

Radical Groups – The Diggers



The Diggers were a group of agricultural communists who called themselves the "True Levellers" however their communistic ideas led the leaders of the levellers to dispossess them. They believed that freedom from poverty could be successful if the earth was made a "Common treasury for all. Their ideas began to thrive in 1649-1650 and were led by Gerrard Winstanley and William Everard. They believed that the Civil Wars had been fought between the King and the great landowners and that now Charles had been executed, the land should be divided up so that the poor could use it.

Good
Clear
explana

✓ || "England is not a free people, till the poor that have no land, have a free allowance to dig and labour the commons..." Gerrard Winstanley 1649

Because of their beliefs the Digger movement began in April 1649 when a group of 20 Diggers settled at St. Georges Hill in Surrey where they began to cultivate the land. They began to plant vegetables and invited "all to come in and help them, and promised them meat, drink and clothes". However they and their settlement were continually attacked by local landowners, which eventually forced them to move a few months later to Little Heath.

Acts such as this led to the number of Diggers more than doubling within 1649 as the movement began to spread across the country.

|| Their activities raised alarm within the Commonwealth Government, we know this because the Council of State sent "It is feared they have some design in hand" in a letter to Lord Fairfax. And in July 1649 they gave instructions for the arrest of Winstanley and ordered Fairfax to disperse of the group and stop any



repetition of such events. The Council of State were worried that this may have been the "beginning to whence things of a greater and more dangerous consequence may grow".

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The brutality of the Council of State meant that the Diggers were not a significant threat to the Commonwealth by 1653 as they had been put down. However they must have seen them as a possible threat during 1649 as they had given immediate instructions to disperse them, to the army. Perhaps they were worried that if support for the Diggers continued at the same rate then they would have developed into a considerable threat.

Although the Diggers did not survive for long, their ideas still continue today. - how?

Good, clear presentation of Digger ideas.
Use of quotes / images of support your research. Significance is covered but could be more explicit.

17/20 (A) Otherwise well researched. Good effort