

**How do historians find out what
happened in England in 1381?**

Let's review the event that we have looked at.

On the next slide are some of the key events from the traditional interpretation.

Can you arrange them into the correct chronological order?

There are also a couple of new pieces of information that were not in the sources and interpretations that we looked at last lesson.

They managed to break into the Tower of London and killed the Archbishop of Canterbury.

A poll tax was introduced to help fund the war with France, led by John of Gaunt. Rich and poor had to pay the same amount.

Although the King did grant them **manumission**, he didn't keep his promise. Leaders were found and executed.

Some people who were involved were later granted pardons.

King Richard II (who was only 14) agreed to meet the rebels and listen to their demands.

They met at Smithfield. During this meeting, the Mayor of London killed Wat Tyler.

They attacked the property of rich people. In London, they even burnt down John of Gaunt's Savoy Palace.

The King spoke directly to the people and asked them to stay calm. He said that if they went home, he would give them their freedom.

They went to London and attracted more people to join them on the way.

A law called the **Statute of Labourers** kept wages for peasants low.

People from Kent and Essex decided not to pay. They started to attack rich and powerful people.

Leaders included Wat Tyler and John Ball.

Today we will find out more about the events of 1381, looking at some recent research by historians on the topic.

What else do we need to know or want to find out?



What happened in England in 1381?

We'll continue to put our findings on to the sheet.

We may need to cross out or add to information as we go. This is absolutely fine and what historians have to do in their work – sometimes new evidence changes things!

The worksheet is titled "What happened in England in 1381?". It contains seven rectangular boxes for taking notes, arranged in a grid-like fashion. The boxes are labeled as follows:

- What happened?
- Who was involved? (Names, groups, occupations)
- Questions you have:
- Outcomes/results?
- Motives/causes?
- Where did it take place?
- Who was affected?
- Other information:

In the bottom right corner of the worksheet, there is a small map of England with a black dot indicating a location.



How do historians find out what happened?

We'll start by thinking about how historians find evidence.

Historians often work in *archives*.

Here we find very old documents and artefacts that have been safely kept over time.

These include official documents (such as laws or court records).

How do historians find out what happened?

These are some Common *Pleas* rolls.

Each piece of *parchment* contains lists of pleas that people have made to Parliament.



How do historians find out what happened?

Sometimes documents are single pieces of paper, like these. They have been rolled up so that they can be stored easily.



What do you think these black things are?



How do historians find out what happened?

We'll watch a short video showing a group of historians working in an archive or record office. They are researching the events of 1381.

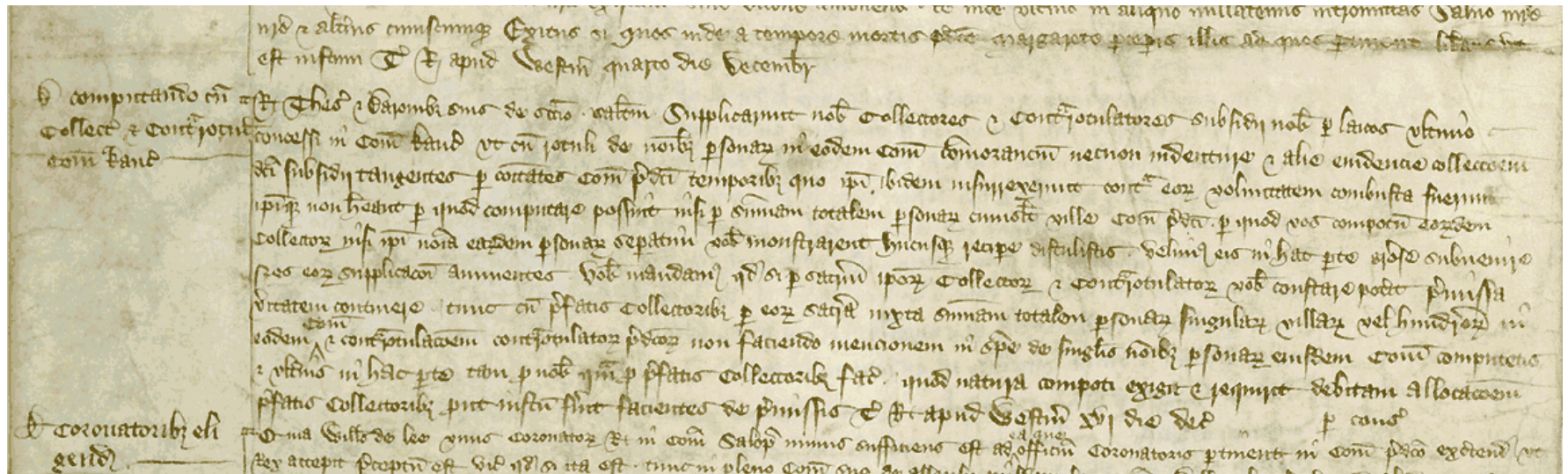
Look out for the following:

How are the documents stored?

How do they know where to look for a document?

How do historians find out what happened?

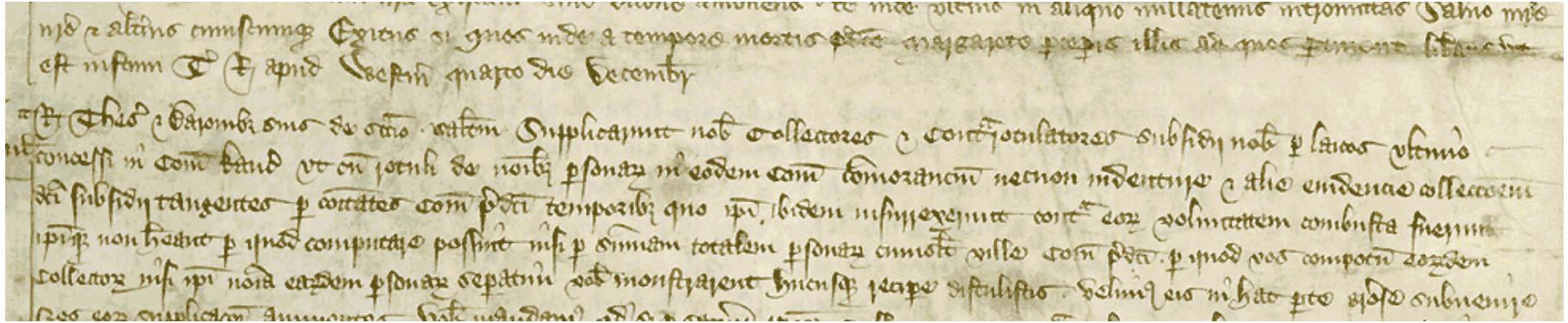
We will be looking at an **extract** from this source.



Can you read it? The next slide will zoom in even more...

What language is it in?

Is it neat? Can you make out any words?



Luckily for us, this one has been *transcribed*.

What can you work out now?

Rex thesaurio et baronibus suis de scaccarii salutem. Supplicarunt nobis collectores et contrarotulatores subsidii nobis per laicos ultimo concessi in comitatu Kantie ut cum rotuli de nominibus personarum in eodem comitatu commorantium necnon indenture et alie evidencie colleccionem dicti subsidii tangentes per comitates comitatus predicti temporibus quo ipsi ibidem insurrexerunt contra eorum voluntatem combusta fuerunt ipsique non habeant per quod computare possint nisi per summam totalem personarum cuiuslibet ville comitatus predicti per quod vos compotum eorundem collectorum nisi ipsi nomina earundem personarum seperatim vobis monstrarent hucusque recipere distulistis velimus eis in hac parte grosere subvenire nos eorum supplicacioni annuentes. Vobis mandamus quod si per sacramentum ipsorum collectorum et contrarotulatorum vobis constare poterit premissa veritatem continere, tunc cum prefatis collectoribus per eorum sacramentam iuxta summam totalem personarum singularum villarum vel hundredorum in eodem comitatu et contrarocionem contrarotulatorum predictorum non faciendo mencionem in specie de singulis hominibus personarum eiusdem comitatus computetis et ulterius in hac parte tam pro nobis quam pro prefatis collectoribus factas quod natura compoti exigit et requirit debitam allocacionem prefatis collectoribus prout iustum fuerit facientes de premissis. Teste Rege apud Westminster xvi die Decembris. Per Consilio.

Luckily for us, this one has been *translated*.
What can you work out now?

The King to the Treasurer and the Barons of the Exchequer. Order, upon petition of the collectors and controllers in Kent of the subsidy last granted to the King by laymen, showing that the rolls of names of those dwelling in Kent, the indentures and other evidences concerning the collection were burned by the commons of the county in their late insurrection, and that the collectors have not wherewithal to account but by the sum total of persons of every town, wherefore the Treasurer and the Barons have deferred to receive their account unless they showed severally those persons' names, if by oath of the collectors and controllers assured that these things are true, to account with the collectors upon oath by the sum total of persons of the towns or hundreds, and by control of the controllers, making no special mention of the names. Witnessed by the King at Westminster, 16 December. By the Council.

The key points have been highlighted.

The King to the Treasurer and the Barons of the Exchequer. Order, upon petition of the collectors and controllers in Kent of the **subsidy** last granted to the King by laymen, showing that the rolls of names of those dwelling in Kent, the indentures and other **evidences concerning the collection were burned** by **the commons of the county in their late insurrection, and that** the collectors have not wherewithal to account but by the sum total of persons of every town, wherefore the Treasurer and the Barons have deferred to receive their account unless they showed severally those persons' names, if by oath of the collectors and controllers assured that these things are true, to account with the collectors upon oath by the sum total of persons of the towns or hundreds, and by control of the controllers, making no special mention of the names. Witnessed by the King at Westminster, 16 December. By the Council.

How did the peasants rebel?



Another word for tax

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Another word for
rebellion

Peasants

What does this tell us about how organised the peasants were?



What does it tell us about their aims?

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Does this challenge any aspect of the traditional interpretation?

Remember – historians might use hundreds of sources (maybe even more).

It's hard work being a historian!

We have the following information to try to answer our remaining questions about the events of 1381.

- A list of occupations of people involved
- Extra sources
- Information about chronicles (a particular type of source – we used extracts from some last lesson)
- A database about the people involved in 1381
- An interactive map showing what happened and where
- <https://padlet.com/ha1381/1381-revolt-map-bnofracmmfti1cyc>
- Information about key figures

Use these to add to your notes from last lesson.



People of 1381 database

A group of historians have recently completed a major project to find out more about what happened in 1381.

They carried out detailed research using hundreds of sources.

People of 1381 database

They have built a database so that people can now use their research to answer their own questions about the events of 1381.

We are going to look at one example to see how it works.

People of 1381 database

We are going to search for a person.

[Home](#) [Database](#) [Search ▾](#) [Maps ▾](#)



The People of 1381

Participants' Names: A-Z

Names are ordered alphabetically by surname and first name.

Click on a letter to view/hide the names.

Each name links through to full information about the participant.

[A](#)

[B](#)

[C](#)

[D](#)

[E](#)

People of 1381 database

Click on **H** and then scroll down for **Robert Hull**. You will also get an idea of how many people are in the database and how many people are involved! You will come to this page....

Participant

First name	Robert
Last name	Hull
Gender	Male
Occupation	Mariner
Domicile	London
Source	TNA KB 27/483 rex m. 8d
Comments	shipman

Incidents

ID	Summary	Description	Location	Role	Charges	Comments on role	View incident
2509	Attack on Abbey of St Mary Graces, 14 June 1381	Robert Hull with rebels from Kent and Essex entered Abbey of St	East Smithfield, Ossulstone, Middlesex	Accused	Not specified	Pardon dated 10 January 1382 and letters de non	View Incident page

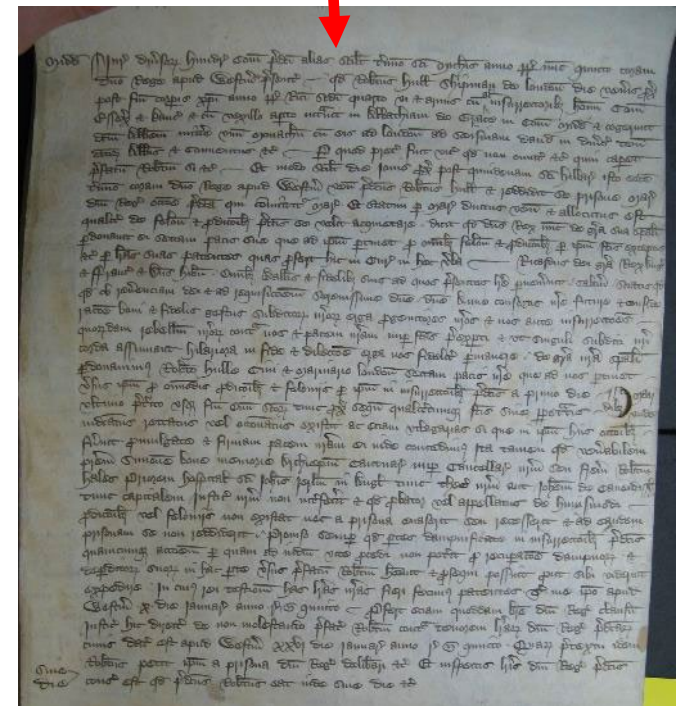
It tells you briefly about the records for the person. If you click on **Source**, it will take you to details of the document where the historians found out about this person. It may also include an image of the source too – like the one here.

Participant

First name	Robert
Last name	Hull
Gender	Male
Occupation	Mariner
Domicile	London
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Incidents

ID	Summary	Description	Location
2509	Attack on Abbey of St Mary Graces, 14 June 1381	Robert Hull with rebels from Kent and Essex entered Abbey of St	East Smithfield, Ossulstone Middlesex



People of 1381 database

You can try searching for people or maybe try the places and see whether anywhere near to you was involved in the Revolt...

Occupations of people involved

You can pick a couple that you don't know the meaning of and try to find out what they were.

What can you infer about the *number* of different jobs?

What can you infer about the *type* of people involved?

Does this challenge the traditional interpretation in any way?



Occupations of people of 1381

Alderman	Cooper	Havering
Apprentice	Cordwainer	Hensman
Approver	Cornmeter	Herder
Armourer	Corvisor	Holy water clerk
Baker	Couper	Horner
Barber	Cowherd	Horse courser
Bargeman	Currier	Hosier
Barker	Cutler	Hunter
Bladesmith	Dauber	Innkeeper
Boatman	Debden	Ironmonger
Boatwright	Dragger	Joiner
Bowyer	Draper	Keeper
Brewer	Driver	Knight
	Dyer	Labourer
	Esquire	Lardener



Key figures involved

Which people are rebels?

Can you add any more information to your sheet?

Why might the age of the King be a factor?



Map of events

Map of events

The pins show all the places where the Revolt happened. If you click on some of them, you can find out what was happening in different parts of the country.

<https://padlet.com/ha1381/1381-revolt-map-bnofracmmfti1cyc>

What can you work out about events from this source?

Pleas held at Royston on Saturday 6 July 1381 before the aforesaid assigned justices.

Hundreds of Armingford and Stow Longa

Twelve jurors say that William Vicory of Linton and John Webbe of Papworth were felons associated with John Hanchach the chief leader, and John Peper. And that on Saturday 15th June 1381 they were ringleaders in the overthrowing of the buildings of Thomas Haselden, and the selling of his goods and chattels. And they made a public proclamation fomenting oppression and treason, namely on seven occasions or more, in prejudice of the king. And be it known that the said William Vicory gave himself up to prison for these felonies, and remains in the custody of the Sheriff.

A plea to a court
Hundreds is the name of a type of court in medieval times
Belongings

Criminals

Villages in Cambridgeshire, east of England

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Pleas held before Hugh la Zouche and his associates, justices of the lord king appointed to subdue, punish and chastise rebels and disturbers of the peace in the aforesaid county [Cambridgeshire] on Tuesday immediately before the feast of St Margaret the Virgin, in the fifth year of the reign of King Richard the Second [16 July 1381]

John Shirley of the county of Nottingham was arrested on the grounds that he was clearly wandering through divers counties at the time of the [recent] disturbance, rebellion and mayhem, spreading lies and falsehoods from region to region, likely to cause trouble and to breach the king's peace and alarm and disturb the people, and for making derogatory statements after the proclamation of the king's peace on the abovementioned day and year. While the justices of the lord king were present and resident in the town, he said in an inn in Bridge Street in Cambridge, where many people had gathered to hear fresh falsehoods from him, that the stewards of the lord king, his justices and many of his officials were more worthy to be drawn and hanged and suffer the other punishments and tortures prescribed by the law than the priest, John Ball, who had been convicted by law as a traitor and a felon, because he said that [Ball] had been condemned to death by the said ministers, with the assent of the king, falsely, unjustly and maliciously, simply for being a true and honest man, speaking out about the councils and courts of the realm and telling of the injustices and oppressions inflicted by the king and the said ministers upon the people, and his death will not go unpunished, but within a short time will be repaid by the king and his officials and ministers. These words and threats were both injurious to the crown and made to the manifest contempt and alarm of the people. Whereupon the said John Shirley was immediately taken by the sheriff before the said justices in Cambridge castle, where he was interrogated about these matters and closely examined concerning the conduct of his life and his place of residence and also with respect to his status. This information was acknowledged by him before the justices, and it was clearly established that he was of low bearing and estate. In addition trustworthy witnesses were questioned who had been present at the time that he had spoken these lies, evil words, threats and falsehoods, and after they had been sworn to tell the truth about these matters, they gave evidence that all the things that he was alleged to have said, had indeed been said by him, and when he was examined separately, he did not deny the allegations. Therefore, by judgement of the said commissioners, he was hanged. And the escheator was ordered to inquire diligently into his lands and tenements, goods and chattels, and to dispose of them accordingly on behalf of the king.

Original source



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Chronicles

Chronicles are contemporary accounts of events. They are also sometimes called *annals*. They tend to have a narrative structure – they tell the story of events in each year in chronological order.

However, although they are often written at the time of events, this doesn't mean that the author was present at events. We need to think about how well informed the author is.

There are four main chronicles that historians use when studying the events of 1381. It is important to note that they do not all agree on events. We will look at each one in turn.

Chronicles: Jean Froissart's *Chronicles*

Although not English, Froissart is a very important source for this time period. His work was highly regarded at the time, and is still considered very useful today.

He travelled around the country, spent time in London and interviewed lots of people (e.g. politicians and soldiers) about the events of which he wrote. His work has information from people who were with the King during events. It does contain some inaccuracies.

Chronicles: Thomas Walsingham's *Chronica Maiora*

Thomas Walsingham was a monk from the Abbey of St Albans. There was a tradition of monks from this abbey writing a chronicle.

St Albans is 20 miles from London and was an important stopping-off point on journeys to and from the capital. In this way, monks were able to keep up to date with news (and gossip) from London.

It is important to note that the Abbey of St Albans was attacked during the events of 1381. This will undoubtedly have affected Walsingham's view of events.

Walsingham did witness some of the events that he discusses, and will have seen some of the documents he talks about. However, he was keen to discredit the rebels.

Chronicles: Henry Knighton

Knighton was based in Leicester, but does reproduce some documents from the time and vividly describes the panic in Leicester.

Chronicles: *Anonimale Chronicle*

This was written within a few years of the Revolt. We think that it was probably written by someone based in York.

It is traditionally considered the most accurate of the chronicles and the most sympathetic to the rebels.

Chronicles

The chronicles do tend to have a particular point of view or 'side'. Whose do you think it is? None of them were impartial, and most did not present the rebels in a positive light. They also tend to focus on events in London.

How does this affect our use of the chronicles?

What other evidence might we need to balance them out?

With your new knowledge about the chronicles, go back to the evidence that we used last lesson – does this change anything?



What happened in 1381?

Last lesson, we focused on the traditional interpretation.

Have we discovered anything new from the more recent research?

- There were a variety of causes.
- The leaders were Wat Tyler and John Ball.
- They had no clear aim.
- The peasants rebelled violently against the King.
- It was mainly in London.
- It was widespread and serious.
- It was unsuccessful.



What happened in 1381?

These are some of the key findings from the new research:

- **There was a variety of different types of people involved.**
- **It was much more organised than previously thought.**
- **It was a hugely significant event that worried the government greatly.**
- **It varied from place to place and the specific causes were often more to do with local area issues.**
- **There was no single leader.**

Having done more research, what do we know as a class?
How certain are we?

There will be some things about which you might be more certain than others – just as real historians would be.

The worksheet is a rectangular card with a white background and a thin black border. It is tilted slightly to the right. On the left side, there is a vertical yellow arrow pointing upwards. At the top of the arrow, it says "Very Certain". At the bottom of the arrow, it says "Not certain/ need more information". The card is divided into three vertical columns by dashed lines. The first column is labeled "Who?" at the top. The second column is labeled "What?" at the top. The third column is labeled "Outcomes?" at the top. Each column is a large, empty rectangular box with rounded corners, intended for students to write their findings.



How do historians find out about the past?

So how do historians find out about events of 1381?



How is technology helping historians to find out more?



Why is it hard to discover what really happened in 1381?