

Thomas Brown – The Soldier with the Silver Nose

The Valiant Dragoon and Hero of Dettingen, Thomas Brown, was born in Kirkleatham in 1705.

Not much is known about his early life other than that he was apprenticed to a shoemaker in Yarm before joining the army. It was on 27 June 1743, at the Battle of Dettingen during the Austrian War of Succession, that Tom earned his fame, at the time he was serving as a Dragoon in the 3rd Kings Own Hussars (Bland's Regiment) fighting the French.

The battle of Dettingen is notable for two things... it was the last time a British Monarch (King George II) personally led his troops into battle and it was reputedly the last time a serving soldier was knighted on the battlefield. In this case it was our hero Tom Brown who was said to have been knighted as a 'Knight Banneret' by the King at the end of the battle for his actions.

During the battle the British forces were heavily outnumbered and had lost more than half of their men. The Cornet holding Bland's standard was wounded and the flag fell to the ground. Tom, who had seen the standard fall, attempted to dismount to recover it. As he did so he was struck by a sabre blow which severed two of the fingers on his left hand. His horse took fright and bolted to the rear of the French lines where Tom again spotted the standard in the hands of a French soldier. Tom killed the French trooper, grabbed the standard, wedged the flagstaff between his saddle and himself, turned his horse and galloped through the massed ranks of the enemy back to his own lines.

As he charged through the French lines he received eight sabre cuts to the face, head and neck, losing most of his nose in the process, was hit twice in the back by musket balls and came close to death as another three musket balls passed through his hat. As he rejoined his own company he was greeted by 'three loud Huzzas' from the British troops who had witnessed his remarkable bravery.

While there may be some doubt over whether Tom was or wasn't knighted on the battlefield immediately following the English victory, it is true to say that King George II did present Tom with a gold topped walking stick, a pension of 30 crowns a year ... and a silver nose to replace his own nose which he had lost in the battle!

Following the events at Dettingen, and with two musket balls still lodged in his back, Tom retired from the 3rd Hussars with his pension of £30 a year from the King. He opened an inn in Yarm where he lived for the remainder of his life. This inn once held an oil painted sign of the hero in action, now sadly lost, but a replica of it can now be found in Yarm Town Hall.

The building remained an inn until it lost its licence in 1908. It has since been converted into two private homes, one of which bears a brass plate commemorating his life, the other has a blue tourist plaque to mark his former residence.

Tom was buried in Yarm Churchyard in 1746, and in 1968 to commemorate the bravery of one of their own, the Queens Own Hussars regiment presented a headstone to St Mary Magdalene's church as a memorial to his service. The headstone can still be seen in the churchyard today.

Tom Brown (British Army Soldier)

Sir Thomas Brown (1705 – 1746 (aged 40–41)) was born in [Kirkleatham](#),^[1] in present-day [Redcar and Cleveland](#), in the [north-east](#) region of [England](#). He was a [hero](#) of the [Battle of Dettingen](#) (27 June 1743),^{[1][2]} in [Bavaria](#) during the [War of the Austrian Succession](#),^{[1][2]} the last time that a British monarch, in this case [King George II](#), personally led his own country's troops into battle.

Biography

Little is known of his early life, save for him being a [shoemaker's apprentice](#) in [Yarm](#), before joining the [Army](#).^[1]

Once [enlisted](#), Brown fought as a [private soldier](#)^[3] in [King's Own Regiment Dragoons \(Bland's Dragoons\)](#).^{[1][3]} During this battle, he had two horses killed under him.^[4] In the thick of the action, Brown witnessed the regiment's [standard](#) falling to the ground and was captured by the French.^[1] Brown attempted to dismount his horse to recover the standard, but was struck by a blow from a [sabre](#) and lost two fingers from his left hand.^[1] His horse bolted in fright to the rear of the enemy lines, where Brown subsequently caught sight of his standard in the hands of a French trooper.^[1] Brown reclaimed the standard after killing the enemy soldier, remounted a horse, secured his regiments' standard by wedging its [flagstaff](#) between himself and the [saddle](#), and returned to his own by galloping through the massed ranks of the enemy.^[1] During this return, Brown was further wounded by the French,^[1] receiving eight sabre cuts in his face, neck and head, and lost most of his nose as a result.^[1] Brown dived with death; two [musket](#) bullets hit his back, and three passed through his headgear,^[1] one of the latter giving Brown a cut across his forehead that went down to his right eyebrow.^[citation needed] Returning to his own company a hero, he was applauded with 'three loud [Huzzas](#)' in recognition of his valiant [bravery](#).^[1]

After his army service, Brown [retired](#) from the 3rd Hussars, whereupon he was rewarded by King George II with a gold-topped walking stick, a replica nose made of silver to replace his he lost in [battle](#), and a King's pension of 30 [crowns](#) (£30) a year.^[1] Brown moved to [Yarm](#) and opened an [inn](#) bearing his own name, where he lived out the remainder of his life.^[1] Browns' inn once contained an oil-painted sign which depicted him as the hero of the Battle of Dettingen.^[1] This sign is now lost, but a replica is located in [Yarm Town Hall](#).^[1]

Brown died in [Yarm](#) in 1746 (aged 40–41), and is buried there in the churchyard of St Mary Magdalene's Church (OS grid ref: NZ416129).^{[1][2]} His grave can still be seen^[1] and is now marked with a [Portland stone](#) replica of a [Commonwealth War Graves Commission](#) (CWGC) headstone, presented by the [Queen's Own Hussars](#) in 1968.^{[1][2]}

Titles, styles, honours and arms

- 1743 – 1746:** *Sir* Thomas Brown

Honours

The [Battle of Dettingen](#) is notable for two things: it was the last time a British monarch personally led his troops into battle, and the last time a serving soldier was knighted on the battlefield. Tom Brown was knighted as a [Knight Banneret](#) by the King at the end of the battle for his actions, as noted in *The London Magazine, and Monthly Chronologer* "the Trooper who retook the Standard from the French".^[6]

This is believed to be the last time a sovereign conferred the title Knight Bannerets to troops on the field of battle. It is recorded that the King created sixteen Knights Bannerets on the battlefield by two sources: a diary entry by Miss Gertrude Savile, which states "This honour had been laid aside since James I, when Baronets were instituted",^[6] and a news magazine published in the same year as the battle.