

St Albans and the 1381 Revolt – consequences cards

It is not known for certain how many people died in the Revolt. The lowest estimate is 1,500. The highest is over 7,000. This was at a time when England's population was 4,000,000 people.

Although a number of leading rebels were executed, there was relatively little suppression after the Revolt. Many rebels were pardoned.

Despite a few further disturbances in the autumn of 1381, Richard II was able to reassert his royal authority very quickly after the Revolt. There was no further widespread popular revolt in England until Cade's Rebellion in 1450.

After the Revolt, Richard II became less interested in waging war against the French, and a truce was agreed in 1389, which lasted until 1415. No further attempts were made to raise money using a poll tax.

Although Richard II went back on his agreement to end feudal services, these gradually diminished in most parts of England over the next 100 years.

The Lollards continued to protest against and challenge the Roman Catholic Church. They were increasingly persecuted for heresy.

'The Great Revolt played out over a remarkably short period of time. Its suppression was swift and thereafter, to all appearances, life returned to normal. We even hear of former rebels who were able to pick up the threads of their old lives as if nothing untoward had happened.'

Juliet Barker

'Protests continued to play a part in the politics of later mediaeval England. In 1382, a conspiracy was uncovered in Norfolk for the assassinations of Bishop Despenser. In 1383 a far more serious disturbance broke out in Sussex on the states of the Earl of Arundel when Lewes Castle was stormed, and its records burnt. In 1393, a major disturbance broke out in Cheshire.'

Alistair Dunn

'Wat Tyler, John Ball and the leaders of the county uprisings were the first ordinary men in the British Isles to mount a credible attack on the political and economic structures of their day. For all the flaws and inconsistencies in their stated objectives and in the prosecution of their campaign, the rebels of 1381 succeeded in giving a voice to those who had hitherto lacked any means of expressing their common political grievances... The people of England found a voice for the first time in 1381. Long after their defeat, the echoes of their cries reverberated in the politics of the English and later British states.'

Alistair Dunn

'One person above all others who must be marked for life by its experiences was Richard II. Unfortunately, we have no means of knowing for certain what impact these events had on the boy king as he left no personal account. What we can perhaps deduce from Richard's subsequent behaviour is that the Great Revolt instilled in him the will to reinforce his own ideas of kingship. Richard was determined to shake off the limitations imposed on his authority by having to consult.'

Juliet Barker

'Even today, the Great Revolt remains a point of reference for almost every radical political movement. From socialism, communism, republicanism, anarchism, and environmentalism. The passage of more than 600 years may have blurred popular notions of what it was all about, but it continues to be an excellent exercise of fascination far beyond narrow political factional interest.'

Juliet Barker

'What makes it so extraordinary is that the Great Revolt achieved none of its stated aims. There were no fundamental reforms in society or government. Even though the Great Revolt failed in its specific historic objectives, however, it articulated much wider ideas, which continue to resonate today.'

Juliet Barker

'For the first time in English history, ordinary people had defied authority and tradition, taken matters into their own hands, and asserted what they conceived to be their basic human rights, their concepts of personal liberty, articulated so powerfully in the Adam and Eve couplet attributed to John Ball... That, surely, is the reason why the Great Revolt continues to speak to us all.'

Juliet Barker

'At first sight, Richard II's revocation of the manumission charters of the 14th June, marked the failure of the rebels' main demand. However, the King's orders to command villeins to perform their accustomed services pitted political will against irresistible long-term economic and social trends.'

Alistair Dunn

Note: the quotes used in this resource are from:

Barker, Juliet (2015) *England, Arise: The People, the King and the Great Revolt of 1381*, London: Abacus

Dunn, Alastair (2004) *The Peasants' Revolt: England's Failed Revolution of 1381*, Stroud: The History Press