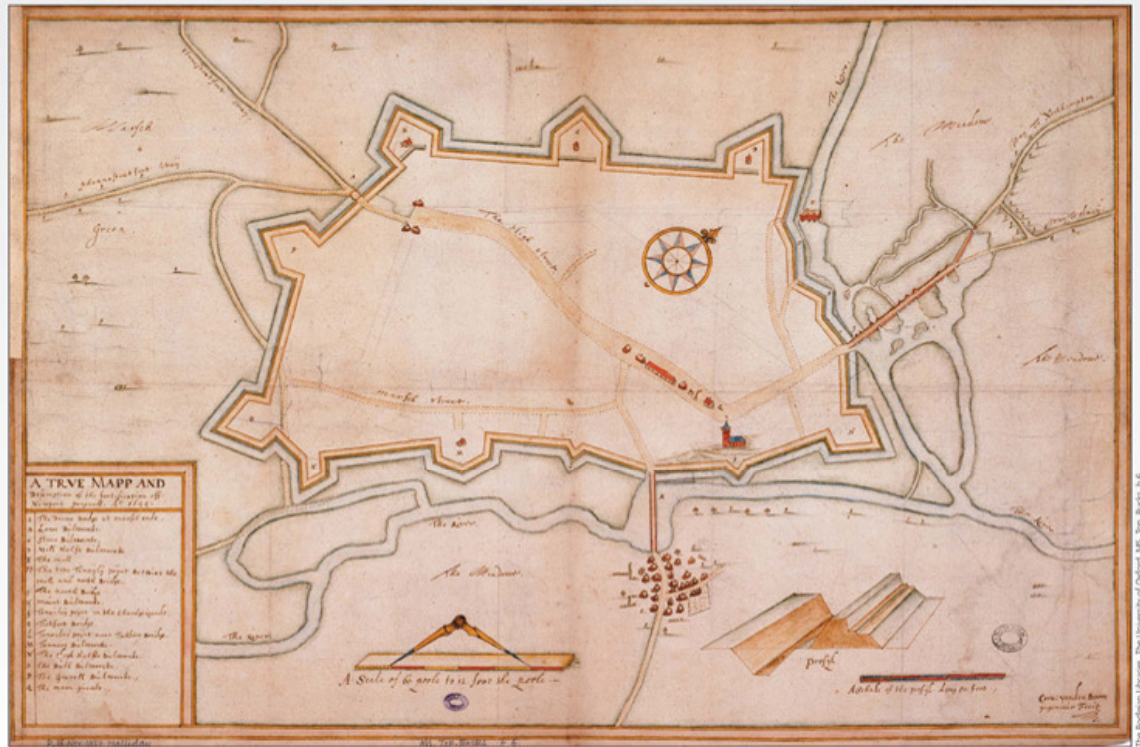


# EARTHWORKS ARE QUICKER THAN STONE

The Garrison fortifications by Van den Boom, 1644 showing the ramparts designed by Cornelius Van den Boom. Probably the earliest map of the town it shows many of the town's features of the period.



Bury Field earthwork section is all that remains of the original ramparts, 2012.



The 'Battery' in the church cemetery overlooks the point where the Rivers Lovat and Ouse meet, 2012.



With the Royal Court at Oxford, the military strategy of the King and his nephew, Prince Rupert, was to operate out of pockets from country houses and the estates of loyal supporters. In comparison the Roundheads took the approach of creating a series of fortified garrisons along a 'front line'.

Such was the importance of Newport Pagnell that in 1643 Parliament ordered the building of a garrison to be strongly fortified, manned by 1200 foot soldiers and 300 horse, costs kept within a budget of £4000 per month (approx £6m in today's terms), and the Governor given powers to force 'the richer sort of inhabitants' to buy weapons for the poorer in times of need.

Designed by Cornelius Van den Boom, a Dutch engineer, a series of earthworks of 3metre deep

ditches and 3metre high embankments with bulwarks were constructed around the town and completed in 1644. Earthwork barriers were quicker to erect than stone or flint walls, but were labour intensive, more than 3000 men and hundreds of horse-drawn carts and wagons were used in the construction and its continuing repairs. Naturally protected by the converging Rivers Ouse and Lovat, a series of river sluice gates were installed that once opened would flood the land and surround the town entirely by water in the event of an attack.

Despite the substantial nature of the defences little survives today – an earthwork ditch in a now protected scheduled ancient monument site at Bury Field and a bulwark mound in the cemetery of St Peter and St Paul Church, known as 'The Battery', believed to have been a gun emplacement.

