

= Battle of Evesham =

The Battle of Evesham (4 August 1265) was one of the two main battles of 13th century England 's Second Barons ' War . It marked the defeat of Simon de Montfort , Earl of Leicester , and the rebellious barons by Prince Edward ? later King Edward I ? who led the forces of his father , King Henry III . It took place on 4 August 1265 , near the town of Evesham , Worcestershire .

With the Battle of Lewes Montfort had won control of royal government , but after the defection of several close allies and the escape from captivity of Prince Edward , he found himself on the defensive . Forced to engage the royalists at Evesham , he faced an army twice the size of his own . The battle soon turned into a massacre ; Montfort himself was killed and his body mutilated . Though the battle effectively restored royal authority , scattered resistance remained until the Dictum of Kenilworth was signed in 1267 .

= = Background = =

Simon de Montfort , 6th Earl of Leicester , had gained a dominant position in the government of the Kingdom of England after his victory at the Battle of Lewes a year earlier . He also held the King , Prince Edward , and the King 's brother Richard of Cornwall in his custody . However , his sphere of influence rapidly began to deteriorate due to loss of key allies . In February , Robert de Ferrers , Earl of Derby was arrested and imprisoned in the Tower . An even more important collaborator , Gilbert de Clare , the Earl of Gloucester , deserted to the side of the King in May of the same year . With Gloucester 's assistance , Prince Edward escaped from Montfort 's captivity .

With the Lords of the Welsh Marches now in rebellion , Montfort solicited the aid of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd , the Prince of Wales . Llywelyn agreed to help , in return for full recognition of his title , and the promise that he could keep all military gains . Whatever benefits this alliance might have brought Montfort , the great concessions cost him popularity at home . Meanwhile , Edward laid siege to the town of Gloucester , which fell on 29 June . Montfort 's goal now became to unite with the forces of his son Simon , and engage with the royal army , but the younger Simon moved much too slowly westwards from London . Eventually Simon made it to the baronial stronghold of Kenilworth , but Edward managed to inflict great losses on the enemy , many of whom were quartered outside the castle walls . From there the Prince moved south , where on 4 August , using many banners captured at Kenilworth to deceive Montfort into thinking his reinforcements were arriving , he managed to trap the older Montfort in a loop of the Avon , blocking off the only bridge and thereby forcing Montfort to fight without his son 's reinforcements . When Montfort realized this , he allegedly commented : " May the Lord have mercy upon our souls , as our bodies are theirs . "

= = Battle = =

Heeding a lesson learned at the Battle of Lewes , the royals took position on the high ground . Along a ridge called Green Hill , just north of Evesham , Edward set up his forces on the left , with Gloucester commanding the right . At about eight in the morning , Montfort left the town of Evesham as a great thunderstorm began to rage . At Lewes , the baronial forces had gained confidence to win the day by a sense of divine destiny , reinforced by white crosses on their uniforms . This time the royal army had taken their lead , and wore a red cross as their distinguishing mark . According to the chronicler William Rishanger , when Montfort saw the advance of the royal troops , he exclaimed that " They have not learned that for themselves , but were taught it by me . "

The respective forces of the royal and baronial armies have been estimated to be 10 @, @ 000 and 5 @, @ 000 strong . Montfort , facing such unfavourable numbers , decided to concentrate his forces on the centre of the enemy 's front , hoping to drive a wedge through the line . Though the tactics were initially successful , the baronial forces soon lost the initiative , especially as the Welsh infantry provided by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd had proved unreliable , and deserted at an early point . The flanks of the royal army closed in on Montfort 's , surrounding them . With Montfort confronted by a force twice the size of his own , on unfavourable ground , the battle rapidly turned into a massacre .

With their defeat at Lewes still fresh in memory , the royalists fought with a strong sense of bitterness and resentment . As a result , and despite attempts to surrender , most of the baronial rebels were killed on the battlefield rather than taken prisoner and ransomed , as was the common custom and practice . In what has been referred to as " an episode of noble bloodletting unprecedented since the Conquest " , Montfort 's son Henry was killed first , then Simon himself lost his horse and died fighting . His body was mutilated ; his head , hands , feet and testicles cut off . King Henry himself , who had been in the custody of Montfort and dressed up in his colours , was barely rescued from the mêlée by Roger de Leybourne , a converted rebel .

= = Aftermath = =

The royals were eager to settle scores after Montfort 's defeat . At the Parliament at Winchester in September the same year , all those who had taken part in the rebellion were disinherited . Yet even though the uprising of the younger Simon Montfort in Lincolnshire was over by Christmas , scattered resistance remained . The main problem was the garrison encamped at the virtually impregnable Kenilworth Castle , and a siege started in the summer of 1266 seemed futile . By the end of October , the royals drew up the so @-@ called Dictum of Kenilworth , whereby rebels were allowed to buy back their land at prices dependent on their level of involvement in the rebellion . The defenders of the castle turned down the offer at first , but by the end of the year conditions had become intolerable , and in 1267 the Dictum was agreed upon .

As far as wide @-@ scale confrontations went , the Battle of Evesham and its aftermath marked the end of baronial opposition in the reign of Henry III . The kingdom now entered into a period of unity and progress that lasted until the early 1290s .