next field diagonally into Mollington. After stile turn right, follow road round then turn left up hill to main road.

Just after end of village take footpath on right. Follow footpath through fields and across stream. Eventually takes you up a hill to the M40. Turn right along path running next to motorway. Stay on this until you reach steps up to road bridge. Cross bridge and take footpath immediately on right. Cross field diagonally to metal bridge next to cattle pens. Over next metal bridge and cross drive leading to substation. Over next two small fields then join road leading to Warrington, turn right and follow road through village past the duckpond.

# Cropredy Bridge

Upper Warrington - Warrington  
6.4 miles (10.3 km)



# Edgehill

Warmington - Kineton  
8.6 miles (13.8 km)

Follow road up the hill out of Warmington, turn right along main road (pavement). Look for footpath on opposite side of road leading right from house drive. Follow path up hill, looking for other footpath branching off to right around foot of hill to stile. Cross next field to bridge across stream. Follow path over next four fields to Arlescote. On entering village turn right down drive then left along road. Shortly look for footpath leading left to houses, taking left fork. Through gate into meadow then take upper path to climb the hill. Turn left along fence line at the top and look for a stile leading out onto road.

Cross road with care and take footpath through metal gate to the right of the entrance to shooting range. Eventually join shooting range drive, turning right and following it until it bears left, where you carry on straight to metal gate. Follow path downhill through middle of field, then up hill to top right corner of next field. Cross stile and follow footpath into Ratley. Past church, turn left down track towards Manor Farm and take stone stile onto footpath. Follow footpath over first hill then climb the next hill towards barn. At barn cross stile and turn right along track. At end of track turn right and follow road a short way before taking footpath on left. Cross road in Edgehill and take footpath opposite next to Castle Inn down the hill to Radway. In Radway turn left past church then take second footpath on right (just after 'derestricted' sign). Follow the line of metal gates across fields. Cross road to footpath opposite, turn right through trees then follow line of metal gates to next road.

Take bridleway on opposite side of road and follow this around the perimeter of the MOD base. After crossing the railway turn left along metalled road and recross railway. When road turns right back across railway, turn left and follow bridleway along grass track. Keep to track until it eventually emerges by radio masts. Turn right along Red Road, right at end, then right again and follow road to Kineton

The Battle of Edgehill was the first major encounter of the English Civil War. The Royalist army was commanded by King Charles I and Parliament's by the Earl of Essex. There were approximately 12,000 men per side. Each army comprised infantry (pikemen and musketeers), dragoons (mounted infantry), cavalry and a number of cannon.

Continuing disagreements between King and Parliament led to a declaration of war. The Royalist army marched on London, and having out manoeuvred Essex, the King deployed on the Edgehill ridge on the morning of October 23<sup>rd</sup> 1642. The Parliamentarians occupied the ground south east of Kineton. The Royalists descended the ridge and positioned themselves in Radway fields.

After an initial artillery exchange, the Royalist cavalry wings under Prince Rupert and Lord Wilmot charged the Parliamentary horsemen opposite and drove them back. In Kineton, they attacked Essex's baggage train, but would play no further significant part in the battle.

The infantry of both armies now fought a fierce battle in the centre. Parliament's troops were pushed back initially and then held the Royalist's foot soldiers. Sir William Balfour's cavalry, supported by infantry, broke part of the Royalist left and centre and charged their artillery. The King's men were driven back towards Edgehill.

Both armies were exhausted and short of ammunition and the fighting ended as night fell. In total about 1,500 men may have been killed, with more wounded on both sides.

While some claimed that Parliament had won a tactical advantage on the field, others suggested that the battle was a strategic Royalist gain; for the next day the Earl of Essex withdrew to Warwick, leaving the Royalists free to march on London.



The Battlefield



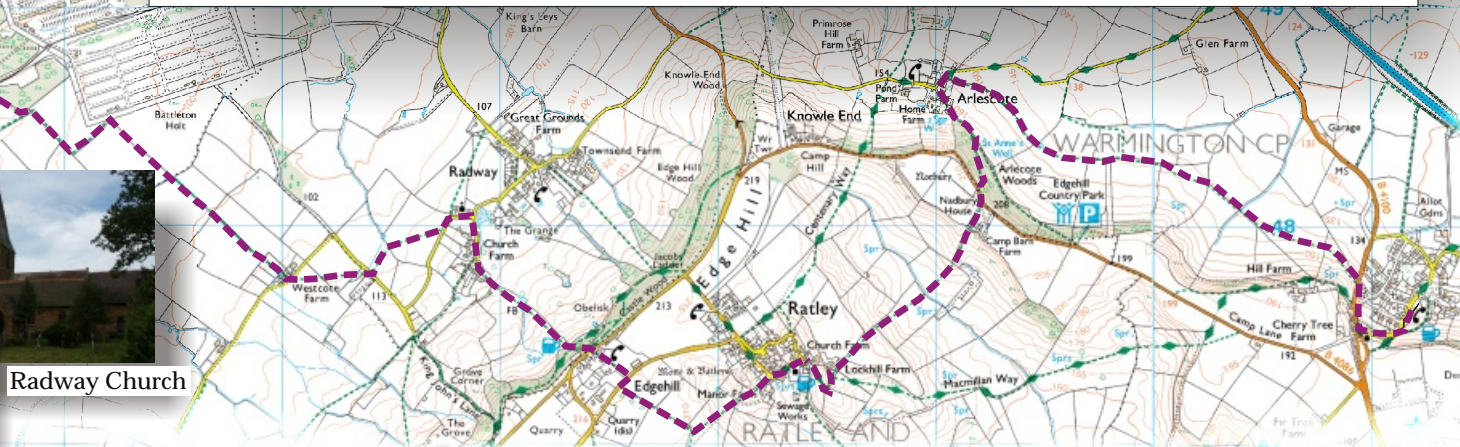
Arlescote

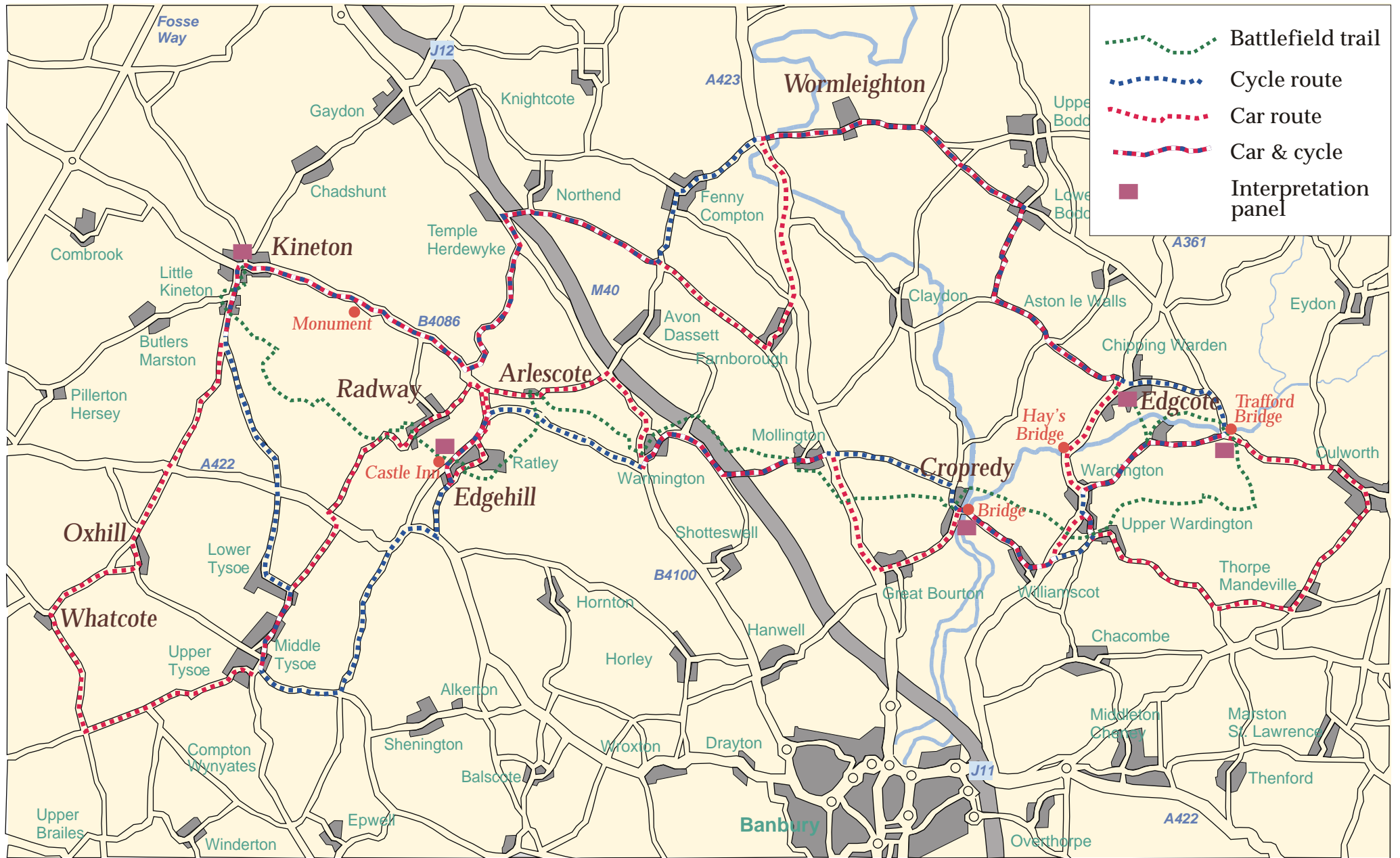


Radway Church



Edge Hill



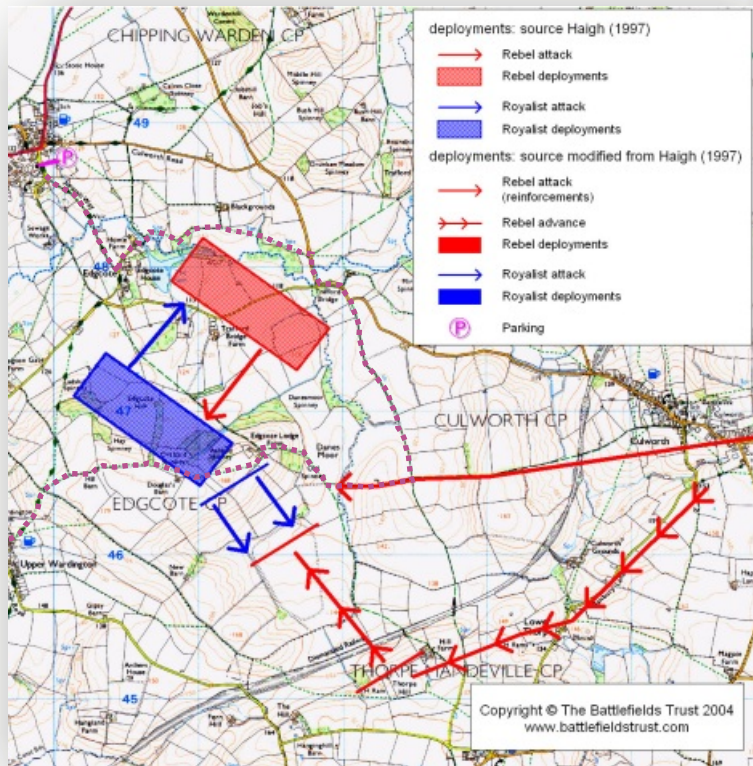


# Battle Deployments

How do we know exactly where battles took place and how forces were deployed? We rely on records of the battle written by contemporaries and the ability to relate their descriptions to the landscape as it is now. This leaves some room for interpretation and, as you will see from these battle plans, there are often competing versions of the action.

While there is general agreement on what happened at the Battle of Edgcote, there are at least two interpretations of where it happened. Surviving accounts have the action ranged around three hills, but the question is which three hills? Different answers swing the battle lines around by 90 degrees, but the Battlefields Trail takes you through the deployments for both suggested sites.

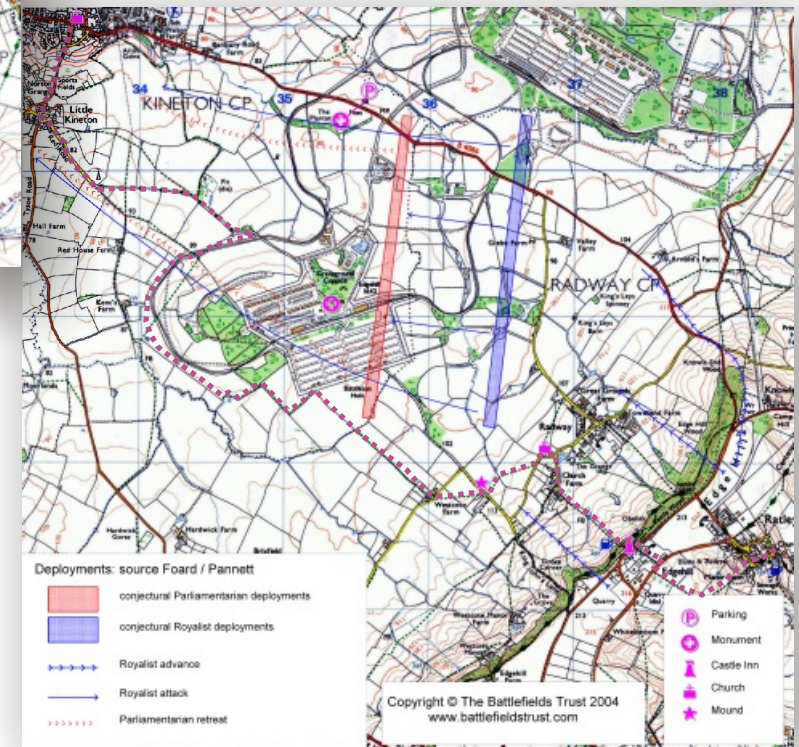
Much of the site of the Battle of Edgehill is now occupied by a Ministry of Defence base. They have recently given the Battlefields Trust access to their land to let the research team see if they can shed more light on the exact locations of the action. The detritus of war - bullets, buckles and other equipment - can help to identify where the action



1 km  
1 mile

Cropredy Bridge is a good example of how topographic features help to fix the site of a battle. We know that the two armies marched along two opposing ridges, and the points where the parliamentarians crossed the river; we know that King Charles got as far as Hay's Bridge before turning round to help his strung-out forces. Many of these features can be securely located in today's landscape.

Battlefields trail



# Places to visit

**Arlescote** - the princes supposedly stayed here on the eve of Edgehill.



**Cropredy Bridge** - Waller's dragoons crossed here and the parliamentary canons were deployed alongside. An interpretation panel on the east side explains the battle



**Kington Church** - Essex was here when he heard of the approach of the Royalist forces.

**Hays Bridge** - King Charles reached this point before turning back to help his troops fighting at Cropredy Bridge.



**Trafford Bridge** - according to one interpretation this was the river crossing fought over at the Battle of Edgcote.



**Wormleighton** - Prince Rupert made the manor house one of his battle headquarters, and rode from here to do battle at Edgehill. Parliamentarians burnt the house in 1646 and all that remains now is the gatehouse.

**Whatcote** - Parliamentarian soldiers reputedly stayed at the Royal Oak and knocked out a bread oven to give them a clear shot out.



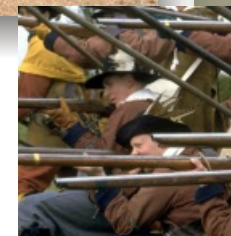
**Edgehill Monument** - the site on the B4086 overlooks the battlefield. A further monument on the battlefield itself is on MOD land and not accessible to the public, although there is an annual wreath laying there.



**Radway Church** - contains the Kingsmill Effigy. Erected by a grief-stricken mother in memory of her Royalist son killed at Edgehill, the effigy was originally in the old church. It can now be found at the base of the tower of the 'new' church.

**Oxhill Church** - has a civil war soldier's grave in the aisle.

**Castle Inn** - this distinctive pub is actually an eighteenth-century folly, but it provides a superb view of Edgehill battlefield and is also the location of the Edgehill interpretation panel.



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