

DEFENSE OF GLOUCESTER

to John Bradshaw (1602–1659), Lord President of the Council of State (1649–1651)

During Cromwell's campaign in Ireland (August 1649–May 1650), the Regicide Major-General Thomas Harrison (1606–1660) commanded the army in England. After Charles II crossed into England from Scotland in early August, Cromwell and Harrison moved their forces to intercept the Royalists, Cromwell south from Perth and Harrison north from London. The three armies seemed to be converging on Worcester.

Gloucester, Saturday, 23 August 1651 [OS]

Upon Thursday last, in the space of twelve hours, we had three several letters from Major-General Harrison, advising and encouraging us to resist the enemy in case they should advance to us at Worcester. Whereupon we came to resolution to hazard our lives in the keeping of the city, and did what we could to strengthen the walls. And the well-affected in the city and County came in to us, willingly engaging themselves; and are in expectation of assistance from the Major-General, according to his promises.

But upon Thursday, late at night, there came a message from the Mayor and Sheriff of Worcester, and some others, signifying to us that they had a desire to confer with Colonel James and the Commissioners concerning the peaceable entry of the enemy into the city; and accordingly a meeting was had. At which meeting the Mayor, Sheriff, and others of the chamber made a high declaration of their dis-like of our proceedings in order to the keeping of the town, and of their resolution of delivering the town to the King, which was opposed only by Alderman Ellins, Major Estoph, and Captain Alies of the chamber, and that they would not be undone by making resistance in satisfying the wills of three or four men. Whereupon there arose a great discouragement amongst the citizens that had listed themselves volunteers and, as we are informed, they were taken off, some by threats and some by promise of rewards.

The officers met and consulted what was best to be done. And considering the falling off of the city, and that assistance came not in, nor yet the troops from the Major-General, it was thought best to do what we could to secure what persons and goods of the well-affected we might in that short time, as also to prevent the enemy of the magazine; which was endeavoured as such a scantling of time would permit.

Upon Friday morning early, which was yesterday, four troops came in from the Major-General, and although our listed soldiers and Horse were much scattered, yet Colonel James did what possibly he could to rally them. And so we fell to our works again with a full resolution to stand it out. But yesterday, there coming no assistance of Foot from Hereford or elsewhere, whither the Major-General had writ for supply of Foot, which was only necessary and extremely wanting for this service, it was concluded by the general officers that we should quit the town. Whereupon order was given to Captain Boyleston and his company to secure the magazine, consisting of seven small firkins, or thereabouts. And whilst he was in the execution of this order, and we horsed, the alarum came that the enemy was entering the city upon the rear of our Horse, and we marched away after some repulse given to the enemy.

But the night before, upon Thursday night, we sent forth a party to beat up their quarters at Bewdley, where we killed two quartermasters and took four prisoners, who upon examination confessed that they were not resolved to stay at Worcester, but to hasten to London.

George Milward
Simon Moore

Andrew Yarranton
William Collins

Richard Inett
Gervasse Bucke

Henry Cary, *Memorials of the Great Civil War in England* (London: Henry Colburn, 1842), II:335–337.