

= James Brudenell , 7th Earl of Cardigan =

Lieutenant General James Thomas Brudenell , 7th Earl of Cardigan KCB (16 October 1797 ? 28 March 1868) was an officer in the British Army who commanded the Light Brigade during the Crimean War . He led the Charge of the Light Brigade at the Battle of Balaclava .

Throughout his life in politics and his long military career he characterised the arrogant and extravagant aristocrat of the period . His progression through the Army was marked by many episodes of extraordinary incompetence , but this can be measured against his generosity to the men under his command and genuine bravery . As a member of the landed aristocracy he had actively and steadfastly opposed any political reform in Britain , but in the last year of his life he relented and came to acknowledge that such reform would bring benefit to all classes of society .

= = Early life = =

James Brudenell was born in a modest , by the standards of the Brudenell family , manor house at Hambleden , Buckinghamshire . In February 1811 his father inherited the Cardigan earldom , along with the immense estates and revenues that went with it , and the family seat of Deene Park , Northamptonshire . James accordingly became " Lord Brudenell " , and took up residence in the most grand of households , at the age of fourteen .

He was educated at Harrow where , notwithstanding the fears of his family that a childhood head injury caused by a dangerous fall from a horse had seriously damaged his intellect , he showed aptitude in Greek and Latin . He made good academic progress , but after he had settled a quarrel with another pupil by an organised fist @-@ fight , his father removed him from the school . (Fist fights were tolerated at Harrow : it was the fact of Brudenell 's receiving punishment for unauthorised absence while having a broken bone in his hand attended to by a London surgeon that had annoyed the earl .) He was subsequently educated at home . Here , as the only son among seven sisters , he developed into something of a spoilt child , accustomed to getting his own way . This is seen as a cause of his arrogance and stubbornness in later life .

Brudenell was a fine rider and , inspired by the decisive role of cavalry at the battle of Waterloo , his wish was to purchase a commission in a fashionable regiment and serve as an army officer . His father , however , mindful of preserving the family pedigree from risk of battle , would not allow this . Instead in November 1815 he was sent up to Christ Church , Oxford ; as an aristocrat he was automatically granted admission without examination . He left in his third year ? aristocrats with no academic bent were released after only two years ? but notwithstanding his showing some aptitude , he did not take a degree .

= = Parliament = =

In February 1818 , during his last term at Oxford , and again following his father 's wishes , he became Member of Parliament (MP) for Marlborough , a pocket borough owned by his cousin Charles , Earl of Ailesbury . The intention was to give Brudenell a grounding in parliamentary affairs before , eventually , he would take his place in the House of Lords .

Brudenell 's first action on leaving Oxford was not to take his parliamentary seat but , as was traditional for wealthy young men of the time , to take the Grand Tour . His itinerary , with Russia and Sweden included , was more extensive than the traditional destinations of France and Italy . The trip allowed Brudenell to enjoy the full pleasures of both cultural and social opportunities afforded by the countries he visited .

On his return Brudenell took his seat in the House of Commons , naturally on the ruling , Tory , side of the House . His contribution to government was minimal : he served with parliamentarians , such as Canning , Peel and Castlereagh , of great commitment and intellect and he could offer nothing to compete . On one issue , however , he made a stand . In 1829 his party introduced a bill allowing limited Catholic emancipation but his patron , cousin Charles , instructed him to oppose it . In three crucial votes Brudenell abstained , because of his admiration for Wellington , the bill 's sponsor , and

in consequence he was thrown out of his seat . His return to parliament in 1830 cost him dearly . After his earlier disobedience he could not expect to be handed a pocket borough so , instead , he had to buy his own . He was elected member for Fowey , Cornwall , at a cost of at least £ 5 @, @ 000 (about £ 400 @, @ 000 in today 's money) .

This sum , however , was not well spent : in 1832 , the seat was one of those identified in the Reform Act for correction of such malpractices and he was thrown out again . He fought the family 's local constituency of Northamptonshire North , newly created in the reforms , in 1832 but despite holding the advantage that many of the electors were dependent on family 's patronage and goodwill , the campaign did not go smoothly . On 12 September in Wellingborough he was beaten up and " considerabl [y] " injured while campaigning . As a precaution he distributed about £ 20 @, @ 000 (equivalent to some £ 1 @, @ 680 @, @ 000 today) among the electorate and the seat was won , albeit as " junior member " to his Whig rival . In 1837 he inherited the earldom from his father .

= = Marriages = =

Early in the 1820s Brudenell met Mrs. Elizabeth Tollemache Johnstone (8 December 1797 ? 15 July 1858) . Her husband , Lt.-Col. Christian Johnstone , had been a friend of Brudenell 's since childhood but , according to the account of Johnstone 's mother , the wooing of his friend 's new wife started soon after the wedding . Johnstone started divorce proceedings in June 1824 and the suit was finalised early in 1826 . Johnstone , who had received damages of £ 1 @, @ 000 from Brudenell , was apparently happy to be rid of her , calling her " the most damned bad @-@ tempered and extravagant bitch in the kingdom " . She and Brudenell married on 19 June 1826 . It was not a happy marriage ; by 1837 they had separated , and they had no children .

After leaving his first wife , Elizabeth , he married for the second time , on 20 September 1858 , to Adeline de Horsey , achieving still greater notoriety as he had been conducting an affair with her as his wife was dying . This , however , was a happy union , notwithstanding the disparity in their ages and Cardigan 's disappointment that there were , again , no children . Adeline , excluded from fashionable society for the rest of her days , accustomed herself to life in the country , happily forsaking her previous interests of books , painting and music , while Brudenell spent large sums of money making their home together comfortable . Adeline even remained on good terms with Brudenell 's principal mistress , Maria Marchioness of Ailesbury , and tolerated his other affairs .

= = Military = =

= = = Early career = = =

Beyond all other interests , which included politics and the preservation of the ancient privileges of the aristocracy against the reformist climate of the period , Brudenell committed himself to a career in the army . At the age of 22 he formed his own troop of horse , armed from official stocks , to guard against possible reformist demonstrations in Northamptonshire . On 6 May 1824 , at the age of 27 , he joined the 8th King 's Royal Irish Hussars . Making extensive use of the purchase of commissions system then in use he became a Lieutenant in January 1825 , a Captain in June 1826 , a Major in August 1830 and a Lieutenant @-@ Colonel , albeit on half @-@ pay , only three months later , on 3 December 1830 . He obtained command of the 15th The King 's Hussars ? at a reported premium of £ 35 @, @ 000 ? on 16 March 1832 .

Parliamentary business , in the form of the hotly contested Reform Bill campaign , delayed his taking command until May . His youth and inexperience , compared with that of the battle @-@ tested officers whom he led (some were veterans of the battle of Waterloo) drew his naturally punctilious nature to manifest itself in petty @-@ minded bullying . In 1833 he was publicly censured for " reprehensible ... conduct " in a court martial held to determine charges he had laid against Captain Augustus Wathen , a subordinate . Brudenell was dismissed , by order of King William , early in 1834 . However he had influence at court and he asked his sister Harriet , married to Queen

Adelaide 's chamberlain , Lord Howe , to get the decision reversed . He pestered senior officers and politicians until in March 1836 he was allowed command of the 11th Light Dragoons (later restyled the 11th Hussars) , notwithstanding the view of his commander @-@ in @-@ chief , Lord Hill , that he was " constitutionally unfit for command " . After a leisurely passage with his wife , he joined his new command in India in October of the following year , just in time to enjoy some tiger @-@ shooting before seeing the regiment off for Britain at the end of its long posting . He travelled separately in a hired vessel , disdaining to share the discomforts of the warship carrying his troops . Of the two years following his appointment , only four weeks were spent with his regiment .

In a genuine desire to lead a smart and efficient unit , Brudenell set about using his own fortune to improve his regiment 's reputation and performance . In purchasing brilliant new uniforms for his men Brudenell also caused resentment among his professional officers ; they had to match the men 's attire with even more costly uniforms , and they had to buy their own . (It was in this role that he was portrayed in the historical fiction novels *Flashman* and *Flashman at the Charge* by George MacDonald Fraser .) He wished his officers to be as aristocratic , flamboyant and stylish as he was himself and as a consequence he had no time for those men ? " Indian officers " ? who had learnt their profession over many years of service with the 11th during its long posting to India . This attitude was particularly in evidence in the mess : Brudenell had forbidden the serving of porter , the beverage of choice among the professional officers , and when at a formal mess dinner a visitor had requested moselle wine , which was served in a " black bottle " similar to that of porter , he decided that the " Indian " Captain John Reynolds , who had ordered it for the guest , was defying him . Reynolds was arrested and in due course received a strongly worded reprimand from Lord Hill , who although privately believing that his misgivings about Brudenell had been well founded , felt that in the interests of good order and discipline a public demonstration of support was necessary . Reynolds 's guardian sent the details of the case to all the London papers and for many months thereafter Brudenell , his regiment and the commander @-@ in @-@ chief were subject to ridicule , hissing and cat @-@ calls of " black bottle " whenever they appeared in public . A more serious punishment was administered to Richard Reynolds , cousin to John Reynolds and another long @-@ serving captain , who was court @-@ martialled for sending Cardigan an " insubordinate " letter in response to being barred from his commanding officer 's quarters . Hill drafted a strong memorandum urging Cardigan to employ " temper and discretion " in dealings with his officers , but Reynolds was cashiered .

Not all of the " Indian " officers of the 11th found themselves the object of Brudenell 's disfavour : when in October 1840 Major Jenkins , a long @-@ serving veteran , fell seriously ill Brudenell attended his bedside for two nights and , when he died , made a substantial payment to the family and secured a suitable position for his younger son . George Ryan , a writer highly critical of Brudenell , acknowledged his generosity towards his officers and men when in hardship and noted him to be a regular , anonymous subscriber to many civic charities .

Brudenell was prosecuted in 1841 for a duel with one of his former officers , another long @-@ serving professional . He was acquitted on a legal technicality , notwithstanding his boast on arrest that " I have hit my man " . The prosecution had demonstrated that Cardigan (using a duelling pistol with concealed rifling and a hair trigger , which was thought unsporting according to the usages of duelling) had fired upon Captain Harvey Tuckett . The indictment , however , was that the victim had been " Harvey Garnet Phipps Tuckett " . The discrepancy in the name allowed the jury of his peers , 120 in number , unanimously to acquit him ; as a nobleman the law of the time allowed him to be tried for a capital crime before the House of Lords sitting as a jury , with the Lord High Steward as judge . This added to his unpopularity , with *The Times* alleging that there was deliberate , high level complicity to leave the loop @-@ hole in the prosecution case and reporting the view that " in England there is one law for the rich and another for the poor " and *The Examiner* describing the verdict as " a defeat of justice " . Even his obituary described this evasion of justice as " an absurd technical deficiency " .

= = = Crimean War = = =

His most notorious exploit took place during the Crimean War on 25 October 1854 when , in command of the Light Cavalry Brigade at the battle of Balaclava , he led the charge of the Light Brigade , reaching the Russian guns before returning , personally unscathed , in a manoeuvre that cost the lives of about 107 out of the 674 men under his command who took part in the charge (although others may have died of wounds later on) . The extent to which Lord Cardigan was to blame is unproven , since he attacked only after expressing his doubts and receiving a direct order in front of the troops from his immediate superior Lord Lucan , Commander of the Cavalry Division . The two men were barely on speaking terms as Lucan was married to one of Cardigan 's sisters and , as Cardigan believed , did not treat her well . The order had been conveyed by Captain Louis Nolan , who died in the charge , and both Lucan and Cardigan blamed him for passing on the order incorrectly . Cardigan 's first action on his return from the charge was to report the undisciplined behaviour of Captain Nolan (whom he did not know to be dead) in riding ahead of him at the start of the attack .

A staff officer to army commander Lord Raglan , Colonel the Hon. Somerset John Gough Calthorpe , alleged in his book *Letters from a Staff Officer in the Crimea* that Cardigan had only survived because he had fled the scene before the charge made contact with the enemy . In his first edition , Calthorpe allowed that Cardigan 's horse may have bolted , but later editions pointedly stated the earl was too fine a horseman for this to be a satisfactory explanation . The horse , " Ronald " , a famous charger bred on Cardigan 's Deene Park estate , survived the war and returned safely to England . After some preliminary legal skirmishing , Cardigan sought an indictment for criminal libel in 1863 , but his action failed , although the bench made plain that it was only his competence , and not his courage , that was in doubt . They found that he had led his men onto the enemy 's guns with " valour ... conspicuously displayed " but thereafter " his conduct as a General was open to criticism " . This conclusion is shared by historian Alexander Kinglake , who concludes that although Cardigan displayed a " want ... of competence " after the charge , he had only lost contact with his men through his brave persistence in galloping too far ahead of them .

There is no doubt that Cardigan had reached and overrun the enemy battery : he was recognised beyond the guns by Prince Radziwill , an enemy officer with whom he was acquainted before the war . Considering his duty then done and disdaining , as he later explained , to " fight the enemy among private soldiers " Cardigan turned about and made his way steadily ? he himself said that his return was at the walk to avoid any unseemly appearance of haste ? for his own lines . Lucan recalled things differently , later giving evidence that Cardigan had been galloping back , only slowing to walk when he realised he was being watched . This hurried retreat was also noticed by General Liprandi , Russian commander , who made enquiries to identify the English officer whom he saw galloping away after the attack . Officers and men of the second and third lines ? men for whom as brigade commander Cardigan remained responsible ? were still advancing at the charge when they saw their commander riding in retreat . Other officers too had noticed his absence and when Lord George Paget of the 4th Hussars , one of the last to return after some intense , hand @-@ to @-@ hand fighting , encountered a " composed " Cardigan , he challenged him to account for himself . Unsatisfied with the response , Paget wrote an official complaint to the new Commander @-@ in @-@ Chief , the Duke of Cambridge . Cambridge forwarded the letter to Cardigan for comment and Cardigan 's reply in turn complained that Paget had not in fact taken his regiments into the attack that day . Inconclusive claim and counter @-@ claim followed , until Cardigan 's attentions were diverted to the allegations made public when Calthorpe 's book *Letters* went on sale .

In the week following the battle of Balaclava , the remnants of the Light Brigade were posted inland , to high ground overseeing the British lines surrounding Inkerman . Cardigan , who had spent most nights of the campaign aboard his luxury yacht *Dryad* in Balaclava harbour , found this move a great inconvenience and his leadership of the brigade suffered as a result . He missed the Battle of Inkerman (4 and 5 November 1854) , casually asking journalist William Russell (who was returning from the conflict) " What are they doing , what was the firing for ... ? " as he rode up from the harbour at noon on the first day . The decisive stages of the battle were on the second day and again Cardigan was absent , although he managed to arrive at a more creditable 10 @. @ 15 am .

The part played by the brigade was not great and , to avoid embarrassing the earl , it was not mentioned in the official account of the battle forwarded to London .

Whatever Cardigan 's faults , he had always tried to ensure that the troops under his command were well equipped . However , as the Crimean winter fell over the Light Brigade 's exposed position , food , fodder , clothing and shelter were all in short supply . Beyond writing letters pointing out the deficiencies , Cardigan did nothing . Food and fodder were available at the coast , but he refused to release any men and horses to carry up stores , as his officers pleaded , in case of a surprise attack by the enemy and because " I had no orders to do so " . Colonel Alexander Tulloch , who gave evidence to a board of enquiry into the failure , noted that in fact Cardigan had more horses than he had needed : indeed more horses than men to ride them , and wrote privately after his evidence was excluded from the final report : " Because Lord Cardigan might have had some difficulty in carrying up all the barley to which his corps was entitled he [resolved himself] therefore justified in bringing up none . " There was great hardship and many horses died .

On 5 December 1854 , citing ill @-@ health , Cardigan set off for England . In these circumstances the word of an officer regarding his fitness to serve would normally be accepted , but Raglan permitted his departure only after a medical board had confirmed his claimed disability .

= = = The Hero of Balaclava = = =

Newspaper accounts of the gallant charge had been given wide circulation in England by the time Cardigan 's ship berthed at the port of Folkestone on 13 January 1855 and the town offered him a rapturous welcome . In London he was mobbed by an enthusiastic crowd and on 16 January at Queen Victoria 's invitation he was received at Windsor to explain to her and Prince Albert the details of the battle . Victoria noted how " modestly " he presented his story , but this reticence was absent in his public appearances : on 5 February , he gave a highly exaggerated account of his participation in the charge at a banquet held in his honour at the Mansion House , London . On 8 February , at a speech in his home town of Northampton , he went even further , describing how he had shared the privations of his men by living the " whole time in a common tent " and how , after the charge , he had rallied his troops and pursued the fleeing enemy artillerymen as far as the Tchernaya river . As his biographer Saul David points out , " a more misleading account of his own exploits could hardly have been given " .

Cardigan was able to enjoy many months of adulation before doubts about his conduct emerged : He was made Inspector @-@ General of Cavalry , the government recommended him for the Order of the Garter , although the Queen denied him this honour because of the previous unseemly incidents in his private life ; he was instead invested as a knight in the Order of the Bath . Merchants , eager to profit from his fame , sold pictures depicting his role in the charge and written chronicles , based on his own accounts , were rushed into print . The " cardigan " , a knitted waistcoat supposedly as worn by the earl on campaign , became fashionable and many were sold .

Cardigan 's commanding officer and brother @-@ in @-@ law , Lord Lucan , had been recalled in disgrace ? largely brought about by the determination of the commander @-@ in @-@ chief , Lord Raglan , to displace blame from himself ? and arrived in England only two weeks after his subordinate but , as the officer who had " looked on " (a pun on his name much exploited by Cardigan) while the charge had taken place , little regard was given to his version of events . (Lucan had earned the unfortunate nickname of " Lord Look @-@ on " while held in reserve during an action before the earlier Battle of Alma .) In July 1855 The Times hinted that the public had been misled over " the real nature of [Cardigan 's] services in the East " but , in the absence of anything definitive , his popularity remained . However , officers who had taken command in the aftermath of the charge , the role that Cardigan was claiming for himself , had heard of his reception in England and were anxious to put the record straight . The writer George Ryan , who had rushed out a hasty pamphlet praising Cardigan , retracted his words , and was the first to report Cardigan 's fellow officers ' reservations about the earl 's conduct on the day . As the soldiers themselves began to return to England , the doubts hardened . It was not until the following year , however , with the official enquiries of Colonel Tulloch and the publication of Calthorpe 's Letters , was there proof that

Cardigan had not been telling the truth . Nonetheless he continued , with characteristic arrogance and self @-@ delusion , as if nothing was amiss and he remained in his cavalry post for the next five years . Eight months on active service , or , A diary of a general officer of cavalry , in 1854 , published in 1855 , was Cardigan 's own account of his time in the Crimea .

Cardigan 's overwhelming enthusiasm for the army remained and the meticulous standards of dress and parade that he had required of his earlier commands he now applied to the whole cavalry . He was made Colonel of the Regiment of the 5th Dragoon Guards in 1859 , but he derived more satisfaction when , after his formal retirement in 1860 , and its accompanying promotion to Lieutenant @-@ General , he became colonel of his favourite regiment , the 11th Hussars , which he had first commanded in 1836 . He remained in royal favour and early in 1861 he was selected to accompany the Prince of Wales , heir to the throne , to inspect Prussian cavalry manoeuvres . He was possibly an unwise choice as his arrogant behaviour towards his hosts , themselves no strangers to high self @-@ esteem among military officers , resulted in numerous challenges to duel ; he was quickly sent home . The Queen , however , blocked his colonelcy of one of the Household regiments because of his dalliance with Adeline while still married to Elizabeth . His last military function was a mounted review of the 11th Hussars before their embarkation for India in May 1866 . He was joined by Colonel John Reynolds , who had been Cardigan 's adversary in the " black bottle affair " , but the men had at last settled their differences in the previous year .

= = Retirement = =

After his retirement in 1866 he lived happily at Deene , passing his time with horse @-@ racing , hunting and shooting . He remained a member of the Royal Yacht Squadron and was Commodore of the Royal Southern Yacht Club .

His parliamentary life continued , with the occasional foray to London to speak in the House of Lords on military matters and to continue to press for further official recognition of his glorious career . He surprised some commentators when , in 1867 , he spoke in favour of the second Reform Bill . In acknowledging his change of heart he said that the time for trying to stem the tide of reform , an endeavour in which he had long strived , had passed and given " good luck " the extension of the vote would " confer ... a great benefit upon every class of the community " . In 1868 he presented to the House a petition calling for additional recognition of the late General Henry Shrapnel , inventor of the explosive artillery shell , in recognition of its effectiveness at Waterloo .

He died from injuries caused by a fall from his horse on 28 March 1868 , possibly following a stroke , and was buried in the family vaults at St Peter 's Church , Deene .

= = Modern assessments = =

The historian Cecil Woodham @-@ Smith 's The Reason Why (1953) did serious harm to the Earl 's posthumous reputation . Another critical assessment of Cardigan and his career is The Homicidal Earl , by Saul David , a military historian . Colonel Calthorpe 's Letters from a Staff Officer in the Crimea has a modern reprint as Cadogan 's Crimea , ISBN 0 @-@ 689 @-@ 11022 @-@ 7 . Donald Thomas 's 1975 biography Cardigan : The Hero of Balaclava provides a more sympathetic portrayal . Terry Brighton in Hell Riders : the Truth about the Charge of the Light Brigade (London : Penguin 2004) gives a critical account of Cardigan as Brigade Commander , but finds him in no way to blame for the Charge .

= = Cultural depictions = =

The Charge of the Light Brigade , a 1968 film based on Woodham @-@ Smith 's research , made Cardigan (played by Trevor Howard) its primary antagonist . The movie depicts Cardigan as a harsh disciplinarian , womaniser and military incompetent . It shows the " black bottle " affair , though it incorrectly makes Louis Nolan Cardigan 's antagonist , and heavily features his rivalry with Lord Lucan . It also fictitiously shows Cardigan pursuing an affair with Fanny Duberly .

George Macdonald Fraser 's The Flashman Papers novels feature Cardigan as a recurring villain . In the first instalment , he commands Flashman in the 11th Hussars and transfers him to India after he marries Elspeth on the grounds that she is the daughter of a tradesman . Cardigan reappears in Flashman at the Charge , where Flashman catches Cardigan trying to seduce Elspeth . Flashman later reluctantly joins Cardigan for the Charge of the Light Brigade . He appears briefly in Flashman in the Great Game , where Cardigan demands Flashman defend Cardigan 's reputation against hostile journalists . Flashman not only refuses but pointedly insults Cardigan . His last mention comes in Flashman and the Angel of the Lord , where Flashman observes Cardigan 's liaison with Fanny Paget .

Cardigan appears as an antagonist in the 2015 video game Assassin 's Creed Syndicate by Ubisoft , set in 1868 . In the game , Cardigan is a member of the Templar Order who headed a plot to assassinate the Prime @-@ Minister Benjamin Disraeli . The lead character Jacob Frye discovers the plot , prevents Disraeli 's death and finally tracks down and kills Cardigan .