

# Armour and Weapons of the British Civil Wars

## Source-Based Activities

### Activity 2: Colonel 'Blowface' Forbes

#### Background

Colonel William 'Blow-face' Forbes fought on the side of the Parliamentarians, under Lord Fairfax in the Civil War. In January 1645, whilst Parliamentary forces were besieging Pontefract Castle in Yorkshire, a cannon ball passed between Forbes and Sir Thomas Fairfax.

#### Source 2 a)

The story of how Colonel 'Blowface' Forbes was injured by a cannon ball, reported in a Parliamentarian newspaper.

*Pontefract Castle is still closely besieged by the L Fairfax his forces: Sir Thomas Fairfax was lately in great danger of being shot by a canon bullet from the castle which came between him and the Colonel Forbes; the waft of it feld Sir Thomas to the ground and spoyled one side of the Colonel's face and eyes. Our forces are in great probability of taking it and will be able no doubt speedily to requite those in the castle for their obstinacy and insolency.*

*Thomason Tract, E24[23], Mercurius Civicus, 9-16 January (London, 1645)*

**Source 2 b)** An illustration of Colonel William 'Blow-face' Forbes from the 'Battle Scarred' Exhibition curated by a team led by the University of Leicester and hosted at the National Civil War Centre in Newark, 2016-19.



Study Sources 2a) and 2b) carefully. Then answer the following questions:

- 1) What happened to Thomas Fairfax when a 'canon bullet ... came between him and the Colonel Forbes'?
- 2) What happened to Colonel William Forbes during this same incident?
- 3) Why do you think Colonel William Forbes got his nickname 'Blow-face Forbes'?

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