

The Severed Knot

By Malcolm Twigg

Amongst those who thought they knew a thing or two about the English Civil War, it was generally acknowledged that winning the Battle of Blundell's Edge had been a turning point for the Parliamentary forces. What was not hitherto suspected, however, was that the previous evening's night of Royalist debauchery at nearby Higley Court had been a contributing factor. Higley Court had burned down immediately afterwards. If it hadn't, the world might have known the truth. As it was, it didn't. Only Gerald Higgs did. Or thought he did ...but he had made it his life's work to find out.

His obsession could be traced back to two unique events from his College days, when research for a thesis on the battle had thrown up a misfiled dispatch from the Royalist battle lines revealing some startling information: and the resultant, and only, intuitive thought that had ever crossed his mind in an otherwise unillustrious academic career. Gerald had not been a particularly bright student, but he was - worryingly - tenacious.

Unfortunately, before he had completed his notes the despatch had promptly been misfiled again so comprehensively that, no matter how much he ripped the library apart, the information might never have been glimpsed at all (it was not a very *good* library).

There was precious little left of the original document, but at last to the ruins of the former building, on the eve of the anniversary of the battle, Gerald had managed to get his hands on some inside information. This is not the complete story. To read further, please either register as a new reader or login now if already registered. Prince Rupert himself had lately become his mentor in these things (Gerald's paranoia had by now led him to some very strange places). At least, he averred to his spirit guide as Prince Rupert since it first manifested itself to him in a Dutch accent and professed a liking for oranges and natty headgear. It also supported Gerald's own assertions about the Battle, revealing confidentially that "We wuz robbed, Gerald. We wuz bleedin' robbed!"

To the uninitiated that might have sounded distinctly odd, but Gerald was quick to point out to any detractors that 'there were more things on heaven and earth than met the eye' and, anyway, 'what the eye didn't see the heart shouldn't grieve over.' Which was unfortunate, for he was prone to speaking rather too extensively in metaphoric cliché (as well as to Prince Rupert) which rather destroyed his credibility in the ears of his listeners.

Hotels being beyond his pocket, and with the night already closed in, Gerald pitched his tent in an overgrown hollow just beyond the tumbled remains of the Great Hall. He wrapped himself in his sleeping bag and dreamed his dreams.