

MONSON (or Mounson, Munson), SIR WILLIAM, BARON MONSON OF BELLINGUARD, VISCOUNT MUNSON OF CASTLEMAINE ('Lord Munson') (born circa 1599, died circa 1672), parliamentary radical, MP 1626, 1628, 1640, 1659 (Reigate), was second son of the noted Admiral Sir William Monson of Kinnersley, Horley, Surrey, and Dorothy, daughter of Richard Wallop of Bugbrooke; he was not son of Sir Thomas Monson (who was really his uncle) as stated in both DNB and Keeler; see *Complete Peerage*, 1936 ed., *correction*, IX, 67-9). Monson, by February 1618, was being advanced at Court as a favourite by Lord Suffolk and the Duke of Buckingham, when he was described as a 'handsome young gentleman' who had had his face washed every day with posset curd to make the best appearance of his complexion (Nichols, *Progress of James I*, III, 469). He met with rebuff from the King, but Buckingham saw to it that he was knighted at Theobalds 12 February (not 22 February as wrongly reported in *Complete Peerage*, *op. cit.*) 1623 (not 1633 as wrong stated in the DNB), by which time Monson was described dismissively as one 'who stood once to be a favourite' (Nichols, *op. cit.*, IV, 804). After this, Monson travelled abroad, presumably on the continent (*ibid.*). He returned and married 25 October 1625 Margaret, daughter of James Stewart, Earl of Moray, and widow of Admiral Charles Howard, 1st Earl of Nottingham (who died 14 December 1624), a woman whose page he had once been (and possibly her lover). This could be described as a fantastic turn of events, as Nottingham had been the elder Monson's enemy and had imprisoned the younger Monson's brother John only two and a half years earlier as 'a most dangerous papist' (DNB, entry of elder Monson). The younger Monson's sister Jane was already married to Nottingham's nephew, Sir Francis Howard, whose brother Sir Edward had preceded Monson (first elected 1626) as Reigate's MP from 1600 to 1615 (*Surrey Archaeological Collections*, IX, 400-5). Monson's middle-aged wife, having been married to an 88 year-old man, now married the youthful Monson and brought him the Castle and Town of Reigate and other property and wealth of his family's recent enemy. She died 4 August 1639; their only son, Stewart Monson, baptized 31 March 1628, died s.p. Monson, immediately after his marriage, was made to pay £60, an immense sum far exceeding others in Surrey, for the 1625 loan (*Surrey Archaeological Collections*, XVII, 80). He seems to have been wildly extravagant and to have got into debt, although reversionary interests of the Howards in his property were a desperately complicating factor for him (Wilfrid Hooper, *Reigate: Its Story through the Ages*, 71-4), and from 1639 he engaged in endless legal battles with the Howards over the Reigate property which were only forcibly resolved at the Restoration (*ibid.*) In fact, Monson refused to leave Reigate, but the Howards shortly afterwards becoming active Royalists, Monson had the advantage. Monson had been created Lord Monson in the Irish peerage (as given above) 23 August 1628. He was admitted to Gray's Inn 13 August 1633 (said unaccountably in the DNB to be the same day he was knighted, but there were no knights made that day at all). He was excused attendance at the Irish Parliament of 1634 but ordered to vote there by proxy (CSPI, 1633-47, p. 55). Monson refused to pay ship money (CSPD, 1637-8, p. 198) and turned to active politics with the Long Parliament, at first causing a stir only by his personal business (CJ, II, 76a, 549a, 556b; Whitelocke, *Memorials*, 1735 edition, 226b). In the House he remained very obscure for years, apparently appearing only on two minor committees in mid-1645 (CJ, IV, 146a, 166a). He married secondly in May, 1646, Frances, daughter of Thomas Alston of Polstead, Suffolk, and Frances Blomfield. Their only son, Alston Monson, was born 1647 and buried 15 January 1675 at St. Martin's-in-the-Fields. This wife died early in 1651. Monson married thirdly Elizabeth, 3rd daughter of Sir

George Reresby of Thribergh, Yorkshire, and Elizabeth Tamworth; she was twice a widow previously (of Edward Horner and Sir Francis Foljambe, Bart.). This fiery last wife was notorious, and Monson was constantly lampooned for being physically assaulted by her. A mock-journal of the Rump Parliament contains this entry: ‘*Ordered.* That the Lord Mounson have a priviledge to wear a Back-piece, Breast-plate, and a Pot, to secure his bones from the knocks of his Ladies Bed-staff.’ (*Proceedings, Votes, ... and Acts of the Rump*, 1660, p. 6).

As political events became more radical, Monson’s importance increased, and he became a member of many significant committees in the House. During the crucial events of the second civil war of 1648, he held Reigate Castle for Parliament against Lord Holland, but was soon relieved by Sir Michael Livesey (Gardiner, GCW, III, 410). After Pride’s Purge, Monson was named to the small and crucial committee of hardcore radicals to suppress criticism of the Purge, along with ten regicides: Lisle, Corbet, Scott, Moore, Garland, Smith, Downes, Purefoy, Norton, and Cawley (CJ, VI, 97b). Monson was named to the High Court of Justice to try the King, and attended several times before dropping out of the proceedings, and he did not sign the Death Warrant. He continued to be important on committees, but became deeply troubled by debts and failed to straighten out his finances (CJ, VI, 264). He was eventually imprisoned for debt in the Fleet along with Henry Marten the regicide. They were both specially released by the restored Long Parliament in May, 1659, to attend the House. At the Restoration, Mondon was again imprisoned in the Fleet, then tried and sentenced to be stripped of his titles, deprived of his property, and drawn every year on a hurdle from the Tower to Tyburn. He died circa 1672 in the Fleet Prison. His widow remarried Adam Felton and died 26 December 1695. Monson’s only daughter by her, Elizabeth, married twice.