

# THE GARRISON



**Sir Samuel Luke, 1603-1670**

MP for Bedford and Governor of the Garrison, an administrator and military commander who employed his own Troop of Horse and Regiment of Foot at the Garrison where he served until June 1644.



18th century illustration of the High Street depicting the Governor's military and civilian headquarters at the Saracen's Head next to the Swan Inn (now known as the Swan Revived).



Troops marching through the town, part of the Sealed Knot re-enactment festivities held in the town in 1980.

The town population (around 2000) increased dramatically with the arrival of 1500 troops, officers and their camp followers. Existing within the ramparts were homes, shops, market stalls, the shambles (a 'tented' covered shopping area), a hydraulic water pump and reservoir (built by Dutch engineers), a hospital, church, stables, stocks, a gaol and a prodigious number of taverns.

A major attack was never launched upon the Garrison; its vital role was as part of the Parliamentary defences, supplying troops and armaments to regional attacks and battles. It was also regarded as an important intelligence gathering centre under the Governor, Sir Samuel Luke.

Soldiers were billeted in the town and in a hastily built barracks in the High Street that soon collapsed. Many were encamped outside the ramparts at Castle Meadow below the Church. Outposts were established at local villages; a large body of troops and a prisoner stockade was sited at Lathbury. Oliver

Cromwell's second son, Oliver Jnr. a young officer of 20, was billeted at the Sherington encampment where, reportedly, he later died of 'camp fever' (probably small pox or typhus).

Engaged in the capture of the town, Sir Samuel Luke, Governor of the Garrison for 18 months from 1644, established his headquarters in the best hostelry 'The Saracen's Head'. He had both military and civilian responsibilities including collecting taxes to maintain the garrison.

*"I understand you have billeted some foot soldiers on me and my tenants at Linford, and am informed by letters that I have 22 of them in my own house. It is not unknown to you that myself and our country have paid our contributions constantly to your garrison. .... Do me the favour to remove your soldiers from my town."*

Letter from Sir Richard Napier (Royalist sympathiser), to Sir Samuel Luke, April 1645

