

= Louis Nolan =

Louis Edward Nolan (4 January 1818 ? 25 October 1854) was a British Army officer and cavalry tactician best known for his role and death in the Charge of the Light Brigade during the Crimean War . Born to a minor diplomatic official and his wife , Nolan was educated at the Austrian Inhaber Pioneer School at Tulln , where he was noted as an enthusiastic horseman and military theorist . After early graduation he was commissioned as a subaltern in the 10th Austrian Hussar regiment , serving in Austria , Hungary and on the Polish frontier , where he again became known for his horsemanship and was promoted to senior lieutenant . Due to the nepotism inherent in the Austro-Hungarian armed forces , Nolan succeeded in transferring to the British Army as a Cornet in the 15th Light Dragoons .

Deployed in India , Nolan was eventually made the regimental riding master and an aide-de-camp to General George Berkeley , commander-in-chief in Madras , accompanying him on horse trials to evaluate the use of geldings as cavalry mounts rather than stallions , and was made a Captain in 1850 . Returning to Great Britain in 1851 , he toured continental Europe and wrote two books on horsemanship and cavalry theory , the second of which , *Cavalry : Its History and Tactics* , was universally acclaimed and led to the adoption of a Nolan-designed saddle by the British Army . A trusted voice on cavalry matters , Nolan was dispatched to the Middle East in the early days of the Crimean War to hunt for appropriate mounts . After returning he was attached to the staff of General Richard Airey , and in this role delivered the order that led to the Charge of the Light Brigade .

40 percent of the Light Brigade 's soldiers were killed , wounded , captured or rendered unfit for service , including Nolan , who was the first casualty of the Charge . Contemporary accounts blamed Nolan for failing to properly communicate the order , either accidentally or deliberately , while some modern historians apportion the blame to not only Nolan but also Lord Raglan , commander of the British forces in the Crimea , and the cavalry commander Lord Lucan .

= = Early life and education = =

Nolan was born on 4 January 1818 to Babington and Elizabeth Nolan , in York County , Upper Canada . Following his father 's dismissal from his minor diplomatic post at the British consulate in Milan , Nolan was accepted into the Austrian Inhaber Pioneer School at Tulln , where he was known as Ludwig by his fellow cadets . His father 's desire to see him given a chance to enter a prestigious branch of the armed forces meant that Nolan was regularly transferred to other cadet schools to learn more about the military . Enthusiastic about the cavalry , he was noted as an excellent horseman and student of military theory , as well as history . With the multi-lingual nature of Austro-Hungary , he also studied languages , including Hungarian . Other subjects studied there included fortification , water engineering , mathematics , fencing , swimming and bridge-building . Nolan graduated from the Pioneer School a year early in May 1835 , probably following a recommendation from Prince Liechtenstein , and was made a subaltern in the 10th Austrian Hussar regiment .

Nolan served in Austria , Hungary and on the Polish frontier , and was again noted for his horsemanship and language skills . His confidential report from 1838 commended his " great zeal and application " , and he was highly popular within the regiment , rising to become the senior lieutenant . Despite this , his status as a foreigner and a commoner limited his opportunities for promotion . Although promotions in the Austrian Army theoretically were merit-based , in practise the gentry exchanged favours and money unofficially to secure them . Nolan 's father attempted to get him a commission with the British Army , with little success until Nolan 's return to the United Kingdom for the coronation of Queen Victoria in July 1838 . While there , he secured an interview with Lord Fitzroy Somerset while his father negotiated with the Austrian General Clam-Gallas to permit Nolan to leave the Austrian armed forces . Eventually , following the payment of £ 450 , Nolan was granted a commission as a Cornet in the 15th Light Dragoons of the British Army on 23 April 1839 . His resignation from the Austrian army was never formally accepted , and

he was struck off the rolls on 31 October 1899 , 45 years after his death .

= = 15th Light Dragoons = =

= = = India = = =

Despite the negative associations with service there , Nolan had deliberately transferred to a regiment operating in India . He initially travelled to Maidstone , where the 15th maintained a troop to train new recruits , under the command of Captain George Key . He then caught a troopship to Bombay , the *Malabar* , which arrived on 9 November . Soon after arrival he fell ill and was granted two years of sick leave , starting from 26 March 1840 , and returned to Britain . He returned to active service in June 1841 , again to the Maidstone depot , and became a Lieutenant on the 19th . He went on leave again in August to take the riding master 's course and exam , and returned on 8 March 1842 , newly qualified .

His attachment to the Maidstone depot gave Nolan the opportunity to further study and practice cavalry theory ; he met several other officers with a similar interest , including Captain Key , with whom he became close friends . By 1842 his time at Maidstone had ended , and he departed for India in October , arriving at Madras on 9 May 1843 . The 15th Light Dragoons were stationed in Bangalore , a relatively peaceful area , and Nolan did not see action during his time there . He was appointed regimental riding master on 13 August 1844 , in recognition of his expertise at horsemanship . In his spare time , Nolan raced his horse *Arab Beauty* . At the Bangalore Cantonment Races in October 1846 , he placed second in two races , and won both the Galloway Stakes and Ladies ' Purse . A year later he entered *Sahagun* , without success .

As regimental riding master he introduced substantial changes to the cavalry training programme , reintroducing the use of leaping bars , training individual soldiers before teaching formation riding to entire squads , and appointing a dedicated soldier in each troop who was trained to break in new horses . Over the next few years the regiment 's standard of horsemanship rose , increasing Nolan 's reputation . When the regiment was inspected by Major General John Aitchison , a man known for his high standards , he wrote that :

Nolan 's system of training horses and teaching riding is worthy of being more generally known . The seat of the men is more uniform and the hand light and firm , and as the hand and heel work together the horses in the ranks are steady to a degree I did not expect to see on a regiment mounted on entire horses .

Nolan then became a staff officer , joining the staff of General George Berkeley , commander @-@ in @-@ chief in Madras , as an aide @-@ de @-@ camp in January 1849 . He quickly became close friends with Berkeley 's two sons , Charles and George , who were also enthusiastic about horse @-@ racing . In 1850 Nolan accompanied Berkeley on a tour of the region , conducting horse trials to evaluate the use of geldings as cavalry mounts rather than stallions , and was also promoted , purchasing a Captaincy on 8 March . Despite these successes , Nolan recognised that his prospects were far more limited in India than in England , and he could not afford the increased costs of serving in the colonies . At the same time , service in India was not taken seriously by many of the officers in high command , and would not be sufficient on its own to advance him . Accordingly , he obtained two years sick leave on 16 January 1851 and returned to England , intending to tour Europe and write a book on cavalry theory .

= = = Grand tour and cavalry theory = = =

After a brief period in England , Nolan and Colonel George Key toured the continent , visiting countries including France , Russia , Sweden and the German states . The Swedish Horse Guards under Curt von Stedingk left a particular impression , with Nolan later writing that they were " one of the best regiments of foreign cavalry I have ever seen " , and he was also impressed by François Baucher , initially considering simply translating Baucher 's *Méthode d'équitation* into English . In

Russia , he attended a military review of Cossack and Circassian cavalry , and passing through Germany , observed the Saxon dragoons . Eventually , following his return to Maidstone in October 1852 (and promotion to commander of the regiment 's troop there) , he published his first book , The Training of Cavalry Remount Horses : A New System , through Parker , Furnivall & Parker . Dedicated to Berkeley , the book was highly specialised and intended for practical use , aimed specifically at cavalry officers rather than equestrians generally .

The reaction to the book was limited , at least in part due to the specialised nature of the work . His second book , Cavalry : Its History and Tactics , covered cavalry theory more widely and made a series of recommendations , including the use of carbines on foot rather than from the saddle , and substantial improvements to the cavalry saddle itself . The existing saddle , in use since 1796 , was considered too high , restricting the use of a rider 's lower legs , leading to instability . Accordingly , he designed a new saddle , with the assistance of the saddler sergeant at Maidstone depot , which focused on reducing rubbing against the horse , improved comfort and weighed less than the existing design . The resulting saddle was tested in April 1853 , with attendance by the Duke of Cambridge , inspector general of cavalry . The reaction was positive , and the army commissioned it as a new model for the cavalry , known as the Universal Wood Arch Pattern design , but informally referred to as " Nolan 's saddle " .

Cavalry : Its History and Tactics received a much warmer reception than Training , with the Illustrated London News praising his knowledge and enthusiasm while recommending it for civilians as well as the military . Another review in The Times was also approving . Over the next few decades it continued to be well received , and was seen as " an important , even ground @-@ breaking , work " . The book gave him substantial prominence , both in Britain and the United States . It was also discussed in India , where it was praised as " the manual for a cavalry officer who would understand his profession and reflect honour upon it " . A copy was sent to Bonneau du Martray of the French Imperial Staff by Major @-@ General Wetherall of the British staff ; Du Martray , having read the book , translated the entire work as Histoire et Tactique de la Cavalerie .

= = Crimean War = =

= = = Remount mission = = =

With the Crimean War fast approaching , the British Army needed some way of obtaining cavalry horses in Turkey . One method was simply to ship horses from Britain , but this was time @-@ consuming and expensive , and would result in a large number dying . Alternately , horses could be bought in the Middle East , if suitable ones could be identified . The Duke of Newcastle , Secretary of State for War , needed an experienced cavalry officer to undertake such a search . With Nolan 's new @-@ found reputation he was a logical choice , and Newcastle had him struck off from the 15th Hussars and made aide @-@ de @-@ camp to General Richard Airey , backdated to 17 March 1854 . Issued with a " special service " passport , he departed to Constantinople , meeting the steamship Thabor at Marseilles .

After arriving in Turkey he met with Skene , the British Vice @-@ Consul , who had him introduced to Omar Pasha and invited to view the Turkish regiments . Nolan was not particularly impressed by them , judging the irregulars incapable of withstanding a Russian cavalry charge and finding the horses too small . He ordered 250 of them anyway , finding them appropriate for the British artillery if not for the cavalry . His report to Somerset (now Baron Raglan , and commander of the British forces in Turkey) included a proposal for a trip to Syria , where he claimed the horses were more appropriate . This proposal was eventually agreed to , and he went to ?skenderun on 9 May . When they arrived they discovered that Turkish officials had already bought most of the army horses in northern Syria , and so they continued on to Beirut and then Damascus . Even there , they failed to find horses of sufficient quality , and so they left the city on 21 May in hopes of making contact with the Bedouin . They left with a train of 292 horses , mostly bought from the ' Anizzah , and were met at Beirut by the steamship Trent and transported back to Turkey .

= = = Staff officer = = =

Nolan returned to the British forces to join the Light Division at Devna as aide @-@ de @-@ camp to Airey . The Royal Navy had control over the Black Sea , and with a Russian treaty with Turkey and Austria , the enemy forces were withdrawing from Eastern Europe . Despite this favourable outcome , the British government wished to negotiate with the Russians from a strong position . The decision was taken to invade the Crimea itself , with the objective of destroying or capturing the Russian naval base at Sevastopol . Raglan personally considered this unrealistic - British forces knew little about the region , the port 's defences , or the strength of the Russian military , with estimates of troop numbers varying between 45 @,@ 000 and 140 @,@ 000 . It was also quite a distance away , causing logistical difficulties .

With the Crimea identified as the target , Nolan and his fellow staff officers had to plan the assault , which eventually included 30 @,@ 000 infantry , 1 @,@ 240 cavalry and 54 guns , along with 24 @,@ 000 French soldiers and 70 of their guns . The cavalry alone required 3 @,@ 379 horses , and with such a small number of ships available the Heavy Brigade would be part of a second wave - until it arrived , the Light Brigade would be relied on as the sole unit of cavalry . The force departed for the Crimea on 2 September 1854 , and began landing at Kalamita Bay , 35 miles north of Sevastopol itself . Airey had the light cavalry engage in reconnaissance and screening while the rest of the force moved off the transports , and they were fully ashore by the 18th . On the 19th , they began marching to Sevastopol - still without the Heavy Brigade .

The force reached the Bulganak River that day , where skirmishers found a force of Cossacks and Russian infantry , with a light battery of artillery . The infantry and artillery had been hidden in a dip in the terrain while the British formed up , and their placement put the British cavalry in heavy danger . Raglan decided to withdraw , and sent a troop forward to cover the retreat ; this body 's confidence deceived the Russians into thinking that there was a larger British force than there was , and they failed to pursue the retreating cavalry . A day later , the British force , together with the French under General St Arnaud , defeated the Russians at the Battle of Alma . Nolan spent the battle as a liaison due to his fluent French , and was often galloping between the two allied armies . They resumed marching on 26 September and entered the plains of Balaclava , near Sevastopol .

= = = Balaclava = = =

The British camp in Balaclava was on a plateau , with two approaches - the South and North valleys - and a small hill , known as the Causeway Heights , between them . At Balaclava , the force waited for supplies while the allied ships bombarded the forts surrounding Sevastopol , starting on 17 October . The forts proved to be particularly strong , but some damage was caused and Admiral Kornilov killed . From then on , time and time again , the allied navy would bombard the forts , causing damage , which the Russians would then repair each night . While the allied armies waited to strengthen their positions and increase their resources , Prince Menshikov , commander of the Russian forces , had a desire to provide a victory to the Tsar following his defeat at Alma . He formed a plan to cut the British army off from the harbour at Balaclava , with a secondary objective of capturing the harbour itself . The Russian forces assembled on 24 October , and attacked at around 7am on the 25th . General Gribbe covered the Russian left flank , with Semiakin , Levoutsky and Scudery on his right : General Ryzhov waited behind them , prepared to support any individual force that came under trouble . The Turkish forces in the first redoubts were quickly overwhelmed and forced to flee .

At 8am Raglan ordered the Heavy and Light cavalry brigades , under Lord Lucan , to move into line with the second set of Turkish @-@ occupied redoubts . The order confused and infuriated Lucan - there was only one set of redoubts that had been occupied by the Turks , and it was now abandoned . Doing so also meant leaving the Turks and 550 British infantry to meet the Russian charge alone , without any cavalry support . Despite Raglan 's " lackadaisical wording " , Lucan interpreted the order (correctly) to require him to place the Light Brigade at the mouth of the North

Valley to Balaclava , a position that left the cavalry dangerously exposed : because of the terrain , they would not be able to see advancing Russian troops until they were less than 50 feet away . As Raglan watched the cavalry form up at the mouth of the North Valley , 30 minutes after giving the order , he changed his mind and had them returned to their original position .

At the same time , Raglan wished to reinforce the Turks and British infantry , and ordered Lucan to detach four of the five Heavy Brigade cavalry regiments and send them to the defensive line . This further angered Lucan , since splitting the force in half merely reduced the cavalry 's overall effectiveness , but he again complied . The result was that the first fork of the Russian cavalry attack encountered The Thin Red Line and were driven off , while the second fork , crossing the heights above the plain , encountered four regiments of the Heavy Brigade . The Russians - with between 1 @, @ 500 and 2 @, @ 000 men - were initially surprised to see the 800 British cavalry approaching , allowing Scarlett , the commander of the Heavy Brigades , to charge the Russians uphill . By this point Lucan had left Lord Cardigan in charge of the Light Brigade and raced over to the Heavies , later claiming that his duty trumpeter had ordered the British charge , which eventually forced the Russians to flee .

= = = Charge of the Light Brigade = = =

When Lucan left the Light Brigade idling on the plateau , he instructed Cardigan to defend the position against attack . Cardigan interpreted this to mean that he should not leave the plateau , and the Brigade remained mostly immobile while the Heavy Brigade engaged the Russian cavalry (over the objection of some of the Light Brigade 's officers) . This prevented the British cavalry from adequately pursuing the Russians , and no attacks were mounted down the North Valley through which they had retreated . Due to the failure of their attack , the Russians chose not to advance further , leading to Raglan deciding to attempt to retake the captured Turkish fortifications using the Light and Heavy brigades with two divisions of infantry . Although the 1st Division advanced swiftly , the 4th Division was deliberately tardy , making Raglan increasingly impatient . He dispatched an aide to Lucan ordering that " Cavalry to advance and take advantage of any opportunity to recover the heights . They will be supported by the infantry which have been ordered to advance on two fronts " . Lucan interpreted this to mean he should await the infantry support before attacking .

About 40 minutes later , with the infantry still having not arrived , Raglan 's staff officers spotted Russian artillery teams approaching the fortifications with equipment to remove captured guns . To avoid the guns being taken , Raglan dispatched Nolan to carry a message to Lucan that read :

Lord Raglan wishes the cavalry to advance rapidly to the front , and try to prevent the enemy carrying away the guns . Troop of horse @-@ artillery may accompany . French cavalry is on your left . Immediate .

As Nolan rode towards Lucan 's position , Raglan shouted that he should " Tell Lord Lucan the cavalry is to attack immediately " ; his fourth order . The Russian forces included the Don Cossack field artillery battery , containing between eight and twelve guns , drawn up at the bottom of the North Valley , with regiments of cavalry waiting behind it . Nolan carried the message to Lucan ; when Lucan asked what guns were referred to , Nolan is said to have indicated , by a wide sweep of his arm , not the Causeway redoubts but the Don Cossack battery in the North Valley , around a mile away . After a brief debate , Lucan ordered the Light Brigade forward . Cardigan claimed that Lucan had ordered him to attack without quarter given , despite him pointing out the Russian artillery ; Lucan , on the other hand , claimed he told Cardigan to retire from battle " if no opportunity to take his objective presented itself " . Regardless , the Brigade drew swords and was ordered by Cardigan to advance down the valley . Nolan had explicitly asked to join the Brigade for the fight , and was allowed to . As the Light Brigade advanced , the Russian guns opened fire , and a shell splinter hit Nolan in the chest . His horse carried him almost back to the Brigade 's starting point before Nolan fell from the saddle , dead .

Russian artillery continued to fire on the Light Brigade . As Lucan advanced after them with the Heavy Brigade , he saw the Light Brigade being overwhelmed by the Russian artillery and ordered the Heavies back , saying that " They have sacrificed the Light Brigade ; they shall not the Heavy , if

I can help it " . The remainder of the Light Brigade eventually reached the Russian artillery , wreaking havoc on the fleeing gunners , before pursuing the Russian cavalry behind the artillery down the remainder of the valley . Despite being outnumbered five to one , the British cavalry who pursued the Russians managed to disrupt the enemy for some time before being killed or captured . Of the cavalry who had stayed with the abandoned artillery guns , 60 or 70 were collected by George Paget , who retired back to the British lines despite Russian cavalry harrying them . The result was 110 dead , 130 wounded , and 58 missing or captured - 40 percent losses in an action that lasted 20 minutes .

= = Legacy = =

At the time of his death , Nolan was the last male member of his family , and the line died with him . Some friends had a plaque erected in his memory at Holy Trinity Church in Maidstone , although his body remained in the Crimea . Most of his possessions were given to Colonel Key , including the copyright on *Cavalry : Its History and Tactics* , his house in London and his interests in the Adelphi Estate in Tobago .

The Charge itself and the tragedy that resulted was blamed on both Lucan and Nolan by William Howard Russell ? Nolan , for misunderstanding the order and issuing a confusing message , and Lucan , for not properly keeping an eye on the terrain . Raglan himself primarily blamed Lucan , who was infuriated by this and wrote a letter to Horse Guards Parade disputing Raglan 's claim . This was too much for Viscount Hardinge , the Commander @-@ in @-@ Chief of the Forces , who had Lucan resign his command and return to Britain . With Hardinge unwilling to give him a court martial , Lucan wrote a pamphlet titled *A Vindication of the Earl of Lucan from Lord Raglan 's Reflections* and a series of letters to *The Times* that revealed Raglan 's order to have been highly ambiguous and " not the kind of dispatch required by an officer on the battlefield " . At the same time , Nolan 's method of delivery had been imperious , and he had insisted the urgency of the attack - something clear in Raglan 's verbal order to him , but not in the written order . Public opinion became divided ; people both attacked Nolan and rallied to his defence . The major newspapers , at least , maintained that with Nolan 's status as a mere messenger it was inconceivable that he alone could have destroyed the Light Brigade without failings by Lucan . Lord Cardigan defended Nolan by saying the Captain " did not have the least idea of the mistake which was about to be perpetrated . " Within the Crimea , however , the majority " roundly damned " Nolan . The Charge was soon overshadowed by other scandalous and bloody military failures such as the continued failure of the Siege of Sevastopol .

Terry Brighton writes in *Hell Riders* that " in the 150 years since the charge historians have generally agreed that the blunder was indeed Nolan 's . Most argue that he misunderstood the order , and when asked by Lord Lucan what Raglan intended by it pointed towards the wrong enemy guns and sent the Light Brigade to its destruction . In recent years it has even been suggested that he deliberately misled Lucan about which guns were to be attacked " . Brighton himself distributes the blame more widely , holding that Raglan , Lucan and Nolan were at fault , but that the vast majority of the blame lies with Lucan . David Buttery , in *Messenger of Death* , agrees that the blame was at least partially Lucan 's for failing to conduct adequate reconnaissance .

Nolan was played by David Hemmings in the 1968 film *The Charge of the Light Brigade* . In the film Nolan is portrayed as a haughty , glory @-@ hungry officer , but also a " symbol of youth , energy and professionalism ... desperate ... to reform the army " .