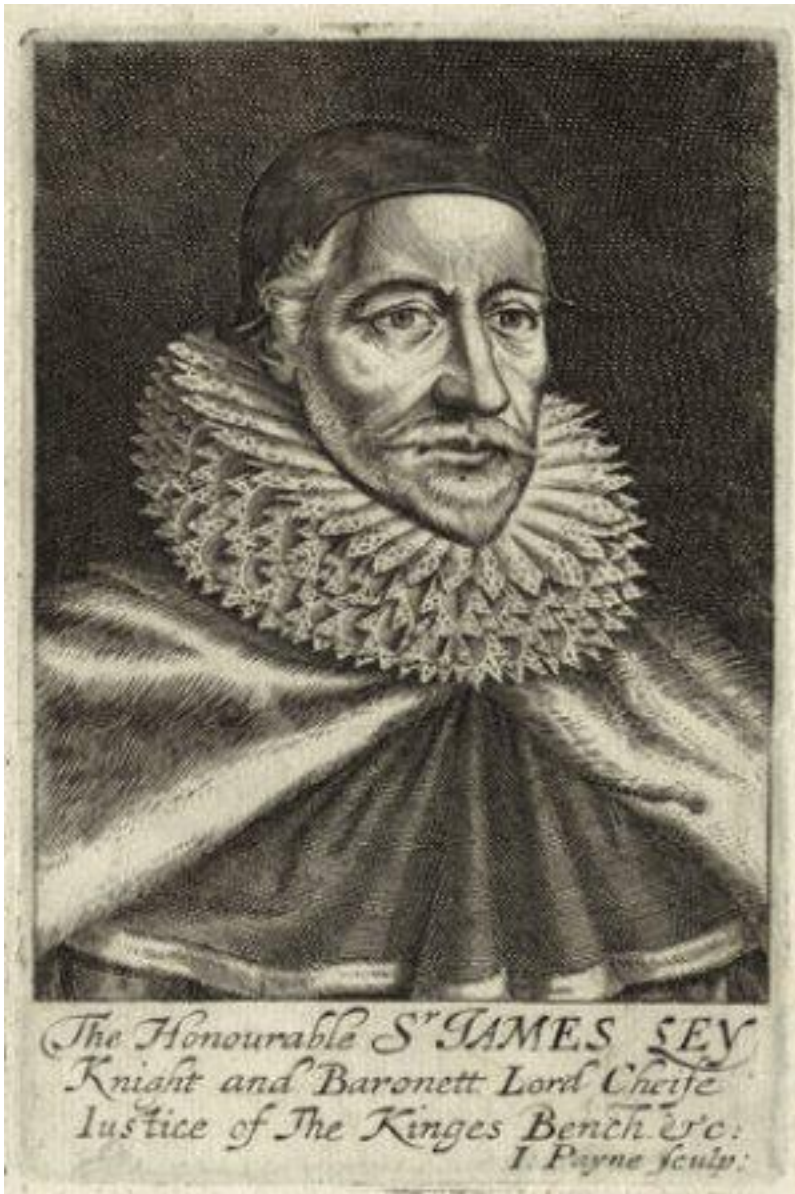


James Ley, 1st Earl of Marlborough (circa 1552 – 1629)

James Ley was a younger son of a the soldier and landowner Henry Ley (died 1574), of Teffont Evas, Wiltshire, where he was born in about 1552. He attended both Cambridge and Oxford Universities, graduating from Brasenose College in 1574. He then trained as a barrister, becoming a bencher of Lincolns Inn and reader of Furnival's Inn. He married Mary Pettie, of Stoke Talmage, Oxfordshire, by whom

he had two sons and eight daughters, including the poet Lady Hester Pulter.



He was Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench in Ireland and then in England; he was an English Member of Parliament and was Lord High Treasurer from 1624 to 1628. On 31 December 1624, James I created him Baron Ley, of Ley in the County of Devon, and on 5 February 1626, Charles I created him Earl of Marlborough. From July 1628 until December 1628 he was Lord President of the Council. Both titles became extinct upon the death of the 4th Earl of Marlborough in 1679.

He was elected as Member of Parliament for Westbury in 1597. In 1603, he was appointed a judge on the Carmarthen circuit in June 1603. That November he became a

serjeant at law; in December James I knighted him, before sending him to Dublin as Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench for Ireland. He also served on the Privy Council of Ireland. Amongst other things, he caused the English Book of Common

Prayer to be translated into Irish, and sought to enforce Protestant church attendance on Irish lords.

He was called back to England in 1608, ostensibly to brief the English Privy Council on the settlement of Ulster. He was then appointed to the lucrative post of Attorney-General of the Court of Wards. Further promotion came slowly. He was member of Parliament for Westbury again in 1609-10 and for Bath in 1614, being made a baronet in 1619. In 1621 he was made an English judge at Westminster, when he became Lord Chief Justice. He was again returned for Westbury, but was required to preside in the House of Lords following the disgrace of Francis Bacon, though he was not made Lord Chancellor.

Late in 1624, he replaced Cranfield as Lord High Treasurer, also being sworn as a Privy Councillor. He was created Baron Ley, and then in 1626 Earl of Marlborough. His treasurership was a difficult one due to Charles I's financial difficulties. He retired from this in 1628, and then briefly held the post of Lord President of the Council. However he soon retired to Lincolns Inn and died the following March.

Ley was a founder member of the Society of Antiquaries. None of his works on legal or antiquarian subjects were published in his lifetime, but his grandson James Ley, 3rd Earl of Marlborough arranged for the publication of his treatise on wardship in 1642, and a collection of law reports in 1659. Four of his papers to the Society of Antiquaries were published by Thomas Hearne in his *Collection of Curious Discourses* (1720).

Original text found on [wikipedia](#)