

## **Revision For CE Possible question in B1, B2, B3, B4, B7, B8**

### **Peasants' Revolt June 1381**

The great Uprising of 1381 saw 40,000 angry and frustrated people descend on London, demanding a meeting with the 14 year old King Richard II

#### **Long Term Causes**

**Peasants** wanted end to Feudal System – Black Death had changed things for some. Some earning wages, some living in towns with charters of freedom. Those living on Church land treated very badly. Disease/famine made life hard.

**Church** very unpopular – 45% died of Black Death – people thought churchmen had sinned – replacement priests poor quality interested in money not doing a good job. Bishops were corrupt – absent, giving jobs to friends, having more than one job pluralism, absenteeism, nepotism

**War** – People wanted Hundred Year War to End. England had had no success for 20 years – Edward III now dead – French had landed in Isle of Wight and attacked ports on South Coast of England – Trade disrupted, merchants losing money. Invasion of England would mean a call out of all men over 15. People had not survived the Black Death, to die at the end of a French sword!

#### **Short Term Cause**

Govt raised **poll tax** 1n 1380 (one shilling for over 15) United all people against the Government

**Peasants'** couldn't afford it – avoided paying and then got into trouble for not paying

**Anti war people** resented paying taxes for a war that was already losing them money

**Anti Church people** ever angrier because Archbishop Sudbury was the man behind the Poll Tax.

#### **Events**

**Tax collectors killed** in Essex. Wat Tyler and Jack Straw take command and rebel march to London causing death/damage on route. John Ball freed from prison

**Meeting at Mile End** 13<sup>th</sup> June with Richard II – Richard no army or commander – (but rebels don't know this)

Rebels demand – End of Feudal System, fixed rate of 4d an acre for land, wages not to be fixed, Pardon for all and punishment for men behind the poll tax.

Richard says he will grant all their wishes, but he is lying. Most rebels go home.

**Some rebels remain** to make sure Richard keeps his promises, particularly punishing ArchB Sudbury. **Rebels enter London** and seize Sudbury, Halles & Legge Execute them, the burn down Savoy Palace (home of John of Gaunt). Foreigner skilled but this upsets Londoners who force rebels to leave London.

**Meeting at Smithfields** between Richard & Tyler on 14<sup>th</sup> June. Tyler rude and made extreme demands – End of ranks under King and one Bishop. Church land to be divided up amongst people. Tyler hoping to provoke & then seize Richard and power. Richard agrees to terms. Tyler becomes aggressive, pulls out dagger, attempts to stab Mayor but is killed in the fight that follows. Richard approaches rebels and tells them that their demands will be met. Rebels go home.

#### **What happened next?**

Ring leaders executed – 7,000 rebels executed between June and Nov. Pardon granted in Nov, but laws toughened up to control peasants. Charters of freedom cancelled (used excuse that Richard had been forced to agree -like John 1215 at Magna Carta.) – Small rebel army defeated at Billericay

#### **Success or Failure?**

The only positives for the rebels were that they had **surprised Richard** and his council, shaking them up. The **Poll tax was cancelled** and Sudbury dead and not used again. **Feudal system not ended, War with France continued** for another 70 yrs. Richard proved himself a talented statesman. He did what he had to do in his precarious position (no troops or commander) and ensured that the revolt did to succeed. Peasants always believed him (and he knew and played on this) and most went home, thereby avoiding more trouble. He allowed Sudbury to be executed and again avoided a difficult situation. The effective removal of Tyler ended the revolt. Punishment to rebels ensured that there would not be a repeat (until Jack Cade's rebellion in 1450). However, by 1420 no peasants in England and Feudal System had broken down, but this was due to the social changes caused by the Black Death and not the revolt.

#### **Why did revolt fail?.**

Richard would not let it succeed and would do anything – peasants believed Richard's words, rebels had no plan, Tyler a poor leader – lost control of rebels in London – violence lost support of Londoners – In the end the Royal army would be too strong for rebels.