

Rupert's Relief of Newark



During the Civil War, Newark was besieged by the parliamentarian army three times. This tract relates to the 2nd Siege of Newark that took place in 1644.

Newark was of strategic importance in the Civil War because two major roads, the Great North Road and the Fosse Way, crossed here. Newark connected the Royalist headquarters in Oxford with other Royalist strongholds in the North of England.

In late February 1644 the parliamentarian commanders Sir John Meldrum and Lord Willoughby advanced towards Newark with 6000 men from the local area. Meldrum stormed Muskham bridge and seized control of the marshland opposite the castle, known as The Island. He built a boat bridge across the river and set up his headquarters in a fortified burned out mansion called The Spittal. On the 8th March he made an unsuccessful attempt to storm Newark. He decided to besiege the town and starve it into submission.

Richard Byron, the governor of Newark, sent a request to Charles I for assistance. The king ordered Prince Rupert to come to Newark's rescue.

This tract describes Prince Rupert's approach to the town, the battle for the Island, the surrender of the Roundhead forces and their march away from Newark.

HIS HIGHNESS PRINCE RUPERT Raising of the Siege at Newark upon Trent, March 21 1643

Written by an eye witness to a Person of Honour

Right Honourable and my very good Lord,

His Highness Prince Rupert being at West-Chester upon Tuesday night, March the 12 received first of all his Majesties Commands to march with all speed to the relief of Newark, as then besieged by Sir John Meldrum. The Rebel Forces were supposed to be about four thousand Foot, under Five Regiments and four Colours, with well towards two thousand Horse and Dragoons. Upon these summons his Highness next morning made hast to Shrewsbury, speeding away Major Legge (our General of the Ordnance) before, to chuse so many commanded musketeers of the English of late come out of Ireland, as might well be spared out of the Garrison: these were 1000 musketeers of Colonel Broughtons and Colonel Tilliers Regiments, with 120 of Colonel Sir Fulke Hunkes; all these send down the Severne met the Prince at Bridgenorth on Friday: **of Horse his Highness took along his own Troop and Regiment, with 150 of Major General Sir John Hurries; with these Forces we drew along three small field Pieces.** At Wolverhampton next day was our little Army recruited by 100 Horse, and 200 Foot of Colonel Levefons. On Monday night had we notice at Ashby de la Zouch, of 2200 Rebels under Sir Edward Hartop, sent out by Meldrum to passe

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and bridge over the Sore, a mile from Loughborough in Leicestershire: their purpose was either to intercept General Major George Porter, or to prevent his joining with my Lord of Loughborough, for thither with four Regiments of Horse, and a thousand commanded musketeers of my Lord of Newcastle's men was M Porter now come from about Newark, to hinder the Rebels further inroads into Leicestershire; a daily slight skirmishes here passed; and had the Major Generals people been as valiant as himself, Meldrum had had occasion to chide his party for doing nothing. For not able to force the Passe, and hearing of my Lord of Loughborough's drawing out, they stole away by moon-light. Master Porter thus disengaged was the next day (being Tuesday, March the 19th, together with my Lord Loughborough's Forces), conjoined with the Prince's; **that night we all quartered in a Close by Bingham, some eight miles short of Newark: about two of the clock (the Moone then well up) our Drummers beat, and we marched:** hirtherto had our Marches been so speedy, as same itself was prevented; for by Meldrum's own Letters, which (together with these two) the Prince intercepted the night before, your Lordship may perceive **the Rebels had no more but an uncredited rumour of Prince Rupert's coming: on this**

day's march, his Highness had notice by his Espials, how the Rebels were busied all the morning in sending away their cannons, which proved no other than their drawing them off the Batteries into their chief Work at the Spittle, or Excester house, little more than a musket shot from the Towne; for into that one quarter had they that morning drawne all their Regiments and Ammunition. His Highness, having intelligence of their amassing themselves into one Body, which he supposed a preparation to Van of Horse upon the spurre, to overtake them: the rest of our Horse had order to keep along with the Foot, Cannon and Ammunition: coming near the Beacon Hill, a mile short of Newarks, we perceived some Horse of the Enemies. Who upon our approach drew down the other side to their gross;

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our thus easy gaining the Hill increased his Highness natural courage, upon his apprehension besides of having many disadvantages upon a retreating Enemy; whereupon, *Courage*, says he, *Let's charge on God's name with the Horse we have, and engage them till our Rear and Foot be marched up to us;* trooping thus to the edge of the Hill, we perceived the most of the Enemies in Battalia (Horse and Foot) near the Spittle; all I mean, except four great Bodies of Horse, who expected us at the descent of the Hill: the Prince thus ordered his own few Force; first himself and his own Troop of Life-Guard, undertook to attack that Body on the left hand, appointing my Lord Loughborough's Troop to second him, and Colonel Charles Gerard's Troop to be as a reserve: a little on my Lord's right hand the Prince his Regiment was cast out into five Divisions, two Troops to each Division: in the first and very right hand of all were Captain Gardiner and Captain Richardson and next them Captain Cob and Captain Martyn, then my Lord Grandison and Sir Thomas Dallison, next them the Troops of Sir Lewis Dives and my Lord Dillon, Major Legges and Lieutenant-Colonel O-Neil's Troop being next unto the Life-Guards: this Regiment was seconded by Major-General Porter's Regiment. Our Field word was *King and Queen* theirs *Religion*. The fight began about nine of the clock, and after a while grew sturdy, especially on our right Wing; the Rebels doubling march off suddenly, advanced their Files from three to six deep, and charged our two utmost Troops upon the Flanks so hard, that Captain Martine came timely in to help beat off the Rebels. The Prince himself having pierced deep into the Enemies, and being observed for his valour, was dangerously at once assaulted by three sturdy Rebels, whereof one fell by his Highness's own sword, a second being pistolled by M Mortaine one of his own Gentlemen: the third now ready to lay hand on the Prince's collar, had it almost chopped off by Sir William Neale: his Highness thus disengaged with a shot only in his Gautlet, with Sir Richard Crane and his own

Troop, charged quite through that Body of Rebels; pursuing them in rout home to their very works at the Spittle.

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Presently after this, his Highness's Regiment with their seconds, likewise routed the three other Bodies; four of the Troops charging even into the work, and bringing away a Captain prisoner: my Lord Loughborough also departed himself honourably, and when some of his shrunk, at the second charge himself rode back to rally and bring them up again: Major General Porter charged with bravery enough in his person, though some of his retired up the Hill in some hast and disorder. Colonel Charles Gerard (who never carried himself but gallantly) did here like himself: but by the fall of his horse, was bruised, shot in the arm and taken prisoner.

After a while both sides began to rally and make ready for a second charge; our to make the impression and theirs to receive it: and though for a good while they disputed it toughly, yet by fine force were they and all the rest driven quite out of the Field; not half of our Horse charging: for our Rear was not yet come up. Now fled the Enemy quite beyond their own Worke, Foot and cannon, at the Spittle, divers of them hasting by a Bridge of Boats over that branch of the Trent, into the Island: four other Troops, with as many Foot Captains, hasted up to Muskam Bridge upon the other side of the Island, and main stream of the River about three quarters of a mile, both from Newark and the Spittle, here being out of gunshot, they stayed till towards evening, when breaking the Bridge behind them and throwing one piece of Cannon into the Trent, they then ran home to Nottingham. In both these stiff bouts, took we five Cornets and about 90 prisoners, whereof three Captains, some Gentlemen, three Cornets, besides other Officers and two Cannoneers, one Cornet was taken by Sir Richard Byron.

And now as if a universal truce had been agreed upon, there was some three hours silence; excepting that the Enemies Canonadoes (though with very little effect) disturbed it; for the Rebels' Foot had not yet advanced; and their Horse, by this time had enough of it. As for the Prince he now staid for his Foot, and Rear of Horse, both left full two Miles behind, when our Van began to double their march to overtake the

Enemy. Anon came up our Foot, all that day commanded by Colonel Tillier: these resting themselves a while upon the Hill, the first Division, being part of those that came from Shrewsbury, were led only by the Colonel. These marched down bravely in the face of the Enemy, hooting at their Cannon. These flanked with some Horse, where wheeled to the right, by and by, into a Meadow. At their coming, the Rebels drew all their Horse and Foot within their Spittle work; whom when our men came against both sides saluted one another at too far a distance, with a short volley. But Colonel Tillier was not to stay here; as being, by his Orders to March up to the very River side, to recover the Boat-Bridge from the Enemy. But this being too well guarded, ours drew off quietly, making a stand without reach of Canon. In this time were divers more Bodies of Foot brought down into the Field, who charged up to the Enemies Works, and killed many, my Lord Loughborough being left upon the Hill for a Reserve.

Thus was the Valley bespread with our Battalions and in this posture stood the Princes Army. Sir Richard Byron Governor of Newark, likewise before this, had sent part of his Garrison (both Horse and Foot) into another ground on the South East side of the Town. And by this time had the Prince notice given him by a Prisoner, and by one of theirs that came over to us, how the Rebels were so distressed for want of Victuals, that they were not able to live there two days. Whereupon His Highness began to resolve upon other counsailes; esteeming it cheaper to block up their Trenches, then to storm them. And blockt up they were already, as being coopt up in a very narrow room, no more then the backside of the Spittle, towards the River, besides which they were on all sides surrounded by our Forces: On the South side by the Town, on the East by the Prince, and on the North by Colonel Tilliar: Into the Island on the West had the Prince sent 500 Horse, besides 200 of the Newark Troopers. Thus the late Blockers found themselves now besieged, yea without much hope of suddaine relief, or safe means to

sally for so well had the Prince ordered them, that had they sallied forwards, we had then fallen upon their first issuing out, both in Front and Flanks with our Army, and the Town had charged them upon their Reer: Had they offered to escape over their Boat-Bridge, ours in the Isle had disturbed their passing, and we entertained their coming over, yea which part soever had first divided, we had been able to beat the other. By this time too had the Prince commanded Sir Richard Bryan with his own, and Sir Gervase Eyres Horse Regiments, with 800 of Sir John Digbies Foot to advance so high into the Island as to put in betwixt the Rebels two bridges, by which interposition was all intercourse cut off, betwixt the Rebels their great body at the Spittle and those at Muskam Bridge: Upon this, those eight Colours at the Bridge retreated, as is aforesaid. Under favour of these Town forces too, was His Highness

resolved to cast up a Redoubt that night betwixt the Bridges. But going now to view the Ground, the Rebels sent out a trumpet to desire a Parlee. To make way for this, and the more to sweeten and oblige the Prince, had Sir John Meldrum, some hours before, sent home Colonel Gerard, yet upon the parole of a Soldier and a Gentlemen, to return himself a Prisoner, whenever he should be called. The Rebels having sent out to Parlee, quit their Bridge, which his Highness presently possessed by a hundred musketeers.

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For the Parlee, His Highness appointed Sir Richard Crane, Captain of his Life-Guards, with Sir William Neale Scout Master General: The Rebels sending Sir Miles Hobard, and Sir John Palgrave, into the Town. Now true though it be that the Enemies were distressed, yet might possibly be relieved. And to confess the truth, our Horses were so over matched, and our foot so beaten off Leggs, that we found ourselves less able for the present for them. In very truth too, the Rebels were more than we believed: for these reasons, and for that (as by these intercepted Letters it appears) My Lord Fairfax, and his son Sir Thomas, being both commanded by the Close Committee to march, other places might ere long have need of His presence. His Highness (at length) condescended to these Articles, which besides they be both honourable and safe, were the same (for the general) as our side had before gone out upon, when the Rebels took Lincoln. Of the Articles this (My Lord) is the Original Copy.

Articles agreed upon 22 Martii by Sir

Richard Crane and Sir William Neale, Knights, on the part of His Highness Prince Rupert: And Sir Miles Hobert, and Sir John Palgrave, on the part of Sir John Meldrum as followeth

- 1. That all Match, Bullet, Powder, Canon, and all other fire Arms belong to the Artillery be delivered.***
- 2. That all Soldiers march away with their Swords by their sides, and Colours and Drums.***
- 3. That all Officers March out without molestation, with the Arms and Horses for themselves and Servants, and Bag and Baggage, Money, and whatsoever else doth truly belong to themselves.***
- 4. That all Troopers and Dragooners March away with their Swords, Horse and Colours.***
- 5. That his Highness send a Convoy to protect us from any Injury two miles from His utmost Quarters towards Lincoln***

But Besides these Conditions, His Highness, gave by Instructions to His Commissioners, to insist upon a demand of some Prisoners before taken, which was also granted. Hereupon next morning the Rebels marched out: but for the Horsemen carrying away their Arms, and others their Pikes, with more then was conditioned, our unruly Soldiers (especially those that had been so before used at Lincoln by the Parliamentiers) taking this occasion to quarrel with the Rebels, took more from them then by the Articles they should have done. But for this were divers of them slashed by the Prince, and the Rebels Colours sent back upon them. The Rebels thus gone, we had leisure to carry off their Arms and Ammunition, consisting of betwixt three and four thousand muskets and a great quantity of Pikes and Pistols, with the Canon they left behind them: of these we found Eleven fair Brass Pieces: one a Basilisk of Hull, four yards long, shooting 32. li ball: one of their Ordnance was found at Muskam Bridge, and the Carriage of t'other. Two goodly Mortar-pieces were also left us, the least shooting 80 pound Granado, and the other twelve stone and eight pound and all their Ammunition. The number of the slain we know not, but we think they lost towards nine score or two hundred, and we about half so many slain or wounded. Thus after just three weeks siege, was Newark happily relieved. Your Honour knows the high consequence of this Service. Several particulars more, I leave to this bearer, who very commendably sustained his part in it. His Highness hath appointed a Thanksgiving for this on Sunday, by which the World may see Him to be a Devout as Valiant.

FINIS

What happened?

What does Rupert do first when he receives his orders?

Where does he stop on the way to Newark?

How does it know that it is a good time to attack the besieging Roundhead army?

What kinds of arrangements does he make in advance of the battle?

Present what happens when Prince Rupert engages in hand to hand combat. (you may wish to reenact the action?!)

Who won this battle?

What happened to the losers?

How does this work as propaganda?

How does the writer present himself as a trustworthy reporter?

How is Rupert presented in this account? Find some examples from the source to support your impressions.

Which side do you think the writer of this account is on? Find some examples from the source to support your impressions.