

# The Life of William Cavendish First Duke of Newcastle

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## 1 The Duke and his place in history



Figure 1: William Cavendish, Earl, Marquis and Duke of Newcastle

The Duke of Newcastle (figure 1) was an equestrian pioneer who developed a new method of training horses and wrote two important books on the subject. He lived in the period between the early Italian masters who re-discovered the art of riding that had been practised by the ancient Greeks, and the 18<sup>th</sup> century French riding master La Guérinière who is held in great esteem today. La Guérinière's training ideas have survived centuries and form the basis of what we now call "classical riding". It was he who invented the "shoulder-in", but it was one of Newcastle's exercises, a kind of shoulder-in ridden on a circular track, that gave him the idea. In his book, La Guérinière quotes Newcastle's advice on how the rider should be seated on the horse, and it is clear that Newcastle's work played an important part in the development of the art of riding.

Horse riders today, with the exception of some classical riding enthusiasts, usually take very little interest in the history of their art. Some will have heard of Newcastle, and a few will know something of his work, but very few indeed will know anything at all about his life. The aim of this short text is to throw some light on his life and bring the reader closer to the man behind the name.

In his day, Newcastle was an important figure of considerable standing in society. He contributed much to the royalist cause in the early part of the English civil war; he was an influential figure in England and he led the colourful life of a cavalier and a nobleman. No Englishman before or after Newcastle has contributed so much to the art of horsemanship but, rather surprisingly, he was not a professional horseman: manège riding was simply his hobby.

## 2 Family background

William Cavendish was born at Handsworth manor in Yorkshire towards the end of the sixteenth century. His date of birth is not known for certain, but it is likely to have been in 1593<sup>1</sup>. He was the second of three sons born to Catherine Ogle and her wealthy husband Sir Charles Cavendish. The eldest son died in infancy and William grew up with his younger brother Charles.

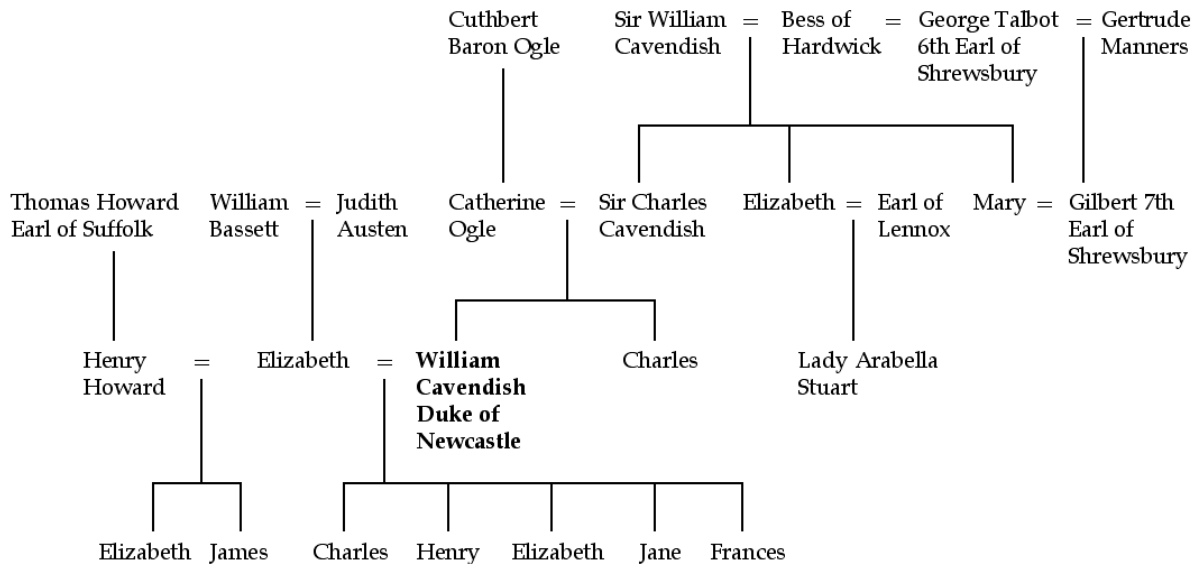


Figure 2: The family tree

William's mother was the daughter of Cuthbert Baron Ogle; his father was the youngest son of Sir William Cavendish and his third wife, the famous Bess of Hardwick. Sir William had been Privy Councillor and Treasurer to three monarchs: Henry VIII, Edward VI and Queen Mary. After Sir William's death, Bess married George Earl of Shrewsbury. George and Bess had at one time, and at great personal expense, been obliged to keep Mary Queen of Scots prisoner on their estate. The story is that their marriage broke up because of George's relationship with the Queen.

George's son Gilbert, from a previous marriage, later inherited the Earldom and married Sir Charles's sister, William's aunt Mary. Sir Charles had another sister, Elizabeth, who married King James I's uncle, the Earl of Lennox. Their daughter, Lady Arabella Stuart, was, on account of her claim to the throne, imprisoned in the Tower of London where she died. (See figure 2.)

Bess of Hardwick had a great enthusiasm for constructing buildings. She persuaded her husband, Sir William, to sell his estates in the south and buy an estate in the north. In 1553 he built Chatsworth House, at a cost exceeding £80,000. (This building was demolished after the civil war, and the house now known as Chatsworth House was erected in 1687.) In the 1590s when she was in her 70s, Bess built Hardwick Hall, now a National Trust property. It was built to have more glass than wall and it contains the longest gallery in England. Bess became the wealthiest woman in England after Queen Elizabeth I, which helped to give her grandson William a very good start in life.

<sup>1</sup>One search yielded a claimed date of 16<sup>th</sup> December 1593 for his baptism.

### 3 The early years

As children, the brothers William and Charles were brought up by their aunt Mary and uncle Gilbert, the Countess and Earl of Shrewsbury. Gilbert and William's father became lifelong friends and died within a year of each other when William was a young man. William's mother died in 1629.

In his youth, William travelled with Henry Wooton, Ambassador Extraordinary to the Duke of Savoy. On their departure from Savoy the Duke presented William with a Spanish horse and an expensive jewelled saddle.

To say that William benefited from an education at Cambridge would be misleading, because, although his father did send him to St. John's College, he showed very little aptitude for learning and much preferred to practise sports, his chief interests being horsemanship and swordsmanship. Since these exercises were considered to be well suited to a person of quality, his father gave him every encouragement, personally teaching him swordsmanship and arranging for him to study under suitable masters of horsemanship. In particular, William was sent to M. Antoine, who was considered the best master of the art of riding at the time. William's brother Charles had a better head for learning and became a keen mathematician.

William and his father both inherited Bess of Hardwick's interest in buildings. They bought Bolsover Castle (now an English Heritage property), which had previously been granted to George Earl of Shrewsbury and Bess, with a view to major construction work. They destroyed most of the castle that had stood on the site since the twelfth century and began building a new manor house. William continued the building work after his father died. The riding school, measuring 92' x 30', was completed sometime in the period 1630 to 1634. It still stands today (see figure 3), having recently been refurbished, and remains one of the earliest surviving indoor riding schools.



Figure 3: Newcastle's riding school at Bolsover. (Copyright: English Heritage; visit [www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk).)

## 4 Social status

Many honours and titles were bestowed on William, by Kings James I, Charles I and Charles II. Some were given as incentives and others as rewards for services to the crown. Many of William's titles brought in appreciable sums of money in the form of rents and, together with his inheritance, he was, at least before the civil war, a very wealthy man. He was possibly the wealthiest man in England at that time.

In 1610, when William was a teenager, he was made a knight of the Bath (at that time not a chivalric order). In later years he was invested as a knight of the most noble order of the Garter. He became Viscount Mansfield in 1620, and later Lord Lieutenant of Nottinghamshire, Lord Warden of Sherwood Forest and Lord Lieutenant of Derbyshire. He joined the ranks of the nobility on March 7<sup>th</sup> 1628 as Earl of Newcastle. On October 27<sup>th</sup> 1643 he was made Marquis of Newcastle and he became Duke on March 16<sup>th</sup> 1665.

## 5 Marriage and country life

After his father died on 4<sup>th</sup> April 1617, William's mother urged him to marry. He chose Elizabeth, daughter of William and Judith Bassett of Blore. Elizabeth was the widow of Henry Howard, the third son of Thomas Howard, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Suffolk. She had two children by Henry, Elizabeth and James.<sup>2</sup>

William and Elizabeth's marriage was a happy one, and it also greatly increased William's estate. Elizabeth was kind, loving and virtuous. She bore William six sons, of whom two, Charles and Henry, survived to adulthood, and four daughters, one of whom died young, Elizabeth who died in childbirth, Jane and Frances. Charles later became Viscount Mansfield, but died after marriage, while Henry outlived his father and became 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Newcastle.

The couple settled to a life in the country, sharing their time between their estates at Bolsover and Welbeck, and taking occasional trips to London. William had diverse interests, which included optics and geometry. He was a member of the "Welbeck Group" which met to discuss science, and he maintained a private laboratory. His own conclusions on matters scientific were somewhat bizarre: he concluded, for example, that the sun is "nothing else but a very solid body of salt and sulphur, inflamed by its own motion upon its own axis". Combining his interest in science with horsemanship, he persuaded Thomas Hobbes to write a treatise "Consideration Touching the Facility or Difficulty of the Motions of a Horse on Straight Lines or Circular". The work survives, but is of little interest.

In 1633, William and Elizabeth spent a small fortune entertaining King Charles I at Welbeck, in the hope of securing royal favour. The amusements included a masque by Ben Johnson: "Love's Welcome to Welbeck". William later conceded that he had spent so much money that he had damaged his estates. In spite of this, when the Great Court at Bolsover was completed the following year, they entertained the King on 30<sup>th</sup> July with another Ben Johnson Masque: "Love's Welcome to Bolsover". A banquet was held in the long gallery, in two stages, with dancing in between. The Royal party had to retire to Welbeck afterwards because the accommodation at Bolsover had not been completed.

In 1638, William accepted the post of Governor to the King's elder son, Prince Charles. William introduced the ten year old boy to manège riding and under his tutelage the prince became an accomplished rider, well able to sit leaping horses.

In the following year, William was elected a Member of the the King's Privy Council.

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<sup>2</sup>William Bassett's tomb lies in Blore village church. On it can be seen effigies of himself, his wife Judith, Elizabeth and Henry Howard, and their daughter Elizabeth Howard.

## 6 Unrest in England

In 1639-40, the King had to put down a Scottish rebellion, and William gave his support by lending him the huge sum of £10,000, and raising an army, which he personally led into battle. William fell out with the army General over the position he was to occupy on the battlefield while sporting the King's colours. As the General would not permit him to ride where he thought fitting for a representative of the King, he promptly removed the colours. The General complained about William's behaviour to the King, but the King supported William's action. When the hostilities were over, William challenged the General to a duel, but the King got wind of it and the General was prevented from turning up at the appointed time. As a result of this incident William fell out of favour with parliament, who wanted to remove from him the governorship of the Prince. William decided to resign the post to avoid a scandal.

In the period leading up to the civil war, the relationship between King and parliament began to deteriorate. William's quiet life in the country was disturbed one day in 1641 when an urgent message arrived from the King. In response, William rode out at midnight, when his wife and children were in bed, without saying where he was going. He travelled some forty miles, arriving in Hull early the next morning. There he obeyed the King's orders by securing his magazine of arms and ammunition, and he sent an express message home to explain where he had gone. For this blatant personal military action William was summoned to appear before a select committee of the House of Lords to explain himself. He probably enjoyed the confrontation as he knew they had no option but to clear him when he produced the Royal Commission.

After a brief interlude in the country, William was called to attend the King in York, where he was commanded to take on the government of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Northumberland, Cumberland, Westmoreland and the Bishopric of Durham. He raised an army, put down a mutiny in Durham and exerted his influence to ensure that no church sermon would say anything against the King or his Government.

## 7 Civil war

On June 11<sup>th</sup> 1642, William became involved in the civil war. He was made commander of the northern armies, and given the power to coin money and to make knights (in all he knighted twelve men). Although he held a position of high authority, William was by nature a man of action, and he rarely made speeches. He had no interest in politics: "Those which have politic designs, are for the most part dishonest, by reason their designs tend more to interest, than justice." He adhered to the King Charles I's cause from motives of personal loyalty, from dislike of disturbance of the public peace, and because the monarchy was the foundation and support of his own position in society.

William did not allow the war to interfere with the pleasures of life. Routinely leaving the details of command to General King, he would steal away with good company and music, and deny top officials access to him for up to two days at a time, which caused great inconvenience when important decisions had to be made. Nevertheless, when the occasion demanded, William would appear in person on the battlefield, showing exemplary courage and absolutely no fear of danger.

Like the King, William did not always manage to pay his troops on time, but he did consider the plight of his men and he caused a tax to be levied for the purpose of paying them and for providing recompense to local communities for any damage caused by them.

As a commander, William was considered sound and fair in his judgement of others, though there were some who despaired of his leniency. He pardoned many men condemned by his

Council of War, on the grounds that if he hanged everyone there would be nobody left to fight. However, there were some crimes he did not forgive easily: "In the cases of robberies and murders, it is better to be severe, than merciful; for the hanging of a few, will save the lives and purses of many." In war, William always dealt fairly with the enemy – he showed great clemency to the common soldiers, and as a result many changed sides and fought for the King.

William was a man who liked to be in control. When York planned to elect a new Mayor, they asked for William's advice. Since he found the serving mayor to be loyal and discreet, he advised them to keep him on for another year. York, however resolved to ignore his advice and choose their own by election. On election day, William sent his forces into the town hall and there they remained until the previous Mayor was returned as he desired.

Because of his family background, William was trusted and well liked, and this made it easy for him to raise troops for the Royalist cause. In total, and without any assistance, he personally raised above 100,000 men, including his own famous and greatly feared 3,000 strong regiment of foot soldiers, the "whitecoats". They should have been "redcoats" but William was unable to obtain enough red material and, rather than wait for the cloth to be dyed, his men chose to wear white, saying they would dye their coats red with the blood of the enemy. The men were often referred to as "Newcastle's lambs" on account of their unusual appearance.

William greatly assisted the Royalist cause, routing the enemy and establishing obedience to the King in many areas. Some places he took by storm, and at others, such as Sheffield, the enemy simply fled as he arrived. At Scarborough, William persuaded the Governor to join the Royalist cause, which much annoyed the enemy.

When, in February 1643, William learned that Charles I's Queen, Henrietta Maria, had set sail from Holland and was intending to land in some part of the East Riding of Yorkshire, he marched his army to that area. After a treacherous crossing, the Queen arrived safely at Burlington Quay in March 1643. Although her ships and the house where she stayed were under fire from rebel vessels in the sea, she was unharmed. As the Queen was in need of money, William gave her £3,000, and provided troops to convey her safely to York.

A little later, the Queen decided to travel south to the King. While William was preparing her escort, word reached him that his wife had died on 17<sup>th</sup> April. He sent an army of 7,000 infantry and cavalry to protect the Queen on her journey, which, to his annoyance, the King decided to keep in his own service. William returned to Welbeck for Elizabeth's funeral later that month.

Being short of troops and well outnumbered by the enemy at Adwalton Moor, William found himself positioned where he was unable to mount a charge. He fired a cannon at the enemy's cavalry, sending them into disarray and giving him time to lead his own cavalry through two by two into a position from which they could line up and charge. They routed the enemy, killing 700 and taking 3,000 prisoners.

As William prepared to storm Bradford town, the enemy, including their General of the Horse, "Black Tom" Sir Thomas Fairfax, escaped in all directions. Lady Fairfax was captured by whitecoats and brought to William. He took her to York initially and, shortly afterwards, in a typical act of gallantry, loaned her his coach and servants to take her safely to her husband in Kingston-upon-Hull.

## **8 Prince Rupert and the battle of Marston Moor**

When, in the summer of 1644, William found himself unable to relieve the besieged Royalist garrison at York, the King sent reinforcements led by his twenty-four year old nephew, Prince Rupert, one of the ablest of all the Royalist commanders and William sent Rupert an eloquent letter of welcome. Rupert assumed command and succeeded in flushing out the enemy, chasing

them seven miles west to Long Marston. He then responded to William's letter by sending Lord George Goring to him with an abrupt military command demanding that William meet him at Marston Moor to engage the enemy. There is no doubt that William was offended and their relationship cooled.

Rupert had gained his position of command by being a favourite of the King. He was not, however, popular with some of the King's councillors. His early successes on the battlefield were not repeated later in the war, his major weakness being that he was never able to rally his troops after a successful charge. Eventually he fell out of favour with the King and went into exile. William had met the youth before the war, having entertained him and his brother the Prince Elector Palatine at Welbeck when they visited with Charles I – an occasion that had cost William £1,500.

William advised Rupert against an immediate attack, with several good reasons. Firstly, the Royalist forces were outnumbered by the enemy. Secondly, William was expecting 3,000 reinforcements to arrive soon from Northumberland, and a further 2,000 from several garrisons. Thirdly, William had had intelligence that there was discontent in the enemy ranks which might lead to weakness and, finally, William must have known, but may have concealed from Rupert, that his whitecoats, following their relief by Rupert's forces, were pillaging and plundering the parliamentary trenches in a drunken state, and were refusing to fight until their arrears of pay were settled. Rupert brushed aside all objections, maintaining that he had orders from the King to engage the enemy. In fact the King's letter was poorly worded. It did not explicitly order a battle, but it did instruct Rupert to return to aid the King as a matter of urgency, so Rupert had to choose between fighting immediately and returning directly without a battle.

Although William's friends advised him that, as he no longer had command, he was under no obligation to participate personally in the battle, he decided to do so. His two sons, who were commissioned officers, were also present. His brother Charles was with him too, but did not have a commission on account of physical weakness. William was accompanied by his page, Major Scot and Captain Mazine. The whitecoats also appeared on the field under their commander Posthumous Kirton, albeit late.

The date was July 2<sup>nd</sup> 1644. It appeared that battle would commence the next day, so Rupert instructed William to rest overnight and take action in the morning. Rupert dismissed his troops and left the field for his supper, while William rested in his coach nearby.

After a short while, at around seven o'clock in the evening, William was disturbed by the sound of battle: the enemy had launched a surprise attack. By the time William had armed himself and mounted his horse, he discovered that the cavalry of His Majesty's right wing had panicked and left the field. He succeeded in making them stand their ground for a time, but soon they fled again, even killing men on their own side who tried to stop them. His Majesty's left wing under Lord Goring and Sir Charles Lucas had better success and managed to beat back the enemy's right wing.

Rupert returned to the field but was soon unhorsed. He hid in a bean field for the remainder of the battle to avoid capture and was unaware of the outcome until he met William after it was all over.

William charged and routed a Scots infantry regiment, killing three men with his page boy's sword; but his success was short-lived, and the tide soon turned in favour of the parliamentary forces. He and his whitecoats repelled charge after charge and continued fighting until only thirty of them remained alive. The battle raged for a full two hours and it was a complete disaster for the Royalists. All of their 20 cannon, 10,000 arms, all their ammunition and all their baggage were lost to the enemy. William himself was physically unharmed, but 3,000 to 4,000 men were killed, including commander Kirton and 23 captains; and 1,500 prisoners were taken, including Sir Charles Lucas. The enemy lost 300 men.

Marston Moor was the first major Royalist defeat of the civil war, and as a result the King lost control of the north.<sup>3</sup>

## 9 Exile, poverty and a new life

The following night, William rode to York with his brother and one or two servants. He had no further means of serving the King, and was faced with a choice between escaping abroad or submitting to the enemy and losing his life, so he took his leave of Rupert, and, escorted by a troop of cavalry and a troop of dragoons, made for Scarborough. On July 4<sup>th</sup> his party took two ships and set sail for Hamburg. Travelling with him were his brother Charles and his sons Charles and Henry, both of whom were taken ill on the voyage: Charles contracted smallpox and Henry caught measles; but they both eventually recovered. The ships arrived at their destination after four days at sea.

As William had only £90 left, he was obliged to seek credit. This enabled him to buy himself a coach and, at a cost of £160, nine horses. He remained in Hamburg until February 1645, when he decided to travel to Paris. He was warmly received at all stopping points on his journey, and arrived in Paris in April 1645, where he presented himself to the Queen of England.

In the Queen's court, William met Margaret Lucas, sister of Sir Charles Lucas who had been taken prisoner at Marston Moor<sup>4</sup>. Margaret was the youngest of eight children born to the wealthy Essex landowner Sir Thomas Lucas and his wife Elizabeth Leighton. She was born at St. John's Abbey, near Colchester, in 1623. Her father in his youth had suffered a long banishment after killing a man in a duel, and had died when Margaret was an infant. Without a father's influence, home life was relaxed, and the children's education did not extend much beyond the rudiments of reading and writing, taught by an elderly gentlewoman. As a child, Margaret was moody, self-absorbed and melancholy, with a taste for flamboyant dress for which she was to become notorious in adult life. She became interested in writing at a very early age, and wrote some sixteen books before the age of twelve, though they were too disordered for publication. She was let down by her lack of schooling, which showed in her writing. Her main ambition was to become famous so that she would be remembered after her death. In fact she did become a prolific author, and a number of her works are still in print today.

At the age of twenty, Margaret resolved to become Maid of Honour to Queen Henrietta Maria, and she followed the Queen into exile after the defeat at Marston Moor. This was a difficult time for Margaret, as hers was a close family and this was the first time she had been separated from the others. At court she was shy and bashful, shunning the company of men and worrying how she should behave in these new unfamiliar circumstances in case she might bring disgrace on her family.

William and Margaret (figure 4) quickly fell in love. They exchanged many letters during their courtship – these have survived and they were published in book form in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The couple



Figure 4: Margaret Cavendish

<sup>3</sup>*The English Civil Wars* by Bob Carruthers, Cassell & Co, ISBN 0-304-35390-6, is a useful reference.

<sup>4</sup>On that occasion Lucas was exchanged. He was later captured again and released on condition he did not raise arms against the parliamentary forces. He subsequently broke this agreement and had the misfortune to be recaptured, court martialled and shot.



were married at Sir Richard Browne's Chapel in Paris. Despite an age difference of some thirty years they were extremely well matched and had the good fortune to enjoy a particularly happy, though childless, marriage. William encouraged his wife's interest in literature, and he and his brother Charles helped to further her education, giving her informal lessons in science and natural philosophy.

At the start of their marriage they lived in relative poverty and were obliged to live on credit, which was not always easy to obtain. At one point they even had to pawn some possessions as they had no money left for food. Margaret travelled to England in an attempt to obtain further credit and her inheritance, but to no avail.

## 10 Horsemanship

After two years and a move of house, William decided to practise the art of school riding. He bought a Barbary horse for 200 pistols, and then another for £100, which he promised to pay on his return to England. He took these with him to Rotterdam when he followed Prince Charles into Holland, and six months later he moved again to Antwerp, taking a house belonging to Helena, widow of the painter Peter Paul Rubens.

Margaret wrote:

“... howsoever our fortunes are, we are both content, spending our time harmlessly. For my Lord pleaseth himself with the management of some few horses, and exercises himself with the use of the sword; which two arts he hath brought by his studious thoughts, rational experience and industrious practice to an absolute perfection ...”

In Antwerp, William managed to secure further credit, and continued schooling his two Barbary horses, but sadly they both died after a short time. Eventually he obtained enough credit to buy himself a further eight horses. Here is what Margaret had to say when the Duke de Guise made an offer for William's grey leaping horse:

“... but My Lord was so far from selling that horse, that he was displeased to hear that any price should be offered for him: so great a love hath My Lord for good horses! And certainly I have observed, and do verily believe, that some of them had also a particular love to My Lord; for they seemed to rejoice whensoever he came to the stables, by their trampling action, and the noise they made; nay, they would go much better in the mannege, when My Lord was by, then when he was absent; and when he rid them himself, they seemed to take much pleasure and pride in it. But of all sorts of horses, My Lord loved Spanish horses and barbes best; saying, that Spanish horses were like princes, and barbes like gentlemen, in their kind. And this was the chief recreation and pastime My Lord had in Antwerp.”

In 1650, following the execution of Charles I in 1649, William was appointed a member of Charles II's privy council. Around this year he turned his hand to writing, and started on a book which he dedicated to his sons, entitled “The Truth of the Sorde”, in which he wrote about the art of fencing. He finished eight chapters but never completed the work. Originally it contained illustrations, but these have since been lost. The text has survived and it has excited some historical interest because of the light it throws on the blades available and the style of fencing adopted at that time. On William's fencing, Ben Johnson commented:

“... he has a method beyond all that ever were famous in it, found out by his own Ingenuity and Practice ...”

William was effectively banished from England because he and a few others had specifically been excluded from a pardon granted by parliament to “delinquents”, as the Royalists were now labelled. On hearing that estates in England were to be sold, and that an allowance was due to the wives of owners, Margaret travelled to England in 1651 with her brother-in-law Charles, and began negotiations. Margaret met with little success, partly because she had not been married to William while he was in England. She was also informed that she would get no allowance as William was the greatest traitor of England.

Charles’s estates, like William’s, had been sequestered and he had to pay to get them back. He agreed to pay £4,500, but parliament then conducted another survey and demanded a further £500, and he was obliged to sell some land to cover the cost. Charles was keen to save Bolsover and Welbeck for William, but Bolsover had already been sold and partly demolished, so he had to negotiate the purchase with the new owner.

Margaret stayed eighteen months with her family in London, during which time she wrote a book of poems, and a book called “Philosophical Fancies”. She returned to William on hearing that he was unwell. Charles was unable to make the journey as he had developed a fever from which, sadly, he did not recover. He died a bachelor, aged about 63, in 1654. William used money from his brother’s estates to pay off some of his creditors.

William continued practising his manège riding, and news of his expertise in the saddle soon spread. His school became something of a tourist attraction, and everyone of note who stopped in Antwerp wanted to see him ride. The Duke of Oldenburg and the Prince of East Friesland even presented him with horses of their own breeds when they visited. On one occasion the court of Dom John d’Austria arrived at the school with a total of seventeen coaches full of people anxious to see a display of equestrian art. Charles II visited and rode some of the horses himself. He was also made welcome at William and Margaret’s house, where he stayed for dinner and games.

## **11 A book on horsemanship**

At that time, Abraham Deipenbeke, a pupil of Rubens, was director of his late master’s art academy. William provided him with sketches and architectural plans of Bolsover and Welbeck that had been made around 1620. Deipenbeke used these as backdrops for a set of equestrian paintings. William sent the paintings to a variety of engravers, and plates were produced for a book he was preparing on horsemanship (see figure 5). The plates show numerous images of William and Captain Mazine who had been with him on the field at Marston Moor. William wrote this book in English and then translated it into French for publication. Two friends helped him with meeting the printing and publishing costs, which amounted to £1,300. The book appeared in Antwerp in 1658.

## **12 Return to England**

In 1660, news arrived of disturbances in England and, before long, Charles II was invited to return as King. William travelled to him at the Hague, where he wrote to Margaret informing her that he intended to go to England and instructing her to remain as security for his debts. The Duke of York offered a vessel, but William preferred to hire his own. The boat that was hired turned out to be a rotten old Frigate, and some of his party refused to sail with him when they saw the condition it was in. William was undaunted as he was keen to get to England quickly. He set off from Rotterdam, was becalmed on the way, and arrived at Greenwich six



Figure 5: An engraving from his book, depicting William riding a capriole, against a backdrop of Bolsover castle.

days later. William's banishment from England ended on May 28<sup>th</sup> 1660. The Frigate sank on its next voyage!

Margaret managed to borrow enough money to pay off the debts and secure a passage back to England on a Dutch man-of-war. William's modest lodgings were not to her taste and she insisted that they moved immediately to somewhere more suitable. As soon as William's business in London was complete they returned to Welbeck.

William's losses as a result of the war were enormous: Margaret estimated a total loss of £941,303, not counting damage to his personal estates of Bolsover and Welbeck. Some of his estates he was unable to recover, whilst others he could only recover for the duration of his lifetime. The King had given to the Duke of York all estates possessed by those executed (nine were executed in all) for the murder of King Charles I, including some properties that had originally belonged to William. The Duke graciously returned these to William.

William was particularly upset to find Clipston Park had been badly spoiled. He re-fenced it, and some friends restocked it with deer for him. At Bolsover he started some rebuilding work. He also acquired the best mares he could afford and started a stud at Welbeck.

## 13 The Duke and Duchess in society

As Duke and Duchess of Newcastle, William and Margaret became social celebrities. William maintained his friendship with the King, and took the post of "Gentleman of His Majesty's bedchamber".

Margaret continued her writing, sending presentation copies of her publications to certain scholars and to the University libraries at Oxford and Cambridge. Critics gave her books both good and bad reviews. William himself was a poet and a minor playwright and both he and the Duchess had plays performed on the London stage. Though Margaret was more prolific in her output, William's plays were more successful, as he had a better sense of comedy. After watching a farce that William had had a hand in writing, the diarist Samuel Pepys confessed he had laughed until his head ached.

When the Duke and Duchess were in London, the crowds would turn out in the streets to see them pass by in their coach. The Duchess earned the nickname “Mad Madge”, chiefly on account of her dress sense which often exceeded the bounds of propriety. Although Pepys labelled her a “mad, conceited ridiculous woman”, this didn’t stop him making a journey to Whitehall on April 11<sup>th</sup> 1667 in the hope of seeing her when she was expected to visit the Queen. On that occasion she did not turn up; but he did catch a glimpse of her on April 26<sup>th</sup>, noting that she sported a number of black patches covering pimples, but was nonetheless a very comely woman.

William published “The Country Captain”, “The Varietie”, “The Humorous Lovers” and “The Triumphant Widow”, and with Dryden’s assistance he translated Moliere’s “L’tourdi” as “Sir Martin Mar-All”. He also contributed scenes to some of Margaret’s plays, and some of his poems can be found among her works.

In 1667 Margaret published a biography of her husband “The Life of the Thrice Noble Prince William Cavendish, Duke Marquess, and Earl of Newcastle”. William insisted that she did not write anything that would prejudice or disgrace any family or individual. He also stipulated that any information about him before she knew him must come from himself or his secretary John Rolleston, and not from historians. In the same year William published a second book on horsemanship, this time printed in English, under the title “A New Method and Extraordinary Invention to Dress Horses”.

## 14 The Cavendish legacy

Throughout his life, William continued to exercise his passion for horsemanship and swordsmanship, though as he grew older he rode less and concentrated more on teaching. He gave riding lessons to many but taught swordsmanship only to his two sons and the future Duke of Buckingham, whose guardian he was.

Circumstances obliged William to take an active role in the civil war, but he was not a natural warrior. He was more at home with the finer qualities in life: he was a patron of Ben Jonson, John Dryden, Thomas Hobbes, René Descartes, Sir William Davenant, Thomas Shadewell, James Shirley, Richard Flecknoe and Pierre Gassendi. According to Margaret, William hated pride and loved humility; he would praise men’s virtues while keeping silent about their faults. His only vice, she said, was that he was a great lover and admirer of the female sex. In fact, during the 1640s, he had acquired quite a reputation for being a ladies man.

The Duke and Duchess were parted when she died suddenly at Welbeck on 15<sup>th</sup> December 1673<sup>5</sup>. She was interred in Westminster Abbey (visit [www.westminster-abbey.org](http://www.westminster-abbey.org)). William wrote an epitaph for them both for the tomb:

“Here lyes the Loyall Duke of Newcastle and his Dutches his second wife, by whome hee had noe issue, her name was Margaret Lucas yongest sister to the Lord Lucas of Colchester a noble familie for all the Brothers were Valiant and all the Sisters virtuous. This Dutches was a wise wittie & learned Lady, which her many Bookes do well testifie. She was a most Virtuous & a Loveing & carefull wife & was with her Lord all the time of banishment & miseries & when he came home never parted from him in his solitary retirements.”

Following Margaret’s death, William published all her letters and poems, but it was for her biography of the Duke, to whom she had clearly been devoted, that she became famous.

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<sup>5</sup>This date is given on the Westminster Abbey website [www.westminster-abbey.org](http://www.westminster-abbey.org) and was confirmed in other searches, but the date “seventh of January 1673-4” appears in the introduction to a 1915 printing of her biography of the Duke.

William died on Christmas day, 1676 at the age of 83 and was laid to rest beside Margaret in the Abbey. An impressive black and white marble monument stands there in the north transept as a memorial to the lives of the couple and their status in society (see figure 6, image reproduced with kind permission of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster). On it can be seen William's epitaph, in English, and a further Latin text that has been added for the Duke.

William's first book on horsemanship was later translated back into English and published under the title "A General System of Horsemanship". Several facsimile editions have since been produced and the book is widely available today. It is recommended reading for the serious student of classical riding. His second book is arguably less interesting than the first and has not yet been reprinted. Original copies are hard to find and expensive, but they are occasionally seen for sale. Literary works of Margaret Cavendish are also available<sup>6</sup>. Interest in them has been fuelled because she was one of the first champions of equality for women. Her biography of the Duke is not currently in print but second-hand copies are easy to find.

The noble couple left their mark on the world and we are richer because of their lives. They would be delighted to know that we are still reading their books and the story of their lives more than three hundred years on.



Figure 6: The William & Margaret Cavendish monument in Westminster Abbey (Copyright: Dean and Chapter of Westminster)

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<sup>6</sup>*Paper Bodies, A Margaret Cavendish Reader*, edited by Sylvia Bowerback & Sara Mendelson, ISBN 1-55111-173-X, is a good introduction to her work.