

Edward Montagu, 1st Earl of Sandwich 1625-1672

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Montagu was commissioned to raise a regiment of foot and became its colonel at the age of eighteen. He was one of the officers who supported Oliver Cromwell'

In 1645, Montagu's regiment was incorporated into the New Model Army. Montagu himself commanded a brigade at the battle of Naseby in June 1645. Montagu's regiment was reportedly one of those that broke as the Royalist infantry advanced in the centre,

Montagu's army career came to an end in October 1645 under the terms of the Self-Denying Ordinance when he was elected MP for Huntingdonshire. He supported the Independent faction, but was generally inactive in the House of Commons and withdrew entirely from Parliament in December 1648.

Following a period of retirement he fully supported the establishment of Cromwell's Protectorate and was elected to the Protector's first Council of State. He emerged as a leading member of the Protectorate régime, acting as a spokesman for the government in Parliamentary debates and taking on important diplomatic roles.

In January 1656, Montagu was appointed joint General-at-Sea with Robert Blake for an expedition against Spain. Montagu had no previous naval experience; his appointment was partly political. The fleet sailed in March 1656 with orders to intercept the Spanish plate fleet returning from the Americas. Montagu's main task was to negotiate the ratification of a treaty with Portugal and to extract £50,000 compensation for Portugal's sheltering of Prince Rupert in 1649. Coerced by the presence of the fleet, King John IV of Portugal agreed to the English demands. In September, Vice-Admiral Stayner captured two ships of the Spanish plate fleet as it made a dash for Cádiz. Montagu, whose relations with Blake were strained, returned to England with the captured treasure in October. Despite having played no part in the capture of the Spanish ships, he accepted the thanks of Parliament on 4 November 1656.

As one of Cromwell's most loyal supporters, Montagu led the faction that offered him the Crown in 1657. After Cromwell's second refusal, Montagu was appointed to the controversial Upper House constituted under the terms of the Humble Petition and Advice and was made a member of the Protector's Privy Council. He also continued to play an active role as a General-at-Sea, commanding the fleets that supported the joint Anglo-French attacks on Mardyck and Dunkirk in 1657-8. After the capture of Dunkirk in June 1658, Montagu was presented to King Louis XIV and entertained Cardinal Mazarin aboard his flagship the "*Naseby*".

After Oliver's death in September 1658, Montagu pledged his personal loyalty and that of the fleet to Richard Cromwell, which provoked strong hostility from republicans and army leaders.

In March 1659, Montagu commanded a fleet sent to the Baltic to defend England's commercial interests and to counteract a Dutch attempt to intervene in the war between Sweden and Denmark, but his diplomatic efforts were interrupted by the fall of the Protectorate and the return to power of the Rump Parliament in May 1659. Republicans of the Rump mistrusted Montagu and suspected him of being in contact with Royalists, particularly as his return to England coincided with Booth's Uprising and a series of planned Royalist insurrections around the country. Montagu protested his loyalty before Parliament and although no evidence could be found against him, his commission was revoked and he retired once again to Hinchinbrooke.

In February 1660, General Monck occupied London and restored the MPs who had been expelled from Parliament in 1648. In the changed political climate, Montagu was recalled to the Council of State and made joint General-at-Sea with Monck. Realizing that the Restoration of the monarchy was inevitable, Montagu cooperated with Monck and proceeded to purge the fleet of republican and radical officers. He entered into correspondence with Charles II and was elected to the pro-Royalist Convention Parliament in April 1660 as MP for Dover. On 14 May, he sailed the fleet to Scheveningen in the Netherlands to convey Charles II back to England. The royal party landed at Dover on 25 May.

Montagu was richly rewarded for his role in the Restoration. Amongst other honours, he was made a Knight of the Garter and created 1st Earl of Sandwich. He went on to lead a distinguished career as a diplomat, naval administrator and fighting admiral under Charles II.

He was killed in action at the battle of Solebay in May 1672 during the Third Anglo-Dutch War, going down with his flagship the "*Royal James*" which, according to some accounts, he refused to abandon.

Sandwich's posthumous reputation was enhanced by his portrayal in the famous diary of his client and distant kinsman Samuel Pepys, in which he appears as a generous and sophisticated patron.