

FORT
ROYAL
LODGE

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THE FORT ROYAL.

When we remember the meaning of the name of WORCESTER - the fortified camp in the Forest of Wyre - we can well expect to find traces of trenches and earthworks in its vicinity.

Of these the most important historically is that named "The Fort Royal". No record exists as to the date of its original use as a fortification though possibly it was one of the two "forts" raised by King Stephen in 1150 to command the Castle which was then held by Waleran, ^{Earl} King of Mellent.

In the Civil Wars of the Stuarts most of the hills around the City, Rainbow, Henwick, Red and Green Hills, Perry Wood, and Barnshall were occupied either by the Royal or Parliamentary Forces but, of them all, the Fort Royal has the most significance. From this hill in 1642 the Earl of Essex opened the first attack on the City. In 1643 Waller again attacked the City from the ridge of which this Fort forms a projecting part. In 1646 in Rainsborough's siege, the batteries fired on the Castle and City over the hill.

On August 22nd. 1650 Charles the Second, after a march of over three weeks from Stirling, arrived at Worcester and captured, after a brief struggle, the City from the Parliamentarians under Col. James. He decided to hold the City as his base and feverish efforts were made to repair the damaged fortifications.

We read in Sir Nicholas Lechmere's Diary that the City "in a few days was fortified beyond imagination." The King gave instructions for the perfecting of a star shaped fort on the hill to the South East of the Sidbury Gate. Great labour was bestowed upon it by the Royal Engineers and the King permitted it to be named the "FORT ROYAL". It is not definitely known to what extent the fort consisted of anything other than an earth-work with ramparts and bastions, but, when the excavations were made for the foundations of the house on the site of the Fort portions of a subterranean passage and dagout were discovered. The possession of this fort was essential as, by it, the whole of the City could be dominated even with the poor artillery of the times. Indeed after its fall when Cromwell turned its guns on the City a round shot was fired from it into the Mayor's house, at St. Martin's Gate on the Northern Boundary.

On August 29th Cromwell appeared before Worcester. He himself was quartered at Judge Berkeley's house at Spetchley but his troops occupied Red Hill nearly within musket shot of the Fort. An enemy battery was posted in Ferry Wood.

Fort Royal thus stood between Cromwell and the City he coveted. Fire was soon opened on the City and it is stated "did good execution". The Fort replied "as if" the report states "they feared never to want powder or bullets".

On September the third the King and his Council, viewing the position of the forces from the Cathedral roof, decided to attack the enemy on Red Hill and Perry Wood since he had been weakened by the loss of detachments which Cromwell had sent to force passages of the River at Upton and Powick and to the West of the City.

Under cover of the guns at Fort Royal the King's Forces, making a sortie from the Sidbury Gate, impetuously drove back the enemy on Red Hill and actually captured the battery in Perry Wood. They were advancing to a second assault when Cromwell arriving with fresh troops, held up the attack and in turn drove back his assailants. Terrible havoc was wrought in the King's ranks. The struggle lasted for hours. The Royal troops fought doggedly, falling back step by step, using the butt ends of their muskets when their ammunition failed. They were forced in great disorder back through the Sidbury Gate. The Fort outside the walls meanwhile held out. Cromwell personally summoned it to surrender. A report states that "his Clemency was seen in venturing his Person through the showers of Shot and offering the Scots Quarter it they would presently yield but they, being infatuated, refused the Proffer".

After preparation, an attack was then made and repulsed with loss. Cromwell himself led the second assault. After severe fighting the Fort was captured at nightfall and its garrison butchered ruthlessly. The guns of the Fort were then turned on the City, adding to the terror and confusion.

The last bulwark of the Faithful City of the King had fallen.

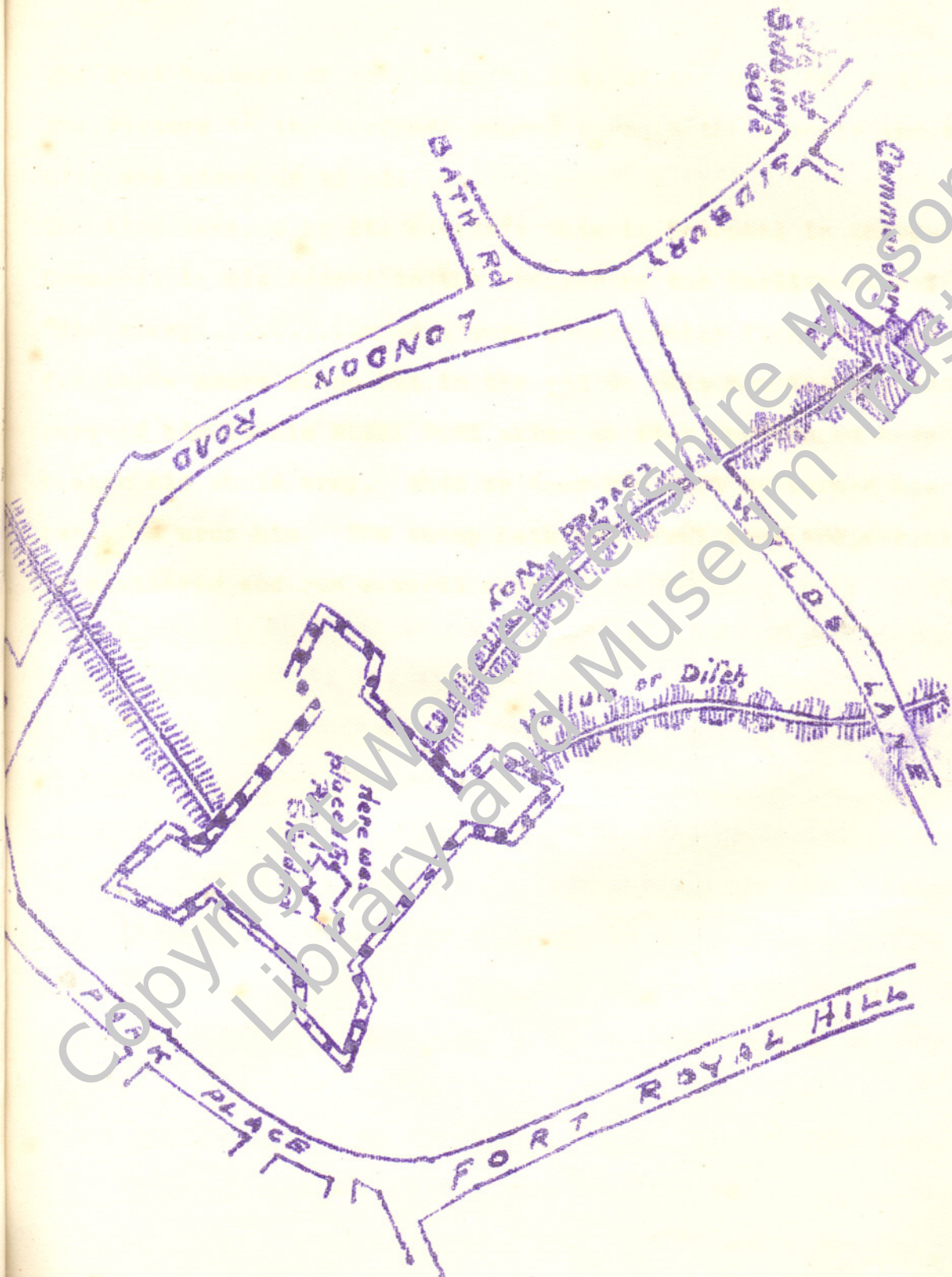
The victors in the darkness poured through the streets and the City was given up to pillage.

The King escaped by St. Martin's Gate to Boscobel in Shropshire.

Cromwell in his report to the Speaker of the Parliament said

"The enemy.....made a very considerable fight with us for three hours space but in the end we beat him totally and pursued him to his ROYAL FORT which we took and indeed have beaten his whole army. When we took his Fort we turned his own guns upon him. The enemy hath had great loss and certainly is scattered and run several ways.

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A ground plan of the City as it stood on September 3rd 1650 is in existence and shows that the fort was constructed as a star with four points with a bastion or bulwark at each corner. From the Fort two trenches with parapets ran, one to the North Wall of the City near to St Peters Church and one across the London Road and thence to the River on the West. A covered way ran back to the Commandery. The actual position of the Fort between the four Bastions is now marked by the house before mentioned which is itself named "THE FORT ROYAL". The South West Bastion is marked by six large elm trees planted shortly after the Battle of Worcester. Only one of these is now perfect the tops of the others having been broken by the wind. A mound, with a lime tree planted on it, shows the corner of the Fort gallantly held to the last by Sir Alexander Forbes for the King.

In a description of Worcester written in 1724 by Daniel Defoe (of Robinson Crusoe fame) entitled "A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain" he says, after alluding to the Commandery, "above in the Park is to be seen a great work of four Bastions called the ROYAL MOUNT whence a vallum and ditch run both ways to encompass this side of the City".

Mr John Noake, Sheriff of Worcester, writing in 1879, said that little then remained except the four bastions and small portions of the trenches. Less remains today. The trench below the Fort is laid out as a rose garden. At the time of the Battle the ground on which the Fort stood was part of the Commandery grounds but now Wvlds Lane runs between the

The position of the Fort itself is occupied by Alderman Stewards house and garden and the remainder of the site forms part of the public park named the Fort Royal Park.

While the material evidences of the Fort Royal disappear year by year the glorious memory of those men who endured to the end for their Rightful King, can never fade.

In some measure this Consecrated Lodge, bearing the name of the site of their martyrdom, is to them a memorial and they, to us, an example.

It is fitting that this Fort Royal Lodge should be composed of brethren, with a General Officer as their first Master, who have served in the Forces of the King, a successor of His Majesty, King Charles the Second.

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