

# DUDLEY: PROUD OF THE PAST, POSITIVE FOR THE FUTURE

## Civil War Dudley



The most illustrious and High borne: PRINCE RUPERT, PRINCE ELECTOR, Second Son to FREDERICK KING OF BOHEMIA, GENERALL of the HORSE of His MAJESTIES ARMY, KNIGHT of the Noble Order of the GARTER.

Prince Rupert with his dog, commanding the Royal Forces



Sir William Brereton, Commander of the Local Parliamentary Forces

**When civil war broke out in 1642 Dudley Castle was garrisoned for the King by Colonel Thomas Leveson. It remained in Royalist hands throughout the war and troops from Dudley constantly harassed the enemy. Parliamentary Birmingham was burnt and ransacked more than once.**

In 1644 the Castle withstood a brief siege, the Parliamentarians being swept from the field by a relieving force from Worcester. However, by 1645 the King's last field army had been destroyed at Naseby, leaving Royalists garrisons isolated and vulnerable.

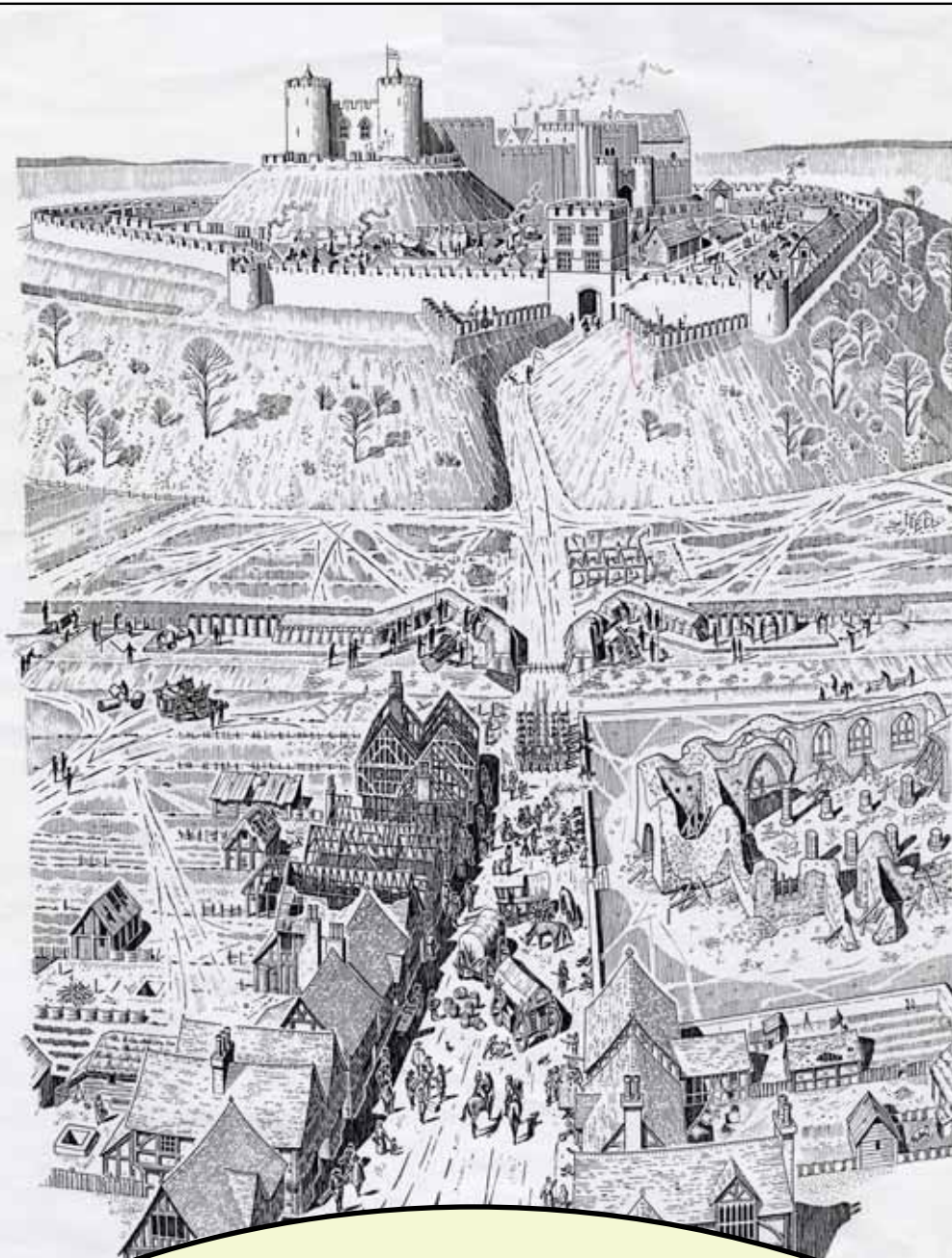
In order to deny his enemy cover Leveson ordered the demolition of St Edmund's Church and probably much of Castle Street. On the 27th April 1646 Parliamentary forces under Sir William Brereton did arrive in Dudley, routing Royalists who were by now attempting to burn the whole town. Brereton then laid siege to the Castle. On 13th May, knowing the King's cause was lost, Colonel Leveson surrendered his garrison of 40 officers and 300 men. They were given safe conduct, having left their weapons and a year's supply of provisions behind and a victorious Parliament ordered the dismantling of the Castle's defences, leaving the ruin which still dominates the

Centre: A reconstruction of the situation on Wednesday 28th April 1646, based on the records of Sir William Brereton and on recent archaeological work in the area.

The Parliamentarians construct siege works, digging ditches and using stone from the demolished church.

At the castle Lower Gateway, a Royalist drummer sounds a request for talks, Dorothy, wife of Lieutenant Colonel John Beaumont, has died in the Castle and he wishes to arrange safe conduct for a funeral at St Thomas's Church.

However, as Brereton's men approach two are shot dead. The funeral is finally allowed, without John Beaumont, after Leveson convinces the besiegers the incident was "contrary to my orders".



### The History of St Edmunds Church

Dudley's "bottom church" is dedicated to the Anglo-Saxon martyr King Edmund of East Anglia, killed by invading Danes in 870. Legend has it he was tied to a tree and shot full of arrows. The early dedication and the fact that St Edmund's was the parish church suggests this area was Anglo-Saxon Dudley's focal point. There is no evidence of what earlier churches on the present site looked like, although documents tell us of a rebuilding in 1485 when Richard III gave 60 oaks from the Royal Forest of Kinver, "to the people of Dudley to build their chancel". The present church arose from the ruins of the Civil War in 1724 using funds provided by George and Richard Bradley with the hope that, as George's memorial inside the church relates, "one sinner by its means might be converted from the error of his ways". It is now a Grade II\* Listed building and still central to the spiritual life of the town.



George Bradley's Monument



This grave slab, now in St Edmund's Vestry, records another tragedy for the Royalist second in command, as the church register explains, "Mr John Beaumont had a daughter borne and buried the 13th day" (of September 1644)