

## 1381: a chronology

The chronology of the Revolt that is suggested from the source material is presented here in different sections. It is presented to give teachers a sense of the scale of this revolt and the inadequacy of a narrative that focuses on the events at Smithfield in June 1381. The first section concerns the dates of events that are argued to be part of causing the Revolt in 1381. The second section puts the 1381 events on one timeline. The third section divides 1381 events by geographical locations for colleagues working in specific areas. You could use parts of this chronology in class in conjunction with the 1381 map.

### 1. Causes

1375: Truce of Bruges as a result, England was left in possession of few French lands

1376: The Good Parliament at Westminster attacks royal officials

1376: Death of Edward the Black Prince

1377: The first poll tax

1377: Death of Edward III and succession of Richard II

1377: Papal schism – two popes challenged each other for control of the Roman Catholic Church

1377: French attacks on the South Coast of England

1378: Unsuccessful campaign by John of Gaunt to capture St Malo

1379: Third Parliament grants second poll tax

1379: Failed naval expedition of Arundel

1380: Archbishop Sudbury appointed Chancellor of England

1380: Failed expedition of army under Thomas, Earl of Buckingham

1380: Third poll tax

1381: January – Royal Council resolves to investigate invasion of third poll tax and commissions appointed to recover arrears

1381: February – Robert Hales appointed Treasurer of England

### 2. 1381 events

May: There are rumours and reports of tax resistance.

7 May: Townspeople attack the Guildhall in the town of Beverley.

30 May: Thomas Bampton, the King's tax collector for Essex, is chased out of Brentwood by villagers from Fobbing, Corringham and Stanford.

2 June: Chief Justice, Sir Robert Belknap, and a small party of soldiers are chased out of Brentwood. Two of Belknap's men are captured and killed. First reported rebel attack in Kent against the Abbey of Lesnes.

5 June: Rebels take control of Dartford.

6 June: Rebels take control of Rochester and its castle.

7 June: Wat Tyler is elected leader of the rebels. John Ball is rescued from Maidstone Prison.

8 June: The people of Yalding receive news of the rebellion.

9 June: Sir John Legge, the King's tax collector for Kent, hears about the rebellion and returns to London. Wat Tyler and the rebels march to Canterbury. Rebels attack the house of Roger of Harleston, Burgess of Cambridge.

10 June: The rebels enter Canterbury. The castle and the Archbishop of Canterbury's palace are ransacked.

11 June: The Kent rebels leave Canterbury and begin their march to London. The marchers break into several manor houses on the way and destroy any documents concerning the feudal system. Imprisoned serfs are set free by the rebels.

12 June: The rebels from Kent arrive at Blackheath on the outskirts of London. Soon afterwards, the Essex rebels arrive at Mile End. Rebels receive news that peasant rebellions are taking place all over England. Peasants also begin arriving in London from Surrey, Sussex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire. It is estimated that there are about 30,000 people in Wat Tyler's army. John Wrawe leads a band of Essex rebels into Suffolk to spread revolt.

Townpeople present demands to Thomas de la Mare, Abbot of St Albans Abbey, for the town to be free of the Abbey's control.

13 June (morning): News reaches the rebels that Richard II has left Westminster Palace and gone to the Tower of London. The King's main adviser, John of Gaunt, is in Scotland. Two senior members of the government, Simon Sudbury, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the King's treasurer, Robert Hales, are with the King. Richard talks to the rebels from the Tower by St Catherine's Wharf. Wat Tyler sends a letter to Richard II. The King, who only has an army of 520 men, agrees to meet the rebels at Rotherhithe.

The King arrives at Rotherhithe on a barge. The rebels demand that the King's leading advisers, John of Gaunt, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Hales and John Legge, should be executed. The King is unwilling to leave his barge, and after a few minutes he returns to the Tower of London.

13 June (afternoon): The Kent rebels arrive at the Southwark entrance to London. Supporters of the rebels inside the walls lower the drawbridge. The rebels now enter London. Soon afterwards, they set fire to John of Gaunt's Savoy Palace. The palace is burnt to the ground.

Wrawe's rebels attack the property of wealthy men and march on the Abbey at Bury St Edmunds.

14 June (morning): Richard II agrees to meet Wat Tyler and the rebels at 8:00 am outside the town walls at Mile End. At the meeting, Wat Tyler explains to the King the demands of the rebels. These include the end of all feudal services, the freedom to buy and sell all goods, and a free pardon for all offences committed during the rebellion. The King immediately grants these demands. Wat Tyler also claims that the King's officers in charge of the poll tax are guilty of corruption and should be executed. The King replies that all people found guilty of corruption would be punished by law. Charters are then handed out that have been signed by the King. These charters give serfs their freedom. After receiving their charters, the vast majority of peasants go home.

14 June (afternoon): About 400 rebels, led by John Starling, enter the Tower of London and capture Simon Sudbury, Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Hales, the King's treasurer, and John Legge. Sudbury, Hales and Legge are executed at Tower Hill. The Massacre of Flemings takes place. Jack Straw and rebels burn Hale's manor at Highbury. The rebels have clear targets: royal officials, wealthy churchmen and records of land ownership and debts are the priority. Killing is not random. Victims are carefully selected.

Rebels led by John Battsford and Thomas Sampson enter Ipswich and attack the property of a poll tax collector and the Archdeacon of Suffolk.

There is rebellion in Thetford (Norfolk). William Ufford, Earl of Suffolk, flees Norfolk disguised as a servant, to join King Richard in London.

Messengers arrive in the early morning in St Albans, asking for support for the revolt. William Grindecobbe and a group of townspeople head to London. The Abbot also sends monks to London to report on events. Grindecobbe returns in the late evening with letters from the King granting freedom for St Albans from control by the Abbey.

Several townspeople, including the vicar of Bridgwater, Nicholas Frompton, are in London pursuing a legal case against William Cammell, the master of the Hospital of St John in Bridgwater.

15 June: William Walworth, Mayor of London, raises an army of about 5,000 men. Richard II sends a message to Wat Tyler asking to meet him at Smithfield that evening. At Smithfield, the King asks Wat Tyler and his rebels to leave London. Wat Tyler makes further demands, such as the end of tithes, the abolition of bishops, the redistribution of wealth, equality before the law, and the freedom to kill the animals in the forest. William Walworth, Mayor of London, begins to argue with Wat Tyler. William Walworth stabs and kills Wat Tyler. The rebels obey King Richard's instructions to leave London. Royal authority is restored in London. The execution of Jack Straw possibly takes place.

The Prior of Cambridge attempts to flee the rebels but is captured at Newmarket and beheaded in Mildenhall. His head is put on a spike and returned to Bury. Sir John Cavendish, Chief Justice of the King's Bench, tries to flee rebels by ferry across a river but is prevented by Katherine Gamen. Cavendish is caught and beheaded. His head is put on a spike and returned to Bury. Cambridge townspeople, in alliance with county rebels, led by John Hanchach and Geoffrey Cobbe, both gentlemen, engage in two nights of violence, including an attack on Corpus Christi College, linked to John of Gaunt. There is widespread looting and a bonfire of university records. During the attacks in Cambridge, local woman Margery Starre is heard to cry 'Away with the learning of the clerks, away with it.' Townspeople start to destroy fences put up by the Abbey around common land. The rebels hold a meeting with representatives from surrounding villages in Luton, Watford, Barnet, Rickmansworth, Tring and Redbourn, swearing an oath of loyalty to each other, and demanding their rights of freedom from the Abbey's control. The rebels then march on the Abbey prison and release all the prisoners, in return for an oath of loyalty to the 'commons', except for a John Baron, who is found guilty of his crimes and executed. At 9:00 am, Richard Wallingford arrives with royal letters granting the freedom of St Albans from control by the Abbey. Abbot de la Mare has little choice but to comply with the King's orders. Sir Walter Lee, a local knight with the royal party, is sent into St Albans to negotiate with the rebels. He meets with Grindecobbe, imprisons him and attempts to have him executed. Tenants demand the Charter of Privileges from the Prior of Dunstable Priory.

Mid-June: A messenger arrives to warn people that a band of rebels is heading towards Leicester to attack the castle, owned by John of Gaunt. The townspeople decide to resist the rebels, and the following morning a 1,200-strong armed group assembles on Gartree Hill just outside the town walls. There is no attack.

16 June: Rebel bands enter Ipswich and destroy property. Cambridge University is forced to surrender all its royal privileges to the town and make a bond of over £3,000. The town of Ely also experiences violent disturbances in which the houses of the wealthy are targeted by rebels.

17 June: The Earl of Buckingham and Sir Thomas Trivet are sent to crush rebellion in Kent.

Rebels led by Geoffrey Lister and Sir Roger Bacon assemble outside Norwich at Mousehold Heath and enter into the city without opposition. Lister declares himself 'king of Norfolk' and sends messengers to London to negotiate with the King. A number of major Norfolk landowners are held captive and one, Sir Robert Salle, is killed by one of his own villeins. Despenser, Bishop of Norwich, is in Stamford, Lincolnshire, when he hears news of the revolt and sets out with a handful of men-at-arms and archers to resist it. Lister's messengers are intercepted by Bishop Despenser and his men, who behead the rebels.

Rebels attack Barnwell Priory, which had been in dispute with local people over enclosures of the commons. The rebellion spreads to Peterborough and Justice of the Peace Edmund Walsingham is beheaded.

Lee is forced to release Grindecobbe when the townspeople threaten to destroy the Abbey of St Albans. Later, Grindecobbe and other local leaders are again imprisoned and put on trial.

There is partial destructions by rebels of walls, gates and property in Beverley.

18 June: Richard II orders the suppression of the revolt. Wrawe leads a rebel attack on Mettingham Castle (Suffolk), looting valuables and burning legal documents. Rebels enter Great Yarmouth. There are riots in Lowestoft.

18/19 June: Bishop Despenser leads an armed band into the area and defeats rebels at Ely and then Cambridge.

19 June: Rebels bearing banners and led by Thomas Engilby and Nicholas Frompton attack the Hospital of St John in Bridgwater.

21 June: The execution of Hugh Lavenham at Ilchester by rebels takes place.

23 June: Richard II and his army arrive in Waltham from London. Richard II announces that he has cancelled the charters that he issued in London on 14 June. The Earl of Suffolk, with 500 men-at-arms, suppresses the Suffolk rebellion and captures John Wrawe.

23 June: There are riots in Scarborough in support of the revolt against local landowners.

24 June: Bishop Despenser crushes rebellion in Norwich.

25 June: Bishop Despenser routs Lister and rebels at North Walsham. The accounts disagree as to whether there is bitter hand-to-hand fighting, or the rebels flee when they first see Despenser's armed band. Lister is captured and executed. He is hung, drawn and quartered and parts sent to Norwich, Great Yarmouth, Lynn and Lister's own home as an example to other rebels. Sir Roger Bacon is not executed but is pardoned after being imprisoned for a period of time.

27 June: Richard and his court direct repression from Havering.

28 June: The King's soldiers defeat Essex rebels at Billericay. About 500 rebels are killed in the battle.

Late June: A rebellion by local people is led by William Napton against the Mayor of Northampton. A rebellion by local townspeople is led by local cloth workers against wealthy landowners in Winchester.

1 July: There are attempts by rebels to resist the royal commissioners in Kent.

An armed attack by rebels in York takes place against wealthy landowners.

2 July: Richard II, at Chelmsford, formally revokes his previous charters of manumission.

5 July: William Gildebourne, Thomas Baker and other rebels from Fobbing are executed at Chelmsford. During the next few weeks, an estimated 1,500 rebels are executed.

The Earl of Northumberland is sent to restore order in Scarborough.

Early July: Reports of rebellion in the area lead to the return of the Earl of Warwick.

10 July: The trial of Wrawe takes place in London, and he is later executed on 6 May 1382. The Earl of Nottingham is appointed to resist rebellion in Lincolnshire.

12 July: Richard II arrives at St Albans to oversee the execution of rebel leaders and to have local people swear to be loyal.

13 July: John Ball is captured in Coventry and taken to be tried at St Albans.

15 July: The execution of Grindecobbe takes place, along with other local leaders and radical preacher John Ball (who was captured in Coventry and brought to St Albans for execution). John Ball is hung, drawn and quartered.

20 July: Richard II leaves St Albans for Berkhamsted after receiving an oath of loyalty from the men of Hertfordshire. There is a rebellion by local villagers on the Wirral against the Abbot of Chester.

11 August: The Archbishop of York and John of Gaunt are commissioned to settle disputes between townspeople in York.

29 September: Peasants, under the leadership of Thomas Harding, make plans to capture Maidstone.

30 September: Leaders of the planned rebellion are arrested at Boughton Heath. Later, ten of these men are found guilty of treason and executed.

12 October: John of Gaunt is commissioned to restore peace in Beverley.

13 November: The first Parliament after the revolt is held.

1382: Royal letters of pardon are given to York, Scarborough and Beverley.

### **3. 1381 locations (other than London)**

#### **Essex**

May: There are rumours and reports of resistance to the poll tax.

2 June: There is an armed attack on Robert Bealknap and his tax collectors near Brentwood.

11 June: Essex rebels, led by Jack Straw, march on London and camp at Mile End.

28 June: Essex rebels are routed at Billericay and leaders are executed.

2 July: Richard II at Chelmsford formally revokes his previous agreements with the rebels.

#### **Kent**

2 June: The first reported rebel attack in Kent takes place against the Abbey of Lesnes.

5 June: Rebels seize and take control of Dartford.

6 June: Rebels take control of Rochester and its castle.

7 June: Rebels led by Wat Tyler enter Maidstone and release John Ball from prison.

10 June: Tyler and rebels take control of Canterbury.

11 June: Tyler and rebels march on London.

12 June: Kent rebels assemble on Blackheath, near Greenwich.

17 June: The Earl of Buckingham and Sir Thomas Trivet are sent to crush the rebellion in Kent.

1 July: Attempts by rebels to resist the royal commissioners in Kent fail.

#### **Suffolk**

12 June: John Wrawe leads a band of Essex rebels into Suffolk to spread revolt.

13 June: Wrawe's rebels attack the property of wealthy men and march on the Abbey at Bury St Edmunds.

14 June: Rebels led by John Battsford and Thomas Sampson enter Ipswich and attack the property of a poll tax collector and the Archdeacon of Suffolk.

15 June: The Prior of Cambridge attempts to flee rebels but is captured at Newmarket and beheaded in Mildenhall. His head is put on a spike and returned to Bury.

15 June: Sir John Cavendish, Chief Justice of the King's Bench, tries to flee rebels by ferry across a river but is prevented by Katherine Gamen. Cavendish is caught and beheaded. His head is put on a spike and returned to Bury.

16 June: Rebel bands enter Ipswich and destroy property.

18 June: Wrawe leads a rebel attack on Mettingham Castle, looting valuables and burning legal documents. There are riots in Lowestoft.

23 June.: The Earl of Suffolk, with 500 men-at-arms, suppresses the Suffolk rebellion and captures John Wrawe.

10 July: The trial of Wrawe takes place in London and he is later executed on 6 May 1382.

## **Norfolk**

14 June: There is a rebellion in Thetford. William Ufford, Earl of Suffolk, flees Norfolk disguised as a servant to join King Richard in London.

17 June: Rebels led by Geoffrey Lister and Sir Roger Bacon assemble outside Norwich at Mousehold Heath and enter into the city without opposition. Lister declares himself 'king of Norfolk' and sends messengers to London to negotiate with the King. A number of major Norfolk landowners are held captive and one, Sir Robert Salle, is killed by one of his own villeins. Despenser, Bishop of Norwich, is in Stamford, Lincolnshire when he hears news of the revolt and sets out with a handful of men-at-arms and archers to resist it. Lister's messengers are intercepted by Bishop Despenser and his men, who behead the messengers.

18 June: Rebels enter Great Yarmouth.

24 June: Bishop Despenser crushes the rebellion in Norwich.

25 June: Bishop Despenser routs Lister and the rebels at North Walsham. The accounts disagree as to whether there is bitter hand-to-hand fighting or the rebels flee when they first see Despenser's armed band. Lister is captured and executed. He is hung, drawn and quartered and parts are sent to Norwich, Great Yarmouth, Lynn and Lister's own home as an example to other rebels. Sir Roger Bacon is not executed but is pardoned after being imprisoned for a period of time.

## **Cambridgeshire**

9 June: Rebels attack the house of Roger of Harleston, Burgess of Cambridge.

15 June: Cambridge townspeople, in alliance with county rebels, led by John Hanchach and Geoffrey Cobbe, both gentlemen, engage in two nights of violence, including an attack on Corpus Christi College, linked to John of Gaunt. There is widespread looting and a bonfire of university records. During the attacks in Cambridge, local woman Margery Starre is heard to cry, 'Away with the learning of the clerks, away with it.'

16 June: The university is forced to surrender all its royal privileges to the town and make a bond of over £3,000. The town of Ely also experiences violent disturbances, in which the houses of the wealthy are targeted by rebels.

17 June: Rebels attack Barnwell Priory, which had been in dispute with local people over enclosures of the commons. The rebellion spreads to Peterborough and Justice of the Peace Edmund Walsingham is beheaded.

18/19 June: Bishop Despenser leads an armed band into the area and defeats rebels at Ely and then Cambridge.

## **St Albans and Hertfordshire**

12 June: Townspeople present demands to Thomas de la Mare, Abbot of St Albans Abbey, for the town to be free of the Abbey's control.

14 June: Messengers arrive in the early morning in St Albans, asking for support for the revolt. William Grindecobbe and a group of townspeople head to London. The Abbot also sends monks to London to report on events. Grindecobbe returns in the late evening with letters from the King granting freedom for St Albans from control by the Abbey.

15 June: Townspeople start to destroy fences put up by the Abbey around common land. The rebels hold a meeting with representatives from surrounding villages in Luton, Watford, Barnet, Rickmansworth, Tring and Redbourn, swearing an oath of loyalty to each other, and demanding their rights of freedom from the Abbey's control. The rebels then march on the Abbey prison and release all the prisoners, in return for an oath of loyalty to the 'commons', except for a John Baron, who is found guilty of his crimes and executed. At 9:00 am, Richard Wallingford arrives with royal letters granting the freedom of St Albans from control by the Abbey. Abbot de la Mare has little choice but to comply with the King's orders. Sir Walter Lee, a local knight with the royal party, is sent into St Albans to negotiate with the rebels. He meets with Grindecobbe, imprisons him and attempts to have him executed.

17 June: Lee is forced to release Grindecobbe when the townspeople threaten to destroy the Abbey. Later, Grindecobbe and other local leaders are again imprisoned and put on trial.

12 July: Richard II arrives at St Albans to oversee the execution of rebel leaders and to have local people swear their loyalty to him.

15 July: The execution of Grindecobbe takes place, along with other local leaders and radical preacher John Ball, who was captured in Coventry and brought to St Albans for execution.

20 July: Richard II leaves St Albans for Berkhamsted after receiving an oath of loyalty from the men of Hertfordshire.

## **Somerset**

14 June: Several townspeople, including the vicar Nicholas Frompton, of Bridgwater, are in London pursuing a legal case against William Cammell, the master of the Hospital of St John in Bridgwater.

19 June: Rebels bearing banners and led by Thomas Engilby and Nicholas Frompton attack the Hospital of St John in Bridgwater.

21 June: The execution of Hugh Lavenham at Ilchester by rebels takes place.

## **Yorkshire**

7 May: Townspeople attack the Guildhall in the town of Beverley.

17 June: There is partial destruction by rebels of walls, gates and property in Beverley.

23 June: There are riots in Scarborough in support of the revolt against local landowners.

1 July: There is an armed attack by rebels in York against wealthy landowners.

5 July: The Earl of Northumberland is sent to restore order in Scarborough.

6 July: The murder of William Haldane takes place.

11 August: The Archbishop of York and John of Gaunt are commissioned to settle disputes between townspeople in York.

12 October: John of Gaunt is commissioned to restore peace in Beverley.

1382: Royal letters of pardon are given to York, Scarborough and Beverley.

### **Leicestershire**

Mid-June: A messenger arrives to warn people that a band of rebels is heading towards Leicester to attack the castle, owned by John of Gaunt. The townspeople decide to resist the rebels and the following morning a 1,200-strong armed group assembles on Gartree Hill just outside the town walls. There is no attack.

### **Northamptonshire**

Late June: A rebellion by local people is led by William Napton against the Mayor of Northampton.

### **Winchester**

Late June: A rebellion by local townspeople is led by local cloth workers against wealthy landowners.

### **Bedfordshire**

15 June: Tenants demand a Charter of Privileges from the Prior of Dunstable Priory.

### **Warwickshire**

Early July: Reports of rebellion in the area lead to the return of the Earl of Warwick.

### **Lincoln**

10 July: The Earl of Nottingham is appointed to resist rebellion in Lincolnshire.

### **Wirral**

20 July: There is a rebellion by local villagers against the Abbot of Chester.

## **Demands**

### **First set of demands (Mile End)**

*End to serfdom (bonded labour)*

*Free market (i.e. serfs could sell produce wherever they liked)*

*Land rent to be reduced to 4d per acre*

*Free pardon for anyone involved in the uprising*

King Richard agreed to these demands, and this was written down in charters for every town represented.

They demanded government officials to be executed (Sudbury and Hales). A crowd then rushed the Tower of London, seized the two men and beheaded them.

### **Second set of demands (Smithfield)**

*Abolition of the aristocracy (except for the King)*

*Abolition of the senior clergy (except for John Ball, as the next Archbishop of Canterbury)*

*Local courts*

*Local police forces*

King Richard agreed, with the request that the people always respect the monarchy, and then led the people to Clerkenwell.