

## ROUNDAABOUT RINGWOOD & FORDINGBRIDGE

# NOW and THEN

**S**trangely for a house with such an important part in Ringwood's story, there are few old photographs showing a full face-on view of Monmouth House in West Street.

The ones shown here were taken about 20 years ago, when the front of the house was painted dark brown. This facade was put on to a much earlier building probably sometime in the first half of the 18th century, judging by the typically Georgian sash windows and door-case pediment. (Today the only difference is a change in the colour scheme.) A survey of the Manor of Ringwood Rectory of 1768 records it as *'One cottage now a good Tenement with a brick front containing three rooms on a Floor'*, proving that the front had been added before that date. The owners were the Provost and Scholars of Kings College Cambridge, who had been granted the Rectory of Ringwood by King Henry VI in 1445, including the church properties and tithes.

**Monmouth House**



questioned at Ringwood vicarage, which in those days was situated close to the church. It makes sense that Monmouth was then housed in a Rectory property for two nights, while it was being decided what to do with him next. From Monmouth House, the Duke wrote a pathetic letter to his uncle King James II, begging for mercy, but his pleas fell on deaf ears. He was taken to London, where he was executed on Tower Hill outside the Tower of London on 15th July 1685, not on Tower Green as is incorrectly stated on the plaque on Monmouth House.

A correspondent writing in 'Notes and Queries' in 1852 adds an interesting insight into Monmouth's treatment whilst held in Ringwood. He wrote that, *"My mother, who was a native of Ringwood, used to relate that her grandmother was one of the spectators when the royal prisoner came out to take horse. The old lady never failed to recount how he rejected any assistance in mounting, though his arms were pinioned, but placing his foot in the stirrup, sprang lightly into his saddle to the admiration of all observers."* From this we can infer that Monmouth must have been treated well enough in Ringwood to recover something of his old spirit, which had always made him so attractive to the ladies. Obviously his Errol Flynn-style of mounting his horse made a life-long impression on this young Ringwood girl, confirming his reputation as a glamorous and gallant but ultimately doomed young royal.

Monmouth House rear



The rear view photograph of the house shows the timber framing of the much older building, perhaps dating back to the 16th century. It was to this cottage, probably looking rather like the Old Cottage next door, that the Duke of Monmouth, the illegitimate son of Charles II, was reputed to have been taken after his capture following the unsuccessful Monmouth Rebellion in 1685. He had been found in an exhausted state crouching in a ditch under an ash tree, and had been taken to Ringwood to be