The Historical Journal, 43, 3 (2000), pp. 647–668 Printed in the United Kingdom
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JOHN LOCKE AND THE RYE HOUSE PLOT

PHILIP MILTON
University of Leicester

ABSTRACT. *In recent years it has become widely accepted that John Locke was involved, perhaps deeply involved, in the Rye House plot of 1682–3. This article takes another look at the evidence for this, and in particular at Richard Ashcraft's claims that he was closely involved with many of the plotters, that he attended some of their meetings, that his letters contain coded references to their activities, and that he hastily left London immediately they realized they had been betrayed. These claims are found wanting. Locke was probably aware that Shaftesbury and others were planning (or at least talking about) an insurrection, but there is little to indicate that he was directly involved. An analysis of his movements during the autumn of 1682 suggests if anything that he was deliberately keeping out of the way. There is even less reason for thinking that he was involved in plans to assassinate Charles II.*

I

About the end of August 1683 John Locke inconspicuously left England for an exile that was to last over five years. Only two months earlier the Rye House plot had been made public, and several of those implicated had already been executed; others were in prison or had fled abroad. It was a time when, in the words of the dean of Christ Church, 'innocent men begin to fear least the really guilty should attone for treason by perjury and revive the old trade of evidence, laying their plot at their neighbours dores'.[1] Innocent or not, Locke felt apprehensive. According to one of his earliest biographers, Jean Le Clerc, 'Mr *Locke* did not think himself any longer safe in *England*; for tho' they could not hurt him according to a due Form of Law, yet 'twas possible they might Imprison him, and let him lye there some Time, to the endangering his Health and Life.'[2] Le Clerc's source was Lady Masham, who sent him this account only two months after Locke's death:

> The times growing more troublesome to those of my Lord Shaftesbury's principles as to public matters, and especially dangerous for such as had been intimate with him, Mr. Locke with reason apprehended himself not to be very safe in England: for though he knew there was no just matter of accusation against him, yet it was not unlikely, as

[1] John Fell to Lord Hatton, 12 July 1683, *Correspondence of the family of Hatton*, ed. E. M. Thompson (Camden Society, 1878), II, p. 28.

[2] Jean Le Clerc, *An account of the life and writings of Mr John Locke* … (2nd edn, London, 1713), p. 19.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X99001144 Published online by Cambridge University Press

things then were, that he might come to be questioned; and should he on any pretence have been put under confinement, though for no very long time, yet was such the state of his health, that his life must have been thereby much endangered. On this account therefore he thought it most advisable for him to withdraw.[3]

Lady Masham probably heard this from Locke himself. But though Locke may have been willing to acknowledge privately that he had feared for his safety, he denied any wrongdoing. Shortly after his expulsion from Christ Church in November 1684, he sent an impassioned letter to the earl of Pembroke rebutting the various allegations that had been made against him and assuring Pembroke that he had never done 'any thing undutifully against his Majestie or the government'. He had, he said, gone abroad for reasons of health and to find time to write.[4] Pembroke clearly accepted this, and nine months later he wrote to assure Locke that he had 'so satisfied the King [James II] that he has assurd me he will never believe any ill reports of you'.[5]

H. R. Fox Bourne, Locke's nineteenth-century biographer, was sure of his innocence. 'It is certain', he wrote 'that he had nothing to do with the later plots in which Shaftesbury had been engaged. It is also certain that he had nothing to do with the plotting now going on under the leadership of Lord Russell and Algernon Sydney.'[6] Twentieth-century scholars have been less certain. One reason has been Peter Laslett's redating of the *Two treatises of government*. So long as it was believed that the *Second treatise* had been written in 1689 to justify a revolution successfully accomplished, there were few grounds for suspecting that Locke had been engaged in seditious activities before he left for Holland; but once it was realized that the *Second treatise* had largely been written before he left, it naturally began to be wondered whether he had also been involved in plans for resistance. Suspicions that he may have were reinforced by an examination of his personal papers. Nothing openly incriminating was uncovered, but while Laslett was preparing his edition of the *Two treatises* he noticed in Lock's journal two entries mentioning visits to Cassiobury, the country seat of the earl of Essex.[7] One was in September 1682, the other in April 1683; both were at a time when discussions of resistance were under way. Locke, Laslett concluded, 'went much further towards revolution and treason than his earlier biographers knew, anxious as they were to present him as a man of unspotted personal and political virtue'.[8]

Many recent scholars have not been particularly anxious to present Locke in this light. Chief among them has been Richard Ashcraft, whose massive labours have produced a picture of Locke very unlike the respectable figure

[3] Maurice Cranston, *John Locke, a biography* (London, 1957), p. 229n, quoting Amsterdam University Library, Remonstrants' MSS J. 57a, Masham to Le Clerc, 12 Jan. 1705.
[4] *The correspondence of John Locke*, ed. E. S. de Beer (8 vols, Oxford, 1976–89), II, pp. 661–6.
[5] Ibid., II, p. 729.
[6] H. R. Fox Bourne, *The life of John Locke* (2 vols., London, 1876), I, p. 478.
[7] John Locke, *Two treatises of government*, ed. Peter Laslett (2nd edn, Cambridge, 1967), p. 32.
[8] Ibid., p. 31.

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portrayed by Fox Bourne The majority of Locke's friends, Ashcraft claimed, were 'political activists', of whom 'the overwhelming majority ... were participants in the Rye House conspiracy'.[9] So too was Locke himself. There is, Ashcraft wrote, 'not the slightest doubt in my mind that Locke was an active participant in the Rye House Conspiracy'.[10]

Ashcraft's *Revolutionary politics* was on the whole very well received – the favoured epithet was 'magisterial' – though many of his critics have argued that he gave a misleading account of Locke's social, religious, and political sympathies.[11] Nevertheless, most of these critics have conceded that he made a very plausible if not entirely conclusive case for Locke's involvement in the Rye House plot.[12] As David Wootton put it, 'There was, and is, no incontrovertible evidence of [Locke's] involvement in the Rye House Plot, but everything points to it.'[13]

II

Strictly speaking, the Rye House (or assassination) plot was a conspiracy, hatched by a small group of disaffected lawyers and ex-Cromwellian soldiers, to assassinate Charles II and the duke of York as they returned from Newmarket in March 1683. The term has, however, long been used as a convenient if inexact label for concurrent plans for an insurrection headed – nominally at least – by the duke of Monmouth. The nature and even the existence of these plots have long been the subject of controversy, and the assassination plot has even been dismissed as 'one of the great historical myths'.[14] A degree of scepticism is quite understandable: much of the evidence is vague, second-hand, inconsistent, or uncorroborated, and some of it is demonstrably untrue.[15] But when all allowances have been made, it is clear

[9] Richard Ashcraft, *Revolutionary politics and Locke's treatises of government* (Princeton, 1986), p. 379.

[10] Richard Ashcraft, 'Revolutionary politics and Locke's *Two treatises of government*', *Political Theory*, 8 (1981), p. 471.

[11] Gordon J. Schochet, 'Radical politics and Ashcraft's treatise on Locke', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 50 (1989), pp. 491–510; David McNally, 'Locke, levellers and liberty: property and democracy in the thought of the first whigs', *History of Political Thought*, 10 (1989), pp. 17–40; Mark Goldie, 'John Locke's circle and James II', *Historical Journal*, 35 (1992), pp. 557–86; David Wootton, 'John Locke and Richard Ashcraft's *Revolutionary politics*', *Political Studies*, 40 (1992), pp. 79–98; John Marshall, *John Locke: resistance, religion and responsibility* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 76–9, 262–3, 280–3.

[12] Schochet, 'Radical politics', p. 494; McNally, 'Locke, levellers and liberty', p. 18; Wootton, 'Locke and Ashcraft's *Revolutionary politics*', p. 80; Marshall, *Locke*, p. 250.

[13] John Locke, *Political writings*, ed. David Wootton (Harmondsworth, 1993), p. 21.

[14] Maurice Ashley, *John Wildman* (London, 1947), p. 239.

[15] The most important accounts are: Lord Grey's confession, London, British Library (BL), Add. MS 30277, fos. 10–29, printed in Ford, Lord Grey, *The secret history of the Rye House plot and of Monmouth's rebellion* (London, 1754); Nathaniel Wade's confession, BL, MS Harl. 6845, fos. 266–82, printed in W. M. Wigfield, *The Monmouth rebellion* (Bradford on Avon, 1980), pp. 149–71; Robert Ferguson, 'Concerning the Rye House business', PRO, SP 31/1, fos. 307–22, printed in James Ferguson, *Robert Ferguson, the plotter* (Edinburgh, 1887), pp. 409–37; Robert West's full

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that something had been going on, that some members of Monmouth's circle had discussed plans for an insurrection, and that other conspirators had discussed assassinating the king at the Rye House.

What is less clear is whether Locke was involved. If he was it would have been through the influence of his patron, the earl of Shaftesbury. Shaftesbury's involvement was never tested in court – he died five months before the plot was uncovered – but all our sources agree that he was the prime mover in such insurrectionary plans as existed in the autumn of 1682. Whether he was also behind the assassination plot is very much more open to question, but he unquestionably had close links with several of those who were.

From 1667 until his departure to France in 1675, Locke had been a full-time member of Shaftesbury's household, and though he retained his studentship at Christ Church he only appears to have revisited Oxford twice and for short periods. After his return to England in 1679 he did not resume the routine secretarial duties which had previously taken up so much of his time, and he was therefore much more able to do as he pleased. One result was that only about half of his time was spent in London – twenty-seven months out of the fifty-two between his return to England and his departure in 1683. A large and increasing part of the remainder was spent in Oxford or with James Tyrrell at Oakley – ten weeks in 1680, five months in 1681, six months in 1682.

Locke was, however, ready to help Shaftesbury when needed. In July 1680 he accompanied him to St Giles, and at the end of August he had to tell Nicholas Toinard that he would not be coming to France as hoped because he was never able to spend his time as he wished.[16] In February 1681 he busied himself arranging Shaftesbury's accommodation for the Oxford parliament, and Shaftesbury also entrusted him with the delicate task of trying to persuade two whig candidates to stand down.[17] He may well have begun work on the *Second treatise* at about this time, though it is not possible to fix an exact date.[18] His intentions are a matter of conjecture, but it is unlikely, given his past record on such matters, that he had any immediate plans for publication. Later that year, when Shaftesbury was in the Tower charged with treason, he played an important part in preparations for his defence and wrote a short tract on the selection of juries; this too remained unpublished.[19]

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confession, BL, Add. MS 38447, fos. 88–121, unprinted. The confessions of those arrested in 1683 were printed as an appendix to Thomas Sprat, *A true account and declaration of the horrid conspiracy against the late king* (London, 1685), and were reprinted in *State trials*, ed. T. B. Howell *et al*. (32 vols., London, 1811–24), ix, 365–437 (hereafter all citations are to column numbers). The fullest modern account is Richard L. Greaves, *Secrets of the kingdom: British radicals from the popish plot to the revolution of 1688–1689* (Stanford, 1992), chs. 3–5.

[16] Locke, *Correspondence*, ii, p. 236.

[17] Ibid., ii, pp. 360–6, 378.

[18] For a full discussion, see J. R. Milton, 'Dating Locke's *Second treatise*', *History of Political Thought*, 16 (1995), pp. 356–90.

[19] J. R. Milton and Philip Milton, 'Selecting the grand jury: a tract by John Locke', *Historical Journal*, 40 (1997), pp. 185–94.

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Locke spent most of the first half of 1682 in Oxford. In March, Humphrey Prideaux, a student of Christ Church, sent his friend John Ellis two letters which described in some detail Locke's mysterious comings and goings.[20] Prideaux was sure Locke was up to something, but he was unable to discover what. His letters were clearly a response to some kind of inquiry – though it is not known from whom – and are the first sign that anyone in the government was interested in Locke's activities.[21] What Locke had done to occasion this curiosity is not known, but his journal shows that the journeys which baffled Prideaux were to Oakley.[22] He returned to London on 30 May and remained there for the rest of the summer, apart from two weeks (8–22 August) in Tunbridge Wells with Edward and Mary Clarke.[23]

According to Robert Ferguson, the first steps towards an insurrection were taken about the beginning of 1682, after *quo warranto* proceedings were instituted against the City of London.[24] Shaftesbury had some preliminary discussions with the earl of Argyle, but these foundered on mutual suspicions and on the unwillingness of the English to provide the money requested.[25] Matters assumed a new urgency in June, when the government succeeded in having its nominees made sheriffs of London. For Shaftesbury in particular this was an ominous development: when the tory sheriffs took up office at the end of September he would face the prospect of a new bill being preferred to a jury selected by his political enemies. If he was to forestall this he would have to do something, and do it soon.

For the events that followed we have largely to rely on Lord Grey's confession. Shortly after midsummer, he wrote, five leading whigs – Grey himself, Shaftesbury, Monmouth, Lord Russell, and Sir Thomas Armstrong – met at Thanet House, Shaftesbury's London residence, to decide what to do next. The plan eventually agreed on was for concurrent uprisings in London, Cheshire, and the West Country. Shaftesbury would consult the leading men in the City, Russell would consult the West Country gentry, and Monmouth would go to Cheshire and sound out support there. When Monmouth returned they would fix a date for the rising.[26]

Monmouth arrived in Cheshire early in September to the usual tumultuous welcome. His progress was a calculated gesture of defiance, and his father was

[20] Humphrey Prideaux to John Ellis, 14, 19 Mar. 1682, BL, Add. MS 28929, fos. 95, 96, printed in *Letters of Humphrey Prideaux to John Ellis*, ed. E. M. Thompson (Camden Society, 1875), pp. 129, 131.

[21] The first letter was endorsed '14 Mar 1681 Locke'; there is no address and Prideaux's signature has been scribbled out. The second was endorsed '19 Mar 1681 Locke'; it was signed HP and was addressed to Ellis at the duke of Ormonde's lodgings in Whitehall.

[22] He was there on 17–20 February, 2–5 March, 7–22 March and 27–8 May: Oxford, Bodleian Library (Bodl.), MS Locke f.6, pp. 19, 33, 44, 47, 52, 62. All Locke manuscripts cited here are in the Bodleian unless otherwise indicated.

[23] MS Locke f.6, pp. 63, 83, 86.

[24] Ferguson, 'Rye House', pp. 414–15.

[25] Ibid., p. 415; Grey, *Secret history*, pp. 14–15; *State trials*, IX, 380.

[26] Grey, *Secret history*, pp. 15–17.

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suitably vexed. On 16 September a warrant was issued for his arrest and a serjeant-at-arms was dispatched north to execute it.[27] Two days later Locke went to Cassiobury, stayed two nights, and then returned to London.[28] It may be tempting to suppose that his journey was prompted by news of Monmouth's impending arrest, but confirmation of this is lacking.[29] Though he carefully recorded in his journal the mileage there and back, and made notes about crayfish and the cure of gout, he gave no indication why he went or whether Shaftesbury or anyone else accompanied him.[30]

On 20 September, the day Locke returned from Cassiobury, Monmouth was apprehended at Stafford and was taken under escort to London; Armstrong left the party that night and hurried on ahead, arriving in London the following afternoon.[31] The next morning, according to Grey, he and Armstrong went to see Shaftesbury, whom they found sitting in his garden with Col. John Rumsey. Armstrong described Monmouth's enthusiastic reception in Cheshire and told Shaftesbury that Monmouth wished to know whether he should allow himself to be taken to London or whether he should escape, return to Cheshire, and start an insurrection there and then. Shaftesbury promised to consult some of his friends in the City and to meet again that evening. Armstrong had to rejoin Monmouth that afternoon, but it was agreed that Grey would stay behind for the meeting and that Monmouth would remain at St Albans, feigning sickness if necessary, until Grey returned.[32]

At seven that evening Shaftesbury, Grey, and Russell met at Southampton House, Russell's London residence. Shaftesbury was much in favour of pressing ahead and, if Grey's account can be believed, claimed to have had several thousand men at Wapping ready to rise at his command. Russell demurred, pointing out that no provision had been made for arms, ammunition, or money, and that no declaration had been prepared, let alone agreed on. He and Shaftesbury argued heatedly and at length, but neither could convince the other. As Grey was leaving Shaftesbury took him aside, told him that Russell was too wary and timorous, and tried to persuade him into deceiving Monmouth that everyone had agreed that he should return to Cheshire. Grey refused, much to Shaftesbury's anger. He then rode to St Albans and gave Monmouth an account of everything that had been said, omitting only Shaftesbury's suggested deception.[33]

[27] Narcissus Luttrell, *A brief historical relation of state affairs* (6 vols., Oxford, 1875), I, p. 222.

[28] MS Locke f.6, pp. 91–2.

[29] Laslett (Locke, *Two treatises*, p. 32) and Ashcraft (*Revolutionary politics*, p. 355) both stated that Locke went there on 15 September – i.e. before orders were given for Monmouth's arrest. Locke spent 15 September in London, MSS Locke f.6, p. 90; c.1, pp. 168, 175.

[30] Ashcraft (*Revolutionary politics*, p. 355) confused this meeting with two others, one at Cassiobury in October and the other at an unknown location not long before Shaftesbury fled in November. For details of these, see K. H. D. Haley, *The first earl of Shaftesbury* (Oxford, 1968), p. 715; *Burnet's history of my own time*, ed. Osmund Airy (2 vols., Oxford, 1900), II, p. 351.

[31] Serjeant Ramsey to Sir Leoline Jenkins, 20 Sept. 1682, PRO, SP 29/420/89; Ramsey to Owen Wynne, 21 Sept. 1682, PRO, SP 29/420/94.

[32] Grey, *Secret history*, pp. 18–20.

[33] Ibid., pp. 22–5.

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There is nothing to indicate that Locke played any part in these events. He was in London, but all his journal shows is that he spent 22 September writing letters, sorting out his financial affairs, and making arrangements for sending various of his possessions to Oxford. He also obtained payment from Lady Shaftesbury for a book – John Kettlewell's *The measures of Christian obedience* – which he had purchased for her husband in June.[34] This suggests that Shaftesbury was engaged elsewhere, which fits Grey's account.

On the following morning, 23 September, Monmouth left St Albans for London, where he was greeted on his arrival by Shaftesbury, Russell, and Essex.[35] Locke was not there to welcome him. That morning he left for Oxford, and the fact that he made the journey in a single day indicates that he must have made an early start.[36] He did not return to London until after Shaftesbury had fled to Holland.

Shaftesbury's plans do not appear to have been affected by Locke's departure. Shortly after his return to London, Monmouth accompanied Grey and Russell to Thanet House, where, according to Grey, Shaftesbury told them that they should now concentrate their efforts on an uprising in London. When Russell again raised objections and advised Shaftesbury to be more patient, Shaftesbury rounded on him, telling him that patience would be their undoing and that if they were unwilling to act he would do so by himself. Monmouth responded by asking him where his invisible army of ten thousand was to be found. Shaftesbury refused to say, but he told them that 'he should see them at Whitehall gates before he was many days older'. On this acrimonious note the meeting broke up, with Monmouth and the others concluding that Shaftesbury was 'half distracted, but not so mad as to rise by himself'.[37]

At the end of September the new sheriffs took up office and Shaftesbury went into hiding. Early in October he summoned Lord Howard of Escrick and (if Howard's subsequent testimony can be believed) told him that he had in London ten thousand brisk boys and a thousand horse all ready to rise whenever he held up his finger. He attributed Monmouth's 'artificial dilatoriness' to a private agreement between him and his father, spurned his offer of a meeting to discuss matters, and told Howard that he would from now onwards rely on the 'honest brisk party in the city'.[38]

When Monmouth heard this he told Howard that he knew nothing of Shaftesbury's plans and thought that he was mad.[39] Howard agreed: 'Says I, to the duke, this man is mad, and his madness will prove fatal to us all; he hath been in a fright in the Tower, and carries these fears about him that cloud his understanding; I think his judgement hath deserted him.'[40] Others thought

[34] MS Locke f.6, pp. 65, 92–4.

[35] Serjeant Ramsay's memorandum, PRO, SP 29/420/116. [36] MS Locke f.6, p. 94.

[37] Grey, *Secret history*, pp. 25–7. According to Burnet, when Shaftesbury found that Essex and Russell would not support him he 'railed at them in his way, which was very foule: he said that Monmouth was reconciled to the Court, that Essex was a fearfull covetous man and that Russell was governed by him', BL, Add. MS 63057B, p. 140. Burnet probably heard this from Essex.

[38] *State trials*, IX, 431–3, 604. [39] Ibid., IX, 432, 605, 1067. [40] Ibid., IX, 606.

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the same. According to Algernon Sidney, 'The duke of Monmouth and himself [Howard] thought him to be mad. I could say much of the earl of Essex his thoughts of the same kind.'[41] Essex later told Burnet that he found Shaftesbury 'much broke in his thoughts'.[42]

It is against this background that we need to consider the most contentious issue in Shaftesbury's career: his possible involvement in the assassination plot. The origins of this plot are obscure – none of those involved was in any hurry to claim paternity – but it seems from the outset to have been a rival to the insurrection plot; certainly there was no attempt to co-ordinate them. There seem to have been five ringleaders: John Rumsey, whom we have already encountered in Shaftesbury's garden; Richard Goodenough, a former undersheriff of London; Robert West, a barrister; Richard Rumbold, the lessee of the Rye House; and Robert Ferguson, nonconformist minister and pamphleteer.

Ferguson provided the chief evidence implicating Shaftesbury. Shortly after Monmouth's return from Cheshire, he wrote, he went to see Shaftesbury, who told him that he was no longer willing to trust Monmouth, 'of whose correspondence with his Father he had an indubitable proof'; that this 'had made him think of a more compendious way of Redeeming the nation than that of an Insurrection'; and that 'he was resolved to try, whether it was not possible to save and deliver the nation by a few, seeing there was no hope of effecting it by united Councils and a combined strength'. A little later, while Shaftesbury was in hiding in his house, Ferguson discovered – or so he said – that this meant 'the cutting of the King and Duke of York by an assult'.[43]

It is difficult to know how much of this to believe.[44] Corroboration of a sort – admittedly only hearsay – was provided by West, who after his arrest in June 1683 told his interrogators that he believed the assassination 'was projected and abetted by the late earl of Shaftsbury'.[45] At Thomas Walcot's trial in July he testified that Walcot had told him that Shaftesbury 'had another design upon the king and the duke, as they came from Newmarket in October last'.[46] Others apparently heard similar rumours. At Russell's trial in July 1683, Howard said that about 17 or 18 October he told Monmouth 'that there was some dark intimation, as if there might be some attempt upon the king's person'. Monmouth, he said, was appalled and 'struck his breast with a great emotion of spirit, and said, God-so, kill the king! I will never suffer that.'[47]

This sounds plausible. Motivated though he was by thwarted ambition and wounded pride, Monmouth would never have contemplated murdering his

[41] Ibid., IX, 928.
[42] Burnet, *Own time*, II, p. 351.
[43] Ferguson, 'Rye House', pp. 420, 422.
[44] For very different views, see Haley, *Shaftesbury*, pp. 719–20; Greaves, *Secrets*, pp. 115–17.
[45] *State trials*, IX, 411.
[46] Ibid., IX, 539; BL, Add. MS 38447, fo. 90r.
[47] *State trials*, IX, 608.

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own father. Those who were advocating regicide understood this very well. Indeed, according to Ferguson, Shaftesbury 'accounted it needful to raise such a hatred in the people of the D. of Monmouth as that he should never be able either to arrive at the Throne, nor to get possession of a power, whereby to be in a condition to punish what had been perpetrated upon his Father & Uncle'.[48]

Whatever the truth of this, it is clear that nothing was done or even attempted. On 21 October the king returned unscathed to Whitehall. Although this meant that plans for an assassination would have to be shelved for the time being, Monmouth still remained apprehensive that, as Russell put it, 'my lord Shaftsbury and some hot men would undo us all'.[49] He therefore convened a meeting of the conspirators at the house of Thomas Shepherd, a City wine merchant.

The authorities first learned of the meeting from West, who said that Rumsey had told him that the managers of the general insurrection had one or more meetings at Shepherd's house.[50] When Rumsey was questioned he said that about the beginning of November Shaftesbury had asked him to go to Shepherd's and tell those present – Monmouth, Russell, Grey, Armstrong, and Ferguson were named – that it was high time that they came to a decision about the projected rising. Their response, Rumsey said, was discouraging: Ferguson told the company that although John Trenchard had earlier promised to raise a thousand foot and two or three hundred horse at four hours' notice, he now said that much more time would be needed. When Shaftesbury heard this, Rumsey said, he resolved to leave England.[51]

Shepherd, who was interrogated separately, gave a very different account. According to him there were two meetings. Some time before Shaftesbury left for Holland – Shepherd gave no more specific date – Monmouth and the others met at his house to discuss how to seize the king's guards. At a second meeting – also undated – those present were told that Monmouth, Grey, and Armstrong had been to look at the guards and had found them unprepared. Shepherd did not mention Trenchard.[52]

Grey provided yet another version of events. According to him there were two meetings. At the first – vaguely dated to the end of October or the beginning of November – Ferguson (who did most of the talking) began by outlining Shaftesbury's plans for concurrent insurrections in Cheshire, the West Country, and London. Shaftesbury, he said, had completed his plans in London but was dissatisfied with what little progress had been made elsewhere and warned the others that he would soon be forced to act without them. Monmouth and Russell professed support, but observed that though they had heard much of Shaftesbury's ten thousand brisk boys they did not know where to find them. Despite this, detailed plans were agreed upon and a firm date was

[48] Ferguson, 'Rye House', pp. 420, 422.
[49] *State trials*, IX, 692.
[50] Ibid., IX, 404.
[51] Ibid., IX, 380.
[52] Ibid., IX, 372–3.

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fixed for the uprising: Sunday week, 19 November. Trenchard was to go to the West Country to make preparations.[53]

Grey also provided a rather sketchy account of a second meeting, held three or four days before the planned uprising. Once more the same persons were present. Monmouth reported that he had been to look at the guards and had found them unprepared, but he had also to tell everyone that Trenchard could not be ready for another two or three weeks. The rising was therefore postponed until more could be known.[54]

These accounts are not easily reconciled. Rumsey kept changing his testimony and could never be pinned down as to whether he had attended one meeting or two.[55] Ferguson only mentioned one meeting.[56] Shepherd stuck to his account of two meetings, but he subsequently told Russell that 'during the trial he was under such a confusion, that he scarce knew what he said'.[57] Russell went to the block insisting that he had only been present at one meeting.[58] One thing is certain: if there was a second meeting three or four days before the planned uprising, Grey cannot himself have been present. On 6 November he was committed to the King's Bench prison, charged with abducting his sister-in-law, Lady Henrietta Berkeley; on 14 November he failed to obtain bail, and he was only released after his trial on 23 November.[59] It would appear that his account of the second meeting was fabricated from the testimony of Rumsey and Shepherd.

There probably was some kind of gathering at Shepherd's at which plans for an insurrection were discussed, and if Grey was present it must have been held before 6 November. There may have been another meeting, but if there was it was inconclusive, and the scheduled date for the insurrection passed without incident. By this time Shaftesbury had realized that nothing would ever be done and that it was time for him to escape while he still could. Even his friends were relieved to see him go. Before leaving he had a final meeting with Essex, who later told Burnet that 'he was much broke in his thoughts: his notions were wild and impracticable: and he was glad he was gone out of England: but that he had done them already a great deal of mischief, and would have done more if he had stayed'.[60] According to West, he left on the night of 19 November.[61] Ferguson and Walcot accompanied him.

If Locke was in contact with Shaftesbury during this time, no evidence of it has survived. There were, however, some people in London who wished to hear from him; for late in October Edward Clarke wrote to let him know that

> I find your Friends in the City are verie desierouse of your Company, *and the Good Lady hath Spoken to Lame Thomas to write to you about it. But upon what Politique Reason Hee hath*

[53] Grey, *Secret history*, pp. 28–35. [54] Ibid., pp. 38–9. [55] *State trials*, IX, 597, 602.
[56] Ferguson, 'Rye House', pp. 427–8. [57] Burnet, *Own time*, II, p. 373.
[58] *State trials*, IX, 601, 615.
[59] Luttrell, *Brief relation*, I, pp. 234–5; Admiralty, Greenwich Hospital newsletters, PRO, Adm. 77, 2, nos. 59, 60; London, Dr Williams's Library, MS Morrice P, pp. 343, 344.
[60] Burnet, *Own time*, II, p. 351. [61] BL, Add. MS 38847, fo. 94r.

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deferred it I know not, and doe doubt Hee hath not done prudently therein, Because I have reason to Believe that All circumstances considered, They have now as much need as Ever of the best Advise and Assistance of theire Wisest and Truest Friends, in which Number I am sure you deserve the first Place.[62]

According to Ashcraft, the friends in the City were the conspirators and the letter was sent some time after their first meeting at Shepherd's.[63] It is, however, unlikely that this meeting was held as early as 26 October, the date of Clarke's letter; and it would appear from the passage italicized, which Ashcraft carefully excised, that Locke's friends in the City were the countess of Shaftesbury, Thomas Stringer, and other members of their circle. Lady Shaftesbury was doubtless concerned about the fate of her husband, but it is unlikely that she was involved in the plot.

It is hard to tell what Locke was doing during this period; none of his letters survive and his journal reveals little. Prideaux was still keeping an eye on him, but now he found nothing suspicious to report:

> John Lock lives very quietly with us, and not a word ever drops from his mouth that discovers any thing of his heart within, now his master is fled I suppose we shall have him all togeather, he seems to be a man of very good converse, and that we have of him with content as for what else he is he keeps it to himselfe and therefore troubles not us with it nor we him.[64]

It looks as though Locke was keeping his head down. Much of his time was spent at Oakley: he was there from 29 September to 11 October and (except for the night of 27–8 October) from 20 October to 8 November. The rest of his time was spent in Oxford. He returned to London on 5 December, some two weeks after Shaftesbury had fled.[65]

III

After Shaftesbury's departure the insurrection conspiracy languished for a while; but in the new year Lord Howard, acting it appears on his own initiative, brought matters to the attention of Algernon Sidney. Sidney had never been a member of Shaftesbury's circle; they disliked each other and he had expressly been excluded from the conspiracy at Shaftesbury's insistence.[66] Howard provided him with a résumé of events, and they agreed (or so Howard subsequently claimed) to form a council to pursue the matter. This initial agreement, Howard said, was made about the middle of January. Between ten days and three weeks after this there was a meeting at John Hampden's house, which Howard also dated to about the middle of January. Monmouth, Russell,

[62] Locke, *Correspondence*, II, p. 556, italics added.
[63] Ashcraft, *Revolutionary politics*, p. 385.
[64] Prideaux to Ellis, 24 Oct. 1682, BL, Add. MS 28929, fo. 100, *Letters of Humphrey Prideaux*, p. 134. It was addressed to Ellis at the duke of Ormonde's lodgings in Whitehall and was endorsed '24 Oct. 82 Locke'.
[65] MS Locke f.6, pp. 94, 95, 97, 100, 107.
[66] *State trials*, IX, 928, 1069.

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Sidney, Essex, Howard, and Hampden were present. Between ten days and three weeks later there was a second meeting, this time at Russell's house, at which it was agreed that someone should be sent to Scotland to open negotiations. Sidney proposed Aaron Smith. Four or five days later Howard visited Sidney's house and was shown some gold Sidney was planning to give to Smith for his journey; Smith left soon afterwards, and three weeks later Sidney reported that he was in Newcastle.[67]

Howard's dates do not add up, and Jonathan Scott has plausibly argued that the meeting at Hampden's was a fabrication.[68] It does appear, however, that there was a meeting at Russell's, and it probably took place towards the end of January.[69] Locke does not appear to have been involved. On 17 January he went to Clapham, where Shaftesbury's young grandson was being looked after, spent the next week ill in bed, and was still there on the 26th when news arrived of Shaftesbury's death; he did not return to London until 8 February.[70]

After news of Shaftesbury's death reached England, Stringer accompanied his widow to St Giles to make arrangements for the funeral. On 12 February he wrote to tell Locke that 'My Lady thanks you very kindly for your friendshipp and readynesse to doe her service at this time of her great affliction … [and] doth own exceeding great obligations to mr Clarke for his kinde offer to come out of Somersettshire hether.'[71] Ashcraft thought that the lady was really Monmouth and that Clarke was volunteering on his behalf.[72] This is far-fetched: Clarke was one of the trustees of Shaftesbury's estate,[73] and the lady was unquestionably the dowager countess.

As this letter indicates, Clarke was in Somerset at the time. His wife and children remained in London under Locke's care. On 20 February Locke wrote to let him know that his daughter would be placed in the hands of a nurse. Two days later he informed him that

> The child is thriven since wee saw it there, but yet your Lady has resolvd to put it into Nurse Trents hands to morrow … Tis agreed that Nurse Edeling has very little or noe milk and Nurse Trent plenty soe that if sucking agrees with her there she may have it. and if Feeding does better Nurse Trent can doe that as well as the other.[74]

Some readers may be surprised to find Locke discussing such matters, but he was a physician and was giving advice in that capacity. There is no need to follow Ashcraft's claim that Nurse Trent was really John Trenchard and that Locke was telling Clarke 'that Trenchard had "plenty of milk", or support, around Taunton, which, if it could be mustered, would be vital to the success

[67] Ibid, IX, 434–5, 609–10, 849–52, 1069–72.

[68] Jonathan Scott, *Algernon Sidney and the Restoration crisis, 1677–1683* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 283–4.

[69] Monmouth was in Chichester from 3 to 22 February: Jenkins to Carleton, 6 Feb. 1683, PRO, SP 44/68, p. 200; Jenkins to L'Estrange, 21 Feb. 1683, PRO, SP 29/422/91. At Hampden's trial evidence was produced that Smith was in Newcastle by 15 February, *State trials*, IX, 1075.

[70] MS Locke f.7, pp. 3, 8; Locke, *Correspondence*, II, p. 576.

[71] Locke, *Correspondence*, II, p. 577.

[72] Ashcraft, *Revolutionary politics*, pp. 385–6.

[73] Haley, *Shaftesbury*, p. 727.

[74] Locke, *Correspondence*, II, pp. 582–3.

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of the revolution (''the child'')'.[75] Clarke lived seven miles from Taunton, and if he had been involved in the conspiracy he would have known far better than Locke how much support Trenchard had thereabouts. Nurse Trent, it should be noted, was not a fictitious person: she was employed by the Clarke family for many years, and there are other references to her in Locke's letters from Holland.[76]

While Locke was thus preoccupied, others were contemplating a renewed attempt on the life of the king. On 21 February, Ash Wednesday, Ferguson returned from Holland.[77] Two days later he had a meeting with Armstrong, who told him that the assassination plot was being revived. Shortly afterwards he obtained a meeting with Rumsey and West, who told him of their exasperation with the slowness of the plans for a general insurrection. None of the Scots, they complained, had arrived, and no money had yet been provided. They therefore concluded, according to Ferguson, that 'there remained nothing practicable, but the Lopping point, meaning thereby the cutting off the King and Duke'.[78]

As before, the chosen venue was to be the Rye House. Rumbold, however, was much cooler about the whole idea than he had been in October: then he had required only twenty men; now he demanded forty or fifty.[79] It proved impossible to find this number or anything like it. Josiah Keeling, who later betrayed the plot to the authorities, could himself only name three, all tradesmen from Wapping.[80] James Holloway, a Bristol merchant recruited for the insurrection plot, said that he had never heard of more than five or six in favour of an assassination, which, he said, 'was carried on by them contrary to the knowledge, or approbation of those who managed the general design'.[81] Ferguson said that he had never heard of above six or seven who were for an assassination, several of whom were disliked by the others.[82] Even West could only name five willing to carry it out.[83]

Most of the insurrection plotters were vehemently opposed to any plans for an assassination. Holloway called it 'a most cowardly dishonourable action, besides the basest sin of murder'.[84] Walcot 'looked upon it as base and ungenerous, and scorn'd to be concern'd in it'.[85] Wade and Nelthorpe held similar views.[86] Even those who were in favour feared Monmouth's revenge.[87] Wade and Shepherd independently warned them that if Monmouth ever became king he would execute those who had murdered his father and uncle.[88]

[75] Ashcraft, *Revolutionary politics*, p. 387.
[76] Locke, *Correspondence*, II, pp. 625, 771; Goldie, 'John Locke's circle', p. 564.
[77] *State trials*, IX, 528; Ferguson,'Rye House', p. 431.
[78] Ferguson, 'Rye House', p. 431.
[79] Ibid., p. 433; *State trials*, IX, 375, 377, 390, 529, 541.
[80] *State trials*, IX, 366.
[81] Ibid., X, 9, 15–16, 23.
[82] Ferguson, 'Rye House', pp. 435–6.
[83] BL, Add. MS 38447, fo. 100v.
[84] *State trials*, X, 22.
[85] BL, Add. MS 38447, fo. 90r; *State trials*, IX, 539.
[86] BL, MS Harl. 6845, fos. 267v–8r; BL, Add. MS 38447, fo. 94v; *State trials*, IX, 380, 396.
[87] *State trials*, IX, 412.
[88] BL, MS Harl. 6845, fo. 268r; *State trials*, IX, 373.

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West repeatedly pressed Ferguson for some assurance on this point, but when none was given he and his associates concluded that Monmouth would have to be killed as well.[89] Wade contemptuously dismissed this as 'idle distracted Talk'.[90] None of those involved appears to have shared Ashcraft's conviction that they were acting with Monmouth's approval.[91]

By the time the king went to Newmarket on 3 March the plotters were already in disarray. On 22 March a fire destroyed much of the town, and the royal party decided to return several days earlier than planned. News of this reached the conspirators the following day. Several hurried meetings ensued, but it was now far too late to improvise; there were too few men, no horses, and no arms. Everything, Rumsey said, was confusion.[92] The king's survival was later attributed to the intervention of providence, but West and Ferguson independently acknowledged that the conspirators would not have been ready even if he had returned as planned.[93]

There is nothing to indicate that Locke was in any way involved in this murderous and incompetent design. Ashcraft, always looking out for supporting evidence, noted a reference in one of Locke's memorandum books to the Green Dragon tavern, 'a frequent meeting place for West, Rumsey, and the other Rye House conspirators'.[94] The entry reads: 'Tanton At a barbers shop over against the green dragon taverne in blackfriars at mr whites in Hues court in water lane in Blackfriers.'[95] 'Tanton', Ashcraft suggested, may have meant Taunton. It is more likely that Locke was referring to Dorothy Tanton, his brother's widow.[96] Besides, the Rye House conspirators did not meet in a barber's shop next to the Green Dragon in Blackfriars: they met at the Green Dragon in Snow Hill.[97]

Locke also had an unbreakable alibi. He left London for Salisbury on 23 February, the day of Ferguson's meeting with Armstrong, and arrived at St Giles on 25 February; Shaftesbury was buried the following day. After the funeral Locke remained at St Giles dealing with Shaftesbury's personal concerns. On 3 March, the day the royal party arrived at Newmarket, he made two and a half pages of notes from *A conspiracy of the Spaniards against the state of Venice*.[98] On 22 March, the day of the Newmarket fire, he went to Salisbury to

[89] *State trials*, ix, 405–6; BL, Add. MS 38447, fos. 94r, 106v.
[90] BL, MS Harl. 6845, fo. 268r.
[91] Ashcraft, *Revolutionary politics*, p. 362.
[92] *State trials*, ix, 378, 442, 533; Ferguson, 'Rye House', pp. 435–6.
[93] *State trials*, ix, 543; Ferguson, 'Rye House', p. 436.
[94] Ashcraft, *Revolutionary politics*, p. 383.
[95] MS Locke f.28, p. 154.
[96] She was mentioned in Locke's journal for 26 March and 5 July 1680 (MS Locke f.4, pp. 38, 129) and in his ledger (MS Locke c.1, pp. 111, 119). There are other references to Tanton in his memorandum book for 1667 (Bodl., MS Film 79, p. 25) and in MS Locke f.12, p. 10.
[97] BL, Add. MS 38447, fo. 111v; *State trials*, ix, 393, 400, 401, 402, 415, 445, 529, 536.
[98] MS Locke f.7, pp. 24–7. Ashcraft (*Revolutionary politics*, p. 382) incorrectly described this as a purchase and wondered whether it was the work listed in Locke's library catalogue as *Examen de la liberté originaire de Venise* (John Harrison and Peter Laslett, *The library of John Locke* (2nd edn, Oxford, 1971), #3064). Locke was reading [César Vischard de Saint-Real], *A conspiracy of the Spaniards against the state of Venice* (London, 1675), Wing S352.

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see David Thomas. They appear to have talked shop, for Locke's journal contains page after page of medical notes. The king returned safely to London on 26 March. Two days later Locke returned to St Giles; his journal records that he 'Left with Dr Thomas a little square deale box naild and corded directed to me in Oxford' – unfortunately we do not know what it contained. He left St Giles on 6 April and arrived back in London the following day.[99]

The Scots emissaries also arrived in London at the beginning of April, and a few weeks later Burnet went to Cassiobury to warn Essex of the dangers Russell was running in his dealings with them.[100] He was not the only one to visit Cassiobury at about this time. Locke's journal shows that he went there on 24 April, stayed one night, and then returned to London.[101] As with his previous visit, he gave no indication of why he went or whether anyone else accompanied him – only an entry (in the hand of his servant Sylvester Brounower) for horse hire.[102]

Laslett thought that he went there 'entirely of his own choosing'.[103] Ashcraft disagreed. Locke, he wrote, went there 'as a representative from the Council of Six to summon Essex back to London for an emergency meeting of the revolutionaries'.[104] There is evidence that such a summons was sent,[105] but it is not at all clear why Locke should have been asked to deliver it. There is also a problem of chronology. Grey was never very precise about dates, but his account indicates that the meeting at Southampton House was held early in May, and that the summons was sent shortly before this, probably at the very end of April – several days after Locke's visit.

The meeting at Southampton House took place as planned: Grey, Monmouth, Russell, Hampden, and Sidney were present; Essex arrived after the others had left. Grey left a detailed account of proceedings.[106] A week or so later there was another meeting, which Grey did not attend. Shortly afterwards he was summoned before the council to explain why arms had been discovered in his house. This can be independently dated: on 11 May a warrant was issued for his arrest and he was examined by the council on 16 May.[107]

Although Grey managed to provide a plausible explanation for possessing eighty muskets, he was bound over for a year on recognizances totalling £20,000 and thought it advisable to retire to Sussex for a while.[108] With his departure our detailed knowledge of the plot ends, but other evidence suggests that things did not run smoothly. Early in June West was informed by Ferguson that Sidney and Wildman 'had done very ill by the Scots, and broken with them after two months treaty, because the Scots would not at the beginning declare for a Commonwealth, the extirpation of Monarchy and the family of

[99] MS Locke f.7, pp. 17–89.
[100] BL, Add. MS 63057B, pp. 139–40; Burnet, *Own time*, II, pp. 355–6.
[101] MS Locke f.7, p. 93.
[102] Ibid., p. 94.
[103] Locke, *Two treatises*, p. 32.
[104] Ashcraft, *Revolutionary politics*, p. 380.
[105] Grey, *Secret history*, p. 48.
[106] Ibid., pp. 51–9.
[107] PRO, SP 44/54, p. 165; SP 29/424/68.
[108] Grey, *Secret history*, p. 60.

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the Stuarts'.[109] This was not at all what Monmouth had in mind: only a little earlier he had told Grey that he was confident that 'there would be little blood shed, for all would end in an accommodation between the King and a parliament'.[110] It was a vain hope.

IV

Early in June an obscure London tradesman, Josiah Keeling, approached the authorities with an alarming story of a plot to assassinate the king and to raise an insurrection in London. On 12 June he was examined before Sir Leoline Jenkins, one of the secretaries of state. Though not himself at the centre of the conspiracy, Keeling knew enough to describe the plans in some detail and to name many of those involved.[111] Jenkins reacted cautiously. For all he knew, Keeling was another Titus Oates, and even if he was not his evidence would require corroboration. Keeling then set about providing this. On 14 June he took his brother John to a meeting with Goodenough at which plans for a rising were discussed; later that day he tricked him into seeing Jenkins, and John had no choice but to describe what he had heard.[112] Although Jenkins now had sufficient evidence to detain the Keelings and to order the arrest of those named, he did neither: the Keelings were released, and Jenkins did nothing until he had consulted his colleagues. John Keeling promptly warned the conspirators, and by the time the first warrants were issued most of them had already fled.[113]

Locke was in London at the time and his movements require careful consideration. On 29 May he received a letter from Tyrrell which described at some length how a mad dog had bitten a number of children, including the son of one of his servants, John Clerk.[114] Ashcraft suspected that this concealed a secret warning. 'I do not know to what specific action Tyrrell is here alluding,' he wrote, 'but the "mad dog" reference was used to denote the government, and the message could be a warning to Locke that some discovery of the "children" has been made.'[115] This is no more plausible than the identification of Nurse Trent with John Trenchard. 'John Clerk' was no pseudonym: Clerk looked after Sorrell, Locke's horse, and subsequently took care of some of his books.[116] Tyrrell's concern for the unfortunate child was clearly genuine and he consulted Locke as a physician and family friend.

Locke's immediate response to this letter, according to Ashcraft, was to move into hiding in the house of his friend, Dr Charles Goodall.[117] Locke did move there on 29 May,[118] but there is little reason to suppose that he did so in

[109] BL, Add. MS 38447, fo. 113r. See also *State trials*, IX, 398, 546.
[110] Grey, *Secret history*, p. 61.
[111] *State trials*, IX, 365–8.
[112] Ibid., IX, 369–70.
[113] Burnet, *Own time*, II, pp. 360–1.
[114] Locke, *Correspondence*, II, pp. 596–7.
[115] Ashcraft, *Revolutionary politics*, p. 388.
[116] Locke, *Correspondence*, II, p. 525; III, pp. 256, 787.
[117] Ashcraft, *Revolutionary politics*, p. 388.
[118] MS Locke f.7, p. 106.

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response to Tyrrell's letter. The fact that David Thomas wrote openly to him at his new address hardly suggests he was endeavouring to conceal it from the authorities.[119] There is a more plausible explanation for the move: Thanet House now belonged to the second earl, whose relations with Locke – never particularly warm – must have become distinctly chilly after he read the letter Locke sent him in April.[120] Locke, we may suspect, was no longer *persona grata*.

Locke did not remain long at Goodall's. According to Ashcraft he 'hastily' left London immediately after Josiah Keeling's confession, when 'only the government and the conspirators knew, or strongly suspected, that the plot had been discovered'.[121] In other words, he had been tipped off. There was, however, nothing hasty about Locke's departure, and it had clearly been planned in advance. On 4 June he arranged for most of his London possessions – ten boxes, two presses, and a chair – to be taken by river to Oxford.[122] On 12 June, the day Josiah Keeling made his first confession, Brounower booked and paid for seats on the Aylesbury coach.[123] On 13 June Locke left the key of his scriptor with Anna Grigg, and the following day he left for Oakley.[124] London to Oakley was a good day's journey – forty-three miles on Locke's reckoning, with a change at Aylesbury – so he must have left quite early, well before the Keelings made the first of their joint confessions and some days before the conspirators realized that they had been betrayed.[125]

Locke stayed one night at Oakley and then went on to Oxford where he spent the weekend. According to Ashcraft he ceased recording his movements in his journal on Monday 18 June; according to Cranston he did so the following day.[126] Since the plot had yet to be made public, this silence would seem to indicate that Locke had inside information. Ashcraft and Cranston were, however, mistaken: Locke continued recording his movements for another week. On 18 June he went to Cirencester, stayed one night, and then returned to Oxford, stopping at Purton, near Swindon. The remainder of the week was spent in Oxford. He went to Oakley on 23 June and returned to Oxford on 25 June.[127]

By now the plot had become public knowledge, and belated efforts were being made to apprehend those involved. West gave himself up on the night of 22 June.[128] The following day a proclamation was issued for the arrest of

[119] Locke, *Correspondence*, II, pp. 597–8.
[120] Ibid., II, pp. 593–4.
[121] Ashcraft, *Revolutionary politics*, pp. 3, 383.
[122] MS Locke c.25, fo. 35r. They were conveyed by Nic Cully, presumably 'Cully the bargman' mentioned in *The life and times of Anthony Wood*, ed. Andrew Clark (5 vols., Oxford, 1891–1900), IV, p. 78.
[123] MS Locke f.7, p. 115.
[124] Ibid., p. 111.
[125] According to West they first began to suspect Josiah Keeling on Friday 15 June, but only received confirmation from John Keeling on Sunday and did not decide to flee until Monday, BL, Add. MS 38847, fo. 118; *State trials*, IX, 402, 548. Other conspirators confirmed these dates. According to Rumsey they had 'inklings' of Keeling's betrayal on Friday or Saturday; according to Zachariah Bourn they learned of it on Sunday, but had 'some intimation' the previous evening, *State trials*, IX, 377, 417, 531, 537.
[126] Ashcraft, *Revolutionary politics*, pp. 406–7; Cranston, *Locke*, p. 226.
[127] MS Locke f.7, pp. 111, 117.
[128] BL, Add. MS 38847, fo. 120r.

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Rumsey, Rumbold, Wade, Goodenough, Nethorpe, and others.[129] Rumsey was arrested on 24 June, and two days later he and West were said to have confessed all.[130]

News of these events must have reached Oxford about the time Locke returned from Oakley. Naturally there was much talk. A year later, Prideaux told Ellis that

> it seems he [Locke] transacted all affairs with West and therefore as soon as he was secured he thought it time to shift for himselfe, for fear West should tell all he knew. When West was first taken he was very solicitous to know of us at the table who this West was at which one made an unlucky reply that it was the very same person whom he treated at his chamber and caressed at soe great a rate when College was tryed here at Oxford which put the Gentleman into a profound silence and the next thing we heard of him was that he was fled for the same.[131]

Unlike some of Prideaux's earlier letters, this does not appear to have been sent in response to an official request for information; Ellis was in Dublin at the time, working as secretary to the Commissioners of the Revenue in Ireland. There is no reason to doubt the accuracy of Prideaux's account of events at Christ Church: one can easily picture Locke silently munching his food while the others exchanged glances, though one may wonder why he was dining at Christ Church if – as Ashcraft claimed – he was already in hiding. It is also likely that Locke had entertained West when College was tried at Oxford in 1681: he was in Oxford at the time and West was listed among the counsel whose assistance College had requested.[132] But Prideaux cannot himself have had – and to be fair to him, did not claim to have had – any first-hand knowledge of meetings between Locke and West in London in 1682–3. Given what we know of Locke's whereabouts in the autumn of 1682 and the spring of 1683 there is no reason to suppose that there were any. West certainly never mentioned them.

If Locke had been engaged in treasonable dealings with West he would surely have seized the opportunity to escape before someone came to arrest him. He did not do so. On Wednesday 27 June he went to Oakley.[133] The entry recording this was subsequently scribbled out – though not so effectively as to render it illegible – and for the next ten weeks he abandoned his normal practice of recording his movements in his journal. A few miscellaneous entries, mostly on financial matters, suggest that he spent several more weeks in Oxford: on 29 June he was there settling various accounts; on 4 July he paid Gristy, his college servant; and on 10 July he received £304 from Goodall.[134]

[129] PRO, PC 2/70, p. 14.

[130] Dartmouth to Conway, 26 June 1683, PRO, SP 29/425/79.

[131] Prideaux to Ellis, 12 Nov. 1684, BL, Add. MS 28929, fo. 110, *Letters of Humphrey Prideaux*, pp. 139–40.

[132] *State trials*, VIII, 550, 552, 561. College was tried on 17 August; Locke was in Oxford from 1 to 18 August, MS Locke f.5, pp. 108, 113.

[133] MS Locke f.7, p. 118.

[134] MSS Locke f.7, p. 119; b.1, fo. 53r; c.1, p. 65.

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It is very striking that Locke did not obliterate any of the earlier entries in his journal, not even those describing his visits to Cassiobury: it was evidently his current activities, not his former ones, which he was most anxious to conceal. The most likely explanation is that he was already placing his papers in safe-keeping and did not wish anyone to discover where they were. Someone must, however, have been watching him, because on 13 July Serjeant Richard Holloway wrote to Jenkins to tell him that 'there are in a clandestine way severall Hand Basketts of papers carryed thence to Mr. James Tyrrells house at Oakely … or to Mr. Pawling the Mercers house in Oxford'. Holloway suggested that Tyrrell's and Pawling's houses should be searched, and that 'the Lord Bp of Oxford and Mr. Vice Chancellor doe then Search Mr Lockes Chamber'.[135] No action appears to have been taken on any of these proposals. Anthony Wood sourly noted that 'When the crop-ear'd plot broke out, he [Locke] left Oxon and conveyed them away with him several letters and writings that would have spoken truth; never search'd – which if he had been popishly affected, it would have been done.'[136]

Towards the end of July Locke left Oxford for Somerset, his first visit since the spring of 1680. On 1, 2, and 7 August he recorded payments from his cousin William Stratton at Sutton; on 10 August he gave Stratton a power of attorney.[137] After this he went to stay with the Clarkes at Chipley, though it is not known exactly when.[138] On 15 and 17 August he recorded two notes on medical matters, the latter from David Thomas.[139] On 24 August he was at Purton, from whence he wrote to Clarke to thank him and his wife for their hospitality and to tell them that he expected to see them in London.[140] The following day he went to stay with David Thomas at Salisbury.[141]

On 26 August he wrote a long letter to Clarke. His departure from England was now imminent, and most of the letter was taken up with detailed directions about the safe-keeping of his papers and other possessions. He told Clarke to burn what he disliked, asked him to send any news from the Old Bailey, and added that he thought it best to make a will. This was a sensible precaution for someone travelling abroad, but it should not be taken as evidence that he feared he might himself be appearing at the Old Bailey: a convicted traitor's property was forfeit whether he had made a will or not. Locke also asked Clarke to ask Mr Bray, one of the storekeepers at the East India storehouse in Leadenhall Street, whether he had any news from Mrs Richards.[142] Ashcraft claimed that 'Mr Bray' was an alias for one of the plotters, that the storekeepers and merchants were Locke's fellow conspirators, and that the news he was eager to hear concerned the confessions of those already in custody.[143] This is unconvincing. Mrs Richards was the widow of John Richards, sometime

[135] PRO, SP 29/428/109.
[136] Wood, *Life and times*, III, p. 117 (15 Nov. 1684).
[137] MSS Locke f.7, p. 121; f.29, p. 10; c.19, fos. 21r, 22r.
[138] Locke, *Correspondence*, II, p. 600.
[139] MS Locke f.7, pp. 122–3.
[140] Locke, *Correspondence*, II, p. 599.
[141] MSS Locke f.7, p. 124; f.29, p. 14.
[142] Locke, *Correspondence*, II, pp. 600–3.
[143] Ashcraft, *Revolutionary politics*, p. 389.

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keeper of the East India Company's warehouse in Leadenhall Street; Mr Bray was Leonard Bray, an East India Company storeman mentioned in letters of October 1681 and April 1685.[144]

Locke's letter of 26 August was markedly different in tone from the one he had sent Clarke only two days before, and it would appear that between writing them he had heard something disturbing enough to make him abandon his hopes of seeing the Clarkes in London and decide instead to leave England at once. Unfortunately, it is not clear what this can have been. No new trials were pending: Russell and Walcot had been executed in July, Essex had committed suicide in the Tower, Grey had escaped to Holland, and Monmouth was lying low. Sidney and Hampden remained in prison, but proceedings against them were held up by the absence of the second witness required by law. Cranston suggested that Sidney's indictment must have caused Locke 'particular alarm'.[145] Perhaps it did, but it cannot have contributed to his decision to leave England: Sidney was indicted on 7 November.[146]

It is not known when Locke left Salisbury, where he went next, or when he left England. According to Cranston and Ashcraft he arrived at Rotterdam not later than 7 September new-style – i.e. 28 August old-style.[147] Locke may have been in a hurry, but he could hardly have got from Salisbury to Rotterdam in two days. He arrived there on Friday 7 September old-style; he began using mixed new-style/old-style dates on 15 October and completed the change to new-style dates on 19/29 December.[148]

V

None of Locke's friends accompanied him into exile. His closest friends – James Tyrrell, David Thomas, and Edward Clarke – were certainly whigs, and they doubtlessly looked with disfavour upon the policies being pursued by Charles II and his ministers, but there is nothing to suggest that any of them was involved in the plot. Locke was, however, acquainted with several of those who were. In August 1680 he went to see Russell on Shaftesbury's behalf.[149] His visits to Cassiobury indicate that he must have known Essex. Rumsey was mentioned in a letter sent to Shaftesbury in February 1681, but the description of him as one of 'your owne friends' does not imply he was one of Locke's.[150] Locke's dealings with West have already been described.[151] He later became a

[144] Locke, *Correspondence*, II, pp. 450–1, 468, 580, 707. Ashcraft (*Revolutionary politics*, pp. 445n, 454) also confused this Mr Bray with one Chapman Bray, an unidentified and possibly pseudonymous person mentioned in an intercepted letter of 4 Jan. 1685, BL, Add. MS 4159, fo. 185. This has no discernible connection with Locke.

[145] Cranston, *Locke*, p. 228.

[146] Luttrell, *Brief relation*, I, p. 287; *State trials*, IX, 920.

[147] Cranston, *Locke*, p. 230; Ashcraft, *Revolutionary politics*, p. 410.

[148] MS Locke f.7, pp. 124, 129, 164.

[149] Locke, *Correspondence*, II, p. 227.

[150] Ibid., II, p. 362.

[151] There is some other evidence, also dating from 1681. After Shaftesbury's arrest Locke was asked 'To Enquire of my Lord if he will not have Wallopp in stead of West for his Counsill', PRO, PRO 30/24/43/63, fo. 501v. Ashcraft (*Revolutionary politics*, p. 346n) described these as 'some

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X99001144 Published online by Cambridge University Press

good friend of John Freke, probably the Mr Freke mentioned in Grey's confession, but their friendship only appears to date from Freke's visit to Holland in November 1686.[152] He later became acquainted with John Wildman, but there does not appear to be any evidence that he knew him at this time.[153] He did, however, know John Ayloffe and Christopher Battiscombe, both of whom were executed in 1685: Ayloffe delivered one of his books to George Walls, and Battiscombe transmitted money from David Thomas.[154] He also knew Francis Charleton, Shaftesbury's cousin, who seems to have been involved in the plot; he lent Shaftesbury ten shillings at Charleton's house in April 1680 and he also met Charleton at the Golden Lion in St John's Street, though it is not known when.[155]

These details are worth recording, but none of them is very damning. Most of the plotters were connected in various ways with Shaftesbury, and it is not at all surprising that Locke knew several of them. It should, however, be noted that none of those who were involved in the plot ever suggested that Locke was one of their number.[156] This cannot be put down to any reluctance to incriminate former associates: those who turned king's evidence knew that pardons had to be earned. Since they were ready enough to accuse John Trenchard or John Wildman, it has to be asked why none of them ever mentioned John Locke.[157]

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notations by Locke'. They are instructions *to* him, in Stringer's hand. Shaftesbury appears to have chosen Wallop: Locke paid him a fee of three guineas on 7 July, MS Locke f.5, p. 91.

[152] Locke, *Correspondence*, III, p. 89; Grey, *Secret history*, pp. 16, 18.

[153] Ashcraft claimed that 'Wildman was also one of Locke's friend at least as early as 1679–80, when along with Locke and others, he was assisting Shaftesbury in examining witnesses during the popish plot', *Revolutionary politics*, pp. 376–7. No evidence is produced for this, and it appears to be a garbled version of the facts correctly stated in Haley, *Shaftesbury*, pp. 473–4. Ashcraft also suggested (*Revolutionary politics*, p. 134n) that Locke may have known Wildman while in France. The evidence – a passing reference in one of William Charleton's letters to 'one mr. Wildman a widdower' (Locke, *Correspondence*, I, p. 546) – hardly supports this. Besides, Wildman was not a widower: Locke received a medical recipe from Mrs Wildman in 1692, MS Locke c.42, p. 32. Charleton was probably referring to Wildman's son, whose wife had died the previous August: Ashley, *Wildman*, p. 18.

[154] BL, Add. MS 15642, p. 125 (30 July 1679); MSS Locke f.5, p. 105 (23 July 1681); f.6, p. 10 (20 Jan. 1682).

[155] MSS Locke f.4, p. 97; f.28, p. 177. Ashcraft claimed (*Revolutionary politics*, p. 376n) that Locke recorded Charleton's address in MS Locke, f.28, p. 141. In fact the entry ('Chaleton [sic] chez William Jarret merchant Lime Street') referred to William Charleton, who sent Locke this address on 23 April 1685, Locke, *Correspondence*, II, p. 717.

[156] Grey (*Secret history*, pp. 112, 118) and Wade (BL, MS Harl. 6845, fos. 270v, 272r) mentioned a Mr Lock contributing money to Argyle's and Monmouth's rebellions. The donor appears, however, to have been Nicholas Lock, a tobacco merchant. The evidence is reviewed in Helen Pringle, 'Who gave money to Monmouth: rounding up the suspects', *Locke Newsletter*, 23 (1992), pp. 131–43.

[157] Trenchard was named by Shepherd, Rumsey, West, Wade, and Grey, *State trials*, IX, 373, 380, 396, 426; BL, MS Harl. 6845, fos. 266v, 267v; Grey, *Secret history*, pp. 18, 28, 32, 35–41, 44, 59. Wildman was named by Rumsey, West, Howard, Whitlock, Bourn, and Holloway, *State trials*, IX, 378, 394, 398–401, 412, 413, 422, 436, 440.

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The simplest explanation is that Locke was not mentioned because he was not involved. It is, of course, unlikely that he was wholly unaware of Shaftesbury's insurrectionary plans, and it is evident from the final chapters of the *Second treatise* that he regarded resistance as a legitimate response to governmental abuse of power. But what is justifiable in theory may be inadvisable in practice, and in the autumn of 1682 a prudent man would have realized that the prospects for a successful insurrection were already slim and were growing slimmer. Locke was a very prudent man. If he feared that Shaftesbury had become dangerously unstable he was not alone; this was one of the few points on which the conspirators were agreed. What he thought can only be conjectured, but we know what he did: three days after returning from Cassiobury he left London for Oxford, where he remained until after Shaftesbury had left England. If this was not deliberately keeping out of the way it certainly looks like it.

Shaftesbury's departure removed one unsteadying influence, but in the spring of 1683 the prospects for a successful insurrection were no better than they had been the previous autumn. If Locke had decided then not to become involved there was little reason for him to change his mind. It is not known when he realized that the plot had been revived, but it may well have been after his return to London at the beginning of April. The second visit to Cassiobury should, I believe, be understood in this light: Locke needed to know what was going on, and he decided to ask someone he could trust. If that was his reason he chose wisely: when Essex was interrogated he gave nothing away, and his secrets died with him.

Although Locke left London shortly after Josiah Keeling's revelations, his departure had clearly been planned well before. There is no sign of haste, and if he had been on the run he would hardly have stayed several weeks in Oxford, somewhere he was sure to be recognized; he would also have left England much sooner than he did. It would appear from Lady Maham's account that he was afraid he might be taken in for questioning, but such fears can hardly be dismissed as unreasonable given his known association with Shaftesbury. The striking thing is that no attempt was made to apprehend him, and one can only conclude that the authorities did not think he was involved. The evidence presented here suggests they were right.

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