

OLNEY AND GRAFTON



The east side of the pre 1894 old 'Duchy' bridge at Olney.



The Sealed Knot, English Civil War re-enactors at Riverside Meadow, Newport Pagnell, 1980.



Prince Rupert, 1619 -1682

Appointed Commander of the Cavalry at 23; Rupert's achievements early in the war earned him a fearsome reputation amongst opposing Roundheads, many believing he had supernatural powers.

Battle of Olney Bridge, 1643

Prince Rupert marched on Olney, intending to continue on to recapture Newport Pagnell. The Royalist troops took the Olney forces by surprise and the Parliamentarians retreated to the bridge where they made a stand. The Royalists could have won decisively, had it not been for a rumour that Cromwell's reinforcements were seen coming from Newport, but they retreated and the battle was over.

Conflicting reports from both sides gave different casualty figures but 40 Cavalier prisoners were imprisoned at Lathbury.

Major-General Philip Skippon, 1600 -1660

Led the siege on Grafton Regis, he was also responsible for capturing Newport Pagnell with his troop of orange and green uniformed Roundheads marching up from London along Watling Street.

In 1651, Skippon bought several estates in Bletchley and Milton Keynes that had been sequestered from Royalists, becoming a wealthy man when he later sold them on.



The Siege at Grafton Regis, 1643

Grafton Regis, one of the largest and best fortified Royalist houses in the area, had royal connections dating back to Elizabeth Woodville's marriage in 1464 to King Edward IV, and as a former hunting estate for Tudor royalty. In addition, the son of Sir Everard Digby of Gayhurst (one of the convicted Gunpowder plotters who attempted to blow up Parliament), Sir John Digby was in-charge at Grafton with a force of 200 musketeers and 80 troopers.

Major-General Philip Skippon in-charge of the Newport garrison led the attack with a large contingent of cavalry, 1000 troop soldiers, four siege guns and supporting troops sent from Northampton. The Crane family and troops at the Manor held out for two days until a cache of munitions was hit, exploding in the house killing one man and seriously wounding nine others. Digby surrendered on the third day (Christmas Eve) of the Siege. Prisoners were taken to the gaol at Lathbury, Digby was sent on to the Tower of London. The house was looted and burnt to the ground.

