



Postgraduate/Distance Learning Assignment coversheet & feedback form

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For completion by the student:		
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The Peasants' Revolt of 1381, although it started in Essex when the non-payment of the poll tax was being investigated, cannot be viewed in isolation. The plague had spread across Europe in the first half of the fourteenth century, reducing the population by between a third and a half giving rise to an acute labour shortage. These developments radically affected the relationship between landlords and tenants. The continuing war with France, which at first King Edward III came out the victor was emptying the Exchequer and battles were being lost. The ailing Edward was intent on finishing victorious and needed to raise the funding to continue the fight. Religious changes were also happening the catastrophe of the plague across Europe was seen by some as the wrath of God. John Wycliffe an English priest and scholar was outspoken and questioned the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and the power it had on the state. He was at odds with the church but to spread the message of equality he employed what were called poor or itinerant priests, for example John Bull, to speak to the people.

Even with the death of Edward III in 1377 who was succeeded by his ten year old grandson the governing of the country continued under John of Gaunt in the same manner.

I have found legal documents that lead up to and follow the revolt of June 1381 which show the disregard by the government to the fundamental changes that have affected the population. The chronicles, three mentioned below, describe the events from different perspectives.

Documents listed chronologically.

Statute of Labours Act 1351

London

The National Archives (TNA)

E (Records of the Exchequer)

175 (Exchequer: King's Remembrancer)

2 (23 Statutes on wages for labourers and artisans...)

Date: 25 Edward III (25 January 1351-24 January 1352)

Statute to prohibit the increase of wages and movement of workers. The statute was poorly enforced and in effective. Printed in Statutes of the Realm, I, pp 311-316

1377 Poll tax example

London

The National Archives (TNA)

E (Records of the Exchequer)

179 (Exchequer: King's Remembrancer)

67/15 (Clerical poll tax)

Membrane one and two relate to the poll tax granted to Edward III by the clergy in the province of Canterbury 1377.

1381 Poll tax example. Levied on York Province

London

The National Archives (TNA)

E (Records of the Exchequer)

179 (Exchequer: King's Remembrancer)

62/6 (Clerical poll tax for York province)

Date: 10 January 1381

Both Poll taxes levied to raise money for the defence of the country, although I have used different locations transcribed accounts show the discrepancies in registration.

Appointment of Commissioners

London

The National Archives (TNA)

C (Records of the Enrolment office)

60 (Chancery: Fine Rolls)

183 (piece)

Date: 4 Richard II (June 1381)

Commissioners were appointed to enforce payment of the Third Poll tax 1381 which increased the peasants contribution from 4d to a shilling and was to include all above the age of 15. Fraud was suspected when the returns for 1381 were compared with those from 1377.

Pardons

London

The National Archives (TNA)

C (Records of the Enrolment Office)

67 (Chancery: Supplement Patent Rolls)

29 (Letters of pardons)

Date: 5-21 Richard II (June 1381 - June 1398)

Post - mortem and Pardon. The Westminster Parliament November - December 1381
Ro. Parl., III 98 - 103. See below

Trials

London

The National Archives (TNA)

KB (King's Bench)

27 (Court of King's: Plea and Crown Sides)

483 (Coram Reg Chief Justice's roll, venue: Westminster)

Rex, Memb. 26

Date: 5 Richard II (Hilary term, 1382)

Trial of two Essex rebels, John Hermare and Nicholas Gromond who were at the attack on the Savoy Palace the home of John of Gaunt. They were released when they produced their royal letters of pardon of 20 December 1381.

London

British Library

Royal MS 18 E II, ff165v-175v

Jean Froissart's Chronicles, volume 2. Written possibly in Chimay in Belgium where was living in the late fourteenth century and for royal consumption the manuscript contains illuminated illustrations of the events, one in particular of King Richard meeting with the people and the death of Wat Tyler as well as full descriptions of the whole episode.

London
British Library
Royal MS 13 E ix

The St Albans Chronicle, *Histria Anglicana* II contains a section (ff 177 - 326) covering 1377 to 1392 which has been attributed to Thomas Walsingham and includes a detailed account of the Peasants' Revolt.

Leeds
University of Leeds
Brotherton Collection
Manuscript BC MS 29

The Anonimale Chronicle of St Mary's Abbey in York written by an anonymous monk contains an account of the Peasants' revolt possibly from eyewitness reports and it is considered by historians to be a more accurate account.

The events in June 1381 in Essex, Kent and London were reported as a victory after the death of Wat Tyler and John Ball with the rebels returned to their villages. But the fires of discontent were now ablaze.

Further research shows riots happening all over the country well before June 1381. Most chroniclers focus on the events in London and the south east and included attacks on the property of government officials although other minor chroniclers have differing views. The documentary evidence, trials and reports, including the poetry of the day show a far wider reaction to the tax demands. Inquisitions were held, pardons revoked and rebels lost their lives but it did not stop what was to be fundamental social, economic and political change to the structure of society.

Warwick is strategically situated in the centre of England on a bend of the River Avon which flows to the south west. Evidence of habitation dates back to the Neolithic era and Roman archaeological evidence from the second century AD. The Fosse Way built by the Romans connects Warwick to the south west of England and Watling Street a little to the east which goes to London. One of the first records documenting a settlement is in the Saxon Chronicles stating that in 914 Ethelfleda daughter of Alfred the Great founded the castle and fortified it against the Danes. The Domesday Book records Warwick as a borough with a royal manor and William the Conqueror recognised its importance and ordered Earl Turchill to fortify the town and castle. The early history can be found in medieval poetry and folk law as well as genealogies which have been reconstructed by later chroniclers.

The strategic and political value of Warwick and its castle is seen in the way it has been used as a royal gift for loyalty, as a repository for arms, a safe haven in times of war, a manorial court and as a prison. To explore its rich history I have looked for evidence of settlements and building work. I have also noted records of changes of ownership, gifting, rescinding and inheritance along with the day to day workings of the inhabitants. To start the search I looked at Exchequer records, the Court and Chancery Rolls at the National Archives, and also records at the British Library and Warwickshire County Records Office.

Manuscripts are given in institution then date order.

1
London
British Library
MS Cotton Tiberius B I ff. 115v -164r

Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, The Abingdon Manuscripts, dating from eleventh century refer to a settlement at Warwick.

2
London
British Library
Lansdowne MS 98/31

A copy of the resolution of a Parliament, temporary Edward II, that the subject is more bound to the crown, than the person of the King; in the dispute concerning Piers Gaveston, 1308. (French.) Members of Parliament, including the Earl of Warwick put forward the resolution to exile Piers Gaveston and remove him for court.

3
London
British Library
Add Ch 25960 - 25965

Court Rolls recording the activities at Elmley Castle Manor, Worcestershire, belonging to the Beauchamps, Earls of Warwick, up to 1539 and afterwards to the Crown; 1350-1544.

4

London

British Library

Lansdowne MS 1/39

A commission to seize the lands of Richard, Duke of York; Edward, Earl of March; and Richard, Earl of Warwick. 1460.

5

London

British Library

Lansdowne MS 511/5

The commission granted 1 Edward IV. (4 March 1461-3 March 1462) to Richard Earl of Warwick, as Lord High Steward: for the trial of several rebels who had murdered the Duke of York, the King's father, at Wakefield. folio 17. From the Patent Rolls 1461-1462.

6

London

British Library

Add MS 48976

The Rous Roll dated 1483 is described as '...an illustrated armorial roll-chronicle by John Rous the chantry priest of Guy's Cliffe in the county of Warwick, commemoration the benefactors of the town... and the deeds of the holders of the Warwick earldom.' Historians prefer not to rely on the information contained in the manuscript and some consider it to be a little fanciful.

7

London

British Library

Lansdowne MS 1/47

Copy of the last will and testament of Sir Richard Beauchamp, (Earl of Warwick) 1508, by Sir William Reede.

8

London

British Library

Lansdowne MS 98/30

A memorandum of a grant made by the Earl of Warwick, to Thomas Atkinson, for the keeping of Guy's sword, with a fee of 3s 4d per annum, 20 May 1585.

9

London

British Library

Lansdowne MS 65/5

The griefs of the Earl of Warwick's heirs, occasioned by the cancelling a certain deed, 1590.

10

London

The National Archives (TNA)

E (Records of the Exchequer)

31 (Records of the Treasury of the Receipt: Domesday Book)

2/2 (Great Domesday Book)
f238a (Warwick)

Domesday Book 1086 - 1087 refers to a borough with substantial number of dwellings with a large number belonging to the king.

11

Warwickshire

Warwickshire County Records Office
CR 1886/BL 481-483

NRA cat Ref 21669 Warwick Castle MSS. Warwick Castle Account roll(s) 1398 - 1402

12

Warwickshire

Warwickshire County Records Office
CR 1886

NRA cat Ref 21669 Warwick Castle MSS
Estate and family papers of Fulke Greville, Earl of Warwick, 1596 - 1600

Further research could include locating the *Annals of Tacitus* the Roman historian AD 56 - 120 for confirmation of the first fortifications erected in Warwick. Copies are held in the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenzina in Florence. Bede in his *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* documented the nobility of Mercia. Evidence of the destruction and rebuilding of Warwick castle in the numerous battles against the Picts, Saxons and the Danes can be found in later chronicles. Manuscripts relating to the Earls of Warwick for example the Newburg, Beauchamp, Neville and Greville families document the work of rebuilding and fortifying the castle and also the fate and allegiances of the Earls. Documents can also be found relating to the drama involving Piers Gaveston and his close relationship with Edward II and the events that occurred at the castle. The Warkworth chronicles cover the Wars of the Roses and described how Richard Neville at the Battle of Barnet in 1471 lost his life fighting against the king.