



### How Wales was governed in the 1650s

#### The Commonwealth for governing without a King

- The Commonwealth period (1649–1660) marked a time of republican rule in British history after the execution of King Charles I.
- England, Scotland and Ireland were declared a republic following the defeat of the Royalists in the English Civil War, with the monarchy officially abolished in 1649.
- Power was initially held by the Rump Parliament, consisting of those who supported Charles I's trial and execution.
- The Rump Parliament became increasingly unpopular with the New Model Army due to its failure to implement promised reforms and accusations of corruption.
- On 20 April 1653, Oliver Cromwell forcibly dissolved the parliament and assumed power as Lord Protector, establishing a military dictatorship.

#### Direct rule by Major-General Berry in Wales

- Under Cromwell, James Berry became the Major General in charge of Wales and the English counties bordering it.
- Berry faced resentment from local landowners who disliked being ruled by someone of low social status.
- Berry's main role was to suppress Royalist sympathies, as Wales had been a Royalist stronghold during the Civil War.
- Berry was tasked with collecting taxes, confiscating land from Royalist supporters, and promoting Puritan values.
- A devout Puritan, Berry enforced strict laws in Wales, closing alehouses, banning sports and leisure, and replacing Anglican and Catholic clergy with Puritan preachers.
- His rule ended in 1657 due to inefficiency and unpopularity.
- After Cromwell's death in 1658 and the collapse of the Protectorate in 1660, Berry was arrested during the Restoration of Charles II.

### Conflicting loyalties in Wales

#### Royalist gentry working for the County Committees of the Republic

- The County Committees were local governing bodies established by Parliament during the Civil War and the Interregnum.
- Their duties included collecting taxes, confiscating Royalist property, enforcing Puritan laws, and monitoring suspected Royalist supporters.
- Although they had supported the Royalist cause, some members of the gentry chose to work with the County Committees in the hope of regaining confiscated estates or reducing the fines imposed on them.
- Many sought to keep their power and protect their interests, believing it was better to collaborate and work with the Republic rather than resist.

#### Continuing support for the Royalist cause by most people in Wales

- Wales remained a Royalist stronghold during the Civil War and Interregnum.
- Cromwell's Puritan laws banning festivals, alehouses, and sports were unpopular.
- Welsh Royalists faced heavy taxes, fines and estate confiscations, deepening resentment.
- Economic hardships under Cromwell increased opposition and Royalist support.
- Military rule under Major-General James Berry was widely disliked.
- Underground Royalist groups plotted against the regime and spread pro-Charles II pamphlets.
- Many evaded taxes and refused local office under the Republic.
- Rather than supporting the Commonwealth, most waited for the monarchy's return.
- After Cromwell's death, Royalist sentiment quickly re-emerged. By 1660, with the Restoration of Charles II, the Welsh gentry largely regained their lands and influence.

### The end of the Republican experiment

#### Charles II being declared rightful king by Thomas Myddleton in Wrexham in 1659

- After Oliver Cromwell's death in 1658, the Protectorate weakened under the poor leadership of his son, Richard Cromwell.
- Political divisions between the Army and Parliament, along with rising Royalist support, destabilised the government.
- Royalist uprisings occurred across Britain, including a significant rebellion led by Sir Thomas Myddelton in Wales.
- In August 1659, Myddelton, a former Parliamentarian turned Royalist, declared Charles II the rightful king and raised an army in Wrexham, Denbighshire.
- Myddelton's army was supported by local Royalists but was defeated by Colonel John Lambert's forces at Chirk Castle.
- Despite this defeat, Royalist sentiment in Wales remained strong, signalling the Commonwealth's weakening control.
- By May 1660, political pressure and widespread support for the monarchy led to the Restoration of Charles II.
- Myddelton was pardoned and rewarded for his loyalty to the Royalist cause.

#### The restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660

- Internal conflicts and army pressure forced Richard Cromwell to resign in May 1659.
- Royalist uprisings, though defeated, revealed widespread dissatisfaction with the republic and increased support for Charles II.
- George Monck, governor of Scotland, played a crucial role by marching his army to London in 1660, pressuring Parliament to restore the monarchy.
- Monck called for the reassembly of the Long Parliament, which dissolved itself and allowed new elections.
- In April 1660, Charles II issued the Declaration of Breda, offering religious toleration (with limits), amnesty (excluding those involved in his father's execution), and protection of property rights.
- These promises reassured various factions that a Stuart restoration would be peaceful and stable.
- In May 1660, Parliament invited Charles II to return, and on 29 May 1660, he was welcomed in London with widespread public support, marking the Restoration and the end of republican rule.