‘CROMWELL’S WHELPS: THE DEATH OF THE NEW MODEL ARMY

By Dr David Appleby

On the morning of 29 May 1660, just before his triumphal re-entry into London, Charles II inspected 3,000 troopers of Cromwell’s old cavalry at Blackheath. He declared that they ‘were as brave troops as the world could shew’, and that he would ‘rather to have them loyal subjects as they now protested, than what some of them had been formerly) violent enemies.’ Sir Edward Hyde noted nervously that the troopers’ faces ‘did sufficiently manifest, that they were drawn thither to a service they were not delighted in.’ If the king had been assassinated at Blackheath the result would have been political chaos, but it was necessary to show the public that the army was no longer in charge.

The swift demobilisation of the old army after Blackheath has encouraged historians to underestimate the continued significance of the military after 1660. Richard L. Greaves and Joyce Malcolm have discussed facets of the issue in their respective works on radicalism and the re-establishment of the monarchy, and the deployment of civil war veterans overseas has occasionally attracted attention; but generally the process of demobilisation and the experience of non-radical veterans in Restoration communities have received a disjointed and perfunctory press. Much reliance has been placed on Samuel Pepys’ diary entry for 9 November 1663:

Of all the old army, you cannot see a man begging about the streets; but what? You shall have this captain turned shoemaker; the lieutenant a baker; this a brewer; that a haberdasher; this common soldier a porter: and every man in his apron and frock, etc., as if they had never done anything else.

This was in fact Pepys’ recollection of a tirade by the radical republican Robert Blackborne, a former Admiralty colleague with whom he had been drinking that evening. Blackborne had complained about rowdy royalist veterans in the capital, comparing them with what he claimed were sober, industrious, law-abiding ex-parliamentarians. The reality was more complicated.
As long as Cromwell’s old army remained in existence the Restoration remained in the balance. In May 1660 the army consisted of 36 regiments of foot, 20 regiments of horse, a regiment of dragoons, plus numerous independent companies and garrisons in Britain, Flanders and Jamaica: a total of around 50,000 soldiers, many of whom were battle-hardened veterans. However, demobilisation would not in itself guarantee political stability. The Restoration authorities were worried that disbanded soldiers might cause mischief, as many of the thousands of able-bodied veterans who had previously returned to civilian life were already thought to be fomenting disaffection among the wider population.

The Restoration regime had another problem in that thousands of maimed parliamentarian veterans and war widows were still reliant on public charity in 1660. The authorities were also soon deluged with claims from thousands of destitute royalist veterans and widows. The economic difficulties caused by the competing needs of these rival groups had the potential to undermine the process of national reconciliation.

***

General George Monck had led his regiments south from Scotland in January 1660 in an attempt to preserve the Commonwealth. He had no intention of restoring the monarchy or imposing a new military dictatorship. By April, however, he and a majority of MPs had concluded that in the interests of political stability, Charles II should return. Monck had kept the army reasonably quiet since being appointed commander-in-chief in February. The political experiments of the previous two decades had prompted waves of resignations, dismissals and reinstatements as officers fell in and out of favour. This instability had rendered the officer corps susceptible to manipulation, making it easier for Monck to cashier disaffected officers and promote others more amenable to regime change. The rank-and-file were less easily controlled.

The army remained riddled with discontent, although most grievances were practical rather than ideological. Monck’s own soldiers had remained loyal because they had been regularly paid, and the general had since repeatedly emphasised the need to do the same for the entire army. In addition, the common soldiers sought assurances that they would be indemnified for past
actions, whilst officers desired a fair settlement regarding Crown and Church lands given to the army in lieu of pay. Monck took care to be seen as a champion of soldiers’ rights, a stance which helped him maintain order during the critical months of April and May. The Declaration of Breda (presented to Parliament on 1 May) confirmed that Charles and his advisors were equally aware of the need to placate the army. The Declaration carried a firm commitment to satisfy soldiers’ arrears, but left a new parliament to adjudicate on the matters of indemnity, land settlement, and religious toleration.

On 16 May 1660 Charles wrote to Monck to express pleasure at the news that the army officers had been persuaded to support the restoration, claiming tactfully (or rather, tactically) that ‘We shall always have an entire confidence in them.’ Monck ordered the letter to be published on the eve of Charles’ arrival in Dover on 25 May, having given permission to selected royalist gentry to gather men in arms to attend the king’s procession through Kent. The size of these assemblies and the routes and timings of their marches were tightly specified, however, in order to minimise the risk of clashes with army regiments then moving towards Blackheath.

After Blackheath, Cavalier-Anglican journalists and preachers worked hard to refashion Monck as a lifelong royalist and hero of the Restoration. His loyal service to Oliver Cromwell was discreetly forgotten. The boost to his moral authority was important, for having successfully stage-managed the king’s return, Monck had now to dismantle the army.

Parliament had experienced difficulties when demobilising 18,000 men in 1647, as had Cromwell in 1654. The demobilisation in 1660 was on a different scale entirely. John Childs has calculated that it eventually cost £835,819 8s. 10d., not including the forces in Dunkirk, Ireland and elsewhere. The cost of paying off the Commonwealth navy was also considerable. The money was to be raised from monthly assessments, a dedicated poll tax, and the Crown’s own resources. By the end of 1660, MPs had rushed through eight different Acts to finance the process; clear evidence that they had initially grossly underestimated the funds needed. This makeshift legislation confused provincial officials, and delays caused by widespread reluctance to pay the poll tax added thousands of pounds to the soldiers’ arrears. Monck (created duke of Albemarle in July 1660) and his
fellow commissioners began to use the army to coerce tardy taxpayers. Kentish commissioners were advised that prompt payment would help ensure that their county would avoid having to billet troops. When Cambridgeshire and West Country communities ignored such warning signs they found themselves forced to provide free quarter for the regiments of O’Neale and Ingoldsby until the troops could be paid off.  

Despite all the problems enough money was raised to enable disbanding to begin. Gentry were advised that they could demonstrate their loyalty to the new regime by helping with the project or (better still) lending money to finance it. Even the national committee included prominent former parliamentarians such as Colonel John Birch and William Prynne. Nevertheless, discord occasionally surfaced. A Buckinghamshire tax collector wrote in the accounts for the parish of Little Hampden that the tax was to pay for the armies and navy ‘of this Commonwealth of England’. His offended colleague scoured out the term ‘Commonwealth’, and inserted the word ‘Kingdome’ in thick black ink. William Prynne committed a more public indiscretion. On 6 November Parliament was informed that several regiments in England and Scotland were yet to be disbanded, and that a further £422,000 would be needed. Prynne cautioned the House not to do anything which might encourage the soldiers to reunite. He was called to order and reprimanded.

Parliament’s anxiety was justified. Kentish Justices had already noted an increase in crime in their county, particularly a spate of robberies which had terrified the local population. Albemarle, now struggling with increasing indiscipline within the army, was forced to organise patrols in and around London to combat a rise in armed robberies. A royal proclamation in December 1660 deprecated the bad behaviour of hordes of dissolute and disaffected soldiery prowling around London and its suburbs. At least eight further proclamations were issued between 1661 and 1670, ordering demobilised veterans to leave London during festivals, and particularly during the traditional rioting month of May.  

Although provincial riots were traditionally resolved through rituals which tended to confirm rather than challenge the ‘natural’ authority of the state, disorder in London was viewed very differently. Rioting in the capital was potentially far more dangerous, particularly as the new regime could not
assume that rioters – particularly ex-parliamentarian veterans – would view the monarchy as the ‘natural’ form of government. Despite legislation such as the Act against Tumultuous Petitioning (1661) the establishment remained obsessed with the notion that demobilised soldiers were fermenting civil disorder. In September 1660, Edward Hyde, now earl of Clarendon, informed Parliament of several seditious plots supposedly hatched by disbanded veterans. Some were real enough, as in January 1661 when Venner’s Fifth Monarchists went on a lethal rampage through London. Royal proclamations in April and November 1661 alleged that demobilised soldiers had threatened ‘mischiefs to Our Royal Person’, and were plotting against the government and the peace of the realm.

Several initiatives were already in motion to counter such threats. Charles II personally oversaw the appointment of the new county lord lieutenants and their deputies. The Lieutenancy’s traditional policing powers were enhanced to guard against the disorder which, it was anticipated, would accompany the disbanding of the army. The king was even willing to allow Cavalier-Anglican MPs to implement a divisive programme of religious repression in return for their endorsement of his royal prerogative as regards the county trained bands. Having said this, Charles and his advisors were not confident of the political reliability of the trained bands. Cromwell had set up an auxiliary body known as the ‘select militia’ during the Protectorate, which had relieved the regular army and county trained bands of many of their policing duties. This ‘select militia’ appears to have been made up of loyal parliamentarian veterans: 27,000 cavalry and 200 infantry. Royalist supporters assembled a similar paramilitary force after the Restoration. This was probably much larger than Cromwell’s militia – over 90,000 men – and was intended to be self-financing. Like Cromwell’s militia troopers, these royalist vigilantes tended to be mounted, in order to police a wide area. Many lord lieutenants found the volunteer militia useful in supressing disaffection, and allowed them considerable latitude in harassing former parliamentarians.

More than this, by deputising thousands of loyalists in this manner the state was better able to channel and restrain the more violent proclivities of popular royalism.

The bitter legacy of the civil wars had fuelled many local vendettas during the Interregnum. Some disputes were rectified peaceably, as when parish officials in Hampshire were ordered to make amends for having prevented a
royalist veteran from living in his own home. Other royalists, however, were tempted to exact unofficial retribution. In 1661 John Maidstone, a former steward of the Lord Protector's household living in Great Horkesley, Essex, was attacked by three men from neighbouring Boxted. In nearby Braintree a royalist felt-maker clashed with two former Cromwellian militiamen over past loyalties. Such episodes drove many ex-parliamentarians to procure weapons for personal protection.

In more peaceful times the common people had been discouraged from keeping weapons by the Game Act (1609). However, weapons were plentiful after the civil wars, and thousands remained unaccounted for. In October 1660 Hampshire deputy lieutenants were instructed to seize all arms held by any inhabitants suspected of disaffection. The searches became more robust in the face of local resistance, and the deputies were even lent a troop of the King's Lifeguard. The Privy Council spread the net more widely after Venner's Rising. Following a proclamation of 28 November 1661 deputy lieutenants and the 'volunteer militia' were given licence to enter any home in search of weapons.

Caches discovered during these searches appeared to vindicate the Privy Council's policy. In January 1661 Laurence Moyer in Essex was found to possess five pistols, one carbine, two barrels of black powder and one small artillery piece. Moyer claimed that he needed the firearms for personal protection. John Maidstone's kinsman, Robert Maidstone was found to possess several weapons, which he admitted was part of a larger hoard. Similar discoveries were made in other counties. The volume of weaponry seized during 1661–63 eventually exceeded the storage capacity of the Tower of London, necessitating the construction of additional buildings.

The most decisive initiative of all involved wedlock, as the treaty which sealed Charles II's marriage to Catherine of Braganza in 1662 also sealed the fate of thousands of veterans. Apart from offering the Portuguese possessions of Tangier and Bombay as part of Catherine's dowry, Portugal requested troops in order to resume its struggle for independence from Spain. This was a godsend for the English authorities, who had been unable to raise sufficient money to disband the entire army. Three English foot regiments stationed in Scotland were reorganised into two units, and transported to Lisbon. They were joined by cavalry composed of ex-
parliamentarians, old royalists, and Irish troopers who had served Charles in Flanders. This cynical disposal of inconvenient flesh was promoted as an honourable and patriotic adventure by the royalist journal *Mercurius Publicus*, which alleged that the foot regiments had eagerly volunteered for the expedition. Their new commander, the earl of Inchiquin, was privately far less sanguine about morale when the soldiers arrived in Lisbon, although *Mercurius Publicus* reported that following a jovial quayside speech the soldiers had ‘joyfully acknowledg’d him for their Generall.’

In all, around 4,500 veterans were sent to the Iberian Peninsula. They suffered scandalous conditions and died in droves. Several officers resigned their commands and returned home as quickly as possible. There was no such escape for the common soldiers, who were forced to endure harangues from embittered ex-royalists such as Guy Molesworth, who said that they were ‘Cromwells whelps and Rebels,’ sent to Portugal ‘for murdering the late King and were as banished men.’ Molesworth was subsequently charged both with demoralising the soldiery, and insulting the king by asserting that honest Cavaliers had been sent to be destroyed in the company of rebels. His court martial went unreported in the English press, as did a discreet official investigation, which resulted in a government whitewash.

Only 800 members of the Brigade survived to see Portugal and Spain make peace in 1668. Four hundred of these were reassigned to Tangier – a posting which had quickly acquired a reputation as a graveyard. Besieged by Moorish forces the colony had already used up some 2,500 troops. Aside from Portugal and Tangier, approximately 500 soldiers were also shipped from England to the East Indies between February and March 1662. Within two years over 300 had succumbed to diseases and the climate. In total, therefore, the Portuguese match enabled the Restoration state to eliminate almost 7,500 veterans.

Ian Green has suggested that the continuance of the army may have stayed the government’s hand as regards a religious settlement until 1662. Radicals were divided and comparatively few in numbers, but the frequency with which many within the Cavalier-Anglican establishment attacked Presbyterians in print suggests that moderate Puritans were perceived to be the greater threat. As regards the army, Monck’s remodelling of the officer corps had restored many Presbyterians to military commands – men who
could be expected to resent, even resist, the ejection of moderate Puritan ministers from the Church of England. However, by the time the Uniformity bill received the royal assent on 19 May 1662, the Portuguese treaty had removed the army as a political force, and Cavalier-Anglicans had a free hand in religious and political matters. Even so, as 24 August drew near – the day by which all Church of England clergy were required to comply with the Act of Uniformity or quit their livings – many ex-parliamentarian officers around the country were arrested as a precaution. The episode gave Restoration officials a taste for maintaining records on rank-and-file veterans as well as officers.  

One category of veteran had long been the subject of scrutiny. The civil wars caused an estimated 90,000 casualties in England and Wales, burdening local communities with unprecedented numbers of maimed men, widows and orphans. On his restoration, Charles II inherited a reasonably efficient war relief system and responsibility for thousands of ‘enemy’ pensioners. The 6,500 ex-parliamentarians and widows in receipt of pensions from Ely House and the Savoy military hospitals cost the state £30,000 per year alone. In December 1660, with the demobilisation of the army well advanced, the inmates and pensioners of the two hospitals were quietly discharged. If, as seems likely, they were referred to their parish of origin, they joined thousands of others already dependent on charity administered by county Justices and parish overseers. After 1660 the plight of these vulnerable individuals would exacerbate political tensions, and place strains on local economies.

Few Restoration Commissions of the Peace were purged so thoroughly as to remove all traces of the Interregnum: counties such as Wiltshire, Sussex and Essex retained a leaven of ex-parliamentarians on the Bench, whilst magistrates in areas such as Devon and Kent were overwhelmingly Cavalier-Anglican. Kent certainly moved more quickly against parliamentarian pensioners than neighbouring counties. With one exception, all parliamentarian war pensions administered by the county were terminated at the Michaelmas Quarter Sessions in October 1660. By contrast, wholesale cessations of parliamentarian pensions did not begin in Essex until April 1661. Justices in Sussex and Surrey only began to terminate parliamentarian pensions in January 1662. These pensioners ceased to be a charge on the
county stock, but as most were incapable of work the economic burden cannot simply have disappeared, and might yet be found in parish records. Some able-bodied veterans almost certainly caused a further drain on local resources by resorting to crime. Although arguments that the disbandment did not lead to a national crime wave are still sound, the increase in criminality in and around London has already been noted. Early modern crime was closely linked with economic vulnerability; although the army was made up of volunteers by 1660, the depressed economy meant that many volunteers were actually economic conscripts. The authorities’ awareness of this is evident in an Act to permit demobilised soldiers (at least, those who had been under Monck’s command in April 1660) to set up in trade without completing their apprenticeships.41

The economic impact of mental health problems among returned veterans is harder to estimate. Provincial authorities did sometimes provide for traumatised soldiers and their families, as in 1661 when John Horne of Buckland, Kent ‘in his madness did set on fire and burne his own house.’ Horne and his homeless family were referred to Kent’s Treasurer for Maimed Soldiers.42 Other economic tensions arose from population displacement: when Kentish Justices later checked on the location of ex-parliamentarian pensioners they found many ‘at some distance from their respective abode.’43 There may therefore be more to the famous Settlement Act (1662) than a desire to restrict movement among the poor; it might also be seen as an attempt to reverse the effects of war-related economic migration.44 At the same time as the authorities attempted to address these difficulties, however, they faced an equally large problem involving royalist veterans.

Ballads, pamphlets and published speeches by former officers have helped to create the impression that Charles II failed to provide for needy royalists.45 In actuality, strenuous efforts were made to recompense those who had suffered in royalist service. Having dismissed their parliamentarian pensioners, for example, Kentish Justices immediately began to bestow pensions on royalist veterans and war widows.46 The Essex Quarter Sessions order book up to 1662 (records after 1662 have not survived) shows that there were noticeably fewer royalist petitions than in Kent, despite the fact that a considerable number of Essex men had fought under royalist command in 1648. Moreover, in stark contrast to other Home Counties, no
royalist petitioner was granted a pension by the Essex Justices before 1662. Some Essex royalists were given gratuities and ordered to trouble the Justices no further, whilst others were simply referred to parish overseers. Hampshire was similarly reluctant to grant pensions, as Justices there recorded in October 1661 that they were prepared only to make interim payments to royalist claimants. Meagre pensions were eventually awarded to fifteen royalists in July 1662.

Hampshire’s change of heart coincided with the passing of two pieces of Parliamentary legislation in 1662. The first of these, an Act for distributing £60,000 among 5,300 indigent royalist officers, was funded by diverting money from Charles’ personal income. The king’s altruism was fortified by self-interest: to leave thousands of loyal gentry so impoverished as to be unable to participate in local society was clearly undesirable. The Act also strengthened the recipients’ adherence to the Crown. The Act to relieve poor and maimed royalist officers and soldiers is less well known, but probably had a greater impact on local communities. If the continuance of the army stayed the government’s hand on religious matters it is even more likely to have affected the timing of these two Acts. It had been impracticable to order royalists to be relieved from the county stock until sufficient numbers of parliamentarian pensioners had been dismissed. Wiltshire and Dorset alone ultimately maintained some 1,142 royalist pensioners. In Kent zealous compliance with the Act created so many new pensioners by September 1664 that the Justices were obliged to restrict awards. In their eagerness to dismiss former rebels and instead relieve royalist veterans and war widows, Cavalier-Anglican MPs and Justices had between them not only failed to deliver a peace dividend, but added significantly to higher parish rates, engendering an anxious search for additional sources of local income.

Time and natural mortality eventually resolved the veteran problem, although rival folk memories continued to be handed on to subsequent generations. Despite the fact that many veterans presumably died during the plague epidemic of 1665–67, royalists were still petitioning for financial relief as late as 1678. Ironically, the most prominent victim of veteran politics proved to be the earl of Clarendon himself: among the charges laid against him by his enemies in Parliament in 1667 was that he had attempted to maintain the army in order to encourage the king to rule as a tyrant.’
charge was preposterous, but Clarendon received no sympathy from old parliamentarians. George Wither observed that, far from seeking to preserve the army, the Lord Chancellor had condemned thousands of brave Englishmen to death.\textsuperscript{56}

The ‘new Restoration historiography’ which first emerged in the 1980s has demonstrated that the rehabilitation of the monarchy was protracted, complex, and far from inevitable. Nevertheless, the new historiography has tended to underplay the significance of the military within that process. This article has sought to re-evaluate the role of the military in the Restoration – in particular Monck’s adroit handling of the army during the critical months of 1660 and the influence of veteran politics within local communities. Although the various events which followed the Restoration were not meticulously planned, the nature and timing of the measures taken indicates that the central authorities were aware that the various military issues were inextricably intertwined, and closely linked to wider issues.

* An earlier, detailed version of this article (entitled ‘Veteran politics in Restoration England’) is available on Open Access: http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0268117X.2013.823101#.VUJT0sJ0xjo.


6 His Majesty’s Letter to his Excellency the Lord General Monck (Edinburgh, 1660), 1.


10 Childs, *Army of Charles II*, 10, 11-22; CJ, viii, 176-7 (6 November 1660).


12 Centre for Kentish Studies, CKS-U1107/C30; BL. Add. MSS 36832, fo. 74v.


17 See the authorities’ response to the Bawdy House Riots of 1668: BL Egerton MS 2539, fo. 182v.

18 *LJ*, xi, 1660-1666, 237-239 (29 December, 1660); *By the King, a Proclamation* (London, April 1661), Wing C3556; *By the King, a Proclamation* (London, November 1661).


21 Hampshire Record Office, Quarter Sessions Order Book 1658-1672, Q1/4, fo. 92.

22 ERO Q/SR 391/60; ERO D/DEb/95/117.

23 E.g., ERO D/Deb/95/123.


25 BL Add. MSS 21922, fos. 240-241, 249; ERO D/DEb/95/112; *By the King, A Proclamation* (Wing C3557).

26 ERO D/DEb/95/123.

27 ERO D/DEb/95/126.


30 *Mercurius Publicus* (8 – 15 May 1662), 293; (31 July – 7 August, 1662), 506.

31 TNA SP89/6/23-23v.


35 BL Add MSS 21922, fos. 249, 250, 253v; TNA SP29/57/235, /237; SP29/58/35TNA SP29/56/216; SP29/58/139-146; ERO D/DEb/95, fos. 113, 115-126.
40 CKS Q/SO W1, fo. 64v; ERO Q/SO1, fos. 224v, 239v, 240v, 248, 271v; East Sussex Record Office QO/EW4, fos. 30v, 41; D. Powell (ed.), *Surrey Quarter Session Records: Order Book and Sessions Rolls 1661-1663* (Guildford, 1935), viii, 18.
42 CKS Q/SO E1, fo. 64.
43 CKS-Q/SO W1, fo. 71.
44 *Statutes of the Realm*, v, 401-5. I am grateful to James Collett-White for suggesting this link.
E.g. ERO Q/SO1, fos. 259v, 263v, 264v, 268v 266v.

HRO Q1/4, fos. 70, 74.

Statutes of the Realm, v, 380-389; A List of Officers Claiming to the Sixty Thousand Pounds, etc. (London, 1663).


14 Car. II. c. 9.


CKS Q/SO W1, fo. 103v

CKER Q/IO E1, fo. 68v; HRO Q1/4, fos. 100, 105, 106; Surrey Quarter Sessions Records, 63.

ERO S/BBa2, fo. 124.


David J Appleby is lecturer in Early Modern British History at the University of Nottingham, and is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society.