

Wat Tyler



Age: 41 years

Social status:

Involvement:

Importance:

Legacy:

Widely regarded as one of the main leaders of the 1381 Revolt, but very little is known about him. Led rebels from Canterbury to London and presented demands to King Richard II. Murdered on 15 June at Smithfield, while meeting the King, by William Walworth, Lord Mayor of London.

Jack Straw

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Age: Not known

Social status:

Involvement:

Importance:

Legacy:

Regarded as one of the leaders of the Essex rebels during the 1381 Revolt. Little is known about Jack Straw, although Thomas Walsingham, a chronicler at the time, suggests that he was a priest. Believed that Straw was executed by royal officers soon after the murder of Wat Tyler at Smithfield on 15 June.

John Ball



Age: 43 years

Social status:

Involvement:

Importance:

Legacy:

English radical priest who had for many years criticised the power, wealth and practices of the Roman Catholic Church. Released by rebels from Maidstone Prison on 7 June and reportedly preached to them at Blackheath on 12 June. After that, his whereabouts is unknown until arrested in Coventry in July, and brought to and executed in St Albans on 15 July. Hung, drawn and quartered, with each quarter sent to a different part of England.

John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster



Age: 41 years

Social status:

Involvement:

Importance:

Legacy:

English royal prince, military leader and third son of King Edward III. Reputedly one of the richest and most powerful men in England. Widely blamed and hated for the failures in the war against France, high taxes and rising cost of living. During the 1381 Revolt, his Savoy Palace in London attacked and burnt to the ground by rebels. At the time of the Revolt, Gaunt was away in the borders of Scotland and did not return south until it was all over.

King Richard II



Age: 14 years

Social status:

Involvement:

Importance:

Legacy:

Only 14 years old at the time of the 1381 Revolt, at first appeared to be intimidated and sympathetic to the rebels' demands, making a number of concessions, but took decisive action at Smithfield on 15 June after Wat Tyler was murdered by William Walworth, Lord Mayor of London. Able to persuade the vast majority of rebels assembled at Smithfield to go back to their villages, then immediately set out to suppress the Revolt in London, followed by the surrounding areas.

Sir Robert Tresilian



Age: Not known

Social status:

Involvement:

Importance:

Legacy:

Cornish lawyer appointed Chief Justice of the King's Bench after the execution of Sir John Cavendish by rebels in Bury St Edmunds on 15 June 1381. Put in charge of punishing rebels, which he did with extreme harshness. Oversaw the trial, conviction and execution of William Grindecobbe and 15 other rebels in St Albans, including John Ball, the radical preacher. At the time, there was a widespread belief that royal punishments went too far and so they were eased in order to prevent any further revolts.

Bishop Despenser



Age: 40 years

Social status:

Involvement:

Importance:

Legacy:

English nobleman and Bishop of Norwich, known as the 'Fighting Bishop' for his part in suppressing the 1381 Revolt in East Anglia, including the defeat of rebels led by Geoffrey Lister at the Battle of North Walsham. At his manor in Rutland at the start of the Revolt, but hastened back to Norfolk with a small group of armed men, crushing rebellions in Peterborough, Cambridge and Newmarket, gaining more support as he moved eastwards. The rigour with which he put down the rebellion made him highly unpopular in Norfolk, and a plot was organised to murder him the following year, which failed.

John Wrawe



Age: Not known

Social status:

Involvement:

Importance:

Legacy:

A rebel leader in Suffolk during the 1381 Revolt and a former priest in the town of Sudbury. On 12 June 1381, led rebels in attacking wealthy landowners and the Abbey in Bury St Edmunds in West Suffolk. The Prior escaped but two days later was caught and executed. One group of rebels tracked down the Chief Justice, Sir John Cavendish, at Lakenheath and executed him. As the Revolt was suppressed, Wrawe captured and tried in London. Probably gave evidence against 24 of his fellow rebels in the hope of a pardon, but was sentenced and executed by being hanged, drawn and quartered on 6 May 1382.

Geoffrey Lister

Age: Not known

Social status:

Involvement:

Importance:

Legacy:



A moderately wealthy cloth-dyer from Felmingham, who led the Norfolk rebels during the 1381 Revolt. On 17 June, assembled a large number of rebels at Mousehold Heath, outside Norwich, then entered the city and took control of the castle. Then led rebels to Yarmouth. On 21 June 1381, at Thorpe Market, called on anyone 'that desired the good of their Kingdom and community' to follow him to North Walsham. On 26 June, led hundreds of men to set up camp at Bryant's Heath, North Walsham, defending their position with ditches and makeshift barricades, but quickly defeated by Bishop Despenser's army. Executed soon after the battle.

Simon Sudbury

Age: 65 years

Social status:

Involvement:

Importance:

Legacy:



Bishop of London from 1361 to 1375, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1375 and appointed Lord Chancellor in 1380. Widely unpopular – blamed for the poll taxes and persecution of radical preachers such as John Ball. On 14 June 1381, while sheltering in the Tower of London, dragged outside to Tower Hill and beheaded by rebels. His head stuck on a pole outside the Tower, but after the Revolt his body buried at Canterbury Cathedral and his head sent to St Gregory's Church, Sudbury, where it still remains on display today.

Sir John Cavendish

Age: 35 years

Social status:

Involvement:

Importance:

Legacy:



English judge, politician and wealthy landowner from Suffolk. Appointed Chief Justice for the King in 1372. On 14 June 1381, fled Bury St Edmunds as rebels attacked, leaving behind all his personal possessions. Attempted to cross the river by boat at Lakenheath but spotted by a local woman, Katherine Gamen, who recognised him and quickly pushed the boat into the river to prevent his escape. Captured by rebels, executed and his head stuck on a pole.

William Walworth

Age: 41 years

Social status:

Involvement:

Importance:

Legacy:



Fishmonger who became Sheriff of London in 1370 and Lord Mayor of London in 1374 and 1381. Member of Parliament for the City of London in 1371, 1376 and 1377. With Richard II when he met the rebels at Smithfield on 15 June. As Tyler approached the King to discuss the rebels' demands, Walworth moved forward and killed him with his dagger. During the Revolt, also raised the city bodyguard in defence of the King and subsequently sent to restore peace in Kent. Knighted for his services to the King.

Sir Robert Hales

Age: 56 years

Social status:

Involvement:

Importance:

Legacy:



Appointed Lord High Treasurer by Richard II. Responsible for the collection of all three poll taxes between 1377 and 1381. On 14 June 1381, while sheltering in the Tower of London, dragged outside to Tower Hill and beheaded by rebels. Described by the chronicler Thomas Walsingham as a 'Magnanimous knight, though the Commons loved him not'.

Johanna Ferrour

Age: Not known

Social status:

Involvement:

Importance:

Legacy:



During the 1381 Revolt, marched on London with the rebels of Kent and Essex, where she led an angry mob to burn down the Savoy Palace, home of the hated John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster. Before torching the Palace on 14 June, made off with one of the Duke's chests containing £1,000. Crossed the Thames over to Southwark and divided up the plunder with other rebels. On 15 June led another group of rebels to the Tower of London, where she seized the Chancellor Simon Sudbury, Archbishop of Canterbury, as well as the Treasurer Sir Robert Hales, and ordered their execution. Does not appear to have been convicted or punished for what she did during the Revolt.

Margaret de Enges, Prioress of Carrow

Age: Not known

Social status:

Involvement:

Importance:

Legacy:



In June of 1381, the Prioress of the Benedictine convent of Carrow just outside the city of Norwich. On 18 June, rebels led by Geoffrey Lister demanded that the Prioress hand over legal documents, which were then burnt. Margaret and her nuns unharmed by the rebels but after the Revolt (in 1382) took legal action against them for compensation. Interestingly, chose to prosecute both John Nicole (Nichol) and his wife Margaret. This couple were the wealthiest of the defendants.

John Hende

Age: Not known

Social status:

Involvement:

Importance:

Legacy:



A prominent London merchant and friend of Geoffrey Chaucer, who accumulated so much wealth that by the fifteenth century became Henry IV's leading moneylender. In June 1381, took control of Bradwell Manor after its owner, John Ewell, killed by Essex rebels. Unclear whether or not Hende involved in the 1381 Revolt, and the manor was taken back into the King's ownership in September 1382. Afterwards Hende apologised for his actions to Parliament.

Margery Tawney

Age: Not known

Social status:

Involvement:

Importance:

Legacy:



A widow and an eyewitness to the chaotic scenes in London at the height of the revolt on 14 June 1381. Not a rebel herself, but became caught up in events that day because of a proclamation she heard being read aloud throughout the city. It advised anyone with a grievance to take their evidence directly to the King at the Tower of London, where they would receive justice. Margery and her eldest son, John Thorp, battled through the crowds in an attempt to put their claim of unpaid debts by Walter Almaly before the King. At first, they were successful, but Almaly accused them of being involved in the murder of Simon Sudbury. John arrested, beaten and died of his injuries in prison. Margaret fled and survived, and in 1383 her younger son took Almaly and another man to court, blaming them for the death of his brother.

Goditha de Stathum

Age: Not known

Social status:

Involvement:

Importance:

Legacy:



In 1381 resided with her five sons in Morley, a village a few miles north-east of Derby. Widowed the previous year. On 18 June 1381, a group of men, including two of Goditha's sons, William and Richard, killed Henry Massy, a neighbour, and then another local man called John Parker. The rebel group then attacked and set fire to the local Breadsall Park Priory, before taking over the royal castle at Horston. Both sons had military experience of fighting against the French before the Revolt. Goditha sought to protect her sons after the Revolt and obtained royal pardons for them in December 1381 and then for herself in 1382.

John Spayne

Age: Not known

Social status:

Involvement:

Importance:

Legacy:



A shoemaker and cordwainer in the town of King's Lynn, Norfolk, accused of leading the tradesmen of King's Lynn during the 1381 Revolt. According to the court documents, Spayne and his band travelled the local area in the period of 17–22 June, extorting money through threats of violence and killing any Flemings they could find. Pardoned for his actions in May 1383 with the support of Bishop Despenser. Despenser's willingness to secure a pardon for Spayne may perhaps reflect concern to keep the peace in Norfolk, suggesting that there was significant support for the rebels among the townspeople of King's Lynn.

William Grindecobbe

Age: Not known

Social status:

Involvement:

Importance:

Legacy:



A miller and property owner in St Albans. Suggested that he was educated at the Abbey, but had been involved in a number of disputes with Abbot de la Mare and the Abbey. In 1377, the Abbot took away an acre of land legally bought by Grindcobbe, claiming that it belonged to the Abbey. Then excommunicated and forced to do penance for violently attacking two monks. Leader of the St Albans rebels during the 1381 Revolt and obtained royal letters from Richard II at Mile End granting freedom to the town. These letters subsequently revoked by the King and the revolt in St Albans was suppressed. Executed with 15 other rebel leaders, including the radical preacher John Ball, on 15 July.

Joan Grindecobbe

Age: Not known

Social status:

Involvement:

Importance:

Legacy:



The wife of William Grindecobbe, the leading rebel in St Albans during the 1381 Revolt. No records exist of whether or not she was involved in the Revolt but court records from 1384 report that she was deprived of her property in 1384 specifically because of her husband's treason during the Revolt in St Albans. Was Joan actively involved in the Revolt or was she punished for just being married to a rebel leader?

Thomas de la Mare

Age: 72 years

Social status:

Involvement:

Importance:

Legacy:



Abbot of St Albans between 1349 and 1396, at a time of increasing grievances between the townspeople, local villagers and the Abbey, following the Black Death of 1348–1350, which came to a head in the 1381 Revolt. The townspeople rose up under the leadership of William Grindecobbe, a burgess, broke open the gaol, tore down the fences and threatened to burn the Abbey unless Abbot de la Mare agreed to end the Abbey's control of the town and rights over local woods, meadows and mill. Eventually agreed and promised all that, but the Abbey then took back control. Believed that de la Mare insisted on the execution of Grindecobbe and 15 other St Albans rebels on 15 July 1381.

Thomas Walsingham

Age: Not known

Social status:

Involvement:

Importance:

Legacy:



A monk and chronicler at St Albans Abbey, where appears to have passed the whole of his monastic life, excepting a period from 1394 to 1396, during which he was Prior of Wymondham Abbey, Norfolk, another Benedictine house. At St Albans in charge of the writing room, where he wrote his chronicles. An important source of much of what we know about the 1381 Revolt, to which he was bitterly opposed. Particularly condemned the actions of William Grindecobbe and the other St Albans rebels, which he possibly witnessed first-hand. Died in 1422.

William Cadyndon (Caddington)

Age: Not known

Social status:

Involvement:

Importance:

Legacy:



A baker and leader of the St Albans rebels during the 1381 Revolt. Very little known about Cadyndon except that he accompanied William Grindecobbe to London on 14 June to obtain royal letters from the King at Mile End to grant the town of St Albans its freedom from the Abbey's control. Involved in obtaining concessions from Abbot de la Mare and subsequently executed, along with Grindecobbe and other rebels, on 15 July.

Richard of Wallingford

Age: Not known

Social status:

Involvement:

Importance:

Legacy:



A constable of Wallingford Castle, Oxfordshire, and a small landowner in St Albans during the 1381 Revolt. Travelled with William Grindecobbe and other rebel leaders from St Albans to London on 14 June to obtain the King's support in obtaining an ancient charter, believed to be held by the Abbot, which granted the town of St Albans its freedom from the Abbey's control. After meeting the King at Mile End, left behind in London to obtain the royal letter, while Grindecobbe and the others returned to St Albans. Arrived back in the town on the morning of 15 June with the royal letter, which was used to force concessions out of the Abbot. When the Revolt was crushed in St Albans, imprisoned but later released and pardoned by the King. Believed that Richard died some years later.

Sir Walter atte Lee

Age: 31 years

Social status:

Involvement:

Importance:

Legacy:

A local Hertfordshire knight from Albury, Hertfordshire, and Member of

Parliament for Hertfordshire between 1377 and 1390 and for Essex between 1391 and 1394. On 29 June 1381, led an armed band of soldiers into St Albans on the orders of the King and demanded the surrender of William Grindecobbe and the other rebels and return of the charters of freedom given to the townspeople by the Abbot under pressure during the Revolt. Had Grindecobbe and the others imprisoned in Hertford Castle but forced to release them when a £300 bail was paid by the townspeople. Grindecobbe and the rebel leaders were rearrested, put on trial and executed on 15 July.

