

the main college garden. In the seventeenth century these continued to bring a few benefits: some control over access; security from nocturnal bands of robbers; riot control. But in military terms they were obsolete. The slow development of effective and mobile artillery across Europe from the later fifteenth century

defences, and the towns were fortified.¹⁰ In contrast, England faced no domestic military threats from the advent of the Tudors until the Civil War. The only places where the new fortifications were slowly developed were Ireland, and the Scottish borders. Without the military concern, English cities and towns avoided this burden with considerable relief.

So when civil war came, and large armies of 10-15,000 men with artillery trains started marching across England, none of the cities that they encountered had modern fortifications. But

All this sounds makeshift, and indeed it was in comparison with the massive, permanent fortification projects undertaken, often over decades, in European towns and cities. But it worked in its own terms: it deterred two exploratory attempts at a siege by Parliamentary forces. After the first in 1644, which had been threatening enough to persuade Charles to slip out of Oxford, the Parliamentary commander, Sir William Waller, had commented: 'I find Oxford much stronger fortified than when I was here last; the new works being finished and the whole north side pallisadoed' (fronted with wooden stakes).¹⁵

And the second attempt to probe Oxford's defences in May 1645, this time with troops led by Thomas Fairfax, was no more successful.

Beyond Oxford however, the military situation was turning definitively against the Royalists. In June 1645 at Naseby in Northhamptonshire a royalist army of 9,000 troops committed collective suicide against a combined Parliamentary force nearly twice their number commanded by Fairfax, Cromwell and Ireton.¹⁶ The crushing defeat at Naseby was followed by further setbacks as the royalists steadily lost control of the South-West of England, culminating in the surrender of Bristol. It became clear that a possible end-

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