

The Three Sieges of Newark

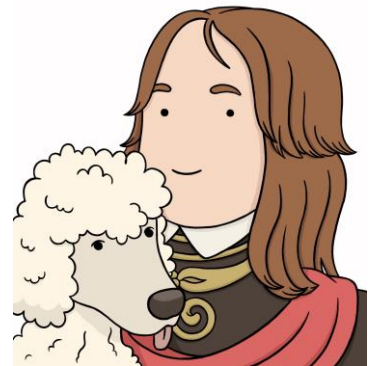
The Nottinghamshire town of Newark was besieged three times during the British Civil Wars. Read the information about the three sieges, then answer the questions overleaf.

The First Siege (27th- 28th February 1643)

Cavalier Newark was a vitally important town in Nottinghamshire during the First Civil War. Two major roads passed through it, the Great North Road and the ancient Roman road The Fosse Way. Whoever controlled Newark exerted control over the two roads. In February 1643, 6,000 Roundheads marched against Newark led by Major General Thomas Ballard. Newark's siege defences weren't very good. It should have been an easy victory for Parliament, but the Roundheads were very badly led by Thomas Ballard. The Roundhead commander placed his cannons too far away to hit Newark and seemed nervous about ordering his soldiers to attack. By contrast the defenders of Newark fought back with fanatical bravery and were extremely well led by the town's governor Sir John Henderson. The siege lasted less than two days. The Roundheads were humiliated and forced to return home.

The Second Siege of Newark (29th February -21st March 1644)

In February 1644 the Roundheads were back with an army of 7,000. Unlike the first siege, this Roundhead army were well led and knew how to fight. They had brought around ten or eleven cannons with them. At night they bombarded Newark with cannon shot and firebombs called grenados. The winter damp stopped Newark from being burned to the ground, but a Roundhead cannonball did manage to smash a hole in the spire of Newark's tallest church. The Roundheads may well have captured Newark, but the town was rescued in a surprise attack. The king's nephew, Prince Rupert of the Rhine led an army of 6,000 across the countryside to relive Newark. On 21st March, in the early hours of the morning Prince Rupert launched a cavalry charge against the startled Roundheads. After a period of intense fighting the Roundhead army surrendered.



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The Third Siege of Newark (26th November 1645 – 8th May 1646)

By the time Newark was besieged for a third time, the Cavaliers were losing the war. The king's army had been destroyed at the Battle of Naseby and many of his important cities and fortresses had been captured or had surrendered. Newark was one of the last Royalist towns capable of resisting a Roundhead army. Unlike the first siege, the town's defences (including two star-shaped forts called sconces) were incredibly strong. Newark was besieged by 17,000 soldiers made up of Roundheads from the surrounding East Midlands, London and Scottish Presbyterians called Covenanters. The siege lasted six months. The people of Newark suffered hunger, an unbelievably cold winter and an outbreak of typhus and the plague that killed around a thousand people. On the 6th May 1646, King Charles I surrendered to the Scots in the nearby town of Southwell. Two days later Newark surrendered.

Questions:

1) Why did both the Cavaliers and the Roundheads want to control Newark?

2) Which side was Newark on?

3) The First Siege of Newark

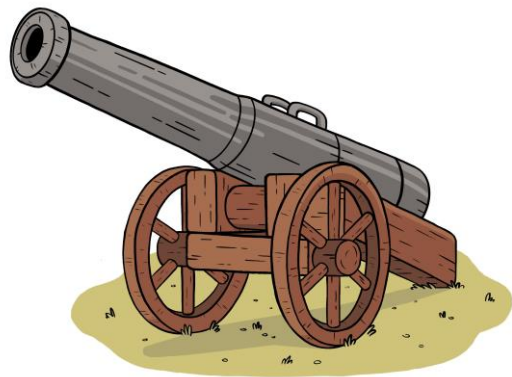
- a) When did it take place?
- b) How long did it last?
- c) Who won and why?

4) The Second Siege of Newark

- a) When did it take place?
- b) How long did it last?
- c) Who won and why?

5) The Third Siege of Newark

- a) When did it take place?
- b) How long did it last?
- c) Who won and why?



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