

# James II 1685-1688



James II succeeded to the throne with no resistance from any quarter. Most people recognised his hereditary right, and many had sympathy for him after the way he had been treated during the Popish Plot and Bill of Exclusion. Yet within 4 years he was to lose his crown. Unlike his brother Charles II, James II was obstinate, intolerant (bigoted), naive and blind to reality. Charles II had realised early on that his people and the majority of Parliament detested popery (Catholicism) and would not allow him to impose it on them. James ignored this lesson. The Tories who were Anglican were loyal to the Crown as were Catholics, and James' naively believed that the Anglicans would be his allies. Loyalty and religious belief do not always go hand in hand.

## Monmouth's Rebellion July 1685

In May 1685, in support of James Duke of Monmouth, The Earl of Argyle rebelled in Scotland. Argyle got little support, was quickly captured and executed.

Monmouth who had been in exile since the Rye Plot, landed in Dorset. A large number of westcountrymen joined him. However, there was little support elsewhere, and although he amassed an army of about 4,000 and marched into Somerset, his soldiers were undisciplined and badly equipped, and with only 800 cavalry and 4 cannons. On the marshes of Sedgemoor his route was barred by the King's army. It was 6th July 1685. As it was foggy, Monmouth attempted a night attack, but it was ill planned and confused. It took him men all night to wade through the marshes to get at the King's army. As they approached a ditch called Langmoor Rhine, they were spotted by Royalist outpost. A shot was fired. Monmouth's troops moved on but another deep ditch called Bussex Rhine halted their progress. The armies faced each other either side of the ditch. At first, Monmouth had success with his artillery, but they soon ran out of ammunition. Now, it was the turn of the seventeen (17) Royalist cannons to pound Monmouth's army. They did their job and as daylight approached, **the Battle of Sedgemoor** was won. Monmouth escaped the battle but was captured on his way to the south coast. He was tried and executed. (it took three blows and a final cut with a knife).

Monmouth's followers suffered terribly at the hands of **Judge Jeffries and the Bloody Assizes**. Judge Jeffries toured the West Country trying rebels. Instead of rounding up and executing the ringleaders, James ordered that large numbers of the rebels be punished. Thirteen hundred (1,300) were arrested of which 200 were hanged, drawn and quartered, with another 800 being sold into slavery in the West Indies. Jeffries is often depicted as an evil, sadistic man, but in truth he did no more or less than any other Judge of the times. Remember, he was working under the orders of James II, with whom any blame should lie.

## The End for James II

The defeat of Monmouth should have shown James that the country was loyal to him, particularly if he supported the Church of England (Anglican). However in 1686-7, he decided to show toleration to Catholics and nonconformists

- Tory ministers were replaced by Catholics
- Catholics were allowed to become town councillors
- Catholics were allowed to become army officers
- The Vice Chancellor at Cambridge University was sacked for refusing to grant a degree to a Catholic priest.

In 1687, James issued a **Declaration of Indulgence**, which virtually cancelled the Clarendon Code. In this he admitted that he wanted **all his subjects to be members of the Catholic Church**. James's action frightened both rich and poor, particularly if the Catholic influence became strong in the army and universities. Power appeared to be given to a minority religion. People were suspicious. Although, nonconformists also benefited from James' actions, it was the Catholics who he was really favouring.

## **Trial of the Seven Bishops**

In 1688, he issued another Declaration of Indulgence, but when Sandcroft, the Archbishop of Canterbury and six Bishops questioned James power to issue it, he had them tried for seditious libel. They were found not guilty, as the judges, although James' friends, saw that public opinion would not allow a guilty verdict. This was the first time an English monarch lost an important law case. This was a shattering blow to James.

Leading Tories and Whigs had had enough of James II. They met together and wrote an invitation to William of Orange, to come to England, save the Protestant faith and restore the countries "true liberties".

## **The Warming Pan Baby**

In 1688, news spread that James' second wife was pregnant. As it stood, should he die, the throne would pass to Mary or Anne, James' Protestant daughters. If a son were born to James, then this Catholic son would succeed to the throne. (Mother Catholic). Some believed that she was not in fact pregnant but this was a Catholic trick and that a boy would be produced at the right time, as the rightful heir. In June 1688, the Queen gave birth to a son, James Edward, later known as the Old Pretender. The people didn't want a Catholic successor. All kinds of rumours spread, such as the fact that the real son had died at birth, and been taken from the crowded room in the confusion without anybody realising what had happened. A baby boy from nearby belonging to a miller, was placed in a warming pan and taken back to the Queen's bed, and nobody knew any wiser.

## **William of Orange's Invasion 1688**

On 1st November William sailed from Holland with an army of 15,000 Dutch and English troops. The English Navy did nothing to stop it. William decided to land in England on the 4th November, because it was his birthday and wedding anniversary. However, his English friends persuaded him to make it the 5th November. Whig writers made great mileage out of the fact that on the 5th November England had twice been saved from Catholic Plots.

James was deserted by many of his soldiers and army commanders including, John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough. He was in no position to fight. Orders came to London from William, that James was to leave the court and have Dutch soldiers to guard him. James truly believed he would face the same fate as his father, Charles I. However, William was his nephew as well as son in law and had no wish to kill James. James was allowed to escape to

France. England had deposed a second Stuart king! The "**Glorious Revolution**" or "Bloodless Revolution" had taken place without a drop of blood being spilt.

## **The Succession Question**

It was agreed that William and Mary (James' sister) should rule jointly. The throne would then pass on to the children. If they died childless, then the throne would go to Anne (sister). In the end both Mary and Anne succeeded but died childless, and in 1714, the throne passed over to the descendants of James I's daughter Elizabeth who had married into the German Hanover family. Therefore, the Catholic line of James II was excluded, and 1745 (Charles Edward Stuart, Young Pretender) in which there were attempts to gain back the English throne for the Catholic Stuarts.