

The English Civil War: 10 Interesting Facts

- 1) Parliament troops were called Roundheads because some of the younger soldiers in the army had their hair cut very short. Their nickname for King Charles' cavalry was the Cavaliers (Spanish horseman called cavalieros had been responsible for killing Protestants in Europe).
- 2) In January 1649 King Charles I was beheaded. He wore 2 shirts to stop him shivering in the freezing cold as he didn't want the people to think he was afraid!
- 3) The cannons used in the Civil War were so heavy, the largest cannon needed a team of 16 horses to move them. More commonly, smaller cannon were used but even these required at least 4 men to move them. Aiming was difficult and the cannon were more effective as a means of instilling fear into the enemy than actually causing damage.
- 4) The pike was a long wooden shaft with a steel point on the end. If the army was surrounded then the pikemen would form a circle and lower or raise their pikes to provide a 'hedgehog' of cover.
- 5) Oliver Cromwell, the Lord Protector cancelled Christmas in 1647.
- 6) There were actually 3 Civil Wars. The Third war involved Scotland and Ireland, despite this being the English Civil War.
- 7) Sir Arthur Aston, the Royalist commander of Drogheda, was beaten to death with his own wooden leg by New Model Army soldiers when the town fell (11 September 1649, during the second Civil War 1648-1651)
- 8) The English Civil War killed a higher proportion of the British population than any other. In the seven years between 1642 and 1649, an amazing 1 in 10 of the adult male population died: more than three times the proportion that died in WWI and five times the proportion than in WWII.
- 9) One of the decisive battles of the English Civil Wars was Marston Moor, near York. On 2nd July 1644, the Parliamentarian forces, led by Oliver Cromwell, defeated the Royalist forces at Long Marston. Cromwell used the Old Hall at

Long Marston village as his base for the battle and his ghost has often been seen there on several occasions, pacing up and down, deep in thought before the conflict. Another story tell of a group of bedraggled men trudging along in the ditch alongside the road towards Marston Moor .The supposed Cavaliers have been known to clamber out of the ditch and wander into the center of the road, only to walk right through traffic.

10) Sir Jacob Astley, a devout royalist is, famous for both the Astley prayer which he was known to utter before battle as well as his final command to his men when he surrendered the last Royalist field army: 'Well lads, you have done your business, you may go and play'.