



The King-Killer and Church Destroyer from Granborough

In June 1645, Oliver Cromwell's New Model Army inflicted a fatal blow to the king's army at the Battle of Naseby. In 1649 a death warrant was signed which led to the execution of the King. All those that signed the warrant, as well as those who had helped to prepare it, were officially termed as "regicides" which literally means "king-killers". One such man was Granborough-born **Cornelius Holland**. For the ensuing period of eleven years, Parliamentarians like Holland ruled the country under the leadership of Oliver Cromwell.

On the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, the regicides were quickly outlawed and pursued. Many of those caught were barbarically executed or died in prison. Some escaped abroad but were traced and died at the hands of the King's agents. The remainder, like Holland, evaded capture by changing their identity, eventually dying in exile, universally reviled and virtually erased from recorded history. It is because he has been erased from recorded history, there is no objective account concerning the earlier years of Cornelius Holland. It is *probable* he was one of several children born to a Granborough man, Benedict Holland, whose own claim to fame was being sentenced to imprisonment for debt in April 1635. He later died in Fleet prison

By Royal Appointment

According to the *Chambers Book of Days* (1869) Cornelius Holland was "a Poore boy in court waiting on Sir Henry Vane, by whose interest he was appointed by Charles I keeper of Creslow pastures.

He subsequently deserted the cause of his royal patron, and was rewarded by the Parliament with many lucrative posts. He became so wealthy that, though he had ten children, he gave a daughter on her marriage £5,000, equal to ten times that sum at the present day”.

Wealth and politics

The upwardly mobile Holland became a Member of Parliament in 1642 and subsequently seems to have been adept at lining his own pocket. In December 1648, only a month or so before the Civil War and with tensions between the Crown and Parliament rising, Holland was appointed one of the Commissioners for Bucks responsible “for settling militia throughout England and Wales. Subsequently, and doubtless influenced by his patron Sir Henry Vane, Holland sided with the Parliamentarians against the Royalists in the ensuing English Civil War, becoming a key member of Cromwell’s government. Immediately after the king’s execution he was appointed to the Council of State. Thereafter, his family home was at Somerset House and he held Richmond House as his country retreat. He had become a powerful and wealthy man and seemingly not averse to using his power to advance his personal objectives. His services to the parliament were rewarded by grants of land both in England and in the Bermudas, while lucrative offices, including the keepership of Richmond Park, were bestowed upon him.

Holland the Church Destroyer

Like many Parliamentarians, for ideological and religious reasons, Holland sought to alter the fabric and fittings of churches, to remove and destroy physical elements and symbols associated with Roman Catholicism. The full extent of Cornelius Holland’s destruction is not recorded but we know it encompassed the partial demolition of the chancels of Granborough, East Claydon, Winslow, and Addington; the destruction of the abandoned churches of

Hogshaw and Creslow and the complete demolition of the north aisle at Oving Church. There may be other churches that received his attention of which we are not aware. As a Privy Councillor in Cromwell's interregnum government, as well as having been entrusted with the deployment of militia throughout the county, Holland had access to cannons and troops, precisely the tools he needed for his demolition. To this day, the exterior nave wall of East Claydon church bears the marks of canon shot fired at the church when the chancel was destroyed.

Regicide

As one of the 135 Commissioners in the Commonwealth government Holland was later assumed to have been one of the 59 Commissioners who had signed King Charles's death warrant in January 1649.

When Charles II inherited his late father's throne, Holland's high-rolling days dramatically came to an end, but he escaped certain execution by fleeing to Lausanne in Switzerland. It is claimed he died there in 1671: it would appear that he escaped assassination by agents of Charles II, eventually dying of natural causes in his early seventies.

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