

POYER, JOHN (died 1649), mayor of Pembroke

Name: John Poyer
Date of death: 1649
Spouse: Elizabeth Poyer (née Button)
Gender: Male
Occupation: mayor
Area of activity: Business and Industry; Public and Social Service, Civil Administration
Author: James Frederick Rees

A leading merchant of Pembroke town. He was active in local affairs and in command of the trained band. On 17 February 1642 he wrote to **Sir Hugh Owen** of Orielton, Member of Parliament for Pembroke borough, to draw his attention to the undefended state of Pembrokeshire in view of the insurrection in Ireland, whence refugees were arriving daily in the county. Later in the year, on the outbreak of the Civil War, he organized the defence of Pembroke town and castle, forcibly retaining the office of mayor and becoming governor of the castle. He was joined by **Rowland Laugharne** and **Rice Powell**, and together with them vigorously maintained the Parliamentary cause. When the Royalist commander in west Wales, **Richard Vaughan, 2nd earl of Carbery**, entered Pembrokeshire in August 1643, he failed to induce Pembroke to capitulate. It became the base for the Parliamentary offensive when opportunity offered and a retreat when difficulties arose. Poyer himself is only recorded as having been the leader in one attack when he captured Carew castle (10 March 1644). His activities involved him in serious disputes with the members of the county committee, some of whom he accused of being half-hearted in the cause. He was in London in December 1645 defending himself against charges of not giving a proper account of moneys he had received and other allegations made by his opponents. He appears to have remained there for several months. When general hostilities ceased in 1647 Parliament decided to reduce its military forces by disbanding supernumeraries. The men who had fought in west Wales were included in this order. General Fairfax sent one colonel Fleming to take over the governorship of Pembroke castle from Poyer as part of this policy. Poyer refused to hand it over. He seems to have regarded the possession of it as an important asset in view of his quarrels with members of the county committee and the claims he was putting forward for payment for disbursements and arrears. Fleming showed a willingness to treat with him; but Poyer proved obdurate. There is no doubt that he was encouraged in his defiance by Royalist agents. He was in touch with prince Charles and received a commission from him issued at S. Germain's on 3 April 1648. Poyer's action led to a widespread opposition to disbandment and **Rice Powell**, in the absence of **Rowland Laugharne**, took command of the resistance. After the defeat of the combined ex-Parliamentary and Royalist forces at St. Fagans (8 May 1648) a remnant escaped to Pembroke where the siege was conducted by Oliver Cromwell. It did not surrender until 11 July, when the garrison was greatly reduced and there was no prospect of help from the Royalists. Poyer, together with **Rowland Laugharne** and **Rice Powell**, was condemned to death; but lots were drawn as to which should be executed. Poyer drew the fatal blank and was shot at Covent Garden on the morning of 25 April 1649. His wife, Elizabeth, petitioned Charles II for a grant on the ground that her husband had lost £8,000 in the Royal cause. She was given a sum of £3,000, payable at the rate of £300 a year.

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

Lloyd Bowen, *John Poyer: the Civil Wars in Pembrokeshire and the British Revolutions* (University of Wales Press 2020)

Wikipedia Article: [John Poyer](#)

Additional Links

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