

# Conflict and Revolt: The Bishop of Ely and his Peasants at the Manor of Brandon in Suffolk c. 1300-81

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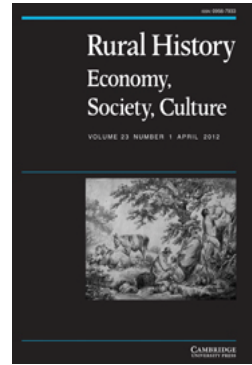
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# Conflict and Revolt: The Bishop of Ely and his Peasants at the Manor of Brandon in Suffolk c. 1300–81

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**Abstract** Using the evidence of manorial court records, this paper examines in detail the developments in the relationship between the Bishop of Ely and his peasants at the manor of Brandon leading up to the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. Increasing levels of discontent among the peasantry can be observed across the period. This is expressed in rising reported numbers of various cases in the court rolls, such as non-compliance with the court, labour refusals, trespasses and cases of foot-dragging. This rising level of conflict, some open, some more hidden, can be seen as evidence both for increasing seigniorial concern to assert various jurisdictional rights, and the peasants' increasing willingness to test the boundaries of seigniorial dominion, leading eventually to their participation in the Rising in East Anglia.

## I

The exploitation of the peasantry was an integral feature of the feudal system. The peasant holding had to produce a surplus above the needs of its own subsistence, which flowed upwards, in the form of rents in cash, kind or labour.<sup>1</sup> The framework of the manor therefore ensured the concentration of wealth in the hands of the rulers and the subjection of the peasantry to its jurisdiction. By about 1300 a substantial section of the peasantry in England were of villein status or, even if technically free, held at least some villein land, for which various dues, services or 'customs' had to be rendered. These included rents in cash, kind and labour. Other customs typically included: payment of marriage licences; heriots, which were usually the best beast of the holding and fell due upon the death of a tenant; making hurdles for fencing in the lord's sheep; carrying services, either of goods or persons, such as the lord; as well as attendance of the manorial court. Additionally villein status meant that peasants were restricted in their movement, and not allowed to leave the manor without the lord's permission.<sup>2</sup>

Peasants could and did resist the demands of lordship. Research into peasant revolts attests to peasants demanding freedom from serfdom, better rent conditions or lower customary demands.<sup>3</sup> The interplay between peasant resistance to seigniorial demands on the one side and seigniorial pressure on the other can be seen at work in the local records of the manor. These changing pressures resulted in a fairly fluid relationship between

the peasant community and the customs of the manor, which could shift accordingly, and were far from set in stone, despite what customals and estate surveys can lead one to believe. Manorial custom could and did change as a result of tenant pressure.<sup>4</sup> Such renegotiations over seigniorial demands could take years, but problems arose when rising peasant demands were continually thwarted, as they were in the later fourteenth century.

There is a general consensus that the revolt of 1381 was sparked by attempts to enforce payment of the widely evaded poll tax. However, underlying discontent about inequality, serfdom and the attempts by lords to turn the clock back and frustrate efforts by peasants and labourers to profit from the changed economic climate after the Black Death are more subtle causes for the revolt which become evident through the close scrutiny of manorial court records.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, one way of identifying these tensions is to examine the more mundane forms of peasant resistance over the long term leading to the rising of 1381, in individual manors. A number of studies have highlighted the ever present small scale conflict between lords and peasants at local level, and to some degree the focus has shifted away from open revolt to the potentially more interesting day to day forms of petty resistance, what might be called 'the weapons of the weak', which litter the records of manor courts.<sup>6</sup>

The aim of this paper is to conduct a case study of the manor of Brandon, located in the Brecklands at the north-western edge of the commercially dynamic county of Suffolk, and examine the relationship between the peasants of this market village and their lord, the Bishop of Ely. As the manor of Brandon produced a number of rebels who were active and visible enough to appear in various court indictments after 1381, the manor presents an interesting opportunity to examine long term developments in lord-tenant relationships in some depth. This will involve using a combination of sources, namely court rolls of the manor of Brandon as well as King's Bench and Gaol Delivery Rolls, and the Pardon Roll of the 1381 revolt.

The Black Death with its consequent drastic population decline made labour a very much sought after commodity. Lords feared a crisis in their incomes as wages rose and grain prices began to drop, especially from the 1370s onwards. At the same time the remaining tenants on their manors were unwilling to take up much of the additional land for which no tenants and heirs could be found, and lords suffered a decline in their incomes through rents. For peasants and wage labourers, however the changes presented them with an opportunity to demand better wages for their labours, and they were also in a better position to demand improved conditions on their tenancies from lords. They therefore found themselves in a stronger bargaining position than before and could move from job to job and from manor to manor, to ensure that their demands were met. The immediate reaction was to attempt to freeze wages and limit the increasing mobility of peasants and labourers, through legislation such as the Statute of Labourers.

On some manors historians have observed evidence for a feudal or seigniorial reaction to these developments, whereby lords tried to strengthen their hold on tenants and to reassert their authority, attempting to increase their threatened incomes, finding offenders against the labour legislation and trying to crack down on the increasing number of runaways from their manors in search of brighter futures.<sup>7</sup> This article will explore whether such developments can be observed at Brandon; whether seigniorial reaction

sharpened conflict between lord and tenants before the step to open revolt in 1381; and whether tenants felt frustrated by continuing seigniorial attempts to clamp down on their improving conditions.

## II

Probably the best known conflict between lords and villein tenants, which was directly related to the shifting economic situation after the Black Death, was over the performance of labour services.<sup>8</sup> As a form of rent due from tenants, labour services were unpaid, and the time spent by customary tenants on the lord's land was lost from their own fields. More substantial tenants were probably even forced to employ additional wage labour to help bring in their own harvest, while for smallholders, any day they had to spend working the land of their lord for free, was a day when they were unable to work for wages.

Two types of labour offence are recorded in the manor court rolls of Brandon: refusal to perform labour services for the lord; and unlicensed departure from the vill with the aim of earning higher wages elsewhere. The latter was an entirely new post-plague phenomenon. Not only does it bear witness to the high demand for labour in the region, but it also demonstrates a willingness by at least some lords to utilise the Statute of Labourers in their own private courts. Before 1349, a total of thirty-six cases of labour refusal were recorded in Brandon. In 1331 for example nine individuals did 'not come to mowing the lord's meadow when they were summoned by the hayward'.<sup>9</sup> Both smallholders and more substantial tenants refused to perform labour services. Richard Archer, who was one of the nine refusing to mow the lord's meadow in 1331, was a smallholder of both free and unfree land.<sup>10</sup> In the same group was Richard Clement, a substantial tenant, who had been married for thirteen years and by 1324 held at least forty acres of land.<sup>11</sup> Hugo Ope was another member in the 1331 group, who held a middling sized holding, most of which was subleased from other tenants.<sup>12</sup> In 1332, three individuals were presented for failing to perform labour services, of which one, John Meyr was amerced twelve pence, not only because he failed to perform 'customs' when he was summoned, but also because he spoke ill of the bailiff and it was concluded that 'He is disobedient towards all commands of the lord.'<sup>13</sup>

A combination of factors led to a decline in the importance of labour services at the manor after 1349. The most important of these was the advance of leasing by the lord of land which was previously held in customary tenure.<sup>14</sup> This advance of leasing itself can be seen to have occurred as a response to peasant resistance. As peasants were unwilling or unable to take on additional large fields left unoccupied after the plague, the lord's solution was to offer the land to tenants on cheaper and flexible short-term leaseholds. This resulted in the direct decay of labour services which had previously been due from these holdings.<sup>15</sup> After 1349 there was therefore a decline in refusals to do labour services, because fewer were being demanded. However, there were still a total of twenty-five such cases recorded. In 1353, nine individuals did not come to the lord's harvest service, and in 1356 another group of four individuals were amerced between two pence and three pence each because they did not 'want to come to work for the lord when summoned.'<sup>16</sup>

The second set of labour cases concerns those who were prosecuted for having left the village to find work elsewhere. In total, eighteen cases, either of labourers seeking work outside the vill, or of the perceived threat of this, are recorded after 1349, seven of which concerned women.<sup>17</sup> Leaving the manor at harvest time was detrimental to the lord and to substantial tenants who employed wage labourers, and it is not always clear who initiated proceedings.<sup>18</sup> However, it was undoubtedly the lord who, in 1369, ordered three labourers to be kept in custody until he could be convinced that they would serve him 'according to the form of the statute' - that is the Statute of Labourers.<sup>19</sup> The prominence of women in these cases is interesting. They had left Brandon to work elsewhere, either in their own right or with their husbands or even fathers, and the fact that they are mentioned whether married or not, bears witness to the greater value now attached to their labour in this period of scarcity. In fact, at Brandon an increasing number of women were being presented for labour refusals overall. Women represented only sixteen per cent of all cases of labour refusals before 1349, but thereafter represented forty per cent of all cases.

Tenants resented having to use the lord's mill for a variety of reasons, ranging from long distances to the mill, to the high rates of multure.<sup>20</sup> However, as has been pointed out before, the issue was not one of tenant resentment against technological innovation, but against seigniorial exploitation, which flared up most dramatically over the issue of milling in 1381 in St Albans.<sup>21</sup> The obligation to utilise the seigniorial monopoly of the mill was a sign of villeinage, and the insistence of suit of mill was probably only enforced consistently when the mill was being managed directly by the lord via the employment of a miller.<sup>22</sup> In 1346 Thomas Notekyn was initially amerced twelve pence, for not having ground his grain at the lord's mill, but then it was found that 'he does not hold in bondage of the lord', so the amercement was crossed out.<sup>23</sup> At Brandon, eleven tenants were accused of failing to grind their corn at the mill of the lord, and all of these occurred before 1346. The reason for the absence of these cases from the court records after 1346 is that by then the lord had ceased to manage the mill directly, and instead had begun to lease out his mill to his tenants for a fixed annual rent. No doubt this saved him having to chase after tenants unwilling to use the mill, while a steady cash income was guaranteed.

Sheep played an important role in the economy of Brandon, and were kept in large numbers by both the lord and the peasants. These animals had a valuable role in fertilising the soil, and tenants were obliged to fold their sheep on the land of the lord. Potentially more starved of valuable nutrients than their lord's fields, the tenant's soil may have yielded less in return. Peasants were aware of the use of manure to raise soil fertility, and it is significant that all cases of failures to place sheep into the lord's fold were recorded before the Black Death era, and in particular in times of difficult harvests between 1325 and 1335, when thirty-two cases were reported, with 1325 representing a peak year when twenty such cases found their way into the court rolls.<sup>24</sup> It has to be assumed therefore that tenants used their sheep to manure their own land rather than the lord's. In times of scarcity in particular, insistence on certain seigniorial rights could impinge on the peasant battle for survival and standards of living. Therefore refusing to let one's sheep manure the fields of the lord can be seen as a form of resistance bound up with the economic survival of the peasant holding.<sup>25</sup> These cases may therefore have been absent after 1349

because the economic circumstances of the peasantry were improving or because the lord was less concerned to keep track of his manure for similar reasons.

One important feature of the rising in 1381 was the complete rejection of seigniorial rule, expressed through the call for an end to serfdom and symbolised by the mass destruction of manorial records.<sup>26</sup> The manor court played a vital role in providing a public forum which sought to inform tenants of seigniorial demands while enforcing the lord's authority. However, it was up to the peasantry to report offences committed in their midst to the lord's officials. This contradiction meant that the court itself could be turned into a tool of resistance by the tenantry. This was expressed through numerous forms of non-cooperation with the court. Defaults and failure to turn up at the manor court could have many reasons, ranging from illness to a direct rejection of the court's authority. At Brandon cases of defaults increased substantially in the post plague decades. Before 1349, 137 cases of defaults were recorded in the court rolls. Of these, two were excused, six came later to the court, one had died and one had fled. Therefore 127 cases of unexcused defaults remain, leading to a mean average of about four cases per recorded annum.<sup>27</sup>

Amercements for defaults were usually three pence per head. Sometimes sixpence was imposed instead, but it is not always clear why the higher amercement was demanded.<sup>28</sup> Already, before 1349, repeat offenders were not unusual, even if they did not necessarily miss consecutive courts. It was after the Black Death, however, that a greater reluctance to cooperate with the manor court can clearly be observed. In the second half of the fourteenth century a total of 282 cases of default were recorded, of which we may deduct five, who were either excused or who arrived late to the court proceedings, which leaves 277 cases of default proper, about seven per recorded annum. As the population had declined due to the plague, this figure represents a dramatic increase. Many peasants were now being presented for repeated defaults in succeeding years, turning into persistent offenders, while seigniorial power was weakening, and struggled to enforce attendance. Women tenants also became more prominent in refusing to participate in court proceedings and eighteen cases of female defaulters are recorded, which at just over six per cent of the total is still very low, but higher than it had been before the plague, when female offenders constituted fewer than two per cent of all defaulters.

Payments to absent oneself legally from court proceedings for a specified period of time were also of increasing importance in the decades after the Black Death. Before 1349 a total of sixteen such payments for a licensed withdrawal from court proceedings were recorded. However, after the Black Death this number rose dramatically to 155. It is remarkable that over twenty per cent of these licences were purchased by women. Considering the very few female defaulters, it may be the case that women preferred a legal route out of the compulsory attendance at the manorial court.<sup>29</sup> In the latter half of the century, clear peaks in recorded defaults can be observed, such as in the mid to late 1360s, when defaults reached in one year nearly thirty cases. Overall recorded defaults declined in number towards the end of the century, but licensed withdrawals became more important from the later 1370s. These developments are therefore indicative of declining seigniorial power over manorial court proceedings.

Before the arrival of the plague, refusals to carry out seigniorial orders were not unknown,<sup>30</sup> but it was really after 1349 that the court rolls display a repeated and frequent

pattern of such foot-dragging. In 1351 the court was ordered to comply with all the orders which had not yet been carried out from the preceding court.<sup>31</sup> In 1356 the whole homage was ordered to compile a document, listing those who owed suit of court, an order which was repeated in 1362, alongside a new demand to compile a tithing roll by the chief pledges under pain of forty shillings.<sup>32</sup> In another example, in 1370 the whole homage was summoned in order to comply with 'divers articles concerning the jurisdiction of the lord'. Unfortunately we do not know what these 'divers articles' were but, in an open act of collective resistance, the tenants did not appear, were placed in mercy and summarily amerced twenty shillings.<sup>33</sup>

In 1372 the chief pledges were amerced a very high forty shillings because they did not present the findings of the tithing, while also having concealed some poachers who had been hunting in the lord's warren and allegedly destroying it.<sup>34</sup> One of the two poachers, John Gyboun, had been presented for poaching before, but pardoned under the condition that he would do no future damage to the lord's warren. However, by the oath of the warrener and 'others of the homage', Stephen and John had entered the warren again on a Friday in November to the 'grave damage of the lord'.<sup>35</sup> The warrener who exposed the poachers was John Philip and eleven years later was to turn against his lord when he emerged as a local rebel leader in the Rising of 1381.<sup>36</sup> Tenants were also presented for various forms of contempt. In 1372 Simon Tailor was amerced forty pence for contempt because he contradicted the local official 'in prejudice of the lord'.<sup>37</sup> Much earlier, in 1322, Bartholomew Archer was amerced three pence because he 'did not want to answer the questions of the official', concerning an unspecified issue.<sup>38</sup> In a rather ineffective response, the lord threatened high fines for non-compliance, repeatedly ordering his court to follow orders and to comply with his authority.

Another growing problem for the lord was the large numbers of empty holdings left in his hands after 1349.<sup>39</sup> It is possible that part of the tenants' reluctance to take up empty holdings after 1349 was the result of poverty, and many tenants at Brandon had holdings of five acres or less. Many smallholders would not have had access to the financial resources necessary to annex holdings of twenty acres or more to their existing tenements. The lord, meanwhile, was unwilling to break large holdings up into smaller parcels, as most customary villein services were attached to larger holdings. Consequently the lord was forced into leasing arrangements. Leasing meant that the lord's security did not rest with an insistence on the maintenance of individual tenements, but rather with limited leasing periods, which at least in the meantime provided some cash income.<sup>40</sup> The seigniorial concession of leases in the face of a tenantry unwilling or unable to take up empty tenements was followed in the last quarter of the century by seigniorial attempts to recoup some of the lost income. Here we can observe a classic example of seigniorial reaction, as the bishop of Ely increased rents and imposed entry fines on lease holdings at a time when land values were dropping, which probably caused resentment among the tenantry.<sup>41</sup>

A total of nineteen cases of rent arrears before 1349 and two in the second half of the century are recorded. Before the plague one can observe veritable rent 'strikes' at the manor. In 1327, in one court alone, seven individuals were recorded as owing cash rents to the lord.<sup>42</sup> Some of them withheld only part of the rent payment. For example, William



de Shardelowe and William le Palmerer held twenty acres of land for which they owed the lord a rent of twelve pence per annum, of which they had only paid sixpence. Eustace Stiward held sixty acres and withheld ten pence of the rent. Others withheld all the rent. For example, Reginald le Clerk, did not pay the two pence per annum that was due for his small piece of land. Economic hardship was not the sole factor in these rent evasions, as some of those involved were well off. Reginald le Clerk, brother of the local alehouse keeper Stephen Clerk, withheld rent of a tiny parcel of land, but only five years later he entered a lease holding of twenty acres for six years, after having taken up nearly eight acres of land from another tenant.<sup>43</sup>

It may appear puzzling that only two cases of rent evasions were recorded in the post Black Death period, but there are indications that the lord's control was slipping, as concealments of rent-arrears by the community became endemic. In 1377, Edward Shardelowe was accused of withholding a rent of two shillings from the lord for no less than twenty-two years, and the court was ordered to raise the money.<sup>44</sup> In a comparable case in 1369 John Waterman was said to have occupied one cottage for a total of three years, owing a rent on it of four pence per annum.<sup>45</sup> As these individuals had escaped prosecution for such long periods, it is clear that the village community played an important role in concealing such rent evasions from the lord. Signs of changing patterns of husbandry can also be detected in the pattern of offences at Brandon. There were increasing cases of overstocking after the Black Death, numbering twenty-four, as against merely four before the arrival of the plague, which indicates the increasing importance of pastoral farming, which was less labour intensive and therefore cheaper than arable agriculture in the later fourteenth century.

Before the arrival of the Black Death, forty-three cases of various encroachments on the lord's lands are recorded. In 1327, three tenants were amerced six pence each for having sown on the lands of the lord, while in 1334 ten tenants were noted as having encroached against the bishop and the royal highway, by annexing sections of the road to their land.<sup>46</sup> Such encroachments on the lord's land can be seen as a sign of land hunger. After 1349, presentments of encroachments on the lord's land were more rarely reported. Perhaps peasants felt less compelled to use the lord's land in this way when land became more available. However, in 1383, four tenants were given a rather phoney 'permission' by the bailiff to plough up the lord's land for one day and sow it with barley. All parties involved were amerced three pence each.<sup>47</sup>

As the land and holdings of deceased tenants were added to those of the survivors, some buildings were left to decay and others were rebuilt. The growth in pastoral farming also meant that peasants were now also building new stables for animals. It was the tenants who took the initiative in dismantling old buildings and erecting new ones.<sup>48</sup> The lord however saw a decay and destruction of his assets and brought tenants to court to order them to repair ruinous buildings. All such cases, twenty-six in total, were recorded after 1349. It was the more substantial tenants who were most likely to come into conflict with their lord over wasted tenements. For these people seigniorial intervention must have been galling, as they saw their possessions growing with increased returns, while their lord attempted to halt these developments. Trees were probably used as building material and eighteen cases of tenants felling trees without the lord's permission are recorded between 1355

and 1400, and none before then. In 1367, for example, John Oresire cut down two trees without the lord's licence, while Godefrey Agas and Reginald Bate cut down two, and all three were amerced two pence each.<sup>49</sup> The lord was concerned about the problem of ruinous holdings, and in 1367 he granted Peter Troppe *ad firmam* one messuage and one and a half acres of land, attaching the clause that 'he shall hold the house of the said holding without waste for the said term', which was the term of the life of the bishop of Ely.<sup>50</sup>

The ability of villeins to take flight and escape their lord's jurisdiction and, when economic conditions were favourable to them in the latter half of the fourteenth century, to settle on another manor on better terms, can be seen as an inherent weakness in the decentralised nature of feudalism.<sup>51</sup> It led to a competition between lords over labour resources which peasants and labourers were able to exploit, and which legislation, like the Statute of Labourers, attempted to undermine. At Brandon only two individual runaways were recorded before 1349, but there were twelve cases thereafter. The problem is that we do not know how many cases were successfully concealed. After 1349, however, the court rolls reflect a growing concern about runaways, as orders were repeated to find and apprehend them. In 1369 it was ordered to attach Bartholomew Clement, alongside three other 'villeins of the lord by blood', because they had fled and were noted to 'dwell outside the lord's demesne without licence'.<sup>52</sup> In the following year the same entry was repeated, and in 1384, fifteen years later the lord must have found out the whereabouts of Bartholomew Clement, because now it was ordered to take 'by the body Bartholomew Clement villein of the lord dwelling in Iklingham before the next court'.<sup>53</sup> In a classic case of foot-dragging on the part of the community, the order to capture Bartholomew had to be repeated in 1385 and 1386 before Bartholomew himself agreed to pay the lord a fine of twelve pence for a licence to remain outside the lordship for approximately one year, in a symbolic acceptance of his villein status.<sup>54</sup>

In most cases the whereabouts of runaways remained unknown, or at least the community claimed ignorance, as in a case recorded in 1352, where the homage presented that they did not know where Andrew son of William and Thomas son of Peter, both villeins by blood, were dwelling.<sup>55</sup> Even when the whereabouts of runaways became known there was usually little that could be done to bring them back. In 1365 it was noted that while the whereabouts of Thomas son of William were unknown, his brother Alex was known to be residing in London, alongside the runaway dyer John Oursire.<sup>56</sup> The lord occasionally tried to exert pressure on individuals not to run away.<sup>57</sup> In 1351 the villein tenant, Bartholomew Alkoc, had to find two pledges to give surety that he would not remove himself from the manor.<sup>58</sup> These were attempts to divide and rule the community. Knowing that the pledges would be held answerable in the event of Bartholomew's flight, it was, at least in theory, in the interest of the pledges to keep an eye on him. These types of pressures, as expressions of the seigniorial reaction, could put a community under great strain.<sup>59</sup> However, in this case at least the tactic failed, and in 1352 Bartholomew had taken off, and orders to attach him were ignored and repeated until late 1353.<sup>60</sup>

In 1374 the new bishop of Ely, Thomas Arundel, made his free and his villein tenants swear fealty to him in the first court under his lordship. In addition, his villein tenants had to swear to remain within the vill.<sup>61</sup> Some of these individuals were probably perceived

as risk factors. One of them, William Rose, had already been presented in 1364 for having laboured outside the vill at harvest time, while Alex Archer and Robert Aleyn had been presented for labour refusals.<sup>62</sup> In the long run, however, this tactic also backfired, since at least two of those having to swear the oath in 1374, Alex Archer and John Bregge, were to emerge as leading rebel figures in Brandon in 1381.

Assertions of freedom of status at Brandon occurred long before 1381. One such case was recorded in 1329, when tenants of so called 'Smytheslond' declared that they held their land freely.<sup>63</sup> The dispute went as far back as 1325, when the court was ordered to retain all villein holdings in Smytheslond, which two tenants claimed to hold freely.<sup>64</sup> By 1326 the dispute had spread. Now five tenants at Smytheslond were withholding villein services from the lord, claiming freedom.<sup>65</sup> In 1330 four villein tenants were still being presented for the detention of customs owed on Smytheslond.<sup>66</sup> While villeins could have no property in theory, the daily reality of peasant life stood in direct contradiction to this. Thus the thirteenth century legal text of Britton noted that 'Villeins may purchase as well as freemen'. A villein nevertheless purchases 'to the use of his lord, unless the purchase be made of the lord, provided that the lord is in seisin of him and his chattels and of his suit'.<sup>67</sup> In reality, peasants bought and sold produce and livestock, and tilled their land as if it was their own.<sup>68</sup> This occasionally resulted in illicit transfers of land which the bishop of Ely perceived as a potential threat, as illegal transfers could lead to confusion over the status of individual plots of land.<sup>69</sup>

Illicit transfers at Brandon were leases, sales or cases which might be regarded as squatting, where individual tenants had simply entered a holding without the lord's knowledge and dwelled there illicitly without paying any rent. Most striking perhaps were illicit transfers by charter, four of which were recorded across the period. In these cases, villeins were not only actively utilising tools that were in theory only open to freeholders, but must also have found literate individuals to act for them who would not immediately report these illicit charters to the lord's agents.

One of the most important issues of continuing conflict between lord and tenants was trespass. Trespasses can be difficult to interpret as expressions of conflict, as some clearly occurred by accident due to straying animals. The key therefore is to look at wider patterns of trespass presentments. The total number of trespass offences committed against the lord between 1316 and 1349 was 875. In the same time span, recorded trespasses against tenants numbered only 358, and trespasses into commons were thirty-nine. Therefore the total number of all recorded trespass offences before the Black Death in Brandon numbered 1272. Of these twenty-eight per cent were inter-tenant, three per cent into commons and the vast majority, at over sixty-eight per cent, were committed against the lord. It is important to disentangle these trespass offences further, as some cases recorded as trespasses against the lord might have been cases of overstocking or may even have been lumped together with payments made for grazing. It is therefore of interest that a total of 532 cases of trespass into the lord's cereals were recorded before the plague, representing over sixty per cent of the total, with trespasses into meadow and pasture coming next at twenty-four per cent with 218 cases. After the arrival of the plague, a grand total of 1247 trespass offences were recorded, of which 743, that is fifty-nine per cent, were directed against the lord, 371, or twenty-nine per cent against other tenants

and 133, or ten per cent into the commons. However, the recorded trespasses into the lord's corn as a proportion of the total number of trespasses against the lord was higher after 1349, at sixty-seven per cent with 508 cases, while trespasses into meadows and pastures came second again with just over twenty per cent. After the Black Death there were also more explicit references to larger sheep flocks trespassing on the lord's land. In 1352 both Richard Capell and Philip Baxtere trespassed into the lord's oats with one hundred sheep each.<sup>70</sup> Clearly some of these trespasses cannot merely be explained by accident or carelessness, but should be understood as deliberate acts.

Faced with losses in other areas of the demesne economy, the lord of Brandon expanded the farming of rabbits in his local warren. As the warren became increasingly profitable in the second half of the fourteenth century, the lord's efforts to clamp down on poachers increased. Over sixty individual poachers were mentioned at Brandon, who primarily took rabbits from the seigniorial warren, but were not averse to occasionally taking some fish and pigeons. A poaching case typically involved between one and three cooperating individuals. In 1333 Bartholomew Clement and Stephen Clerk were amerced six pence as they had placed nets to catch pigeons, while in the previous year Stephen Clerkesson had been caught hunting in the lord's warren and taken one rabbit.<sup>71</sup> In 1378 John Blossme and Peter Note who were shepherds of the lord were amerced a very high two shillings each for having hunted in the lord's warren and for taking rabbits.<sup>72</sup>

Before the Black Death twenty-three poaching cases came to the attention of the manor court. After 1349 this had risen to forty-five cases and by the 1370s the lord's warren at Brandon had turned into a battlefield of wills between the bishop and his tenants. In 1372, a large amercement of forty shillings was imposed on all chief pledges of Brandon, for refusing to present the findings of the tithing and for concealing the fact that Stephen son of John Gyboun and John Cavemas destroyed the lord's warren and took rabbits from it.<sup>73</sup> In response to his poaching problems, the Bishop imposed heavier amercements on individual poachers. Before the Black Death amercements for poaching ranged from three to twelve pence; thereafter individual amercements of two or four shillings were not untypical. These were designed to make an example of the offender. In 1380, barely one year before the Peasants' Revolt, Reginald Chapman was found to have taken two rabbits from the lord's warren and was amerced two shillings, at a time when a typical rabbit from Brandon's warren had a market value of two and a half pence. Moreover, Reginald was also ordered to kill the dogs he used when hunting in the warren before the next court.<sup>74</sup>

While this is the only reference in the court rolls to the lord actually ordering one of his tenants to kill his dogs, hunting with dogs was a recurring theme in the latter years of the century. The bishop's concerns about his rabbits were clearly echoed in 1390, when the Commons in Parliament complained about their social inferiors, who mimicked the sport of gentleness and petitioned that anyone holding land worth less than forty shillings a year should not be allowed to keep hunting dogs. For such people hunting provided an opportunity to 'hold discussions, and make plots and conspiracies, to make insurrection and disobedience to your majesty and laws', whilst also shunning divine service and instead going 'hunting in parks, rabbit runs and warrens of the lords and others'. The king gave his consent and added that 'low persons' should neither be allowed nets or cords

'to take or destroy beasts of the forest, hares or rabbits, or other sport of gentlefolk'.<sup>75</sup> Still recovering from the shock and aftermath of mass insurrection in 1381, when calls for the freedom to fish and hunt played a prominent part in rebel demands, the ruling class felt that hunting was not motivated by want. The fear of plotting was certainly not totally unfounded. Brandon's tenants appear to have made little effort to expose poachers amongst their midst, and concealment is in itself an act not only of insubordination but also of cooperative resistance.

Notions of ownership of land and ownership of chattels went hand in hand, while a title to the ownership of a manor entailed ownership of land, various natural resources, such as trees, woods, parks, warrens, and lordship over villeins.<sup>76</sup> Accordingly, entering the lord's warren and taking beasts therefrom was an act which carried a political message, and the demand for the right to hunt and fish freely was echoed by many rebel contingents in 1381.<sup>77</sup> Poaching was an activity which was effectively sanctioned by the communities and therefore not perceived as criminal activity.<sup>78</sup> This sanctioning was a necessary prerequisite for the particular behaviour in the reporting or concealment of the 'crime'.

### III

The sharpening conflict between the bishop and his tenants, observable in the records of the manor, was probably triggered into open revolt by the last poll tax and the news that rebellion was spreading rapidly across the whole region in the early summer of 1381. Brandon became directly involved in the rising, and various indictments mention a total of nine rebels who can be positively identified as Brandon residents. These individuals can be traced not only through the manorial records, but also through records of private indictments brought against rebels by individual lords in the aftermath of the revolt.<sup>79</sup> Two of these identifiable rebels emerged as main leaders of local rebel contingents, William atte Metefeld junior and John Phillips.<sup>80</sup> The others were William Metefeld senior, who was the young William's father, John de Fordham, John Latimer, Alex Archer, William Webster and Henry Brandon. In addition, the rebels John Monk, Roger Peper, John Crowe and John Brigge might also have come from Brandon, but the evidence on these individuals is less clear-cut.

These individuals came from all strata within the peasantry. They ranged from substantial and influential tenants, to smallholders who had to scrape a living together by supplementing their meagre incomes from their holdings with wage labour. Alex Archer, whom we have previously encountered refusing to perform labour services, was a middling tenant, holding about twenty acres of land; John Latimer held only ten acres of land; while William Webster seems to have been a smallholder or landless. A John Crow did reside in Brandon who brewed and baked, frequently breaking the assize of ale and bread between 1380 and 1400, but nothing more can be gleaned about him. John de Fordham was a more substantial tenant who was a victim of rent increases by the lord, when in 1374 he was expected to pay a rent of seven shillings per annum for a holding for which he had previously paid four shillings and sixpence. He had also served as one of the manor's petty officials, as an ale taster, alongside Alex Archer, and

they were presented in court for not having performed their office in 1377 to 1378 and 1380.<sup>81</sup>

There is also evidence of a John Bregge at Brandon, who entered his first medium sized holding in the early 1370s. John Phillips was a substantial tenant who once worked as the lord's warrener and even acted as the lord's bailiff from 1374. He therefore fits the profile of a manorial petty official drawn into a leadership position in the rising.<sup>82</sup> He was married to a woman called Caterina, and had two sons, John and Thomas. At the time of the rising his younger son John would have been nine years old. He seems to have inherited his father's rebellious trait, for in 1395, when he was twenty-three, he was accused of 'rescuing taxes of the lord king' and was in contempt of court. Two years later he was caught hunting rabbits in the lord's lucrative rabbit warren.<sup>83</sup>

Brandon became involved in the events of 1381 on 14th or 15th June, after Bury St Edmunds was in rebel hands. Around 14th June, Suffolk rebel leader John Wrawe sent Geoffrey Parfrey, vicar of the church of All Saints, Sudbury, with Thomas his chaplain and Adam Bray from Bury St Edmund, as messengers to Thetford. Once there, they threatened that Wrawe and his band would sack Thetford, if the mayor and the burgesses failed to hand over twenty marks in gold.<sup>84</sup> The required sum was paid promptly, no doubt as a result of the knowledge of recent events in nearby Bury St Edmunds, where Wrawe and his followers were in firm command. In Bury itself the Prior's house was wrecked, his head placed on a lance, marched through town and placed by the pillory, next to that of John Cavendish.<sup>85</sup> The latter had attempted to flee another group of rebels near Lakenheath, but while attempting to cross the river he was captured, immediately beheaded and his head carried back to Bury.<sup>86</sup>

These events in the immediate neighbourhood of the manor of Brandon spilled northwards between June 14th and 15th. An individual identified as John Buntyn in some, and John Geldere in other, records played an important role in connecting different rebel groups in this area.<sup>87</sup> On 15th June, rebels under the joint leadership of William son of William Metefeld, and John Phillip, alongside John Geldere, attacked John Strakour's residence at Weeting, at the same time as Wat Tyler was meeting the King in Smithfield. Weeting is in the immediate neighbourhood of Brandon, on the Norfolk side of the Little Ouse River, about one mile away. At Weeting, the rebels proceeded to take goods and chattels to an alleged value of twenty pounds.<sup>88</sup> William de Metefeld junior entrusted these to his father William de Metefeld, who kept them overnight before thinking better of it and returning them to Strakour the next day, on Sunday 16th.<sup>89</sup> It is possible that the rebels stayed the night in Brandon from Saturday 15th to Sunday 16th, when William Metefeld senior decided to return the goods to John Strakour, while the rest of the rebel band moved on to their next targets the next day.

The rebels continued a general movement north-westwards, and on 16th June the group attacked the Augustinian priory of Bromhill, one of John of Gaunt's estates at Methwold, and John de Methwold's house at Langford.<sup>90</sup> Two separate indictments place William son of William de Metefeld of Brandon in the leadership of the group which attacked the priory at Bromhill.<sup>91</sup> One of the two surviving indictments also mentions John Philip of Brandon, a certain John Monk, Roger Peper and John Geldere as leading figures with William. At Bromhill William, 'together with other malefactors', demanded

ten pounds from the prior, threatening that they would 'pull his house down and kill the prior'. The money appears to have been handed over and carried off 'against the peace of the lord King'.<sup>92</sup> Their next stop was the Duke of Lancaster's property at Methwold. The close proximity of Methwold may have provided the rebels with the incentive to move northwards in the first place, as it represented a deliberately chosen target, since the hated John of Gaunt's properties had been targeted by rebels elsewhere. This is, therefore, an example of how the attack on Methwold provides a connection to the aims and actions of rebels elsewhere.<sup>93</sup> Gaunt was not only one of the most powerful landowners in the kingdom, but also came to symbolise government corruption as well as military failure on the continent.<sup>94</sup>

When William Metefeld junior led the rebels to the manor of Methwold, the group proceeded to follow another well recognised pattern of the rising. They took once again 'goods and chattels', including sheep and 'other things' to the value of twenty shillings and carried them off. But they also made a statement, as important in its symbolic meaning as in its practical implications, by breaking into the duke's house, taking rolls and muniments, and 'feloniously burning them against the peace'.<sup>95</sup> It was probably after Methwold that William led his rebel band to attack Langford, the residence of John de Methwold, and the last place to be targeted on that day. Both John Geldere and William de Metefeld were named as the leaders in this attack, while the other Brandon rebels were John de Fordham, John Philip, John Latimer, Alex Archer and William Webstere.<sup>96</sup> Much of the information on this attack, as well as the names of the rebels associated with it, come from the private prosecutions that John Methwold brought against the rebels after the suppression of the revolt. The rebels were accused of taking various goods and chattels of John de Methwold and carrying them away to the value of forty shillings, while also committing unspecified 'other outrages'.<sup>97</sup> The indictments mention a total of eighty-five separate names in connection with this attack.

The Langford attack included men from Brandon, Southerye, Fordham, Mildenhall, Holgate, Beckes, Bodeneye, Feltwell, Larlyng, West Dereham, Wilton, Weststowe, Northwold, Mundeford, Hepton and Bury St Edmunds. Only one woman, Matilda, together with her husband Andrew Henk, is mentioned in the indictments.<sup>98</sup> John de Methwold's property at Langford was also deliberately chosen, as he was John of Gaunt's steward at his property of Castle Acre to the north of the county.<sup>99</sup> The rebels arrived at Langford in the evening or late afternoon, and probably spent the night nearby. The following day, 7th June, they decided to divide into two groups, one moving to Didlington, and the other to West Dereham, another of John de Methwold's properties.<sup>100</sup> It is possible that the decision to split and attack another Methwold property was taken spontaneously at Langford. The indictments clearly established the link between Langford and West Dereham, especially via the names of John Pikerel of Mildenhall and William Vude of Bekswell, who had been present at both attacks.<sup>101</sup> Meanwhile William de Metefeld from Brandon led the second group from Langford to Didlington.

At Didlington the rebels attacked the residence of Richard Holdych. Here, rather than merely threatening destruction, the indictments noted that William, son of William Metefeld, went to Didlington and 'pulled down the house' of Richard Holdych,



taking goods and chattels.<sup>102</sup> Thirty-two individual names, in addition to Metefeld, are mentioned in the indictments.<sup>103</sup> While there is still a recognisable influence of and connection with the area to the south, with Thetford featuring among the places named, a more northerly influence is also apparent, with representatives from places like North Pickenham. Richard de Holdych, who had served as commissioner of tax assessments and looked into tax evasions in 1379, held some land here.<sup>104</sup> The final main target for this group of rebels was John Reed's residence at Rougham which came under attack on 17th June. This can be seen as a culmination of events in the region, with a number of rebel bands meeting together in joint action.<sup>105</sup> Apart from William Metefeld's group, those recorded as having participated in the Rougham attack were: William Geldere; a group led by Thomas de Gyssing, which had been active towards the east and north of the band led by Metefeld, in Guiltcross, Waytland, Palgrave in South Greenhoe and Launditch; and another group led by John Bettes in Guiltcross, Mitford and Launditch. The indictments once again show that supporters for this action came from a wide area, stretching from Lakenheath to Rougham itself, where a number of insurgents originated.<sup>106</sup> In fact, in the aftermath of the rising over forty individuals, including five women, were presented in Rougham's court rolls for hamsok offences.<sup>107</sup> Certainly the wrecking of the manor seems to have been thorough.

One indictment noted that William son of William Metefeld was a chief leader 'against the peace and in prejudice of the crown of the lord king', and together with 'other malefactors' pulled down John Reed's house and carried off goods to the value of one hundred shillings.<sup>108</sup> Other indictments more specifically mention horses, grain, pigs, a millstone and various other unspecified 'goods and chattels' as having been taken away.<sup>109</sup> John Reed was unpopular because he was involved in the assessment and collection of taxes. These included subsidies as well as the poll tax of 1379.<sup>110</sup> As the rebel band moved northwards it constantly drew in new participants from the surrounding areas, while maintaining an original core group. While thus establishing connections vertically as it were, possible horizontal connections can equally be drawn. Among those attacking the property of John de Methewold at West Dereham on June 17th were individuals from the villages of Southery and Hilgay, as well as Mildenhall, Littleport and Massingham. Southery was one of Bury St Edmund's possessions, where rebels had burned manorial records on June 16th in an action which also included individuals from Littleport.<sup>111</sup>

Hilgay was home to another of John of Gaunt's properties which also saw the destruction of manorial documents, between 17th and 19th June.<sup>112</sup> It is possible that the contingent which split from the main group at Langford to go to West Dereham spread the news of the sacking of Gaunt's property at Methwold the previous day and thus helped to incite similar actions in Hilgay. While individual rebels came from a wide area, the rebel villages that came in contact with the insurgents from Brandon were mainly within a twelve to fourteen mile radius of the manor. A number of these villages had therefore had various previous contacts with the manor of Brandon, either through economic activities, such as trade, travel or even migration to Brandon. It was therefore possible to foster connections and contacts, exchange ideas and maintain solidarities over wide areas. This was doubtlessly facilitated in East Anglia by a combination of a high concentration of markets on the one hand and population density on the other.



#### IV

The involvement of Brandon peasants in 1381 did not come out of the blue. In Brandon, over 1900 individual offences against the lord were recorded in the course of the fourteenth century, of which over 931 were before 1349 and 989 after the arrival of the plague. Taking population decline into account, these figures represent a real and substantial increase in recorded offences against lordship. The roots of the discontent which turned into open revolt in 1381 were therefore of long standing. Struggles over the use of natural resources clashed with seigniorial rights of dominion, and these frictions intensified after the Black Death. In Brandon, increases in non-compliance with seigniorial jurisdiction, exemplified by numerous examples of non-compliance with the manorial court, can be observed in the second half of the fourteenth century.

Signs of a feudal reaction after 1349 can also be identified and attempts were made by the lord to claw back real or assumed peasant gains. Lease rents were increased, attempts were made to enforce the Statute of Labourers in the manorial court, in order to freeze wages and put a stop to increasingly mobile peasants. Attempts were also made to divide the community by putting them under pressure to keep an eye on their neighbours to stop them leaving the manor illegally. The complex interplay between peasant aspirations and demands on the one hand and seigniorial expectations and insistence of rights on the other become visible to the historian when they flare up as disputes in the manorial court. The forces underpinning these can be seen as ways to negotiate demands between lords and peasants, and indeed negotiate customs, yet when these negotiations failed, open dispute could further escalate into open revolt. At Brandon, it is possible to observe an intensification of conflict at the manor, which eventually spilled across the boundaries of the village and led to its peasants joining their neighbours in open revolt against lordship in general.

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#### Notes

1. R. H. Hilton, 'Feudalism in Europe: Problems for Historical Materialists', in R. Hilton, *Class Conflict and the Crisis of Feudalism* (London, 1990), pp. 1–4.; R. H. Hilton, *Bond Men Made Free* (London, 1993), pp. 25–6; C. Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 6–7.
2. For discussions of peasant status in Suffolk in particular see C. Dyer, 'The Rising of 1381 in Suffolk: Its Origins and Participants', in C. Dyer, *Everyday Life in Medieval England* (London and New York, 2000 edition); for peasant status more generally see J. Hatcher, 'English Serfdom and Villeinage: Towards a Reassessment', *Past and Present*, 90 (1981), 4–39; Z. Razi, 'Serfdom and Freedom in Medieval England: A Reply to the Revisionists', in C. Dyer, P. Coss and C. Wickham, eds, *Rodney Hilton's Middle Ages: An Exploration of Historical Themes* (Past and Present Supplement 2, Oxford, 2007), pp. 182–7; M. Müller,

- 'A Divided Class? Peasants and Peasant Communities in Later Medieval England', in Dyer et al., *Rodney Hilton's Middle Ages*, pp. 115–31.
3. The literature on this subject is substantial, see, for example, C. Dyer, 'Memories of Freedom: Attitudes towards Serfdom in England, 1200–1350', in M. L. Bush, ed., *Serfdom and Slavery: Studies in Legal Bondage* (London, Longman, 1996), pp. 277–95; S. K. Cohn, 'Revolts of the Late Middle Ages and the Peculiarities of the English', in R. Goddard, J. Langdon, M. Müller, eds, *Survival and Discord in Medieval Society* (Turnhout, 2010), pp. 269–85; C. Dyer, 'The Social and Economic Background to the Rural Revolt of 1381' in Dyer, *Everyday Life*, pp. 191–220; M. Müller, 'The Aims and Organisation of a Peasant Revolt in Early Fourteenth-Century Wiltshire', *Rural History*, 14 (2003), 1–20.
  4. Müller, 'Aims and Organisation', p. 13.
  5. Dyer, 'Social and Economic Background', pp. 191–220.
  6. For the concept of the 'weapons of the weak' see J. C. Scott, *The Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale University Press, 1985). For peasant resistance in this medieval English context see P. Franklin, 'Politics in Manorial Court Rolls: The Tactics, Social Composition and Aims of a pre-1381 Peasant Movement', in Z. Razi and R. Smith, eds, *Medieval Society and the Manor Court* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 162–98; Z. Razi, 'The Struggles between the Abbots of Halesowen and their Tenants in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries', in T. H. Aston et al., eds, *Social Relations and Ideas: Essays in Honour of R. H. Hilton* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 151–67; P. V. Hargreaves, 'Seigniorial Reaction and Peasant Responses: Worcester Priory and its Peasants after the Black Death', in *Midland History*, 24 (1999), 53–78; and more recently P. L. Larson, *Conflict and Compromise in the Late Medieval Countryside: Lords and Peasants in Durham, 1349–1400* (New York and London, 2006), esp. pp. 171–98.
  7. R. H. Britnell, 'Feudal Reaction after the Black Death in the Palatinate of Durham', *Past and Present*, 128 (1990), 28–47; Hargreaves, 'Seigniorial Reaction and Peasant Responses', 53–78; Dyer, 'The Social and Economic Background' pp. 191–220.
  8. Franklin, 'Politics in Manorial Court Rolls', pp. 162–98; See also R. H. Hilton, 'Peasant Movements in England Before 1381', in E. M. Carus-Wilson, ed., *Essays in Economic History*, vol. 2 (London, 1962), pp. 73–90.
  9. Chicago, University of Chicago Library, Sir Nicholas Brown Collection of English Court and Manorial Documents, Manor of Brandon (hereafter UCBC) MS 289, no. 7.
  10. UCBC MS 289, no. 19v.; UCBC MS 289, no. 23; UCBC MS 291, no. 1v.
  11. UCBC MS 290, no. 2v; UCBC MS 290 no. 5v.
  12. UCBC MS 289, no. 4.
  13. UCBC MS 291, no. 3.
  14. For developments of leasing at Brandon see M. Müller, 'Peasants, Lords and Developments in Leasing in Later Medieval England', in B. van Bavel and P. Schofield, eds, *Emergence and Early Development of Lease Holding in the European Countryside during the Middle Ages* (CORN series, vol. 10., Brepols, 2009), pp. 155–78.
  15. See also, on the decline of labour services due to slightly different circumstances, P. L. Larson, *Conflict and Compromise in the Late Medieval Countryside: Lords and Peasants in Durham, 1349–1400* (New York and London, 2006), pp. 99–101.
  16. UCBC MS 291, no. 31 and UCBC MS 291, no. 37.
  17. See for example: UCBC MS 292, no. 27; UCBC MS 291, no. 27.
  18. See also on this the excellent paper by L. R. Poos, 'The Social Context of Statute of Labourers Enforcement', in *Law and History Review*, 1 : 1 (Spring 1983), 27–52. See also P. L. Larson, *Conflict and Compromise*, pp. 100–101.
  19. UCBC MS 291, no. 51.

20. On mills and rates of multure see R. Holt, *The Mills of Medieval England* (Oxford, 1988), p. 50.
21. See for example Hilton, 'Feudalism in Europe: Problems for Historical Materialists', p.4.; For developments in St Albans see R. Faith, 'The Class Struggle in Fourteenth Century England', in R. Samuel, ed., *People's History and Socialist Theory* (London, 1981), pp. 53–5.
22. UCBC MS 289, no. 24 actually notes 'by testimony of the miller'.
23. UCBC MS 291, no. 10.
24. For the mass presentment of cases in 1325 see UCBC MS 290, no. 6.
25. Such confrontations over sheepfolds have also been observed in Mildenhall in the 1340s and may have been a common feature in the area. Dyer, 'The Rising of 1381 in Suffolk', pp. 226–7.
26. See for example Hilton, *Bond Men Made Free*, pp. 137ff.
27. For a brief discussion of this phenomenon see also Müller, 'A Divided Class?', p. 127.
28. Rates of amerancements may have varied to take account of the wealth of the individuals involved, seigniorial pressure or communal disapproval of the offence.
29. See also, on such questions, B. Alpern Engel, 'Women, Men and the Languages of Peasant Resistance, 1870–1907', in S. P. Frank and M. D. Steinberg, eds, *Cultures in Flux: Lower Class Values, Practices and Resistance in Late Imperial Russia* (Chichester, 1994), esp. pp. 38–47.
30. See for example UCBC MS 289, no. 3 in 1317.
31. UCBC MS 291, no. 21.
32. UCBC MS 291, no. 22; UCBC MS 291, no. 38; UCBC MS 291, no. 39v.
33. UCBC MS 291, no. 52.
34. UCBC MS 291, no. 57.
35. UCBC MS 291, no. 57.
36. UCBC MS 293, no. 2. See also on poaching M. Müller, 'Food, Hierarchy and Class Conflict', in R. Goddard, J. Langdon and M. Müller, eds, *Survival and Discord in Medieval Society: Essays in Honour of Christopher Dyer* (Belgium, Turnhout Brepols, 2010), esp. pp. 243–5.
37. UCBC MS 291, no. 57.
38. UCBC MS 289, no. 21.
39. See also, on empty tenements or wasted holdings and the peasant's attempts to restructure their tenements, C. Dyer, 'English Peasant Buildings in the Later Middle Ages (1200–1500)' in Dyer, *Everyday Life*, pp. 133–65; Hargreaves, 'Seigniorial Reaction and Peasant Responses', pp. 53–78.
40. Müller, 'Peasants, Lords and Developments in Leasing', pp. 155–78. See also on leasing developments in this period the excellent studies collected by P. D. A. Harvey, *The Peasant Land Market in Medieval England* (Oxford, 1984).
41. See Hilton, *Bond Men Made Free*, pp.156–7; Dyer, 'The Social and Economic Background'.
42. UCBC MS 291, no. 1. For such rent strikes see also Franklin, 'Politics in Manorial Court Rolls'.
43. UCBC MS 291, no. 1; UCBC MS 289, no. 8; UCBC MS 289, no. 9; UCBC MS 291, no. 3.
44. UCBC MS 292, no. 2.
45. UCBC MS 291, no. 51.
46. UCBC MS 289, no. 24v.; UCBC, MS 291, no.6.
47. UCBC MS 292, no. 5v.
48. See also Dyer, 'English Peasant Buildings', pp. 133–65.
49. UCBC MS 291, no. 49v.
50. UCBC MS 291, no. 48. For a detailed discussion of Brandon's Leasing developments and *ad firman* cases see Müller, 'Peasants, Lords and Developments in Leasing', pp. 155–78.

51. See, for example, on this issue, R. Brenner, 'The Rises and Declines of Serfdom in Medieval and Early Modern Europe', in M. L. Bush, ed., *Serfdom and Slavery: Studies in Legal Bondage* (London, 1996), pp. 247–76.
52. UCBC MS 291, no. 51.
53. UCBC MS 291, no. 50v.; UCBC MS 292, no. 9.
54. UCBC MS 292, no. 11; UCBC MS 292, no. 10.
55. UCBC MS 291, no. 24.
56. UCBC MS 291, no. 45v.
57. See also, for similar observations, Dyer, 'Social and Economic Background', p. 24.
58. UCBC MS 291, no. 22.
59. Britnell, 'Feudal Reaction after the Black Death', esp. pp. 37–40.
60. UCBC MS 291, no. 26; UCBC MS 291, no. 29; UCBC MS 291, no. 30.
61. UCBC MS 291, no. 58.
62. UCBC MS 291, no. 43; UCBC MS 291, no. 51; UCBC MS 291, no. 54v.
63. UCBC MS 289, no. 5.
64. UCBC MS 290, no. 6.
65. UCBC MS 289, no. 24v.
66. UCBC MS 289, no. 20.
67. F. M. Nichols, translator and editor, *Britton: An English Translation and Notes* (Washington D.C., 1901), p. 203.
68. Hilton, *Bond Men Made Free*, pp. 40–41.
69. Dyer, 'Social and Economic Background', p. 28.
70. UCBC MS 291, no. 26.
71. UCBC MS 291, no. 1v; UCBC MS 291, no. 5.
72. UCBC MS 292, no. 1.
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75. A. R. Myers, ed., *English Historical Documents*, vol. 4, 1327–1485 (London, 1969), p. 1004.
76. F. Pollock and F. W. Maitland, *The History of English Law before the Time of Edward I*, vol. 2, second edition (Cambridge, 1898), pp. 149–50.
77. Hilton, *Bond Men Made Free*, esp. pp. 70–72; Müller, 'Food, Hierarchy and Class Conflict', pp. 243–6.
78. See, for a wider discussion of this issue, J. E. Archer, *By a Flash and a Scare: Incendiarism, Animal Maiming and Poaching in East Anglia 1815–1870* (Oxford, 1990), p. 5. See also G. Rudé, *Criminal and Victim: Crime and Society in Early Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1985) p. 85.
79. The immense value of these private indictments to the study of the revolt has been revealed in the excellent work by H. Eiden, 'In der Knechtschaft werdet ihr verharren'; *Ursachen und Verlauf des Englischen Bauernaufstandes von 1381*, Historische Forschungen, Band 32, (Trier, 1995). See also his 'Joint Action against "Bad" Lordship: The Peasants' Revolt in Essex and Norfolk', in *History*, 83: 269 (1998), 5–30.
80. These individuals have also been identified as important rebels by Christopher Dyer, who also compiled short biographies of them: 'The Rising of 1381 in Suffolk: Its Origins and Participants', esp. pp. 237–8.
81. UCBC MS 282, no. 2v.; UCBC MS 292 no. 3.
82. Dyer, 'Rising of 1381', p. 225.
83. UCBC MS 292, no. 24; UCBC MS 292, no. 25.
84. 'Depositions of John Wrawe', translated and printed in R. B. Dobson, ed., *The Peasants' Revolt of 1381*, second edition (Basingstoke and London, 1983), pp. 252–3.
85. Walsingham, 'Historia Anglicana', reprinted and translated in Dobson, *The Peasants' Revolt*, pp. 244–5. See also, E. Powell, *The Rising in East Anglia in 1381* (Cambridge 1896), pp. 12–13.

86. Powell, *Rising in East Anglia*, pp. 13–14.
87. A. W. Reid, 'The Rising of 1381 in South-West and Central Norfolk', in B. Cornford, ed., *Studies towards a History of the Rising of 1381 in Norfolk* (Norfolk, 1984), p. 15.
88. PRO KB 9/166/1 fol. 53.
89. PRO KB 9/166/1 fols. 51 and 53.
90. A. W. Reid, 'Rising of 1381', pp. 16–17.
91. PRO KB 9/166/1 fols. 51 and 71.
92. PRO KB 9/166/1 fol. 71.
93. See also Reid, 'Rising of 1381', p. 24.
94. Hilton, *Bond Men Made Free*, pp. 158–60.
95. PRO KB 9/ 166/ 1 fols. 53 and 71.
96. PRO KB 9/166/1 fols. 51 and 65; PRO KB 27/482 fol. 29; PRO KB 27/484 fol. 28 verso.
97. PRO KB 9/166/1 fol. 65; PRO CP40/ 485 fol. 421v.
98. PRO KB 27/482 fol. 29; PRO KB 27/ 484 fol. 28 verso.
99. Reid, 'Rising of 1381', p. 24.
100. PRO KB 9/166/1 fol. 46.
101. PRO CP 40/485, fol. 421 v.; PRO KB 27/484, fol. 28v., PRO KB 9/166/1 fol. 46.
102. PRO KB 9/166/1 fol. 71.
103. PRO KB 27/489 fol. 32 v.; PRO KB 27/493 fol. 13.
104. For information on Holdych see Reid, 'Rising of 1381', pp.16, 24.
105. Eiden, '*In der Knechtschaft werdet ihr verharren*', p. 325; Reid, 'Rising of 1381', p. 29.
106. Eiden, '*In der Knechtschaft werdet ihr verharren*', p. 325; Reid, 'Rising of 1381', p.18.
107. Eiden, '*In der Knechtschaft werdet ihr verharren*', p. 325; Reid, 'Rising of 1381', p. 29.
108. PRO KB 9/166/1 fol. 71.
109. PRO KB 9/ 166/1, fols. 49 and 47; Eiden, '*In der Knechtschaft werdet ihr verharren*', p. 325.
110. Reid, 'Rising of 1381', p. 24.
111. Eiden, '*In der Knechtschaft werdet ihr verharren*', p. 320.
112. Eiden, '*In der Knechtschaft werdet ihr verharren*', p. 321.