

Metal detectors and roads have harmed civil war fields says watchdog

# Battle trust criticises 'lack of care' for site

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Chronicle Reporter

**A HISTORIC Northamptonshire battlefield which became the birthplace of British democracy is being left to the mercy of road planners and amateur metal detectors, a heritage charity has warned.**

Naseby Battlefield was the site of the decisive battle of the English Civil War in 1645, leading to the execution of Charles I and the start of parliamentary democracy.

Though the site is considered to be in the national top five in terms of historical importance, the fields of battle have been cut in half by the A14 and left bare apart from two stone monuments, says the Battlefields Trust. And the trust also warns that the site could be losing vital clues to the course of the conflict through visitors with metal detectors removing valuable artefacts.

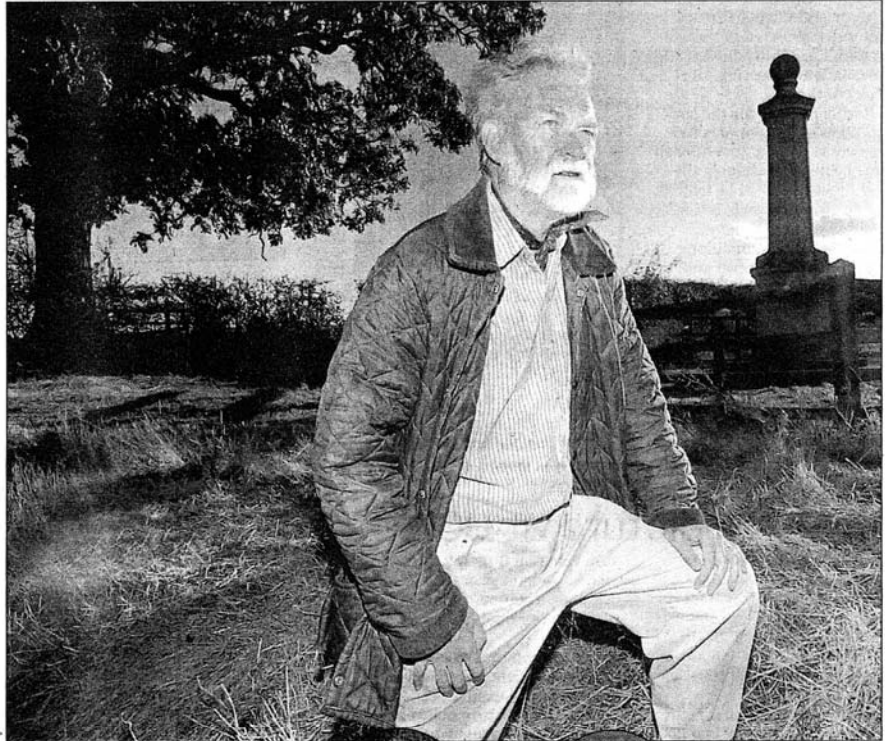
Martin Marx Evans, a trust member leading a project to build two viewing platforms at the site, said: "This is where British democracy was born. It is the foundation of our modern system of government and the fact that no-one seems to care very much is wildly frustrating.

"Nothing has been done on the site since the 1930s, and the Cromwell memorial, if you stand in front of it, actually has you facing away from where the main battle took place."

Glenn Foard, an archaeologist who published a book on the battle in 1995, said: "Naseby is one of Britain's most important heritage sites, not just battlefield sites. It deserves much better on-site interpretation than it has at the moment. We would like to see a visitors' centre of some sort, as has been done by Leicestershire County Council at Bosworth, and the county council here should look at it, not only for heritage reasons but for tourist purposes.

"The sites that have visitor centres, such as Bosworth and Hastings, attract visitors in their hundreds of thousands."

He added: "We need to do more systematic work than we have been



■ Martin Marx Evans at the site

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doing. That is why we are concerned that people do not just come and take artefacts off sites without understanding what they are doing. We want to see them protected until proper archaeological surveys can be done."

He said Northamptonshire County Council should be more proactive about pushing projects at Naseby.

A council spokesman said: "We support any proposals that would improve the experience of visitors to the site. In an ideal world we would love to be more proactive in promoting the site but the reality is that our role is limited and we are involved in an advisory capacity."



■ The armles of Oliver Cromwell (left) and King Charles I clashed at the Battle of Naseby in 1645

## Saddle-height view platforms bid

VIEWING platforms proposed at the historic Naseby battlefield would see visitors being lifted to take in a 'commander's eye view' of the landscape which hosted the English Civil War's decisive battle.

The aim is to recreate the experience of Prince Rupert, leader of the Royalist troops, as he gathered his forces in preparation for the day which led to the downfall of Charles I.

The Battlefields Trust, which is due to put in planning applications for the two viewing points this month, hopes to renew interest in Naseby with the scheme.

Martin Marx Evans, chairman of the Naseby Working Party at the trust, said: "We are preparing planning applications for two viewing points, one at

East Farndon where Prince Rupert drew up his troops, and one on Clipston Road, where Fairfax and Cromwell got their first sight of the Royalist forces.

"The viewing platforms will come in two levels, one for adults and one for children or people in wheelchairs, and will lift viewers to a height of 30 inches above the ground.

"This is the height of a mounted horseman, and from there they will be able to view the scene as Prince Rupert would have seen it from the back of his horse. It is a commander's eye view."

He said existing monuments on the site from the early part of the 20th century acted as memorials to the battle rather than working with the landscape itself.

"These days we are much more inter-

ested in the way in which battles were fought tactically and the effect of terrain on the battlefield," he added.

"At Naseby, Cromwell and Fairfax could see the Royalist troops from their position while the Royalists couldn't see the Parliamentarian army at all.

"The result was that Prince Rupert moved from a good defensive position in East Farndon to an attacking position on Dust Hill and that was how the battle was lost.

"Prince Rupert was doing the best he could in very difficult circumstances."

The planning application, which includes information boards beside the platforms and lay-bys for coaches to pull into, will be considered by Daventry District Council. The project if passed is likely to cost a total of £40,000.