

**Naseby Day Conference at Kelmarsh Hall, 29 June 2008
Organised by Dr Andrew Hopper and Martin Marix Evans
Centre for English Local History, University of Leicester**

The critical importance of the battle of Naseby was underlined by a recent University of Leicester conference held at Kelmarsh Hall, Northamptonshire, just two miles from the battlefield. Proceedings were attended by 70 delegates from a wide range of backgrounds, including academic historians, archaeologists, archivists, librarians, education officers, re-enactors and amateur historians. There were three presentations in the morning reflecting a variety of new inter-disciplinary approaches to the battle, then luncheon, followed by a very successful battlefield coach tour, afternoon tea and closing lecture.



Left to right: Martin Marix Evans, Prof. Martyn Bennett, Prof. Ian Gentles, Dr. Andrew Hopper, Dr Jason Peacey, Dr Glenn Foard

Professor Martyn Bennett of Nottingham Trent University opened proceedings with an insightful paper entitled ‘ “...None are to share with Him”: Cromwell, Naseby and God’. This used Oliver Cromwell’s letters and speeches to demonstrate that Naseby was a key turning point for Cromwell’s confidence in interpreting providence, assuring him of God’s blessing, and committing him to the divisive cause of liberty of conscience. Dr Jason Peacey of University College London followed with an excellent paper entitled, ‘Opening the King’s Cabinet: Propaganda and Public Opinion after Naseby’. This paper discussed how Parliament’s seizure of the King’s correspondence during the battle and its selective publication thereafter raised the stakes in the propaganda war, making a negotiated peace less likely and contributing heavily to the ongoing process of desacralisation of Charles I’s majesty that eventually made his execution possible.

Dr Glenn Foard of the Battlefields Trust then delivered a richly illustrated talk, entitled ‘Recent Advances in Battlefield Archaeology: the Implications for Naseby’. Dr Foard used his experience of new methodologies in Europe and America to explain the future studies needed for Naseby. He stressed that because Naseby is so comparatively unspoilt, piecing together evidence from documents, landscape and archaeology at Naseby would provide a model of how early modern battles were fought that could be applied elsewhere. Naseby is therefore vital. It is the key to unlock new evidence relevant across European

battlefields, in explaining how the development of firepower subsequently allowed Europe to dominate much of the world.

The battlefield tour was led by Martin Marix Evans, the Chairman of the Naseby Battlefield Project. The tour integrated the landscape into the evidence from the written sources and showcased the recent work of the Naseby Project in improving rights of way, installing platforms at Rupert, Fairfax and Cromwell's viewpoints, and planning a new visitors' centre.

The closing lecture was delivered by Professor Ian Gentles of Tyndale University College, Toronto, entitled 'The Legacy of Naseby'. Professor Gentles examined the short, medium and long-term political and military consequences of Naseby, concluding it was a mighty blow for liberty of conscience, a milestone on the road to republicanism, and the foundation for the fiscal military state that emerged in the 1690s that made possible Britain's rise to world power status.



Kelmarsh Hall was an excellent venue; its conference support and catering were absolutely first rate. Grateful thanks are due to the members of the Naseby Battlefield Project for helping with the exhibitions, displays and tour, while the generosity of Kelmarsh Hall and its staff headed by Lesley Denton and Carole Jones helped to make the whole event possible.

The conference was the next step in building a collaborative partnership between the University of Leicester, the Naseby Project and the Battlefields Trust, with the aim of developing future funding bids for the academic study of the battle and related issues.