

How important was John Ball in causing the Peasants Revolt?



This is the skull of Simon Sudbury. In the year Sudbury was murdered, peasants from Essex and Kent formed an army and marched to London. Here, they attacked lots of buildings and people. They were **revolting** against the way the country was being run.

Simon Sudbury was one of the people they killed. They cut off his head and stuck it on a pole on London Bridge.

What is shocking about this is Sudbury had thought he was safe. He had hidden in the King's castle, the Tower of London. But the rebels had managed to break in.

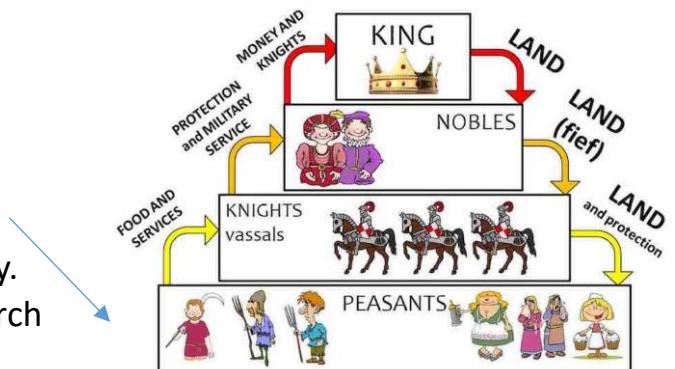
What is *more* shocking about this is that Sudbury, like Thomas Becket before him, had been the **Archbishop of Canterbury**!

What had gone so wrong that ordinary people wanted to do something as drastic as murder the most important man in the Church?

Cause 1: A hard knock life

Peasants...

- were the lowest members of society.
- worked hard on the land with little pay.
- had to pay taxes and work for the church without pay.



But if they were used to this, what made them revolt?

Cause 2: The Black Death and the Statute of Labourers

Peasants who survived the Black Death got richer/poorer because there were more/fewer peasants to do the work. This meant that the peasants could charge more/less money for the work they did. This made the King and the nobles happy/unhappy because they were worried that they were losing/gaining power.

In 1351 they introduced the **Statute of Labourers**. This said that peasants could only be paid the same as they had before/after the Black Death.

This made the peasants richer/poorer and therefore happy/angry and this was an important cause of the Peasants' Revolt.

SOURCE 3 A government decree in the 1350s

Because a large number of people, especially labourers and servants, have lately died of Plague, many refuse to work unless they are paid excessive wages. Therefore every man and woman, free or villein, not already working, shall be bound to serve him who shall require their labour, and receive only the wages traditionally paid. And if any workman in a man's service leaves the service without permission, he shall be imprisoned.

[Meanwhile, elsewhere... the 100 Years War was going on with France!]

Watch [this video clip](#) [1.30-6.00] to find out about a war that was going on throughout the fourteenth century (1300-1400) ... and had a part to play in causing the Peasants' Revolt.

Cause 3: The Poll Tax and War with France

The poll tax is a tax that **King Richard II** and his uncle John introduced. There had been a long war with France. Wars cost money.

So the King made everyone pay 4p every year by creating a new tax called 'the Poll Tax'. Then he raised the amount in 1379 and raised it *again* in 1381 to 12 pence.

1377: First Poll Tax introduced (4 pence)

1379: Second Poll Tax (8 pence)

1381: Third Poll Tax (12 pence)

SOURCE 5 From a recent history book

The spark that ignited the flames was a check by government officials on who had not paid the Poll Tax of 1380 (12d a head). This tax had to be paid by everyone. This was the third such tax in three years. Those who did not pay were imprisoned. The tax was needed to pay for the war against France, but was seen as an attempt by the rich to make the labouring classes pay more as they had been better off since the Black Death.