

The siege of Colchester.

Lord General Thomas Fairfax cracked open his boiled egg breakfast and called his New Model Army lieutenants to council.

‘Gentleman, our idle troops consume too much ale and brandy. Parliament demands we take Colchester. What is the distraction?’

‘Sir, it’s the Royalist’s, they’ve rebuffed our advances, their musket men concealed in the bushes and upon the town walls cause havoc.’

‘But we sent in the cavalry.’

‘Sir, they outflanked the royalists to allow the infantry to enter Colchester. Ultimately, they were repulsed.’

Fairfax swatted this away, resigned that his attack had failed. He’d lost a thousand good men. The royalist losses, thirty men and two officers; a gross underestimate.

‘Orders sir?’

‘Crack the egg; let’s make an omelette.’

‘How goes the day?’

‘Not well Lord General. The Royalists’ cannon on the ramparts has range and field of view to inhibit any approach.’

‘Your proposal to circumvent this issue?’

‘Permission to covertly move up our guns to a point where we can blast the wall out from under...’

Fairfax’s eyes quizzed. ‘The imbecile Royalists always christen their pieces. Take it out. I don’t need to know what it’s called.’

Surreptitiously the NMA worked through the night. Decoy fires, hymn singing and feints kept Colchester occupied whilst the oiled and rag wrapped parliamentary artillery were clandestinely rolled forward. With the first golden rays of dawn the barrage commenced and the stricken town-wall beneath the cannon crumbled. The ordinance fell and smashed in the rubble. Scores of Royalists tried to resurrect their defence, but its guncarriage lay in smithereens, its barrel twisted beyond repair.

The NMA flew kites to drop surrender term leaflets. Lords and gentlemen, all prisoners of mercy with the common soldiery to be free under oath.

Colchester capitulated to the resonant NMA's new anthem.

'Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall...'