

LAUGHARNE, ROWLAND (died 1676?), Parliamentary major-general

Name: Rowland Laugharne
Date of death: 1676?
Spouse: Ann Laugharne (née Button)
Parent: Janet Laugharne (née Owen)
Parent: John Laugharne
Gender: Male
Occupation: Parliamentary major-general
Area of activity: Military
Author: James Frederick Rees

The son of John Laugharne of S. Brides, Pembrokeshire, and his wife, Janet, daughter of [Sir Hugh Owen](#) of Orielson in that county. In his youth he was page to [Robert Devereux, third earl of Essex](#), and he may have accompanied him on military service in the Low Countries. When the Civil War broke out in August 1642, some of the leading gentry in south Pembrokeshire, supported by merchants who had close associations with Bristol, garrisoned Haverfordwest, Pembroke, and Tenby for the Parliament. The king entrusted his cause in west Wales to [Richard Vaughan, second earl of Carbery](#). [Carbery](#) did not make any definite move until after the capture of Bristol by prince Rupert (26 July 1643). He then entered Pembrokeshire and occupied Haverfordwest and Tenby. Pembroke held out, under its mayor, [John Poyer](#), and at this juncture Rowland Laugharne and [Rice Powell](#) seem to have joined him. Laugharne was no doubt influenced by the fact that the [earl of Essex](#) was now commander-in-chief of the Parliamentary forces. [Essex](#), it should also be added, was a local landowner with an estate at Lamphey, near Pembroke. With the assistance of Parliamentary ships which were driven into Milford Haven by stress of weather, Laugharne took the offensive, and, having forced small Royalist garrisons at Stackpole and Trefloyne to surrender, he crossed Milford Haven and in a combined sea and land assault captured a fort which the Royalists were constructing at Pill (23 February 1644). He followed up this success by recovering Haverfordwest and Tenby. [Carbery](#) then withdrew from Pembrokeshire and Sir Charles Gerard was despatched there by prince Rupert to check Laugharne's advance. He forced Laugharne to retire to Pembroke and Tenby; but the defeat of the Royalists at Marston Moor (2 July 1644) relieved the situation, for Rupert recalled Gerard. Laugharne, again with the help of seamen, resumed the offensive. He captured the town and castle of Laugharne and threatened the Royalist garrison at Carmarthen. Cardigan castle was besieged, and capitulated on 29 December 1644. In the spring of 1645 Gerard was sent back to west Wales. He surprised and defeated Laugharne, who was engaged in besieging Newcastle Emlyn. This set-back compelled Laugharne to withdraw the remnant of his forces once more to Pembroke and Tenby. Gerard failed to reduce these and finally withdrew from Wales after the king's defeat at Naseby (14 June 1645). The forces he had left in the county were engaged by Laugharne on Colby Moor (1 August 1645) and completely routed. He entered Haverfordwest on the following day. The smaller garrisons were easily reduced, and Laugharne was in a position to play a decisive part in a wider field. With the surrender of Aberystwyth castle (12 April 1646) all west Wales was in his hands. In February 1646 he had gone to the relief of Cardiff castle, where the governor, Edward Pritchard, was threatened by a rising of the Royalist gentry of the Vale of

Glamorgan. In recognition of his services Laugharne was appointed commander-in-chief in the counties of Pembroke, Cardigan, Carmarthen, and Glamorgan. He was also awarded the forfeited estates of John Barlow of Slebech. There was further trouble in the Vale of Glamorgan in June 1647, but by his prompt action Laugharne successfully suppressed an incipient rising. As the war reached a conclusion the differences between the military leaders and the county gentry came to a head. There were charges that excessive exactions had been made in money and in kind. It was even rumoured, apparently maliciously, that Laugharne was in touch with Royalist agents. To meet these allegations he was summoned to London and was there 'en parole' when a series of events in west Wales led to the renewal of the war. The decision to disband supernumeraries provoked resistance. [John Poyer](#) refused to surrender Pembroke to colonel Fleming, the Parliamentary commissioner sent down to supervise the disbanding. His action encouraged some of Laugharne's men to follow his lead. [Rice Powell](#) assumed command of the dissentients and rapidly advanced towards Cardiff, having been joined by Royalists in his march. To counter this move colonel Thomas Horton, of the New Model army, threw his forces between him and Cardiff and S. Fagans. There Laugharne, having left London, found [Powell](#) on 4 May. He disputed Horton's authority to enter within his command; but he must have realised that he was now in rebellion against the Parliament. Battle was joined on 8 May and Laugharne's forces were routed, he himself being wounded. He took refuge once more in Pembroke, where he organised a stubborn resistance to the siege conducted by Oliver Cromwell in person, in the vain hope of help from the exiled prince Charles. The garrison was so reduced that at length Laugharne was forced to surrender on 11 July 1648. He was tried with [Poyer](#) and [Powell](#) by court martial and sentenced to death. The penalty was inflicted on [Poyer](#) only; Laugharne was subsequently pardoned. On 6 November 1649, he was allowed to compound for his delinquency at a fine of £712. This was remitted on 25 December 1655, in view of the debts he had incurred for the Parliamentary cause. At the Restoration he was elected member of Parliament for Pembroke borough and granted a small pension. He stated in a petition of 19 March 1662 that he had lost £37,650 during the war. Laugharne married Anne, daughter of [Sir Thomas Button](#). She survived him, and on 4 August 1677 sought help from the king on the ground of her straitened circumstances.

Author

Sir James Frederick Rees, (1883 - 1967)

Sources

John Roland Phillips, *Memoirs of the Civil War in Wales and the Marches, 1642–1649* (London 1874)

A. L. Leach, *History of the Civil War (1642-49) in Pembrokeshire and on its borders* (London 1937)

J. F. Rees, *Studies in Welsh History collected papers, lectures and reviews* (Cardiff 1947)

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Rowland Laugharne](#)

Additional Links

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