

# The Mysterious Colonel Richard Newman

(A Cautionary Tale?)

It was the scan of a page from a 1905 newspaper, sent to me last week by Robert Newman, our Keeper of Newman Records, that set me off writing this article. The article touched on the legend of my ancestor Richard Newman whose heroics in the English Civil War sparked a childhood interest in my family history. It reminded me that I've never satisfactorily resolved the truths and myths behind the legend. This is my latest (but probably not the last) attempt to do so.

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## Richard Newman, his father Richard, his son Richard, and his grandson Sir Richard

In the family history handed down to me, Col. Richard Newman (1620-1695) was established as perhaps the most notable Newman amongst the 18-odd generations of my known ancestors. Richard's father was another Richard Newman who lived from 1584 to 1664. His eldest son was another Richard Newman (of Evercreech Park) who predeceased him, living from 1650 to 1682<sup>1</sup>, and his grandson was yet another Richard, Sir Richard Newman bart., who lived from 1675 to 1721.

This fourth and last Richard Newman is well established in the records, having been made a baronet in 1699, and being memorialized in the magnificent monumental carving in the Newman chapel, annexed to the little church in Fifehead Magdalen, in rural Dorsetshire.

Not a lot was known for sure about the first Richard Newman (1584-1664) other than that: (a) he matriculated into Gloucester Hall, Oxford, on 18th June 1602, and (b) he lived in Fifehead Manor, and probably had a house of some sort in Westminster.

In fact, the Fifehead manorial estate had been leased from the Abbot of St. Augustine's Abbey, Bristol, by a succession of Newmans from 1408 until around 1660, when, for a long time, I've believed that the freehold was purchased by one or other Richard Newman. However this may not in fact be so.<sup>2</sup>

Richard, the father's dates, 1584-1664, are recorded on a memorial in the same Newman chapel at Fifehead, together with a Latin inscription kindly translated for me by [Peter Foden](#), as follows:

**Richard Newman,**  
firstborn son of Thomas, lies in the same grave.  
He fathered sons Thomas, carried off by fever in the flower of youth,  
And Richard, erector of this monument,  
Composer of these inscriptions,  
Surviving Daughters Anne and Jane.  
With respect toward superiors and  
friendship toward inferiors,  
He diligently dispensed Justice equally to all.  
He remained a true widower for 44 years,  
Imitating his father equally in virtue and in longevity,  
He followed the rule of duty.

On 10th June AD 1664, suffering one-sided paralysis, he expired in his 80th year.

Richard, the son (the mystery man) is named as the "erector of this monument and composer of these inscriptions", but the chapel has no memorial to him.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard's youngest son was Francis Holles Newman - my great-great-great-great-great-great grandfather.

<sup>2</sup> [John Hutchin's History of Dorset \(p.57\)](#) says that both Richard Newmans are mentioned in a subsidy roll of 1661 relating to the Fifehead estate, but I believe this implies residence there rather than ownership. It also says that on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1649 "the Manor of Fifehead & Crockerford and the demenses, were sold to John Aclyft for £1,333 12s 4d".

In fact, it was this same Richard who paid for the construction of the chapel and the vault below it where his wife Anne (née Harbord) had been laid to rest. He also paid for the memorial to his father Richard (mentioned above) and his grandfather Thomas (d.1649) that is mounted on the east wall of the chapel, and the much less elaborate memorial to his son, Richard (1650-1682), mounted on the west wall.

The absence of a memorial is not one of his mysteries. If there was one, it must have been mounted on the north wall and subsequently removed to make space for the monumental carving by Sir Henry Cheere<sup>3</sup> in memory of Richard's grandson, Sir Richard Newman (1675-1721) which occupies almost the entirety of the chapel's north wall. But it's also possible that no memorial was erected to our "mystery man" Richard.



*Sir Henry Cheere's monumental memorial to Sir Richard Newman and his family, occupying almost the entirety of the Newman chapel's north wall in the church at Fifehead Magdalen, Dorset. On the east wall (to the right) is the earlier memorial to Richard Newman (1584-1664) and his father Thomas Newman (d. 1649). On the west wall (out of sight on the left) is a small memorial to Richard Newman (1650-1682), son of Richard Newman (1620-1695) who built the chapel and whose bones, and those of his wife and his successors, are said to lie in the sealed crypt below the floor.*

<sup>3</sup> [Sir Henry Cheere](#) was a friend of the Newman family, being a neighbour of theirs in Westminster. He was appointed "official carver" to Westminster Abbey in 1743. His Fifehead monument dates from between 1747 and 1763.

## True or False? Fact or Fiction?

What is known, or believed to be true, about Richard Newman (1620-1695) is as follows:

- He attended Sherborne School from around 1630 to 1635
- He trained as a lawyer at Pembroke College, Oxford, from 1635 to 1639;
- He became a Barrister at Law of the Middle Temple in 1640.
- He married Anne Harbord in 1649. She gave him seven or eight children and probably a lot of money as well as she came from a wealthy family.
- He purchased Evercreech Park estate in 1660.
- There is evidence that he also purchased the North and South Cadbury estates from his brother-in-law, William Harbord, in 1675.
- He inherited the Sparkford Manor estate from his father.

So much for the "facts", as I understand them. Now for the "legends" handed down to me from my Victorian ancestors. I don't know how far back they date, but they include:

- Richard (1620-1695) was appointed High Steward of Westminster (date unknown).
- He joined the Royalist forces during the English Civil War (1642-1651), taking the rank of Colonel.
- He lent money in support of Charles I, and in 1651 assisted the young king Charles II escape after the Battle of Worcester.
- He was imprisoned for his efforts supporting the King.
- Charles II subsequently rewarded him with an augmentation to his Coat of Arms in the form of an "escutcheon gules" (red shield) and a "crowned portcullis or" (gold coloured portcullis with crown on top) as illustrated below, plus a reward in cash.

*Newman family crest  
~ a swallow rising*

*First and Fourth  
Quarter Three  
Mullets Argent  
(three silver stars)*

*"Quarterly Sable  
and Argent"  
(Black and  
silver quarters)*



*Augmentation:  
Portcullis  
"Royally Crowned"*

*Newman motto:  
Lux Mea Christus  
"Christ my Light"*

*The Newman crest and Coat of Arms, with the augmentation of an "escutcheon gules" (red shield) and a "crowned portcullis or", clearly visible in the centre.*

## References supporting the Legend and those supporting “Alternative Facts”

There are numerous publications and websites that tell the tale of Col. Richard Newman’s derring-do at the Battle of Worcester. For instance:

- [Wikipedia](#) has a page saying that “the king escaped through the gate of the city of Worcester solely through the heroic efforts of Colonel Newman”. It offers three references, only one of which mentions Colonel Newman and/or the Battle of Worcester. That one reference happens to be the Fox-Davies reference following.
- [Arthur Charles Fox-Davies’s “Complete Guide to Heraldry”](#) quotes the same story of the King escaping through the gates of Worcester “solely through the heroic efforts of Colonel Newman, and this is kept in remembrance by the inescutcheon of augmentation”.
- J.F. Huxford, on page 61 of his book “Honour and Arms – The Story of some Augmentations of Honour”, repeats the story, saying “the gallant conduct of Colonel Richard Newman assisted [the King’s] escape”.
- The Heraldry Society once had a page titled “Augmentation of Honour” saying: “Col Richard Newman of Fifehead Magdalen, Dorset, whose conduct at the Battle of Worcester had enabled the King to escape through the city gate, was granted an augmentation an escutcheon gules charged with a crowned portcullis or”. This has been replaced by a [new page](#) saying “Augmentation granted 1658 for Colonel William Carlos alias Careless hiding Charles II in the Boscobel Oak 1651, Augmentation for Col Richard Newman assisting Charles II to escape Worcester 1651, Augmentation granted 1837 for Thomas Whitgreave sheltering Charles II at Moseley Hall 1651”.

It all sounds very plausible. Yet I wonder if there is any truth in these stories, and if all these references might not be cross-referencing themselves. Either way, the following contrary evidence suggests that the legend is unfounded:

- In 2015, Charles (Earl) Spencer wrote a book titled "To Catch a King" which recorded in detail the King’s plight at, and after, the 1651 Battle of Worcester. Yet he makes no mention of Richard Newman. In 2017, I wrote to the Earl to ask if he'd come across a Richard Newman in his researches, and received a polite reply in the negative.
- I have clear evidence that it was Richard Newman (1584-1664) rather than his son Richard (1620-1695) who was rewarded with an augmentation to his coat of arms. This evidence came to me from the College of Arms who sent me a photocopy of pages 154 and 155 from *The Harleian Society Volume 77, Miscellaneous Grants of Arms Part II*. These pages are headed “Grants of Arms, Crests and Confirmations”, and they present a short article titled “Grant of an Augmentation to Richard Newman of Fifehead Magdalen, Co. Dorset, Gentleman, by Sir Edward Walker, garter, dated 2nd April, 1664”. The text states that the award was granted to Richard Newman, being the “son & heir of Thomas Newman, Grandchild of another Thomas Newman & Great Grandchild of Robert Newman Gent” all of which identifies the recipient as Richard Newman (1584-1664), and **NOT** his son Richard. Unfortunately, the text does not specify what Richard’s actions were that deserved the augmentation to his arms. All it says is that in awarding the augmentation, the King had been “sufficiently satisfied, that the said Richard Newman of Fifehead Magdalen aforesaid is a person that hath faithfully & constantly adhered to the interest of the Crown during the late times of distraction & hath been a great sufferer for the same”.

It may be no coincidence that the date given for the grant was little more than 3 months before the elder Richard’s death (10 July 1664). Perhaps the issue of the award was expedited so that he could receive it before he died, or perhaps it was received by his son Richard (1620-1695) who was better placed to receive it since he lived in London.

Page 57 of [John Hutchin’s History of Dorset](#) confirms that it was the elder Richard (1584-1664) who earned the augmentation. It says that “King Charles II granted to Richard Newman, esq., of

Cadbury, Co. Somerset, in consideration of the loyalty and sufferings of his father, high steward of Westminster, who attended the King in his troubles and provided him with large sums of money during the rebellion, being imprisoned by Cromwell, an augmentation of his arms, viz. Gules, a portcullis crowned or". However, it says that it was his son Richard (1620-1695) who received the augmentation. It also states that it was the elder Richard (1584-1664) who was high steward of Westminster, and not his son as claimed by my forebears.

The elder Richard Newman would have been 58 years old at the start of the Civil War in 1642, and 64 at the time it dragged to a close in 1648, so it would seem unlikely that the assistance that he gave the King would have been of the "Cavalier" style that his son is supposed to have performed after the Battle of Worcester (by when he would have been 67). Be that as it may, we will probably never know what really happened.

If all this is not confusing enough, further confusion is added by the existence of a Pardon issued to a Richard Newman of Fifehead Magdalen in November 1648, supposedly by King Charles I, in which Richard was pardoned of "all and singular Treasons, both major and minor, and crimes of lese Majeste, and also rebellions, insurrections, conspiracies and concealments of all and singular the same treasons and crimes of lese Majeste, from the 20<sup>th</sup> May 1642". For this he had to pay a hefty fine of £287 10s (perhaps £30,000 or more in today's money).<sup>4</sup>

Needless to say, this relatively recent discovery left me wondering if Richard had after all been supporting the Parliament rather than the King, however [Peter Foden](#) (who again kindly translated the Latin text for me) surmised that the pardon must have been issued by Parliament in Charles's name. This must indeed have been the case, since, in November 1648, the King was in no position to be issuing pardons to anyone as he was imprisoned on the Isle of Wight awaiting his final journey to London.

Notwithstanding, the doubts raised as to the heroic actions of either Richard Newman, there is strong evidence that one or other, or even both of them, was a leading member of the Dorsetshire Clubmen who defended homes and farms in their neighbourhood from the ravages of the warring armies that were so common during the Civil War. Evidence for this can be found at:

- <https://www.fontmellmagna.net/2013/10/the-dorset-clubmen>,
- <https://www.clubmen1645.com>, and
- [The Great Civil War in Dorset 1642-1660](#) by A.R. Bayley, page 278.

All three tell of Richard meeting with Oliver Cromwell on Duncliffe Hill, a mile or two west of Shaftsbury, and of his meeting with Sir Thomas Fairfax in Dorchester. At least two quote from a letter from Cromwell to Fairfax stating that Newman represented "the Clubmen in Dorset and Wilts, to the number of ten thousand, were to meet about their men who were taken away at Shaftsbury, and that their intendment was to secure themselves from plundering".

Finally, in relation to the awarding of the augmentation to Richard Newman's coat of arms in 1664, a paragraph in Earl Spencer's "To Catch a King" offers another perspective on the rewards given out at the end of the Civil War:

"The Cavalier Parliament met for the first time in May 1661, and sat for nearly three-quarters of Charles II's twenty-five-year reign. It became known as 'The Pensioner Parliament' because of the number of awards granted by the king to those who had supported him during his time waiting for the throne. As Colonel Gunter commented, when comparing the dire days of the autumn of 1651 with the subsequent prospects of rich prizes: 'So few friends then had his Sacred Majesty in his distresses, now so numerous in expectation of reward'."

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<sup>4</sup> [John Hutchin's History of Dorset \(p.57\)](#) also reports the file, saying "During the rebellion, Richard Newman, gent., compounded for and paid £285 10s for being a commissioner of the King's".



## Postscript

I conclude by going back to where I began, referring to a page from a newspaper sent to me by Robert Newman. The newspaper concerned was the Essex Weekly News of Friday Dec 29th, 1905, containing an article about a Captain John Robert Branston Newman, of Newberry Manor and Kinslannig House, County Cork. The article concluded with a reference to Capt. Newman's ancestry, saying: "The Newman family possessed the Manor and estate of Fifehead near Gillingham, Dorsetshire. On the restoration of King Charles II, Col. Richard Newman was granted by the Crown the Castle of Dromaneen in County Cork and lands which were formed into the Manor of Newberry, in commemoration of the battle of that name. in which Col. Richard Newman had distinguished himself."

As it happens, Tony Newman (who was involved in founding the NNS) wrote an article for the Chronicle of April 1998 which gives a more credible account of this particular episode in Newman history. He wrote:

"Humphrey and Dorothy Newman of Wincanton's second son Richard settled in county Cork [c. 1650] .... Of subsequent Irish generations, I have meagre details. Landed Gentry of Ireland' reports: 'In 1686 the above Richard passed patent for the castle property of Drumineene and several other lands in County Cork, and 4 messuages in the city of Cork. Said lands be erected into a manor called the manor of Newbury.' Dromaneen Castle and the Manor of Newberry in County Cork were granted to Richard Newman of Cork by patent of King James II."

Thus we may conclude that the newspaper article not only confused Richard Newman of Cork with his fourth-cousin Richard Newman of Fifehead, but also confused Charles II with his brother James II. It lends truth to the adage "don't believe what you read in the newspapers".

Likewise, whilst I haven't entirely ruled out the possibility of Richard Newman (1620-1695) taking the rank of Colonel and participating in heroic actions on behalf of Charles I or Charles II, I've satisfied myself that it was his father who earned (by unknown deeds) the augmentation to the Newman coat of arms. Notwithstanding, I'm reminded not to believe all the evidence that I dig up from the historical records. Hence my choice of subtitle "A Cautionary Tale"!

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## Acknowledgements

I should like to thank **Harold Biggs**, a long-time correspondent from America who first sowed doubts in my mind as to the existence of a Colonel Richard Newman. Harold's interest derived from his late wife's Newman ancestry, and he is a much more diligent genealogist than me.

It took a lot of persuading on his part before I reluctantly conceded that his doubts were justified.

I should also like to thank [Peter Foden](#) for the Latin translations that he did for me. I can confidently recommend him to anyone needed translation assistance of this sort.

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Overleaf is a Pedigree of my ancestors and various cousins, in which I've highlighted the five Richard Newmans who feature in the above article.

Chris Newman - May 2023

For further information, see [www.newman-family-tree.net](http://www.newman-family-tree.net).

# LINEAGE OF THE NEWMANS OF FIFEHEAD

*(outline only)*

Unknown Newman

