

## The Raid on Chinnor and the Fight at Chalgrove Field, June 17th and 18th, 1643

By JOHN STEVENSON and ANDREW CARTER

JUNE and July 1643, eight months after Edgehill, saw the Royalist armies at the height of their power, and their successes that summer surely brought Charles nearer victory than he ever came again.

In the North and Midlands, the Fairfaxes were constantly on the run from the Earl of Newcastle. In the West, Sir Ralph Hopton, recently joined by the Marquess of Hertford and Prince Maurice, was moving through Somerset to face William Waller's Western army, while the main Royalist army containing Prince Rupert's cavalry, patrolled the area round the King's headquarters at Oxford. It seemed only a matter of time before London itself would fall.

With this in mind, no doubt, the Parliamentary leaders directed their attention toward the most immediate threat to their capital. In April, Essex advanced from London with the intention of besieging Oxford, thus opening Parliament's main campaign of 1643. Reading was besieged on April 16 and surrendered on April 27,<sup>1</sup> three days after an ineffectual attempt to relieve it. But there the Parliamentary progress stuck fast. Spring rain had flooded the country around Reading, seriously impeding any manoeuvre Essex might contemplate and aggravating the camp fever (possibly typhoid), which was raging through his army in their overcrowded and insanitary quarters. Also, Essex was finding it difficult to raise from Parliament the £40,000<sup>2</sup> necessary to keep his troops provisioned and paid. Many of his men who escaped illness blessed their good fortune and deserted, and a mutiny had to be severely dealt with. Questions were being asked in London about Essex's inaction.

Eventually, the army was reinforced and Essex at last moved his forces, still torn by fever, in the direction of Oxford—'there being no other way to quiet the city'.<sup>3</sup> On June 10, he made his headquarters at Thame, barely fourteen miles from the Royalist capital, and billeted his troops in small detachments in the villages and hamlets round the town. A further increase in his numbers meant that Essex could set up an advance post at Wheatley, across the river Thame into Royalist territory and little more than a mile from the Royalist outpost at Shotover Hill.<sup>4</sup>

Essex's intention was to make his headquarters as safe from attack as he could

<sup>1</sup> Essex allowed the defenders of the garrison at Reading to march out with the honours of war and join their colours at Oxford. Clarendon points out that such good terms may mean that the Parliamentary army was already too weak to maintain a sustained siege. Cf. *Rebellion*, vii, 74.

<sup>2</sup> On 30 April, Essex himself was voted £10,000 a year by Parliament from the sequestered estates of Lord Capel. Of this he never received a penny. Essex always seems to have had difficulty in paying his army. Cf. C. H. Firth, *Cromwell's army*, 23-25.

<sup>3</sup> Clarendon, *Rebellion*, vii, 74.

<sup>4</sup> Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War*, i, 175.

and to secure Buckinghamshire for Parliament. He was no doubt mindful, too, of the way sickness and overcrowding had gone hand in hand at Reading, when he spread his men so thinly. But he also had other things in mind. Queen Henrietta Maria had arrived by sea at Bridlington in Yorkshire in February, and was now on her way to Oxford, escorted by a considerable army of northern Royalists.<sup>5</sup> She had with her also arms and artillery brought from the Continent, as well as a large treasury, and Essex wanted to be sure his forces were distributed well enough to be able to intercept her train when it arrived. The Queen apart, Essex knew that any assault on Oxford would be difficult, and wanted to be able to mobilize his troops on as broad a front as possible.

However, a large part of his force were new levies, untried in battle and hard put to look after themselves. Small detachments of them, isolated from their comrades in tiny hamlets, would be easy prey for a raiding party from Oxford. Evidently Essex thought his strategy outweighed any such risk.

Unfortunately, a certain Colonel John Hurry, a Scotsman, had just ridden into Oxford. He was an experienced soldier, who had fought in Germany and France. At the outbreak of the Civil War he had joined the Parliamentary side, and had led a troop of cavalry at Edgehill. Clarendon has no illusions about him :

Finding himself afterwards [after Edgehill] not so well regarded as he thought he had deserved (as it was no easy thing to value that people at the rate they did set upon themselves) and being without any other affection for their service than their pay inclined him to, he resolved to quit them and go to the King.<sup>6</sup>

His welcome had been secured by Ruthven, Lord Forth, Charles's Lord Lieutenant-General and Hurry's old commanding officer, but 'to give proof that he brought his whole heart with him',<sup>7</sup> he told the King the whereabouts of all the many small forces of Parliamentary troops in their still weakened state. He also brought news of £21,000 on its way from London to pay the Parliamentary army—probably all Essex could raise of the £40,000 for which he had been waiting.

Prince Rupert was immediately excited by Hurry's news and wanted to act upon it straight away. His resolve was strengthened by what happened on June 17. Essex sent a force of 2,500 horse and foot to beat up the King's out-quarters at Islip, five miles from the city. On their arrival they were astonished at the speed with which three or more regiments of cavalry had been mobilized against them<sup>8</sup> and, considering discretion the better part of valour, returned without even offering to fight.

<sup>5</sup> 'The King's army received a fair addition by the conjuncture with those forces which attended the Queen; for her majesty brought with her above two thousand foot, well armed, and one thousand horse, with six pieces of cannon and two mortars, and about one hundred waggons.' Clarendon, *Rebellion*, VII, 122.

Sanderson, *History of Charles I*, gives the Queen 3,000 foot, 30 companies of horse and dragoons, six pieces of cannon and two mortars.

<sup>6</sup> Clarendon, *Rebellion*, VII, 75.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Sir Arthur Aston was quartered at Islip, and Lieutenant-General Henry Wilmot at nearby Bletchington. Essex's force was met by the Prince of Wales's, Henry Percy's and Aston's cavalry Regiments and 150 of Lord Wentworth's dragoons 'and others'.

'The Earle of Essex having by this Alarme begun the Courtesie, his Highnesse Prince Rupert would not be long behind hand with him.'<sup>9</sup> And, indeed, this exhibition of uncertainty and nervousness prompted Rupert to make his raid immediately and 'return the visit with interest'.<sup>10</sup>

In Rupert's own words, 'The Prince desired the King (not believing that Essex would come on) to give him one thousand horse and foot to go and see Essex; and his Highness sent out a party that told him that Essex was retreating to Thame to his quarters.'<sup>11</sup>

Rupert had his way and rode out of Oxford at 4.00 p.m. the same afternoon at the head of three regiments of cavalry and a small number of dragoons and foot. He took with him his own regiment, commanded by Lt.-Colonel Daniel O'Neale, and his troop of Lifeguards, under Sir Richard Crane, as well as General Henry Percy and his regiment and the Prince of Wales's regiment under Major Thomas Daniel. In addition, there were three hundred and fifty dragoons picked from several regiments and commanded by Lord Wentworth.<sup>12</sup> Four or five hundred infantry were under the command of Colonel Henry Lunsford and the Forlorn Hope was commanded by Major Will Legge.<sup>13</sup> In all, the force numbered seventeen hundred.

Rupert seems to have made directly for Chinnor,<sup>14</sup> a small town four miles beyond Thame in the direction of London. The number of enemy troops there was worthy of his attention yet small enough to present few problems. On the way there and back, the Royalists would raid as many of the outlying billets as time or the situation allowed, and with luck they might also be able to intercept the pay waggons on their slow progress from London.

Essex had occupied the bridge at Wheatley, on the direct road to Thame and London, so Rupert's men had to cross the river at Chiselhampton, some way to the south. The river Thame provided the boundary between Royalist and Roundhead country, and having crossed the bridge into enemy territory, Rupert's small army waited for dark.

The moving of money from London meant that defences would be concentrated on the northern road, leaving the southern road through Chiselhampton

<sup>9</sup> *His Highnesse Prince Rupert's Late Beating Up etc.*, p. 2. This pamphlet, although written under the Royalist banner, is nevertheless the clearest and most objective of the four contemporary accounts of the raid. Rupert's diary records a disjointed version, in which the names of the villages are confused and which dwells less on the raid itself than the dishonour of the two Parliamentary prisoners who broke their word to Rupert. *The True Relation etc.*, is a Parliamentary account written a few days after the event. It has few details, most of which are wrong. Essex's version of the affair, in a letter to the House of Commons, agrees with *His Highnesse Prince Rupert's Late Beating Up, etc.* in most respects but lacks the detail of the Royalist pamphlet. This latter, which Firth calls 'the most detailed account of any cavalry fight during the war', is clearly the work of an eye-witness, presumably a member of Rupert's raiding force, and it is upon this that any retelling must be based. Quotations are from this pamphlet, except where otherwise stated.

<sup>10</sup> Warburton, *Memoirs of Prince Rupert*, II, 205.

<sup>11</sup> *Rupert's Diary*. The original is in the Wiltshire County Record Office at Trowbridge, but a more accessible transcription is to be found in Warburton, *Memoirs of Prince Rupert*, II, 203.

<sup>12</sup> The dragoons were picked from Wentworth's own troop, Rupert's dragoon Regiment (under Colonel John Innes), Sir Robert Howard's and Colonel Henry Washington's Regiments.

<sup>13</sup> The Forlorn Hope was made up of the Prince of Wales's Regiment, 100 other cavalry and 50 dragoons under Lieutenant Colonel George Lisle.

<sup>14</sup> The assumption, by Gardiner and others, that the pay train was the primary objective, seems a little unrealistic. Only the Royalist account mentions it at all, and then only as an aside.

hopefully less well defended. The Parliamentary leader, Colonel John Hampden,<sup>15</sup> had ridden out that night to inspect the pickets in the south,<sup>16</sup> wondering if the King might be contemplating an attack from that direction. Hampden was acutely aware of his army's dangerous position. He had lately complained of the way the outlying posts were spread so thinly and were so cut off from each other. Unsuccessfully, he had pressed to have the more remote detachments brought in, for their own safety and to strengthen the main force. Also, Hampden had tried to organize a more efficient system of communications between posts, but his advice had gone largely unheard. On the night of the 17th, he found a bed at Watlington, a village at the foot of the Chilterns.

By 1.00 a.m., Rupert had made his way back onto the London road, and his troops were marching as swiftly and silently as they could through Tetsworth. But not silently enough, for the alarm was raised and Rupert's men were saluted with pistol and carbine. Rather than waste time and possibly get no further, the Prince ordered his men to press on without returning the fire. At Postcombe<sup>17</sup> they were more fortunate. A small group of cavalry were surprised; arms, a cornet<sup>18</sup> and nine other prisoners were taken.

At dawn, the Royalists had turned off the London road and had surrounded Chinnor,<sup>19</sup> where a party of Essex's new levies were sleeping soundly,<sup>20</sup> tired and thankful at having survived the raid on Islip so easily. With the town surrounded, Rupert sent in his Forlorn Hope, under Legge, to rouse the inmates.

These all weary and new come into the Quarters, were taken sleepers in the Barnes and Houses. Diverse were kil'd as they bustled up: and others, that upon the Alarme, had already gotten themselves to their Armes. Some Captaines and Officers (as we were told) getting into a house at the Townesend, would needs there stand upon their Guard; shooting at the Prince and his company out at the windows. Upon which the house being fired by a Souldier, diverse of them running out at the backside, were there shott by our Foot and Dragoons.<sup>21</sup>

A hundred and twenty or so were taken prisoner almost before they were awake, near fifty 'wakened but to die'<sup>22</sup> and very few escaped. The Royalists took nearly all the horses and arms from the town, as well as three guidons of Sir Samuel Luke's Bedfordshire Dragoons, showing several bibles against a black background. Unfortunately, alarm was general by now throughout the Parlia-

<sup>15</sup> Hampden, like Falkland, who also died in the early stages of the war, became a subject for legend. Most accounts of his last days are based on Clough's *Narrative*, written some time after Hampden's death, and clouded by hero-worship.

<sup>16</sup> Essex, in his letter (p. 4), states that Sir Samuel Luke was with Hampden and fought with him at Chalgrove, being taken prisoner and escaping three times.

<sup>17</sup> Essex calls this village Porcham. Rupert, unfamiliar with the country, thinks it is Chinnor. Warburton refers to it as Lewknor—Postcombe being in the parish of Lewknor.

<sup>18</sup> From Colonel Herbert Morley's Sussex Regiment.

<sup>19</sup> Rupert confuses Chinnor itself with Stokenchurch, on the brow of the hills. *A True Relation etc.*, takes Rupert to Chinnor by way of Abingdon and Wallingford.

<sup>20</sup> These were 200 dragoons of Sir Samuel Luke's Bedfordshire Regiment, under Sergeant-Major Edwards. *A True Relation etc.*, adds some from Essex, putting the total number at 400.

<sup>21</sup> *His Highness Prince Rupert's Late Beating Up etc.*, 4. But Cf. *A True Relation etc.*, 2: '[The Royalists] according to their barbarous and destructive manner fired the same [the town] in divers places.' There is a local tradition at Chinnor that the town was burnt during the raid. It is understandable that the Royalist pamphleteer would want to play down anything so 'barbarous' in the behaviour of the Royalists.

<sup>22</sup> Warburton, *Memoirs of Prince Rupert*, II, 205.

mentarian quarters and the waggons of the pay train had been driven into the woods that line the side of the Chilterns above Chinnor. It was clearly time for Rupert to head for home.

The alarm had also roused John Hampden, at Watlington, and he hurried out to discover what counter measures were being taken. He sent immediately to Essex, asking for a force to try to cut off Rupert's retreat at Chiselhampton, before riding out himself with cavalry from Watlington in an attempt to delay the Royalists by harrying them until help arrived. The troops joined by Hampden were those of Major John Gunter, Captain Edward Sheffield—Lord Mulgrave's son—and Captain Richard Crosse, Hampden riding with Crosse's troop. The Quartermaster General, Colonel John Dalbier, also joined them, and the three troops of cavalry, with their two distinguished volunteer members, attacked the rear of the Royalist column as it passed near Watlington.

O'Neale and Percy, whose regiments had fallen a little behind the rest, managed to fight off the attack without much difficulty, and hurried on to where the Prince had halted his men in a cornfield near Chalgrove, almost four miles from Chiselhampton and the bridge.

It was now about 9.00 a.m., and small groups of enemy horse and dragoons were converging on Chalgrove from nearby villages. As well as those who had harried the rear of the column near Watlington, the Royalists could see several more troops of horse and dragoons riding from the direction of Thame.<sup>23</sup>

Rupert quickly formulated his plan. He sent Lunsford's infantry, with the prisoners, ahead to Chiselhampton to secure the bridge. Wentworth and the dragoons were sent after them to line the lanes between Chalgrove and the bridge. The cavalry were to retreat slowly and thus lead their pursuers into the waiting ambush. Daniel and Percy, covering the left and right respectively, would precede Rupert's Regiment and his Life Guards, protecting the rear.

By the time the orders had been given and the feigned retreat had begun, the enemy were hard on Rupert's heels. A single hedge divided the Royalists from the advancing Parliamentary forces. They could see now that the force they had to deal with consisted of at least eight cornets of horse and a hundred or so dragoons. Off to the left, where a number of trees surrounded Warpsgrove Farm, there were three cornets waiting in reserve. Two more troops were to be seen, lingering on the hill behind.

Their numbers<sup>24</sup> were pitifully unequal to those of Rupert and they were staking a lot on the hoped for arrival of reinforcements before the Royalists could get away. On the other hand, Rupert's army had been marching and fighting without rest since the previous afternoon. They and their exhausted horses contrasted with their opponents, eager to put right the insult of this scornful raid. The sight of the Royalists retreating must have given the Parliamentarians hope, and their dragoons drew up close to the hedge, with the cavalry behind them.

<sup>23</sup> These, according to Essex (p. 4), were Captain Sanders with a troop, Captain Buller with 50 volunteers, Captain Dundass with a troop of dragoons and Colonel Melves (or Mills) with a troop of dragoons.

<sup>24</sup> Three hundred, according to Essex.

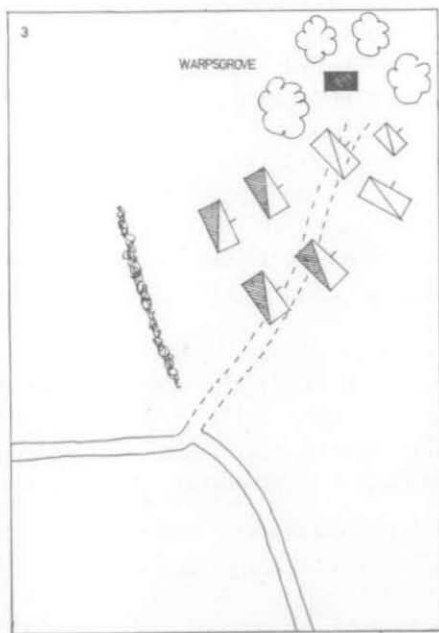
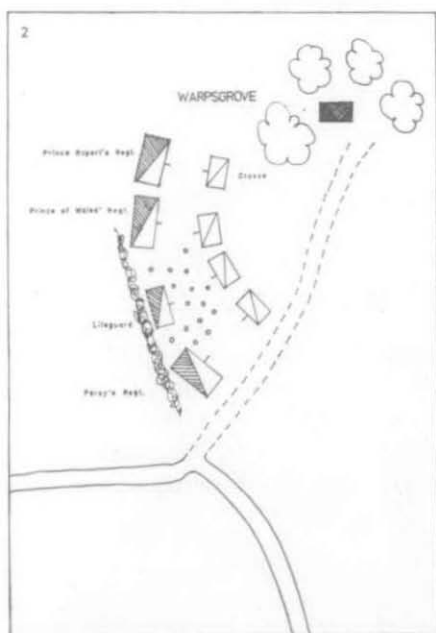
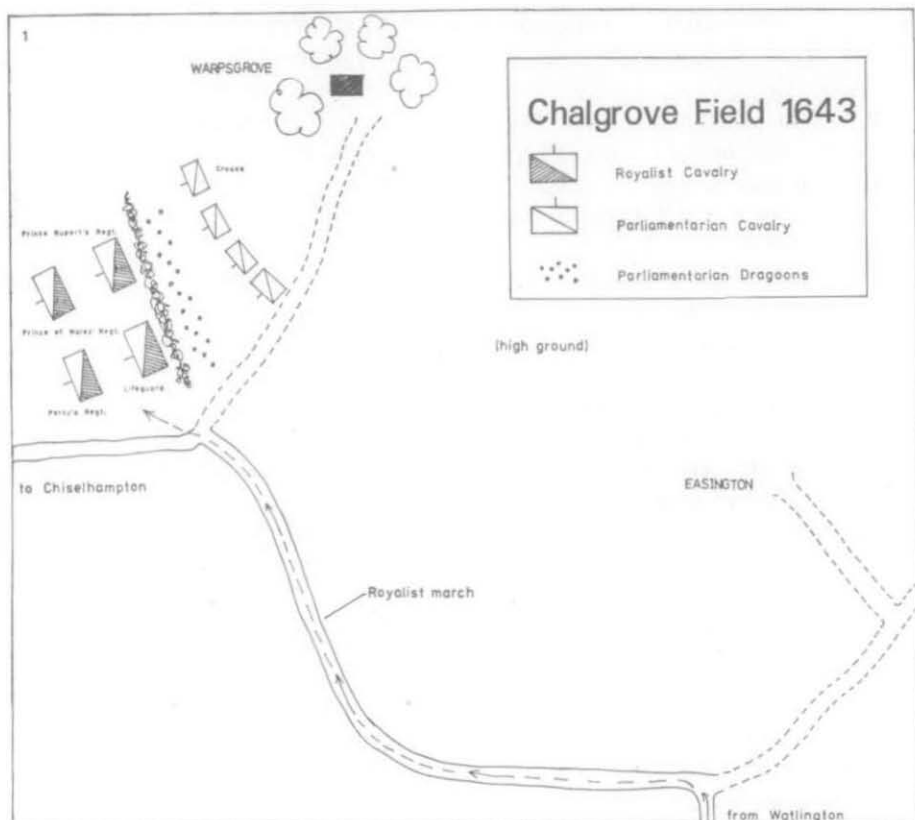


FIG. 1.

Their front was broader than could be matched by Rupert's Regiment and his Lifeguard, so he borrowed two troops from Daniel to make the numbers even.

Clearly, the enemy were far too close to be successfully ambushed in the way Rupert had planned. The rear would already be fighting them off before they reached the trap and in the confusion of the fight, Rupert's dragoons could not hope to be of much use. The Prince must already have decided to turn and make a stand, when the Parliamentary dragoons, under cover of the hedge, opened fire.

'Their insolency is not to be endured', cried Rupert, spurring his horse over the hedge into the ranks of the astonished dragoons. Fifteen or so of his Lifeguard followed him, and by the time the rest of the Royalist cavalry had made their way over or round the hedge, the enemy dragoons had fled to their companions in the middle of the field.

A more cautious commander might have waited for the other side to make a move: indeed, 'It was an axiom with some of the military writers of the period', C. H. Firth reminds us, 'that it was often better to allow the enemy to charge than to charge yourself.'<sup>25</sup> He quotes Colonel Ward's *Animadversions of War*:

When the enemy shall charge you with one of his troops, do not you rush forth to meet them, but if your ground be of advantage keep it.<sup>26</sup>

Rupert, however, shared with Cromwell the belief that it was always better to take the initiative,<sup>27</sup> even when the position seemed disadvantageous, and he never waited to be attacked. Besides, in this instance, with the alarm raised and enemy reinforcements surely on their way, time was of the essence. He ordered a charge on the left from his own Regiment under O'Neale.

The Parliamentary horse received the charge well and the Royalist account gives them due credit for it: 'they stood our first charge of pistols and swords, better then the Rebels have ever done, since their first beating at Worcester [*i.e.* Powick Bridge].' Their freshness must have helped them and, if one can believe in Hampden's legendary popularity, his presence in itself may have been an inspiration.

Nevertheless, any counter charges they could mount had not weight enough behind them to be effective and their line broke eventually, after the Prince of Wales's Regiment had been thrown in to help O'Neale. When Rupert charged from the right with his Lifeguard, strengthened with Percy's Regiment, all went down before him. Dalbier was heard to call for a retreat 'lest we are hemmed in by them'.

The small force of Roundheads had fought bravely, though. One 'daring fellow' had the boldness to challenge the Prince himself, 'and had the honour to die by his pistol'. O'Neale's act of mercy in offering quarter to another 'proper young gentleman' was greeted with such scorn by the fellow that the Royalist leader promptly slew him 'in the very act of discourtesy as well as of

<sup>25</sup> C. H. Firth, *Cromwell's Army*, 134.

<sup>26</sup> p. 281.

<sup>27</sup> C. H. Firth, *Cromwell's Army*, 141.

rebellion'. At one point, Crosse had to borrow a horse from one of his men after his own had been shot from under him.

On the Royalist side, Sergeant-Major Daniel<sup>28</sup> of the Prince of Wales's Regiment captured an enemy cornet by killing the bearer, thus restoring to his troop the right to bear a standard, a privilege they had lost, with their own colour, at Hopton Heath. Legge ('as usual')<sup>29</sup> was captured early in the encounter, but managed to escape as his captors were routed. Throughout, Colonel Hurry, the instigator of the whole affair, was seen fighting hard at the head of the Prince of Wales's Regiment against men who shortly before had been his allies. Cornered and recognized at one point, he was offered quarter, but 'he brought off himself by his sword cheaper, then they would have ransom'd him'.

In the course of the fight, three cornets of Parliamentary horse, obviously trying to save something of the day, had been seen to set off to the south as if they were going to wheel round towards Chiselhampton and try to take the bridge. O'Neale borrowed two troops from Percy's Regiment, who were on the southern flank, and made after them, 'which they perceiving, turn'd bridles about, and made haste back to their fellows'.

A sadder sight was that of Hampden, who at the height of the battle had been seen riding off the field 'with his head hanging down and resting his hands on the neck of his horse'.<sup>30</sup> Shot twice in the shoulder, he was making his way painfully towards his first wife's home at nearby Pyrton.

With their line giving way on both flanks, the Parliamentary troops withdrew to where the three reserve cornets were watching from the trees around Warpsgrove. These could do little or nothing to help stay the Royalists, who, having quickly reformed, charged the enemy once more. They pursued their fleeing adversaries for a mile or more, but no further; 'the main reason indeed was the temper and discretion of the Commanders and Souldiers, they had learn'd by Edgehill, not to pursue too farre: so that now contenting themselves to have routed the Rebels, they were seen to rallie themselves again into order handsomly and suddenly in their ground'.

It is a tribute to Rupert's skill as a commander not just that he had learnt from his earlier mistake, but that he could rally his men so easily. It was the enforcement of this kind of discipline that was to bring Cromwell success.<sup>31</sup> It is also true, of course, that the tiredness of Rupert's men reduced the momentum of their last charge, and the expected arrival of Parliamentary reinforcements would have been a strong incentive to rally swiftly for the homeward march.

And not without reason, it seems, for the retreating Roundheads were shortly met, according to Essex, by Philip Stapleton and a main force of reinforcements

<sup>28</sup> Warburton credits O'Neale with this feat.

<sup>29</sup> Warburton, *Memoirs of Prince Rupert*, II, 212. Legge had been captured and released twice by July 1643. He was caught in August 1642, and escaped that October from the Gatehouse in London. He was captured again at Lichfield, but later released. Cf. F. J. Varley, *Oxford Army List for 1642-1646*.

<sup>30</sup> Clarendon, *Rebellion*, VII, 79.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Clarendon describing the cavalry at Marston Moor: 'Though the King's troops prevailed in the charge and routed those they charged, they seldom rallied themselves again in order, nor could be brought to make a second charge the same day . . . whereas the other troops, if they prevailed or though they were beaten and routed, presently rallied again, and stood in good order till they received new orders'. *Rebellion*, IX, 41.



waiting to fall on the pursuers. He did no more than wait, however, and the Royalists did not see him on their way back, reaching Chiselhampton and safety without further incident.

Rupert, leaving Percy's Regiment and Washington's dragoons to guard the bridge for the night and patrol the surrounding country, made his camp for the night a little way from Chiselhampton. He finished the journey back the following day, arriving in Oxford at 2.00 p.m.

Hampden's ride home was not so proud. The story goes that his friend Colonel Arthur Goodwin caught up with him on his way to Pyrton and, persuading him it would not be safe there, escorted Hampden an agonizing seven miles to his house at Thame. There six days later he died of his wounds. If he had been allowed to reorganize the outer defences in his own way, the outcome of Rupert's raid might have been very different: there would have been no troops to surprise in the outlying villages and Chinnor would have been defended by more men. Better communications would have raised the alarm at Chinnor in time and would have mobilized a force more capable of tackling Rupert's army.

The number of others who died in the fight is hard to estimate. Essex claims forty-five killed on each side, while the Royalist account makes the total only a little over forty-five altogether. It adds, though, that 'to reckon up the slain by the number of burials, is no sure way of coming by the truth: for that diverse of these Brownists and Anabaptists refuse to have their souldiers buried otherwise than they Doe their horses'. It also notes scornfully that most of the enemy dead seemed to have been hit from behind.

Apart from Hampden, the important Parliamentary loss was that of Major Gunter. Captain Buller was shot in the neck, but not fatally. Among the captured were Sheffield and a Captain Berkely, both of whose behaviour aroused the indignation of Prince Rupert<sup>32</sup> and the Royalist pamphleteer. They were severely wounded and were left near the battlefield for their wounds to be dressed, 'each promising upon the word and parole of a Souldier, to become true prisoners'. In fact they broke their word and returned to their quarters the following night in a coach that had been sent for them.

Two Royalist officers of similar rank, Henry Howard, the Earl of Berkshire's son, and Captain Thomas Gardiner, had been taken after confusing some of the enemy with their own side as they were wearing similar red scarves. They were exchanged amicably for a Sergeant-Major Edwards—the haste with which they were released clearly being a tacit apology for the dishonourable conduct of Sheffield and Berkeley, although Essex would not openly admit as much.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> 'The Lord Mulgrave was here shot and taken, the Prince took his parole to be a true prisoner, and left a surgeon, but he brake his word.' *Rupert's Diary*.

<sup>33</sup> The Earl of Essex to Prince Rupert.

Sir,

Mr. Sheffield affirms he never engaged himself to be 'a true prisoner', yet since it is your Highness's desire to have Captain Gardner and Mr. Howard released, I will send them to you, they being gone to Windsor, having received your promise to set at liberty Mr. Edwards which I am sure you will perform too.

Your Highness's humble servant,

Tame, this 22nd. of June, 1643.

ESSEX.

The story of the raid, which began with Colonel Hurry, ends with him. On June 25, the day after Hampden's death, he was to lead another successful raid from Oxford, this time reaching West Wycombe. But in the meantime, the King was proud enough of the deserter to knight him for his part in the affair of Chinnor and Chalgrove, and for bringing news of the victory.

Essex's campaign had by now lost any momentum it may have had before Chalgrove. Rupert had shown his superiority in cavalry and had made nonsense of any attempt to secure Buckinghamshire for the Parliamentary cause. There was now but little hope of a successful siege, and Essex, writing in July from new headquarters on the far side of Aylesbury, underlined the helplessness of his position :

I was advised to march to Great Brickhill, as the most fit place for all purposes, the enemy's chief strength being in horse. And, this army being recruited with neither horses, arms, nor saddles, it is impossible to keep the counties from being plundered, nor to fight with them but when and where they list ; we being forced, when we move, to march with the whole army, which can be but slowly, so that the counties must suffer much wrong, and the cries of poor people are infinite.<sup>34</sup>

Insult was added to injury when the Queen arrived safely in Oxford on July 14, escorted by Rupert and, for the last leg of the journey, by the King himself. Her route had carefully kept her away from any risk of confrontation with Essex's army, but the possibility of an effectual intervention by the weakened Parliamentary force had become more and more remote. Worse still was the news that Waller had been utterly defeated at Roundway Down on the 13th, and it was not long before recriminations were being heaped on Essex's head. Waller, whose activities in the West had been the only bright spot in the Parliamentary campaign that summer, blamed Essex unfairly for not coming to his aid. The loss of Bristol on the 26th was the last straw ; Parliament's fortunes were at their lowest and Essex was in disgrace. There was nothing but hope (and precious little of that) to hint at the successful autumn campaign that followed. Instead, Essex took his bedraggled army back towards London and reported to the House of Lords :

To the Speaker

Sir,—I should not so often trouble you in your great affairs, but that I could not discharge the duty I owe, holding so great a charge as I do, but to acquaint you, that unless present order be taken for the supplying the army with money, their necessities are so great, it will be impossible for me to keep them together. For besides their former arrears, they are now three weeks without pay ; many sick men recover, but finding no money they have small comfort. I am now marching to a fresh quarter, where, if they may have pay, recruits and clothing, most of them being almost naked, and our soldiers not drawn away with new levies, I doubt not but in a short time to have a considerable army.

Sir, I am your assured friend,

ESSEX.

Uxbridge, this 6th. August, 1643.

<sup>34</sup> Letter of Essex to the Speaker of the House of Commons. Great Brickhill, 9th July, 1643.

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