**THE GREATEST BATTLES IN BRITISH HISTORY**

**Camlann**

**537**

King Arthur killed, perhaps mythical, by Mordred.

**Naseby (First English Civil War)**

**14 June 1645**

**Naseby, Northamptonshire, England**

The decisive battle of the First English Civil War. The Royalists, under King Charles I, clashed with the Parliamentarians, led by Sir Thomas Fairfax and Oliver Cromwell. The Royalists were thoroughly defeated by the disciplined New Model Army. More than 1,000 Royalists were killed and around 6,000 captured.

**Blenheim (War of the Spanish Succession)**

**13 August 1704**

**Blenheim, Bavaria (in modern-day Germany)**

Fought between a Grand Alliance and the French-Bavarian Army. Blenheim has gone down in history as one of the turning points of the War of the Spanish Succession. The overwhelming Allied victory ensured the safety of Vienna from the Franco-Bavarian army, thus preventing the collapse of the Grand Alliance. Allied casualties were 4,500 killed and 7,500 wounded, whereas the enemy suffered losses of 38,600 killed, wounded or taken prisoner. It destroyed the myth of French invincibility.

**Culloden (Jacobite Rebellion of 1745)**

**16 April 1746**

**Drumossie Moor (to the north-east of Inverness), Scotland**

The last pitched battle fought on British soil. Charles Edward Stuart (The Young Pretender) led the Jacobite forces into battle with a Royalist army, under the Duke of Cumberland. The battle ended any hope of the Stuarts regaining the throne, safeguarding the succession of the Protestant House of Hanover.

**Plassey (Seven Years War)**

**23 June 1757**

**Plassey (in present-day West Bengal, India)**

Fought between the forces of Siraj Ud Daulah, the last Nawab of Bengal (and his French support troops) and the troops of the British East India Company, led by Robert Clive (later referred to as Clive of India). This battle ultimately led to the establishment of British rule in India.

**Quebec (Seven Years War)**

**13 September 1759**

**Plains of Abraham, outside Quebec City (in present-day Canada)**

General Wolfe’s army won a stunning victory over the French. It is one of the greatest victories of the Seven Years War (1756-63) and marked the beginning of the end of French power in North America.

**Lexington (American War of Independence)**

**19 April 1775**

**Lexington, Massachusetts (in present-day USA)**

The famous ‘shot heard round the world,’ marked the start of the American War of Independence. This momentous event has taken on an almost mythical quality in the American consciousness. The episode was not a large affair, but was politically disastrous for the British. The violence turned a colonial revolt against British economic policy into a fight for political independence.

**Salamanca (Peninsular War)**

**22 July 1812**

**Arapiles, Salamanca, Spain**

The Battle of Salamanca saw Anglo-Portuguese and Spanish armies under the Duke of Wellington defeat Marshal Auguste Marmont 's French forces. The victory was one of Wellington’s finest and proved that he was more than just a good defensive general after he had quickly seized on an opportunity to attack Marshal Marmont’s divisions when they became too extended after marching across his front.

**Waterloo (Napoleonic Wars)**

**18 June 1815**

**Waterloo (in present-day Belgium)**

The Battle of Waterloo was the last great battle of the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815) and marked the end of France’s attempt to dominate Europe.

**Aliwal (First Sikh War)**

**28 January 1846**

**Aliwal (in present-day Punjab, India)**

The British were led by Sir Harry Smith, while the Sikhs were led by Ranjodh Singh Majithia. The British won a victory which is sometimes regarded as the turning point of the First Anglo-Sikh War.

**Balaklava (Crimean War)**

**25 October 1854**

**Balaklava, Crimean Peninsula (in present-day Ukraine)**

The battle is famed for two British cavalry charges and the 93rd Highlanders’ ‘thin red streak tipped with a line of steel’ which repulsed a Russian cavalry attack. The Charge of the Light Brigade led by Lord Cardigan against Russian forces during the Battle of Balaclava was the result of a miscommunication which saw the Light Brigade charge, unsupported by infantry, into the mouths of massed Russian cannon. The charge is commemorated in Lord Tennyson’s poem.

**Rorke’s Drift (Zulu War)**

**22-23 January 1879**

**Rorke’s Drift on the Buffalo river between Natal and the Zulu kingdom (in present-day South Africa)**

Following the overwhelming defeat of the British at Islandlwana, 150 British and colonial troops successfully defended the garrison against an intense assault by 3,000 to 4,000 Zulu warriors. 11 Victoria Crosses were awarded.

**Gallipoli (World War One)**

**25 April 1915 – 9 January 1916**

**Gallipoli peninsula (in present-day Turkey)**

A joint British, Imperial and French operation was mounted to capture Istanbul and secure a sea route to Russia. The attempt failed, with heavy casualties on both sides. The campaign was considered one of the greatest victories of the Turks and was reflected on as a major failure by the Allies.

**Somme (World War One)**

**1 July – 18 November 1916**

**Somme and Pas-de-Calais, France**

A joint British and French offensive against the German Army in France. The Battle of the Somme was one of the largest battles of the war and one of the bloodiest military operations ever recorded with over 1 million casualties.

**Megiddo (World War One)**

**19 September – 31 October 1918**

**Present-day Israel, Jordan and Syria**

Decisive breakthrough. The Allies quickly advanced, taking Damascus and Aleppo, before the Turks sued for peace in October 1918. Battle involved skilful series of manoeuvres and use of aeroplanes, artillery, infantry and cavalry. In many ways can be considered a forerunner of the German ‘Blitzkrieg’ tactics of WW2.

**El Alamein (World War Two)**

**23 October – 4 November 1942**

**El Alamein, Egypt**

Led by Montgomery, the Allied victory turned the tide in the North African Campaign and ended Axis hopes of occupying Egypt, taking control of the Suez Canal, and gaining access to the Middle Eastern and Persian oil fields.

**D-Day and the Battle for Normandy (World War Two)**

**6 June – 25 August 1944**

**Normandy, France**

The greatest amphibious invasion in history. Marked the start of the Allied invasion of Hitler's fortress Europe.

**Imphal/Kohima (World War Two)**

**8 March – 3 July 1944**

**Imphal (in present-day Manipur, India) and Kohima (in present-day Nagaland, India)**

Japanese armies attempted to destroy the Allied forces at Imphal and invade India, but were driven back into Burma with heavy losses. The battle marked a turning point of the Burma Campaign

**Imjin River (Korean War)**

**22-25 April 1951**

**Imjin River, Korea**

The bloodiest battle fought by British troops since World War Two. About 4,000 troops of the British 29th Brigade, including about 700 from 1st Battalion, The Gloucestershire Regiment, faced more than 27,000 men of the Chinese 63rd Army. Around 400 "Glorious Glosters" fought a last stand on Hill 235 (later renamed Gloster Hill) against 10,000 Chinese troops for three nights, allowing time for UN forces to regroup and block the Chinese advance on the capital Seoul.

**Goose Green (Falklands War)**

**28-29 May 1982**

**Goose Green and Darwin, East Falkland, Falkland Islands**

The first major land engagement of the Falklands campaign was a hard fought battle involving 2nd Battalion Parachute Regiment and Argentinian forces that provided the British Government with a much needed victory after its Task Force had suffered a number of setbacks.

**Musa Qala (War in Afghanistan)**

**17 July -12 September 2006**

**Helmand province, Afghanistan**

In 2006 Musa Qala was one of the most isolated district centres in Helmand province occupied by ISAF forces. A small garrison of British Pathfinders and Danish troops withstood a Taleban siege for over 50 days. Reinforcements including men of the Royal Irish Regiment and 3 Para endured further weeks of intense combat in this remote outpost.