



SEDGEMOOR BATTLE and MONMOUTH REBELLION CAMPAIGN

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THE CAMPAIGN

War period: **Stuart Uprisings**
Campaign: **Monmouth Rebellion**
Dates: **11/06/1685 – 6/07/1685**

Summary

On the 11th June 1685 the exiled Duke of Monmouth, illegitimate son of Charles II, landed at Lyme Regis in Dorset with a small force in an attempt to topple the new Catholic king James II. Monmouth was popular with a large section of the English people and many would support his rebellion in an attempt to recover religious and political rights which had been progressively eroded since the Restoration of Charles II.

This was to be a concerted effort between Scots and English, for the Duke of Argyll had set sail from Holland in May to initiate a rebellion in Scotland. But the planning was inadequate, their invasion preparations had been discovered by the crown and Monmouth's forces were few in number and poorly equipped. Argyll's Scottish rebellion was stifled almost before it could begin and within 36 hours the news of Monmouth's landing had reached the king and his military commanders in London. The rebels' only chance was to raise, equip and train forces as they marched and to rapidly secure Bristol, England's second city, before the royal army could counter them.

Background

Following the restoration of Charles II in 1660 the parliamentary democracy and religious freedoms for which so many had died in the Civil War, were rapidly eroded. Charles developed a progressively more autocratic approach to government and nonconformists were increasingly persecuted. Worse still in the view of many at the time, Charles had fathered no legitimate son or daughter and so his brother James, a Roman Catholic, would succeed to the throne on Charles' death. The spectre of absolute Catholic monarchy loomed large once more. Many still remembered the death and destruction that this had caused just a few decades earlier.

To avoid another civil war there were attempts to ensure the succession of Charles II's eldest illegitimate son James, Duke of Monmouth, who was both popular in the country and a protestant. But the attempts in 1681 to exclude the king's brother from the succession and substitute Monmouth by parliamentary means failed. Then a plot to overthrow both Charles and James in a coup led to the Duke of Monmouth prudently

exiling himself in Holland. When Charles died on 6th February 1685 his brother came to the throne as James II.

For many it seemed that only the use of force could now resolve the situation. But the plotters who persuaded Monmouth to venture all on an invasion were a small and unrepresentative group. Most significantly there were just a handful of the nobility, among whom the most significant were Lord Grey of Warke and the Duke of Argyll. They lacked even a clear common purpose, other than the removal of James II, for alongside those who wanted to see Monmouth crowned king there were others who were committed republicans.

Campaign

On 11th June 1685 Monmouth and his supporters landed at Lyme Regis in Dorset. They arrived in three small ships with just four light field guns, 1500 muskets and equal quantities of armour. In all there were no more than about 300 men while practically all the money had already been spent. The invasion had been inadequately funded, lacked sufficient arms and equipment and had at its core only a tiny body of experienced soldiers, including a few mercenaries such as the Dutch gunner who would command the artillery.

In contrast James II had inherited from his brother a small but well trained, well equipped and ably led professional army. Its second in command was John Churchill who later, as Duke of Marlborough, would be responsible for some of the most famous of British victories. Once this standing army was fully mobilised and supported by the local militias the rebels would have little chance of success in a pitched battle. But the royal forces swiftly received news of the landing as two customs officers of Lynne arrived in London on the 13th June having ridden some 200 miles. Monmouth's only chance was to raise forces and money rapidly and take control of Bristol, the second city in England where he had strong support. Then he would march on London, hoping that elements of the royal army would defect to him.

Thousands flocked to his colours as Monmouth marched through the South West, to Taunton (18th June) where a proclamation was issued declaring him king, then on to Bridgewater from where he marched towards Bristol. A significant proportion of them were nonconformists who had suffered increasing persecution under Charles II. Others were disaffected because of the economic recession which had recently hit the south west particularly hard. Most were labourers and artisans rather than the peasants of popular tradition. They even included amongst their number a young Daniel Defoe, later to become famous as an author. At its height the rebel army numbered more than 5000, perhaps as many as 7000, but the level of support did not match that which Monmouth and his supporters had expected. In particular the gentry did not seem to be rallying to the cause.

The rebels dealt with various local militia forces in minor skirmishes. But already Monmouth's ships had been taken by the navy, removing his opportunity for escape, and a naval presence along the south coast guarded against any hope of reinforcement, though none was planned (Bryant, 1947, 121). Churchill had been dispatched to the South West as Major General with 6 troops of horse and 5 infantry companies with the Tangier garrison, recently returned to England, soon to follow. Monmouth's advance was too slow and Lord Feversham, the commander of the royal army, reached Bristol with his Horse Guards before the rebels. At Keynsham on the 26th, intending to skirt around and attack Bristol from the more vulnerable north side, they found that the royal forces had attempted to block their advance on Bristol by breaking the bridge over the Avon. The rebels contrived a temporary repair but then were beaten in a skirmish with a detachment of royal cavalry. Monmouth decided not to attempt an attack on Bristol and his summons to Bath to surrender was refused. They then turned eastward towards London. As time passed the royal forces were increasing in strength as the professional units and the militias rendezvoused. Most importantly, Churchill joined with Feversham at Bath. Yet despite their lack of equipment and experience, in a major skirmish at Norton St Philip on the 27th June the rebels got the upper hand. The royal forces, advancing into the town which had been the rebel headquarters that night, had been surprised in an ambush. If Monmouth had now attempted a bold attack then it might have led to a dramatic defeat for the royal army which, with about 2500 troops, was just half the size of the rebel force. But Monmouth did not to grasp what was surely his best opportunity of the whole campaign.

From now on the rebel's position seemed ever more hopeless. With the failure to reach Bristol before Feversham on the 23rd June they had lost the initiative. At Norton St Philip on the 27th Monmouth had failed to take the only real opportunity the campaign would offer of inflicting a serious defeat on the royal forces, which might have caused James's troops to begin to defect and many more Englishmen to rally to the rebel cause. Now, while the army rested at Frome on the 28th, the news arrived of the failure of Argyll's Scottish rebellion. Argyll, who had set sail 3 weeks earlier than Monmouth had been captured and executed before he could even raise his standard. The expected Cheshire rising had also failed to materialise. The rebels realised they stood alone and that the royal army could concentrate all its forces against them.

The morale of the rebel force began to collapse. As Monmouth began to retreat his forces began to desert in large numbers, men taking up the amnesty offered by James II for those who abandoned the rebellion immediately. Churchill had been dispatched to Dorset to cut the rebels off from the channel ports and so Monmouth's army fell back into the south west. They reached the town of Bridgewater on the 3rd July, believing wrongly that a large body of peasants had been raised in support. But Bridgewater was a significant port which had been a royalist garrison in the Civil War and was relatively isolated on the western edge of the extensive wetlands of the Somerset Levels and approached by causeways across the moor. It was here that the rebel force was cornered when the royal army arrived on the 5th July, quartering 3 miles south east of Bridgewater at Westonzoyland and the adjacent villages of Middlezoy and Othery.

1000 years earlier the Somerset wetlands had provided refuge for King Alfred and from them he had launched his dramatically successful campaign against the Danes. On the 6th July 1685 the Duke of Monmouth similarly tried one last desperate attack. The 'Pitchfork Rebellion' was about to reach its climax on the bleak wastes of Sedgemoor.

Consequences

At Sedgemoor the Duke of Monmouth's army was completely destroyed and the rebellion crushed. Although he escaped the field, the Duke was soon captured and a few days later executed in London. This and the summary execution of a small number of rebels in the hours and days after the battle may have been considered a reasonable response to such a rebellion. It was however the cold and calculated course followed by the judicial system in the subsequent months that was considered completely disproportionate.

The retribution that James II visited on the people of the South West in the months that followed Sedgemoor has never been forgotten. The name of Judge Jeffreys and the Bloody Assizes are infamous in English history. Of those accused many were sentenced to death and many more were punished with transportation to the West Indies. The harshness of the sentences caused national revulsion and contributed, if only in a small way, to the overthrow of James II and his replacement by William and Mary in the Glorious Revolution of 1688.

Further reading

For a very brief but coherent context to the Monmouth Rebellion covering the period from the Restoration of Charles II in 1660 to the Glorious Revolution of 1688 see: Morrill, *Restoration and Union*, Simon Hall, The Penguin Atlas of British and Irish History, London, Penguin Books, 2001

A leaflet produced for the 300th Anniversary and is still available through Tourist Information Offices in Somerset. It provides a useful summary of the campaign and information on linked historical attractions in Somerset to assist you in planning your own tour. Anon, *The Pitchfork Rebellion: The Road to Sedgemoor*, 1985

Some additional online material, including images of some original documents relating to the campaign, is available through the Admiral Blake Museum website:

<http://www.sedgemoor.gov.uk/sedgemoorweb/content/museums/blakemuseum.htm>

For a more extensive treatment of the Monmouth rebellion there are many modern works. The most useable detailed military history is Chandler, *Sedgemoor 1685 : from Monmouth's invasion to the Bloody Assizes*, Staplehurst, Spellmount, 1999. By far the

best written and most readable account of the rebellion is Earle, *Monmouth's Rebels: The Road to Sedgemoor 1685*, 1977

THE BATTLE

Summary

On the 5th July 1685 the rebel army of the Duke of Monmouth, perhaps by then no more than 3500 strong, lay cornered in the town of Bridgewater (Somerset) by a smaller but far more experienced royal army. That night, in a last desperate attempt to salvage something from his abortive rebellion, Monmouth launched a surprise night attack from the least expected direction, across the marshy wastes of Sedgemoor. But the rebels' bold strategy was discovered before they reached the royal camp and then in the darkness their cavalry failed to locate the ford giving access to the royal camp.

With the element of surprise lost any chance of victory had disappeared. The rebel horse soon fled the field and in open country without cavalry support Monmouth's infantry proved an easy target for the royal cavalry. The discipline, experience and firepower of the well equipped professional soldiers of the army of James II soon began to tell. As the morning light revealed the rebels' true plight of the rebels, Feversham launched a joint cavalry and infantry attack. Monmouth's army was totally destroyed.

KEY FACTS

Name	Sedgemoor
Type	Pitched battle
Campaign	Monmouth Rebellion
War period	Stuart Uprisings
Outcome	Destruction of rebel army
Country	England
County	Somerset
Place	Westonzoyland / Chedzoy
Location	very accurate
Terrain	unenclosed lowland moor
Date	6th July 1685
Start	c.2:00 a.m.

Duration	c.3 hours
Armies	Royal army under Lord Feversham Rebel army under Duke of Monmouth
Numbers	royal army: c. 2600 rebel army: c. 3600
Losses	
Grid Reference	ST351356 (335100,135650)
OS Landranger map	182
OS Explorer map	140 (Quantock Hill & Bridgewater)

For a location map follow this link:

<http://www.multimap.com/p/browse.cgi?pc=&GridE=335100&GridN=135650&scale=500000&title=Sedgemoor+battlefield&cat=h>

The Armies

The Duke of Monmouth's rebel army outnumbered the royal forces at Sedgemoor, especially as the Wiltshire militia was quartered several miles away and did not reach the battlefield until the rebels were already routed. But the rebels were deficient in muskets, poorly trained and with some of their troops armed with no more than scythes as weapons. In contrast the royal army were well equipped and experienced professionals.

Royal

Commanders

Commander: Lord Feversham.

Infantry commander: John Churchill

Troops

c.2600 professionals plus c.1500 Wiltshire Militia in Middlezoy (not engaged until the rout); comprising:

Cavalry: c.700 in 4 squadrons of which 200 on patrol.

Infantry: c.1900 in 6 battalions: Kirke's, Trelawney's, the 2nd (Coldstream) Guards, two battalions of the 1st Foot Guards, and Dumbarton's Regiment (Royal Scots);

Artillery: 26 of which 6 engaged in the main action.

Rebel

Commanders

Commander: Duke of Monmouth

Cavalry commander: Lord Grey of Warke

Infantry commander: Nathaniel Wade

Troops

c.3600 comprising:

Cavalry: c.600

Infantry: c.3000 in 5 'regiments'

Artillery: 4 small iron guns, but only 3 brought onto the field

Losses

Royal: Probably no more than about 80 killed and 220 wounded.

Rebel: Probably more than 1000 killed and c.500 captured and imprisoned in the church overnight.

Arms & Equipment

The armies of 1685 were still equipped and used tactics very similar to that seen in the Civil War. The greatest changes had been amongst the infantry, and not simply in the style of their coats – long coats having now replaced the short coats worn in the 1640s. While armour had already been largely abandoned by all but the cavalry by the later stages of the Civil War, in the 1640s and 50s the musketeers had almost all used matchlock muskets. Just one of the royal regiments were now equipped with matchlocks, the rest using flintlock muskets, a more reliable mechanism that was always ready for use, saving precious minutes in the lighting of the match, while at night there was not the glow of the match to give away the musketeers' position. The rebels however would have used any weapon that came to hand, so matchlocks may have been far more common amongst Monmouth's army. Although the days of the pike were numbered, due to the invention of the bayonet, in 1685 the infantry still comprised a balance of musketeers, providing a devastating firepower, and the pikemen whose most important task was the defence of the infantry against cavalry attack.

The Story of the Battle

Monmouth may initially have intended to march north at night to evade the royal forces. However he changed his mind once he had information from a local supporter, Benjamin Godfrey, who had reconnoitred the enemy deployment and

offered to guide the army across the moor. Monmouth recognised immediately the weakness of the royal deployment. The three arms of the royal force were positioned at some distance from each other and in this sense were vulnerable to a surprise attack. Monmouth change his plans to exploit that weakness in a surprise attack under cover of darkness across Sedgemoor itself.

He would take the long route through the narrow lanes skirting Chedzoy to the north and east approaching the royal camp from its least protected side. The cavalry would ride on and cross the upper pluncheon, which was covered by few if any troops, and following the wide drove between the fields of Bussex and those of Westonzoyland they would attack the artillery train from the rear, neutralising one of the royal army's main advantages and possibly even turning the guns on the royal infantry itself. Meanwhile the rebel infantry would form up in battalia in the moor to the north and attack the royal infantry camp, wading across the shallow rhyne in battle formation hopefully even catching the enemy unawares before they could form up. With the royal cavalry in quarters some distance away in the houses in the village the other main royal advantage, its experienced cavalry, would be out of contention in the early stages of the attack. Any night attack was risky, especially with inexperienced troops, but this was the best opportunity that the rebel army could ever have hoped for.

The Royal Deployment

The royal army had approach Bridgwater on the 5th July along the major road from the east, making their headquarters at Westonzoyland and that night the professional regiments were quartered in and about the village. The Wiltshire Militia were at Middlezoy and Othery, 2 miles to the south east, and would only arrive on the battlefield in time to participate in the killing which accompanied the rout of the rebel army.

At Westonzoyland the six royal infantry regiments were camped in regularly laid out lines of tents. These were organised in six groups, one for each regiment, along the moor edge immediately outside the hedged fields which enclosed the small 'island' of Bussex on the northern edge Westonzoyland. On the north and west sides their camp was protected by the wide but shallow drainage dyke known as the Bussex Rhyne, leaving space between the tents and the rhyne to be able to draw up in battle formation. The train of artillery also lay within the protection of the Bussex Rhyne but to the south west of Bussex island and next to the fields of Westonzoyland.

The artillery pieces were lined up just inside the line of the rhyne facing westward against the most direct line of rebel attack. Lined up behind them and then in lines between the rows of wagons of the baggage train were the tents of the gunners, waggoners and others who kept the army equipped and moving. Here they were half way between the two routes across the moor from Bridgewater where they entered Westonzoland. From this position the guns could cover any rebel approach along the main road to the south or via the more circuitous route of the lane which crossed the rhyne by the lower pluncheon or

ford intended mainly as a cattle drove. The majority of the cavalry were quartered in the village itself, although the horses were kept together and saddled ready for action.

To forewarn the army of any threat of a rebel attack, or in case the rebels tried to escape the town under cover of darkness, detachments of cavalry and infantry were deployed at various locations across Sedgemoor.

One was at Chedzoy, which could be easily reached from Bridgewater and from where a local road across the moor approached Westonzoyland via the lower pluncheon from the north west. The main road and the other lane across the moor from Bridgewater, which also entered at the lower pluncheon was covered by commanded musketeers deployed in Pitzoy Pound, a stone walled stock enclosure on the small 'island' of Pitzoy immediately to the west of the Westonzoyland lying between these two routes. Another detachment was positioned on the hill to the north of Chedzoy covering the major road from Bridgewater towards Bristol and London. A scout was also left to watch the crossing of the Langmoor Rhyne where the other approach from the north, the much longer route across the moor to the east of Chedzoy, which entered Westonzoyland by the upper pluncheon. In addition patrols were also sent out along each of the routes to seek out any evidence of enemy troop movements. Any approach from the south or west would be far too long and anyway the Wiltshire militia was deployed in the villages to the rear. The royal army was thus apparently well prepared for any rebel approach.

The Rebel Advance

The axles of the cannon were well greased and horses hooves muffled with rags to keep down the noise. The rebel force departed between 10:00 and 11:00pm on a three hour march of five miles, arriving at about 2:00pm. The recognition word was 'Soho', a reference to Monmouth's London home. In the confusion of a night attack the 'word' would be even more vital than usual. The march along Marsh Lane from the main road and then out across Northmoor was a challenging one, keeping quiet and avoiding the royal patrols. Because of a squeaking wheel one cannon had to be left behind and then so too was the ammunition wagon, near Peasey Farm. The clandestine advance was however initially successful as they skirted Chedzoy and managed to avoid the royal patrols.

Like that other desperate surprise attack of the Stuart Rebellions, at Culloden in 1746, the rebel attack was ultimately to fail, through a combination of bad luck and incompetence. At first the luck held and they were able to avoid the royal scouts. When they reached the Langmoor Rhyne, a water filled dyke which drained part of the moor, the local guide could not find the crossing point near 'step stones' or 'Langmoor Stone'. Many of the rhyne were wide but shallow and might have been waded through, but this had been a very wet summer and to attempt a crossing with more than 3000 horse and foot in line of march would have been impossible. So they lost crucial time finding the crossing and then, when they did, they appear to have been discovered by a royalist scout left to watch this unlikely northern approach. A shot rang out, presumably from the trooper alerting his

comrades, and then he set off at full speed back to the camp at Westonzoyland to raise the alarm with the repeated call of: “Beat your drums, the enemy is come. For the Lord’s sake, beat your drums”. Within a short time of this call to arms each of the regiments were deployed and ready for action, although the cavalry who were quartered in the village would take far longer to arrive. To organise the troops in such rapid fashion into the formal deployment of a 17th century army in the dark and under threat of imminent attack was undoubtedly the mark of a professional army. It might have been a somewhat different story if the militias had been involved.

The Rebel Attack

The rebels might still have had a chance of success because the enemy camp was now less than ¾ mile (1200m.) away across the moor. The cavalry commander, Lord Grey, was sent ahead with the main body of cavalry to take the crossing of the Bussex Rhyne. But he seems to have rushed off without the local guide and thus in the darkness he failed to find the Upper Plungeon, the fording point where a cattle drove way crossed the drainage dyke, which was the only realistic crossing of the rhyne with so many cavalry.

At no point during the action did cavalry, either royalist or rebel, apparently attempted to cross the Rhyne other than at the plungeons. Indeed when royal infantry regiments later had to cross the rhyne in line of march they seem to have done so by the plungeons. Desperately looking for the plungeon Grey rode along the north side of the Rhyne right across the front of the royal infantry deployment.

Once the royal infantry realised that this was the enemy they opened fire and, mounted on horses unused to combat, Grey’s cavalry were soon put to flight. By the time the second division of cavalry arrived, under Captain Jones, who did locate the upper plungeon it was already defended by about 150 of Compton’s cavalry. Jones tried either to take the plungeon or to hold back the royal cavalry from advancing across it.

As a veteran of Cromwell’s Ironsides he knew how important it was that the royal cavalry were unable to engage the infantry. It is unclear how fierce an action this was but Jones was later spared from execution because of the great courage he had shown leading his men in the cavalry engagement, earning the respect of his royal opponents. But such bravery was now in a hopeless cause. The key opportunity had been lost through this failure to take out the royal artillery, which would still have been totally vulnerable to Grey’s cavalry had he found and crossed the upper plungeon.

The royal infantry had all by now deployed between the two plungeons, a distance of probably about half a mile (800 metres), close by the rhyne on the south side and facing the moor. When the rebel infantry finally arrived they mounted their attack on the right flank of the royal army, held by Dumbarton’s, the only royal troops

using the old matchlock muskets, who could be seen in the darkness by the glow of their lighted match.

It was Wade's intention when he arrived with the first rebel battalion to cross the rhyne in battle formation once the three battalions were deployed, because the drain was shallow enough for such a crossing. But when the second rebel battalion arrived, deploying on Wade's left, it immediately opened fire, as did the third battalion. They were deployed about 30 yards from the rhyne and with the fire-fight underway Wade could not persuade his men to advance any further. While an attack across the Rhyne, even if opposed, would have offered some chance of success, to stand off and settle into a fire-fight sealed the rebel fate. Their last hope had been to get to close quarters because in hand to hand fighting all their men, many of whom lacked firearms, could have been thrown into the action.

Wade did make an error in deploying his infantry too far to the left, with the result that the rebel infantry could only engage with the right wing of the royal infantry. But Lord Grey earned Wade's contempt as the main architect of the rebel defeat. Not only had he failed in the first and most important strike, his cavalry had fled the field after a very short time leaving the rebel infantry to stand with no flanking cavalry protection when the royal cavalry finally appeared. And to compound his failures, as detachments of Grey's cavalry fled the field they reserve units of the advancing rebel infantry into chaos before they could even reach the action. Dummer in his plan of the second stage of the engagement describing the 'confused posture' of the rebel infantry as the infantry engagement began.

Counter attack and rout

Initially in the infantry engagement the rebels still had the advantage of three artillery pieces, which they deployed about 100 yards back from the Rhyne on their left flank. Firing case shot they caused significant losses in Dumbarton's regiment on the right wing of the royal forces. However with their ammunition wagon more than 2 miles away and with limited numbers of muskets the rebel force would never win a fire-fight against the far better equipped, supplied and trained royal infantry. Indeed the inexperienced rebel musketeers are said to have generally fired too high and so it was the artillery pieces which did the real damage amongst the royal infantry.

The critical early stage of the defence was under the command of Churchill. After Feversham's arrival Churchill commanded the infantry for the rest of the battle, transferring regiments from the left to the right flank to support Dumbarton's. Finally also six of the heavier royal artillery pieces were brought up, after the sort of chaos that one would not expect from a professional army, three being deployed on the right and three in the centre of the royal infantry battalia. The last rebel advantage was gone and very soon the rebel artillery was silenced and then the royal artillery began to cut through the rebel troops.

By now the royal cavalry had all arrived. With most if not all the rebel cavalry having been driven off the field there was no need even for royal cavalry squadrons to be sent to keep them out of the action. The whole royal cavalry force could thus be sent across the upper and lower plungeons to face the rebel infantry on their right and left flanks. The rebel reserve regiments may never have engaged with the royal infantry but now they had to deploy to right and left to face the royal cavalry.

The latter had now crossed the plungeons and deployed against the rebel flanks, six squadrons under Lord Oxford and the King's four troops of horse on the left. They are clearly shown by Dummer, each squadron in two divisions, the rear division there to support the first division and provide a second attack if the latter withdrew. When daylight arrived and Feversham could fully assess the situation he ordered the cavalry attack, supported by an infantry advance of four regiments across the rhyne to be supported by the other two that crossed the upper plungeon in line of march. But in the final attack most of the royal infantry seem to have stood off with just detachments of commanded musketeers engaging the rebel centre while the main action was left to the cavalry.

Initially the rebel regiments deployed and met the cavalry attack with pike and musket in similar fashion to many actions of the civil war. Though Wade claimed later that only his battalion had put up any serious resistance it seems from Dummer's plans that each of the rebel regiments may have initially played its part. The first cavalry attacks were driven off, but any infantry force caught in open country without cavalry support would be extremely vulnerable but especially such an inexperienced force as Monmouth's army.

Soon the pikes began to waver as rebel soldiers began to break and run from the back as the cavalry and infantry attacks came in. With troops streaming away, seeking the relative protection of the hedged fields, the rebels units were driven back in chaos. Many had died in the main action but, as so often, it was in the rout as the structure of the regimental formations collapsed that the rebel forces suffered their greatest loss of life. Wade claimed that his battalion made a desperate fighting retreat but it too was finally broken. Many had died on the field and many more lost their lives as they fled across the moor and into the cornfields of Chedzoy.

The Aftermath

The battle had lasted about three hours. By 5:00 or 6:00 in the morning the rebels had all fled or been killed or captured. The rebel army had been totally destroyed. Fleeing from the battlefield Monmouth had looked back from Pendon Hill to see the rout. Over the next three days he attempted to reach the coast to take ship to the continent, but was both he and Lord Grey were captured on the 9th. While Grey was able eventually to pay for his freedom, Monmouth was taken to London and executed on the 15th July on Tower Hill.

At least 1000 rebels died on the field while the royal army suffered no more than about 80 killed. The rebels taken prisoner that day, including the wounded, were locked up in Westonzoyland church. Some died of their wounds overnight and in the morning 22 others were executed, though the majority would have to await the Bloody Assizes where their fate would be execution or transportation.

Assessment of the Battle

This was a small, isolated battle which did not have any direct major political or social consequences. But it was equivalent in scale to a number of the lesser battles of the Civil War and it was the first significant battle for several of the best known regiments of the British army. Also, in command of the royal infantry that night was John Churchill, later to distinguish himself as one of our greatest generals, now better known as the Duke of Marlborough. Most importantly however Sedgemoor has a place in popular consciousness both as the last pitched battle fought on English soil and from the vicious retribution exacted thereafter in the infamous Bloody Assizes.

Sedgemoor is often dismissed as a reckless adventure with no chance of success. Yet when examined in detail, with a clear understanding of the landscape as it was in 1685 and of the exact royal deployment, the reality is quite the opposite. The attack is in some ways reminiscent of Sir William Waller's dramatically successful surprise attack on a royalist army at Alton during the Civil War. Monmouth was making the very best use of the resources to hand, exploiting the opportunities that the landscape offered and seeking out the enemy's greatest weakness. But in most battles the element of luck plays an important part and for Monmouth the luck simply ran out.

Monmouth knew his inexperienced, poorly trained and ill equipped army, though it outnumbered the enemy nearly two to one, was no match for Feversham's professional force in a pitched battle. This may have been why he failed to exploit the opportunity at Norton St Philip. He needed to catch the enemy by surprise and neutralise their advantages in cavalry and artillery. To do this he made use of expert local advice on the terrain and reconnaissance as to the exact enemy deployment. Monmouth recognised the enemy's weaknesses and designed a relatively simple strategy to exploit those weaknesses while as far as possible ensuring his own troops' shortcomings were not exposed.

The frontal attack along the Bridgewater to Weston road, that Chenevix Trench claims should have been made, would have proved suicidal, as would a similar attack along the lane and across the moor direct from Bridgewater. The approach was guarded by a well defended outpost of musketeers and both crossings of the Bussex Rhyne were covered by numerous artillery. Monmouth saw his only hope was to catch the enemy in camp with an attack from the least expected direction. He could not match the firepower of Feversham's artillery. He knew was outgunned both in the size of the pieces and their

number – with just 4 small iron pieces compared to at least 16 on the royal side. But he knew Feversham had made a dramatic mistake by deploying all his artillery together against an attack along the main road. Monmouth had a simple strategy to exploit this. The upper crossing of the rhyne was not apparently defended or is so only lightly and once taken the artillery was a sitting target for Grey's cavalry. The attacking cavalry would have a clear run at the enemy artillery once they were over the upper pluncheon because the drove route between Bussex island and Westonzoyland was wide and hedged on all sides, taking them right around into the rear of the artillery train camp.

The infantry advance also was relatively simple direct advance once formed up in battalia, which they managed in the dark with relative success. The royal deployment, with no artillery pieces in support of the infantry as one might normally expect, also gave a substantial window of opportunity when Monmouth's four small pieces could wreak havoc with the enemy infantry with his own troops free from such attack, as proved to be the case. If the royal infantry could be caught in camp and at night then there would again be critical minutes before they were ready to fight, even if their muskets were propped up outside each tent and Dumbarton's perceptive commander had already laid out the ground ready for a rapid form up because he expected an attack. With the element of surprise the rebels could be in amongst the tents before the enemy had formed up and even if they had they would still be vulnerable to a rapid assault in which they would be outnumbered once it came to hand to hand fighting. Monmouth had the added advantage that in the dark his own inexperienced troops would not be faced by the sight of the enemy they had to engage until the very last moment.

Monmouth's greatest weakness was in cavalry. Untested in battle and riding horses that had not been acclimatised to warfare, they would be no match for the professional cavalry in the royal army, yet without effective cavalry support the rebel infantry would soon be overwhelmed in an open landscape by the royal cavalry. This is why the rebels had, according to Peyps, dodged amongst the enclosures of the West Country all through the campaign (Bryant, 1947, 123 n.20). But on the night of the 5th July the royal cavalry were mostly quartered in Westonzoyland village and, although Feversham had ordered that the horses be kept together and ready saddled, it would take valuable minutes for the troops to form up and then reach the field. In that critical window the inexperienced rebel cavalry would have almost free hand.

The attack was simple, so long as the luck held. The plan depended on exploiting the darkness and the mist to avoid the detachments of royal cavalry that were deployed to discover any attack from across the moor. There were inevitable problems with such a night attack following the narrow lanes to reach the moor and then passing through the narrow defile of Langmoor stone, but with luck this could be achieved. The difficulties arose at the two key crossing points of the rhyne. It was only at the last minute, after an unexpected delay and when they were within striking distance of the royal camp that the luck ran out. But even then, had Grey found the upper pluncheon and managed to break into the royal camp then the rebels may have had a chance of victory given the chaos such an attack would have caused. Even a professional army would have been hard pressed to form up in battalia in the dark under direct attack. Without a fully organised

infantry force opposing the crossing of the rhyne then the rebel infantry, once they arrived, could have attacked in formation as Wade had intended and the outcome could have been very different. Crucially, there would have been no time for the royal artillery to be brought up from its defensive position more than 500 metres away.

Monmouth's attack was a high risk venture and he paid the cost, but it was not a completely hopeless cause until Grey failed to find and cross the upper pluncheon – and that is something we still haven't found today!

Recommended Reading on the battle

If all that is required is a brief description from a battlefield guide then by far the best account is that by Burne.

The best and most comprehensive account of the battle and battlefield is Chandler, 1999, which also places the battle very effectively within the wider context of the whole campaign of the Monmouth Rebellion. It is a well written and accessible account which also contains extensive transcripts of contemporary accounts of the battle and provides guidance for a campaign and battlefield tour.

The account by Earle is very eloquently written and a pleasure to read, but there are some points at which the narrative seems to depart from the story as we know understand it. Despite this it is still well worth reading and is particularly good if one also wants to explore the wider issues of the rebellion.

The troops and equipment of the Monmouth rebellion is discussed in detail in Tincey, *Armies of the Sedgemoor campaign*, Leigh-on-Sea, Partizan, 1985.

The rebellion has also attracted a range of authors to compile novels, plays and other literature linked to the events of the rebellion. They are not listed here but are reviewed by Chandler, 1995.

Secondary works

The main works used in preparing this report are underlined.

- Barrett, *Battles and Battlefields in England*, London, Innes & Co., 1896
- Burne, *The battlefields of England*, London, Greenhill Books, 1996
- Chandler, *Sedgemoor 1685 : from Monmouth's invasion to the Bloody Assizes*, Staplehurst, Spellmount, 1999
- Trench, *The Western Rising: An Account of Monmouth's Rebellion*, 1969
- Clarke Nigel, *Monmouth's West Country rebellion of 1685*, Lyme Regis, N.J. Clarke, 1980

- Clifton, *The last popular rebellion : the western rising of 1685*, New York, St. Martins ; London : Maurice Temple Smith, 1984 199-225 on battle; only plan is Pascal's redrawn.
- Coad and Chiswick, *A memorandum of the wonderful providences of God to a poor unworthy creature : during the time of the Duke of Monmouth's rebellion and to the revolution in 1688*, London, Longman Brown Green & Longmans, 1849
- Curtis, *Sedgemoor and the Bloody assize : a history and guide*, London, Simpkin Marshall, 1930
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- Duckett George, et al., *Original letters of the Duke of Monmouth in the Bodleian Library. Edited by Sir G. Duckett*, 1879
- Dummer, *A journal of the proceedings of ye D. of Monmouth in his invading of England : with the progress & issue of ye rebellion attending it*, Woolwich, Royal Artillery Institution, 1890
- Dunning, *The Monmouth Rebellion: a complete guide to the rebellion and the Bloody Assizes*, Wimborne, Dovecote Press 1985, 1985
- Earle, *Monmouth's rebels : the road to Sedgemoor, 1685*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977
- Emerson William and Yale University Committee on Undergraduate Prize, *Monmouth's Rebellion*, Yale University. Undergraduate prize essays ; Vol.8, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1951 61-63, very simplified battle plan
- English Heritage, *Battlefield Report: Sedgemoor 1685*, English Heritage, 1995
- Fea, *King Monmouth : being a history of the career of James Scott "The Protestant duke" 1649-1685*, London ; New York, J. Lane, 1902
- Macaulay Thomas Babington and Firth Charles, *The history of England : from the accession of James the Second*, London, Macmillan, 1914, vol.2.
- Humphreys Arthur, *Some sources of history for the Monmouth Rebellion and the Bloody Assizes*, Taunton, Printed for the Author, 1892
- Keppel, *Ringwood, the Monmouth Rebellion and the Bloody Assize*, The Ringwood story ; part 1, Ringwood, Ringwood Community Association, 1960; Little, *The Monmouth episode*, London, T. Werner Laurie, 1956
- Lawrence, *The Battle of Sedgemoor*, Sedgemoor Preservation Society, 1975
- Little, *The Monmouth episode*, London, T. Werner Laurie, 1956, 167-192 on battle, some detail of topography and a battle deployment plan
- McCretton, *Sedgemoor: the last battle on English soil, 6th July 1685: Westonzoyland battle trail*, Bridgwater, Somerset Education Centre, 1985
- McGuffie, *The last battle on English soil: Sedgemoor 1685*, History Today, 1955
- Melville, *'Mr. Crofts' : the King's bastard : biography of the Duke of Monmouth*, 1929
- Morley, *A thousand lives : an account of the English revolutionary movement, 1660-1685*, [London], A. Deutsch, 1954

- Page, *The battle of Sedgemoor*, Bridgwater booklets ; no. 4, Bridgwater, East Gate Press, 1930
- Roberts, *The life progresses and rebellion of James Duke of Monmouth &c. to his capture and execution : with a full account of the Bloody Assize and copious biographical notices*, London, Longman Brown Green and Longmans, 1844
- Roots, *The Monmouth rising*, Exeter, Devon Books, 1986, this is a brief study. No battlefield map. Very simple campaign map. Regional map is the Mercator – Hondius – Jansson atlas 2nd ed 1636 – only settlements and rivers no roads – like Speed.
- Sturdy, *Extracts from Weston Zoyland Registers and notes thereon*, Monmouth rebellion ; 1685, Sherborne, Sawtell, 1934
- Tincey, *Armies of the Sedgemoor campaign*, Leigh-on-Sea, Partizan, 1985
- Walters John, *Bygone Somerset*, London, W. Andrews & co., 1897; includes chapters on: Sedgemoor and Monmouth rebellion, by K. Parkes; Taunton and the bloody assize, by J. T. Page.
- Whiles, *Sedgemoor 1685*, Chippenham, Picton Publishing, 1985
- Wigfield and Wade, *The Monmouth rebellion : a social history*, Bradford-on-Avon, Moonraker Press [etc.], 1980
- Wigfield, *The Monmouth rebels 1685*, Gloucester, Sutton, 1985

Contemporary Accounts

Sedgemoor is an exceptionally well documented battle and campaign. There are two independently produced groups of sketch plans of the battle and a series of detailed written accounts. The contemporary accounts of the battle presented here are taken from the English Heritage reports prepared for the Battlefields Register. Of the major accounts only Robert Ferguson's account is not presented as it was considered to be too distorted by his attack on the conduct of Lord Grey's cavalry. More detail can be found in Chandler (1999) who provides an assessment of the various written accounts.

Plans

Paschall's plan:

prepared to accompany his written accounts. The clearest reproduction is in Young & Adair, *From Hastings to Culloden*, 1979.

Dummer's Plans:

Three detailed plans by Dummer, prepared to accompany his written account, showing the action against a detailed background of the contemporary landscape. The plans are described in the catalogue of the Pepys Library, p.38 & 64-5.

1. The royal camp and deployment at the moment of the rebel alarm (Dummer, p.4-5; reproduced in Macaulay Thomas Babington and Firth Charles, *The*

history of England : from the accession of James the Second, London, Macmillan, 1914.)

2. Posture of the two armies at the moment of the rebel attack (Dummer p.8-9; copy in PRO: PRO22/6)
3. Postures of the armies at the moment of the rebel collapse (Dummer p.12-13; unpublished; copy in PRO: PRO22/6)

All three of Dummer's plans are reproduced in colour in Foard, *Historic Terrain: Applying the Techniques of Landscape Archaeology to Military History*, Landscapes, 2003

Written Accounts

- **A True Relation:** Anon, *A true relation of the late action and victory against the rebels in England, near Bridgewater, on ... the 6. of July, 1685, from several hands*, 1685, pp. 22
- **Official report of the campaign from Feversham's army:** reproduced in Hewlett, et al., *Report on the manuscripts of Mrs. Stopford-Sackville, of Drayton house, Northamptonshire*, London, H.M.S.O., 1904, pp16-19.
- **Pascal's account:** earliest version, as printed in Heywood, *A vindication of Mr. Fox's history of the early part of the reign of James the Second*, London, printed for J. Johnson and Co. and J. Ridgeway, 1811, Appendix 4, pp xxix-xlv; later version as printed in *Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries* March 1961(Part 273) pp15-21.
- **Account of Nathaniel Wade**, British Library (Harleian manuscripts 6845) printed in Hardwicke Philip, *Miscellaneous state papers, from 1501 to 1726*, London, Printed for W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1778, vol. II pp329-30, and in Wigfield and Wade, *The Monmouth rebellion : a social history*, Bradford-on-Avon, Moonraker Press [etc.], 1980
- **James II's account** printed in Hardwicke Philip, *Miscellaneous state papers, from 1501 to 1726*, London, Printed for W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1778, vol. II, pp305-13.
- **Robert Ferguson's account** quoted in Echard, *The history of England. From the first entrance of Julius Caesar and the Romans, to the conclusion of the reign of King James the Second, and establishment of King William and Queen Mary. With a compleat index*, 1718, pp768-80.
- **Dummer's original account** is in the Pepys Library (see above). A transcript is in BL Add MSS.31956.
- **Oldmixon:** Oldmixon, *The history of England during the reigns of the Royal House of Stuart : Wherein the errors of late histories are discover'd and corrected; with ... letters from King Charles II. King James II. Oliver Cromwell ... Lord Saville's famous forg'd letter ... which brought the Scots into England in the year 1640 ... To all which is prefix'd, some account of the liberties taken with Clarendon's History*, London, Printed for J. Pemberton [etc.], 1730

The events of the campaign are also depicted in a superb set of playing cards, each showing a different event of the rebellion. Examples of these are reproduced in Chenevix Trench, 1969; Earle, 1985; and Chandler 1999.

Official Account

The official account of the campaign from Feversham's army:

'And on Sunday morning, being the 5th of July, marcht from Somerton along Sedgmoore towards Bridgwater, with a designe to encamp at Midleseey, but Collonell Ramsey who was sent before to set out the ground, found a more convenient place by Weston within 3 myles of Bridgwater, where my Lord Feversham, after he viewed the ground, ordered our foot to encamp, behind a convenient ditch that runs from Weston into the Moor, which they did in one lyne, leaving room between their tents and the ditch to draw up.

On the left of our foot were our canon, fronting the great road that comes from Bridgwater to Weston, and in the village which was covered by our Camp, were our Horse and Dragoons quartered.

My Lord Feversham ... having notice from stragling people that the Duke of Monmouth had drawne his forces out of Bridgwater into a meadow that joyned to the towne, my Lord sent away Collonell Oglethorpe with a party of horse to the top of a hill on the road from Bridgwater to Bristoll, fearing they would in the night pass that way, and in the evening gave orders for 100 horse and 50 Dragoones to be posted on the right of our camp against a way that goes round by Chedzy towards Bridgwater and that all the rest of the horse in the village should be ready saddled and bridled.

About 11 at night my Lord Feversham rid through our camp visiting the centrys together with the grand and out guards, which were posted as followeth -

On the great road that comes from Bridgwater to Weston was our grand-guard of 40 horse, under the command of Capt. Upcott, before him centryes, and in the Lane between them and them and Bridgwater, patrolls. To the right of our camp and against the way from Bridgwater round by Chedzy was a guard of 100 horse and 50 dragoons, commanded by Major Compton, before them an advanct party, from them centrys, and between them on the way towards Bridgwater, patrolls. Between those two guards came a middle but narrow way from Bridgwater into the Moor, which was guarded by 50 musqueteers, in Pitzy-pound, wal'd man high, to which our horse on the left were ordered to retreat in case of necessity.

... About a quarter after one came Sir Hugh Middleton with one of Collonell Oglethorpe's party to let my Lord know that he could not perceive the least motion of the enemy, and therefore resolved to march directly towards the towne of Bridgwater, untill he mett with some account of them. In the mean while the Rebels by the help of the night marcht undiscovered about a myle up Bristoll Road, turned off on their right hand and came

round by Chedzy towards the Moor where we were encamped, so that Collonell Oglethorpe in his march towards Bridgwater fell behind them and got no intelligence of them, but from the centrys they had left in the towne, from whome they understood their army was marcht, which made Collonell Oglethorp take the next and middle way to the Moor.

Our patrols in the meanwhile apprehending the approach of the enemies vanguard immediately gave notice to our advanct party, and they to our guard of 150 horse under the command of Sir Francis Compton, from whome both our foot that were encampt and the horse in the village took the allarum. My Lord Feversham himselfe hearing the first sound of the trumpet rid directly to the camp, where he found the foot at their armes in a lyne by the Ditch side over which he commanded not a man to stir without order.

By this time Sir Francis Compton and the Enemy's vanguard met, who chancelled one another, and upon a carbine of ours that went off by accident, the Rebels fired, who upon Sir Francis Compton's fire, returned immediatly to their main body. Sir Francis being shot in the breast, Capt. Sands commanded, who soon met with a body of the enemy's horse marching towards him, which Capt. Sands tooke at first for our militia, but finding his mistake immediatly charged and broke them, and then retreated with his hors towards our camp, himselfe and divers of his men being wounded.

How neare the main body of their horse, commanded by my Lord Grey (who passt first into the Moor) came to our camp we know not, nor can certainly learne, it being darke. But a party of their horse did come up, and one of them commanded Capt. Berkly to come over the Ditch to the Generall, whome he found after some discourse to belong to the enemy, and fired. This fire from our foot, we conclude, with the repulse given them by Sir Francis Compton and Capt. Sands, broak and disordered all their horse, because we perceived them afterwards on the left of their foot in great confusion, endeavouring to forme, but could not, while two Batalions of their foot (before whom they were designed to charge), came up within halfe musquet shot of our camp, but they having past through a defile where but few could go abreast, were forced to halt a considerable tyme, to draw up themselves and their other three batalions, with their three peces of canon in order.

My Lord Feversham upon the first approach of their foot immediately drew Capt. Parker, Capt. Vaughan, Capt. Atherley, and Collonell Villers troops of horse and horse granadeers on the right of the enemies flank, and returning to our camp met Collonell Oglethorp with his party and our out guards on that side that he had brought in.

These my Lord Feversham marcht behind our foot to the right of our camp, where he found Collonell Orp at the head of a party of our horse, where with Capt. Littleton's troop, Capt. Sande's, Colonell Windham's, and two more troops of my Lord Oxford's, commanded by Lieut. Selby and [Lieut. William] Winde, he drew upp in a body and marcht over the ditch on the left of the enemies forces. Collonell Oglethorp passing over the ditch a little more to the right, mett with a considerable number of the enemys horse, whom he pusht into the mire and routed (they being in great disorder and confusion were never able to make any great resistance). My Lord Feversham then commanded Colonell

Oglethorp to wheele and charge with the rest of our horse on the enemy's flank, giving directions to them all to charge what ere they found before them.

In the mean tyme my Lord Churchill having the command of the foot, seeing every man at his post doing his duty, commanded one troop of his dragoons to march over the ditch between our horse on the left, and our camp, the other two troops being drawne up on the right of the foot under the command of my Lord Cornbury.

On the right of the Scotch forces were 3 peeces of our cannon brought up and planted, which did great execution, the rest of our cannon firing through the intervalls of our own troops, our foot keeping their fire till they had received the enemyes, whose great and small shot flew thickest among my Lord Dumbarton's bataillon, and first Battaillon of Guards commanded by Lieut. Collonell Douglas and the Duke of Grafton, on whose left were the other two batailons of Guards, Colonel Kirk's bataillon, and Capt. Trelany's men, commanded by Major Eaton, Collonell Sackvill, Colonell Kirk, and Lieut. Collonell Churchill.

My Lord Feversham returning to our foot ordered Collonell Sacvill to draw his men to the right of the Scotch forces, intending to bring Collonell Kirke's and Trelany's men in their roome. But seeing my Lord Churchill marching with Collonell Kirk's and Trelany's men towards him, he made Collonell Sackvill halt, and returned to the horse, leaving my Lord Churchill to march them to the right.

The Rebels by this tyme being very uneasie, our foot and canon firing on their front while our horse charged them on both sides, my Lord Feversham commanded all the foot to march over the ditch directly to the enemy, upon which two of their batailons which had stood hitherto very well, gave ground in a body, and soon after fled, Capt. Littleton having beaten them from their cannon, which our foot perceiving ran eagerly to possesse themselves of it, while the Rebels run after the rest of their foot, that had been scowring away for some tyme in the rear in great disorder and confusion, which only our troops next them were sencible off, and durst not pursue them untill 'twas light for fear of being knockt on the head by our owne men, elce but few of them had escaped us, for most of them who did escape were within an hour so disperst that you could not se anywhere ten of their men living.

Some straglers there were which our militia pickt up, while my Lord Feversham and my Lord Churchill marcht into Bridgwater, with some horse and dragoons and 500 foot, whom my Lord left in Bridgwater under the command of Collonell Kirk after my Lord Feversham had sent away Collonell Oglethorp to give his Majesty an account of this happie and great victory, which did not consist in the number slain and taken, (though there were about 14 or 15 hundred kill'd, 200 prisoners, and 22 colours taken on the place) but in the total rout and defeate of above 7,000 rebels by the Kings forces which consisted but of 700 horse and 1,900 foot. The militia being quartered at Midlesey, 'twas impossible for them to come to our assistance, though they came in good order and made great hast.'

Paschall's account

Paschall's two accounts of the battle as integrated in the English Heritage report, with the material from the later version identified in italics:

'Upon Sunday, July 5, the King's army, consisting of about 4000 men, marched from Somerton. About noon they encamped in Zog, in five regiments, lodge in the camp; 500 horse quarter in Weston; 1500 militia men took up their quarters in Middlesoy, Othery etc, a mile or two distant from Weston ... That evening, between nine and ten of the clock, the Duke leads his army out of Bridgwater with great silence. He did not take the nearest way to Weston, which was three miles in length, by which he went June 22, and returned July 2, but he took the long causey, and so made his march near three miles long before he could reach the King's camp. He left the way by that short causey though Chedsey, though that was nearer and much more commodious, probably to avoid the danger of being discovered ... Avoiding them [the inhabitants], therefore, who knew, generally, nothing of his march, he went by Bradney Lane; which lane he also soon left, probably that he might not come too near to a loyal man's house at the end of that lane, where it turns into the moor, so by Marsh Lane, which was further about, and less commodious, he led the army much incumbered, and retarded, by the narrowness of the lanes into the North Moor.'

'.... About sunset, a party of the King's Horse came to Langmoor Stone from the Camp and taking with them the Guard there (about 12 or 16 horse) went by North Moor into Bawdrip and afterward up the hill towards [the] Bristol road. They passed by Long Cawsey to Bridgwater town's end and so round the next way to Weston. While they were about Bawdrip, the Duke's army marched into North Moor with great silence, standing still till the Guard party of horse was gone for they were within view of them. This party is supposed to be Col. Oglethorpe's.

About midnight (probably while the Duke of Monmouth was in North Moor) another party of the King's horse came from Zog by Langmoor Stone and step stones to Parchey Gate, so they marched quite through Chedzoy and round, as is supposed, to the Camp again, yet though they were so near to the enemy marching towards the King's army, those horse made no discovery of them. Guards and sentinels were placed in all the avenues in and about the nearer way from Weston to Bridgwater and in the other and farther way about by which the enemy designed to come. But all were gone (particularly that most necessary Guard at Langmoor Stone and the sentinels that stood near it) before bedtime ... Countrymen, hearing that the Duke was moving, informed divers of the officers and of the King's soldiers of it. JW [John Whiting, a local Quaker] avers that he himself spoke of it to above 500 of them but none would believe it

Only Captain Mackintosh, in the Scots regiment, believed over night, and would have ventured wagers upon it, that the Duke would come. He, in that persuasion, marked out the ground between the tents and the ditch, where his men should stand in case of an attack, and gave directions that all should be in readiness; and it was well he did so; for his regiment being in the right wing was to receive the first assault and main shock...

To return to the Duke's army which we left in North Moor, they had placed 42 waggons in the ascent of Bulden Hill in Bristol road, with orders to drive on to Axbridge. They bring with them now three great guns, and march with great silence. The Lord Grey led the horse, supposed to be about 800. *[Of these Monmouth] committed 500 horse to the Lord Grey with this design, that they should march about quarter of an hour before the main body of the army directly to the Upper Plungeon [a crossing of the Bussex Rhyne] and, in going over, they should silently get behind the camp, seize the officers in their beds, as also the 18 guns and 160 wagons standing all together and, if occasion were, turn the guns, as they might have done easily, upon the King's Camp and this gave them a terrible alarm on that side. The known ways being very convenient for doing all this. While this was to be in doing, the Duke, with the body of his army, was to make the onset. These were commanded to march with all possible silence. Their first orders were to fire and run over the ditch within which the camp was, it being presumed that the Lord Grey with his 500 horse should have drawn the army in the camp into the town, by the alarm designed to be given from thence. When all this was just putting into execution and the Duke's army was marching after midnight into Langmoor with great silence, a pistol was discharged about step stones or Langmoor Stone. Captain Hucker is said to have owned it at his trial, as done by him to give the King's army notice of their danger near. Immediately a trooper rides from that place-ward full speed to the camp [and], standing on the outside of the ditch, calls with all imaginable earnestness, 20 times at least, 'Beat your drums, the enemy is come. For the Lord's sake, beat your drums'. He then rode back with the like speed the same way he came. Among some of the King's soldiers, particularly the Scots, there were expectations of the enemy before this, yet all continued quiet. Now the drums beat, the drummers running to it, even bare-foot for haste. All fly to arms. All are drawn out of their tents and in 5 battalions stand in the space between the tents and the ditch, [those] fronting the ditch not having their clothes or arms all on and ready. Then were they expecting the enemy.*

The Lord Grey, with his 500 horse, missed the Upper Plungeon. Falling before it, they marched on by the outside of the ditch, seeking a way over, which was not to be found for the horse, though the ditch was then dry enough for the foot to have got over. When [the] horse were come so far as the Scots battalions, they were demanded who they were for. They pretend they are friends and from the Duke of Albemarle. They are believed by the Scots and let pass. At length they are discovered and fired at and so march off. Those wheeling toward the rear of the Duke's army are fired at by their own with some execution, they supposing them to be the enemy coming from the left wing of the King's army. Thus a consternation went into the hinder part of the Duke's army which, by the narrowness of the lanes retarding them, were not come up. The Front also being somewhat sooner engaged than was intended by reason of the Alarm given. Sir Francis Compton stood with a guard at the upper Plungeon. One Jones was commanded with a party of horse to beat him from that passage. He played his part with so much valour, that for the same he was thought not unworthy of a pardon from the General. But Sir Francis, though hard beset and wounded yet kept his post so well that the rebels horse behind, said to be 300, went backward on the outside of the ditch toward Sutton Mill, near which they took up their station to see the issue of the fight. When it appeared how things went, they shifted for themselves. Whether Sir Francis were there before the 500

horse missing their way went down toward the camp, or came to the Plungeon afterwards, and so had his encounter with Jones as belonging to the latter 300 horse we do not know. To be sure that worthy gentleman did great service, for had the horse gone over there, notwithstanding the alarm, all might have been lost. It was not above half a quarter of an hour, *the Duke having planted his three guns north of the King's Camp*, before the foot continuing their march appear to the Scots, first in three bodies, then the third lesser body joins with one of the other two. Of these there were 2000 of their prime, and principally Taunton men, led by Wade. By these the fight was managed. The King's soldiers gave them the commendation of stout men, 2000 more, among whom were 1000 scythe men, stood at a distance between Lang Moor Stone and them. These 2000 came not to fight. Many are said to have been behind them who, being hindered by the lanes through which they marched could not come up, before they met cause to run with their fellows. The fight continued not above half an hour. It is said that victory seemed to be inclined to the rebels, and that the King's army was almost in despair. We are next to give an account of the following happy alteration.

...the 2000 foot which made the assault were first commanded to run over the ditch. This was as is likely, upon a presumption that the horse, going over the Plungeon, and so into Weston, would have given the alarm behind the King's camp. Accordingly they marched in[to] the Moor with a persuasion that the King's army was running. So Wade is said to have told his men they were; silence they would have broken, though commanded silence, and shouted, had not he, doubting their circumstances, restrained them. But when these foot were come to the ditch, things were found to be otherwise than they hoped, and they were commanded [on] pain of death not to go over. And this might easily put them into some confusion and consternation. *The assault made was chiefly upon the Scots (of whom 'tis said that the Duke of Monmouth was made to believe that they were disposed to come over to him and this by a drummer who ran from them to him into Bridgwater the night before).*

...*At length the Scots (who had but four officers in their regiment of 500 men that were [not] killed or wounded) were made to give ground. They are seasonably reinforced by three troops of horse of the King's ... Things being thus, the immediate cause of the rout was this. Upon the alarm the King's horse, said to be 500 quartered in Weston, get up, made ready their horses, and mounted as soon as they may, and get together, and as is said, designing to go to the camp and fight, miss their way, and ride into Weston town, out of which they pass into the Moor by the road-way leading to Bridgwater, and now they are in the outside of the ditch. By this time three of the King's guns are drawn from the place where they stood altogether, and planted on the inside of the ditch, between it and the tents. These, being fired, made lanes among the rebels, and at the same time with great courage and fury the King's horse break in upon them. This was presently followed with a total rout of the rebels, running every way, and leaving to the King's army an intire victory.'*

The account by Edward Dummer, who served in the royal artillery, extracted from his *A Brief Journal of the Western Rebellion*, printed in J Davis *History of the Second Queen's Royal Regiment* (1895) pp48-9.

5th. We Marchd into ye Levell, and in the Evening Encampt at Weston in Sedgmore about 2 Miles from Bridgwater, wth the Village on One side and beguirt with a Dry (but in some places Miery) Ditch on the Other, Fronting ye Moore a Place copious and commodious for Fighting; In our March hither we understood that the Rebells had given out; They would fight in this Place; In ye Evening Coll Oglethorpe advanc'd with a strong Party of Horse to Bridgwater to discover ye motion of the Rebells who were said to be drawn out from thence, and in their March towards Bristoll (as They would have us believe) We securely went to Sleep, The Foot in Camp, and the Horse in Quarters at Weston and Midlesea, saving some Outguards of Horse upon Our Right and Left.

6th. At 2 a Clock this Morning (securely sleeping) Our Camp was Rouzd by the near approach of the Rebells; a darke Night and thick Fogg, covering the Moore, Supiness and a preposterous confidence of Our Selves, with an undervaluing of the Rebells, that many dayes before, had made us make such tedious Marches had put Us, into ye Worst circumstances of Surprize. Our Horse in Quarters, Some Near, Some Remote, Our Artillery distinct, & in a separate Post, to yt of the Camp, neither immediatly accomodable to a Generall Resistance; Thus we Recd ye Alarme from Sr Francis Compton upon the Right, whose Successfull Charging ye whole Body of the Rebells Horse, Commandd by the Ld Gray, with his Single Party of 150 Horse and Dragoons Broke their Body of near 1200 and Routed ym; From this Alarme, there seemes to be 2 Minuits distance, to a Volley of Small Shott from the Body of the Rebells Foot, consisting of abt 6000 (but All came not up to Battell) in, upon the Right of our Camp, followed by 2 or 3 Rounds from Three Pieces of Cannon brought up within 116 Paces of the Ditch Ranging Our Battallions. Our Artillery was near 500 Paces distant, and the Horses Drivers not easily found, through confusion and darkness; Yet Such, was the Extraordinary cheerfullness of our Army, that They were allmost as readily drawn up, to Receive them, as a Praeinform'd expectation could have Posted ym, tho: upon so Short & dangerous a Warning; Six of Our Nearest Gunns were, with ye greatest diligence imaginable advanced, Three upon the Right of the Scotts, and Three in the Front of the Kinges first Battalion; and did very considerable execution upon the Enemies; They Stood near an hour and halfe wth great Shouting and Courage, briskly fying; & then throwing down their Armes fell into Rout and Confusion; The Number of the Slaine wth about 300 Taken, according to ye most Modest computacon might make up 1000, We Losing but 27 on the Spott and having abt 200 Wounded. A Victory very considerable where Providence was absolutely a greater Friend, then Our Own Conduct - The Dead in the Moor we Buried, and the Country People tooke care for ye intermt of those, slain in the Corne fields.

Wade's Account:

An extract of the account of Nathaniel Wade, commander of the Red Regiment in the rebel army:

About eleven o'clock that night, we marched out of the town. I had the vanguard of the foot, with the Duke's regiment; and we marched in great silence along the road that leads from Bridgwater to Bristol, until we came to the lane that passed into the moor where the

King's army was. Then we made a halt for the horse to pass by, and received our orders; which were, that the horse should advance first, and push into the King's camp, and mixing with the King's foot, endeavour to keep them from coming together; that the cannon should follow the horse, and the foot the cannon, and draw all up in one line, and so finish what the horse had begun, before the King's horse or cannon could get in order. The horse advanced to the ditch, and never farther; but on the firing of some of the King's foot, ran out of the field. By that time our foot came up, we found our horse had gone, and the King's foot in order. I advanced within thirty or forty paces of the ditch, being opposite to the Scotch battalion of the King's, as I learnt since; and there was forced to make a full stop, to put the battalion in some order; the Duke having caused them to march exceeding swift after he saw his horse run, that they were all in confusion. By that time I had put them in some order, and was preparing to pass the ditch (not intending to fire till I had advanced close to our enemies) Colonel Matthews was come up, and began to fire at a distance; upon which the battalion I commanded fired likewise, and after that I could not get them to advance. We continued in that station firing for about an hour and a half, when it being pretty light, I perceived all the battalions on the left, running (who, as I since understood, were broken by the King's horse of the left wing), and finding my own men not inclinable to stand, I caused them to face about, and made a kind of disorderly retreat to a ditch a great way behind us, where we were charged by a party of horse and dragoons, and routed; above one hundred and fifty getting over the ditch. I marched with them on foot to Bridgwater..'

James II's account

An account compiled by James II based on various reports by those involved.

[Monmouth] began to march as soon as it grew night, taking his way about, at the head of the moor, leaving Chedsy on his right hand; hoping by taking that compass, to surprise the King's troops; who, he believed, would not expect him that way, it being also the best way he could take to attack them, the strait way being a perpetual defile till they were very near Weston, the camp to which Lord Feversham had advanced with all the King's troops; which were about 1800 foot, in six small battalions, and some 700 horse and dragoons, leaving the Earl of Pembroke at Middlesea, and villages adjacent, with the militia, horse and foot. The post of Weston was a very well chosen one, for such a small body of men, and very secure, the foot being camped with their rear to the village, and had their front covered by a ditch, which serves for a drain to the moor; and though it was then a dry season, was not to be past by horse but in one or two places; and it was this drain deceived the Duke of Monmouth, for he not knowing of it, thought the foot lay open, and consequently the whole quarter.

...[Monmouth] had two defiles to pass after he was in the moor, the one presently after he came on it, and the other about a mile from the camp. He drew up in two columns after he had passed the first, the foot on the right, and the horse on the left, and so marched till he came to the second. There his horse passed over first, which were some eight squadrons; his cannon, which were but three small iron guns, marched over after them, at the head of the foot, which consisted of five great battalions, each of which had one

company of at least one hundred scythemen, instead of grenadiers; the horse commanded by Lord Grey, with the title of Lieutenant General; the five regiments of foot, by Wade, Lieutenant Colonel to the Duke of Monmouth's own regiment; Matthews commanded the next, then Holmes, Buffet, and Foulks. As they were passing the last defile, the advanced centries of the horse-guards discovered them, and galloped back to advertise Sir Francis Compton of it, who immediately gave the alarm to the camp, and staid in his post till he received a faint charge from an advanced party of some of the rebels horse; who, after having fired their carabines, and received some shot from his party, went off on their side, and he drew back to the camp on the right hand of our foot behind the ditch. Whilst this passed, the Duke of Monmouth hearing the alarm was taken in the King's camp, ordered Lord Grey to march fast on with the horse to fall in amongst the tents of the foot, and to take them by the flanks, not knowing any thing of the ditch which covered them, and told him he would march after him with the foot as fast as he could. And now in the camp, so soon as they had the alarm, the foot stood to arms, and were in a moment drawn up in battle at the head of their tents, in very good order, and the horse were drawing out of the village as fast as they could. The foot were in six battalions; the first on the right was composed of Dunbarton's, one company of which were grenadiers, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Douglas. Next to which were two battalions of the first regiment of guards, of six companies in each, besides one company of grenadiers of that regiment; at the head of the first of which was the Duke of Grafton their Colonel, and Eaton the Major of it, was at the head of the other. Next to them was a battalion of the second regiment of guards of six companies, and another company of grenadiers; at whose head was Lieutenant Colonel Sackville. Then five companies of Trelawny, one of which were grenadiers; commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Churchill. On the left of all was another small battalion, composed, as the former, commanded by Colonel Kirke. As for the horse, there were one hundred and fifty commanded out of the three troops of guards; sixty grenadiers on horseback, commanded by Villiers; seven troops of the King's regiment of horse; and four of dragoons; the horse commanded by Sir Francis Compton, and the dragoons by Lord Cornbury ... The train of artillery consisted of sixteen field-pieces, under the conduct of Mr Sheers. And now whilst the King's horse were getting in order, the rebels horse, in pursuance of the orders they had received, marched on to put them in execution, and meeting with the ditch, came along by it, and being challenged by Douglas, who they were? some one answered Albemarle; at least he understood it so, and let them pass without firing at them. Then coming up to the first battalion of the guards, Captain Berkley, who commanded the right wing of the musketeers of it, asked who they were for? They answered, The King. He called to them, What King? They answered, Monmouth, and God with us, which was their word. He then said, Take this with you; and made his wing fire at them: So did the other wing of that battalion; as also the next battalion of the same regiment, and half that of the two regiments of guards. Upon which, that party of the rebels horse ran away, leaving some of their men and horses on the ground, by the fire they had received; but to this day it was not known certainly, whether it was only part, or their whole horse that came so up to the ditch; or whether it was part of them, or a fresh party of them, which were charged some time after, by a party of our horse.

As this happened, Lord Feversham, who had been getting the horse in order, and sent for the cannon, came to the foot, and ordered them to keep their fire till the enemy came close up to them. Soon after this, the rebels foot came up, but not in good order; for the Duke of Monmouth would not stay after they had passed the last defile, to draw up in battle, but made them march on in their ordinary way of marching, battalion after battalion, guiding their march by the matches of Douglas (which were the only battalion of the King's foot that had matchlocks) as soon as they came in sight of the camp, and did not begin to form till they came within about eighty paces of the ditch, intending so soon as their whole line was drawn up, to have attacked the King's foot. But, according to the account Lieutenant Colonel Wade has given, before the three first battalions were quite got up upon a line, his being the right hand one, Matthews, which was the next to him, without order from their commander, began to fire; then his, and Holmes's, which was on Matthews left, did the like. After which they could never make their men advance one foot; but stood firing as they were, and though they thought that their right was over against the King's left, they were mistaken; for their right reached no farther than the first battalion of the guards, and their three small guns were advanced as near as could be, just before the interval which was between Matthews and Holmes, and were very well plied, and did great execution on Douglas, and the first battalion of the guards; which two indeed bore all the brunt of the rebels fire, and lost many officers and soldiers, and most of them by the cannon. For though the rebels fired hard, their men being new, shot too high, and they continued firing at least three quarters of an hour; and except Douglas who fired a little, the rest never fired a shot, but bore the rebels shot both small and great with great order and steadiness, only the King's cannon which came soon up in the intervals of the battalions, plied the rebels very hard, and did good execution.

It is a hard matter to give a very exact account of such an action as this, which began in the night, and was ended by break of day; and to do right to all the general officers and other commanders, who behaved themselves with great steadiness and resolution in their several posts and stations, as appeared by the success they had. Whilst this was passing between the foot, Lord Feversham ordered Villiers with all the horse-guards and grenadiers on horseback (except that party of them which had been out with Oglethorpe), Captain Adderly's troop of horse, and one troop of dragoons, to pass over the ditch on the left of the foot, and to draw up on the enemy's right, but not to charge them; and meeting Oglethorpe who was but then come back with his party of guards and volunteers from towards Bridgwater, and Captain Upert with his small guard of fifty horse, brought them with him behind the foot, to the right, where finding the rest of the horse and dragoons drawn up, the last next the foot, and the horse on the right of all, ordered them to pass over the ditch; and Oglethorpe, who with his party passed over first, met with a body of the rebels horse. What their number was, the darkness of the night, and their running so soon, made it not to be known; so that instead of pursuing them, they were ordered to halt; and after they had stood some time fronting that way, Lord Feversham ordered them to wheel to the left, and to keep their ground, not knowing what was become of all the rebels horse; not judging it proper then to let them charge their foot; only Oglethorpe, with his party, tried one of their battalions, but was beaten back by them, though they were mingled amongst them, and had several of his men wounded and knocked off their horses, amongst which was Captain Sarsfield, who was knocked down by the butt end of

a musket and left for dead upon the place. I forgot to give an account of one thing which happened before the horse and dragoons passed over the ditch; which was, that Holmes's battalion firing at the Lord Cornbury's troop of dragoons, his Lieutenant Warde, who was standing by him, called out to that battalion not to fire more at them, for that they were friends; which they thinking to be true, did not only that, but Holmes himself, taking them for friends, came up on horseback from the head of his battalion to the very ditch behind which they stood. The same Lieutenant calling to him, Who are you for? and being answered, For who but Monmouth; the Lieutenant and one of the serjeants fired at him, killed his horse under him, and broke his arm, and there he lay. Soon after which, Lord Churchill passing over the ditch there, when that wing passed, seeing him hold up his head as he lay, asked him, Who art thou? He answered, he was not in a condition to tell, and lay still, but afterwards got up, and was taken by some straggling men among the tents of the foot.

And now as things were in this condition, Lord Churchill went to the left of the foot, and ordered the two Tangier battalions to march from their post, there being no enemy against them, and to march behind the other battalion, to draw up on Douglas's right. But, as I take it, just as they got thither, the day beginning to break, Lord Feversham, who was with the horse on the right, seeing no appearance of any more of the rebels horse, and that the pikes of one of their battalions began to shake, and at last open, ordered the foot to pass over the ditch to charge them; which they did. Which the rebels seeing, ran before they came to handy blows, and the five companies of grenadiers were ordered to follow the pursuit, and some of the horse and dragoons fell in with them, and did execution on them, till they got off the moor into the inclosures, which they soon did, the moor being but eight hundred yards broad in that place, from ditch to ditch. There was the greatest slaughter of the rebels in that ditch, which was deep and boggy, and in a corn field, which was on the other side of it; and there they took and gave quarter to about twelve hundred of them.

As for the Duke of Monmouth himself, he brought up the foot; and then went to his cannon to see them well plied, as indeed they were, by a Dutch gunner he had brought over with him; but some time after, his horse were all gone, and that Williams, a servant of his, told him he might see the King's horse on their flanks, going, as he believed, to encompass them, he put off his arms, and taking one hundred guineas from his servant, left his foot still fighting, and went away with Lord Grey (who came to him after his horse were all dispersed or gone), a Brandenburgher, and one or two more, and went up the hill which overlooks the moor as you go towards Bristol, and from thence looked about, and could see his foot still firing; and continued on his way ... But to return to his beaten troops, Buffet's battalion suffered the most, who were all of the town of Taunton, and were for the most part killed or taken. The rest were all dispersed, though they suffered not so much; only Wade with some two or three hundred foot of his battalion, got in a body into Bridgwater...

THE BATTLEFIELD

The battle was fought on land between the villages of Chedzoy and Westonzoyland, three miles east of Bridgewater (Somerset). Today this is a pleasant but very flat rural landscape of rectilinear hedged fields, mainly of pasture, with a network of straight drainage channels leading into the great Kings Sedgemoor Drain. Though the village of Westonzoyland has expanded substantially since the 17th century, the battlefield remains as agricultural land.

Location

Sedgemoor is probably the most securely located of all English battles. In addition, there is such detailed information that the line of march of the rebel army, the location and layout of the royal camp and the deployment of both armies can be mapped with a high degree of accuracy, though as yet this has not been fully tested by archaeological investigation.¹

Historic Terrain

In 1685 the area where the battle was fought was known as Langmoor. This was part of King's Sedgemoor, within the vast tract of poorly drained lowland moor known today as the Somerset Levels. In the late 18th century this landscape of common pasture was transformed when the moor was drained and the land enclosed as rectilinear ditched fields served by straight trackways.

Physical Geography

Kings Sedgemoor is bounded on the north by the Polden Hills while on the south lies the River Parrett. Within the moor there were two large islands of sand and gravel which can still be recognised today as they stand a few metres higher than the surrounding peat. The smaller island was Chedzoy, which contains a village of the same name. The larger was known as Zoy, with Westonzoyland on its western edge and to the east the villages of Middlezoy and Othery. Attached to the western end of zoy was another small area of gravel which formed an almost separate small island, Penzoy. On the moor there were also a number of much smaller islands called 'batches'.

There had been limited drainage of parts of the Levels in the medieval period, including a significant area on the south side of the island of Zoy, but the Kings Sedgemoor, to the north of the island was in 1685 still largely unaffected by such works.

The major transformation of the landscape began in 1791 when, under the provisions of a private Act of Parliament for the drainage and enclosure of the moor, a major new

¹ Foard, *Historic Terrain: Applying the Techniques of Landscape Archaeology to Military History*, Landscapes, 2003.

drainage dyke known as the Kings Sedgemoor Drain was constructed between the river Cary and the lower reaches of the river Parrett. This drain, which has since been greatly enlarged and further embanked, and the subsidiary channels that feed it are still a dominant feature in the modern landscape. The land was then subdivided into allotments to the various people who held common rights in the moor, resulting in a rectilinear pattern of fields, some quite small, bounded by lesser drainage dykes. These dykes or *rhyne*s as they are known locally replaced the old irregular pattern of rhyne)s. New straight droves, for agricultural access, and local roads also generally replaced the old trackways and new farms were constructed down on the former wetland where none had existed before.

The Bussex Rhyne was first mapped in detail from archaeological evidence in 1980.² A more detailed reconstruction of the historic landscape of the battlefield, which also locates the Langmoor Rhyne and the upper and lower plungeons and possibly also the Pitzoy Pound, based on historic map evidence and archaeological evidence from aerial photographs was published in 2003.³ Excavation has also been conducted to establish the depth and width of the Bussex Rhyne.⁴

Settlements & townships

In the 17th century the moor was intercommoned by a number of townships which surrounded the moor, although Paschall's plan of the battle shows the 17th century perambulation of Chedzoy parish extending to the Bussex rhyne and Black Ditch. At Inclosure however the boundaries of the townships were reorganised to encompass parts of the former moor, the battlefield area being divided between Chedzoy and Westonzoyland.

Land Use

In the 17th century the moor was too wet to cultivate and had been used as rough pasture shared by the adjacent communities. After Inclosure the land was only rarely subject to flooding but was still largely used as pasture. With the increased efficiency of more recent drainage works some of the land has now been turned over to arable but there still seems to be a much higher proportion of the old moorland down to pasture than is seen on the former islands, much of which were already arable in the 17th century. Sadly however most of the fields seem to have been cultivated at some time and the earthworks of ancient drainage rhyne)s and other features visible as earthworks in 1947 are now mostly levelled.

Communications

The major road system, mapped by Ogilby in 1676, ran through Middlezoy to the south east and Bridgewater to the north west of the battlefield, both crossing the moor on

² Curran, *The Bussex Rhyne*, Somerset Archaeology and Natural History, 1980.

³ Foard, *Historic Terrain: Applying the Techniques of Landscape Archaeology to Military History*, Landscapes, 2003.

⁴ Fieldwork by GUARD as part of the *Two Men in a Trench* TV series.

causeways. The former had been used by the royal army and the latter by the rebels. A causeway also linked Middlezoy through Westonzoyland to Bridgewater. However there were also lesser routes across the moor which were presumably poorly marked and will have been impassable in wet weather. One ran from the lower pluncheon past Pitzoy Pound to Bridgewater, another to Chedzoy and a third via Langmoor Stone skirting around Chedzoy to the north, which was the route taken by the rebel army in their night attack.

Archaeology of the Battle

Stray finds have been made on the battlefield at various times, including weapons and armour.⁵ There are some artefacts from the battlefield in the Blake Museum in Bridgewater, while the farmer at Bussex Farm also has a small collection of musket and pistol shot and a silver button from the field. Many more finds must have been made over the years and a metal detecting survey with a mapped record of distributions has been conducted on an amateur basis. More recent archaeological work, as yet unreported, has been conducted by the Glasgow University Archaeological Research Division (GUARD) as part of the television series *Two Men in a Trench*.

Sedgemoor also has one of the few relatively well located mass graves on any English battlefield. It is approximately positioned on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey 6 inch map. There has however been no detailed archaeological survey or excavation to confirm its exact location or to establish the condition and survival of any burials of the site. It was dug into shortly before 1896.⁶ Other burials may also be expected across the former moorland between the Bussex Rhyne and Chedzoy island, and possibly also on the island where some rebels were cut down within the cornfield. It is however uncertain the degree to which bodies were collected together for burial. Warner refers to burial pits near both Chedzoy and Westonzoyland but gives no authority for this.⁷

Research & Conservation information

Historic administrative areas

County: Somerset

Township (parish): Chedzoy (Chedzoy); Wooavington [detached portion] (Woolavington); Westonzoyland; Cossington [detached portion] (Cossington).⁸

⁵ Earle, *Monmouth's rebels : the road to Sedgemoor, 1685*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977, plate opposite p.117.

⁶ Barrett, *Battles and Battlefields in England*, London, Innes & Co., 1896,, p.417.

⁷ Warner, *British Battlefields: The Definitive Guide to Warfare in England and Scotland*, 2002.

⁸ Kain and Oliver, *Historic Parishes of England and Wales: Electronic Mpa - Gazetteer - Metadata*, Colchester, History Data Service, 2001.

Sites and Monuments Record

The Somerset Sites and Monuments Record is the archaeological record covering the area.

For information on the local Sites and Monuments Record follow this link:

<http://demo.battlefieldstrust.com/resource-centre/battlefieldsuk/periodpageview.asp?pageid=234&parentid=184>

Portable Antiquities Officer

For information on how to contact the local Portable Antiquities Officer follow this link:

<http://demo.battlefieldstrust.com/resource-centre/battlefieldsuk/periodpageview.asp?pageid=234&parentid=184>

Record Offices

The Somerset County Record Office (SRO) is the main archive of historic documents covering the area. They also provide 1st edition and 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey 6 inch mapping online.

For information on this and any other relevant Record Office follow this link:

<http://demo.battlefieldstrust.com/admin/periodpageview.asp?PageId=311>

Local Studies Collections

Modern administrative areas

County: Somerset

District: Sedgemoor

Parish: Chedzoy; Westonzoyland

Local Archaeological curator

County Archaeologist, Somerset County Council.

For contact information for the relevant local and the national archaeological curator:

<http://demo.battlefieldstrust.com/admin/periodpageview.asp?SectionId=5&ItemId=21&pageid=235>

Management Assessment and Strategy

Assessment

As the last battle on English soil it is arguably the best documented of all, with detailed plans showing the deployments and the action. Although the landscape has been

dramatically transformed since 1685, there is excellent documentary and archaeological data to enable reconstruction of the earlier events and to enable the accurate placing of documented military events within it. Moreover the main stages of the battle appear to be clearly separated spatially. The landscape has also not been significantly disturbed except by a limited amount of ploughing and the construction of the drainage system and hence there is still the potential for well preserved archaeological evidence of both the historic terrain and the battle. Such a combination provides a rare if not unique potential in England and one which may mean that Sedgemoor offers the potential, through detailed archaeological survey and documentary research, to determine with confidence the archaeological signature of the various aspects of a 17th century battle.

Military History

The battle and the campaign are very well recorded in a number of detailed contemporary accounts and it has an exceptional series of detailed contemporary plans of the action. The military history of the battle and the wider campaign has been well researched and published in several significant modern studies and the campaign as a whole has an extensive literature. There are no major outstanding questions about the nature or location of the events although some of the finer detail of the battle does require elaboration.

Military Archaeology

The battlefield archaeology can be expected to survive in good condition. The area has not been subject to extensive modern disturbance by urban development, mineral extraction etc. A metal detecting survey has been conducted on an amateur basis but with mapping of the distribution of the artefacts. There is no information to suggest that there has been substantial 'treasure hunting' which might have substantially distorted the archaeological pattern, but this needs further assessment. Sedgemoor is exceptional in having an accurately located mass grave and there appears to be a high potential for a wider archaeological investigation of the battle. However the existence of areas of permanent pasture may make the recovery of shot and other artefacts from some area less representative. There has also been limited destruction of the archaeology by the various drainage works since the late 18th century, but it is unclear whether this also involved the spreading of the excavated spoil across a wide surrounding area but if it did then this could have both transferred large amounts of shot and other artefacts from their original locations and may in places have buried other shot beneath a covering of spoil, so affecting recovery patterns from systematic metal detecting survey. Over most of the moor this is however likely to be no more than a very localised effect.

The extensive waterlogged conditions, if not totally disrupted by the drainage of the moor, may also offer exceptional potential for the survival of artefacts made of organic materials which on most other battlefields would have decayed. Given that the pursuit continued over the fields of Chedzoy island there is also the potential here for individual or mass graves in that area, beyond the currently registered area, as well as on the moor itself.

Historic Terrain

The primary archaeological and documentary evidence for the historical geography of the battlefield landscape is good and there is already a broad understanding of the evolution of the Sedgemoor landscape. A detailed reconstruction of the pre inclosure landscape of the battlefield has been attempted but further research is needed to refine this picture.

Access

The battlefield and its environs have suffered relatively little from modern development and there are substantial clues remaining in the landscape as to its earlier character. There is good public access to the whole area along rights of way and the only significant improvement to access would be free access to the two fields with earthworks adjacent to the monument.

Interpretation

There are several on site interpretation panels and a linked campaign trail described in a leaflet provided by the Tourist Information Centres. There is also a museum exhibition on the battle in Bridgewater.

Research Agenda

Further documentary and especially archaeological study would enable more exact location of the events on the ground, especially with regard to the extent of the frontages and the positioning of the key crossings of the Bussex Rhyne, of the Pitzoy pound and the course of the tracks across the moor from the plungeons and the Langmoor Rhyne with its crossing. Comparison can then be made to the Bussex Rhyne, although the different impact of crossing a rhyne in line of march as opposed to in battalia needs to be considered.

The detailed study of the archaeology of the battle in association with such good documentary evidence for the action might also enable significant general advances in the interpretation of battlefield archaeology of the 17th century. The apparent subtly different lines of advance and of retreat/rout of the rebel army, identifiable thanks to the exceptional documentation, offer the potential for detailed study of the nature of the archaeological evidence left by an advancing force and by one conducting a fighting retreat and then collapsing into rout. This may provide important complementary evidence for that already recovered from Naseby as to the nature of shot distributions associated with different types of action. The extensive use of case shot by the artillery on both sides may also be clearly distinguishable from the musket fire of the infantry regiments and, given the detailed documentation as to the location of the artillery, this may be one of the best opportunities for such a comparative study, with potential implications for all civil war battlefields and siege sites. Sedgemoor is however relatively unusual in having been fought on a wetland landscape and this may render some aspects of its battlefield archaeology atypical.

A systematic survey of the battlefield for shot should enable the accurate definition of the extent of the frontages and allow the identification of the location and intensity of the action where Wade's and any other rebel troops challenged the royal advance at the end of the battle. The nature of the shot pattern from the rout will also be of interest for comparison to other battlefields. It may also be possible to locate the position of the rebel and the royal artillery which, if used at close quarters are likely to have been firing case shot, on which there can be distinctive damage enabling it to be distinguished from ordinary musket shot.

Conservation Strategy

Conservation status

Registered Battlefield

Threats

No immediate major threats have been identified to the overall historic environment of the battlefield. There is however no statutory protection through Scheduling for the surviving earthworks or the buried archaeology, either stratified or unstratified, and thus these must be considered under a high level of threat from cultivation and other land use change not covered by the Town and Country Planning Acts. In particular the small area of surviving earthworks of the contemporary drainage channels including the Bussex rhyne and associated unploughed land possibly representing the original surface form of the moor and the earthworks of the probable mass grave are extremely vulnerable to cultivation, which has levelled the earthworks on much of the rest of the moor. The archaeology and historic landscape character is also vulnerable to ill thought out conservation action, as demonstrated by the what appears to have been conservation related construction of a pond and associated works on the line of the Bussex rhyne at NGR ST353356, close to the likely position of the upper pluncheon. An equally if not more important threat is that of unrecorded removal of artefacts by metal detectorists but there is currently no information as to whether the site is subject to a significant degree of unrecorded metal detecting.

Management priorities

The boundary of the registered area should be revised now that the Langmoor Rhyne has been accurately located and there should be further revision when and if the Penzoy Pound is identified with certainty. Elsewhere the boundary seems to adequately encompass the likely area of the cavalry flank attacks and the area of the royal camp in so far as it is undeveloped. With regard to the main action it is unlikely that even systematic archaeological survey of the artefact distribution will provide evidence requiring revision of the boundary. The highest priority must however be for the scheduling of the earthworks of the Bussex rhyne, the mass grave and their associated earthworks.

Further reading on the Battleground

Secondary works

- Blake, *Sedgemoor - as a study in landscape evolution*, 1961.
- Curran, *The Bussex Rhyne*, Somerset Archaeology and Natural History, 1980.
- Dunning, *A History of the county of Somerset*, The Victoria history of the counties of England, Oxford, Published for the Institute of Historical Research by Oxford University Press, 1992
- Foard, *Historic Terrain: Applying the Techniques of Landscape Archaeology to Military History*, Landscapes, 2003
- Havinden, *The Somerset landscape*, The Making of the English landscape, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1981
- Hawkins, *Sedgemoor and Avalon : a portrait of lowland Somerset*, The Regional books series, London, R. Hale [1954], 1954.
- Storer, *Sedgemoor, its history and natural history*, Newton Abbot, David and Charles, 1972
- Williams, *The draining of the Somerset Levels*, London, Cambridge U.P 1970, 1970

Primary sources

British Geological Survey maps

1:50,000 scale solid & drift geology: map sheet 295

Historic Ordnance Survey Maps

1st edition 1 inch scale Ordnance Survey map sheets: 20

1st edition 6 inch scale Ordnance Survey map sheets: 61/04, 62/01, 50/16, 51/13

Other Historic Maps

Chedzoy:

1841, Tithe Map, Manor of Chedzoy

1850s, Manor of Chedzoy, land use map by J Baker, SRO: D/RA4/2/22

1860, Manor of Chedzoy sale plan

Westonzoyland:

1809, Map of Westonzoyland, MAP\D\P\w.zoy/20/1/1

1843, Tithe Map, SRO: DD/SAS/C/212/9/86; also copy at PRO IR30/30/453

a key map for the reconstruction of the historic landscape

1843, Estate map, SRO

Sedgemoor:

c.1660, Map of Kings Sedgemoor, SRO: MAP\DD\X\STK 1

1791, plan of Kings Sedgemoor, SRO: DD\SG/54

1792/1795, Map of Kings Sedgemoor, SRO: MAP\DDMK 28/1-2

c.1795, plan of Kings Sedgemoor Drains and Parochial Allotments,
SRO: D\P\chedz/20/1/1 and DD\SG/55

1795, Map of Kings Sedgemoor re Drainage and Enclosure Act, PRO CP43/851, after rot.276

A key map for the reconstruction of the historic landscape

early 19th cent, plan of the battle of Sedgemoor , SRO: DD\SAS\S/2494/1

1891, map re Land Drainage Act for Kings Sedgemoor, PRO: MPA 1/47

This map shows Chedzoy north of the village only and the periphery of Bawdrip with the New Cut, Cossington to the north and north east of Kings Sedgemoor Drain, extensive new drainage in Middlezoy and Othery by Westonzoyland and the areas drained in the late 18th century are excluded.

Historic Documents

None consulted.

VISITING THE BATTLEFIELD

The value of a site visit

Sedgemoor is one of the best understood and accurately located of English battles and the battlefield is well preserved. Although the landscape looks very different today than it did in 1685, a tour of the battlefield is an enjoyable experience which can give the observant and well prepared visitor an excellent grasp of the contemporary landscape and a good understanding as to where and how the battle was fought.

The Battlefield Monument

The battlefield memorial lies just a few metres north of the former course of the Bussex rhyne and close to the centre of the action (Grid reference: ST351536). It is rather an odd monument, surrounded by mushroom-like ‘staddle stones’ which commemorate other major battles where British troops died: from the 18th century there is Plassey and

Quebec, from the 19th century Trafalgar and Waterloo and from the 20th century the Great War. The inscription reads:
'TO THE GLORY OF GOD AND IN THE MEMORY OF ALL THOSE WHO DOING THE RIGHT AS THEY GAVE IT FELL IN THE BATTLE OF SEDGEMOOR 6 JULY 1685 AND LIE BURIED IN THIS FIELD OR WHO FOR THEIR SHARE IN THE FIGHT SUFFERED DEATH, PUNISHMENT OR TRANSPORTATION. PRO PATRIA'

Interpretation on site

There is an interpretation panel on battlefield at the east end of Sogg Drove (grid reference ST 354354) and another interpretation panel is in Westonzoyland church.

Other locations to visit

Westonzoyland church: used as prison after the battle.

Middlezoyland church: in floor of nave is a grave slab with an inscription on brass plate to a French officer killed in the battle.

Museums

The Admiral Blake Museum, Bridgewater, has displays on the Monmouth Rebellion and Sedgemoor including a model of the battle and artefacts from the battlefield. See below.

Admiral Blake Museum, Bridgewater:

<http://www.sedgemoor.gov.uk/sedgemoorweb/content/museums/blakemuseum.htm>

For other museums in Somerset:

<http://www.somerset.gov.uk/museums/>

Nearby battlefields

Langport (Somerset, 1645): 8 miles.

Other nearby sites of historic military interest

Bridgewater:

Civil War garrison stormed by the New Model Army. The only remains of defences are the stone archway on the West Quay.

Statue of Admiral Blake, Civil War commander.

Access Information

Finding the Battlefield

For modern road mapping and links to other travel information online follow this link:

<http://www.multimap.com/p/browse.cgi?pc=&GridE=335100&GridN=135650&scale=100000&title=Sedgemoor+battlefield&cat=h>

Rights of Way

There are a number of rights of way across the battlefield and its immediate environs. There is also access via a number of tracks or droves. These are all depicted on the Ordnance Survey Explorer map extract.

Registered Common Land and Open Country

For Sedgemoor battlefield and its immediate environs there are no areas of defined on the draft maps produced by the Countryside Agency.

Other public access

There is one minor section of additional public access under the Countryside Stewardship scheme listed for the Sedgemoor battlefield area on the DEFRA Country Walks web pages. This site is described as Moor Drove near Parchey. It is a short section of path between the Moor Drove and the Kings Sedgemoor Drain to the south east of Chedzoy.

For further information on Rights of Way or access to land through the Countryside Stewardship scheme follow this link:

<http://demo.battlefieldstrust.com/resource-centre/battlefieldsuk/periodpageview.asp?pageid=211&parentid=104>

Tourist Offices

Bridgewater

For contact details for the nearby TICs follow this link:

<http://demo.battlefieldstrust.com/admin/periodpageview.asp?PageId=313>

Battlefield visit

A Battlefield Drive

11 miles. Starting from and returning to Bridgewater, to explore the wider landscape of Sedgemoor. However the core of the battlefield cannot be traversed by car and so one must also take the walk from Westonzoyland.

The best starting point for a driving tour of the battlefield is Bridgewater, which was the rebel headquarters on the 5th July. From St Mary's church Monmouth himself is said to have surveyed the landscape of Sedgemoor, supposedly with a telescope now in Bridgewater museum. While in the town you might like to take a Civil War diversion for this was an important royalist garrison stormed by the New Model army in 1645 and home to Robert Blake a parliamentarian commander during the Civil War and admiral of the Navy during the Commonwealth. From Bridgewater take the A39 towards the motorway. The modern road follows closely the course of what was in 1685 the post road to London running out across moorland along the old causeway.

Turn right immediately after the motorway towards Chedzoy village. Watch carefully for the point at which the land rises very slightly before you enter the village – you have just

reached the 'zoy' or island (derived from the old English 'eg') which gave Chedzoy its name.

Chedzoy

This is a pleasant village with a few old houses and walls of stone although most of the buildings were built in brick in the 19th or 20th century. The street is narrow and winding but there are several parking places in front of the church.

To get an overview of the Sedgemoor landscape and a real feel for the scale and direction of the rebel approach you can't beat a climb to the top of the church tower at Chedzoy. But this is something to be taken lightly, for there are a large number of narrow and uneven steps in a tiny spiral staircase. It is also a visit that needs to be planned in advance for, although the church itself is normally open during daylight hours, one must gain permission and obtain the key to the tower door if one wishes to make the ascent.

From the top of the tower on a clear day one can see Bridgewater 4km away to the south west, the old town marked out clearly by the slender spire of St. Mary's church. To the north of Chedzoy and about 1.5km away is the hamlet of Bradney and the adjacent Peasey Farm. It was here, having left the causeway for the narrow lanes, the rebels marched eastward. Leaving their ammunition and powder wagon near the farm they struck out across the open moor between the Chedzoy island and the Polden Hills, which are clearly visible 2km to the north. Monmouth followed close to the present line of the Kings Sedgemoor Drain, between Chedzoy and Pendon Hill, which is visible as a low hill just 1km to the north east. Here they were still a great distance from Westonzoyland and the royal army camp. From our vantage point the church tower of Westonzoyland is clearly visible in the distance, 3km away to the south east!

The tradition that the marks on the buttress outside the south transept were created by rebels sharpening their weapons, repeated by Clark, 1996, is clearly wrong, not least because we know they never entered Chedzoy village.

To Westonzoyland

If you lack the time or the inclination to walk in the footsteps of the rebel army all the way from Chedzoy you can drive south from that village to Westonzoyland. As you leave the village note the way the road winds its way across the ancient arable land past the isolated farms. After it turns south once more notice when it drops down a few feet off the island and onto the almost perfectly flat land of the former moor. At the main road (A372) turn left to Westonzoyland. As you enter the village, now expanded well beyond the confines of the 17th century settlement, the ground rises onto the main island which has given its name to both Westonzoyland and Middlezoy. It is somewhere here, guarding the direct route from Bridgewater, that Feversham had placed the royal artillery on the night of the 5th July. Continue to the middle of Westonzoyland where it is possible to park on the main road close to the church. From here it is best to follow the walking tour of the battlefield.

A Battlefield Walk

2.5 miles. Level terrain, mainly along metalled paths and lane although it can be wet and muddy on the moor. The walk starts from Westonzoyland church.

There is a pub and a shop in Westonzoyland, but no public toilets.

The walk described here is meant to be used in conjunction with the Battlefield Explorer map, which can be downloaded from the Media Store.

Westonzoyland church

As so often after 17th century battles, the church provided the largest and most secure building within which to hold the prisoners. Hundreds of men, some wounded and a few dying, were herded into Westonzoyland church after the battle. The handsome decorated pews which fill the nave were there at the time and may have provided a little comfort for wounded and terrified men, better at least than the cold stone flags of the floor. By the time the surviving prisoners had departed the church was in such a terrible state it had to be not only cleaned but fumigated!

On the wall at the west end of the south aisle is a large interpretation panel about the battle. A cheaply produced leaflet of Page's description of the battle is also usually on sale for a few pence. In the village for about £25 (I saw it in the butcher's shop) you can buy a coloured print of an artist's impression of the battle (proceeds to the church). There is also a pub and shop in the main street but if you are not tempted then walk down to the battlefield, to the battlefield interpretation panel near Bussex Farm.

From the church walk northward along the lane by the west side of the churchyard. This leads to the narrow alleyway which runs between the modern housing and down to Monmouth Road. Turn right and follow the road as it curves northward turning into a narrow lane with a few older houses and leads to Bussex Farm. At the junction of the lane and droves is the battlefield interpretation panel (grid ref: ST354354). The Bussex Rhyne ran across the northern corner of the field to the north of the panel and it appears that it was here that the upper pluncheon lay. Had Grey's cavalry found and crossed the pluncheon they would have charged straight through where you are standing and down the line of the modern lane that you have just walked up, to capture the royal artillery.

Just to the north east of the interpretation panel is Bussex Farm, where the Sogg Drove leads off from the village loop road and down to the battlefield monument. When I last visited we went in to Bussex Farm to get permission to walk across the field opposite the monument to look at the surviving earthwork of the Bussex Rhyne and so to walk along the front line of the rebel army. If you do the same then watch out for the two sheepdogs in the farmyard - they were loose and very interested in us, barking and yelping. They seem to respond well if you talk to them but I still watched carefully behind me in case one of them nipped my ankle! It was worth the effort because the farmer is very friendly. He was happy to chat and says that quite a few people take the trouble to look in before they walk over the battlefield. We signed his visitors book and he kindly brought out a couple of small display cases. In one was a silver button of the period found on the battlefield, probably lost in the action by one of the wealthier of the combatants; in the

other were half a dozen lead shot from the site, mostly for musket but with one from a pistol.

From the interpretation panel at the junction of lane and droves take the Sogg Drove westward into the heart of the battlefield. Though the moorland has long since gone, replaced by pasture and in places now by arable crops, this landscape still has a distinct and very engaging character. The noise and bustle of the 21st century can be left far behind in the peaceful tranquillity of Sedgemoor. On some other battlefields, like Roundway Down or Lansdown, the terrain is so dramatic it shouts out to you and even the least observant visitor can hardly miss the significant topographical features. But here on Sedgemoor you have to work hard, but it will repay the effort. If you spend some time exploring the moor, viewing it from different locations, you begin to understand the terrain as it must have been in 1685. Once you understand the historic terrain you can at last begin to appreciate the challenges and opportunities that faced the commanders.

The Royal Army's Camp

As you walk out along the Sogg Drove about half way down (350m) look left across the drove-side ditch towards Westonzoyland church. Despite the drainage system, across most of the foreground the pasture field is covered with the sedges that gave Sedgemoor its name. At the far side of the field however the sedges stop as ground rises suddenly, no more than a few feet, onto the island of Zoy on which the village lies. A modern housing estate has encroached across part of this land. The closest house stands where a house stood in 1685 and the hedge is that which enclosed the fields on the small Bussex island at that time. The majority of the farmhouses of the hamlet of Bussex then stood close to where there is now, in the distance, a row of council houses. The royal infantry were camped on the very edge of the island, extending no further to the left than the isolated house but running to the right almost as far as where the Sogg Drove now turns back southward towards the village.

Follow along the Sogg Drove which turns sharp left. After turning look left as you walk down this drove. The Bussex Rhyne ran north-south through this field and half way across the field is the probable location of the lower pluncheon. Go past this first field and look across to your left again. It was in this second field, close to the far side, that the royal artillery were positioned that night, facing the track running across the moor from Bridgewater to cross the pluncheon. The tents and wagons of the royal artillery train were positioned in the area beyond where there is a new housing estate. Turn and look in the opposite direction. Somewhere out there, alongside the track to Bridgewater lay the Penzoy Pound where royal musketeers provided a forward guard against a rebel attack across the moor from the west.

The infantry action

Now retrace your steps along the drove and after turning sharp right take the drove which leads off on the left. This is Langmoor Drove which leads to the battlefield memorial, in the second field on the left. As you approach the hedgerow you walk through the royal infantry front line, then near the hedge you cross the line of the Bussex rhyne. The rebel infantry positions were just another 30 yards in front of you.

From the monument look north westward towards the tower of Chedzoy church, nearly a mile and a half away (2.2 km). In the middle distance almost half a mile (700 metres) you will see the moor edge – a quite slight but very distinct rise in the ground onto what in the 17th century was Chedzoy island. It was between here and the modern Chedzoy New Cut that the combined royal cavalry and infantry assault destroyed the rebel army. It was across the moorland beyond and up to the island that many of the rebels fled, some being cut down on the moor and dozens more in the standing corn on the island.

Unlike much of the moor, the long narrow field behind the monument is permanent pasture. There are irregular earthworks right across the field. Hidden amongst these slight humps and bumps, some of which may be old drainage channels and wet hollows from the period before enclosure, is the site of a mass grave from the battle.

The Bussex Rhyne

From the monument, if you have gained permission, you can walk through the field gate on the opposite side of the drove and into the pasture field. Here the Bussex rhyne is clearly visible as a linear hollow no more than half a metre deep and about 10 to 15 metres wide. This former drainage dyke, abandoned ever since the new drainage system was put in during the late 18th century, is normally dry now, except perhaps in times of heavy rain. Its replacement, planned out with the ruler of the drainage surveyor in the 1790s, lies at the south side of the field. Unlike its modern replacements the rhyne wanders across the field in an irregular fashion with other lesser channels, also long since drained, running on from either side. When I visited in October 2002 the archaeologists from the Two Men in a Trench series had not long departed and the position of their excavation trenches were clearly visible. Their work has shown that the rhyne was about 15 metres wide but probably less than one metre deep. This may not seem much, and the earthwork of the old watercourse certainly does not look as though it could have been a particularly formidable obstacle. However, to cross a wet ditch of those proportions at night, in mist and under fire from a strong opposing force of musketeers would have been no simple task for a battle hardened professional army let alone for the inexperienced and ill equipped rebel force under Monmouth's command.

From here you can now retrace your steps along Langmore Drove to the Sogg Drove, turn left and return to your starting point by the church.

Walk Variation: The Rebel Advance

The walk to battlefield and back from Chedzoy is almost 5 miles (8km) and if you include the visit to Westonzoyland church then add just over another mile (1.5km). The going can be a little wet and rough at times, especially off the droves, and so stout footwear is essential.

If you are intent on a long walk then you can start from Chedzoy. Some guides suggest a start from near Peasey Farm but, as Burne says, this adds little to the experience. Take the

road past the church towards Sutton Mallet and just after you cross the bridge over the great Kings Sedgemoor Drain you will find a parking space on the left for 8 or 10 cars. From here you can cross back over the bridge. (The lane from Chedzoy to the car park is one of the pre-enclosure lanes and gives a good impression of the problem that the narrow lane leading from the London road to the moor posed for the rebel army, making progress painfully slow. The actual lane they used is the one leading from the A39 towards Bradney House). Over the bridge turn left follow the western bank of the Drain southward towards Westonzoyland, roughly on the line of Monmouth's advance. After almost 1km you reach the point where Monmouth encountered the Langmoor Rhyne, although this watercourse has long since disappeared. It was here that the rebel advance was disrupted as, in the dark and the mist, they desperately sought the pass across the rhyne. It was then, after they had found the crossing and the troops were making their way across, that the fateful shot rang out from the rebel army giving the game away. A new waymarked access under the Countryside Stewardship scheme leads to the right from our path across to the path alongside Chedzoy island, immediately to the north of the former line of the Langmoor Rhyne.

Continue along the side of the main Drain and then turn right along the second drove (600 m), then left along the next drove (250m). At the junction (450m) turn right and follow the drove to Bussex Farm and the junction of droves with the lane from Westonzoyland village. Just before you reach the farm the ground rises quite clearly off the moor and on to the gravel island. You cross the line of the Bussex Rhyne just before you reach the island.

Before walking the core of the battlefield a detour to Westonzoyland church is highly recommended. From the junction take the tarmac lane, Monmouth Road, leading straight on through the hamlet of Bussex. The road bends right into a street of council houses (400m). Pass a road on the left and take the small alleyway left between the houses (100m). Follow the alley to the church which lies adjacent to the main road (350m). Here you rejoin the less adventurous visitor who has chosen to drive from Chedzoy and you can follow the main walk instructions to the battlefield.

When you have reached the Bussex Rhyne and monument on the main walk you have two alternatives to return to your car near Chedzoy. Either turn right on the Langmoor Drove which will take you directly to the Kings Sedgemoor Drain whence you can turn left and retrace your steps along the side of the watercourse to your starting point. Alternatively for a yet longer walk you can retrace your steps along the Langmore Drove, turn right on the Sogg Drove and just after it turns sharp left take the footpath on the right skirting the field, crossing the Chedzoy New Cut and then north to the edge of the Chedzoy island. Turn right to skirt the island, alongside the drain that was there at the time of the battle. This drain proved a dangerous obstacle to the fleeing rebels, and here you are close to the line of flight of those rebel troops. On the slight higher ground many were cut down and lay undiscovered in the corn for some days. Skirting along what was the moor edge alongside the drain. By Mount Close Batch turn north and follow the path to Parchey, which was another small, anciently enclosed island. Here you turn right on the road to return to the car park. As you cross the bridge over the Kings Sedgemoor

Drain the hill 500m to the north east is Pendon Hill, from which Monmouth is said to have surveyed the battlefield early in the morning as he made his escape.

Further reading: Battlefield guides

The battle is dealt with in most of the standard battlefield guides, but in most cases the information is very limited. As so often, the best by far is Burne, although there is now far more detailed mapping of the historic terrain and of the army deployments that was available when Burne wrote.

- Burne, *The battlefields of England*, London, Greenhill Books, 1996
- Chandler, *Sedgemoor 1685 : from Monmouth's invasion to the Bloody Assizes*, Staplehurst, Spellmount, 1999; provides several pages of information for a visit to the battlefield.
- Clark, *Battlefield Walks : The South*, 1996; the walk suggested by Clark is long and does not seem to best exploit the battlefield.
- Fairbairn & Cyprien, *A Traveller's Guide to the Battlefields of Britain*, 1983
- Getmapping, *British Battles: Amazing Views*, 2002; as usual an excellent air photo though it does not extend quite far enough north to show the position of the Langmoor Rhyne; the troop deployments are not accurately positioned and should be ignored.
- Green, *Guide to the battlefields of Britain and Ireland*, London, Constable, 1973
- Kinross, *Walking & Exploring the Battlefields of Britain*, 1988; one of the better accounts and walk descriptions.
- Kinross, *Discovering Battlefields of England*, 1989
- Warner, *British Battlefields: The Definitive Guide to Warfare in England and Scotland*, 2002

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