

Blast from the past

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Basingstoke Common saw a blast from the past as Royalists and Roundheads fought out some of the decisive battles of the English Civil War.

Thousands gathered over the August bank holiday weekend to see The Battle of Basing.

Visitors were able to see displays of swordsmanship, 16th century pikemen and real muskets firing as the main battles of the war were reenacted.

Saturday, August 28 saw the recreation of Spring 1643, as the Marquis of Winchester and his household in Basing House, defending the King, prepared to take on the approaching Roundheads, loyal to Oliver Cromwell.

Sunday, August 29 and Monday, August 30 jumped back to 1644 and 1645 as the two forces fought for Basingstoke, an important supply route to London.

Over 2,300 visitors turned up each day to see members of the Sealed Knot perform the display, using real life muskets.

Dave Geldard, 55, from Yorkshire, was fighting as part of Cromwell's Army for the reenactment. He said: "It has been an amazing weekend and we have had a great set of displays with a great turnout."

"It is always amazing when you are doing this on a real site as part of real English Army regiments.

"It was not a high point of our history, Englishmen killing Englishmen, and a lot of it would have been forgotten if it was not for groups like us keeping the history alive."

The weekend saw people coming from all corners of England, Germany, Canada and the UK performing in the fights.

The displays were all complete with a show of 16th century firearms. The wooden muskets, gunpowder and loading regime remained true to the original.

Mr Geldard said: "What we are firing are real weapons, with real gunpowder. The only difference is that these guns don't have a musket ball. If they did, then it could do a lot of damage.

"Anyone using or firing these today has to pass several tests and hold the appropriate licences of competency to use them, we are acting, but these are not toys."

Kati Elliott, 31, flew over from Texas to take part in the reenactment and was just about to take a firearms test.

She said: "It is quite surreal firing one of these things. Even though it is a blank we are firing, it is still a weapon that could, and has done, a lot of harm in the past. It is quite a scary thing to handle."