

Name:

## Rebellion 2

### Introduction: What happened.

#### The main stages of the Western Rising, May to August 1549

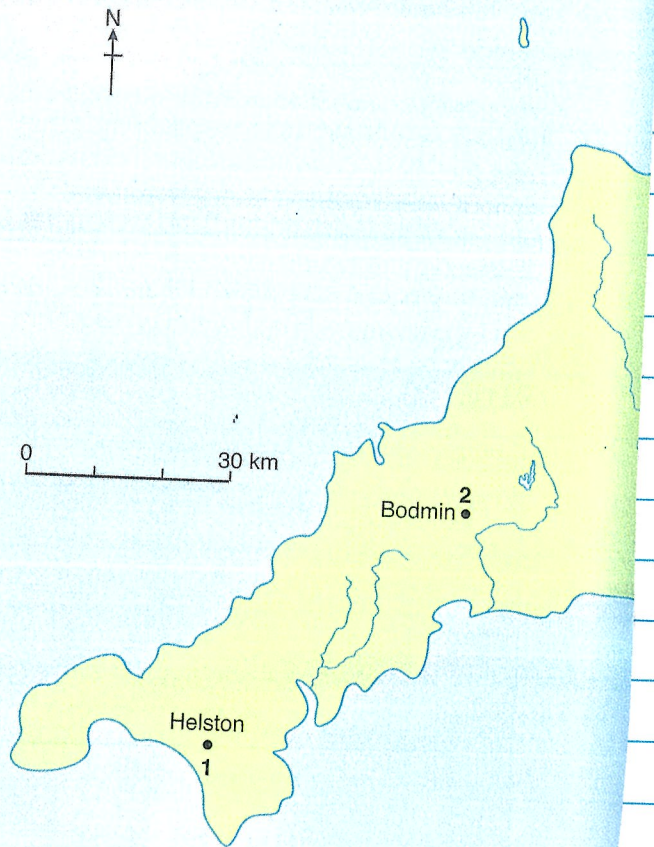
**3** At Whitsun the citizens of Sampford Courtenay in Devon rebelled when the new service was used in their church. A member of the gentry who intervened was killed. This force then marched to Crediton where Arundell and his Cornish force of about 6000 had established themselves and fortified the town. The government sent a small force under Sir Peter Carew with instructions from the Duke of Somerset to show leniency in dealing with the rebels. Carew made the situation worse, he failed to meet with the rebels and the accidental burning of Crediton barns increased tension.

**2** In spring 1549 the imposition of the New Prayer Book led to protests across Cornwall which came together under the leadership of Humphrey Arundell at Bodmin.

**1** The first sign of trouble came the year before the outbreak of the rebellion proper, at Helston in April 1548, when the much-hated government commissioner William Body visited the town to oversee the destruction of church images. In the ensuing riot Body was murdered. Ten men were ordered to be hung, drawn and quartered and the brutality of the government's response caused widespread resentment.

▷ This map shows you the main stages of the Western Rising from its outbreak in May 1549 to its suppression four months later in August.

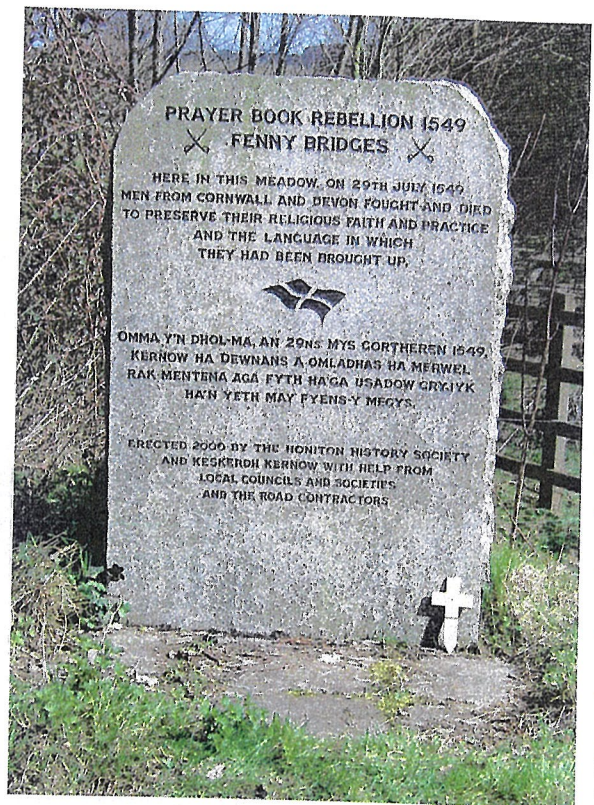
**4** Instead of marching towards a poorly defended London, Arundell decided to capture the largely sympathetic and strategic town of Exeter. Those citizens most supportive of the rebels now left the city to join them, thus weakening the prospect of a successful uprising within the city, not least by reducing the pressure on the limited amount of food so enabling Exeter to hold out longer. Meanwhile, led by the mayor, John Blackaller, the town officials' fear of committing treason overcame their sympathies with the rebels. The result was a lengthy siege which swung one way and then the other for six weeks.



**5** Meanwhile the Protector, the Duke of Somerset had replaced Carew with Lord John Russell, who was the Lord High Admiral and President of the Council of the West. Russell based himself at Honiton throughout July 1549. His force was probably less than a hundred. He was not strong enough to attack the rebels and was forced to wait for reinforcements.

**6** On 3 August the arrival of further forces under Lord Grey enabled the royal army to march on Exeter. The rebels were defeated in clashes at Fenny Bridges, Clyst St Mary and Clyst Heath. Finally on 6 August Russell relieved the city of Exeter as further government forces under William Herbert arrived.

**7** On the 16 August Russell led a royal army of 8000 men against the rebels who had reformed at Sampford Courtenay. It required a three-pronged attack by Russell, Grey and Herbert before the rebels fled. In total about 4000 West Country men lost their lives in the battle or the hunting down that followed it.



△ Memorial stone for the Battle of Fenny Bridges.

## → What caused the "Prayer Book" Rebellion?

### Causes of the Western Rebellion

#### Religious grievances

- Religion was unquestionably the central issue here → can be seen in the list of articles where the rebels call for a return to Catholicism. It was perhaps the unfamiliarity of the changes (changes in appearances) rather than their political/doctrinal motivation that sparked anger in the rebels.

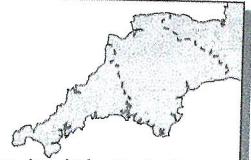
#### Economic factors

- To interpret the rebellion as solely religious would be a vast simplification' → economic issues featured more highly in the early stages of the rebellion (e.g. complaints about taxes that appeared in the first set of articles before clergymen 'hijacked' the movement.

#### Other reasons.

#### Background

Cornwall, with its own language and its geographical location at the edge of the country, was 'a land apart' (J. Cornwall, *Revolt of the Peasantry, 1549*). The largest town was Bodmin with only 1,000 inhabitants and the county relied heavily on the meagre profits that were made from tin mining. Poverty and a vigorous sense of regional identity had triggered the rebellion of 1497 against Henry VII's tax request and had led 3,000 Cornish people to join Perkin Warbeck's attempt to claim the throne later in the same year. Devon shared much of its neighbour's natural conservatism with regard to matters social and religious, and the common people of the county were, according to David Loades in *The Mid-Tudor Crisis, 1545-1565*, more hostile towards their gentry than in most other parts of England.



#### SOURCE 16.6 Selected articles of the Western rebels, 1549

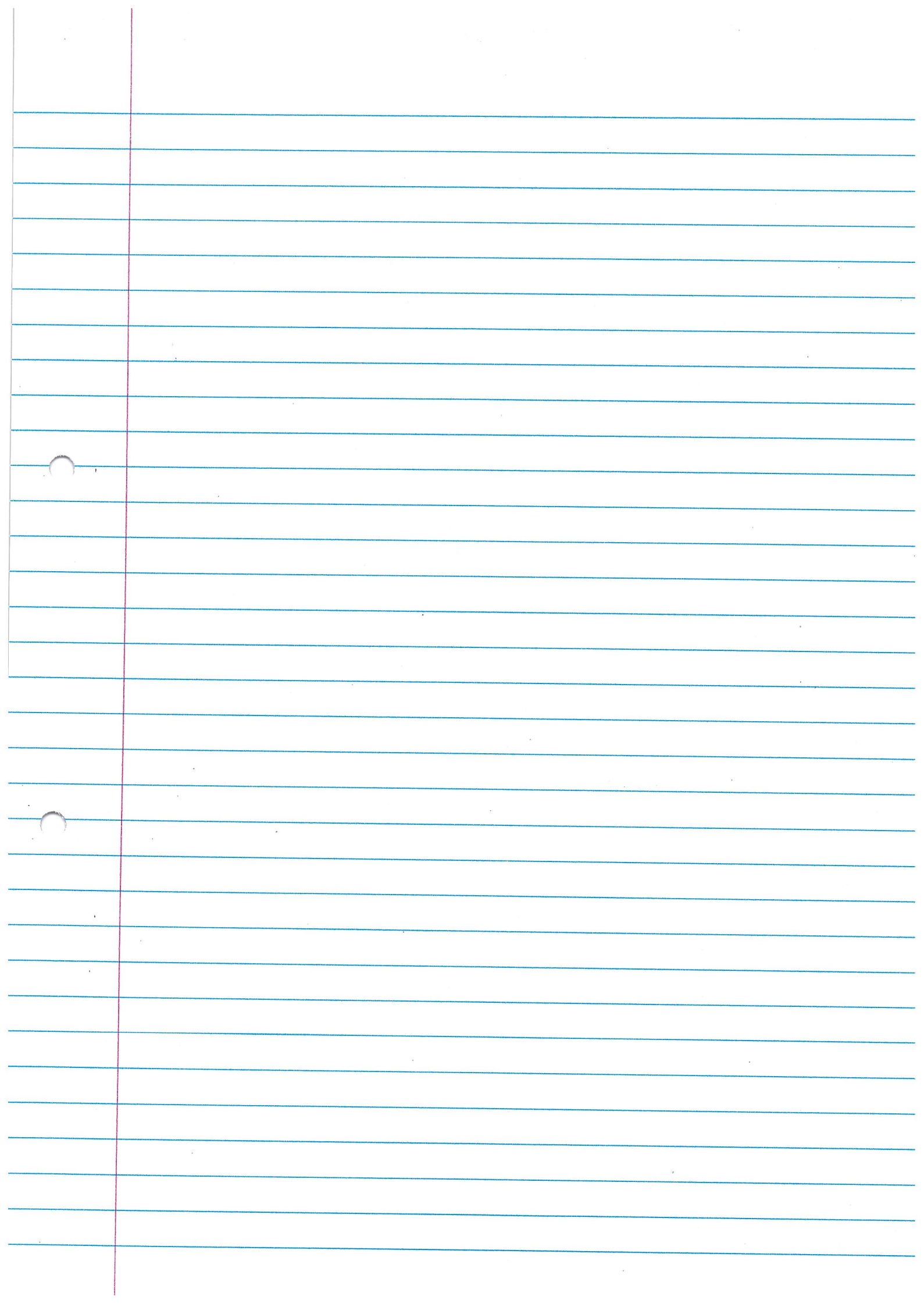
- 1 *First we will have the general counsel and holy decree of our forefathers observed, kept and performed, and who so ever shall speak against them, we hold them as heretics.*
- 2 *We will have the Laws of our Sovereign Lord King Henry the VIII concerning the Six Articles, to be used as they were in his time.*
- 3 *We will have the mass in Latin, as was before, and celebrated by the priest without any man or woman communicating with him.*
- 4 *We will have the Sacrament hung over the high altar, and there to be worshipped as it used to be, and they which will not thereunto consent, we will have them die like heretics against the holy Catholic faith.*
- 5 *We will have the sacrament of the altar but at Easter delivered to the people, and then but in one kind.*
- 6 *We will that our curates shall minister the sacrament of baptism at all times, as well on the week days as on the holy days.*
- 7 *We will have holy bread and holy water made every Sunday, palms and ashes at the time accustomed, images to be set up again in every church, and all other ancient old Ceremonies used as heretofore, by our mother the holy church.*
- 8 *We will not receive the new service because it is but like a Christmas game. We will have our old service of matins, Mass and evensong and procession as it was before; and we utterly refuse the new English.*
- 9 *We will have every preacher in his sermon, and every priest at the Mass pray, especially by name, for the souls in purgatory as our forefathers did.*
- 10 *We will have the whole Bible and all books of scripture in English to be called in again, for we be informed that otherwise the clergy shall not of long time confound the heretics.*

## What caused the Western Rebellion of 1549?

### Causes of the Western Prayer Book rebellion, 1549

<p>The destruction of one of the remaining Chantry Churches, Glasney College, brought an end to the formal scholarship that had helped to sustain the Cornish language and the Cornish cultural identity.</p>	<p>Roots could be traced back to the Cornish rebellion of 1497 and the memory of the harsh treatment of those Cornish rebels.</p>
<p>In 1547 William Body, local Archdeacon, had been attacked for Protestant sympathies.</p>	<p>The introduction of the Book of Common Prayer in 1549, reflecting strongly the theology of Protestantism, was problematic in a traditionally Catholic area.</p>
<p>The issue of enclosure had affected local people in Cornwall as they lost their rights to common land on which to grow surplus and rear animals.</p>	<p>In April 1548 William Body returned to Cornwall to supervise the destruction of images – he was murdered. The resulting punishment was the execution of 28 Cornishmen.</p>
<p>From 1547 to 1549 inflation had led to wheat prices quadrupling which had an alarming impact on farming.</p>	<p>The banning of traditional symbols and icons within local churches.</p>
<p>In 1549 The Act of Uniformity made it unlawful to use Latin liturgical rites from Whitsunday onwards.</p>	<p>On Whit-Monday 1549 the peasants in Sampford Courtenay in Devon compelled their priest to revert to the old service arguing that the new English liturgy was '<i>but lyke a Christmas game</i>'. JPs arrived to enforce the change.</p>

Dicken & Fellows 148-150.



## 16D The Government's response to the Western rebellion

### First Government response

Somerset was acting on inadequate information and had only limited resources at his disposal. On 29 June he urged Lord Russell, a Catholic member of the Council, to find a peaceful settlement and wrote a conciliatory response to the rebel demands. At the time, Somerset was struggling to suppress enclosure riots in the Midlands, maintain adequate forces on the Scottish border and watch for any French aggression. He could therefore provide the cautious Russell with only a small army. Russell, knowing the weakness of his position, avoided confronting the enemy.



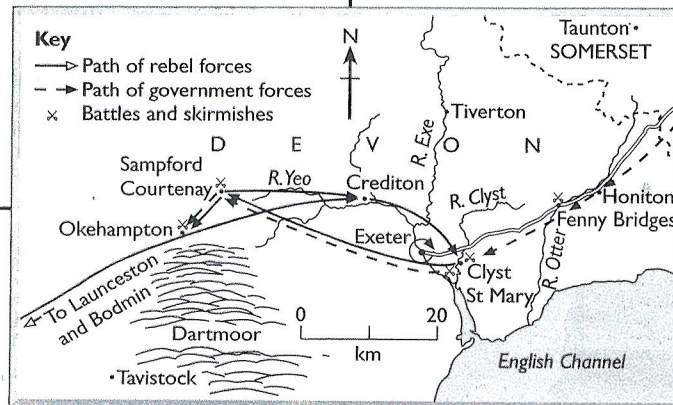
### Aftermath

The resilience and commitment of the rebels remained strong to the end and, even after the victory on the battlefield, Russell had to deal with rearguard action and pockets of resistance until an estimated 3,000 people had been killed. Robert Welsh, the vicar of the church of St Thomas and probably the leader of the rebellion, was hanged on gallows erected on his church tower, in his vestments and with a 'holy-water bucket, a sprinkle, a sacring bell, a pair of beads and such other like popish trash hanged about him'. The Government operation further deepened hostility as Government forces had acted illegally, executing without trials and confiscating and redistributing property.



### The descent into bloodshed

Loyalty to the Crown led the citizens of Exeter to defend their city staunchly against the rebel attack for six weeks. Russell still prevaricated and on 8 July he made his last attempt to reach a settlement with the rebels. On 12 July reinforcements under Lord Grey were delayed by another uprising in Oxfordshire (see Chart 16A on page 227). On 28 July, in response to pressure from Somerset, Russell began his advance against the rebels. He was aided by the much-needed arrival of the forces of Lord Grey on 3 August.



### Government suppression

Confrontations between the rebels and the Government forces under Russell took place at Fenny Bridges, Cyst St Mary and Cyst Heath, and each time the rebels were pushed further back. On 6 August, Russell relieved Exeter and Government reinforcements under Sir William Herbert arrived. Time was running out for the rebels. Somerset heaped yet more pressure on to Russell to finish the job, as the French had declared war on England on 8 August. Finally, on 16 August, Russell advanced on and defeated the rebel forces at Sampford Courtenay.



## How threatening was the Western Rising of 1549?

The alternative name for this uprising, the Prayer Book Rebellion, encourages comparison with the Pilgrimage of Grace. There are many similarities. The protests in the West Country turned into a rebellion because of strong leadership. Like Aske, Humphrey Arundell was a gentleman with considerable tactical skills. By June 1549 his support had built up until he commanded a force of about 6000 men, centred on Bodmin, and representing all social classes. Again, Arundell kept control and discipline by ordering that the rebels were divided into military detachments under the control of colonels, majors and captains or clergy. The aims of the rebels were clearly expressed in the Eight Articles largely written by the clergy, all but one of which called for the return of the old religious beliefs and practices. Like the 'pilgrims', their plan was to send their grievances to the Council, while protesting their loyalty to Henry VIII's wish that there would be no religious changes until Edward came of age. In one way, however, Arundell appeared to differ from Aske. He was determined to march on London to make sure the government both met his demands and kept its word. Again, although this rebellion was not a dynastic threat in that it was not seeking the overthrow of the monarch, the impact on the regency government of being brought news of a rebel force intending to march on the capital needs to be considered.

In the event however, Arundell decided to capture Exeter before advancing to London believing its arms, money and recruits would add to his strength. This turned out to be a serious misjudgement. Exeter did not surrender which meant that Arundell was unable to take advantage of London being relatively unguarded. There was also unrest in the capital over the preaching of the new church services and the authorities feared both that the Londoners might open the city gates to the rebels and that Edward's sister, the Catholic Princess Mary, was in league with them. Arundell's error ensured that the rebellion remained confined to the West Country. The chance to win more widespread support or to join up with disturbances in other counties and then take London was lost. The siege of Exeter also gave Russell time to move to Honiton and then await additional forces. The rebellion therefore only gained huge support in the West Country. There was no foreign support for the rebels although, ironically, foreigners were involved when Somerset paid for Italian mercenaries to fight on the government's side.

The reaction of the government does not reveal the seriousness of this rebellion. It was slow to react decisively because Somerset was pre-occupied with economic issues and looming war against Scotland. At first Somerset took the view that the people in the West Country were simply misguided and could be shown the error of their ways. He ordered Sir Peter Carew, the Sheriff of Devonshire, to deal with the rebels, but he failed to do so. Somerset then, under pressure from hardliners in his council to abandon his strategy of leniency, replaced Carew with Lord Russell who had a reputation for brutality and who eventually succeeded in harshly putting down the rebellion. However, for all its delay there was never any chance that the government would agree to the rebels' grievances because overturning the Catholic religion and replacing it with Protestantism was at the heart of this government's policies.



## Extension materials

### The rebellions of 1549

The year 1549 was perhaps the worst year of the whole of the Tudor period. There were major rebellions in East Anglia and the South West, as well as considerable levels of disorder throughout much of the rest of the country. It was, according to John Guy in *Tudor England* (1988), 'the closest thing Tudor England came to a class war'. To make matters worse,

Somerset's government found it difficult to cope with the rebellions, not least because the thin resources of the Tudor State were overstretched with substantial numbers of troops engaged in the garrisoning of the south of Scotland while others were stationed in the south-east of England to ward off a potential French invasion.

There were a number of reasons for rebellion. In some parts of the country religious reasons predominated; in the Midlands and East Anglia agrarian and social grievances were most important, with the Council receiving numerous reports of riots and rooting up of enclosures. Resentment of taxation appears also to have a consistent factor. Most of the risings died out fairly quickly, either because of insufficient support or through prompt action from the local nobility and gentry, such as the Earl of Arundel who managed to calm matters down in strategically sensitive Sussex. Arundel heard grievances and punished a few oppressive landlords and disorderly peasants even-handedly, restoring what he considered to be a 'quavering quiet'. Similar methods seemed to work in Cambridgeshire, Yorkshire and the Midlands. However, the South West lacked a resident aristocrat of Arundel's stature who could bring matters under control, and both the Western Rebellion and Kett's Rebellion in East Anglia required significant military action to achieve suppression and restore order.

### The Western Rebellion

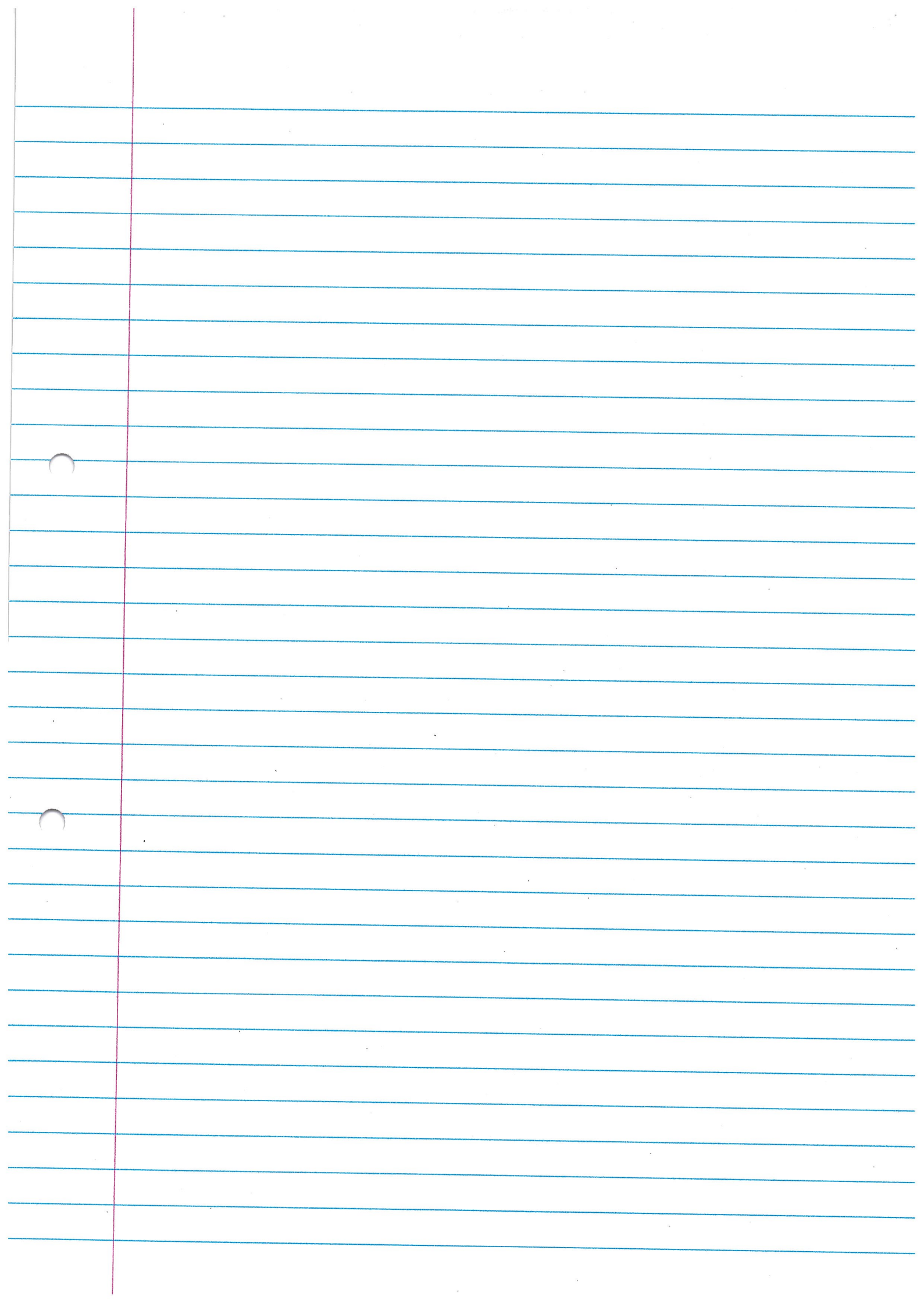
The Western Rebellion was prompted particularly by religious grievances. This rebellion has been described as the 'prayer book rebellion' on account of the description by the rebels of the new Book of Common Prayer as a 'Christmas game'. However, the rebels had had little chance to experience the new prayer book and the actual religious grievances ran much deeper, for the rebels wanted nothing less than the reversal of the entire process of religious reform that they had had inflicted upon them for the previous decade and a half. These reforms had destroyed the whole way in which they had experienced religion, both in church services whose rituals had had mainly a sensual appeal and in the Church's wider communal role, in which they and their forebears had invested much real and emotional capital. Nevertheless, the Western Rebellion was not purely religious in origin. There is considerable evidence of distrust between peasants and rural labourers, on the one hand, and landowners on the other, to the extent that the situation exhibited what Eamon Duffy in *The Voices of Morebath* (2001) has described as 'class antagonism'. Taxation was also a grievance. Somerset's government, in attempting to deal with the social effects of enclosure, for which contemporary propagandists blamed sheep farming, placed a tax on sheep.

To hard-pressed hill farmers grazing a few sheep on the marginal uplands of Devon and Cornwall, this came as yet another blow imposed on them by a seemingly uncaring and ignorant government in London, made worse through its implementation by insensitive local officials.

### Exploring the detail

#### Enclosures

Enclosure is the process by which common land was taken into private ownership. In this way, many peasants lost their rights of access to common land and suffered considerable poverty as a result. Somerset, as a result of pressure brought by John Hales, issued a proclamation against enclosure. Despite the controversies of the late 1540s, the rate of enclosure seems to have been slowing down considerably by this time and, thus, Somerset's proclamation might well have been wrong-headed.



# The Western Rebellion of 1549

## Religious protest in Devon and Cornwall

What was the Tudor rebellion in Devon and Cornwall all about? Where did it begin? How did it spread? How was it eventually put down?

### Exam links

**AQA 1C** The Tudors: England, 1485–1603

Edexcel paper 3, option 31 Rebellion and disorder under the Tudors, 1485–1603

**OCR Y136/Y106** England 1485–1558: the early Tudors

**OCR Y306** Rebellion and disorder under the Tudors, 1485–1603

**D**uring the summer of 1549, a huge popular rebellion took place in Devon and Cornwall. Thousands of people took part in the insurrection and the government of Edward VI was eventually forced to raise a powerful army in order to suppress it.

### Background to the rebellion

The Western Rebellion had many contributory causes, but it was basically a protest against religious change.

#### Henry VIII and religious tradition

During the 1530s, King Henry VIII had broken away from the Catholic Church, led by the Pope in Rome, and had established himself as supreme head of an independent English Church. Henry had then proceeded to dissolve the monasteries and to seize their wealth.

Yet while the king had changed the religious landscape of England forever, he had remained firmly opposed to the new strain of Christianity which was then taking root across large parts of the continent, and which would eventually become known as Protestantism. As a result, religious traditionalists — who almost certainly made up the great majority of Henry's subjects — had generally managed to adapt themselves to the old king's unsettling policies. Following Henry's death in 1547, however, and the accession to the throne of his 9-year-old son, Edward VI, England witnessed a full-blown religious revolution.

#### Edward VI and religious revolution

Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, was appointed as Lord Protector and therefore effectively ruled England in the boy-king's name. Seymour soon made it clear that Edward's government was determined to steer the English Church in an unambiguously Protestant direction. As a result, bitter disputes broke out in communities across the land. Religious reformers — made bold by the new thrust of royal policy — openly accused their conservative neighbours of being 'Papists', or treacherous supporters of the old Church of Rome. Religious traditionalists, for their part, accused the reformers of being 'heretics', or enemies of God. Distaste for 'the new learning' was particularly strong in the deeply traditional southwest.

## The 'Cornish Commotion' of 1548

Violent opposition to the Crown's religious policies first surfaced in the west country in April 1548. During this month the archdeacon of Cornwall's deputy, William Body, was murdered by an angry crowd in the west Cornish town of Helston: according to some reports, because he had been overseeing the destruction of traditional religious imagery in the church there. Several thousand men subsequently gathered in arms before being dispersed by the local gentry.

### Ethnic tension

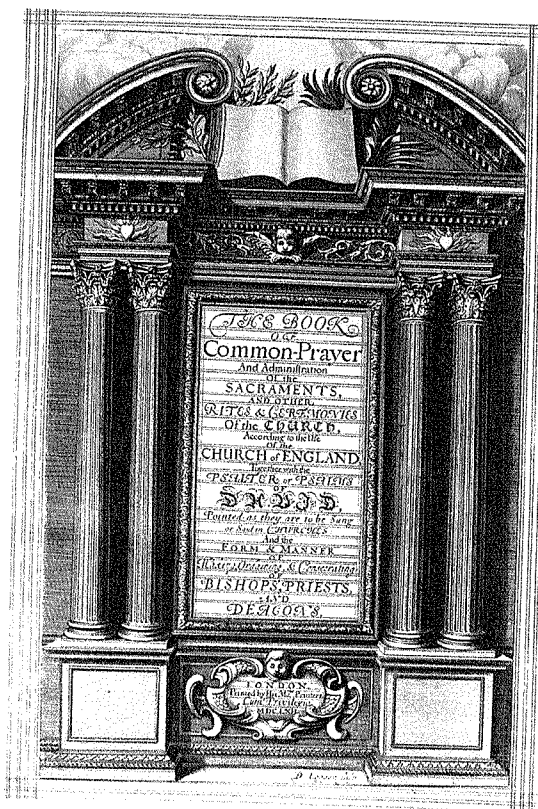
The Helston disturbance was chiefly the result of deep-seated religious conservatism, but it may well have had an ethnic dimension, too. The village of St Keverne, from which many of the protestors came, lay in the heart of the Lizard peninsula. This was a district in which the ancient Cornish language, nowadays long extinct, was then still widely spoken. The inhabitants of west Cornwall — like their close cousins, the Welsh — saw themselves as an entirely separate people from the English during the Tudor period. So the fact that west Cornwall was Cornish-speaking can only have made its inhabitants even more stubbornly resistant to the message of the Protestant Reformation: a message which was almost always preached and taught to the ordinary people in English.

### The outbreak of the Western Rebellion

The 'Cornish Commotion' of 1548 was quickly suppressed. However, it foreshadowed the much bigger revolt which was to break out in the west country during the following year.

## Chronology

- January 1547** Death of Henry VIII, accession of Edward VI
- July** The Crown issues orders for religious reform
- 1548** Fear of religious change provokes an uprising in West Cornwall
- 1549** The Crown orders the adoption of an English Prayer Book
- 10 June** The new book sparks protest at Sampford Courtenay in Devon
- Late June** The protests escalate into full-scale rebellion
- 2 July** The rebels besiege the city of Exeter
- 5 August** The rebels are defeated by a royal army at Clyst Heath
- 17–18 August** The rebels are again defeated at Sampford Courtenay
- January 1550** The surviving rebel leaders are executed in London



Frontispiece to the Book of Common Prayer

### The new Book of Common Prayer

In 1549 the Crown ordered that every parish in the kingdom should adopt a new prayer book for use in church services. The Book of Common Prayer was written in English, not Latin, and incorporated a good deal of Protestant doctrine. Unsurprisingly, religious conservatives disliked it, and after the inhabitants of the remote mid-Devon village of Sampford Courtenay had heard the new service, in June 1549, they decided that enough was enough. Led by a local man named William Underhill, they persuaded their parish priest to abandon the new book and revert to the old Latin service instead.

### Wider grievances

Word of what had happened quickly spread and, within days, many protesters had gathered together at Sampford. They now asked, not only that the new prayer book should be withdrawn, but that various other grievances should be redressed as well. The growing band of protestors next made their way to the town of Crediton, a few miles from the regional capital of Exeter.

Here, they were attacked by a group of local gentlemen — led by ardent Protestants, Sir Peter and Sir Gawen Carew — who killed several of the demonstrators on the spot. This was a fatal mistake, for the Carews' aggressive action infuriated the local countryfolk. They now rose in arms across large parts of Devon, and what had previously been a relatively modest protest against the Crown's policies turned into a full-scale rebellion.

Protestant Reformation  
A European-wide movement aimed at reforming the practices of the Catholic Church.

Book of Common Prayer  
The Act of Uniformity (1549) abolished the Latin mass in England. The new Book of Common Prayer was issued with the Act, providing the text for services to be held in English. It is commonly supposed that it was written by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer. It was superseded in 1552.

## The siege of Exeter

Towards the end of June 1549, the rebels urged the inhabitants of Exeter to let them into the city. Many of the citizens sympathised with the rebels, but there was also a small group of committed Protestants who were determined to resist them, and — bolstered by this faction — the town governors resolved to remain loyal to the Crown. Affronted, the Devon rebels, led by William Underhill and other local captains, now proceeded to besiege the city.

Meanwhile, the flame of insurrection had spread into Cornwall, where more rebels had assembled at Bodmin under the command of a gentleman named Humphrey Arundell. Soon afterwards, Arundell led a powerful Cornish force across the River Tamar to assist the Devon rebels in the siege of Exeter.

Because Edward's government was facing several other rebellions elsewhere in the kingdom at this time, it was unable to send down many troops to the west country. As a result, the nobleman whom Somerset had ordered to suppress the disturbances — John, Lord Russell — did not dare to attack the rebels, who were massed around Exeter, and had to hover on the eastern borders of Devon instead.

### Rebel demands

Russell's evident weakness must have caused the insurgents to feel increasingly confident, especially as it now seemed that they were on the brink of starving the citizens into surrender. Around 26 July 1549, the rebels drew up a formal set of 'articles', or demands, which they sent to the government in London. These demands made the rebels' determination to oppose

## Questions

- Why did the Western Rebellion spread so quickly?
- Why did the rebels decide to besiege Exeter, rather than just bypass it?
- Why did it take the government forces so long to defeat the rebels?
- Was it always probable that the rebellion would fail?

the Crown's religious policies absolutely clear. Among them was one that declared that:

We will not receive the new service, because it is but like a Christmas game, but we will have our old service...in Latin, as it was before. And so we the Cornish men, whereof certain of us understand no English, utterly refuse this new English.

The way that this particular demand was phrased suggests that there were a number of Cornish-speakers in the rebels' ranks.

### The defeat of the rebels

Unfortunately for the rebels, powerful reinforcements were by this time arriving in Lord Russell's camp. Among them were bands of mercenary soldiers, drawn from as far afield as Germany and Italy, whom the government had originally hired to fight the Scots, but whom it now decided to turn on its own people.

### Liberating Exeter

Towards the end of July 1549, Russell managed to defeat a force of rebels who had been bold enough to advance to Fenny Bridges, just a couple of miles from his base at Honiton. Soon afterwards, the royal commander moved over to the offensive, marching towards Exeter with his army, and defeating the rebels in a savage battle fought at Clyst Heath on 5 August. That night, the surviving rebels stole away from their positions around Exeter and abandoned the siege of the city.

When Russell's victorious army finally appeared before the town walls early the next day, there was great rejoicing among the citizens — or, at least, among those of them who had opposed the insurgents — and 6 August would, for many years afterwards, be kept as an annual day of thanksgiving in Exeter.

### Beyond Exeter

Exeter may have been relieved, but the rebellion was by no means over. Despite the heavy casualties which they had suffered, the rebels were still determined to resist the royal forces. The insurgents now regrouped at Sampford Courtenay, where the insurrection had originally begun, and soon the king's commanders received the worrying news that Arundell was

Memorial to the men of St Ives who died in the Western Rebellion of 1549





Rebel leaders were executed at Tyburn, London, where today a stone marks the spot of the 'Tyburn Tree' gallows

gathering more men in Cornwall. Russell realised that he had no time to lose. Summoning up his army which had by this time swelled to some 8,000 men — he marched out from Exeter and, in another bloody battle, fought in and around Sampford, completely routed the insurgents. Underhill was slain on the field, while Arundell fled to Launceston in Cornwall, where he was captured the following day.

Russell's troops now spread out across much of Devon and Cornwall, plundering the countryside wherever they came and imprisoning — and sometimes executing — those who had helped the insurgents. The vicar of the rebellious Cornish parish of St Keverne was hanged there on 26 August, for example, together with the vicar of nearby Mannacan, who was later described as one of the 'principal stirrers' of the insurrection.

### Further reading



Fletcher, A. and MacCulloch, D. (2016, 6th edn) *Tudor Rebellions*, Routledge, Chapter 5.

Stoyle, M. (1997) 'Cornish Rebellions, 1497–1648', *History Today*, Vol. 47. Available at: [www.historytoday.com](http://www.historytoday.com).

Stoyle, M. and Hodgman, C. (December 2010) 'The Prayer Book Rebellion', *BBC History Magazine*, Vol. 11, No. 12. Available at: [www.historyextra.com](http://www.historyextra.com).

### The aftermath

While many of the insurgents were punished on the spot, the surviving rebel leaders were sent up to London. Here, four of them — including Arundell — were tried for treason in Westminster Hall, and, after having been pronounced guilty, were hanged, drawn and quartered at the place of public execution at Tyburn. It was a bloody end to a bloody episode: an episode in which — according to the most reliable contemporary commentator — some 4,000 protestors lost their lives.

Few events do more than 'the Commotion in the West Parts' to illustrate the remarkable determination which ordinary Tudor men and women so often displayed when it came to defending their religious faith. This determination also helped to fuel several of the other great rebellions of the sixteenth century, including the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536 and the Northern Rising in 1569.

Mark Stoyle grew up in rural mid-Devon and went to school in Crediton, where the first armed clash of the Western Rebellion occurred. He is professor of early modern history at the University of Southampton.

**Pilgrimage of Grace (1536)** A protest in Yorkshire (although there were other locally related rebellions) against the religious policies of Henry VIII.

**Northern Rising (1569)** An unsuccessful attempt by Catholic noblemen in the north of England to depose Elizabeth I and replace her with Mary, Queen of Scots.

# Using this article in your exam



How could this article be useful in your exam?

Despite recent trends focusing on skills development at A-level, it is apparent that students still enjoy a well-told story. Mark Stoyle's article on the Western Rebellion of 1549 brings the event alive. It is detailed and thorough in its coverage and highlights the pivotal role of the rebellion (in the context of social unrest in the mid-Tudor period). The article illustrates perfectly how a narrative approach to history can be adopted without masking key concepts such as cause and consequence.

# 1549 Rebellions

## The Western ('Prayer Book') Rebellion

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The rebels drafted two sets of articles where they stated their demands, however there is not a complete copy of the first set of articles available for historians to analyse. Evidence suggests that this first set was largely social and economic in nature, with the second set (see below) taking a more religious angle...

### The second set of Articles:

- Holy laws of the past should be observed. Those who use the new service shall be treated as heretics.
- The Six Articles to be used again so that religion is restored to the time of 'our Soverayne Lord Kyng Henry the VIII'.
- We will have the mass in Latin. The priest will communicate on our behalf.
- We will have the sacrament hung over the high altar. Those who do not consent will be treated as heretics 'against the holy Catholyque fayth.'
- Baptism can be administered in the week as well as on Sundays.
- Images and ceremonies to be restored.
- "We will not receyve the newe servyce because it is but lyke a Christmas game." Matins and masses to be said as before. Services will not be in English, since many of the Cornish cannot understand English.
- Prayers for souls in purgatory to be said.
- In order to stop heretical thinking all of the Bibles in English to be called in.
- Cardinal Pole should be pardoned and sent for to serve in the King's council.
- Gentlemen should not have more than one servant. Any more servants he has should be appropriate to the amount of land that he has.
- Reinstate two abbeys in every county. In order to do this they demanded the names of commissioners.
- Rewards for Arundell and Henry Braye. They ask to have arms.

### Causes of the Western Rebellion

#### Religious grievances

- Religion was unquestionably the central issue here → can be seen in the list of articles where the rebels call for a return to Catholicism. It was perhaps the unfamiliarity of the changes (changes in appearances) rather than their political/doctrinal motivation that sparked anger in the rebels.

#### Economic factors

- 'To interpret the rebellion as solely religious would be a vast simplification' → economic issues featured more highly in the early stages of the rebellion (e.g. complaints about taxes that appeared in the first set of articles before clergymen 'hijacked' the movement).