

## Goditha de Stathum

I lived in Morley, near Derby. I was a noblewoman – my husband was very important and had been elected MP four times, as well as collecting the first poll tax in 1377. He probably fought for the King at Poitiers in 1356. We had five sons together, four of whom followed in their father's footsteps and fought in the military in France. When he died in 1380, I became a very wealthy widow, as I already had property from my family, the Massys of Sale in Cheshire. Two of my sons, Robert and William, were serving with the Duke of Gloucester in 1380, but came home immediately.

The events of 1381 were very dramatic! We first heard about the news of rebellion in London on 18 June. A group of men in the village took action. Two of my sons, William and Richard, went to the house of our awful neighbour Henry Massy. Their father had been arguing with him for a long time before he died, and to top it all off, Henry Massy was a tenant of the awful Duke of Lancaster, John of Gaunt. That man has been targeting us in the courts, and in 1380 Ralph and I were fined £100 for illegal occupation of his land. The cheek of it! My sons decided to end this vendetta and killed him. Another local man, John Parker, was also killed. They then went to the local Breadsall Priory, where they assaulted and imprisoned the prior and canons [these were the leaders of the monks who lived there] and set fire to their church, kitchen and chambers. They went to the royal castle of Horston and took it by force, raising the banner of St George to signal their takeover.

My sons were just making right the situation in which they found themselves. John of Gaunt had too much power, as did some of these monasteries. Raising the flag of St George showed how they were loyal to England. People did similar things across the country.

Of course, I knew what my sons had done and that there might be repercussions. I let my sons and others stay in the house and protected them from arrest. When we heard that pardons were being offered, all five of my sons went on 18 December 1381 to get one, and I went too a few months later.

I remained a very important local person. From 1381 until at least 1410, I was very active in the legal courts. I had to be, to make sure that people weren't trying to take any of our land away or damage it. Even with our pardons, I had to keep defending my family too. As late as 1393, the Prior of Breadsall Park was still trying to sue my sons for the damage done to their priory. I managed to fight back against these charges. I also kept busy organising the building works on the local parish church of St Matthew – you've got to keep on top of these things. The builder failed to finish the work on the new tower I paid for on time, so I had to sue him too! Can you believe that people tried to argue that it was because the mason [stone builder] on the project fell to his death? If you pay for a service, you expect it done right. I lived into old age and died in 1418, meaning that I was in at least my late seventies when I died.