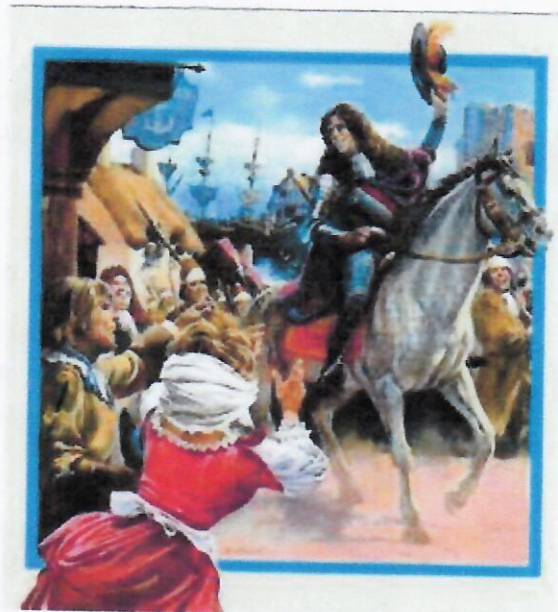


## JAMES SCOTT 1<sup>ST</sup> DUKE OF MONMOUTH 1649 – 1685



James Scott was the eldest illegitimate son of Charles II of England, Scotland and Ireland and his mistress Lucy Walter. As an illegitimate son, James was not eligible to succeed to the throne although there were rumours that Charles had married Lucy secretly. At the age of 14 James was created 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Monmouth amongst other titles and in 1663 he was appointed a Knight of the Garter. In this same year he married Anne Scott and the couple had 6 children. He took his wife's surname upon his marriage. But he became known as Monmouth and he gained a considerable reputation as one of Britain's finest soldiers. He was very popular because he was a Protestant. The heir to the throne was the King's brother, James, Duke of York, who had converted to Roman Catholicism.

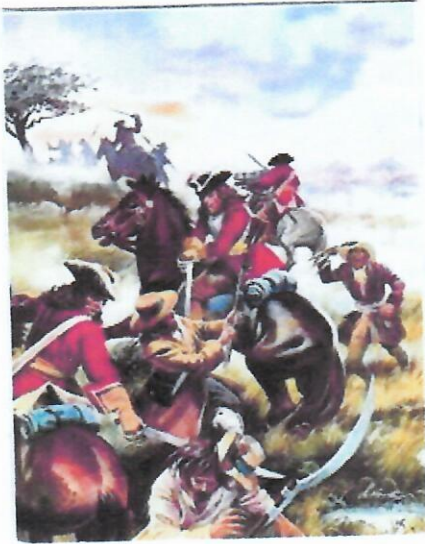
As Monmouth's popularity with the masses increased, he was obliged to go into exile in the Dutch United Provinces (The Netherlands) where he gained support. On King Charles II death in February 1685 Monmouth led what became known as "The Monmouth Rebellion." In 1685 he set sail with three ships to England and on the 11<sup>th</sup> June anchored in Lyme Regis to the West of the Cobb and beyond the arc of fire of the town's cannon. These three ships were to be the means of escape. Upon landing with 82 men on the pebble beach at Poker's Pool (now known as Monmouth Beach) he knelt down and kissed a pebble. He marched up Stile Path and made his headquarters at the George Inn in Coombe Street (this inn was burnt down in 1844). He was helped considerably in the unloading of artillery pieces by the cooperation of the staunchly Protestant towns people of Lyme Regis. Monmouth also seized £400 from The Custom House in Lyme leaving a signed receipt for the "loan"! Whilst all this was happening we are told that, like Sir Francis Drake, the Mayor of Lyme Regis was playing bowls on a green to the south of Pound Street. From here they overlooked the Cobb at the bottom of Stile Lane. The bell was rung on Bell Cliff and the order given to prepare the guns on the Cobb but no gun powder could be found! Meanwhile Monmouth had gathered about 300 men from Lyme on the first day. Volunteers also arrived to serve under Monmouth and by 15<sup>th</sup> June he had a force of over 1000 men. A customs officer was reputed to have ridden over 200 miles from Lyme to London to inform the King.



Monmouth's arrival in Lyme Regis

The King ordered the Royal Navy to capture Monmouth's ships anchored in Lyme Bay, thus cutting off any escape back to Europe. One of these vessels was a two-masted 'dogger' which later gave its name to the Dogger Bank used in shipping forecasts.

Monmouth's supporters, one of whom was Daniel Defoe, author of 'Robison Crusoe', armed only with pitchforks were easily defeated at the Battle of Sedgemoor – the last pitched battle to



be fought on English soil. Monmouth fled but was soon captured together with his army and brought back to Lyme. He unsuccessfully begged for mercy and he even offered to convert to Roman Catholicism but all to no avail. He was sentenced to death as a traitor. James would not allow a trial and he was be-headed at Tower Hill on 15<sup>th</sup> July 1685 by Jack Ketch. It is said that it took the executioner 8 blows to sever Monmouth's head despite him begging to be finished with one blow. The Tower of London account says 5 blows. Many of Monmouth's supporters were executed for treason on 15<sup>th</sup> July 1685. They were tried during what became known as "The Bloody Assizes" led by Judge Jeffries, known as "The Hanging Judge". It is said that 320 people were condemned to death and 800 were transported to the West Indies.

It was because of Judge Jeffries revenge and retribution on Lyme Regis that on the 12<sup>th</sup> September 1685 he chose 12 victims to be hung, drawn and quartered on Monmouth Beach, the landing place of the unfortunate Duke whilst Jeffries dined in the 'Great House' in Broad Street, now Chatham House which is said to be still troubled by his ghost. Each of the twelve victims was to be fully disembowelled and butchered, their body parts dipped in tar and sent for display across the affected counties as a gruesome warning of the price of treason.



### Popular Legends

One legend was that they realised after his death that no official portrait of Monmouth had been painted so they exhumed his body and stitched his head back on. They sat him upright for the portrait to be painted. However, there are two formal portraits from before his death in the National Portrait Gallery, London.

The second legend is that "The Man in the Iron Mask" by Alexandre Dumas could be Monmouth. This could be based on the reasoning that James II would not execute his own nephew. So someone else was executed in his place and James arranged for Monmouth to be sent to France and be put in the custody of his cousin King Louis XIV of France. Who knows?