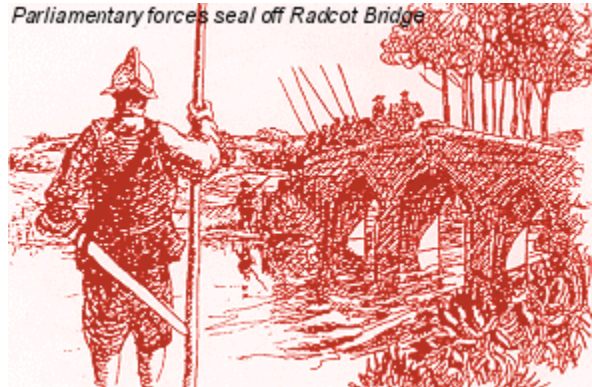**Civil War   1642 -1646**

After the drawn battle of Edghill, King Charles moved his government to Oxford, central for communications, defended by walls and rivers. Outposts were established at three strategic bridges across the Thames - Wallingford, Abingdon and Faringdon. The king passed through our town in 1643 on his way to Bristol and the siege of Gloucester. Abingdon fell to Parliament in May 1644, and a garrison of 300 was set up in Faringdon House to cover Radcot Bridge and St John's Bridge at Lechlade.

Next year the reorganised Parliamentarians, victorious at Islip in April, moved SW over Radcot Bridge, and 'quartered up to Faringdon', overlooking it from high ground round Folly Hill. Reinforced by troops from Abingdon, Cromwell offered terms on 29 April, but was refused; he attacked Faringdon House, unsuccessfully, at night, with unsustainable casualties. On 7 May Royalist forces moved up from Newbury, forcing Cromwell to retire north, and regained control of Radcot Bridge. All the while skirmishes, evidenced by scattered finds of musket balls, continued at or near the neighbouring crossings, Lechlade, Highworth and Newbridge, while Faringdon was soon strongly reinforced, and remained a vital Royalist garrison.

Parliamentarians [under Col. Sir Robert Pye, son of the owner of Faringdon House!] captured Radcot House over the river and then infiltrated Faringdon itself; but they were quickly repulsed piecemeal from various occupied houses. A couple of days later they set up a battery in a lane [?Coach Lane] to bombard the church steeple, whence snipers successfully fired. The defenders deliberately felled the steeple southwards to

Parliamentary forces seal off Radcot Bridge

improve their defences. But considerable parts of the town were burnt - noted by John Evelyn nine years later, and still witnessed by the singular wood-frame house surviving in the Market Place. A 200 lb mortar round hit the church and another strong, but again unsuccessful, attack was made on the town, whence, after the king's surrender, the garrison honourably marched away on 24th June 1646. Skeletons found in later centuries near the church and on Folly Hill may have been fatalities during these two seasons of battle round the town.