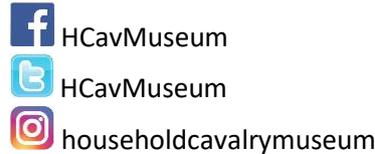




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Podcast 15 ~ HOUSEHOLD CAVALRY ANECDOTES

MONCK.

It's a plain a simple fact that if it wasn't for **Lord General & Admiral George Monck, 1st Duke of Albermarle**, today's Household Cavalry would not exist.

A seventeenth-century military and naval commander of distinction, Monck was blessed with the Emperor Napoleon's favourite characteristic in a General: luck. He was also a consummate politician with faultless timing.

Monck was born in 1608, the son of Sir Thomas Monck, who was an impoverished West Country royalist MP. As a second son with few prospects Monck joined the Army aged sixteen.

By 1629, and despite having in the interim killed an Under Sheriff following a pub brawl, he had acquired an Ensign's commission in Sir John Burroughs' Regiment of Foot along with a reputation for leadership and discipline.

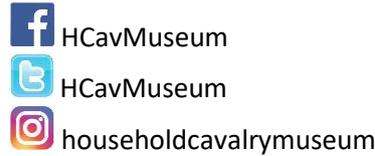
In 1637, having distinguished himself at the Siege of Breda as a Captain in command of a Company of the Earl of Oxford's Regiment, he resigned his commission in a fury following a disciplinary dispute. However, he resumed his Army career two years later as Lieutenant Colonel of the Earl of Newport's Regiment followed, in 1641, with his appointment – at the age of thirty-three – as Colonel of the Earl of Leicester's Regiment.

At the outset of the English Civil War, Monck was serving with the royalist Army in Ireland but, on his return to England in 1643, he refused to sign the Oath of Allegiance to King Charles I. He was arrested and imprisoned in Bristol Castle but was later released after an



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interview with the King who commissioned him to raise a new Regiment of Foot. This was a fortuitous but inexplicable reversal of fortune.

Within six months, thanks to the incompetence of the royalist commander at the siege of Nantwich, Monck had been captured by the parliamentarians and imprisoned, first in Hull and then in the Tower of London. Three years later, with the King clearly heading for defeat, Monck was asked if he would lead parliamentary troops to suppress yet another nationalist uprising in Ireland; he agreed, was released from the Tower, promoted to Adjutant General and sent to Ireland.

In 1647, and still in Ireland, Monck was promoted to Major General but his time in Ireland didn't end well when, in 1649, he was discovered to have sold gunpowder to the rebel Catholics. Monck was arraigned before Parliament but successfully defended himself by stating that the sale was necessary in order to cover the under-funding of his troops. Monck's extraordinary luck held, he got off with a reprimand.

Having tacitly accepted the execution of the King, by 1650 Monck was in a senior position with the Commonwealth Army fighting against the royalist Scots, during which he honed his skills with artillery and formed Monck's Regiment of Foot.

His expertise as an artilleryman led to him being appointed General-at-Sea by Oliver Cromwell in the 1652-3 naval war against the Dutch, during which Monck proved to be as able and successful a commander on the waves as he had been on dry land.

On his return to London, he married Anne Radford, who was reputed to have worked for him as a seamstress and as his after-hours comforter whilst he was in the Tower and who, at the time of her marriage to Monck, was probably still married to her first husband. Seemingly immune from scandal, the newly-married Monck was not, however, destined to return to sea, instead he was again sent to quell a royalist uprising in Scotland where, the task



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accomplished, he remained out of political harm's way as military Governor until Cromwell's death in 1658.

If Monck's management of his career up to that point had been characterised by a degree of good fortune, what happened next was a masterstroke of guile and timing. Although loyal to Cromwell's son, Richard, Monck quickly recognised that the young man was unfitted for the role of Lord Protector and so he did nothing to stop Richard being ousted by the Army, although he was deeply concerned when young Cromwell was replaced with the regicide Rump Parliament that had been dismissed by Oliver Cromwell in 1653. Accordingly, he secretly opened negotiations with the exiled King Charles II, marched his Scottish forces to London, stood for Parliament in the election of March 1660 and in May ensured that the new Convention Parliament invited King Charles II to return and resume the throne.

Almost needless to say, King Charles II showed his profound gratitude for the return of his throne, showering Monck with honours and rewards including the Order of the Garter, the dukedom of Albermarle, a huge swathe of land in the American colonies, an annual income of £1.6 million at today's values, a seat in the Privy Council, promotion first to Captain General and then to Lord General (a rank which has never been used since) and, if that weren't enough gratitude, made him his Master of the Horse.

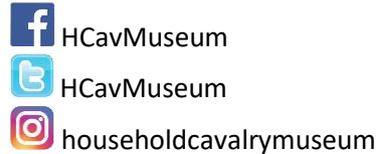
Monck never again 'took to the field' on land, although as Captain General he was tasked with the disbandment of Cromwell's New Model Army and its recreation as a royalist-led force, included in which were his own Regiment of Foot (after his death, the Coldstream Regiment of Foot Guards) and his own Troop of Life Guards which was re-designated the 3rd or Duke of Albermarle's Troop of Horse Guards (from 1788 the 2nd Life Guards).

Monck did, however, serve as the Admiral commanding the British fleet in the 1666 naval war with the Dutch, making him the first but not the only Life Guard Admiral.



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Monck died in 1670 and was buried in Westminster Abbey. This and the other stories in this series are drawn from my book, *The Drum Horse in the Fountain*, which is available on Amazon. Next week I will be talking about the life of a famous Blue.

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