

= Monmouth Rebellion =

The Monmouth Rebellion , also known as The Revolt of the West or The West Country rebellion , was an attempt to overthrow James II , the Duke of York who had become King of England , Scotland , and Ireland upon the death of his elder brother Charles II on 6 February 1685 . James II was a Roman Catholic , and some Protestants under his rule opposed his kingship . James Scott , 1st Duke of Monmouth , an illegitimate son of Charles II , claimed to be rightful heir to the throne and attempted to displace James II .

Plans were discussed for several different actions to overthrow the monarch , following the failure of the Rye House Plot to assassinate Charles II and James , in 1683 , while Monmouth was in self @-@ imposed exile in the Dutch Republic . The Monmouth rebellion was coordinated with a rebellion in Scotland , where Archibald Campbell , the Earl of Argyll , landed with a small force . The Duke of Monmouth had been popular in the South West of England , so he planned to recruit troops locally and take control of the area before marching on London .

Monmouth landed at Lyme Regis on 11 June 1685 . In the following few weeks , his growing army of nonconformists , artisans , and farm workers fought a series of skirmishes with local militias and regular soldiers commanded by Louis de Duras , 2nd Earl of Feversham , and John Churchill , who later became the Duke of Marlborough . Monmouth 's forces were unable to compete with the regular army and failed to capture the key city of Bristol . The rebellion ended with the defeat of Monmouth 's army at the Battle of Sedgemoor on 6 July 1685 by forces led by Feversham and Churchill .

Monmouth was executed for treason on 15 July 1685 . Many of his supporters were tried during the Bloody Assizes , led by Judge Jeffreys , and were condemned to death or transportation . James II was then able to consolidate his power . He reigned until 1688 , when he was overthrown in a coup d'état by William of Orange in the Glorious Revolution .

= = Duke of Monmouth = =

Monmouth was an illegitimate son of Charles II . There had been rumours that Charles had married Monmouth 's mother , Lucy Walter , but no evidence was forthcoming , and Charles always said that he only had one wife , Catherine of Braganza .

Monmouth had been appointed Commander @-@ in @-@ Chief of the English Army by his father in 1672 and Captain general in 1678 , enjoying some successes in the Netherlands in the Third Anglo @-@ Dutch War .

= = Context = =

The English Civil War had left resentment among some of the population about the monarchy and the penalties which had been imposed on the supporters of the Commonwealth . The South West of England contained several towns where opposition remained strong . Fears of a potential Catholic monarch persisted , intensified by the failure of Charles II and his wife to produce any children . A defrocked Anglican clergyman , Titus Oates , spoke of a " Popish Plot " to kill Charles and to put the Duke of York on the throne . The Earl of Shaftesbury , a former government minister and a leading opponent of Catholicism , attempted to have James excluded from the line of succession . Some members of Parliament even proposed that the crown go to Charles 's illegitimate son , James Scott , who became the Duke of Monmouth . In 1679 , with the Exclusion Bill - which would exclude the King 's brother and heir presumptive , James , Duke of York , from the line of succession - in danger of passing , Charles II dissolved Parliament . Two further Parliaments were elected in 1680 and 1681 , but were dissolved for the same reason .

After the Rye House Plot of 1683 , an attempt to assassinate both Charles and James , Monmouth went into self @-@ imposed exile in the Netherlands , and gathered supporters in The Hague . Monmouth was a Protestant and had toured the South West of England in 1680 , where he had been greeted amicably by crowds in towns such as Chard and Taunton . So long as Charles II

remained on the throne , Monmouth was content to live a life of pleasure in Holland , while still hoping to accede peaceably to the throne . The accession of James II and coronation at Westminster Abbey on 23 April 1685 put an end to these hopes .

= = Plan = =

The Monmouth rebellion was planned in Holland and coordinated with another rebellion in Scotland led by Archibald Campbell , the Earl of Argyll . Several areas of England were considered as potential locations for rebellion , including Cheshire and Lancashire along with the South West , as these were seen as having the highest number of opponents of the monarchy . Argyll and Monmouth both began their expeditions from Holland , where James 's nephew and son @-@ in @-@ law , William of Orange , had not detained them or put a stop to their recruitment efforts . Argyll sailed to Scotland and , on arriving there , raised recruits mainly from his own clan , the Campbells , as part of the Scottish revolt . He had previously been involved in the Rye House Plot of 1683 .

Another important member of the rebellion was Robert Ferguson , a fanatical Scottish Presbyterian minister . He was also known as " the plotter " . It was Ferguson who drew up Monmouth 's proclamation , and he who was most in favour of Monmouth being crowned King . Thomas Hayward Dare was a goldsmith from Taunton and a Whig politician , a man of considerable wealth and influence who had been jailed during a political campaign calling for a new parliament . He was also fined the huge sum of £ 5 @,@ 000 for uttering " seditious " words . After his release from jail , he fled to Holland and became the paymaster general to the Rebellion .

To raise the funds for ships and weaponry , Monmouth pawned many of his belongings . His wife Anne Scott , 1st Duchess of Buccleuch , and her mother also pawned their jewellery to hire the Dutch warship Heldevenberg .

= = From Lyme Regis to Sedgemoor = =

On 30 May 1685 Monmouth set sail for South West England , a strongly Protestant region , with three small ships , four light field guns , and 1500 muskets . He landed on 11 June with 82 supporters , including Lord Grey of Warke , Nathaniel Wade , and Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun . They gathered about 300 men on the first day at Lyme Regis in Dorset , where a long statement prepared by Ferguson denounced the king .

King James had previously received intelligence about the impending plot , and the ships leaving Holland ten days before . He was warned of Monmouth 's arrival soon after the first landing . The mayor of the town , Gregory Alford , informed the local militias while Samuel Damsell and another customs officer rode from Lyme to London , arriving on 13 June , having ridden 200 miles (322 km) . To face Monmouth 's rebels , John Churchill was given command of the regular foot in the King 's army , and the honour of leading the campaign passed to Earl of Feversham . It would take a few days to assemble the army and travel from London to the west country , therefore initial defence was left to local militias .

Over the next couple of days volunteers arrived in Lyme offering to serve under Monmouth . By 15 June he had a force in excess of 1 @,@ 000 men . On 13 June he lost two of his leading supporters when Dare and Fletcher disputed who should ride one of the best horses provided by local supporters . Fletcher shot and killed Dare and was then put under arrest and sent back to the frigate Helderberg . The next day , 40 cavalry and 400 foot soldiers , under the command of Lord Grey and Wade , moved on to the nearby town of Bridport , where they encountered 1 @,@ 200 men from the local royalist Dorset militia . The skirmish ended with the retreat of Grey and the cavalry followed by Wade with the foot soldiers . Many of the militiamen deserted and joined Monmouth 's army . Following this confrontation , Lord Albermarle led a royalist force from Exeter towards the forces of the Duke of Somerset , who were approaching Lyme Regis from the opposite direction .

Monmouth learned of the approach of royalist reinforcements and departed , but instead of marching to London , he headed north with his force towards the county of Somerset . On 15 June

he fought with the militia at Axminster , taking the town before the militias could join up . More recruits joined his disorganised force , which was now around 6 @, @ 000 , consisting mostly of nonconformists , artisans , and farm workers armed with farm tools (such as pitchforks) . One famous supporter was the young Daniel Defoe .

Monmouth again denounced the king in Chard and was the subject of a coronation in Taunton on 20 June 1685 , against the wishes of some of his republican supporters such as Wade . The Taunton Corporation was forced to witness the event at sword point outside the White Hart Inn , to encourage the support of the country gentry . In Taunton , Monmouth was joined by many new supporters and formed a new regiment of 800 men . The king 's force of Dragoons under Churchill continued to close on Monmouth , arriving in Chard on 19 June . With the assistance of the local militias they attempted to stop new recruits arriving in Taunton to join Monmouth . Feversham meanwhile moved with his forces into Bristol , on the assumption that this would be Monmouth 's next target , and took overall charge of the campaign .

Monmouth and his growing force then continued north via Bridgwater , where he took up residence at Bridgwater Castle (21 June) , Glastonbury (22 June) and Shepton Mallet (23 June) in worsening weather . Meanwhile , the Royal Navy captured Monmouth 's ships , cutting off any hope of an escape back to the continent . The Royalist forces of Churchill , who was now in Chard , and of Feversham , in Bristol , also received reinforcements who had marched from London .

On 24 June , Monmouth 's army encamped at Pensford , and a small force skirmished with the Gloucester Militia to take control of Keynsham , a vital crossing point over the River Avon . Monmouth intended to attack the city of Bristol (the largest and most important city after London at that time) . However , he heard the city had been occupied by Henry Somerset , 1st Duke of Beaufort . There were inconclusive skirmishes with a force of Life Guards commanded by Feversham . These attacks gave the impression that there was a much larger royalist force in the vicinity than there actually was . Several historians have speculated that if Monmouth had marched as quickly as possible for Bristol at this point , when it was only protected by the Gloucestershire militia , he would probably have been able to take the city and the final outcome of the rebellion might have been very different . Once Bristol had been taken , more recruits would have been attracted to the Rebellion and a later march on London would have been possible .

Monmouth left his headquarters at Keynsham Abbey and moved towards Bath , which had also been occupied by royalist troops , making entry into the city impossible . Monmouth camped in Philips Norton (now Norton St Philip) , where his forces were attacked on 27 June by the leading elements of Feversham 's forces , which had now combined into a larger force , but were still awaiting their artillery . The Duke of Grafton led some cavalry , dragoons , and 500 musketeers into the village , where they were surrounded by the rebels and had to hack through hedges to escape . They were rescued by Churchill and withdrew with approximately 20 losses on each side ; however each side believed that the other had taken greater losses .

Monmouth then marched overnight to Frome arriving on 28 June . The morale of Monmouth 's forces started to collapse as news of the failure of the rebellion in Scotland arrived that day , while the makeshift army was camped in Frome . Argyll 's small force had been involved in minor skirmishes at Greenock and Ellangreig . He took Ardkinglass castle , but after disagreements with key supporters about when and where to fight the royalists commanded by Rosse and William Cleland , his supporters dwindled away and the Scottish rebellion failed .

The rebels , heading for Warminster got as far as Trowbridge , but royalist forces cut off the route and Monmouth turned back towards Somerset through Shepton Mallet , arriving in Wells on 1 July . The soldiers damaged the Bishop 's Palace and west front of Wells Cathedral , tearing lead from the roof to make bullets , breaking the windows , smashing the organ and the furnishings , and for a time stabling their horses in the nave .

Feversham aimed to contain the rebels in the South West until the rest of his forces , including three battalions from Holland arrived . In the light of propaganda suggesting the rebels had an army of 40 @, @ 000 and that 500 royalist troops had been lost at Norton St Philip , Feversham was ordered to engage Monmouth 's forces . On 30 June the final parts of Feversham 's army , including his artillery , arrived and eventually Monmouth was pushed back via Shepton Mallet to the Somerset

Levels , where Alfred the Great had found refuge in his conflicts with the Vikings . Becoming hemmed in at Bridgwater on 3 July , he ordered his troops to fortify the town .

= = Battle of Sedgemoor = =

Monmouth was finally defeated by Feversham with John Churchill , his second in command , on 6 July at the Battle of Sedgemoor .

Once Monmouth 's force had entered and started to fortify Bridgwater , he sent some of his cavalry to collect six cannon from Minehead . He planned to stay in Bridgwater until they returned and then break out and head for Bristol . Feversham and his army of 500 horse and 1 @, @ 500 militiamen camped on the edge of Sedgemoor at the village of Westonzoyland . Monmouth could view them from the tower of Church of St Mary and may have inspected them more closely from the Church of St Mary in Chedzoy , before deciding to attack them .

The Duke eventually led his untrained and ill @-@ equipped troops out of Bridgwater at around 10 : 00 pm to undertake a night @-@ time attack on the King 's army . They were guided by Richard Godfrey , the servant of a local farmer , along the old Bristol road towards Bawdrip . With their limited cavalry in the vanguard , they turned south along Bradney Lane and Marsh Lane and came to the open moor with its deep and dangerous rhynes (drainage ditches) .

There was a delay while the rhyne was crossed and the first men across startled a royalist patrol . A shot was fired and a horseman from the patrol galloped off to report to Feversham . Lord Grey of Warke led the rebel cavalry forward and they were engaged by the King 's Regiment of Horse which alerted the rest of the royalist forces . The superior training of the regular army and their horses routed the rebel forces by outflanking them . His untrained supporters were quickly defeated by the professionals , and hundreds were cut down by cannon- and musket @-@ fire .

The death count on the rebel side has variously been given as between 727 and 2 @, @ 700 , with royalist losses of 27 who were buried in the churchyard of the Church of St Mary the Virgin in Westonzoyland , which was used as a prison for rebel soldiers .

= = After Sedgemoor = =

Monmouth fled from the field of battle , but was captured in a ditch on 8 July (either at Ringwood in the New Forest , or at Horton in Dorset) . Parliament had passed an Act of Attainder , on 13 June sentencing Monmouth to death as a traitor , Therefore , no trial was needed before his execution . Despite begging for mercy and claims of conversion to Roman Catholicism , he was beheaded at Tower Hill by Jack Ketch on 15 July 1685 . It is said that it took multiple blows of the axe to sever his head . (Though some sources say it took eight blows , the official Tower of London website says it took five blows , while Charles Spencer , in his book Blenheim , claims it was seven .) His dukedoms of Monmouth and Buccleuch were forfeited , but the subsidiary titles of the dukedom of Monmouth were restored to the Duke of Buccleuch .

The subsequent Bloody Assizes of Judge Jeffreys were a series of trials of Monmouth 's supporters in which 320 people were condemned to death and around 800 sentenced to be transported to the West Indies .

James II took advantage of the suppression of the rebellion to consolidate his power . He asked Parliament to repeal the Test Act and the Habeas Corpus Act , used his dispensing power to appoint Roman Catholics to senior posts , and raised the strength of the standing army . Parliament opposed many of these moves , and on 20 November 1685 James dismissed it . In 1688 , when the birth of James Francis Edward Stuart heralded a Catholic succession , James II was overthrown in a coup d 'état by William of Orange in the Glorious Revolution at the invitation of the disaffected Protestant Establishment .

= = Literary references = =

The Monmouth Rebellion and the events surrounding it have formed the basis for several works of

fiction . John Dryden 's work *Absalom and Achitophel* is a satire partially concerned with equating biblical events with the Monmouth Rebellion . The Monmouth Rebellion plays a key role in Peter S. Beagle 's novel *Tamsin* , about a 300 @-@ year @-@ old ghost who is befriended by the protagonist . Arthur Conan Doyle 's historical novel *Micah Clarke* deals directly with Monmouth 's landing in England , the raising of his army , its defeat at Sedgemoor , and the reprisals which followed . Several characters in Neal Stephenson 's trilogy *The Baroque Cycle* , particularly *Quicksilver* and *The Confusion* , play a role in the Monmouth Rebellion and its aftermath .

Dr. Peter Blood , main hero of Rafael Sabatini 's novel *Captain Blood* , was sentenced by Judge Jeffreys for aiding wounded Monmouth rebels . Transported to the Caribbean , he started his career as a pirate there . John Masefield 's 1910 novel *Martin Hyde : The Duke 's Messenger* tells the story of a boy who plays a central part in the Monmouth Rebellion , from the meeting with Argyll in Holland to the failed rebellion itself . *The Royal Changeling* , (1998) , by John Whitbourn , describes the rebellion with some fantasy elements added , from the viewpoint of Sir Theophilus Oglethorpe . See also Lorna Doone , Richard Doddridge Blackmore 's romantic novel of 1869 . Farmer John Ridd rescues his brother @-@ in @-@ law Tom Faggus from the battlefield of Sedgwick , but is captured as a rebel , and is brought before Judge Jefferies . The events immediately before and after the Battle of Sedgemoor , and leading up to James II 's exile following The Glorious Revolution provide the setting for Robert Neill 's historical novel *Lilliburlero* .