

Margery Tawney

I was an ordinary person in London during the Revolt. There were so many people there on 14 June; it was chaotic. There were rumours everywhere about what the rebels were doing, burning houses and attacking traitors. I would have stayed safely at home, but I heard the proclamation being read aloud throughout the city that anyone with a grievance could go to the Tower of London to get justice from the King himself.

This was the chance that my family had been waiting for. My husband, Thomas Tawney, died in 1379, and I had been fighting for justice ever since. Thomas was a Poor Knight of St George's College in Windsor Castle. The Poor Knights were all soldiers who had fallen on difficult times. King Edward III set up the charitable order in 1346 after winning the Battle of Crecy. The ex-soldiers there prayed for the King and did religious services and got given money and somewhere to live. When my husband died, his will stated that his money should go to me as his wife, but the Dean [head] of the College wouldn't give me the money! We had to take this opportunity to try to get our money, so my eldest son, John Thorp, and I set off for the Tower.

We had to battle through the crowds and there were so many people at the Tower, all trying to do the same thing. People were waving their petitions and shouting for justice. There were just so many people that we were forced to go home without having handed our petition in. I wasn't about to give up, though, and the next morning we managed to give the document to the King's Master of the Wardrobe. My son and I were so excited. It was agreed that I should get the money, and the Dean who had wronged us was arrested. It seemed like everything was going to work out and we would get justice!

Things then went very wrong. The Dean accused me and my son of being present at the murder of Simon Sudbury, the Chancellor, whom some of the rebels dragged off and beheaded on 14 June. My son John was arrested and beaten up so badly that he died in prison. I was terrified; surely they would come for me next? I fled to a church and claimed sanctuary. I had two petitions written for me to be sent to the King, asking him to see that justice was done. I pleaded that I was a widow and terrified for my life, hoping that the men who were to judge my case might feel sympathy for me.

Historians don't know what happened to me or my case. My younger son, however, continued to try to seek justice for his brother who died in prison.