

1

00:00:14,880 --> 00:00:18,160

2

00:00:18,890 --> 00:00:20,966

Hello and welcome back to Unexpected

3

00:00:20,966 --> 00:00:23,734

Essex. I'm your host, Eri Berry, and this

4

00:00:23,734 --> 00:00:25,810

is episode 3 Villeins Ye Are.

5

00:00:26,910 --> 00:00:28,886

Objectively, for peasants in England in

6

00:00:28,886 --> 00:00:31,191

the 14th century, life was pretty grim.

7

00:00:31,191 --> 00:00:33,497

Firstly, as a peasant you're pretty low

8

00:00:33,497 --> 00:00:36,131

down in the pecking order at this time,

9

00:00:36,131 --> 00:00:38,437

all thanks to that feudal system that's

10

00:00:38,437 --> 00:00:40,742

been firmly embedded since the arrival of

11

00:00:40,742 --> 00:00:42,718

William the Conqueror in 1066. Secondly,

12

00:00:42,718 --> 00:00:45,023

your King Edward the Third, throws his

13

00:00:45,023 --> 00:00:47,329

royal toys out of the pram and

14

00:00:47,329 --> 00:00:49,305

starts staking a questionable claim to

15

00:00:49,305 --> 00:00:51,610

the French throne after the French king

16

00:00:51,610 --> 00:00:53,586

confiscated the Duchy of Guyenne. This

17

00:00:53,586 --> 00:00:56,221

leads to a war which is likely to

18

00:00:56,221 --> 00:00:59,081

outlast your entire existence because it

19

00:00:59,081 --> 00:01:01,687

goes on for over 100 years.

20

00:01:01,687 --> 00:01:04,293

Yep, the name the 100 Year War

21

00:01:04,293 --> 00:01:07,205

is somewhat misleading. Thirdly, there's

22

00:01:07,205 --> 00:01:09,825

a good chance that most of your friends

23

00:01:09,825 --> 00:01:12,445

are dead thanks to the arrival of bubonic

24

00:01:12,445 --> 00:01:15,064

plague, also known as the Black Death or

25

00:01:15,064 --> 00:01:17,357

the Pestilence, which is a truly horrific

26
00:01:17,357 --> 00:01:20,304
way to die. Next up, when the dead are

27
00:01:20,304 --> 00:01:22,596
buried and the dust has settled, you

28
00:01:22,596 --> 00:01:24,888
realise there are far fewer workers and

29
00:01:24,888 --> 00:01:27,508
more work available as a result of all

30
00:01:27,508 --> 00:01:29,146
the fatalities from the plague.

31
00:01:29,146 --> 00:01:31,110
Naturally, you ask for better conditions

32
00:01:31,110 --> 00:01:34,058
and more money and you are told no, you

33
00:01:34,058 --> 00:01:36,023
need to accept the wages that

34
00:01:36,023 --> 00:01:38,325
we set before the plague hit and you're

35
00:01:38,325 --> 00:01:40,348
not allowed to go looking for work

36
00:01:40,348 --> 00:01:41,794
elsewhere, you naughty, naughty peasant.

37
00:01:41,794 --> 00:01:44,395
Oh, and while we're on it, there are new

38
00:01:44,395 --> 00:01:46,419

laws being passed that dictate what you

39

00:01:46,419 --> 00:01:48,732

can wear and even what you're allowed to

40

00:01:48,732 --> 00:01:51,552

eat. Rude. Finally, you get a

41

00:01:51,552 --> 00:01:54,197

new King, Richard the Second, only he is

42

00:01:54,197 --> 00:01:56,841

way too young to actually rule on his

43

00:01:56,841 --> 00:01:59,816

own. He's only 10 years old when he comes

44

00:01:59,816 --> 00:02:02,461

to the throne in 1377, and he's assisted

45

00:02:02,461 --> 00:02:04,444

by some pretty sketchy advisers who

46

00:02:04,444 --> 00:02:07,088

decide that the best way to fund this

47

00:02:07,088 --> 00:02:09,402

ongoing war with France that Richard has

48

00:02:09,402 --> 00:02:11,386

just inherited and that literally nobody

49

00:02:11,386 --> 00:02:14,030

asked for, is to introduce a poll tax.

50

00:02:14,630 --> 00:02:17,458

Not just once, not twice, but three

51

00:02:17,458 --> 00:02:20,286
times over. No wonder it all came

52

00:02:20,286 --> 00:02:22,710
to a boiling point in 1381.

53

00:02:23,870 --> 00:02:26,855
So how on earth does this relate to the

54

00:02:26,855 --> 00:02:29,177
county of Essex? Well, contrary to the

55

00:02:29,177 --> 00:02:31,499
history books, which tend to focus solely

56

00:02:31,499 --> 00:02:33,821
on the activities of the Kentish rebels

57

00:02:33,821 --> 00:02:36,474
under the lead of the infamous Wat Tyler,

58

00:02:36,474 --> 00:02:38,464
they were actually two separate uprisings

59

00:02:38,464 --> 00:02:40,455
from two different counties: the Kentish

60

00:02:40,455 --> 00:02:43,108
rebels South of London led by Wat Tyler

61

00:02:43,108 --> 00:02:45,430
and the Essex rebels north of London.

62

00:02:46,030 --> 00:02:48,302
Both groups converged on the city at the

63

00:02:48,302 --> 00:02:50,787

same time. The Peasants Revolt itself,

64

00:02:50,787 --> 00:02:53,092

though, kicked off in the Essex village

65

00:02:53,092 --> 00:02:55,396

of Fobbing. You heard me right, folks.

66

00:02:55,396 --> 00:02:57,042

Essex people started this particular

67

00:02:57,042 --> 00:02:59,018

revolt, and their rebellion lingered on

68

00:02:59,018 --> 00:03:01,322

past the time that the Kentish Rebellion

69

00:03:01,322 --> 00:03:03,627

was quashed later on. Now, I have

70

00:03:03,627 --> 00:03:06,590

explained a little bit at the top of the

71

00:03:06,590 --> 00:03:08,895

episode about what had the peasants so

72

00:03:08,895 --> 00:03:11,199

vexed, but it's still worth exploring the

73

00:03:11,199 --> 00:03:13,504

context a little more deeply before we

74

00:03:13,504 --> 00:03:16,458

jump into the revolt itself. So

75

00:03:16,458 --> 00:03:18,249

first off, it's worth quickly recapping

76

00:03:18,249 --> 00:03:20,040

on the whole feudal system idea.

77

00:03:21,030 --> 00:03:22,968

I mentioned before that this was

78

00:03:22,968 --> 00:03:24,906

established in 1066 after William the

79

00:03:24,906 --> 00:03:26,845

Conqueror's victory at the Battle of

80

00:03:26,845 --> 00:03:29,106

Hastings, but it's worth noting that this

81

00:03:29,106 --> 00:03:31,044

applies rurally because the system in

82

00:03:31,044 --> 00:03:32,982

London is very different. The general

83

00:03:32,982 --> 00:03:35,244

premise of the rural system is that

84

00:03:35,244 --> 00:03:37,505

societies hierarchy at the time has the

85

00:03:37,505 --> 00:03:40,089

King at the top where you would expect

86

00:03:40,089 --> 00:03:42,997

him to be, and the King owns all of

87

00:03:42,997 --> 00:03:45,258

the land and grants estates known as

88

00:03:45,258 --> 00:03:48,136

fifes to trusted Lords. Below the King

89

00:03:48,136 --> 00:03:50,207

you have the nobles and the barons, and

90

00:03:50,207 --> 00:03:53,051

these lease land from the King. They act

91

00:03:53,051 --> 00:03:55,377

as local rulers and they provide the King

92

00:03:55,377 --> 00:03:58,199

with money and also knights. Now

93

00:03:58,199 --> 00:04:00,416

those knights receive smaller parcels of

94

00:04:00,416 --> 00:04:03,001

land from the nobles in exchange for

95

00:04:03,001 --> 00:04:04,848

military service and protection. And

96

00:04:04,848 --> 00:04:07,065

finally, below the knights, you have

97

00:04:07,065 --> 00:04:09,281

everybody else. If you're everybody else,

98

00:04:09,281 --> 00:04:12,236

you're either a peasant or a serf, and

99

00:04:12,236 --> 00:04:15,191

you're also known as a villein. But this

100

00:04:15,191 --> 00:04:18,146

is not the word villain that we know

101

00:04:18,146 --> 00:04:21,101
of today. This is VILLEIN. It's the root

102

00:04:21,101 --> 00:04:23,687
of the more modern word, but it

103

00:04:23,687 --> 00:04:25,903
originally comes from the Latin word

104

00:04:25,903 --> 00:04:28,772
villa, which just means country. Or farm,

105

00:04:28,772 --> 00:04:31,568
and at the time it just meant a feudal

106

00:04:31,568 --> 00:04:34,080
farm worker. Over the centuries the

107

00:04:34,080 --> 00:04:36,268
meaning has evolved to mean someone with

108

00:04:36,268 --> 00:04:38,455
bad manners, and then later finally it

109

00:04:38,455 --> 00:04:40,643
took on its modern meaning of somebody

110

00:04:40,643 --> 00:04:42,830
evil. But these villeins are just unfree

111

00:04:42,830 --> 00:04:45,330
tenants. They farm the fields of the Lord

112

00:04:45,330 --> 00:04:47,518
in exchange for being allowed their own

113

00:04:47,518 --> 00:04:49,705

small plots, and they owe fixed labour

114

00:04:49,705 --> 00:04:52,205

service, so this means a number of days

115

00:04:52,205 --> 00:04:54,705

per year they're expected to plough or to

116

00:04:54,705 --> 00:04:56,893

harvest the fields for the Lord. They

117

00:04:56,893 --> 00:04:59,393

also had to pay various dues on life

118

00:04:59,393 --> 00:05:01,268

events, things like inheritance. So you

119

00:05:01,268 --> 00:05:02,830

want to inherit your late father's

120

00:05:02,950 --> 00:05:05,321

possessions? You can do, but it's going

121

00:05:05,321 --> 00:05:07,691

to cost you. Oh, you're getting married!

122

00:05:07,691 --> 00:05:09,046

Lovely. Congratulations. Cough up,

123

00:05:09,046 --> 00:05:11,417

please. Oh, you're having a child. The

124

00:05:11,417 --> 00:05:14,150

Lord would like some money. Social

125

00:05:14,150 --> 00:05:16,670

mobility was simply not a thing. Your

126

00:05:16,670 --> 00:05:19,190
status was inherited and you stayed where

127

00:05:19,190 --> 00:05:20,990
you were, both geographically and

128

00:05:20,990 --> 00:05:22,790
socially. You needed the Lord's

129

00:05:22,790 --> 00:05:25,670
permission to move, to marry, or to sell

130

00:05:25,670 --> 00:05:28,550
goods. Now I don't know about you, but

131

00:05:28,550 --> 00:05:31,430
this doesn't sound like a whole lot of

132

00:05:31,430 --> 00:05:34,310
fun. So why were people putting up with

133

00:05:34,310 --> 00:05:36,830
it? In medieval times, there was the

134

00:05:36,830 --> 00:05:39,350
concept of three estates, those who pray,

135

00:05:39,350 --> 00:05:41,870
so, the clergy, those who fight, the

136

00:05:41,870 --> 00:05:44,417
nobility, and those who work, so

137

00:05:44,417 --> 00:05:47,388
everybody else. And it's seen as the

138

00:05:47,388 --> 00:05:48,945

whole social order reflecting God's

139

00:05:48,945 --> 00:05:51,126

design for the universe. Think about how

140

00:05:51,126 --> 00:05:52,995

in Christianity, angels rank above humans

141

00:05:52,995 --> 00:05:54,864

and humans rank above animals. Basically

142

00:05:54,864 --> 00:05:57,357

stay in your lane. It's a spiritual duty,

143

00:05:57,357 --> 00:06:00,160

not just a legal one. So it's not even

144

00:06:00,160 --> 00:06:02,341

really a "behave yourself or you will

145

00:06:02,341 --> 00:06:04,522

burn in the afterlife" sort of situation.

146

00:06:04,522 --> 00:06:07,326

It's more of a "this is just how the

147

00:06:07,326 --> 00:06:09,818

system is, it's common sense. So why on

148

00:06:09,818 --> 00:06:11,998

earth would you ever think to question

149

00:06:11,998 --> 00:06:14,582

it?" This isn't quite the same as the

150

00:06:14,582 --> 00:06:16,253

divine right of kings, by the way, which

151

00:06:16,253 --> 00:06:18,897

was a concept touted later on by the

152

00:06:18,897 --> 00:06:21,563

Stuarts, but it is a general consensus on

153

00:06:21,563 --> 00:06:23,897

how society would be structured at the

154

00:06:23,897 --> 00:06:25,897

time. Now if you contradicted this,

155

00:06:25,897 --> 00:06:27,897

excommunication meant that you would be

156

00:06:27,897 --> 00:06:29,897

socially excluded in your own community,

157

00:06:29,897 --> 00:06:32,563

so it was a lot easier to just

158

00:06:32,563 --> 00:06:34,897

go along with things. Now that said,

159

00:06:34,897 --> 00:06:37,230

religion wasn't the only thing that was

160

00:06:37,230 --> 00:06:38,897

upholding this particular framework. The

161

00:06:38,897 --> 00:06:41,563

Lords who ran the manors were in charge

162

00:06:41,563 --> 00:06:43,897

of manorial courts, which had the power

163

00:06:43,897 --> 00:06:45,897

to fine, imprison and enforce labour

164

00:06:45,897 --> 00:06:48,339

obligations. So there is law to support

165

00:06:48,339 --> 00:06:50,648

it as well. It's also important to

166

00:06:50,648 --> 00:06:52,956

remember that your villeins did not have

167

00:06:52,956 --> 00:06:55,265

money, they weren't allowed to travel or

168

00:06:55,265 --> 00:06:57,243

even move about much, and generally

169

00:06:57,243 --> 00:06:58,892

speaking, they were also illiterate.

170

00:06:58,892 --> 00:07:00,871

There's simply no alternative for them.

171

00:07:00,871 --> 00:07:02,850

However, and this is crucially important

172

00:07:02,850 --> 00:07:05,488

when we look at any history, the peasants

173

00:07:05,488 --> 00:07:08,126

were not stupid people, and many of them

174

00:07:08,126 --> 00:07:10,764

didn't like this status quo that put them

175

00:07:10,764 --> 00:07:13,402

firmly at the bottom of the pile, which

176

00:07:13,402 --> 00:07:15,711
is exactly what led to the eventual

177

00:07:15,711 --> 00:07:18,519
Peasants Revolt of 1381. Another vital

178

00:07:18,519 --> 00:07:20,930
thing to note is that the term

179

00:07:20,930 --> 00:07:22,996
"Peasants Revolt" is a bit misleading

180

00:07:22,996 --> 00:07:25,063
because this wasn't just peasants. The

181

00:07:25,063 --> 00:07:26,785
protest included local artisans and

182

00:07:26,785 --> 00:07:28,507
village officials across the southeast.

183

00:07:28,507 --> 00:07:30,917
These burnt court records and opened up

184

00:07:30,917 --> 00:07:32,984
local prisons to release prisoners. It

185

00:07:32,984 --> 00:07:35,739
should also be noted that, as I explained

186

00:07:35,739 --> 00:07:37,806
before, the system worked differently in

187

00:07:37,806 --> 00:07:40,796
London. In the 14th century the city

188

00:07:40,796 --> 00:07:43,312

was a self governing commune. It had its

189

00:07:43,312 --> 00:07:45,827

own charter, its own courts, and it had

190

00:07:45,827 --> 00:07:48,342

an elected mayor and a number of Aldermen

191

00:07:48,342 --> 00:07:50,543

. Status here wasn't set by land

192

00:07:50,543 --> 00:07:52,744

ownership like it was in the countryside,

193

00:07:52,744 --> 00:07:55,259

it was set by trade guilds instead, and

194

00:07:55,259 --> 00:07:57,775

these had a hierarchy all of their very

195

00:07:57,775 --> 00:08:00,604

own. At the top of the pile you had

196

00:08:00,604 --> 00:08:02,491

the great merchant guilds. We're talking

197

00:08:02,491 --> 00:08:03,748

mercers, grocers, fishmongers and

198

00:08:03,748 --> 00:08:05,320

goldsmiths. These filled the mayoralty

199

00:08:05,320 --> 00:08:07,836

and they were often really wealthy at the

200

00:08:07,836 --> 00:08:10,682

time. Below them you had the

201

00:08:10,682 --> 00:08:12,761

weavers, the tailors and the saddlers.

202

00:08:12,761 --> 00:08:14,840

Now these had been trained through

203

00:08:14,840 --> 00:08:16,919

apprenticeship, but they were far more

204

00:08:16,919 --> 00:08:18,998

economically exposed. Below these are the

205

00:08:18,998 --> 00:08:20,384

journeymen and the apprentices

206

00:08:20,384 --> 00:08:22,116

themselves, people who were still

207

00:08:22,116 --> 00:08:24,195

learning their trade. They are skilled,

208

00:08:24,195 --> 00:08:26,274

but they're basically wage labour. And

209

00:08:26,274 --> 00:08:29,045

then finally, at the bottom of the heap

210

00:08:29,045 --> 00:08:31,471

were the unguilded poor. They had no

211

00:08:31,471 --> 00:08:33,652

institutional protection whatsoever. This

212

00:08:33,652 --> 00:08:35,644

is really important because it wasn't

213

00:08:35,644 --> 00:08:37,636

vertical and personal like the rural

214

00:08:37,636 --> 00:08:39,628

hierarchy with a villein bound to one

215

00:08:39,628 --> 00:08:42,513

Lord. It was horizontal and it was

216

00:08:42,513 --> 00:08:44,216

economic. So think horizontally, Guild

217

00:08:44,216 --> 00:08:45,918

against Guild and economically rich

218

00:08:45,918 --> 00:08:47,621

guildsmen against poor apprentices. Just

219

00:08:47,621 --> 00:08:50,345

keep those divisions in mind as we go

220

00:08:50,345 --> 00:08:53,069

into this because there'll be a lot more

221

00:08:53,069 --> 00:08:55,862

relevant later on. So we have this feudal

222

00:08:55,862 --> 00:08:57,923

system that keeps the peasants in check.

223

00:08:57,923 --> 00:09:00,278

But what about the impact of the plague

224

00:09:00,278 --> 00:09:02,338

that I mentioned before? Well, given that

225

00:09:02,338 --> 00:09:04,693

some statistics point out that up to half

226

00:09:04,693 --> 00:09:07,048
of the population died, we can see the

227

00:09:07,048 --> 00:09:08,815
concept of supply and demand really

228

00:09:08,815 --> 00:09:10,875
clearly in effect. As I mentioned before,

229

00:09:10,875 --> 00:09:12,642
these peasants are not stupid. They

230

00:09:12,642 --> 00:09:14,702
realise that there were now plenty of

231

00:09:14,702 --> 00:09:16,763
Lords who were panicking over just who

232

00:09:16,763 --> 00:09:18,824
was going to be ploughing their fields

233

00:09:18,824 --> 00:09:21,760
and tending their land for them. With a

234

00:09:21,760 --> 00:09:23,440
lower supply of workers and a higher

235

00:09:23,440 --> 00:09:25,678
demand for their services. It stands to

236

00:09:25,678 --> 00:09:28,460
reason that this would be a good time to

237

00:09:28,460 --> 00:09:30,315
try to get more favourable conditions,

238

00:09:30,315 --> 00:09:32,480

perhaps higher wages or lower dues. So

239

00:09:32,480 --> 00:09:33,717

peasants began exploring opportunities

240

00:09:33,717 --> 00:09:36,190

with other Lords who might pay them more.

241

00:09:36,590 --> 00:09:39,215

But no such luck. According to the

242

00:09:39,215 --> 00:09:41,465

records in the National Archives, the

243

00:09:41,465 --> 00:09:44,090

1351 Statute of Labourers was enacted in

244

00:09:44,090 --> 00:09:45,965

response to economic challenges that

245

00:09:45,965 --> 00:09:48,215

appeared after the plague outbreak in

246

00:09:48,215 --> 00:09:50,465

England in 1348. This statute regulated

247

00:09:50,465 --> 00:09:53,090

labour in a restricted market. It was

248

00:09:53,090 --> 00:09:55,340

designed to combat rising wages, to

249

00:09:55,340 --> 00:09:57,215

regulate the maximum amount that

250

00:09:57,215 --> 00:09:59,465

employers could pay, to control movement

251

00:09:59,465 --> 00:10:01,715
of labourers, to mandate employment for

252

00:10:01,715 --> 00:10:04,340
all able-bodied workers and to stop the

253

00:10:04,340 --> 00:10:06,590
poaching of servants from employment by

254

00:10:06,670 --> 00:10:08,301
offering better terms, though with the

255

00:10:08,301 --> 00:10:09,932
latter it was generally the servants

256

00:10:09,932 --> 00:10:11,835
themselves that would have had this law

257

00:10:11,835 --> 00:10:13,465
enforced against them, rather than the

258

00:10:13,465 --> 00:10:15,912
Lord who had been trying to poach them in

259

00:10:15,912 --> 00:10:18,358
the first place. It's a bit of a double

260

00:10:18,358 --> 00:10:21,158
standard. For anyone who had managed

261

00:10:21,158 --> 00:10:23,796
to gain a little more gold, it wasn't

262

00:10:23,796 --> 00:10:26,763
going to be so easy to spend it as

263

00:10:26,763 --> 00:10:29,400

you pleased. This was due to the newly

264

00:10:29,400 --> 00:10:31,378

enacted sumptuary laws. Now these were

265

00:10:31,378 --> 00:10:33,356

created to control the consumption of

266

00:10:33,356 --> 00:10:35,664

fabrics and related goods based on social

267

00:10:35,664 --> 00:10:37,972

class. King Edward the Third wanted to

268

00:10:37,972 --> 00:10:39,950

increase the amount of bullion coming

269

00:10:39,950 --> 00:10:42,587

into England to fund the war with France.

270

00:10:42,587 --> 00:10:44,565

Now if this happens, wealth of

271

00:10:44,565 --> 00:10:46,543

inhabitants will also happen across the

272

00:10:46,543 --> 00:10:48,521

social classes. People will have more

273

00:10:48,521 --> 00:10:51,209

money to spend. This means that

274

00:10:51,209 --> 00:10:53,679

the lower and middle classes could in

275

00:10:53,679 --> 00:10:55,797

theory, acquire more expensive goods and

276

00:10:55,797 --> 00:10:58,541
food. Parliament was a bit concerned

277

00:10:58,541 --> 00:11:00,689
that spending on luxury imported fabrics

278

00:11:00,689 --> 00:11:02,838
would impoverish the realm and drain

279

00:11:02,838 --> 00:11:04,628
domestic wealth because the money

280

00:11:04,628 --> 00:11:07,135
wouldn't be staying in England, it would

281

00:11:07,135 --> 00:11:09,642
be going abroad to wherever the fabrics

282

00:11:09,642 --> 00:11:12,148
were being imported from. So they passed

283

00:11:12,148 --> 00:11:14,297
the Statute concerning Diet and Apparel

284

00:11:14,297 --> 00:11:16,804
of 1363, which was basically brought in

285

00:11:16,804 --> 00:11:19,310
to stop people from dressing above their

286

00:11:19,310 --> 00:11:21,459
station and to keep visible differences

287

00:11:21,459 --> 00:11:23,966
between social ranks. Now, what does this

288

00:11:23,966 --> 00:11:26,893

actually look like?Well, if you're a

289

00:11:26,893 --> 00:11:29,173

servant or a labourer, it's cheap rough

290

00:11:29,173 --> 00:11:32,104

woollens for you, with the value to be no

291

00:11:32,104 --> 00:11:34,710

higher than 12 pence to two marks apiece,

292

00:11:34,710 --> 00:11:36,990

and absolutely no gold, no silver, no

293

00:11:36,990 --> 00:11:39,270

silk or precious stones. If you're a

294

00:11:39,270 --> 00:11:41,876

Craftsman or a Yeoman, the total value of

295

00:11:41,876 --> 00:11:44,156

your attire is limited to 40 shillings,

296

00:11:44,156 --> 00:11:46,110

but you're still not allowed any

297

00:11:46,110 --> 00:11:47,739

elaborate embroidery, no pressure stones

298

00:11:47,739 --> 00:11:50,344

or high status furs. If you're in the

299

00:11:50,344 --> 00:11:52,950

Gentry or you're a knight, you can have

300

00:11:52,950 --> 00:11:54,904

something fancier than that you might

301

00:11:54,904 --> 00:11:57,241
have. Velvet or satin or higher grade

302

00:11:57,241 --> 00:11:59,447
furs which could be miniver (or squirrel)

303

00:11:59,447 --> 00:12:01,968
or lamb. But it would depend on your

304

00:12:01,968 --> 00:12:04,489
income. If you're a woman, what you are

305

00:12:04,489 --> 00:12:06,694
allowed to wear depends entirely on the

306

00:12:06,694 --> 00:12:08,900
social rank and income of either your

307

00:12:08,900 --> 00:12:10,791
husband or if you're unmarried, your

308

00:12:10,791 --> 00:12:12,997
father. Also, if you're a higher rank,

309

00:12:12,997 --> 00:12:15,203
you are allowed an elaborate 3 course

310

00:12:15,203 --> 00:12:17,409
meal, but if you're lower class, no

311

00:12:17,409 --> 00:12:20,245
feasting for you, you can have a simple 2

312

00:12:20,245 --> 00:12:23,160
course dish only. These laws, as you

313

00:12:23,160 --> 00:12:24,560

can probably imagine, were quite

314

00:12:24,560 --> 00:12:26,520

difficult to enforce and they were very

315

00:12:26,520 --> 00:12:28,964

unpopular with the public, who mostly it

316

00:12:28,964 --> 00:12:31,483

has to be said, just ignored them. After

317

00:12:31,483 --> 00:12:33,687

lots of pushback, Parliament caved in a

318

00:12:33,687 --> 00:12:35,891

year later and repealed them. But again,

319

00:12:35,891 --> 00:12:38,095

this whole debacle was not well received

320

00:12:38,095 --> 00:12:40,614

by the peasants. Now all the while, this

321

00:12:40,614 --> 00:12:42,818

war with France that Edward the Third

322

00:12:42,818 --> 00:12:45,652

started in order to try to lay claim to

323

00:12:45,652 --> 00:12:47,226

the French throne continues. And as

324

00:12:47,226 --> 00:12:49,115

history tells us consistently, wars cost

325

00:12:49,115 --> 00:12:52,025

money. The 100 Years War dragged

326

00:12:52,025 --> 00:12:54,817

on for longer than the name would

327

00:12:54,817 --> 00:12:57,610

suggest and it cost an absolute fortune

328

00:12:57,610 --> 00:13:00,003

just maintaining the garrisons in Calais

329

00:13:00,003 --> 00:13:02,796

and Brest alone was £36,000 a year.

330

00:13:02,796 --> 00:13:05,588

Now for context in new money, that's

331

00:13:05,588 --> 00:13:08,381

about £21.5 million

332

00:13:08,381 --> 00:13:11,174

here in 2026. Taxes back then were

333

00:13:11,174 --> 00:13:13,567

not regular. People weren't paying income

334

00:13:13,567 --> 00:13:15,961

tax or National Insurance. Taxation was

335

00:13:15,961 --> 00:13:17,955

instead generally imposed on a

336

00:13:17,955 --> 00:13:19,551

household's movable possessions like

337

00:13:19,551 --> 00:13:22,266

stock or goods. So this is their general

338

00:13:22,266 --> 00:13:24,731

form of taxation. Now part of the problem

339

00:13:24,731 --> 00:13:26,887

that the government had was that the

340

00:13:26,887 --> 00:13:28,735

official figures and statistics that they

341

00:13:28,735 --> 00:13:30,892

were using to administer taxes and work

342

00:13:30,892 --> 00:13:33,048

out what everybody owed was based on

343

00:13:33,048 --> 00:13:34,896

communities before the plague had hit.

344

00:13:34,896 --> 00:13:37,052

Obviously since then a number of people

345

00:13:37,052 --> 00:13:39,517

have died and the reality now is that

346

00:13:39,517 --> 00:13:41,365

everything has changed, but the figures

347

00:13:41,365 --> 00:13:43,829

that they were relying on hadn't. So it's

348

00:13:43,829 --> 00:13:45,677

therefore much harder to collect the

349

00:13:45,677 --> 00:13:48,142

right tax that's due when half the people

350

00:13:48,142 --> 00:13:49,990

you're looking to claim tax from are

351

00:13:50,190 --> 00:13:52,634

actually dead. Fast forward now, then to

352

00:13:52,634 --> 00:13:55,428

1377. King Edward has died from a stroke

353

00:13:55,428 --> 00:13:57,872

and the throne has passed to his

354

00:13:57,872 --> 00:13:59,967

grandson, Richard the Second, who I

355

00:13:59,967 --> 00:14:02,411

mentioned before, is just 10 years old.

356

00:14:02,411 --> 00:14:04,506

Richard's government is made-up of his

357

00:14:04,506 --> 00:14:06,951

uncles, including John of Gaunt, who was

358

00:14:06,951 --> 00:14:09,395

deeply unpopular, as you will come to

359

00:14:09,395 --> 00:14:11,839

learn, and the old King's former senior

360

00:14:11,839 --> 00:14:14,283

officials. So they set about trying to

361

00:14:14,283 --> 00:14:17,077

work out how they were going to fund

362

00:14:17,077 --> 00:14:19,521

this ongoing war with France. What's the

363

00:14:19,521 --> 00:14:22,332

solution? Well that will be a poll

364

00:14:22,332 --> 00:14:24,737

tax. So this was introduced right before

365

00:14:24,737 --> 00:14:26,799

Edward's death and it continued through

366

00:14:26,799 --> 00:14:29,204

Richard's coronation. And this tax is set

367

00:14:29,204 --> 00:14:31,953

at 4 pence on everyone over 14, with

368

00:14:31,953 --> 00:14:34,358

a deduction for married couples. It was

369

00:14:34,358 --> 00:14:36,764

hugely unpopular, but it did raise £22,000

370

00:14:36,764 --> 00:14:39,512

, so about £13.2 million in 2026. You've

371

00:14:39,512 --> 00:14:42,261

got to remember we have a much smaller

372

00:14:42,261 --> 00:14:44,667

population at this point, so you can

373

00:14:44,667 --> 00:14:47,416

understand the value of that 4 pence per

374

00:14:47,416 --> 00:14:50,348

person is quite significant. Naturally

375

00:14:50,348 --> 00:14:53,295

though, this £22,000 is not enough. The

376

00:14:53,295 --> 00:14:56,242
war is still not going well and so

377

00:14:56,242 --> 00:14:58,821
the Crown returns to Parliament in 1379,

378

00:14:58,821 --> 00:15:01,768
hat or crown in hand, to ask them

379

00:15:01,768 --> 00:15:04,347
for more funds. This was after raising

380

00:15:04,347 --> 00:15:07,136
money through forced loans. Although the

381

00:15:07,136 --> 00:15:09,254
Commons were supportive of Richard, they

382

00:15:09,254 --> 00:15:12,077
were a bit concerned about how much money

383

00:15:12,077 --> 00:15:14,901
was being sought and how it was being

384

00:15:14,901 --> 00:15:17,371
spent by the King's councillors, who they

385

00:15:17,371 --> 00:15:20,195
suspected of being a bit corrupt. So this

386

00:15:20,195 --> 00:15:23,018
led to a second poll tax and the

387

00:15:23,018 --> 00:15:25,489
rates for this were a sliding scale

388

00:15:25,489 --> 00:15:27,254

against seven different classes of

389

00:15:27,254 --> 00:15:29,371

English society. This meant that upper

390

00:15:29,371 --> 00:15:31,842

classes did pay more in absolute terms,

391

00:15:31,842 --> 00:15:33,607

technically. Naturally, as you would

392

00:15:33,607 --> 00:15:35,724

expect, there was widespread evasion, so

393

00:15:35,724 --> 00:15:37,473

only £18,600 was actually raised, which

394

00:15:37,473 --> 00:15:40,240

was a lot less than the £50,000 that

395

00:15:40,240 --> 00:15:43,139

they were hoping for. In 1380, Parliament

396

00:15:43,139 --> 00:15:45,436

meets to discuss the situation. The

397

00:15:45,436 --> 00:15:48,116

Commons are told that they now need

398

00:15:48,116 --> 00:15:50,796

to find an eye watering £160,000

399

00:15:50,796 --> 00:15:53,476

in new taxes. So let's have a

400

00:15:53,476 --> 00:15:56,156

third poll tax. This time though, it's

401

00:15:56,156 --> 00:15:58,836
a flat rate basis of 12 pence

402

00:15:58,836 --> 00:16:01,516
on each person over the age of

403

00:16:01,516 --> 00:16:03,813
15, with no allowance for married

404

00:16:03,813 --> 00:16:06,493
couples. And this is designed to raise

405

00:16:06,493 --> 00:16:08,790
£66,666, a very weirdly precise number.

406

00:16:09,600 --> 00:16:11,640
As you can probably imagine, many people

407

00:16:11,640 --> 00:16:13,680
in Southeast continued to try to evade

408

00:16:14,030 --> 00:16:16,344
this and they refused to register.

409

00:16:16,344 --> 00:16:18,659
Tensions were raised further when the

410

00:16:18,659 --> 00:16:20,587
Royal Council appointed commissioners in

411

00:16:20,587 --> 00:16:23,287
March of 1381 to interrogate officials to

412

00:16:23,287 --> 00:16:25,987
find people who were refusing to comply

413

00:16:25,987 --> 00:16:28,687

and register. Now the reason for this

414

00:16:28,687 --> 00:16:31,387

was that the local tax collectors had

415

00:16:31,387 --> 00:16:33,702

been reducing their community's tax bill

416

00:16:33,702 --> 00:16:35,630

by silently discounting unmarried women.

417

00:16:36,350 --> 00:16:38,643

Virgins at the time were exempt from

418

00:16:38,643 --> 00:16:40,936

paying the tax and it was therefore

419

00:16:40,936 --> 00:16:43,557

assumed at the time due to social norms

420

00:16:43,557 --> 00:16:46,177

and mores that if you were an unmarried

421

00:16:46,177 --> 00:16:48,470

woman, you were, by definition, a virgin.

422

00:16:48,870 --> 00:16:50,705

The royal collectors made themselves

423

00:16:50,705 --> 00:16:52,172

incredibly unpopular. They were

424

00:16:52,172 --> 00:16:54,374

intimidating people into paying, and a

425

00:16:54,374 --> 00:16:57,310

source from the time, in the form of

426

00:16:57,310 --> 00:16:59,144

Henry Knighton's Chronicle, suggests that

427

00:16:59,144 --> 00:17:01,346

these royal collectors were engaging in

428

00:17:01,346 --> 00:17:03,547

some truly abhorrent behaviour to check

429

00:17:03,547 --> 00:17:06,116

whether young girls were virgins or not.

430

00:17:06,116 --> 00:17:09,051

I won't go into the finer details, but

431

00:17:09,051 --> 00:17:11,253

parents often felt compelled to pay

432

00:17:11,253 --> 00:17:13,455

additional money rather than see their

433

00:17:13,455 --> 00:17:15,656

daughters subjected to that kind of

434

00:17:15,656 --> 00:17:17,672

degrading treatment. Knighton himself

435

00:17:17,672 --> 00:17:19,813

wasn't a first hand witness, but scholars

436

00:17:19,813 --> 00:17:22,261

have noted that it's very specific in a

437

00:17:22,261 --> 00:17:24,096

way that some other accounts weren't.

438

00:17:24,096 --> 00:17:25,626

Generally, historians have taken it

439

00:17:25,626 --> 00:17:27,767

seriously as a motive for what happened

440

00:17:27,767 --> 00:17:30,215

next, but it's worth noting that we don't

441

00:17:30,215 --> 00:17:32,050

have any court records or anything

442

00:17:32,050 --> 00:17:35,028

concrete to actually confirm it. Now if

443

00:17:35,028 --> 00:17:37,619

we move down to Kent, what's going on

444

00:17:37,619 --> 00:17:39,886

down there at this point, around this

445

00:17:39,886 --> 00:17:42,476

time? The people of Kent are also pretty

446

00:17:42,476 --> 00:17:44,096

unhappy with the feudal system,

447

00:17:44,096 --> 00:17:45,715

particularly the fact that manorial

448

00:17:45,715 --> 00:17:47,982

courts were being used to enforce levies

449

00:17:47,982 --> 00:17:50,573

and fines on behalf of land owners when

450

00:17:50,573 --> 00:17:52,516

those same manorial courts were being

451

00:17:52,516 --> 00:17:54,135
organised and administrated by, you've

452

00:17:54,135 --> 00:17:56,726
guessed it, the land owners. As a result,

453

00:17:56,726 --> 00:17:59,317
a lot of village elites were refusing to

454

00:17:59,317 --> 00:18:01,260
take up positions in local government.

455

00:18:02,260 --> 00:18:04,984
The issue wasn't the laws, according to

456

00:18:04,984 --> 00:18:07,707
historian Mari Rubin. The issue was who

457

00:18:07,707 --> 00:18:10,431
was applying and enforcing those laws. So

458

00:18:10,431 --> 00:18:13,155
if we zoom out then to wider

459

00:18:13,155 --> 00:18:15,878
England, by 1377 an incident called the

460

00:18:15,878 --> 00:18:18,602
Great Rumour had occurred. This was where

461

00:18:18,602 --> 00:18:21,326
rural workers were refusing to work. They

462

00:18:21,326 --> 00:18:23,660
were claiming that the Domesday Book

463

00:18:23,660 --> 00:18:25,995

actually exempted them. But their appeals

464

00:18:25,995 --> 00:18:28,718
to the courts and the King were

465

00:18:28,718 --> 00:18:30,275
unsuccessful, according to another

466

00:18:30,275 --> 00:18:32,220
historian, Dyer, ultimately by 1381,

467

00:18:32,300 --> 00:18:34,997
tensions had risen so much that there was

468

00:18:34,997 --> 00:18:37,356
actually fear by the ruling classes that

469

00:18:37,356 --> 00:18:40,053
if the French were to invade that the

470

00:18:40,053 --> 00:18:42,075
peasants might actually side with them.

471

00:18:42,075 --> 00:18:44,772
To cap it all off, May 1381 saw

472

00:18:44,772 --> 00:18:47,132
a huge storm which many felt prophesized

473

00:18:47,132 --> 00:18:49,828
change coming, adding to the mood of the

474

00:18:49,828 --> 00:18:52,525
era. A bit of pathetic fallacy for any

475

00:18:52,525 --> 00:18:54,884
fans of literary devices who happened to

476

00:18:54,884 --> 00:18:57,244

be listening, but the final straw in

477

00:18:57,244 --> 00:18:59,941

Essex came on the 30th of May, which

478

00:18:59,941 --> 00:19:02,761

saw a royal official by the name of

479

00:19:02,761 --> 00:19:04,808

John Bampton trying to collect unpaid

480

00:19:04,808 --> 00:19:07,195

poll taxes in Brentwood. Bampton was a

481

00:19:07,195 --> 00:19:09,583

Member of Parliament, he was the Justice

482

00:19:09,583 --> 00:19:12,311

of the Peace, So what we would now

483

00:19:12,311 --> 00:19:14,699

call a magistrate, and he was generally

484

00:19:14,699 --> 00:19:16,745

very well connected. He summoned village

485

00:19:16,745 --> 00:19:18,110

representatives from the surrounding

486

00:19:18,110 --> 00:19:19,815

villages of Corringham, Fobbing and

487

00:19:19,815 --> 00:19:21,862

Stanford La Hope to explain any

488

00:19:21,862 --> 00:19:24,249

shortfalls and to make payments on the

489

00:19:24,249 --> 00:19:26,296

1st of June. Those representatives though

490

00:19:26,296 --> 00:19:28,765

did not come alone. The other villagers

491

00:19:28,765 --> 00:19:30,617

came with them and they were armed as

492

00:19:30,617 --> 00:19:32,239

well as they could be given the

493

00:19:32,239 --> 00:19:34,510

circumstances. Bampton tried to

494

00:19:34,510 --> 00:19:36,369

interrogate the people of Fobbing and

495

00:19:36,369 --> 00:19:37,918

their representative, Mr Thomas Baker,

496

00:19:37,918 --> 00:19:40,707

who said no, our taxes are paid, you will

497

00:19:40,707 --> 00:19:43,186

get no more money from us. Bampton and

498

00:19:43,186 --> 00:19:45,355

two sergeants tried to arrest Baker and

499

00:19:45,355 --> 00:19:47,524

things got violent. He managed to escape

500

00:19:47,524 --> 00:19:50,003

but a few of his associates were killed

501

00:19:50,003 --> 00:19:52,172
in the violence and words spread across

502

00:19:52,172 --> 00:19:54,342
the region like wildfire, with a local

503

00:19:54,342 --> 00:19:55,891
bailiff, John Jeffrey, riding between

504

00:19:55,891 --> 00:19:57,750
Brentwood and Chelmsford to stir up

505

00:19:57,750 --> 00:20:00,372
supporters. In the meantime, on the 2nd

506

00:20:00,372 --> 00:20:02,077
of June, the Chief Justice, Sir Robert

507

00:20:02,077 --> 00:20:04,026
Belknap, was sent with a few soldiers to

508

00:20:04,026 --> 00:20:06,639
try. To restore order, two of his men

509

00:20:06,639 --> 00:20:08,992
were captured and killed, and he and the

510

00:20:08,992 --> 00:20:11,345
rest of his men were chased out of

511

00:20:11,345 --> 00:20:13,698
Brentwood. The 4th of June saw the rebels

512

00:20:13,698 --> 00:20:15,462
gathering at Bocking, near to Braintree,

513

00:20:15,462 --> 00:20:17,815

before a group of Essex rebels, a few

514

00:20:17,815 --> 00:20:19,286

thousand strong, marched S towards

515

00:20:19,286 --> 00:20:21,345

London, with some being led north to

516

00:20:21,345 --> 00:20:23,404

Suffolk by a former chaplain, John Wrawe,

517

00:20:23,404 --> 00:20:25,757

in the hopes of raising a revolt there

518

00:20:25,757 --> 00:20:28,698

too. So now we go back down to Kent. Sir

519

00:20:28,698 --> 00:20:31,051

Simon de Burley, who was a close royal

520

00:20:31,051 --> 00:20:33,110

associate, was claiming that a man named

521

00:20:33,110 --> 00:20:35,548

Robert Belling who was living in Kent at

522

00:20:35,548 --> 00:20:37,620

the time was actually an escaped serf

523

00:20:37,620 --> 00:20:40,358

from one of his estates. He sent

524

00:20:40,358 --> 00:20:42,522

two sergeants to find Belling and to

525

00:20:42,522 --> 00:20:44,952

reclaim him. The local bailiffs and

526

00:20:44,952 --> 00:20:46,769

Belling tried to negotiate, offering to

527

00:20:46,769 --> 00:20:49,494

pay Burley money to get him to drop the

528

00:20:49,494 --> 00:20:51,312

case, but Bailing was imprisoned at

529

00:20:51,312 --> 00:20:54,108

Rochester Castle anyway. This did not sit

530

00:20:54,108 --> 00:20:55,799

well with the locals who apparently

531

00:20:55,799 --> 00:20:58,054

gathered at Dartford on the 5th of June

532

00:20:58,054 --> 00:20:59,745

to discuss this before travelling to

533

00:20:59,745 --> 00:21:01,718

Maidstone to storm the local prison and

534

00:21:01,718 --> 00:21:04,255

then on to Rochester on the 6th of June

535

00:21:04,255 --> 00:21:06,228

to storm the castle. Belling was freed

536

00:21:06,228 --> 00:21:07,919

and the constable in charge surrendered

537

00:21:07,919 --> 00:21:10,737

in the face of a large angry mob. At this

538

00:21:10,737 --> 00:21:12,992

point some of the rebels went home but

539

00:21:12,992 --> 00:21:14,683

others continued on their way, apparently

540

00:21:14,683 --> 00:21:16,938

under the leadership at this point of Wat

541

00:21:16,938 --> 00:21:19,679

Tyler. On the 10th of June,

542

00:21:19,679 --> 00:21:21,874

Tyler and the Kentish rebels headed to

543

00:21:21,874 --> 00:21:23,443

Canterbury deposed the absent Archbishop

544

00:21:23,443 --> 00:21:25,917

of Canterbury. Time in Sudbury and got

545

00:21:25,917 --> 00:21:28,124

the monks to swear loyalty to their

546

00:21:28,124 --> 00:21:30,015

cause. There was bloodshed with buildings

547

00:21:30,015 --> 00:21:32,222

within the city linked to the royal

548

00:21:32,222 --> 00:21:34,114

council being attacked and suspects being

549

00:21:34,114 --> 00:21:36,321

dragged out and executed in the street.

550

00:21:36,321 --> 00:21:38,528

They also freed the city prisoners before

551

00:21:38,528 --> 00:21:41,051

Tyler took a few thousand rebels north to

552

00:21:41,051 --> 00:21:43,258

London the next morning. So the rebels

553

00:21:43,258 --> 00:21:45,465

coordinated at this time. It appears that

554

00:21:45,465 --> 00:21:47,987

the two rebel movements of Kent and Essex

555

00:21:47,987 --> 00:21:49,564

coordinated their movements along with

556

00:21:49,564 --> 00:21:52,417

rebels from Suffolk and Norfolk. Armed

557

00:21:52,417 --> 00:21:54,843

with sticks, battle axes, old swords and

558

00:21:54,843 --> 00:21:57,018

bows. They encountered Lady Joan, the

559

00:21:57,018 --> 00:21:59,143

King's mother, who was travelling back to

560

00:21:59,143 --> 00:22:00,661

London. Interestingly, although they did

561

00:22:00,661 --> 00:22:03,090

mock her quite a lot, they didn't harm

562

00:22:03,090 --> 00:22:05,519

her. It would appear that they did not

563

00:22:05,519 --> 00:22:07,948

have an interest in violence for the sake

564

00:22:07,948 --> 00:22:10,377

of it, which is interesting as she was,

565

00:22:10,377 --> 00:22:12,502

by very definition of being the King's

566

00:22:12,502 --> 00:22:15,386

mother, connected to the Crown. The King

567

00:22:15,386 --> 00:22:17,650

heard about the revolt on the 10th of

568

00:22:17,650 --> 00:22:19,630

June. He travelled down the River Thames

569

00:22:19,630 --> 00:22:22,460

to hole up in the safety of the Tower of

570

00:22:22,460 --> 00:22:24,724

London, where he was joined by Lady Joan,

571

00:22:24,724 --> 00:22:26,422

the Archbishop Simon Sudbury and other

572

00:22:26,422 --> 00:22:28,402

senior nobles, and they sent a delegation

573

00:22:28,402 --> 00:22:31,126

out to negotiate with those rebels. On

574

00:22:31,126 --> 00:22:33,549

the 12th of June the Kentish rebels

575

00:22:33,549 --> 00:22:35,626

reached Blackheath where a new figure

576

00:22:35,626 --> 00:22:38,395

joins our tale, a well known priest and

577

00:22:38,395 --> 00:22:40,472

radical preacher named John Ball who

578

00:22:40,472 --> 00:22:42,895

delivered a famous sermon to the rebels.

579

00:22:42,895 --> 00:22:45,664

So who is this John Ball guy? Well

580

00:22:45,664 --> 00:22:47,741

fittingly for this podcast, it's believed

581

00:22:47,741 --> 00:22:50,164

that John Ball was originally from Essex.

582

00:22:50,164 --> 00:22:52,587

Born near Colchester, he trained as a

583

00:22:52,587 --> 00:22:55,009

priest in York before moving to Norwich

584

00:22:55,009 --> 00:22:57,857

and then back to Colchester. Before we

585

00:22:57,857 --> 00:23:00,203

go any further though, John Ball is not

586

00:23:00,203 --> 00:23:03,201

an easy person to research. History is

587

00:23:03,201 --> 00:23:05,514

most often written by the person holding

588

00:23:05,514 --> 00:23:07,827

the pen, and the lived experiences of

589

00:23:07,827 --> 00:23:10,141

millions of people are just simply not

590

00:23:10,141 --> 00:23:12,123

recorded. Those who keep the records

591

00:23:12,123 --> 00:23:14,767

often have their own agenda, and this is

592

00:23:14,767 --> 00:23:16,750

particularly true in relation to John

593

00:23:16,750 --> 00:23:19,393

Ball. Because John Ball was not one for

594

00:23:19,393 --> 00:23:22,037

sticking to the status quo. He got in

595

00:23:22,037 --> 00:23:23,689

trouble for preaching articles contrary

596

00:23:23,689 --> 00:23:26,333

to the faith of the Church, which brought

597

00:23:26,333 --> 00:23:28,316

him into direct conflict with Archbishop

598

00:23:28,316 --> 00:23:30,629

Simon Sudbury, who threw Ball in prison

599

00:23:30,629 --> 00:23:33,350

several times over. It also

600

00:23:33,350 --> 00:23:35,762

seems that Ball was excommunicated, so it

601

00:23:35,762 --> 00:23:38,175
was actually forbidden for anyone to hear

602

00:23:38,175 --> 00:23:40,588
him preach. This didn't stop him though.

603

00:23:40,588 --> 00:23:43,001
He didn't moderate his views, and his

604

00:23:43,001 --> 00:23:45,552
popularity also didn't suffer. He spoke

605

00:23:45,552 --> 00:23:47,383
to parishioners in churchyards after

606

00:23:47,383 --> 00:23:49,214
official services were concluded, acting

607

00:23:49,214 --> 00:23:52,143
as a roving preacher with no parish and

608

00:23:52,143 --> 00:23:53,974
delivering radical sermons all over

609

00:23:53,974 --> 00:23:56,631
Essex. You might be wondering exactly

610

00:23:56,631 --> 00:23:59,208
what Ball had been preaching that had the

611

00:23:59,208 --> 00:24:01,463
authorities so hacked off. Ball was a

612

00:24:01,463 --> 00:24:04,040
huge fan of social equality and he wasn't

613

00:24:04,040 --> 00:24:06,618

afraid to rock the boat to promote that

614

00:24:06,618 --> 00:24:08,873

cause. At the time that the Peasants

615

00:24:08,873 --> 00:24:11,128

Revolt kicked off, Ball was believed to

616

00:24:11,128 --> 00:24:13,383

be in prison in Maidstone before being

617

00:24:13,383 --> 00:24:15,960

released by the rebels and he gave a

618

00:24:15,960 --> 00:24:17,893

famous open air sermon at Blackheath,

619

00:24:17,893 --> 00:24:19,504

including the following: "When Adam

620

00:24:19,504 --> 00:24:22,081

delved and Eve span, who was then the

621

00:24:22,081 --> 00:24:24,336

gentleman? From the beginning, all men by

622

00:24:24,336 --> 00:24:26,363

nature were created alike, and our

623

00:24:26,363 --> 00:24:28,574

bondage or servitude came in by the

624

00:24:28,574 --> 00:24:30,784

unjust oppression of naughty men. For if

625

00:24:30,784 --> 00:24:33,626

God would have had any bond men from the

626

00:24:33,626 --> 00:24:35,521

beginning, He would have appointed who

627

00:24:35,521 --> 00:24:37,732

should be bond and who free. And

628

00:24:37,732 --> 00:24:39,942

therefore I exhort you to consider that

629

00:24:39,942 --> 00:24:42,784

now the time is come, appointed to us by

630

00:24:42,784 --> 00:24:45,626

God, in which ye may, if ye will, case

631

00:24:45,626 --> 00:24:47,837

off the yoke of bondage and recover

632

00:24:47,837 --> 00:24:49,100

liberty." Which, translated into

633

00:24:49,100 --> 00:24:50,679

simplified modern English, is roughly: "

634

00:24:50,679 --> 00:24:53,521

In the days of Adam and Eve there were

635

00:24:53,521 --> 00:24:56,356

no Lords, we were all equal. And it was

636

00:24:56,356 --> 00:24:58,445

only later that some men decided they

637

00:24:58,445 --> 00:25:00,834

were in charge and made us serfs and

638

00:25:00,834 --> 00:25:02,923

peasants. If God had wanted this, he

639

00:25:02,923 --> 00:25:05,610

would have done it from the start. So as

640

00:25:05,610 --> 00:25:08,297

he didn't, if you want, you should all be

641

00:25:08,297 --> 00:25:09,789

free." Interestingly, John Ball also

642

00:25:09,789 --> 00:25:11,581

promoted the rebel slogan "with King

643

00:25:11,581 --> 00:25:13,670

Richard and the True Commons of England",

644

00:25:13,670 --> 00:25:15,461

which shows that the rebels weren't

645

00:25:15,461 --> 00:25:17,253

disloyal to the monarchy, they just

646

00:25:17,253 --> 00:25:19,342

wanted rid of serfdom and the hierarchies

647

00:25:19,342 --> 00:25:21,133

of church and state. They actually

648

00:25:21,133 --> 00:25:23,522

claimed to be true to Richard, unlike his

649

00:25:23,522 --> 00:25:26,400

advisers. The delegation from

650

00:25:26,400 --> 00:25:28,711

the Tower of London arrived, but they

651
00:25:28,711 --> 00:25:30,362
were unsuccessful in persuading the

652
00:25:30,362 --> 00:25:32,673
rebels to go home, so onward they

653
00:25:32,673 --> 00:25:34,653
marched. The King and his advisers

654
00:25:34,653 --> 00:25:36,964
discussed how to tackle this revolt from

655
00:25:36,964 --> 00:25:39,275
the Tower of London. They didn't have

656
00:25:39,275 --> 00:25:41,586
many troops with them though, because the

657
00:25:41,586 --> 00:25:43,896
rest were either fighting over in France

658
00:25:43,896 --> 00:25:45,877
or guarding against a potential Scottish

659
00:25:45,877 --> 00:25:47,528
invasion. English law was complicating

660
00:25:47,528 --> 00:25:49,838
matters nicely because it was stated that

661
00:25:49,838 --> 00:25:52,149
only the King could summon local militias

662
00:25:52,149 --> 00:25:54,130
or lawfully execute rebels and criminals.

663
00:25:54,130 --> 00:25:55,986

So the local lords were quite reluctant

664

00:25:55,986 --> 00:25:58,875
to get stuck in. The King decided

665

00:25:58,875 --> 00:26:01,260
then to meet the rebels at Greenwich and

666

00:26:01,260 --> 00:26:03,944
he sailed from the Tower on the 13th of

667

00:26:03,944 --> 00:26:05,435
June. Negotiations at this point

668

00:26:05,435 --> 00:26:07,224
completely failed. Richard was not coming

669

00:26:07,224 --> 00:26:09,907
off his barge for love nor money, and the

670

00:26:09,907 --> 00:26:12,293
rebels would not speak to him until he

671

00:26:12,293 --> 00:26:14,976
did so. So Richard goes back to the Tower

672

00:26:14,976 --> 00:26:17,064
of London. At this point rebel forces

673

00:26:17,064 --> 00:26:19,449
from both Kent and Essex made their way

674

00:26:19,449 --> 00:26:22,332
into the City of London. So while

675

00:26:22,332 --> 00:26:24,682
this is going on, I mentioned earlier

676

00:26:24,682 --> 00:26:26,696
that London had a different social

677

00:26:26,696 --> 00:26:29,046
structure at the time compared to the

678

00:26:29,046 --> 00:26:31,061
rural feudal system. However, this was

679

00:26:31,061 --> 00:26:33,411
not without its frictions. In fact, in

680

00:26:33,411 --> 00:26:36,097
the lead up to 1381, London was quite

681

00:26:36,097 --> 00:26:37,775
fractious. The authorities were often

682

00:26:37,775 --> 00:26:40,125
alarmed by the activities of the guilds

683

00:26:40,125 --> 00:26:42,140
and Londoners generally resented the way

684

00:26:42,140 --> 00:26:44,490
that the royal legal system had expanded

685

00:26:44,490 --> 00:26:46,840
in the City, particularly the role of

686

00:26:46,840 --> 00:26:49,190
Marshalsea Court in Southwark. This was

687

00:26:49,190 --> 00:26:51,204
starting to compete with the already

688

00:26:51,204 --> 00:26:52,319

established authorities. Londoners

689

00:26:52,319 --> 00:26:54,623

generally disliked John of Gaunt, who I

690

00:26:54,623 --> 00:26:56,599

mentioned before. He was Richard's uncle

691

00:26:56,599 --> 00:26:59,232

and his advisor, and he was feuding with

692

00:26:59,232 --> 00:27:01,537

the London elite because it was rumoured

693

00:27:01,537 --> 00:27:03,842

that he wanted to replace the elected

694

00:27:03,842 --> 00:27:05,817

mayor with a crown appointed captain.

695

00:27:05,817 --> 00:27:08,780

This just on its own led to riots in

696

00:27:08,780 --> 00:27:11,414

1377, so we can see that London itself

697

00:27:11,414 --> 00:27:14,048

was pretty unstable at that time. John of

698

00:27:14,048 --> 00:27:16,023

Gaunt narrowly escaped being lynched at

699

00:27:16,023 --> 00:27:17,999

that point and there were further

700

00:27:17,999 --> 00:27:20,303

protests in the north and West of

701

00:27:20,303 --> 00:27:22,478

England. There was also resentment of

702

00:27:22,478 --> 00:27:24,694

anyone foreign, in particular the Flemish

703

00:27:24,694 --> 00:27:26,909

weavers. These guys had settled in

704

00:27:26,909 --> 00:27:29,124

England partly at royal invitation from

705

00:27:29,124 --> 00:27:31,708

Edward the 3rd, and they were dominating

706

00:27:31,708 --> 00:27:34,292

part of the cloth trade. Basically over

707

00:27:34,292 --> 00:27:37,246

time the Weavers Guild, as in the English

708

00:27:37,246 --> 00:27:39,461

Weavers Guild, had lost members from

709

00:27:39,461 --> 00:27:41,676

London, with some weavers moving away

710

00:27:41,676 --> 00:27:44,260

from the city to avoid Guild control.

711

00:27:45,180 --> 00:27:47,471

This departure left space for the Flemish

712

00:27:47,471 --> 00:27:50,281

weavers to move in. Edward the

713

00:27:50,281 --> 00:27:52,924

Third saw the national value of the cloth

714

00:27:52,924 --> 00:27:55,236

trade and he issued regulations to forbid

715

00:27:55,236 --> 00:27:57,879

the export of wool and the import of

716

00:27:57,879 --> 00:28:00,795

foreign cloth. Now at this time there

717

00:28:00,795 --> 00:28:03,251

were a number of Flemish weavers who were

718

00:28:03,251 --> 00:28:05,400

very unhappy in Flanders and they brought

719

00:28:05,400 --> 00:28:07,549

their skills to England. But the King

720

00:28:07,549 --> 00:28:09,698

prevented the weavers Guild, as in the

721

00:28:09,698 --> 00:28:11,233

existing English Weavers Guild, from

722

00:28:11,233 --> 00:28:13,689

forcing foreign workers to join it and to

723

00:28:13,689 --> 00:28:15,531

pay dues. The Flemish weavers therefore

724

00:28:15,531 --> 00:28:18,294

set their own Guild up and that did not

725

00:28:18,294 --> 00:28:20,443

sit well with the English Weavers Guild.

726

00:28:20,443 --> 00:28:23,206

This set off a feud that lasted for over

727

00:28:23,206 --> 00:28:25,891

100 years. The Flemish weavers, from

728

00:28:25,891 --> 00:28:27,468

the English weaver's perspective, were

729

00:28:27,468 --> 00:28:29,675

seen to be taking jobs and undercutting

730

00:28:29,675 --> 00:28:32,176

wages. In addition to that perceived

731

00:28:32,176 --> 00:28:34,380

royal favouritism that they had received,

732

00:28:34,380 --> 00:28:36,584

they were quite unpopular, seeming to

733

00:28:36,584 --> 00:28:38,420

benefit from the authority's approval.

734

00:28:38,860 --> 00:28:41,402

This was a powder keg about to explode,

735

00:28:41,402 --> 00:28:43,308

and while the Flemish Weavers hadn't

736

00:28:43,308 --> 00:28:45,214

actually done anything directly to invoke

737

00:28:45,214 --> 00:28:48,074

the ire of the people, they were an easy

738

00:28:48,074 --> 00:28:49,980

target as a resident foreign community.

739

00:28:51,060 --> 00:28:53,999

What actually happened then in London?So

740

00:28:53,999 --> 00:28:55,795

the Kentish rebels began crossing from

741

00:28:55,795 --> 00:28:57,890

Southwark onto London Bridge on the 13th

742

00:28:57,890 --> 00:28:59,985

of June with no difficulty as the

743

00:28:59,985 --> 00:29:02,080

defences had been opened from the inside.

744

00:29:02,080 --> 00:29:04,774

No one is completely sure if this was due

745

00:29:04,774 --> 00:29:07,168

to sympathy for their cause or just plain

746

00:29:07,168 --> 00:29:09,263

fear, but either way they had no

747

00:29:09,263 --> 00:29:12,011

difficulty in getting in. Meanwhile, the

748

00:29:12,011 --> 00:29:13,782

Essex rebels made their way towards

749

00:29:13,782 --> 00:29:16,143

Aldgate on the north side of the city.

750

00:29:16,143 --> 00:29:18,505

The rebels had a list of people they

751

00:29:18,505 --> 00:29:20,867

wanted the King to hand over, with John

752

00:29:20,867 --> 00:29:22,933

of Gaunt and the Archbishop pretty high

753

00:29:22,933 --> 00:29:25,295

up on it, along with other royal council

754

00:29:25,295 --> 00:29:27,771

members and officials. The rebels tore

755

00:29:27,771 --> 00:29:29,752

the Marshalsea prison in Southwark apart

756

00:29:29,752 --> 00:29:32,064

and they were joined in their activities

757

00:29:32,064 --> 00:29:35,036

by a number of Londoners who were also at

758

00:29:35,036 --> 00:29:37,678

the end of their tether and together they

759

00:29:37,678 --> 00:29:39,659

attacked the Fleet and Newgate prisons.

760

00:29:39,659 --> 00:29:42,301

Now here's where things get a little bit

761

00:29:42,301 --> 00:29:44,282

uncomfortable, because it's at this point

762

00:29:44,282 --> 00:29:46,264

that those Flemish immigrants I mentioned

763

00:29:46,264 --> 00:29:48,245

earlier are targeted too. I say

764

00:29:48,245 --> 00:29:49,896

uncomfortable because they're not really

765

00:29:49,896 --> 00:29:52,208

a part of this oppressive system, but

766

00:29:52,208 --> 00:29:54,189

apparently the rebels see them as

767

00:29:54,189 --> 00:29:56,604

benefiting from it. And therefore they

768

00:29:56,604 --> 00:29:58,733

become symbolic targets of sorts. Rebels

769

00:29:58,733 --> 00:30:00,862

allegedly dragged them out of their

770

00:30:00,862 --> 00:30:03,345

sanctuary in churches and their homes and

771

00:30:03,345 --> 00:30:05,474

reportedly subjected them to a linguistic

772

00:30:05,474 --> 00:30:07,958

test. This part is, strictly speaking, a

773

00:30:07,958 --> 00:30:10,796

rumour that if it is true, it's not

774

00:30:10,796 --> 00:30:13,633

unique within history. The concept

775

00:30:13,633 --> 00:30:15,780

of shibboleths, or words that must be

776

00:30:15,780 --> 00:30:17,927

said in a particular way to identify

777

00:30:17,927 --> 00:30:20,687

oneself as part of a group, dates back to

778

00:30:20,687 --> 00:30:23,384

the Bible. The story goes that the

779

00:30:23,384 --> 00:30:25,798

Flemish weavers were asked to say the

780

00:30:25,798 --> 00:30:28,212

phrase "bread and cheese" as their accent

781

00:30:28,212 --> 00:30:30,626

would give them away. Over 100 Flemish

782

00:30:30,626 --> 00:30:32,695

weavers were executed in this instance.

783

00:30:32,695 --> 00:30:35,453

To add to the confusion, you might be

784

00:30:35,453 --> 00:30:37,522

wondering why before I was saying "

785

00:30:37,522 --> 00:30:39,591

allegedly" in relation to the rebels

786

00:30:39,591 --> 00:30:41,660

storming through and taking the Flemish

787

00:30:41,660 --> 00:30:44,419

weavers out of their safe houses. And the

788

00:30:44,419 --> 00:30:46,833

reason I said this is because it's

789

00:30:46,833 --> 00:30:48,902

actually theorised by a historian named

790

00:30:48,902 --> 00:30:50,970

Rodney Hilton that the Flemish weavers

791

00:30:50,970 --> 00:30:52,894

weren't actually targeted by the rebels

792

00:30:52,894 --> 00:30:54,931

themselves, but by rival weavers from the

793

00:30:54,931 --> 00:30:56,677

English Weavers Guild due to that

794

00:30:56,677 --> 00:30:58,423

existing feud. Because let's be honest,

795

00:30:58,423 --> 00:31:00,460

it would be a really brilliant cover

796

00:31:00,460 --> 00:31:02,787

story. Nope, nothing to do with us. No

797

00:31:02,787 --> 00:31:04,824

idea what happened to all those Flemish

798

00:31:04,824 --> 00:31:06,570

weavers. It's just coincidence that our

799

00:31:06,570 --> 00:31:09,189

enemy happens to be dead. But we can very

800

00:31:09,189 --> 00:31:11,226

comfortably blame the rebels and no one's

801

00:31:11,226 --> 00:31:12,972
going to know the difference. So

802

00:31:12,972 --> 00:31:14,718
basically, we're not too sure whether

803

00:31:14,718 --> 00:31:16,754
they were executed by the rebels or

804

00:31:16,754 --> 00:31:19,082
murdered by a rival Guild, but either way

805

00:31:19,082 --> 00:31:21,119
it's a particularly chilling part of this

806

00:31:21,119 --> 00:31:23,543
entire period. Unfortunately, history is

807

00:31:23,543 --> 00:31:25,899
littered with instances of collateral

808

00:31:25,899 --> 00:31:28,824
damage. The rebels continued to attack a

809

00:31:28,824 --> 00:31:30,519
number of properties connected to their

810

00:31:30,519 --> 00:31:32,213
enemies, including the Temple, which was

811

00:31:32,213 --> 00:31:34,190
a complex of legal buildings and offices,

812

00:31:34,190 --> 00:31:36,167
where they dragged out the contents, the

813

00:31:36,167 --> 00:31:38,143

books and the paperwork, and they burned

814

00:31:38,143 --> 00:31:40,402

it in the street. They also attacked the

815

00:31:40,402 --> 00:31:42,379

Savoy Palace, which belonged to John of

816

00:31:42,379 --> 00:31:44,638

Gaunt, who was most fortunate to not be

817

00:31:44,638 --> 00:31:47,317

at home at the time. The rebels are

818

00:31:47,317 --> 00:31:49,211

reported to have refused to steal

819

00:31:49,211 --> 00:31:51,105

anything from the palace, saying that

820

00:31:51,105 --> 00:31:53,314

they were not common thieves, though they

821

00:31:53,314 --> 00:31:54,892

did systematically destroy the interior,

822

00:31:54,892 --> 00:31:56,786

burning the soft furnishings, smashing up

823

00:31:56,786 --> 00:31:58,680

the metalwork and throwing things into

824

00:31:58,680 --> 00:32:00,889

the Thames and into the city drains.

825

00:32:00,889 --> 00:32:03,414

Finally, they set fire to what was left

826

00:32:03,414 --> 00:32:05,623
of the building and gathered outside the

827

00:32:05,623 --> 00:32:08,487
Tower of London. The 14th of June

828

00:32:08,487 --> 00:32:11,179
saw the King make his way to Mile End to

829

00:32:11,179 --> 00:32:13,064
negotiate with the rebels, taking only a

830

00:32:13,064 --> 00:32:15,863
couple of guards with him. At

831

00:32:15,863 --> 00:32:17,863
this point, then, it's worth assessing.

832

00:32:17,863 --> 00:32:20,197
What is it that the rebels actually

833

00:32:20,197 --> 00:32:22,530
wanted? What were their demands that they

834

00:32:22,530 --> 00:32:24,863
were putting forward to the king? They

835

00:32:24,863 --> 00:32:27,197
wanted lower taxes, an end to serfdom,

836

00:32:27,197 --> 00:32:29,197
and for Richard the Second's senior

837

00:32:29,197 --> 00:32:31,530
officials and law courts to be removed.

838

00:32:31,530 --> 00:32:33,530

They wanted the surrender of hated

839

00:32:33,530 --> 00:32:35,530
officials on their lists for execution.

840

00:32:35,530 --> 00:32:37,863
They called for amnesty for the rebels,

841

00:32:37,863 --> 00:32:40,197
and they called for something called the

842

00:32:40,197 --> 00:32:42,530
Law of Winchester. No one is precisely

843

00:32:42,530 --> 00:32:44,863
sure of what this means, but it's

844

00:32:44,863 --> 00:32:47,621
speculated that. It may be referring to

845

00:32:47,621 --> 00:32:50,437
the idea of villages as communities self

846

00:32:50,437 --> 00:32:52,448
regulating rather than being governed

847

00:32:52,448 --> 00:32:55,343
externally. So in response to these

848

00:32:55,343 --> 00:32:57,183
requests, what did Richard actually give

849

00:32:57,183 --> 00:32:59,963
them?To begin with, Richard issued

850

00:32:59,963 --> 00:33:02,528
charters to abolish serfdom, but he did

851

00:33:02,528 --> 00:33:04,727
refuse to hand over any officials,

852

00:33:04,727 --> 00:33:06,559
promising though to personally implement

853

00:33:06,559 --> 00:33:08,758
any required justice. But while Richard

854

00:33:08,758 --> 00:33:11,690
was away, the tower was taken by a

855

00:33:11,690 --> 00:33:14,256
different group of rebels. 400 of a

856

00:33:14,256 --> 00:33:16,454
separate group had stormed the fortress,

857

00:33:16,454 --> 00:33:19,020
which had foolishly been left open to

858

00:33:19,020 --> 00:33:21,585
receive Richard when he came back. That

859

00:33:21,585 --> 00:33:24,517
is an absolute rookie error on the part

860

00:33:24,517 --> 00:33:27,442
of security. And as a consequence, they

861

00:33:27,442 --> 00:33:28,993
met no resistance. Everyone was

862

00:33:28,993 --> 00:33:30,545
terrified. But these particular rebels

863

00:33:30,545 --> 00:33:32,717

did not share the same hesitancy in

864

00:33:32,717 --> 00:33:34,579

relation to stealing, and they thoroughly

865

00:33:34,579 --> 00:33:37,519

looted the Tower of London. So

866

00:33:37,519 --> 00:33:40,309

it was at this point that the rebels

867

00:33:40,309 --> 00:33:41,703

executed Archbishop Sudbury, Robert

868

00:33:41,703 --> 00:33:43,796

Hales, John Gaunt's physician, and Royal

869

00:33:43,796 --> 00:33:45,888

Sergeant John Legge by beheading them

870

00:33:45,888 --> 00:33:47,631

before parading their dismembered heads

871

00:33:47,631 --> 00:33:50,072

around the city and attaching them to

872

00:33:50,072 --> 00:33:52,165

London Bridge. They nearly executed John

873

00:33:52,165 --> 00:33:54,605

of Gaunt's son, who is actually the

874

00:33:54,605 --> 00:33:57,395

future Henry the 4th, but a guard managed

875

00:33:57,395 --> 00:33:59,836

to prevent this, apparently by hiding him

876

00:33:59,836 --> 00:34:02,626

in a cupboard. They also found Lady Joan

877

00:34:02,626 --> 00:34:05,067

and Richard's sister Joan Holland in the

878

00:34:05,067 --> 00:34:07,469

castle, but again they refused to harm

879

00:34:07,469 --> 00:34:09,236

them, merely mocking them instead. John

880

00:34:09,236 --> 00:34:11,297

of Gaunt, as I mentioned, was incredibly

881

00:34:11,297 --> 00:34:13,653

fortunate to not be in the vicinity at

882

00:34:13,653 --> 00:34:16,009

this point. He was actually up on the

883

00:34:16,009 --> 00:34:17,775

Scottish border trying to negotiate a

884

00:34:17,775 --> 00:34:20,131

peace treaty with the Scots to avoid yet

885

00:34:20,131 --> 00:34:23,036

another war. Richard did not return to

886

00:34:23,036 --> 00:34:25,270

the Tower after the attack, but instead

887

00:34:25,270 --> 00:34:27,185

travelled to the brilliantly named Great

888

00:34:27,185 --> 00:34:29,419

Wardrobe, a royal house in Blackfriars in

889

00:34:29,419 --> 00:34:31,334
southwest London. It's here that he

890

00:34:31,334 --> 00:34:32,930
appointed a new chancellor, Richard

891

00:34:32,930 --> 00:34:35,164
Fitzalan, the Earl of Arundel, and they

892

00:34:35,164 --> 00:34:37,717
began to make plans to deal with the

893

00:34:37,717 --> 00:34:40,589
rebels the next day. At this point a lot

894

00:34:40,589 --> 00:34:43,142
of the Essex rebels were quite happy with

895

00:34:43,142 --> 00:34:45,695
the promises made by the king and packed

896

00:34:45,695 --> 00:34:48,568
up and went home. But not all of them.

897

00:34:48,568 --> 00:34:50,802
This leaves Wat Tyler and the Kentish

898

00:34:50,802 --> 00:34:52,867
rebels still. Doing their thing in

899

00:34:52,867 --> 00:34:54,551
London, which was essentially finding

900

00:34:54,551 --> 00:34:56,572
anyone connected with John of Gaunt,

901

00:34:56,572 --> 00:34:58,256

anyone identifiably foreign and anyone

902

00:34:58,256 --> 00:35:00,276

associated with the legal system and

903

00:35:00,276 --> 00:35:01,960

killing them in the street.

904

00:35:03,240 --> 00:35:05,898

So, rolling onto the 15th of June,

905

00:35:05,898 --> 00:35:07,797

the government and remaining Kentish

906

00:35:07,797 --> 00:35:10,455

rebels who were not appeased by the

907

00:35:10,455 --> 00:35:13,113

King's offerings the day before, met at

908

00:35:13,113 --> 00:35:15,391

Smithfield, just outside the city walls.

909

00:35:15,391 --> 00:35:18,049

That's the King with a party of

910

00:35:18,049 --> 00:35:20,707

about 200 including men at arms, versus

911

00:35:20,707 --> 00:35:22,985

thousands of rebels who, whilst lacking

912

00:35:22,985 --> 00:35:24,504

any particularly sophisticated weapons,

913

00:35:24,504 --> 00:35:26,782

had certainly proven themselves to be

914

00:35:26,782 --> 00:35:28,681

absolutely lethal. Richard calls what

915

00:35:28,681 --> 00:35:31,643

Tyler forward. Tyler is cheeky. He greets

916

00:35:31,643 --> 00:35:33,650

the king with far too much familiarity,

917

00:35:34,120 --> 00:35:36,500

calling him his brother, Richard asks why

918

00:35:36,500 --> 00:35:38,880

the rebels are still here after the

919

00:35:38,880 --> 00:35:41,430

offerings the day before. Tyler gets

920

00:35:41,430 --> 00:35:43,635

angry, saying demands have not been met.

921

00:35:43,635 --> 00:35:45,524

He then rudely demanded refreshment and

922

00:35:45,524 --> 00:35:48,044

once given this he tried to leave. This

923

00:35:48,044 --> 00:35:50,564

caused a row to break out between Tyler

924

00:35:50,564 --> 00:35:53,083

and some of the royal servants. The Lord

925

00:35:53,083 --> 00:35:54,973

Mayor of London, William Walworth gets

926

00:35:54,973 --> 00:35:57,492

involved, but no one is too sure whether

927

00:35:57,492 --> 00:35:59,382

Walworth or Richard called for Tyler's

928

00:35:59,382 --> 00:36:02,217

arrest. What we do know though is that in

929

00:36:02,217 --> 00:36:03,791

the kerfuffle that followed, Walworth

930

00:36:03,791 --> 00:36:05,681

stabbed Tyler in self defence. This

931

00:36:05,681 --> 00:36:07,886

initial stab wound was followed up with

932

00:36:07,886 --> 00:36:09,775

more stab wounds courtesy of Ralph

933

00:36:09,775 --> 00:36:12,619

Standish, a royal squire. Richard manages

934

00:36:12,619 --> 00:36:14,715

to defuse the situation, persuading the

935

00:36:14,715 --> 00:36:16,811

rebels to follow him away from

936

00:36:16,811 --> 00:36:19,164

Smithfield. Tyler's body is beheaded with

937

00:36:19,164 --> 00:36:21,763

the head stuck on a pole, and at this

938

00:36:21,763 --> 00:36:23,495

point the rebel movement began to

939

00:36:23,495 --> 00:36:25,228
collapse, with Walworth and his leading

940

00:36:25,228 --> 00:36:26,671
supporters being knighted for their

941

00:36:26,671 --> 00:36:29,468
services. Now here is where most

942

00:36:29,468 --> 00:36:31,133
recollections of the peasants revolt in

943

00:36:31,133 --> 00:36:33,077
textbooks comes to a natural close. The

944

00:36:33,077 --> 00:36:35,020
rebel leader is dead, the king is

945

00:36:35,020 --> 00:36:36,963
victorious, and they all went home for

946

00:36:36,963 --> 00:36:39,957
dinner. The reality is somewhat messier,

947

00:36:39,957 --> 00:36:42,209
though. Richard did ride towards the

948

00:36:42,209 --> 00:36:44,462
crowd after Tyler's death, appeasing them

949

00:36:44,462 --> 00:36:47,089
by saying he will be their leader.

950

00:36:47,089 --> 00:36:49,342
The Kentish rebels dispersed at this

951

00:36:49,342 --> 00:36:50,843

point relatively peacefully, basically

952

00:36:50,843 --> 00:36:53,096

believing that they've won, but Richard

953

00:36:53,096 --> 00:36:54,972

also scrapped his previous promises.

954

00:36:54,972 --> 00:36:57,225

Within days, the charters were revoked,

955

00:36:57,225 --> 00:36:59,477

and it's reported that Richard said "

956

00:36:59,477 --> 00:37:02,105

Villeins ye are and villeins ye shall

957

00:37:02,105 --> 00:37:04,617

remain." But it's important to remember

958

00:37:04,617 --> 00:37:06,600

that the Essex rebels are a separate

959

00:37:06,600 --> 00:37:08,583

group and they keep going over the

960

00:37:08,583 --> 00:37:11,283

following weeks back at home. In order to

961

00:37:11,283 --> 00:37:13,742

stop them, Thomas of Woodstock had to use

962

00:37:13,742 --> 00:37:15,587

actual royal forces near Billericay and

963

00:37:15,587 --> 00:37:17,432

Great Baddow. In East Anglia, their

964

00:37:17,432 --> 00:37:19,277

rebellion was crushed by a literal

965

00:37:19,277 --> 00:37:21,429

armoured Bishop Henry le Despenser. Other

966

00:37:21,429 --> 00:37:23,274

rebellions had been ongoing in other

967

00:37:23,274 --> 00:37:25,119

parts of the country, including Suffolk,

968

00:37:25,119 --> 00:37:27,271

Norfolk and Hertfordshire in even as far

969

00:37:27,271 --> 00:37:30,038

north as the City of York and as far

970

00:37:30,038 --> 00:37:31,883

West as Somerset. Richard began to

971

00:37:31,883 --> 00:37:33,728

suppress the revolt shortly after what

972

00:37:33,728 --> 00:37:35,880

Tyler's death on the 15th of June.

973

00:37:36,730 --> 00:37:38,221

Knights were appointed to regain control

974

00:37:38,221 --> 00:37:39,960

of London and they rounded up followers

975

00:37:39,960 --> 00:37:42,449

to sort out the other regions. In due

976

00:37:42,449 --> 00:37:44,858
course, at least 1500 rebels were killed

977

00:37:44,858 --> 00:37:47,268
in the aftermath and more were imprisoned

978

00:37:47,268 --> 00:37:49,678
or fined. But remember, as these are

979

00:37:49,678 --> 00:37:51,399
medieval figures, they're an estimate

980

00:37:51,399 --> 00:37:53,120
rather than a precise number.

981

00:37:54,160 --> 00:37:56,282
John Ball was captured in Coventry. He

982

00:37:56,282 --> 00:37:59,009
was tried as a traitor and he was hanged,

983

00:37:59,009 --> 00:38:01,434
drawn and quartered at St. Albans in July

984

00:38:01,434 --> 00:38:03,648
of 1381. Richard himself made sure to

985

00:38:03,648 --> 00:38:05,581
witness that one and the four body parts

986

00:38:05,581 --> 00:38:07,272
of John Ball were taken to different

987

00:38:07,272 --> 00:38:09,662
cities to be shown off. William

988

00:38:09,662 --> 00:38:11,773

Grindcobbe, the leader of the St. Albans

989

00:38:11,773 --> 00:38:13,884

uprising, was also executed, as well as

990

00:38:13,884 --> 00:38:15,995

John Wrawe, the Essex chaplain who raised

991

00:38:15,995 --> 00:38:17,805

the rebellion in Suffolk, though the

992

00:38:17,805 --> 00:38:19,615

latter wasn't captured until the year

993

00:38:19,615 --> 00:38:21,726

after. He also turned informant on his

994

00:38:21,726 --> 00:38:24,139

fellow rebels in a failed bid to save

995

00:38:24,139 --> 00:38:26,885

himself. Finally, Thomas Baker of

996

00:38:26,885 --> 00:38:29,695

Fobbing, the man who upset the apple cart

997

00:38:29,695 --> 00:38:32,505

by standing up to Bampton in the first

998

00:38:32,505 --> 00:38:34,612

place, had his property confiscated and

999

00:38:34,612 --> 00:38:37,070

was then executed at Chelmsford. So after

1000

00:38:37,070 --> 00:38:39,178

all this chaos and bloodshed, what

1001

00:38:39,178 --> 00:38:42,138

actually changed? Truthfully, a little and

1002

00:38:42,138 --> 00:38:44,746

a lot. Serfdom didn't end. It

1003

00:38:44,746 --> 00:38:47,353

technically remained on paper, but the

1004

00:38:47,353 --> 00:38:49,960

social landscape was starting to shift.

1005

00:38:50,720 --> 00:38:52,682

As I said before though, Richard's

1006

00:38:52,682 --> 00:38:54,643

charters to scrap serfdom were revoked

1007

00:38:54,643 --> 00:38:57,586

just days after he made the promise to do

1008

00:38:57,586 --> 00:38:59,874

so. Medieval England did not see any

1009

00:38:59,874 --> 00:39:01,509

comparable national poll tax levied,

1010

00:39:01,509 --> 00:39:03,144

though the rebellion had rattled

1011

00:39:03,144 --> 00:39:05,432

Parliament pretty badly and they came to

1012

00:39:05,432 --> 00:39:07,067

the realisation that getting ordinary

1013

00:39:07,067 --> 00:39:09,355

households to cover eye watering sums of

1014

00:39:09,355 --> 00:39:11,644

money made them unpopular at best and

1015

00:39:11,644 --> 00:39:14,259

likely to end up with their heads on

1016

00:39:14,259 --> 00:39:17,120

spikes at worst. So although

1017

00:39:17,120 --> 00:39:18,920

serfdom formally continued, the Manor

1018

00:39:18,920 --> 00:39:21,440

Lords started to quietly grant a few

1019

00:39:21,440 --> 00:39:23,600

economic freedoms to their serfs. Over

1020

00:39:23,600 --> 00:39:26,120

time, it became more profitable to lease

1021

00:39:26,120 --> 00:39:29,000

land and to pay wages rather than to

1022

00:39:29,000 --> 00:39:31,763

forced labour. So technically the legal

1023

00:39:31,763 --> 00:39:34,409

status of serfdom stuck around, but on a

1024

00:39:34,409 --> 00:39:36,725

practical level it did start to die

1025

00:39:36,725 --> 00:39:39,040

off, one Lord's decision at a time.

1026

00:39:39,520 --> 00:39:41,180

The upper classes became significantly

1027

00:39:41,180 --> 00:39:43,504

warier of taxation and the possibility of

1028

00:39:43,504 --> 00:39:45,164

riots. Culturally though, the rebellion

1029

00:39:45,164 --> 00:39:47,820

left quite a legacy. But we must always

1030

00:39:47,820 --> 00:39:50,144

remember, as I said earlier on, history

1031

00:39:50,144 --> 00:39:52,800

is written by whoever is holding the pen.

1032

00:39:52,800 --> 00:39:54,792

John Ball was vilified for centuries

1033

00:39:54,792 --> 00:39:57,448

after his death for daring to stand up

1034

00:39:57,448 --> 00:40:00,104

against the status quo, and it was only

1035

00:40:00,104 --> 00:40:02,760

when a few more revolutions kicked off in

1036

00:40:02,760 --> 00:40:04,752

the 18th century that his reputation

1037

00:40:04,752 --> 00:40:06,412

started to change, with more

1038

00:40:06,412 --> 00:40:08,072

revolutionaries reflecting on his words

1039

00:40:08,072 --> 00:40:10,350

and concluding that this guy at the time

1040

00:40:10,350 --> 00:40:12,007

may have had ideas that aligned with

1041

00:40:12,007 --> 00:40:14,710

their own. The revolt is remembered

1042

00:40:14,710 --> 00:40:16,933

as failing in London in Richard's favour,

1043

00:40:16,933 --> 00:40:19,790

and maybe on the surface it did. But it's

1044

00:40:19,790 --> 00:40:22,013

across the county borders, in Essex and

1045

00:40:22,013 --> 00:40:24,235

Kent, that those quiet changes began to

1046

00:40:24,235 --> 00:40:26,775

happen. An inch of land here, a fairer

1047

00:40:26,775 --> 00:40:29,315

wage there. And these were on the terms

1048

00:40:29,315 --> 00:40:31,538

of the tenants starting in the same

1049

00:40:31,538 --> 00:40:33,443

villages, Fobbing among them, where tax

1050

00:40:33,443 --> 00:40:35,665

collectors once found out the hard way

1051

00:40:35,665 --> 00:40:38,205

that the people of Essex weren't to be

1052

00:40:38,205 --> 00:40:41,195

pushed around. I hope you've enjoyed this

1053

00:40:41,195 --> 00:40:43,036

episode. Thank you so much for listening.

1054

00:40:43,036 --> 00:40:44,877

If you'd like to, I'd really appreciate

1055

00:40:44,877 --> 00:40:46,455

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podcasts so that you don't miss the next

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episode. I'd also love any feedback you'd

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like to provide with the e-mail address

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in the show notes. You can also find us

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on social media. Until next time, thank

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you so much for listening. Stay awesome,

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stay safe, and we'll see you in the next

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one.

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