

'The rebellion had achieved nothing'. Assess this view of Jack Cade's Rebellion, 1450

While the idea of achievement is subjective and abstract, there are clear arguments for and against this statement in regards to Cade's Rebellion. The rebellion could be seen as having 'achieved nothing' through the comparison of the rebellion's causes to the rebellion's consequences; they were inspired by politics, both national and local, the mismanagement of the French War and their socio-economic conditions, yet the rebellion neither changed nor rectified the situation. Hence, Jack Cade's Rebellion 'achieved nothing'. However, their aims were ultimately achieved, as the Wars of the Roses, which the rebellion arguably led to, inadvertently answered the cry for political reform. Furthermore, the King's power was undermined, through the facile success of the rebels taking London and defeating royal forces, and finally, class collaboration, of many groups within society, from gentlemen to yeomen, occurred in the 1450 Rebellion, and both of these consequences (undermining royal authority and class collaboration) are crucial for the forging of the modern state. Therefore, to argue that 'the rebellion achieved nothing' is not only oversimplification, but is ignoring many crucial effects of Jack Cade's Rebellion, 1450.

Despite this, 'the demands [of Cade's rebels] became well known to contemporaries: to reform the wrongs and abuses of England's government, and remove and punish the king's advisers and personal companions'¹. As this did not occur, the Rebellion failed and arguably did not achieve anything. In *the Demands of the Kentish rebels*, 1450, it is stressed how 'the king our sovereign lord [has] certain persons [who] daily and nightly are about his person and daily inform him that good is evil and evil is good'² and that 'by their false means and lies they make him to hate and destroy his friends, and cherish his false traitors'³. Cook summarises this idea with 'the crisis that ensued in 1450 questioned the nature of Henry VI's faction-dominated government'⁴. Lander goes further, describing how 'the rebel solution was to demand that recognized ideal of late-medieval politics – government by a broadly based group of peers, including this time the dukes of York, Exeter, Buckingham and Norfolk'⁵. Meanwhile, Weir describes the events, saying how 'the people gathered as usual for the festival [of Whitsun⁶]. But this was a gathering with a difference for it signalled a political revolt orchestrated by intelligent men who were aware of the violent public feeling against the corrupt officials of the royal household and the magnates of the court faction who had abused their power'⁷. Gregory⁸, Makinson⁹ and Mate¹⁰ also all stress the importance of political malcontent in Cade's Rebellion, which is why the significance

¹ Griffiths, Ralph Alan, *The Reign of King Henry VI: The Exercise of Royal Authority, 1422-1461*, University of California Press, 1881, page 628

² *The Demands of the Kentish Rebels*, 1450, clause 2

³ *The Demands of the Kentish Rebels*, 1450, clause 4

⁴ Cook, David R., *Lancastrians and Yorkists: The Wars of the Roses*, Longman Group, New York, 1984, page 18

⁵ Lander, J. R., *Government and Community: England, 1450-1509*, Hodder Arnold, 1980, page 188

⁶ 'Whitsun', also referred to as Pentecost

⁷ Weir, Alison, *Lancaster and York: The Wars of the Roses*, Vintage Books, London, 2009, page 146-7

⁸ Gregory, Philippa, *Women of the Cousins' War: The Duchess, the Queen and the King's Mother*, Simon & Schuster UK Ltd, 2011, London, page 77

⁹ Makinson, Albert, *The Wars of the Roses: Who Fought and Why?*, Published in *History Today* Volume 9, Issue 9, September 1959

¹⁰ Mate, Mavis, *The Economic and Social Roots of Medieval Popular Rebellion: Sussex in 1450-1451*, *The Economic History Review*, New Series, Volume 45, No. 4, November 1992, page 661

of a lack of change in English politics is so great. The king's 'false council', 'daily traitors' and 'evil counsellors'¹¹ ultimately remained at his side and the cause of the rebellion was not satisfied. Hence, 'the rebellion had achieved nothing. The King's commission was dismissed and no changes were made; the court party remained supreme'¹². But it was not only on a national scale that political reform was demanded and failed. Grummitt argues that the Rebellion was 'caused primarily by the corruption of Lancastrian officials at a county level'¹³. Griffiths supports this, describing how 'at the root of men's frustrations was the knowledge that remedy for the oppressions of Kentishmen (and others) was baulked by a corrupt officialdom, headed by the sheriff, whose office had become notorious, and his under sheriff'¹⁴, which is furthermore backed up by Keen¹⁵ and Brogden Orridge¹⁶. Caldwell outlines why it was Kentishmen in particular who rebelled because 'although rebellions sprung up in other parts of England, the most intense and long-lived one was localized and probably in part a response to local conditions. Kent, more than most areas, suffered the effects of Henry's patronage, for his faction used extortionate means to gain control of lands and goods in the locale'¹⁷. Therefore, if these demands were indeed at the heart of Cade's Rebellion, then the rebellion did not achieve its central goal; the rebels were unsatisfied. Unrest continued. Men 'continued to gather together in armed bands for almost a year after the capture and defeat of Cade. This Sussex unrest – perhaps because it produced no spectacular deaths – escaped the attention of contemporary chroniclers and has likewise been virtually ignored by modern historians, who give it, at best, a passing mention'¹⁸, as Mate argues, which is supported by Griffiths¹⁹. As the unrest continued and the aims were unsatisfied, Cade's Rebellion both changed and achieved nothing.

However, because Cade's Rebellion led to the Wars of the Roses, its political aims were inadvertently achieved. As Gregory argues, 'Jack Cade's cause was not forgotten. Richard Duke of York used the rebellion as an instance of the failure of the king's council to keep the peace, adopted Cade's manifesto as his own programme of reform, and demanded admission to the king's council, and the arrest of Edmund Beaufort Duke of Somerset'²⁰. Gregory then describes the Queen's defence of Somerset and the kinsmen, Somerset and York, being 'locked in a bitter rivalry to influence the king. The opposing cousins in the war that would be named after them – 'the cousins' war' – were identified'²¹ by Cade's Rebellion – not least because Cade

¹¹ *The Demands of the Kentish Rebels*, 1450, clauses 2-6

¹² Weir, *Lancaster and York*, 2009, page 155

¹³ Grummitt, David, *Deconstructing Cade's Rebellion: Discourse and Politics in the Mid Fifteenth Century*, Essay from *Identity and Insurgency in the Late Middle Ages*, edited by Linda Clark, Boydell Press, 2006, page 107

¹⁴ Griffiths, *The Reign of King Henry VI*, 1881, page 663-4

¹⁵ Keen, Maurice Hugh, *English Society in the Later Middle Ages 1348-1500*, Penguin, Reissue edition, 1990, page 198

¹⁶ Brogden Orridge, Benjamin, *Illustrations of Jack Cade's Rebellion, from Researches in the Guildhall Records: Together with Some Newly-found Letters of Lord Bacon*, J.C. Hotten, the University of California, 1869 (digitalized 16 March 2012), page 72

¹⁷ Caldwell, Ellen C., *Jack Cade and Shakespeare's "Henry VI, Part 2"*, from *Studies in Philology*, Volume 92, No. 1, Winter 1995, University of North Carolina Press, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4174505>, quotation taken 18 August 2015, page 34

¹⁸ Mate, *The Economic and Social Roots of Medieval Popular Rebellion*, 1992, page 663

¹⁹ Griffiths, *The Reign of King Henry VI*, 1881, page 643

²⁰ Gregory, *Women of the Cousins' War*, 2011, page 79-80

²¹ Gregory, *Women of the Cousins' War*, 2011, page 80

took the name of Mortimer and defended York in the Kentish Demands²², leading many to question the Duke's involvement with the Rebellion. Although, as Weir points out, 'there is no contemporary evidence that York or any of his affinity were connected in any way with Cade's uprising'²³, which is supported by Cook²⁴. Because the Wars of the Roses led to a change in dynasty, not just once, but twice, the call for 'political reform [...] not revolution'²⁵ by the rebels was answered. On the other hand, there is some disagreement over whether Cade's Rebellion did lead to the Wars of the Roses, as asked by Weir. She argues that 'Cade's rebellion did not signal the outbreak of the Wars of the Roses, nor was it a part of those wars, but the frustrations engendered by its failure were undoubtedly a contributory factor. The grievances and demands published by Jack Cade were the same grievances and demands that Richard, Duke of York, would voice not so long afterwards. Hence the rebellion may [only] be seen as a prelude to war'²⁶. Ultimately, however, the key difference between Weir and Gregory's arguments as to whether Cade's Rebellion led to the Wars of the Roses is in the language. One claims it was a 'cause' and the other a 'prelude', yet the abstract nature of these terms is not enough to draw real distinction. While it was not the only cause, just as few things find their roots in a single place, it is certainly intrinsically linked, due to the involvement of York in rebel demands, York's use of the Rebellion as evidence against the King, post 1450, and the Lancastrians' use of Cade in condemning York. But if Cade's Rebellion did lead to the Wars of the Roses, could this be seen as an achievement? Ultimately, yes, as these wars proved to be the answer to the rebels' aims, 'political reform [...] not revolution'²⁷. Therefore, to argue 'the rebellion had achieved nothing' is to oversimplify the issue. The achievement of political reform was not instant, but Jack Cade's Rebellion was arguably crucial for making it happen.

Nevertheless, political reform was not the only cause of Cade's Rebellion. 'The final loss of Normandy in April, which people somewhat unfairly laid at [Henry VI's] door, gave the occasion for more attacks upon the government'²⁸. The mismanagement of the French War was listed in one of Cade's manifestos, describing how 'the sea is lost, France is lost'²⁹; as Jenkins argues, 'peace after a defeat in war rarely finds favour with English opinion'³⁰. Weir supports this sentiment, recounting how 'people were also appalled by what had been happening in France'³¹. Carpenter³², Cook³³ and Keen³⁴ also stress the importance of the impact of the French war on Cade's rebellion. There are four aspects to the impact of the French War on the 1450 uprising: nationalism, unpaid soldiers, taxation and protection. Jenkins references this sense of nationalism³⁵,

²² *The Demands of the Kentish Rebels*, 1450, clause 4

²³ Weir, *Lancaster and York*, 2009, page 148

²⁴ Cook, *Lancastrians and Yorkists*, 1984, page 19

²⁵ Cook, *Lancastrians and Yorkists*, 1984, page 19

²⁶ Weir, *Lancaster and York*, 2009, page 155

²⁷ Cook, *Lancastrians and Yorkists*, 1984, page 19

²⁸ Lander, *Government and Community*, 1980, page 187

²⁹ *The Demands of the Kentish Rebels*, 1450, clause 6

³⁰ Jenkins, Simon, *A Short History of England*, Profile Books Ltd., 2012, page 87

³¹ Weir, *Lancaster and York*, 2009, page 145

³² Carpenter, Christine, *The Wars of the Roses: Politics and the constitution in England, c. 1437-1509*, Cambridge University Press, 1997, page 113

³³ Cook, *Lancastrians and Yorkists*, 1984, page 18

³⁴ Keen, *English Society in the Later Middle Ages*, 1990, page 198

³⁵ Jenkins, *A Short History of England*, 2012, page 87

which is tapped into by Shakespeare in his representation of Cade's Rebellion in *Henry VI, Part II*. Littered with anti-French gags, Cade and his fictional accomplice, Dick, discuss how 'we'll have the Lord Say's head for/selling the dukedom of Maine'³⁶ and 'I tell you that Lord Say/hath gelded the commonwealth, and made it a eunuch:/and more than that, he can speak French; and/therefore he is a traitor'³⁷. Linking Say so directly to the French War, while historically inaccurate, emphasises the importance of the War on the Rebellion and deepens the frustrations caused by local politics. As for the unpaid soldiers, Caldwell explains that 'soldiers, no longer in the pay of magnates or king (if they had ever fully been) remained disaffected and chose as their targets Cade's and his followers' enemies'³⁸, which is why 'the rebels are particularly concerned with the losses to France, [...] since many of them appear to be veterans of French campaigns'³⁹. Grummitt supports this with 'the rebels' ranks were swollen by the return to England of hundreds, if not thousands, of defeated and disillusioned soldiers, eager to attribute blame'⁴⁰. To show the extent of disillusionment and violence following the end of the war, Mate even depicts how only five months before Cade's Rebellion, 'mutinous soldiers murdered Adam Moleyns, Bishop of Chichester, and recently keeper of the privy seal'⁴¹. The reason that the unpaid soldiers are so crucial for the county of Kent's part in Cade's Rebellion, aside from the natural involvement of Kent due to Cade himself being the 'Ashford Tanner'⁴², is that the ports of Kent 'witnessed a steady stream of ragged, embittered soldiers returning from France, the embodiment of England's humiliation'⁴³. The soldiers returning through Kent reminded the countrymen not only of England's failure across the Narrow Seas, but also of the lack of support given by the king to his soldiers at home. Thirdly, as with any war, taxes were levied on the population and Mate argues that they 'probably hated the disruption caused by the war in Normandy, and the taxes to pay for it'⁴⁴. Brogden Orridge builds on this describing how 'many complaints were current of the mode in which the fifteenths were collected'⁴⁵ at this time. Finally, the matter of protection: after listing the sixth clause of the Demands of the Kentish rebels, which mentions how 'the sea is lost, France is lost', Castor concludes that 'it was a powerful message, and one that spoke eloquently to the inhabitants of a region that now looked with dread toward the coast, where the triumphant French were seizing their new-found opportunity to raid and plunder with impunity'⁴⁶. Mate builds on this, speaking of how 'the fighting in Normandy and its subsequent loss exacerbated the problems faced by inhabitants of the coastal regions of Kent and Sussex. The ill-disciplined armies, as they passed to and from the ports, frequently attacked goods and people along their routes. Communities within reach of the coast

³⁶ Shakespeare, William, *Henry VI, Part II*, c. 1591, from *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare Online*, Jeremy Hylton, Operated by The Tech, Dick in Act IV, Scene II

³⁷ Shakespeare, *Henry VI, Part II*, 1591, Cade in Act IV, Scene II

³⁸ Caldwell, *Jack Cade and Shakespeare's "Henry VI, Part 2"*, 1995, page 41

³⁹ Bernthal, Craig A., *Jack Cade's Legal Carnival*, *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, Volume 42, No. 2, Tudor and Stuart Drama, Rice University, Spring 2002, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1556114>, 18 August 2015, page 267

⁴⁰ Grummitt, *Deconstructing Cade's Rebellion*, 2006, page 107

⁴¹ Mate, *The Economic and Social Roots of Medieval Popular Rebellion*, 1992, page 672-3

⁴² Brogden Orridge, *Illustrations of Jack Cade's Rebellion*, 1869, page 24 [Ashford is a town in Kent]

⁴³ Weir, *Lancaster and York*, 2009, page 146

⁴⁴ Mate, *The Economic and Social Roots of Medieval Popular Rebellion*, 1992, page 673

⁴⁵ Brogden Orridge, *Illustrations of Jack Cade's Rebellion*, 1869, pages 71-2

⁴⁶ Castor, Helen, *She Wolves: The Women Who Ruled Before Elizabeth*, Faber and Faber, London, 2011, page 333

were required to pay for their own defence, and preparations tended to be inadequate, leaving the area very vulnerable to surprise attacks⁴⁷. Therefore, as a consequence of the ending of the Hundred Years' War, the sense of nationalism was deflated, the unpaid soldiers not only reminded Kent of this but also joined Cade's Rebellion in hope of finding someone to blame, taxes were levied and Kent and other south-eastern counties were left largely unprotected, yet the protection they did receive had to be paid for by the inhabitants themselves. Thus, Cade's Rebellion was in part a response to this, but when nothing was done to rectify the situation, the Rebellion could be seen to have 'achieved nothing', for what could be achieved? Henry could not win back his losses, nor did he have money to distribute to the population. Hence, Cade's Rebellion 'had achieved nothing' for nothing could be achieved of this.

While compensation for the French War was not and could not be achieved, it is not the same as the rebellion achieving nothing whatsoever; in fact, Cade's Rebellion successfully undermined royal authority. As Carpenter argues in more general terms, 'at times of acute disturbance and division, as in 1381 (the Peasants' Revolt) and 1450 (Cade's Rebellion), even the lower orders in town and countryside began to question the power of authority'⁴⁸. With 'Henry's discredited government [...] coming under attack'⁴⁹ due to Cade's Rebellion, questioning the King's divine power was not far behind. Weir argues that Jack Cade's Rebellion was 'a well-planned and organised movement that posed a serious threat to the government'⁵⁰ because 'royal government had virtually collapsed; the Council was helpless and unwilling to confront Cade'⁵¹. Going from protestors to soldiers, Gregory describes how, in battle, 'a skilled feint from Cade's army led the royal army into a trap and Cade won the first battle, killing two royal commanders and putting the troops to flight [...] which] was a dramatic defeat for royal power. Many soldiers of the king's army immediately deserted and joined Jack Cade, and more rebel volunteers came in from the southern counties of England as news of his victory spread', to which she emphatically concludes that 'the men of Kent had started a popular uprising against royal tyranny'⁵². Weir reiterates that 'what had been made strikingly manifest by Cade's uprising was the inability of King and Council to cope successfully with such a crisis. A king was supposed to lead his armies, protect his people and enforce justice, but this king had fled and in his absence the government of the realm had all but broken down'⁵³. Cade's Rebellion in context then, could portray this as one of the first steps towards having a somewhat disabled, puppet monarchy, as is often presented of the modern day British royal family, placing the fifteenth century revolt alongside the Magna Carter and other restrictions of royal power. On a smaller scale, it added to the evidence against Henry VI, providing York with greater momentum and adding fuel to the flames of the later Wars of the Roses. This was heightened by the fact that 'the shock of the revolt had done nothing to jolt the almost thirty-year-old king into any more active engagement with his responsibilities'⁵⁴. This is perhaps why Weir would argue that 'the rebellion

⁴⁷ Mate, *The Economic and Social Roots of Medieval Popular Rebellion*, 1992, page 672

⁴⁸ Carpenter, *The Wars of the Roses*, 1997, page 62

⁴⁹ Castor, *She Wolves*, 2011, page 332

⁵⁰ Weir, *Lancaster and York*, 2009, page 147

⁵¹ Weir, *Lancaster and York*, 2009, page 150

⁵² Gregory, *Women of the Cousins' War*, 2011, page 78

⁵³ Weir, *Lancaster and York*, 2009, page 155

⁵⁴ Castor, *She Wolves*, 2011, page 334

had achieved nothing⁵⁵ because on the fact of it, Cade's Rebellion *had* changed nothing. King Henry remained, as did his 'evil counsellors'⁵⁶ and no compensation was given for those suffering the consequences of the Hundred Years' War. Yet in reality, Cade's Rebellion had changed a remarkable amount; it had given cause for the country to see the weakness of their King, brought York forward as a possible alternative candidate and shown, due to the skill of Cade's army, 'how easy it had been for the insurgents to occupy the capital'⁵⁷. Therefore, Jack Cade's Rebellion of 1450 did not achieve nothing, but highlighted important issues, such as the ease of taking London, through the undermining of royal power.

Underpinning the political and military causes of the 1450 Rebellion was economic, social and even judicial unrest, which, much like the continuing political malcontent, carried on throughout the 15th century. The economic unrest was caused partly by the King's overwhelming debt, as reads in one manifesto: 'the king himself is so beset that he may not pay for his meat and drink, and he owes more than ever any King of England ought, for daily his traitors about him, when any thing should come to him by his laws, at once ask it from him'⁵⁸, which also links the debts to the wider political issues. In fact, the Crown had 'massive debts amounting to £372,000, increasing by £20,000 each year', while 'the cost of maintaining the royal household was a staggering £24,000 a year, twice what it would be twenty years later [i.e. under Edward IV]'. According to Weir, 'even members of the King's household went unpaid and were forced to petition Parliament for their wages'⁵⁹. Across the kingdom, the falling population 'during the 1430s as a result of repeated outbreaks of pestilence and other diseases'⁶⁰, combined with 'a general European bullion famine caused by the drain of gold and silver to the Near East and exacerbated by the widespread closure or contraction of European mints and mines'⁶¹, led to a fall in prices. Even though Weir argues that 'few [supporters of the revolt] had suffered any particular economic hardship: there was no agrarian depression in Kent, and in recent years Kentish farm labourers had enjoyed increased wages'⁶², Mate provides a wider picture, with 'the evidence of rent reductions, unoccupied land, and reduced common fine payments all suggest that much of the countryside [in Kent and Sussex], as elsewhere, was still suffering from an acute shortage of people throughout the 1440s'⁶³. The significance of 'an acute shortage of people' is that the market becomes saturated, making prices drop, especially as 'the export trade was not expanding, so any surplus circulated at home [yet] the home market could not expand to absorb the excess production'⁶⁴. Even if the farm labourers *had* enjoyed increased wages there was 'a marked drop in wool prices, major producers had a hard time finding buyers for their crop and in some places wool accumulated unsold. Small-scale farmers suffered as much as, and perhaps more than, the larger institutions, since they could not afford to store their goods until the market improved'⁶⁵, which is supported by

⁵⁵ Weir, *Lancaster and York*, 2009, page 155

⁵⁶ *The Demands of the Kentish Rebels*, 1450, clauses 2-6

⁵⁷ Weir, *Lancaster and York*, 2009, page 155

⁵⁸ *The Demands of the Kentish Rebels*, 1450, clause 6

⁵⁹ Weir, *Lancaster and York*, 2009, page 144

⁶⁰ Mate, *The Economic and Social Roots of Medieval Popular Rebellion*, 1992, page 661

⁶¹ Mate, *The Economic and Social Roots of Medieval Popular Rebellion*, 1992, page 661

⁶² Weir, *Lancaster and York*, 2009, page 148

⁶³ Mate, *The Economic and Social Roots of Medieval Popular Rebellion*, 1992, page 661

⁶⁴ Mate, *The Economic and Social Roots of Medieval Popular Rebellion*, 1992, page 661-2

⁶⁵ Mate, *The Economic and Social Roots of Medieval Popular Rebellion*, 1992, page 661

Griffiths⁶⁶. Therefore, it could be concluded that 'economic distress might, for some rebels, have been as powerful a motive as political dissatisfaction'⁶⁷. Because there was no 'improvement to the Crown's financial problems'⁶⁸ nor a remedy to the deflated prices, Cade's Rebellion achieved nothing. On top of this background of economic hardship, Cade 'gave firm organisation to long-seething resentment in Kent'⁶⁹. As Brogden Orridge explains, 'Kent had been discontented in the early part of 1450'⁷⁰, which is supported by Marsh asserting that '[after the Peasants' Revolt of 1381] there was a renewed attempt to seek liberty through violence. In 1450 Jack Cade led another unsuccessful revolt of the peasants in Kent'⁷¹. Even though the idea that Cade's revolt was 'unsuccessful' is disputable in the same way as its lack of achievement is, and that it was not so much a 'revolt of the peasants in Kent' but a protest of the southeastern counties, the comparison between the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 and Cade's Rebellion of 1450 is often struck, with Cade often seen as Wat Tyler's successor. One reason that is given for this move for social change is in Cade's followers, in particular artisans such as shoemakers. 'The presence of so many artisans among the rebels – in the fifteenth as well as in the sixteenth century – may owe something to the nature and independence of their work. Shoemakers, for example, have a long history with political radicalism. Their work was both sedentary and physically undemanding and could be readily combined with thinking and conversation [...] Yet they also had contact with their customers – usually poor, humble people like themselves – and thus had the opportunity to exchange ideas and information without fear or reprisal'⁷². Shakespeare, for example, almost presents Cade as an egalitarian reformer. In one monologue Cade declares that 'all the realm shall be in/common; and in Cheapside shall my palfrey go to/grass: and when I am king, as king I will be [...] there shall be no money;/all shall eat and drink on my score; and I will/apparel them all in one livery, that they may agree/like brothers and worship me their lord'⁷³. This is especially significant because Makinson links support of Cade to twentieth century extremism. He argues that 'it is significant that Cade—or whatever his real name was—chose to adopt the name of Mortimer, and to associate his demands for political and economic reform with the possible claim to the throne of the Duke of York. The discontented commons of the fifteenth century turned to the Yorkists as the discontented commons in some countries in the twentieth century turn to the Communists or Fascists, not because they supported the Duke of York, who then had made no claim to the throne, but because they wanted a change and the bloodier the better'⁷⁴. However, because Cade's Rebellion did not dethrone Henry VI, nor did that Duke of York ever make it so far, the uprising 'had achieved nothing'. The final aspect of the Kentishmen's unrest is to do with 'the failure of the law'⁷⁵. As reads in the *Demands*, 'the law serves for nought else in these days but to do wrong'⁷⁶. Cook also depicts 'the breakdown in law and order' by the 1440s, causing

⁶⁶ Griffiths, *The Reign of King Henry VI*, 1881, page 631-2

⁶⁷ Mate, *The Economic and Social Roots of Medieval Popular Rebellion*, 1992, page 661

⁶⁸ Weir, *Lancaster and York*, 2009, page 144

⁶⁹ Lander, *Government and Community*, 1980, page 187

⁷⁰ Brogden Orridge, *Illustrations of Jack Cade's Rebellion*, 1869, page 30

⁷¹ Marsh, Henry, *The End of Serfdom in Britain*, Published in History Today, Volume 24, Issue 2, February 1974

⁷² Mate, *The Economic and Social Roots of Medieval Popular Rebellion*, 1992, page 669

⁷³ Shakespeare, *Henry VI, Part II*, 1591, Cade in Act IV, Scene II

⁷⁴ Makinson, *The Wars of the Roses*, 1959

⁷⁵ *The Demands of the Kentish Rebels*, 1450, clause 3

⁷⁶ *The Demands of the Kentish Rebels*, 1450, clause 5

'widespread dissatisfaction at Lancastrian rule'⁷⁷. As one rebel exclaims in *Henry VI, Part II*, 'First thing we'll do, let's kill all the lawyers'⁷⁸. Tompkins explains the significance of this, because although 'Shakespeare was writing 150 years after these events and may have been unaware of the extent to which the rebels were led by gentlemen, and even lawyers, [...] his depiction of peasant animosity against lawyers was probably accurate; it had certainly been a major feature of the great Peasants' Revolt of 1381'⁷⁹. Once again, Cade's Rebellion did little to change 'the failure of the law', which is mentioned in nearly every clause of the *Demands*. Therefore, Cade's Rebellion, which did not alter the social, economic or judicial situation in the country, 'achieved nothing'; especially given the significance of these causes.

However, many historians have concluded that Cade's Rebellion was not a social or economic uprising, which is shown in the range of people who were pardoned. Over 5000 names are comprised in the list of pardons, containing 'men from all classes of society and included one knight who had fought at Agincourt, seventy-four gentlemen, three sheriffs, two members of Parliament, eighteen squires, and a substantial number of local officials, sailors, churchmen, tradesmen and yeoman farmers. They came mainly from the south-eastern counties'⁸⁰. Hence, many of these people belonged to privileged positions, both in regards to society and the economy. While with such a range of people, there will always be a range of interest, socio-economic conditions were not at the forefront of the manifestos; only the King's debts were mentioned in the *Demands*. Be that as it may, this evidence of a range of participants is part of what Cade's Rebellion did achieve: class collaboration. Occupations are often added alongside the names of those pardoned, including butchers, bakers, goldsmiths, trumpeters, tanners, mercers, tailors, glovers, chandlers, and wax- and tallow-chandlers, grocers, spicers, braziers, tinkers, sawyers, carpenters, masons, tillers, thatchers, turners, smiths, coopers, and saddlers, barbers, brewers, innholders, vintners, taverners, hackney-men, grooms, servants, shipmen, watermen, mariners, clothmakers and weavers⁸¹. Brogden Orridge adds that 'in many parishes the occupations are not given; but the main force consisted of husbandmen and labourers'⁸². However, the presence of seventy-four gentlemen, a knight and two MPs must also be noted. It's not just the range of people that is significant in Cade's Rebellion; it is the fact that this range occurred at a time of change. As Keen argues, 'it was the end of the Middle Ages, the period that saw the old social order, the rigid economic and class structure, called feudalism, threatened and overthrown by new forces; that, simultaneously with the rise of the middle class, saw the rise of the yeoman, the man whose long bow won the victories of Crecy and Agincourt, and which witnessed the disappearance of the half-free serf and villain from the English social landscape'⁸³. Keen directly connects Cade's Rebellion to these developments. Therefore, the 1450 uprising was not just in response to social unrest, it contributed to

⁷⁷ Cook, *Lancastrians and Yorkists*, 1984, page 18

⁷⁸ Shakespeare, *Henry VI, Part II*, 1591, Dick in Act IV, Scene II

⁷⁹ Tompkins, Matthew, 'Let's Kill All The Lawyers': Did Fifteenth Century Peasants Employ Lawyers when they Conveyed Customary Land, Essay from *Identity and Insurgency in the Late Middle Ages*, Linda Clark, Boydell Press, 2006, page 73

⁸⁰ Weir, *Lancaster and York*, 2009, page 148

⁸¹ Brogden Orridge, *Illustrations of Jack Cade's Rebellion*, 1869, page 29

⁸² Brogden Orridge, *Illustrations of Jack Cade's Rebellion*, 1869, page 29

⁸³ Keen, Maurice Hugh, *Robin Hood – A Peasant Hero*, Published in *History Today*, Volume 8, Issue 10, October 1958

social change. Mate⁸⁴ and Marsh⁸⁵ support Keen's idea, especially in regards to the end of serfdom in Britain. So while Jack Cade's Rebellion may have been caused by socio-economic and judicial unrest, it also helped to reform England's social structure. Perhaps Keen overextends this idea and breaches the barriers for what the Kentish- and Sussex-men in 1450 can take credit for, but to argue that 'the rebellion had achieved nothing' ignores the effects that the class collaboration achieved via this revolt upon English society.

Despite all this, there are a few issues that are important to note. Firstly, Grummitt argues that 'the precise nature and meaning of the events which transpired in Kent and London in the summer of 1450 are ultimately unknowable to us'⁸⁶. Therefore, attempting to measure achievement against what was aimed to be achieved is ultimately impossible, as what was written in the *Demands* and manifestos will arguably differ from what Cade's men actually wanted to achieve. Furthermore, the reliability of the pardons is questionable; there is no way of proving if those men were really gentlemen. Lander taps into this, saying, 'seventy-four gentlemen (or, seventy-four people who called themselves gentlemen)⁸⁷'. Also, William Shakespeare's play, *Henry VI, Part II* was used as a source, yet it is, of course, a work of fictional drama. Yet, it is useful evidence because it shows what was popular with 'the comons'⁸⁸ (albeit an audience a century and a half later) and the way that Cade's Rebellion was remembered by later generations; Brogden Orridge adds that 'we [cannot] now judge the accuracy of the complaints; all that I need remark is the wide difference between them and the travestic of them given by Shakespeare'⁸⁹. Hence, remembering the nature of dramatisation is crucial for using Shakespeare a source. Finally, the 'rebels' would not have thought of them in those terms, nor would they have seen it as a 'rebellion'. Hicks summarises this perfectly with 'that the movement has become known as Cade's *Rebellion* was the one achievement of a beleaguered regime. Insurgents did not regard themselves rebels. They were subjects engaged in legitimate protests'⁹⁰, which is supported by Cook⁹¹, Weir⁹² and Griffiths⁹³. Therefore, while it is most common to describe Cade's followers (and not all of them even followed Cade) or Kentishmen (yet not all of them came from Kent, nor was it all of that county) as 'rebels', the usage is actually incorrect.

Ultimately, although Cade's Rebellion did not cause immediate political change, did not achieve compensation for the French War and did not alter the socio-economic and judicial situation of the nation, to argue that 'the rebellion had achieved nothing' because of this is an oversimplification. The rebellion's contribution to the Wars of the Roses inadvertently did lead to political reform, the skill of Cade's army undermined royal power, which arguably makes Cade's Rebellion into an event that led to the restriction of royal power, and the range of supporters within the rebellion allowed the

⁸⁴ Mate, *The Economic and Social Roots of Medieval Popular Rebellion*, 1992, page 671

⁸⁵ Marsh, *The End of Serfdom in Britain*, 1974

⁸⁶ Grummitt, *Deconstructing Cade's Rebellion*, 2006, page 107

⁸⁷ Lander, *Government and Community*, 1980, page 187-8

⁸⁸ J. Payn to John Paston, *The Paston Letters, AD 1422-1509, Volume 2, Cambridge Library Collection – Medieval History*, edited by Gairdner, James, Cambridge University Press, 2010, page 153

⁸⁹ Brogden Orridge, *Illustrations of Jack Cade's Rebellion*, 1869, page 33

⁹⁰ Hicks, Michael *English Political Culture in the Fifteenth Century*, Routledge, 2003, page 80

⁹¹ Cook, *Lancastrians and Yorkists*, 1984, page 19

⁹² Weir, *Lancaster and York*, 2009, page 148

⁹³ Griffiths, *The Reign of King Henry VI*, 1881, page 628

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collaboration of social classes, which contributed to the forging of the modern state through this creation of a middle class of artisans. Therefore, Jack Cade's Rebellion of 1450 did not achieve nothing; its achievements are merely easier to see with hindsight.

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