

1 This walk begins from the car park of the Hinton Arms public house. The landscape of hedgerows, lanes, and woods has hardly changed since the day of the battle. As you leave the car park turn right, taking care as you follow the path along the side of the A272. It is barely light on the morning of 29 March 1644, the eve of battle. A thick mist lingers in the valley bottom and clings to the slopes of the ridge of high ground on your right. Leaving Cheriton to its fate, you walk on.

2 At this point on the road, as the light improves, you are greeted by an awesome site. Looming out of the mist, in the fields on your right, is the Parliamentary force, 10,000 strong. It is so close you can smell the horses and hear the shouts of command. To the rear are the cannon, in the centre the main body of troops, pikemen and musketeers, flanked to left and right by cavalry. Just past the bus stop on your left, you turn north, away from the main road. You are attempting to clear the Parliamentary lines, but time is running out. Will this route lead you to safety or leave you in no man's land between two opposing armies?

3 You have been walking up a gentle incline, the north side of a shallow valley, but before you reach the crest of the ridge stop at the crossroads. Through the morning mist you begin to make out the distinctive sounds of troops and cavalry preparing for battle. This is the Royalist force of 7,000 and they are directly ahead of you, although it is impossible to say how far. At the crossroads you turn right, along Cheriton Lane and try to exit the battlefield, but it may already be too late.

4 As you reach the end of the lane you hear the sound of musket shots, mingled with shouts and cries, some distance away on your left. The battle has begun. Now curiosity gets the better of you, you must have a closer look. This is your chance to see history in the making. You turn north, off Cheriton Lane, along a short stretch of track joining Alresford Lane. Follow this route to the edge of Cheriton Wood.

10 You turn right, seeking shelter down the sunken hollow of Cheriton Lane as the battle rages in the fields above. When it is safe you walk back along the lane and turn right towards the road. The wreckage of battle litters the fields. As many as 500 may have died with many more wounded. The Royalists have been forced back to their original position from where Hopton will make an ordered retreat to Basing House, sacking Alresford on his way. Our story of the battle is now over and your journey through it almost at an end. Returning to the A272, turn left back to the Hinton Arms.

9 The terrain only allows the cavalry to advance in small groups down two lanes. You follow one group as it makes its way down the lane towards Cheriton. Parliamentary troopers are deployed and waiting for them. Outnumbered and hemmed in by the deep sunken lanes, they are beaten back. Now Waller makes his move. Looping round both flanks of the Royalist force, his infantry advance, every ditch and hedgerow is contested as the Royalists begin to give ground.

8 As you reach the ridge turn right, along the rear of the Royalist lines. Bard's action has resulted in increasing numbers of Royalist troops being committed to the attack. Losing the advantage of the high ground, they engage with the advancing Parliamentary musketeers. Fierce fighting has broken out all along the line. With one last roll of the die the Royalists send in their cavalry.

7 At this point you turn left, off the road, along the footpath. You can clearly hear the sound of battle as you approach the ridge, a position the Royalist commanders were content to hold. But one of their officers, Sir Henry Bard, has rashly led his infantry in an attack. Surprised by Parliamentary cavalry, his men are being cut to pieces.

6 After you reach the end of the lane, continue on a short distance along the road which will then bear right taking you to a T junction and the site of a memorial commemorating the troops from both sides who lost their lives during the battle. This high ground, occupied by the Royalist force, offers the best view of the battlefield. Cheriton Wood, now in Royalist hands, can be seen on the left although the main Parliamentary army is obscured by East Down in the middle distance. Hopton now takes the decision to move his troops forward onto this ridge. You decide to follow. Re-trace your steps along the road to the junction with Alresford Lane, and continue along the road as it bears right onto Badshear Lane.

5 During the night the Parliamentary commander, William Waller, positioned a mixed force of cannon, cavalry and musket in the wood in an attempt to outflank the Royalist line. Ralph Hopton, the Royalist commander, quickly moved to counter the threat, sending a force of 1,000 musketeers to take the wood. The sound of fighting is getting closer. Several riderless horses come careering out of the trees, with the remaining Parliamentary troops close behind. Hopton's musketeers, now using their muskets as clubs, have routed Waller's inexperienced London Brigade who are now in full retreat back to the safety of their own lines, and you are in their way! You decide to continue along Alresford Lane, at a reasonable pace, to the relative safety of the Royalist position. After all, they do appear to be winning.

