

This version of the Bradford Civil War Siege story was assembled from passages and comments taken from the following books:

Bradford – Joseph Fieldhouse 1972
Bradford in History – Horace Hird 1968
The Civil War in Yorkshire – David Cooke 2004
The Civil War and Bradford – Dr. P R Newman 1989
The History and Topography of Bradford – John James 1867
The Story of Bradford – Alan Avery 2008
The Siege of Bradford – Bradford Libraries 1989
Pen and Pencil Pictures of Old Bradford – William Scruton 1889
The Rider of the White Horse – 1643 – version by Andrew Parker 1989

Prominent Royalists

William Cavendish - The Earl of Newcastle (1592-1676)
Commander of the Northern Counties

George Goring – George, Baron Goring (1608-1657)
General of Horse

Prominent Parliamentarians

Ferdinando, Lord Fairfax (1584-1648)
Commander of the Yorkshire Forces

Sir Thomas Fairfax (1612-1671)
Second in Command of the Yorkshire Forces (later Commander of the New Model Army)

There is a saying: ‘Cometh the hour, cometh the man’. In the case of Bradford it should be ‘Cometh the hour, cometh the men’, as the ill-armed, and vastly outnumbered, citizens of the town had, beyond all reason, not only held the town, but sent their enemies scurrying back to Leeds in disorder’. – David Cooke, The Civil War in Yorkshire.

The Background and Lead-up to the Siege

Sentiment in Bradford was overwhelmingly for Parliament. The population was largely Puritan whereas the king had a Catholic wife and was rumoured to be Catholic himself. Moreover, in his desperate need for money, Charles had sold off the manor of Bradford and placed a high church vicar in the church and a papist sympathiser as headmaster of the school, furthermore, it was the Catholic Tempest family, of Bolling Hall, who tried to bring back old feudal laws and taxes for the benefit of London financiers. Worst of all, the Crown tried to enforce its old rights to tax cloth on its way to Hull and York for export. All this had made the people of Bradford thoroughly displeased with their king – and they had made it known to him.

Joseph Fieldhouse, in his book *Bradford* wrote: *‘The bonds of the “old faith” were not especially strong in Bradford, and the changes brought about by the Reformation appear to have been received quietly. A hundred years later, when the Civil War broke out, the town was a Parliamentary stronghold. The manor was often in the hands of the Crown and when Charles I sold it to the citizens of London to pay off his father’s debts the inhabitants of Bradford were hurt and displeased. They distrusted the king and hated Archbishop Laud, who had called one of the parish clerks before the Court of High Commission because he had conducted informal services. Fears were abroad that ‘Popery was likely to be set up and the light of the gospel put out’.*

Young Joseph Lister witnessed the weeping, fasting and praying that went on in many a household, *'not any of us, old or young, eating so much as a morsel of bread for twenty-four hours together. . . mothers and children expecting daily when they should be dashed to pieces, one against the other'*.

There was a real and frightening reason for harbouring such feelings of dread: there had been rumours of a group of blood-thirsty Irish rebels crossing the sea and reaching Rochdale, soon to arrive at the northern wool towns. (The background to this was an Irish uprising where hundreds of Protestants had been murdered in cold blood.) A certain John Sugden had sowed the seeds of panic by announcing the rebels would be in Bradford before long. Joseph Lister, a Bradford man, noted that riders were sent to Halifax to get the latest reports. To the relief of all, they came back disproving the rumours; the group of Irish "rebels" were actually harmless Protestant refugees who had left Ireland to escape persecution.

But if troubles had been averted from one quarter, they came from another. By voicing opposition to the king, and refusing to obey the commands of the Archbishop, the people of Bradford had deeply offended their monarch, and all he stood for – after all, he believed in the "Divine Right of Kings": that he was put on this earth by God Himself, and that whatever the king commanded must be right; he was infallible, and so too his decisions. Allowing the town to get away without punishment was therefore unthinkable, and the result would be a very ugly body of the King's Foot and Horse billeted in the town, awaiting orders to destroy it by *'fire and sword'*. In the event, the king ordered the men to join him at Nottingham where he would raise his Standard – but not before they had severely harassed the townspeople, attacking them in the streets as they went about their lawful business, and smashing up taverns and lodging houses. When one man asked them why they were doing this they chillingly replied: *'to pass the time while we await the order to murder you'*.

This, then, was the background against which the inhabitants of Bradford lived. It was one rife with constant rumours, a feeling that there was an enemy lurking around every corner, an atmosphere of impending doom, and it was not helped with the entering of the town of Sir Thomas Fairfax – commander of the Parliamentary forces – who, there to defend the town and make it ready to resist the inevitable return of the Royalists, did his bit, then seeing no point in his men remaining in the town, left to see action elsewhere, taking most of the town's youth with him.

The First Attack and the Miracle of Bradford

October 23rd 1642

Bradford had only three months to wait before a Royalist army – under the command of William Cavendish, Earl of Newcastle – arrived nearby. By this time the town was barricaded, and the church had been turned into a strong point from which to repel the enemy when they came. But though fortified, there were few men to fight and few to man the barricades, and those that could offer any kind of defence had only clubs and a few rusty swords and muskets as weapons.

Joseph Lister relates: *'ere long news was brought that they [the Royalist army] were breaking up their quarters, and making every preparation in order to attack us; accordingly every man that was able to make any defence, provide himself with such weapons as they could best procure, and everything requisite for their defence; accordingly the enemy came forward, and pitched their tents on that part of the common called Hundercliff [Undercliffe], in three separate bodies, where they entrenched themselves and lay there for that day, which was a mile distant from town; the next morning they struck their tents and advanced towards us, and came to the brow of the hill, where they exhibited to our view their ensigns of war, which were truly very awful and tremendous to behold; here they halted and made every preparation to attack us; they were about seven or eight hundred men, we about three hundred; they had several pieces of cannon, we had none; they began to play their ordnance upon us with great fury; we drew up close to the town in order to receive them; they had the advantage of the ground, which exposed us more to their cannon, from which we sustained some loss; but our men defended their passes so well by which they were to descend, that they got no ground of us; moreover, whilst each party were exerting*

themselves to the utmost of their power, providence in a most miraculous and surprising manner interfered in our favour, by sending the heaviest shower of snow, attended with a mighty strong and blustering wind, which beat directly in their faces with such impetuosity, that they were not able to withstand or support it; besides at the same time, one of their great guns burst asunder, which so intimidated and struck them with amazement, that they, with the greatest precipitation and confusion, fled . . .'

The Bradford "rabble" as they were then called, had, seemingly with a little help from the Almighty, won the day, and back at his camp Lord Cavendish would be enraged to find his troops returning defeated after what should have been a mere 'cleaning-up' operation. To take up Lister's narrative once more: *'The Earl of Newcastle, who commanded the king's forces, had got a very strong reinforcement, and had plundered Leeds already, and intended to pay us another unwelcome visit, that they might satiate their revenge upon us with great avidity; we therefore resolved to conquer or die, there was no alternative; our captain mustered all his men, which were about eighty that had muskets or long guns; the greatest part of these he placed in the church upon the steeple; the rest were armed with clubs, scythes, spits, flails, halberds, sickles laid on long poles, and such like rustic weapons . . .'*

Bradford's Deliverance – the Battle of the Steeple

December 18th 1642

The Earl of Newcastle, having captured Pontefract, now turned his sights on making himself master of the western regions of Yorkshire, by blocking all routes between Bradford and nearby towns – thus stopping any chance of Fairfax's men relieving the town. A chronicler of the time, who went by the name of 'The Rider of the White Horse', wrote: *'We could expect from this, that the first towns to suffer would be those who had been most forthcoming in their support of Parliament; hence, Leeds, Bradford and Halifax became the principle targets. In Leeds however, Royalist sympathies were predominant and the town was easily brought into line. Bradford was the next place in their way, the town least able to resist them.'*

Now one day's march from Bradford, Newcastle's army – made up of many men who had been incensed by their retreat from the town not long before – were bent on revenge, and knowing that there could be no help from Lord Fairfax, anticipated the expected fall of the town with glee. In Bradford, there was a sense among the defenceless townsfolk that all were deserting them, leaving them to their fate.

The 'Rider' wrote: *'Formerly our enemies had tried to placate us, but now came nothing but threats against those who had been the most active in their support of Parliament. The fear created by their threats was so great that many of the more high-ranking people fled out of the town – out went our Royalists to bring in the king's Catholic army . . . Our deserters were returned with a letter from Sir William Saville, in which he stated his intention to burn and plunder Bradford. . . To this we returned no answer [and] our stand was seen as a courageous attempt, desperate in the eyes of many who saw neither experience in our forces, nor sufficient capability to organise them – the mind, body and constitution for war was deficient, we had no man in the parish to command us, nor would any stranger be persuaded to undertake the task. All our trained soldiers and their troops were with Lord Fairfax, together with most of those who were capable of service as volunteers.'*

Early on the following morning, Newcastle's army was sited on the hillside above Barker End. They were somewhere in the region of a thousand strong, made up of horse troops, dragoons, foot soldiers, pioneers [infantry soldiers] and artillery, under the commands of Sir Francis Howard and Colonel Evers, and accompanied by General Goring and, according to some, the Earl of Newport. The Earl of Newcastle was not with them, having operations elsewhere, but it was noted by the 'Rider' – perhaps remembering the outcome of the previous encounter – that *'Sir Marmaduke Langdale, Sir Thomas Glenman and Sir John Gotherick's troops, Sir Ingram Hopton, Captain Neville, Captain Batt and Captain Binn's companies had not been enough to overwhelm our lowly town . . .'*

'I shall now describe how our men were arranged' he continues, 'It is a difficult task to organise men who have no commanders, colours, or distinct companies. The night previously we had borrowed a commander from Halifax [Captain John Hodgeson of Coley] who had almost 40 muskets and cavalry in the town, about 30 fowling, birding guns and smaller pieces together with almost twice as many club-men. Our captain positioned these in several parts of the town, 10-12 of our best marksmen in the church tower and some inside the church. The latter did not wait for the warning sound from the enemy when they first came in close proximity, but defiantly opened fire on them at the first sighting.'

The first fighting began when Sir John Goodrick sent in his troops to capture houses close to the church, while at the same time sending other troops to the west of the town to partly divert the Parliamentarian's fire, and to prevent the rest of the town coming to their aid. On their way this second body of troops murdered two unarmed men and robbed a woman, before setting up a battery at Sun Bridge. But they were not there long. Local musketeers fired at them, and then they were attacked by more club-men arriving from Bingley. The Royalists fled back to the army as quick as they could. Meanwhile the Royalist cannon were bombarding the church tower and Kirkgate.

The 'Rider' takes up the story: *'This accomplished, Major Carew led out some foot soldiers, with whom he captured two houses within thirty yards of the church. He did this without any interference from us other than from the steeple. We did not have sufficient strength to advance upon this group, and from the houses they fired on the church with considerable ferocity, as did the church upon them. Our steeple was a notable advantage to us, from where our musketeers could contain the enemy, as when any buff or scarlet coat appeared they put two or three of their weapons in one opening and fired upon instantly, with considerable success, thereby deterring the rest of the forces from relieving their men in the houses. This continued until noon, at which time some fire-men and many clubs came to our assistance from Halifax. They were promptly pressed into service.'*

As the afternoon wore on, it became obvious that something of a stalemate was setting in and though the town was being adequately defended, the Bradfordians were not repelling the enemy. The defenders' solution to this problem was a bold and noble one: Bradford's "rabble" army of 300 untrained men now decided to take on the entire Royalist army in an all-or-nothing do-or-die stand, by abandoning their own defensive positions and striking out at the very heart of the Royalist army. Waiting for an opportunity between the firing and loading of the enemy, the irregulars suddenly advanced out of the church shouting 'Conquer or die!' and storming the occupied houses they passed as they climbed up the steep hill on the way to confront the army. Reinforced by troops already in the lanes, they burst open the doors, killed those who resisted and captured those who surrendered, and within seconds the remainder were on the run, fleeing into the adjoining fields with the Bradford men following. The 'Rider' described the scene as being even more deadly than before, and these fields became the killing fields – with forever after the track leading through them being christened Dead Lane.

'Our men were too enthusiastic to keep rank and file, despite the fact they knew how to. However, their disorder was an advantage, where in mixing themselves with the enemy, they could fight before the mouths of the enemy's cannon and in front of the eyes of one other group of forces which were both located in the over-looking field. The enemy did not dare to fire for fear of hitting their own men (otherwise, having ten fire-men to our one, they could have cut us down instantly, especially since our men could now only use their muskets as clubs) . . . our men now fought without mercy and with renewed vigour.'

Meanwhile, throughout the heat of battle, the Royalist artillery had continued to bombard the town, firing eight-pound balls at anything that stood. "And yet," wrote our 'Rider' *'thanks to the mercy of the Lord, the one that was trained on the tower never hit its target . . . nor did the one trained on Kirkgate hurt anybody, although many of its shells hit the houses and the street itself. Thus with the wrath of the Lord and of us falling on them, away the enemy went, sending their foot soldiers and artillery first (using their feet better than they had used their*

hands), and after them went about fifty of our own clubs and musketeers. The courage of our men greatly astonished the enemy, who believed that no fifty men in the world would dare take on a thousand unless they were either drunk or mad. Our men did indeed fire as if they were mad, and the enemy fell as if they were drunk. Some of our men fired 10 to 12 times during the chase, and having the entire force of the enemy to aim at, the severe toll they inflicted on the enemy during the mile's march can be easily imagined. At the moor our troops retreated, fearing the threat of being surrounded by the enemy's cavalry. Some of them, who were exhausted from eight hours continuous fighting, could barely return to the town.

'One thing I cannot omit is the tale of one hearty roundhead who, separated from his comrades and surrounded by the Royalist cavalry, fired his musket at one, cut down another's horse with the butt end of it, broke a third's sword, pushing it back towards his throat and saw all of them off. This is a story, the truth of which I stake my life on.'

And so the second encounter came to a bloody and violent close: the Royalist dead included Sir John Harper, Captain Wray, Captain Binns and many ordinary soldiers whom shall never be known. The injured included Sir John Gotherick and a hundred or more ordinary soldiers; captured were Major Carew, 26 ordinary soldiers, about 100 horses, 180 weight of powder, and about 40 muskets. The Bradford irregulars were thought to have suffered no more than two deaths and only twelve casualties. Not one man was captured, nor was it reported even a single bullet lost to the enemy.

It had been Bradford's finest hour.

But the Royalists would state: *'Bradford soldiers were barbaric, ignoring the rules of warfare, offering no quarter to those who deserved it.'* Joseph Fieldhouse, in his book, *Bradford*, explains: *'In the heat of battle an unfortunate incident occurred. A brave young officer, thought to be the Earl of Newport's son, led a company of footmen in a rash attempt to force a way into the church. He fell into an ambush and, being cut off from his men, begged quarter. On hearing this, one Ralph Atkinson replied, 'I'll give you quarter alright – this is Bradford quarter', and slew him in cold blood. Later it was learnt that Atkinson had rifled the officer's pockets, taking rings, gold and other valuables – a rash action he would later deeply regret.'* Rules of war were clear: quarter (mercy) *must* be afforded all men when asked for – particularly those of high rank. This event would return to haunt Bradford when, upon hearing news of the incident, Newcastle is reputed to have railed: *'From now on, it [Bradford] shall have only one quarter from me – Bradford quarter.'*

Matters Arising Elsewhere

January – June 1643

Newcastle would not be able to turn his sights on Bradford immediately; in fact he was to suffer yet further humiliation at the hands of the Parliamentarians. In January 1643, Sir Thomas Fairfax would march his army into Bradford in celebration of the town's deliverance and defeat of the Royalist attack. But he didn't stay long: Leeds was for the taking, and so after fortifying the town, he set out on the 23rd to confront Sir William Saville's forces which were at that time in occupation of Bradford's near neighbour. Fairfax won, and what was left of the Leeds garrison fled to Wakefield, joined then by that town's garrison, all fleeing on to the safety of Newcastle's headquarters at nearby Pontefract. Shocked, the earl withdrew his entire army back to York, and so, with the roads now open once more, Fairfax junior was able to open communications with his father. The Earl of Newcastle had no option but to grin and bear the situation, for he was at this time obliged to take his army to the coast to meet with the queen, Henrietta-Maria, who had at that moment arrived at Bridlington from Holland. It was now Newcastle's priority to escort her to safe Royalist territory in Lincolnshire. However, on his way to meet the queen, Newcastle still managed to chalk up several small victories; one being the taking of Malton, but he would have to be patient with the idea of confronting his main adversary. Whatever the Royalist Commander of the Northern Counties may have thought, his luck – hitherto ill – was about to change for the better when several defections by prominent Parliamentarians would suddenly place the earl in a very strong

position, one aspect of this allowing him to take out Scarborough before leaving to escort the queen to York. Meanwhile, in the West Riding, Fairfax's luck was changing for the worse: he had decided to take on Tadcaster yet never got there. A large part of Newcastle's army – now under the command of General George Goring – marched out of York to surprise the young commander, and did so at Seacroft Moor, giving his men a severe beating. Fairfax summed up the Battle of Seacroft Moor as *'the greatest loss we ever received'*. But he would get his revenge: father and son now came together, concentrating their troops into two main garrisons at Leeds and Bradford, and then combining forces they set out on 20th May to take the now strongly garrisoned Wakefield. This would prove a resounding victory for them as on their arrival it turned out the Royalist forces there had been enjoying certain festivities and most of the town was drunk and incapable of fighting. Colonel Goring was captured along with a record amount of prisoners and booty. The odds had once more been evened, but the situation between Fairfax and Newcastle could no longer be left unaddressed, and a personal confrontation between the two commanders could no longer be avoided. They would meet head-to-head, five weeks later, on the outskirts of Bradford.

The Whisket Hill Encounter and the Battle of Adwalton Moor

June 30th 1643

Newcastle once again retreated to York; his primary mission involving the queen still not over. On 4th June, he marched his army (among them the queen) from York to Pontefract. Once there a council of war was called, and it was decided that a strong escort would continue with the queen to Newark, but Newcastle would not be among them. His new task was to stay at Pontefract, and muster as many troops as he could in order to swell his army into an enormous juggernaut, since coming to the conclusion that Bradford was not only a troublesome nest of hornets, but also a key town that if taken would cut supply routes and hinder troop movements between Yorkshire and Lancashire, it urgently needed to be dealt with. Therefore an army of some 15,000 Foot and 4,000 Horse were mustered at Pontefract, some to remain there as a garrison, others to move on to garrison Wakefield, but the bulk – some 10,000 to 12,000 men, were to march forth to Bradford.

Meanwhile, in Bradford, news of Newcastle's march had reached the ears of Fairfax, who now decided the best course would be to ride out of the town and take on his opponent on more favourable ground. This meant taking the Wakefield Road and climbing the hill, not the present modern road, but the one which is now called Bowling Back Lane. Here his army's path to Whisket Hill is unclear, but they probably joined Ned Lane and moved on to Tyersal Gate, where they may have been met by Ferdinando, Lord Fairfax bringing his own army from Leeds. In his book *Bradford in History* Horace Hird states: *'It was apparently understood that the father from Leeds would meet the son from Bradford somewhere in the neighbourhood of Whisket Hill. The army from Leeds which was inferior in size of the Royalists would wish to keep well away from the Wakefield road which was the route taken by the enemy and consequently it would march over the ground which is now covered by the Corporation's Holme Wood Housing Estate. It could have been joined there by the younger Fairfax's forces from Bradford had the latter been able to adhere to the previously arranged time-table. In any case the neighbourhood of Whisket Hill was a suitable high point for a rendezvous.'*

Fairfax the Younger had planned to march at 4.00am that morning, but under the command of Major-General Gifford, three to four hours were lost in getting away, messing up the army's arrival times for equipment and supplies. This would certainly benefit the enemy's plans, and strong suspicion surrounded Gifford's motives: it would have been a treacherous act if he had purposely mismanaged the situation. Either way, the consequences were such that Newcastle was able to select the ground to suit his own advantage and to dispose his forces without hindrance. Together with his father's group, the Parliamentary army under Thomas Fairfax numbered some 4,000 men. This was nowhere near as strong as Newcastle's army, but the element of surprise was with them since the approach to Whisket Hill took them through a dip in the valley near Holme village. This area cannot be seen from the ridge above, and at this point Fairfax's men would have been almost invisible. Once they had

passed Raikes Farm, a swift climb up the hillside meant they suddenly appeared at the top of Whisket Hill, and, with the high ground reached, Fairfax found a Royalist van awaiting him. Fairfax's men plunged straight into the enemy, after a short time beating them back to their main army at Adwalton, just one mile away. Newcastle, now with his army in full battle position, would have scrutinised the approaching Parliamentarians, noting that Ferdinando, Lord Fairfax was commanding the middle ground of about 1500 men; his son Thomas commanding the right wing of 100 men and 5 troops of Horse, and the left wing the same number under Major-General Gifford.

Let Thomas Fairfax describe the engagement: *'We advanced through the enclosed grounds, till we came to the moor, beating the foot that lay in them, to their main body. Ten or twelve troops of Horse charged us in the right wing; we kept the enclosures, placing our musketeers in the hedge next the moor; which was a good advantage to us who had so few Horse. There was a gate, or open place to the moor, where five or six might enter abreast. Here they strive to enter, we to defend it; but after some dispute those who entered the pass found sharp entertainment and those who were not yet entered, as hot a welcome from the musketeers that flanked them in the hedges. They were all, in the end, forced to retreat, with the loss of Colonel Howard, who commanded them. Our left wing was at the same time engaged with the enemy's Foot, and had gained ground on them. The Horse came down again, and charged us, they being about thirteen or fourteen troops. We defended ourselves as before, but with more difficulty; many having got in among us were beaten off with some loss. Colonel Hearne, who commanded that party, was slain. We pursued them to their cannon. This charge, and the resolution our men showed in the left wing, made the enemy think of retreating. Orders were given for it, and some marched off the field. Whilst they were in this wavering condition, one Colonel Skirton desired his general to let him charge with a stand of pikes, with which he broke in upon our men, and not being relieved by our reserves, which were commanded by some ill affected officers, chiefly Major-General Gifford, who did not his part as he should have done, our men lost ground; which the enemy seeing, pursued their advantage by bringing on fresh troops. Ours being herewith discouraged, began to flee, and so were soon routed. The Horse also charged us again. We not knowing what was doing in the left wing, our men maintained their ground, till a command for us to retreat, having scarce anyway now to do it, the enemy being almost round about us, and our way to Bradford cut off. But there was a lane in the field we were in which led to Halifax, which as a happy providence, brought us off, without any great loss, save of Captain Talbot, and twelve more that were slain in this last encounter. Of those who fled there were about 60 killed, and 300 taken prisoner'.*

The Final Siege of Bradford –'Oh! That Dreadful night!'

July 1st 1643

Sir Thomas Fairfax escaped to fight another day, travelling a circuitous route to Bradford via Birstall, Bailiff Bridge and Halifax. His father, along with his own men, had a more difficult time but eventually they reached the safety of Leeds, from where they had set out that morning. Meanwhile, Newcastle began his march on Bradford. He later wrote: *'So we pursued them, killing and taking them to Bradford Town End, which was more than two mile, in which chase was slain about 500 of the enemy's army, and about 1400 taken prisoners, amongst them many officers.'*

Newcastle lost no time making his way to Bolling Hall, the home of Richard Tempest, which he made his headquarters, and from which he would lead the attack on Bradford. Fairfax entered Bradford at the same time, there to find stragglers from the battlefield who had already told tell their tale of woe, filling the inhabitants with dismay. There was little he and the community could do except put their defences in order and once more drape the Parish Church tower with wool sacks. After this, all the townsfolk could do was gaze up at the awesome army looking down on them – and wait.

Joseph Lister takes up the sad tale: *' . . . our troubles begin again; fresh storms arise, and clouds of sorrow gather blackness over our heads, threatening us with great distresses, if possible, than heretofore; for the Earl of Newcastle marched a most formidable army*

towards us . . . he comes forward to a place convenient for his purpose, where he directly points his cannon upon the town, but more especially against the church and steeple, as if he was determined to revenge himself of that place whence he had of late met with such severe treatment.'

The morning of July 1st began with a bombardment of the town, the Royalists paying particular attention to the church (as Lister had foretold) knocking out the drakes that had been placed there, and bringing down – amid loud cheers – the woolsacks. Yet Newcastle now offered to negotiate a peace settlement and this was gladly accepted by Fairfax. However, this might not have been quite the gesture it seemed: during the truce – which was strangely drawn out without rush – the Royalists had time to move their cannon to Goodman's End and completely surround the town with their men. Fairfax wrote: '*. . . two captains were sent to treat with him [Newcastle] and a cessation [took place] during the time. But he continued working still, and contrary to agreement; whereupon, I sent for the commissioners again (suspecting a design of something against us) but he returned them not until 11 at night, and then with a slight answer, and while they were delivering it to us, we heard a great shooting of cannon and musket . . . here was very hot service but at length they retreated . . . after this we had not above one barrel of powder and no match.*'

Lister wrote of the day thus: '*But on the Lord's day morning, they beat a drum for a parley, and all that day (during the time of the parley) they spent in removing their great guns just against the heart of the town; so that no way was left for any escape. There were but few men in the town, and most of their arms and ammunition were lost at Adwalton; they had no match, but what was made of twisted cords dipped in oil. About the going down of the sun, the parley broke up, and off went their murderous guns before the inhabitants knew, and at the first shot they killed three men sitting on a bench. All that night it was almost as light as day, with the continual firing.*

'Oh! That dreadful and never-to-be-forgotten night, which was mostly spent in firing those dreadful engines upon us, as that the blaze issuing there from appeared like lightening from heaven. What a night in which Bradford was taken! What weeping and ringing of hands! None expected to live longer than till the enemy came in; the Earl of Newcastle having charged his men to kill all, man, woman, and child in the town, and to give the Bradford quarter, for the brave Earl of Newport's sake . . .'

At dead of night, Fairfax called a council of war. With only one barrel of gunpowder left, and not a single match in the town, it was decided to abandon Bradford in order to get as many of his bedraggled troops as possible away to the safety of Leeds. Bradford was to be left to its fate. At dawn the next day (2 July) the breakout attempt began. Fairfax led a charge of twelve horsemen against three hundred Cavaliers, and succeeded in getting through with two of them. The rest, including Lady Fairfax, who was riding behind one of the officers, were captured. A similar disaster befell the foot soldiers, of whom only about eight broke through the cordon. Fairfax described it thus: '*Before I had gone 40 paces (the day beginning to break) I saw them upon the hill being about 300 Horse. I with some twelve more charged them. Sir Henry Foulis, Major-General Gyffard, and myself with three more broke through. Captain Mud was slain; and the rest of the Horse being close by, the enemy fell upon them, and soon routed them, taking most of them prisoners; among them my wife was . . . I saw this disaster, but could give no relief; for I was got through, I was in the enemy's rear, alone, for those who had also charged through went on to Leeds, thinking I had done so too . . . there was no more in my power to do.'*

However, a touch of gallantry would now be provided by the Earl of Newcastle of whom upon hearing of Lady Fairfax's capture, dispatched his personal coach to where she was being held at Barker End, with orders for her to be escorted to her husband – and with a full guard to ensure her safe conduct.

Yet back to that '*dreadful*' night. Whilst the population of Bradford ran the gauntlet of the bombardments and shootings, Newcastle issued orders that come dawn the army was to march on a thoroughly battered and defenceless people, slicing them down as they went:

'Every man, every woman, every child – every living thing to be put to the sword. Let them have no quarter – except Bradford quarter!'

And yet, events would now seem to almost wander off into the realms of fantasy, for in the night, while he tossed and turned in his sleep, the Earl claimed he was visited by an apparition; that of a woman in white, which pulled the blankets from his bed, wailing *'Pity poor Bradford, pity poor Bradford. . .'* Newcastle got no further sleep that night, and before dawn, when the bombardment was to end and the wholesale slaughter of the town begin, he issued fresh orders: *'Take the town, but you are to spare the people'*.

And so Bradford was saved. At dawn the Royalist army marched into the town, ransacking and pillaging as they went. They took everything and anything they desired, reducing the population to that of refugees, but they allowed them to live. Only a handful of Bradford people lost their lives, and those being the ones who, in little pockets, decided to fight on.

What had really happened in Newcastle's bedchamber? In *Pen and Pencil Pictures of Old Bradford* William Scruton wrote: *'Of course, in these days of Board Schools, and science lectures, a story like this has not the ghost of a chance of gaining credence; hence some will have it that in the carousals of the soldiers, in anticipation of the carnage to take place on the following day, the wine had flowed a little too freely, and that the Earl, in a restless, broken sleep had conjured up some weird and unearthly shape of his dreams, which, in superstitious age would readily take as some spectre from the spirit land. Others, again, have gone the length of regarding it as a clever performance of some Bradford lass, who, afraid lest anything should happen to her relations, or possibly her lover, boldly assumed this ghostly guise in order to frighten the Earl from his cruel purpose'*.

There is yet another possibility: there was no ghost at all; the earl simply made it up. Earlier, he had demonstrated himself to be a man of honour when dealing with Lady Fairfax's situation; some say he would privately not have issued *any* order that would create a holocaust. The story of a ghost forcing him to change his mind – Divine intervention – afforded him a way out. The king was not the *only* person God talked to. Who was there to question it?

On March 3rd, 1644, Parliamentary forces drove the Royalists out of Bradford for good. The people rejoiced.

Malcolm Hanson
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