Fief

A Look at Medieval Society from Its Lower Rungs

by Lisa J. Steele



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A Word From The Publisher



About the Author

Lisa J. Steele is a criminal defense attorney and author based in Massachusetts. She represents clients accused of crimes ranging from minor traffic offenses to capital murder. Ms. Steele has been a game player and designer for at least 15 years. She is the author of ***GURPS Cops*** (forthcoming from Steve Jackson Games), White Rose's ***Medieval France*** (unfortunately out of print), and a variety of articles in various gaming magazines and legal periodicals. Her personal interests range from science fiction to economics to medieval history to firearms.

If you're like most readers, this is your first encounter with ***Fief***, Lisa Steele's primer on medieval life for fantasy gamers, SCA enthusiasts, and others interested in knowing what made society tick in the days of crusading knights and the Black Plague.

This is, however, a new, revised edition of what amounts to an "underground classic" of gaming – the kind of book that's a jealously-guarded secret of those few who've managed to locate it. The first edition, a tape-bound book published by White Rose Publishing, appeared quietly, five years ago, distributed with elbow grease and affection. I knew Lisa in those days from our mutual involvement in the fan press, which made me one of the lucky handful aware of White Rose. Most gamers had never heard of the little New England company, and still haven't.

Now, I'm in the happy position of being able to share that secret, putting an excellent tool into the hands of Game Masters all over the globe.

Lisa's work feels right at home at Cumberland. Like any other title in the All-Systems Library, ***Fief*** is rules-independent, focusing entirely on details that will open your eyes and fuel your imagination, unencumbered by game-speak. That makes room for a lot of detail, and Lisa doesn't skimp on the servings. ***Fief*** is a *feast*, and everyone from the casual fantasy gamer to the seasoned medievalist will find something worthy to chew on. My own contribution, exclusive to this edition, is a new index with over 1,300 entries. It says more about how much *stuff* this book contains than any praise I can heap on it here. Enjoy.





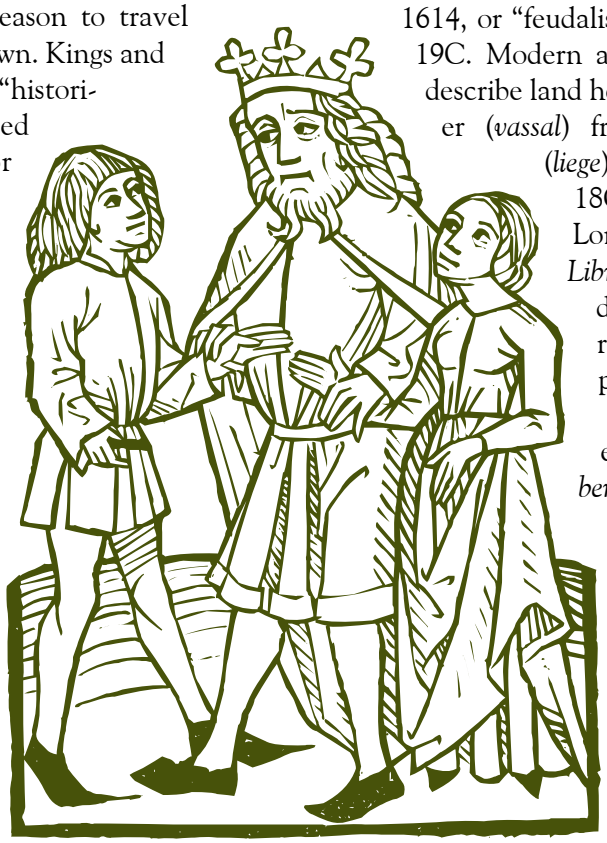
Austin, Texas, November 2001

I. Fundamentals

The Three Orders

This book discusses life in England and northern France in the 9th to 13th centuries (9-13C) with some digression into other countries and times. It focuses on the basic rung of that society: the *knight's fee* or small landholding. The knight's fee was home to ninety percent of western European society at the time – landholders, farmers, and village priests – all trying to eke out a living based on farming and animal husbandry. It was a precarious life threatened by poor harvests, disease, wartime raids, oppressive taxes and tithes, and ill fortune. It was also a stable life, changing slowly over the course of centuries.

The knight's fee was an isolated place. Few of its inhabitants had any reason to travel beyond the nearest market town. Kings and bishops were distant figures; "historical events" generally garbled rumor arriving months or years later.



Although a knight's fee was a small, closely knit world, it was also a socially stratified one. In 1030, Bishop Gerhard of Cambrai taught that humanity was divinely divided into three estates: those who pray, those who labor, and those who fight. This provided an explanation for customs evolved since the collapse of the Roman Empire. Although the landholder on a small knight's fee might have an income little larger than the wealthiest peasant on the manor, he or she was still a landholder, a noble, with all the privileges that entailed. A priest, no matter how humble his birth, no matter how poorly he spoke Latin and knew scripture, was still ordained and separate from all other classes.

This book discusses the structures and customs of rural medieval society focusing on the basic elements upon which the entire edifice of kings, cathedrals, and castles were built. It draws together data from a number of specialized academic treaties and integrates several disciplines. Readers interested in delving further should consult the works listed in **Sources**.

Fief, Vassal

"*Fief*" is one of those words used in a variety of inconsistent ways. Medieval people used "fief" to describe many kinds of property. They didn't write about the "feudal system," a term first used in 1614, or "feudalism," a term first appearing in 19C. Modern academics often use "fief" to describe land held by a subservient landholder (*vassal*) from a dominant landholder (*liege*). The concept evolved in 16-18C based partly on a 12-13C Lombard legal book called the *Libri Fedruorum*. Academics now dispute whether the *Libri* reflected an ideal, or actual practice.

Medieval "fiefs" probably evolved from benefices. A *benefice* was a grant of land by the crown or clergy to a landholder for life, with limited inheritance rights. In return, the vassal agreed to perform military service, instead of paying rent or performing non-military labor. Counts and other officials received benefices as part of their office. When the Carolingian empire collapsed in late 9C, many benefices merged with the office holder's personal and family lands. Custom began to permit large fiefs to be inherited by right rather than by royal favor. Around 11C, this custom was extended to lesser fiefs. *Allods*, conversely, were land held by the owner

without any feudal duties to a superior landholder. Such lands were rare during and after 11C.

Some historians try to distinguish allods, benefices, and fiefs. Before 11C, it appears that medieval writers used these terms interchangeably. When "fief" started appearing more frequently in French records (10-11C), it described property with subordinate rights or property within an area controlled by another landholder. Still, the uses were ambiguous – at times it even referred to rights in churches and mills – and did not always connote subordination or dependency.

By 12C or so, "fief" had a more-or-less settled definition as property held by someone of greater than peasant status with some rights and obligations to a superior landholder.

By whatever name one prefers, the fief is the foundation of medieval society. Modern scholars sometimes describe medieval society as a pyramid. The crown theoretically owns all of the land. It grants large portions to its favored followers. They, in turn, divide their portions among their favored followers. This continues down to the smallest parcel that can support one mounted, armored warrior (the knight's fee). Historical sources suggest that, at least before 12C, that isn't how medieval nobles and clergy thought of the situation at all. There is little evidence that any medieval writer thought of all land as belonging to the crown, and even less evidence that major and minor landholders thought so. Landholders thought of their land as, well, theirs. Their financial and military obligations to their liege were social and personal obligations, not a *quid pro quo* for their property.

To confuse the matter, there were large holdings that might look like fiefs but were virtually independent of their nominal liege. Some of the great counties and duchies of France – Aquitaine, Brittany, Burgundy, and Toulouse – were originally part of the Carolingian empire, became briefly independent, and were eventually merged back into the royal *demesne*. Small independent "fiefs" were sometimes found in isolated mountainous areas.

"Vassal" or "vassalli" is often used to describe the subordinate landholder. The word comes from Carolingian documents and was used commonly in France, Germany, and Italy until 10C. After 10C, it fell out of common usage in France and Germany, but continued to be used in Italy. Around 13C, "vassal" returned to French and German usage, spread by lawyers trained in Italy.

"Vassal" was generally used to refer to royal vassals. It referred to a variety of relationships: ruler and subject, patron and client, landlord and tenant, employer and employee, military general and soldier, bully and victim. Traditionally, vassals were personal friends and allies of the superior landholder. They were raised to value courage and loyalty. Many served in their liege's army. It is unclear how much this relationship was a matter of status and friendship and how much it depended on owning land, and whether lesser nobles used the same concept.

Rights and Duties

I promise by my faith that from this time forward I will be faithful to Count William and will maintain towards him my homage entirely against every man in good faith and without any deception.

– Oath given to Count William Clito in 1127

A fief was not owned by its occupant, it was managed by the occupant for both the superior landholder and the occupant's heirs. It came with various rights to govern lesser landholders (peasant tenants and serfs), and with various obligations to greater landholders.

The landholder had various rights to civil and criminal justice over the fief, its residents, and occupants. A landholder's basic rights might include: to use and manage the land; to receive income or produce from the land; to bequeath some or all of the land to family members; to sell some or all of the land to friends or strangers; and to be secure in one's ownership and governance.

A noble's paramount duty was loyalty. Traditionally, an English noble's duty of loyalty was irrevocable except if he or she was exiled, or unless treated so unfairly as to justify defiance. French nobles' duty of loyalty to the crown derived from a requirement in 854 that all Franks swear loyalty to the king. Italian kings made a wide range of subjects swear loyalty, some as vassals, others as citizens.

Landholders also had to offer *aids* (money payments) to their liege. For landholders who were not clergy, aids were customary for the knighting of the liege's eldest son, the marriage expenses of the eldest daughter, and ransoming the liege if captured.

In some areas, aids for Crusades and large property purchases were also customary. For ecclesiasti-

cal landholders, aids were customary for the bishop's consecration, official trips to Rome, trips to councils, and repairing the cathedral. An examination of medieval records shows, however, that aids were usually levied from townspeople and farmers, not nobles.

Military service is more fully discussed in **Warfare** (pg. 75). Records suggest that, outside England, this duty was nominal.

A famous letter from Fulbert of Chartres to Count William V of Aquitaine (c. 1000) recited the duties of a vassal as follows:

> *He who swears fealty to his lord should always keep these six terms in mind; safe and sound, secure, honest, useful, easy, possible. Safe and sound, that is, not to cause his lord any harm to his body. Secure, that is, not to endanger him by betraying his secrets or the fortresses which make it possible for him to be secure. Honest, that is, not to do anything that would detract from his lord's rights of justice or the other prerogatives which have to do with his honor. Useful, not to cause him any loss as regards his possessions. Easy and possible, not to make it difficult for his lord to do something which would be of value to him and that he could otherwise do with ease, or render it impossible for him to do what was otherwise possible. That the vassal should avoid injuring his lord in any of these ways is not only right, but this does not entitle him to a fief; for it is not enough to abstain from evil, it is also necessary to do good. So it remains for him to give his lord faithful counsel and aid as regards these six points if he wishes to be considered worthy of his benefice and secure as to the fidelity that he has sworn.*

Was this letter expressing established custom, or an ideal? No one knows. In any case, the duties of even a minor landholder involved military service, financial assistance, and attendance at court.

Getting a Fief

The usual way for a young noble to get a fief was to either inherit it or marry into it. Widows and children of a landholder were sometimes given rights in a landholder's fief for their support. Land was difficult to transfer except by marriage or inheritance. If nothing else, spouses, children, and relatives contested gifts to the Church or otherwise outside the family. Sometimes a noble might get a fief by supporting the winning side in a war. A classic example of this tactic is the Norman Conquest (1066). Rarely, one might get a fief as a gift. Large landholders sometimes granted small parcels to their friends and relatives in return for nominal services – a rose, a few pounds of pepper, a sparrow hawk, or an egg.

Another way to get a fief was to be appointed to an office that came with associated land. Many clerical offices included land managed by abbots and bishops as trustees for the Church. Castellans and bailiffs were appointed to manage land for the crown or for a major landholder.

In any case, getting a fief likely involved some sort of ceremony and often a payment. Lay landholders received their land from the grantors. Clerical landholders were forbidden by the Council of Clermont (1095) to accept offices or ecclesiastical property from lay lands or to do liege fidelity to the laity. (The ban was singularly ineffective.) There is some confusion in the surviving records between ceremonies granting land and those where a vassal gives an oath of fidelity (*homage*). Usually, the two went together, but in Italy some landholders did not owe fidelity to the grantor.

The ceremony had several purposes. First, the landholder's duties and rights were recited publicly. (The Church made a written record of its grants; lay landholders often did not.) Second, the ceremony impressed the event and the rights on the usually illiterate attendees.

A Vassal of One's Own

"Subinfeudation" is a term used by academics to describe the creation of subordinate landholders. A knight's fee is likely to be too small to be subdivided, but the knight's liege might subinfeudate parts of his or her manor – selling them for profit, granting them to kin, or even donating the land to the Church.

The landholder's new neighbors might not be simple knights; they could easily own several properties in the area. A problem with subinfuedation was that sub-tenants did not owe any loyalty to their grantor's liege. As John de Blanat noted in 13C, the "man of my man is not my man."

Castellans and Bailiffs

It is hard to tell from surviving records how a grantor distinguished between creating a castellan of a fortress and creating a vassal. The distinction seems to be between a castellan who was appointed over an existing fortress and a vassal who built a fortress on the grantor's lands. Castellans were trusted agents who were responsible for the safety of fortresses on their liege's lands. They had some rights to the post and often hoped to keep the post within their family.

In Savoy, France, castellans were non-hereditary salaried posts. Savoy limited its castellans to five year tenures and transferred them to various castles to prevent any fraud or deceit. A son or heir might succeed a Savoyard castellan only to complete his term or his accounts.



Bailiffs (*bayle*, S.France) were appointed officials who collected taxes, inspected fields, and administered justice in the landholder's name. They were sometimes entrusted with the care of a fortress or allowed to reside in a small fortress as part of their duties.

A landholder, one assumes, was careful to restrict inheritance of important castles. Whatever its past history, a powerful noble might use unrest as a reason to claim that an important castle was held only by permission and thus try to restrict inheritance.

Losing a Fief

There are three ways one can lose a fief: by military defeat, by dying without heirs, and by forfeiture for disloyalty or heresy. A landholder could voluntarily grant a fief to the Church or to another landholder. A liege could confiscate a fief for failure to pay an inheritance fee or to meet other duties, but the fief was returned when the obligation was satisfied.

Fiefs along contested borders were commonly captured and occupied by an enemy. During the Hundred Years War, unemployed mercenaries even captured weakly defended castles and used them as bases for extortion and brigandage. If the fief were recaptured, the landholder would be restored.

Dying without any heirs was not easy. **Inheritance** (pg. 54) discusses who a landholder's heirs might be. In general, they included children, siblings, parents, aunts and uncles, their children, cousins, and so on. Italian custom even allowed landholders to adopt heirs. Records suggest that reversions because of a dearth of heirs only occurred during massive disasters like the Black Plague (14C).

Some 7C writings state that if a landholder is disloyal to the crown or to the Church, he or she might lose lands or property. The Italian *Libri Fedruorum* (12C) added to the list of offenses meriting forfeiture: failing to serve in battle, desertion of one's liege in battle, revealing secrets, failing to warn of danger, seducing any of a liege's female relatives, attacking the liege's person or castles, or killing a liege's male relative.

In 12C England, the crown could confiscate all the movable property of those convicted of serious crimes and could take control of their land for a year and one day. Thereafter a felon's lands were given to his or her liege. A traitor's lands were taken by the crown.

One could also lose lands for heresy. In 1207, a papal legate came to Toulouse to investigate the Albigensian heresy. He excommunicated Count Raymond VI of Toulouse, placed the county under interdict, and pronounced anathema on Count Raymond saying "he who would disinherit you will be in the right, and he who would kill you would be blessed."

A landholder could also sell a fief or give it away. Sales to the Church were often restricted. In 1136, Lothar III of Germany forbade any sale that reduced a benefice's usefulness to the emperor or its liege.

The Church tried to protect itself by having sales agreements made in writing, and by getting the consent of the landholder's liege and as many potential heirs as could be found. This lessened, but did not prevent, messy legal battles after the landholder's death. A landholder needed not vacate the land after the sale. Some agreements allowed the landholder to reside on the land until his or her death.

Manor

The term "fief" describes the legal aspects of holding land. "Manor" describes the physical and economic aspects. A "manor" contains one or more villages, a fortified dwelling for its holder, a church or chapel, mills, ovens, fields, forests, and at least one water source, preferably running water.

The physical structures of a typical manor are described in **Architecture**; the land divisions are described in **Agriculture**. *Fief* often uses 13C Farnham as an example because of its size and the quality of its surviving records. Farnham is located near the southern coast of England and was held by the bishop of Winchester.

A manor's size varied widely depending on the fertility of the soil and its holder's status. *Fief* focuses on a knight's fee, which was a small holding able to support one armored, mounted warrior. Its size depended on the land's usual yields and on the customary equipment of a knight. An 11C knight clad in a chain hauberk required less land to support him and his horse than a 15C knight clad in steel plate with several horses.

England's Domesday Book (11C) listed the manors held by various knights. A third of the knights listed held 90 to 180 acres. A quarter of the knights held even less. Few held more than 420 acres. In contrast, a prosperous peasant might hold a little less than 120 acres. Other sources wrote that 120 to 240 acres would just support a knight, his arms and armor, and 1-2 warhorses. A third of the Domesday knights, thus, were just barely maintaining their status and were living little better than wealthy peasants on larger holdings.

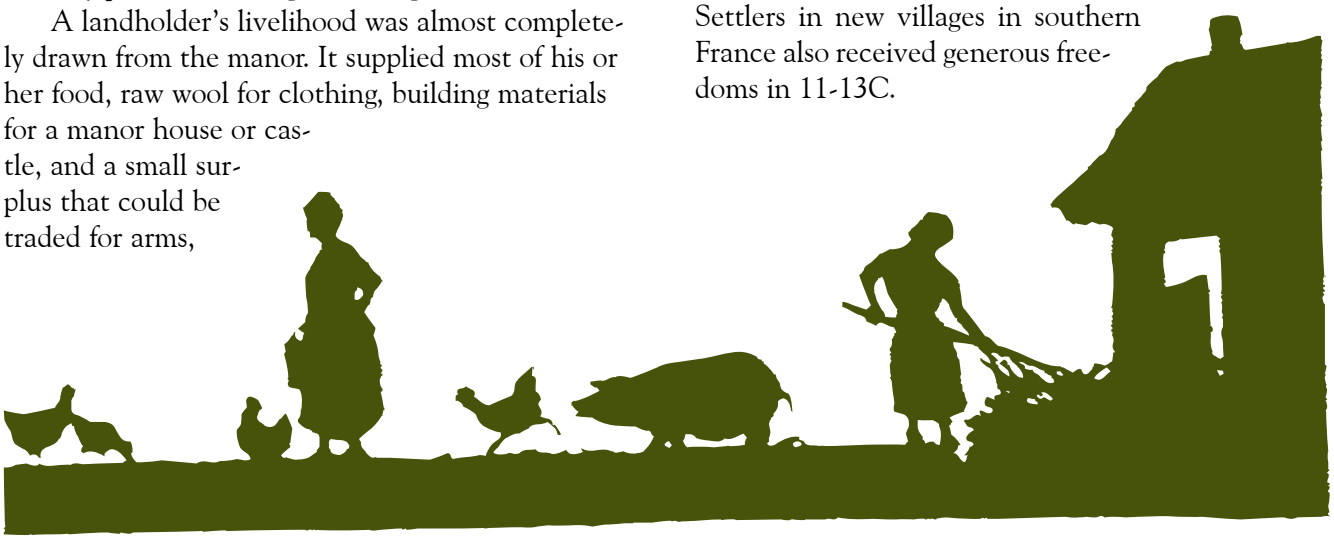
A landholder's livelihood was almost completely drawn from the manor. It supplied most of his or her food, raw wool for clothing, building materials for a manor house or castle, and a small surplus that could be traded for arms, armor, horses, and other needs. The more elaborate and expensive armor a landholder needed, and the larger the horse needed to bear the weight of a properly armored landholder, the larger the knight's fee needed to be.

Academics use "manorialism" to describe relations between landholders and farmers. The classic system of organizing tenant farmers (peasants) and serfs to divide their labor on the landholder's fields and on their own fields first appears in 9C French documents, then in 10C English and Italian records. The system had spread through a large part of Europe by 11C. By 13-14C, the system had broken down because absentee landlords "farmed" their estates to third parties for a fixed annual rent.

Assarts

An *assart* was new lands added to a manor. Generally, it was land that previously had been either uncultivated or had been unsuitable for crops: swamps, forests, or just abandoned land. It isn't clear how the new farmland was divided among a manor's landholder and farmers; local custom varied.

If a group of farmers cleared enough territory for a new village, they were often rewarded with significant privileges. The privileges were meant to encourage adventuresome farmers to enlarge the landholder's domains. In 12-13C, German communities created from cleared land along the Rivers Elbe and Saale, and in the north-western marshes, were given privileges similar to towns. Farmers could receive unrestricted inheritance rights for listed citizens, free election of judges and officials, and a special charter for government and courts. Settlers in new villages in southern France also received generous freedoms in 11-13C.



Parish

Yet a third system for describing medieval landholding is by the ecclesiastical divisions of parishes. In 13C, there were about 9,500 parishes in England, with about 300 parishioners and 4,000 acres each. Ideally, no village was more than two miles from a church and its essential services: baptism, marriage, and burial in its associated graveyard.

The parish was the root of the medieval church hierarchy, which ran from parish priest or rector, to the archpriest of the region's baptismal church, to the bishop, to the pope. Abbeys, convents, and monasteries were grafted into this system at various points. Some orders, like the Cistercians, Templars, and Dominicans, had an internal hierarchy and were only subject to the pope. Other orders were subject to the local bishop. Local churches were squarely subject to their bishop, on whom they relied to consecrate their churches, ordain their priests, and supply their *chrism* (an aromatic oil used to baptize and to ordain priests).

A parish's income came from its parishioner's tithes (see **Taxes, Tithes and Tolls**, pg. 63). The tithe system was hideously complicated by major disputes within the Church between old churches and those newly founded, between baptismal churches and proprietary churches, and between parish priests and bishops.

Getting a Parish

There are many priests and there are few priests. For there are many in name, but few in deed . . . For there are many priests in name, because in this life and especially at this time, nothing is easier and lighter and more attractive to men than the office of bishop and priest, but in God's sight, nothing is more miserable, sad, and damnable, if that office is carried out with negligence and flattery . . . But there are few priests in deed, because in this life and especially at this time, nothing is more difficult to effect, laborious as to the person, and dangerous as to the soul than the office of bishop or priest, but in God's sight, nothing is more blessed, if the office is carried out in the way that Christ commands . . . But in order that many become priests in deed, they ought to labor with great diligence in the Holy Scripture . . . For priests ought to know the Holy Scripture and the canons, at least penitential ones, and all their work should be in preaching and teaching, and they ought to edify all both with the knowledge of the faith and the discipline of works.

– Oculus sacerdotis (c. 1320)

A man usually became a parish priest by being born on the manor, studying with the then-resident priest, and taking over when the priest was promoted or died. The candidate had to be male, of legitimate birth and free status (not a serf), and be somewhat literate in theology. There were some vague physical requirements – one Franciscan cut off his own thumb to avoid being ordained; another candidate was ordained despite losing part of a finger to frostbite. Even in 15C, there was no formal instruction, or even much supervision, by busy bishops.

The candidate was usually nominated by his predecessor, by the parishioners, or by the landholder. The bishop from whom the church received its chrism had to examine the candidate and ordain him. In theory, the bishop could ordain whomever he pleased and assign them as he willed.

The examination traditionally took three days. The bishop set a date for the candidate to appear, often the Ember Days (the Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday after the First Sunday in Lent), the Day of Pentecost, or Holy Cross Day (September 14). The candidate was responsible for his own housing and food during the exam. The questions were up to the bishop.

Losing a Parish

Ordination is permanent. Once a man is made a priest, he cannot lose that status. A priest who is excommunicated or declared a heretic has the right to give sacraments suspended. Performing a sacrament while excommunicated is a sin, but the rite is valid as to the recipient.

Parishes were assigned by the bishop. A parish priest was rarely reassigned for incompetence – the records are all too full of complaints about illiterate, absentee priests. If competent and ambitious, however, a priest could be transferred to a collegiate church, a cathedral chapter, or even a university.

A parish might also be lost if several of its villages were destroyed or abandoned. In England, the crown destroyed several villages in 11C to protect the royal forests. In 12C, Cistercian monks destroyed villages which might disturb the solitude of their abbeys. The parish priests thereby unemployed were usually reassigned by the local bishop.

Threats to the Order

The system of fief, manor, and parish evolved to be very stable. If the relationship were disturbed for

too long, the harvest could be disrupted and people would starve. That risk was a powerful motivation for landholders, their lieges, and clergy to act conservatively and maintain custom.

There were many threats to each element of the system. The major threats to the fief came from the landholder's superiors, who might challenge his or her right to hold the land, and from potential heirs who might try to win their inheritance prematurely. The major threats to the manor came from warfare, brigandage, farmer unrest, and bad weather. The major threats to the parish came from its superiors, who might despoil its tithes and appoint unqualified priests, and from its priest himself, who might prove incompetent or greedy. There were also secular landholders who tried to claim church lands or impose their own candidates on the local bishop.



Money

Fief lists figures in the standard units of *livre*, *sou*, and *dernier*. In many places, the livre was not an actual coin; it was an accounting notation, equal to 20 sou or 240 dernier. In practice, coins varied in worth depending on their metal content and their scarcity. All of the values given in *Fief* have been translated into the *livre tournois* (French) or *livre Angevin* (English), which had basically the same value. France had a number of different livre, each named for the city where it was minted and having different values. England kept records in the pound sterling (worth about ¼ livre) and the silver mark (worth about 13 1/3 sou). France and England experienced a wave of coinage debasement in 14-15C caused, in part, by a shortage of gold and silver and, in part, by the expenses of the Hundred Years War. The English monarchs had a more effective royal tax system than the French and did not need to debase their coin just to pay for the war. The English penny's weight and silver content remained unchanged (92.5% silver) weighing roughly 1/240 lb.) from 1279-1344. It was reduced by less than 1/5th from 1344-51. In 1412, it was reduced by another 1/6th. In 1464, it was reduced by another 1/5th, and remained constant until 1526.

Terms

The following is a list of various terms and how they are used in *Fief*. Historical sources and academics use some of these terms in different ways. Where actual records are quoted, the meaning should be clear from the context.

Acre - As a modern measure, 43,560 square feet. The medieval acre was only half to two-thirds the size of the modern acre.

Boon Work - Special employment due from serfs on the landholder's fields, notably ploughing, sowing, harrowing, and harvesting.

Bovate - Measure of land averaging 15 medieval acres.

Bushel - As a modern measure, 8 gallons or 1¼ cubic feet. The medieval bushel was based on a customary container and might vary widely in size.

Culture - A division of land, about 8-10 acres.

Demesne - Fields owned directly by the landholder and worked by tenants on his or her behalf.

Farmers - The people who actually work the land, used to collectively refer to both peasants and serfs.

Hide - A division of land, equal to 60 to 120 acres.

Landholder - The noble or aristocrat who holds legal title to the land. It is possible for more than one landholder to control a given manor.

Peasant - A free farmer with some enforceable rights against the landholder.

Quarter - Measure of grain equal to 8 bushels, or 32 pecks, or 64 gallons.

Serf - An unfree farmer with limited rights against the landholder. A serf's status was somewhere between a slave and a sharecropper or tenant farmer. Serfdom reached its height in 12C and had all but vanished by 15-16C.

Sheaf - Unit of grain equal to 1/10 bushel.

Tun - Unit of grain equal to 4 quarters

Venison - Often used to refer to the four major forest game animals: fallow deer, red deer, roe, and wild boar.

Vergate - Measure of land averaging 30-32 medieval acres.

Vert - Often used to refer to trees, underbrush, and forest plants needed to shelter and feed game animals.

Villein - English word for an unfree farmer. *Villain* is a French word for a free farmer.

Week Work - Weekly labor required from serfs on the landholder's fields.

II. Architecture

A manor's architecture varied by the climate and local materials. Half-timbered houses with thatch roofs were common in England and Normandy. Brick houses with tile roofs were common in southern France and Italy. On most manors, the only permanent structures were the castle or manor house, church, and mill. Other structures were built at need and only expected to last during their builder's life.

Castle

A castle is a fortified residence and a residential fortress. On a small manor, it might be merely a house slightly larger and more strongly built than a wealthy peasant's. On a large manor, one might find the elaborate walls, baileys, and towers of a Château Gaillard or Loches. A castle's size, shape, and elaborateness depend on the landholder's wealth, the perils of the region, and popular trends in fortress design. Fortifications were expensive to build and to maintain, so landholders built them carefully. Regardless of its size, a castle had two main purposes. First, it ensured that an invader would have to capture it in order to control the associated fields. Second, it provided a secure meeting hall and storage for the landholder's grain and crops.

After 9-11C, a landholder needed his or her liege's permission to build anything hardier than a fortified manor house. In 862, Charles II of France ordered fortresses built in all parts of his kingdom to resist Norman and Saracen invaders. Local landholders began to build private fortresses. Town walls were repaired and strengthened. Two years later, Charles ordered the destruction of fortresses built without his license. Then in 869, he ordered all of the towns along the Seine and Loire rivers to be fortified.

The Normans introduced castle building to England and Sicily. Their fortresses could be divided into those built by landholders with royal permission and garrisoned by them, those built by landholders with royal permission and garrisoned by bailiffs, and illegal fortresses. The last were often torn down by royal command. In Naples and Sicily, for example, many fortresses were built during a thirty year period of unrest starting in 1189. Frederick II, acting as King of Sicily, tore down many of the illegal fortresses after 1220.

Common Styles of Castles

The motte bailey (11C): A motte was an artificial hill built with stone, earth, and other fill. A 30-foot high, 90-foot wide motte could be built by 50 men working for 40 days. The bailey was often a three story high square tower made of wood or stone built on top of the motte. The entire hill was surrounded by a wooden fence, hedges, ditches, and other defensive "works".



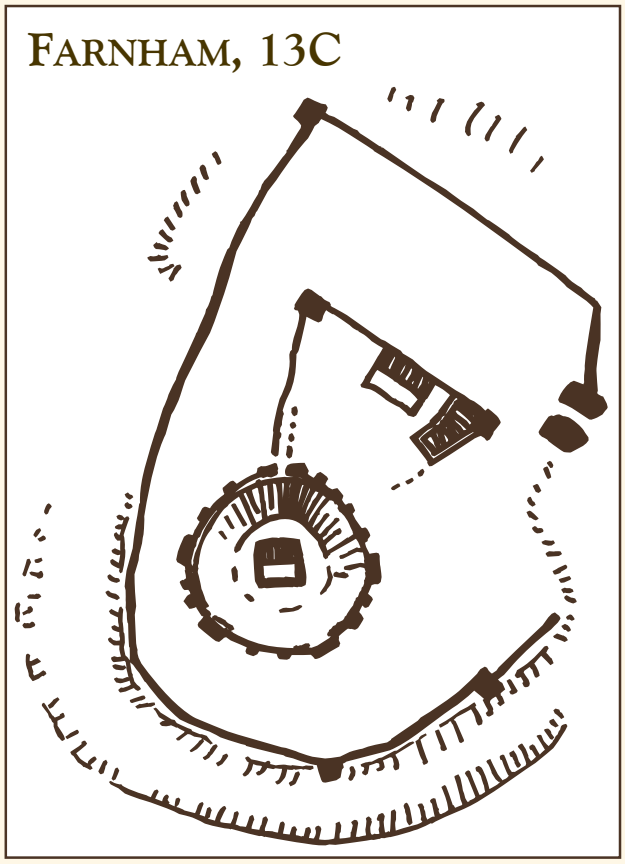
The shell keep (late 11C): Seen from above, it looks like a donut with stone outer walls, store rooms and living quarters built inside those walls, and a central courtyard. Some of these had a second set of stone walls enclosing a outside courtyard, towers, gatehouses, crenellations and machicolations, portcullis, and drawbridges. A variation on the shell keep was a two to four story rectangular tower, like a large bailey, with high walls surrounding it. Larger keeps had outbuildings like a kitchen, hall, living quarters, and craft shops.

The circular keep (12C): Crusaders returned with the idea of a large round stone tower with stout walls. Seen from above, it looked like a compressed shell keep. They were often supplemented by rectangular stone halls, kitchen, chapel, and craft buildings. The main gatehouse was two to three stories high, protected by a ditch and drawbridge. Crusaders also brought home the idea of archer's loops (narrow openings in walls, wider on the inside than outside, which protected archers from attackers).

Farnham's Castle

Farnham had a motte and bailey castle. Its stone keep contained a soldiers' barracks, well, armory, and stores. It was protected by a ditch and a removable bridge. Until 13C, the ditch was surrounded by two rows of hedges. The inner one protected the bailey, the outer one kept cattle from falling into the ditch. The ditches were full of nettles and thorns which were trimmed every year.

In 13C, Farnham gained an outer stone wall, three turrets, a square tower, a round tower, and two gates. The towers were all roofed with tiles. The main gatehouse and keep were roofed with lead sheets. The gate house had a drawbridge of sorts, but it wasn't very sturdy. In 1251, it broke beneath the weight of some carts. It was rebuilt in 1288. In the meantime, a temporary or removable bridge was used.



The major buildings inside the walls included a hall, chapel, kitchen, and landholder's chamber. Each was a stone building connected by wooden passages. The main hall was protected by its own dry moat, gatehouse, and drawbridge. It measured 66' x 43' with four narrow windows on each long wall. These were protected by iron bars and shutters. It had a timber roof with a hole in it for smoke.

Doors led from the hall to the kitchen, buttery, pantry, chapel, and landholder's room. It also had small chambers for the landholder's four household officials, plus a treasury and a study. The hall was furnished with a cupboard, tables, and benches. At night, it was lighted with wax candles in iron holders. For formal dinners, the tables were covered with linen and the walls hung with tapestries. Hay was scattered on the floor. (When the landholder wasn't present, hog carcasses were hung in the hall after slaughtering.)

The kitchen was attached to the buttery (where butter and cheese were made and stored) and a pantry. It had eleven windows, protected again by iron bars and wooden shutters, and an opening in the roof for smoke and steam. It also had two fireplaces for cooking, tables, a few brass pots, a boiling pan, and a few brass utensils.

Castle chapels became increasingly common starting in 13C. The chapel had an altar on a stone platform, a few glazed windows, a reading pulpit, benches, and a small belfry. There was a small vestry where books and vestments were stored when the landholder was in residence. When the landholder visited, he brought the vestments, altar linens, hangings, and sacred vessels with him. In 14C, Farnham gained two more chapels, one near the keep and another near the landholder's quarters. The chapel was used for daily worship, but not for greater church feasts and masses.

A steep narrow stair led to the landholder's chamber. The stairs were easily defended and the windows were again protected by iron bars. It had tables, benches, and a bed. Bedding was part of the landholder's traveling luggage.

The bailey had a group of wooden buildings, including a bakery, brew house, dairy, dovecot, dyer's house, kennels, mews, stable, and smithy.

Church

Each village usually had its own church and a house for its priest. In England, France, and Germany, many were fortified as a refuge for their parishioners. An unfortified church had a timber roof, thick walls, and tiny, narrow windows. A fortified church was built on a mound like a castle motte, and might have a ditch, crenellated walls, turrets, loopholes, parapets, and machicolations. Some had their own wells, ovens, hand mills, and siege stores. A few had underground passages used to escape an attack. Most churches had a belfry and bell to summon the faithful to Mass, warn of danger, and mark canonical hours. Next to the church was the village graveyard, surrounded by a low stone wall.

Starting in 12C, there was a sharp rise in popular piety in urban areas and along trade routes. Urban and rural churches benefitted from donations which allowed improvements and expansions. Churches built or renovated during this time might have added aisles, towers, spires, carvings, and decorations.



In some churches, the parish priest lived in a loft. Any of his guests, visitors, and most travelers stayed in the church hall itself. In other churches, the parish priest had his own hall, probably built in the same manner as a wealthy farmer's dwelling. Its furniture was similar to the landholder's – a table, benches or chairs, a cupboard, and a bed. The floor was covered with straw. Travelers passing through might claim hospitality from the parish priest and sleep on the straw wrapped in blankets.

The priest had a small private room with a bed, straw mattress, and blankets. There was also a table, chair, and chest. The chest contained the priests' books and the records of the parish. It also contained the church's vessels – chalice (gold or silver), paten (gold or silver), alms basin, cruets (pitcher), candlesticks, and altar linens. The church hall likely had its own larder. A large parish church might have its own bakehouse, buttery, kitchen, and pantry.

Each church also had to have a relic. The Council of Nicaea in 797 forbade any church to be consecrated unless it housed some holy relic. A small parish's relic was likely to be either the remains of a local saint unknown more than few miles from its door, or a small bone or part of a better known saint. Mysterious statues of the Virgin washed ashore from the sea or found while plowing also qualified as relics.

Bibles were rare. They were produced in two volumes, the Old Testament (including books of what is now called the Apocrypha) and the New Testament. The work was arduous, requiring three or more scribes working for at least two years, plus 200 or more sheep skins for the parchment, plus any decorations. Instead of owning a Bible, most parishes survived with other books – psalter, hymnal, book of homilies, manual of common sacraments, Lives of Saints, missals, etc. Missals, or prayer books, were particularly common. They were often written in a tight script with readings for each day. A larger church might have a Gradual book (sung responses to the Mass), Antiphonary (sung responses to the Daily Office), and Processional (litanies and procession music).

The parish church was built and maintained by its parishioners. They also paid for its books, ornaments, vessels, and vestments. The priest maintained his hall and any outbuildings from the tithes.

A parish church was more than a house of worship. It was a meeting hall, occasional market hall, store house, and gathering place. The church and yard were used for dancing, games, wrestling, banquets, fairs, markets, and religious plays. Merchants sometimes set up booths in the church itself. They, or hired watchers, slept in the church at night to protect goods. Courts, marriages, and dower exchanges were held at the church door or porch. Unwanted newborns might be left on the porch or in the nearby graveyard. Deeds and contracts might be announced after Mass to the entire parish. Rents and tithes were sometimes paid after Mass, again with the parish as witnesses.

Granges, Stables and Tithe Barns

Most manors had various wooden storage buildings for hay, grain, and animals. A large manor might have several barns and stables, a separate stable for oxen and cows, a sheepfold, an enclosure for pigs, and a pound for stray livestock. Landholders had their own barns or stored grain in their hall. Wooden tithe barns were used to hold the church's grain. In small parishes, the grain might be kept in the church itself.





Houses

Each farmer's family had its own house; a few had more than one. These buildings were simple and sturdy, made of whatever materials were most abundant: wood, cob (mud, straw, and chalk), wattle-and-daub (mud over a twig and branch framework), thatch, stone, brick, or tile. These houses were only intended to last for a generation.

After twenty years, a new house was built, usually somewhere else in the family's yard (*croft*). The old building served for a time as a barn or storage shed. Until late 12C or early 13C, most English peasant houses were made of timber supported by posts, turf, or cob. In later centuries, farmers built houses which used frames placed on stone foundations and sills. Frame houses were more durable and could support a second floor or loft.

In 13C, English peasant houses began to be built partly or completely out of unmortared stone. Even then, new houses were built about once every other generation. The church and the manor house were usually the only permanent mortared stone buildings in the village.

Farnham's Storage Buildings

Farnham had two granges: the *grangia feni* could hold 60 meadows of hay (enough bedding for a single royal visit); the *grangia bladi* held grain. The manor had two stables outside the castle walls which held 4-6 horses, and a third for guests' mounts. There was a fourth stable inside the castle itself. It had a sheepfold made of timber and plaster, a stone cow stable for 20-50 cattle (which could hold up to 110), and an enclosure for 20-30 pigs

Each house was surrounded by a narrow ditch. In 14C, these ditches were widened into small moats. Houses were often surrounded by a garden and a yard for chickens and small livestock. This croft could vary from a small vegetable patch to elaborate gardens. It often contained a well (often a simple narrow pit with no cover), cisterns, latrines, and rubbish pits.

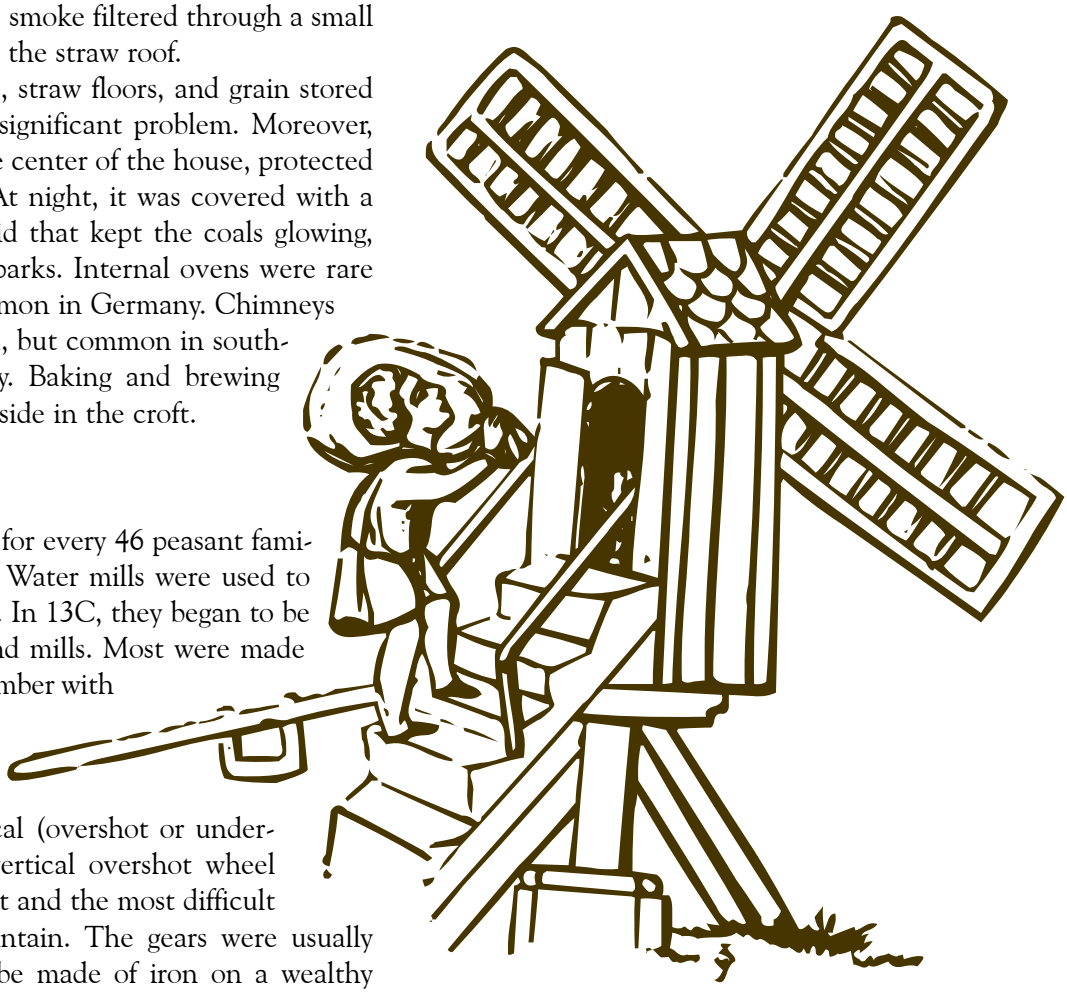
The poorest farmers lived in small one or two room houses. Since they rarely owned any large livestock, they did not need a large place to house animals over the winter. Most farmers lived in a long-house with three rooms: a living space, a central chamber with hearth, and a byre or animal room. Wealthy peasants had two buildings, often set at right angles, to separate themselves from their livestock.



Furnishings were simple: a wooden bed for the entire family, a table of a plank laid on trestles, a long bench, and various tools hanging on pegs. Straw covered the floors and was changed whenever it became too dirty. More expensive homes might have clay, wood, or even stone floors. Doors were sturdy wooden affairs with locks and crossbars. Windows were protected by sturdy wooden shutters.

Houses were lit by their cooking/heating fires and by rush lights. The fire's smoke filtered through a small opening and holes in the straw roof.

The thatch roofs, straw floors, and grain stored in lofts made fire a significant problem. Moreover, the hearth was in the center of the house, protected by a clay platform. At night, it was covered with a perforated ceramic lid that kept the coals glowing, but captured most sparks. Internal ovens were rare in England, but common in Germany. Chimneys were rare in England, but common in southern France and Italy. Baking and brewing was usually done outside in the croft.



Mills

There was a mill for every 46 peasant families in 13C England. Water mills were used to grind grain into flour. In 13C, they began to be supplemented by wind mills. Most were made of mixed stone and timber with a wooden wheel and earth mill dam. Mills used both horizontal and vertical (overshot or undershot) wheels. The vertical overshot wheel was the most efficient and the most difficult to build and to maintain. The gears were usually wooden, but might be made of iron on a wealthy manor. See also **Mills** under **Monopolies** (pg. 36).

Building Costs

Item	Year	Amount	Location
Church bell	?	18-20 l.	?
Farmer's house (Long house, cob walls)	1406	5 l. 18 s.	Devon
Farmer's house (Single room, cob walls)	1406	3 l. 4 s.	Devon
Mill (rebuilt)	1286-87	27 l. 8 s. 8½ d.	Farnham
Mill (rebuilt)	1288	18 l. 1 s. 9½ d.	Farnham
Miller's house (new) (Labor, carting, materials, roofing)	1290	3 l. 12 s. 1½ d.	Farnham
Pulling down ruined tower	1302	8 s. 6 d.	Farnham
Stone for new tower		6 l.	
Lime cement for tower		47 s. 4 d.	
Carting stone for tower		6 l. 16 s. 2 d.	
Rebuilding castle walls (over course of 3 years)	?	97 l. 15 s. 5 d.	Farnham

III. Agriculture

A manor existed to produce enough grain to feed its farmers and landholder, and provide a surplus which could be bartered for needed imports. The smallest manor would provide just enough surplus to feed one or more warhorses and barter for armor and weapons.

There was a constant tension on the manor between diminishing returns from depleted fields, and increased productivity from improved agricultural knowledge and techniques. Overall, by 11C, manors were able to feed an increasing population of townspeople, clergy, and nobles.

One of the basic concepts of manorial agriculture is that a farmer's labor is divided between his or her family's land and the landholder's. Land was divided into fields and then into strips. The landholder's, church's, and farmers' strips were all intermingled. Agricultural decisions had to be made collectively, often by the farmers rather than the landholder.



Medieval agriculture was inherently conservative. The landholder's goal was to maintain yields and livestock without excessive waste. He or she was rarely entitled to a share of the farmers' products and did not have an interest in taking risks that might improve overall yields. The Church's income was based on a fixed percentage of gross yields, so it had an incentive to improve yields. Moreover, a monastic order had the resources to risk crop failure in experimenting with new technology and techniques on its own lands. Farmers, of course, needed improved yields to improve their standard of living, but were limited by the need for village consensus on basic decisions like when to start planting and what fields to leave fallow.

Soil

Soil varied widely depending on where a manor was located. Northern Europe, in general, has heavier soil than southern Europe, but soil types varied even within a manor. The soil's composition affected the plow and plow team used.

Wheeled plows work well in light soil but get clogged in heavy soil. Foot plows work well in heavy soil, but are slow and cumbersome in light soil. Swing plows or hook plows were used on stiff, heavy soil or on very uneven ground since the smaller ploughshare was less impeded by obstacles like roots and stones. The furrow made by a hook plow was also smaller, causing less evaporation in Mediterranean climates. Different plows were used at different times of the year. The soil was damper in the winter, so foot plows were used for winter plowing. In the drier summer, wheel plows were preferred.

A manor's soil also affected the choice of crops. The major crops were wheat, oats, barley, beans, peas and various vegetables. Other crops included flax and hemp. Flax thrives in shallow, chalky, humid soils. Hemp, used for rope, thrives on deep, rich, wet soil. Both flax and hemp rapidly exhaust soil, however. In northern Italy, crops included the usual wheat, rye, and millet (a kind of grain), but also cabbages, cauliflowers, garlic, pumpkin, melons, onions, and turnips.

Farmers valued soil that could retain its minerals. They preferred soil with a medium amount of clay. Light loam was less popular. Wetlands, fens,

and marshes were tilled as a last resort. When farmers tilled heavy clay soil, they discovered that continuous cultivation turned the soil into a pasty mess impervious to moisture and air. This soil often formed water-tight "platforms" underneath the tilled surface which retained water and rotted seeds. These "platforms" can be repaired, but not by medieval farming techniques.



Land Divisions

The customary division of a manor's fields in England dates from 7C. A manor's fields were divided into cultures of 8 to 10 acres each. Cultures were subdivided into one acre strips called *selions*. Each was the size a single plow could work in a day – they were long and narrow to avoid turning. A typical size was 220 yards long by 22 yards wide. Each strip was separated by *balks* (narrow bits of unplowed turf) or by a double furrow. (The double furrow wastes less land, but is easier to miss among half-grown crops.) At the ends were *headlands* for a team to turn. There were also *gores* (unplowed bits of land that did not fit into the strips) and other unplowable bits.

Each farmer's family held a number of strips, some adjoining, some widely separated. Strips were divided unequally, but every family had strips in the fields which would be cultivated and in those which would be left fallow.

The variety may have arisen to equally divide good and poor soil, or it might have evolved from inheritance customs (see pg. 54). Borders were marked by stakes, stones, double plowed furrows, and balks. If they were intentionally displaced, the malefactor was fined.

Fields were surrounded by fences and ditches to keep domestic and wild animals away from the crops and to make it easier to stop thieves. They were accessed by a network of drove ways, footpaths, and roads to get to the fields and market without disturbing growing crops.

Farmers were fined by their neighbors for damaging crops when taking shortcuts. Landholders could and did trample fields with impunity. Roads were maintained by those who used them and those whose lands abutted them. Work on the roads was, of course, in addition to work due the landholder and work done on the farmers' fields.

Plows and Harrows

The manor started its agricultural year with spring plowing sometime after the last frost. Plowing was the principal work performed by the medieval farmer and it was critical to the harvest's success. A minimum of one day of each week was set aside for it, and was the only task a landholder could require be done even when a serf was ill. Plowing was only interrupted for severe weather and for holy days. Even then, lost time was made up as quickly as possible.

Custom, climate, and soil established whether a manor used a 2 field or 3 field system of crop rotation. In the 2 field system, half of the manor's land was cultivated and the other half left fallow each year. In the 3 field system, one-third of the manor's land was cultivated with wheat, one-third with barley or other crops, and one-third was left fallow annually.

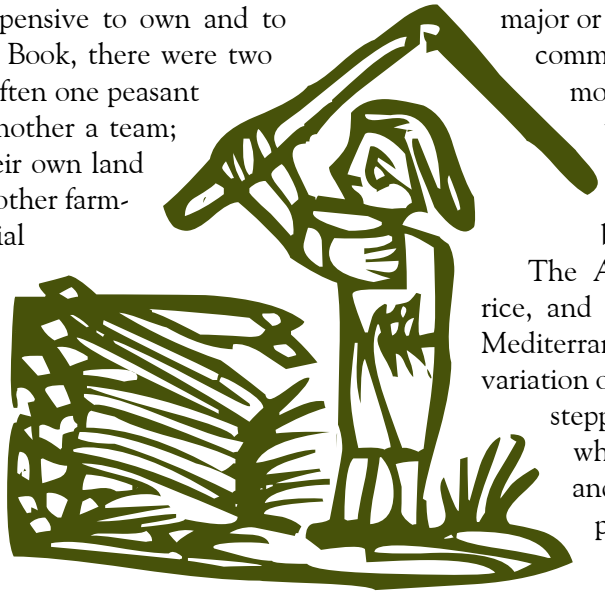
During the fallow period, grasses grew which transferred nitrogen from the air into the soil. Some records suggest that crop rotation was practiced in a variety of ways. On some estates, it was limited to the landholder's lands.



Fields were plowed several times a year. In autumn, some fields were plowed for winter seed. Those to be cultivated were plowed once in the spring to break up the soil, again to destroy thistles and weeds, then finally when seeding the crops. Even fallow ground was plowed twice – first to turn under crop residue, weeds, and grasses – then to aerate the soil.

After a field was plowed for the third time, a harrow was drawn across it to flatten the furrow ridges, level hollows, uproot weeds, and crumble clods of soil. Speed was important so harrows were usually drawn by horses, even if oxen were used for plowing. If a family could not afford a harrow, the farmers broke up the clods with mallets. At this point the field was ready for seed.

In northern Europe, plowing was done with a heavy plow drawn by 4 to 8 oxen or horses. The plow and its team were expensive to own and to maintain. In the Domesday Book, there were two peasant families per plow. Often one peasant family owned a plow and another a team; they cooperated to plow their own land and rented their services to other farmers. There was a perennial shortage of fodder for the team. Oxen required about a third of a bushel of oats per week to keep fit for spring plowing; horses required a little more than half a bushel of oats per week.



Sowing

Sowing seed was done by hand. A farmer selected what seed remained from the previous year, filled a sack, and scattered seed in his or her strips. Some 13C manuals suggested landholders purchase seed from other manors and mix it with their own stores.

Timing was critical. Winter sowing must be done before the frost. Spring sowing must be done after the frost, but before one's neighbor's seed had sprouted (when the young plants might be trampled by the sower as he or she worked on his own strips).

The sowing window might be as long as a month. Farmers were obligated to sow all of their land, both to prevent weeds from appearing unexpectedly and to provide adequate stubble for fall pasture. After crops were sown, they were tended. Children watched the fields for birds and wild animals. Adults pulled weeds and checked plants for disease. Both fertilized the fields with animal manure.

Common crops were wheat, barley, and oats. Wheat was the standard crop for most manors. It was used for porridge, bread, and animal feed. Barley, less nutritious than wheat, was used for bread, porridge, beer, and animal feed. Barley was also the most hardy grain and could be grown from near-deserts to the northern extremes of Scandinavia. Oats were used for porridge and animal feed.

Despite their high nutritive value (a little less than wheat) and their lack of need for milling and preparing, beans and peas were not major or even significant crops. Rye was common in some areas. It tolerates more cold, dry climates, a wider variety of soils, and ripens more quickly than wheat. Hops were cultivated in Germany, but rarely outside it.

The Arabs introduced hard wheat, rice, and sorghum (a kind of grain) to Mediterranean farmers. Hard wheat, a variation of emmer, could be grown in dry steppe regions unsuited for other wheats. It contained little water and could be stored for longer periods. Hard wheat was used to produce new foods like macaroni, spaghetti, and various Mediterranean flat breads.

Rice, which requires a great deal of water, was cultivated in Sicily and, in 15C, in the Po valley of Italy. Where it could be grown it yielded higher returns on sown seed than any other grain crop. Sorghum was grown in southern France and Italy. It gave higher yields than millet and could tolerate hotter, dryer conditions. Both rice and sorghum were summer crops, which allowed Mediterranean farmers to plant crops throughout the year.

The Mongols introduced millet and later buckwheat to Europe. Some varieties of millet could mature in a mere three months. It became an important grain in Italy and the mountainous regions of southern and south-western France. Some peasants used it as a subsistence crop and grew wheat to pay their taxes and for trade. Buckwheat appeared in Germany in 1436 and spread rapidly throughout northern France.

Supplemental crops included garden vegetables, flax, olives (in Mediterranean regions), walnuts, chestnuts, fruit trees, grapes, and other useful plants.

Fertilizing

Do not sell your stubble or take it away from the ground if you do not want it for thatching: if you take away the least you will lose much. Good son, cause manure to be gathered in heaps and mixed with earth, and cause your sheepfold to be marled every fortnight with clay land or with good earth, as the cleansing out of ditches, and then strew it over the fields

– William of Henley

One consistent problem with medieval agriculture was that crops drained away nutrients from the soil faster than stubble, manure, and fallow periods refreshed it. The Romans had used dung, wood ash, beans and other nitrogen fixing crops, and lime to maintain and replenish their soil. Most medieval farmers had lost the Roman technique of using lime to fertilize their fields, but a few did supplement manure with lime, marl (a kind of chalk), and broken sea-shells.

Manure was the primary fertilizer. Pigeon-dung (*columbine*) was especially prized; landholders built dovecots to supply manure for their orchards. Sheep were kept in a moveable fenced enclosure so they could graze on fallow fields and refresh them. (Sheep dung has a very high nitrogen content.)

After the harvest, cows, oxen, and horses were pastured on the fields so that their manure could replenish them. Unfortunately, plowing the stubble under would have replenished the soil better than the manure. The animals needed the forage, however, if they were to have a chance of surviving the winter. On some manors, landholders required their farmers to pasture their animals on the landholder's fields for a certain period first.

Farmers in Flanders were among the first to keep their animals in stalls and apply the resulting dung evenly. They also used "night soil" (human waste) from towns. Pasturing animals means that manure is randomly dropped and decays by exposure to air and rain. (Half of manure's nitrogen volatizes within 2 days if exposed to air; half of urine's nitrogen and potassium is leached away by a rainfall.) William of Henley's manual (quoted above) recognizes that if manure is collected from barns and sheepfolds, it could be spread more evenly in the fields.

Haying

Hay was mowed in the late summer, a few weeks before the harvest. It was used as animal fodder, especially over the winter. One noble paid farmers each a wheat loaf (good for 2 days' meals), a half-penny worth of cheese, and a share of a sheep in return for a summer's mowing.

There was usually a shortage of hay for winter fodder. Landholders and farmers alike estimated their stores, and then killed many of their animals in the fall. The meat was salted and stored.

Harvest

The harvest was the critical moment in the agricultural year. Done too early, the grain might be wet and would spoil over the winter. If it was came too late, the grain might be too dry and precious kernels spilt into the soil during harvesting. An autumn hailstorm could devastate an entire field.

When the proper time came, the farmers went into the fields with scythes and sickles to cut the grain. Behind them, people gathered the grain into sheaves, bound it, and let it dry. It was then threshed and stored in barns. Women were often charged with threshing and winnowing grain. Once the fields were harvested, children and elderly farmers were allowed to glean what remained.

Three to six days later, the fields were opened for pasturing. Pasturing ended when the fields were sown for winter crops. (In England, the right to pasture animals on the common fields can be documented from 13C and may have existed before that.) Tenants were forbidden to overburden the common lands with more animals than they could support over the winter.

The scythe cut nearly an acre of hay, barley, or oats in a day. A sickle, commonly used by women, cut only a quarter as much per day. For every 4 scythe-wielding reapers, there was one binder to gather the grain. A team of 5 could harvest about 3 acres per day. The sheaves were small; 20 sheaves of oats, after threshing, filled a bushel basket.

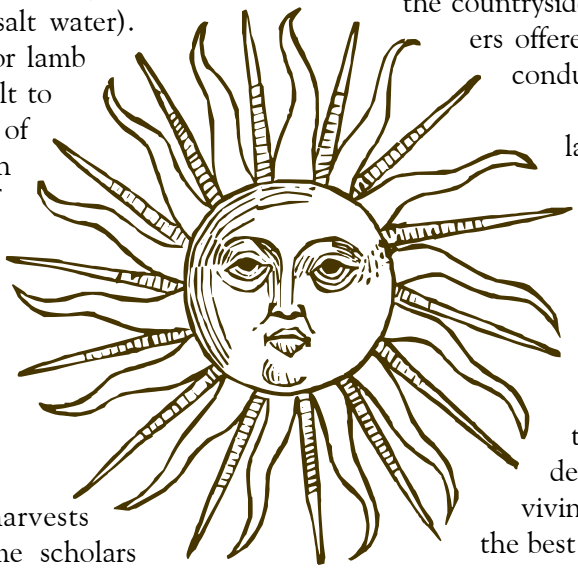
Once the grain was gathered, it was threshed to separate the seed from the ear. About one-eighth of the seed was set aside for the next year's sowing. The remainder was then winnowed to separate the seed from the husks. Farmers used wicker winnowing fans to shake the chaff loose. At the end of the year, the return on sown seed, after separating next year's seed, was likely four or five bushels per bushel sown. In the Netherlands, yields approached the modern

ratios of ten to eleven times what is sown, but did not reach the modern upper yields of twenty times what is sown.

Storage

Grain was stored in wooden barns for the winter. When barns were not available, grain was stored in ricks set on stone or iron saddles. Under optimum conditions, if grain is kept dry, protected from weevils and rodents, turned every six months, and riddled (pierced to aerate the grain) every month, it might keep for 2 to 4 years. In most years, however, grain was used within the year after it was harvested.

Meat and fish were salted. Either could be kept "dry" salted (stored in beds of salt) or "brine" salted (stored in casks of salt water). Every 100 pounds of beef or lamb needs about 8 pounds of salt to preserve it; 100 pounds of pork needs 7 pounds. Fish requires about 25 pounds of salt per 100 pounds of fish. Salted meat and fish is generally edible for 9 to 12 months.



Famine and Failed Harvests

Famines and failed harvests were a constant risk. Some scholars believe that by early 14C, Europe's population had reached the limits of its agricultural technology – manors were farming all of the available arable land, but harvests were meager and nutrition poor.

England's worst harvest of the 13C was in 1258. In 14C, heavy rains caused successive harvest failures in 1314-1316. This second famine affected most of Europe, causing starvation and death on a massive scale. Prices soared. Stores vanished. Rumors held that the poor ate cats, dogs, and even babies stolen from neighbors. As people killed and ate unhealthy animals and rotting stores, epidemics added to the death toll. The famine was combined with murrain in 1318 that killed sheep and plow animals. Whole villages were completely depopulated as a result of the heavy death toll. Three decades later, the Black Death, or Great Plague, continued the destruction the famines had begun.

In southern England, the wheat harvest in 1315 was 60% of average; barley was 80% of average; and oats were 89% of average. In northern England, the wheat harvest was 28% of average; barley was 41% of average; and oats were 64% of average. The *next* year, the wheat harvest in southern England was 53% of average; barley 68% of average; and oats 71% of average. The northern England wheat harvest was 11½% of average; barley 71% of average; and oats 80% of average.

Prices reflected the disaster. In fall 1315, wheat was 8 *s* per quarter. In summer 1316, wheat was 26 *s*, 89 *d* per quarter. Barley was 16 *s* per quarter. Salt in 1300 was 3 *s* per quarter. By 1316-17, it reached 11 *s* per quarter. Prices were a third lower in parts of the countryside. To stave off disaster, landholders offered grants of protection and safe-conduct to cross-country trade.

An estimated 10% of the population of England died in the 1314-16 famine. An estimated one-third to one-half of England's population died as a result of the 1348-49 Plague. The climate changed for the worse during the 14C, leading to an era of low temperatures called the "Little Ice Age", which further decreased yields. The smaller surviving population increased its use of the best arable lands.

Inventions and Improvements

Agricultural knowledge and techniques improved continuously from 6C to 15C. In 6C, the heavy plow, harrow, padded horse collar, and tandem harness together made it easier to grow grain in northern Europe. The scythe made harvests more efficient. In 9C, iron horse shoes made horses even more productive in the fields and in battle. The rotary grindstone replaced hand mills. In 12C, farmers discovered the artesian well, which made it easier to draw water from deep underground. The wheelbarrow first appeared in fields. The 13C brought spinning wheels and an improved cloth loom. In 14C, builders discovered the screw jack. The 15C brought an improved spindle and treadle for the spinning wheel.

IV. Forests and Waste Lands

The King to the sheriff of Glouchestershire greetings. Summon by good summoners the archbishops, bishops, abbots, priors, earls, barons, knights, and all free tenants having lands or tenements within the metes of our forest in your jurisdiction, and from each vill of your country being within the metes of our forest four men and the reeve and the foresters of the vills, and all others who are wont and ought to come before our justices for the pleas of our forest, that they be at Glouchester in the octave of St. Hilary next coming before our beloved and liege Luke de Tany, Adam Gurdon, Richard de Crepping and Peter de Lenche whom we constitute our justices in eyre for this turn for the pleas of the forest in the said county to hear and do what we command touching those things which belong to the aforesaid pleas . . .

– Writ of Edward I (1281)

Most manors were bordered by marshes, fens, or forests. These provided wood for building and cooking, small game for meat, and land that could be cleared for fields. In England, many forests were claimed by the monarchy for hunting. William I was said to love stags as if he were their father.

Forests provided game including boar, deer, fox, and wolves. They provided wood for fires, buildings, siege engines, and ships. Often farmers and clergy had the right to take wood from the landholder's forests to repair houses, hedges, carts, and tools (*estover*). To protect the forest and provide fodder for its beasts, farmers were often limited to taking only fallen wood and dead branches. Some farmers paid a *pannage* fee to feed their pigs in the forest. Until styes became common in 14-15C, the forests were often full of herds of semi-wild pigs. If a farmer exceeded customary or granted rights, he or she was fined for waste until the damaged wood or brush began to regrow. Forests might also be home to iron and coal miners and their associated forgers and smelters, as well as charcoal burners, smugglers, poachers, and bandits.

Those who had rights over the forest had to prevent over hunting and over-harvesting. Despite strict French forest laws, France lost ½ of its forests between 6C and 14C. Landholders who bordered other landholders' forests and royal forests constantly argued over the extent of the forest and just what was included in their customary rights.

The English royal forests are discussed below. In France, counts claimed more control over the forests. In 14C, Enguerrand de Coucy hanged three Flanders nobles for hunting in his forests without permission. The French king imprisoned de Coucy and refused to release him until he promised to pay a 10,000 livre fine and go on a pilgrimage to Palestine.

English Royal Forests

The Saxon and Norman monarchs established England's royal forests. These included not just woodland, but pastures, fields, even villages. Royal forests were subject to their own laws and courts – hunting and harming venison without royal permission was strictly forbidden, as was harming any trees, undergrowth, and plants that might serve as fodder or cover for game.

The basic administrative structure for the English royal forests was: (1) the chief justices of the forests (one for those north of the Trent river; one for those south of it); (2) itinerant justices (justices-in-eyre); (3) a warden who was also often the constable of a nearby castle; and (4) local foresters-of-fee.

Each forest also had its *agisters* (money collectors). The Sheriff of the county also had some responsibility for the forest, and appointed *regarders* (knights to investigate encroachments) and supervised the election of *verderers* (freeholders elected to guard the animals and oversee estovers).

At the manor level, the most important officials were the foresters-of-fee. The forester was appointed by the itinerant justices with the warden's approval; in practice, the office was all but hereditary. Each forester had charge of a *bailiwick* (forest district) and held some land associated with the office. The forester's job was to manage the forest and to track down poachers and criminals living in it.

Forest Fees and Fines (England)

Offense	Year	Fee or Fine	Comments
Assart	1199	1 s per 3 acres	Illegally clearing forest for crops
Assart-spring grain	1282	6 d per acre	
Assart-winter grain	1282	1 s per acre	
Building house	1283	20 s	
Making charcoal without warrant	1283	2 s + value of charcoal	
Pannage	13C	½ d per piglet and 1 d per pig over one year old	
Stealing Oak	1283	3 s 4 d	A bit more than market value of wood
Stealing Oak	1283	20 d	
Smuggling Wood	1283	6 s 8 d	Fine may have been reduced because offenders were poor
Taking, receiving or selling venison	1283	20 s to 2 marks	Doubled or tripled for repeat offenses

Foresters had various rights of and over the minerals, hunting birds, estover, nuts, pannage, and herbage. One forester of Dean claimed that he had the duty to follow the king to war wearing a hauberk and carrying a bow and arrow. He claimed the rights of wardship, *heriot* (an inheritance fee), and marriage over those who lived in his bailiwick.

A distant influence were the itinerant justices, who were usually local men of some importance. In addition to their infrequent courts, justices could swear in jurors (usually 12 or 24) to investigate poaching and issue reports.

Landholders often appointed woodwards from their farmers. Woodwards were sworn into office before the itinerant justices and were expected to protect the king's venison, trees, and plants while overseeing the villager's rights to estover and pannage.

Offenses in English royal forests were judged in one of two courts – the verderers' court or the eyre of the itinerant justices. The verderers' court was held about every 40 days, judged minor offenses, and could set fines up to 4 *d*. All cases involving venison were tried by the itinerant justices, whose courts were held infrequently. In 12C, they were held about once every 3 years. In 13C, there were gaps of up to 12 years. (It isn't clear what happened to the accused between sessions). Poaching, the most common offense brought before the eyre, was harshly punished. Until 1217, the eyre commonly sentenced poachers to death or maiming. After 1217, offenders were merely imprisoned or fined.

Hunting

For a knight should always engage in anything to do with arms and chivalry, and if he cannot do so in war, he should do so in things which resemble war. And the chase is most similar to war, for these reasons: war demands expense, met without complaint; one must be well horsed and well armed; one must be vigorous, and do without sleep, suffer lack of good food, and drink, rise early, sometimes have a poor bed, undergo cold and heat, and conceal one's fears.

– Alphonso XI of Castile (1312-50)

Hunting was a noble's primary hobby. Both men and women were avid hunters. There were several common styles, ranging from using hounds to drive animals into nets or archers, to using hounds to bring larger game to bay for riders. A noble might hunt in forests on his or her own land or might have the right to take game from a neighbor's forests or the royal forest. Accidents were common – King William Rufus of England was shot and killed by his own knights while hunting.

Common game included bear, boar, fallow deer, fox, hares, red deer (stags and hinds), and roe deer. Red deer was the most treasured quarry, followed by fallow deer, then roe deer. There were different terms for the herd, size, and habits of each animal. A 15C hunting manual by Gaston Phoebus of Foix (southern France) mentions the reindeer, which he claimed to have seen in Norway and Sweden, as well as the ibex (a mountain goat) and the chamois (mountain antelope) both of which he hunted in

the Pyrenees. Badgers, fox, lynx, otters, rabbits, wildcats, and wolves were considered dangerous pests and hunted, poisoned, or trapped.

The hunt was as much a ritual as a source of meat. Hunts were carefully planned affairs. To hunt a deer, the host first sent a huntsman and a trained dog to locate a reasonably sized deer. The huntsman tracked the animal, estimated its size from its tracks, from broken twigs and frayings, and from flattened grass where it rested. He then returned with several of its droppings. The hunters used this information to plan the hunt.

The next dawn, they stationed huntsmen with small groups of dogs (relays) along the path the deer was expected to run. When everyone was in position, the host's huntsman released the first group of dogs to drive the deer from its lair. The chase then ensued until the deer was brought to bay by the hounds. When the deer turned to face the hounds, the hunters tried to delay the kill until the host could arrive. If possible, the host was given the honor of killing the deer.



A less elaborate version of a deer hunt involved a group of 3 archers on foot and 3 mounted riders with a group of dogs. This hunt could, and sometimes was, done with larger groups. Once a deer was spotted, the archers and riders tried to surround the animal. (The archers downwind, the riders using their horses' scent to approach from upwind). When the deer finally started, it usually ran away from the riders into the archer's aim. The hunters then used their dogs to track the wounded deer.

Boar were hunted in a similar manner to deer. Unlike deer, however, boar tended to turn on the hounds at various points in the chase. Several relays of hounds were needed to replace the dead and injured and to keep up with the boar's stamina. Even when surrounded by hounds, boar killed many mounted and dismounted hunters. The hunter had but seconds to set a spear to receive the boar's charge. In rare cases, one might use a sword against a charging boar. Riders also chased down fleeing boar with spears and swords.

The quarry was then partly dressed in the field, with its parts divided among the hunters and animals by regional customs which grew increasingly elaborate as the centuries passed. Shares of slain animals were given to the hunting dogs and to peasant hunters. The meat was divided by rank. The choicest bits – testicles, tongue, and certain organs – were given to the highest ranking noble. The hide was given to the owner of the dog which brought the prey to bay.

Large landholders and the English monarch established enclosed woods, called *parks*, where game was stocked for hunting. There were 31 parks mentioned in the Domesday Book. Their number increased slowly. The crown sold the right to create parks as part of its normal revenue. Often, parks were set within sight of the landholder's battlements so that guests could watch the hunt progress.

Large households had dozens of hunters including the *veneur*, *aide*, *varlet*, and *page*, as well as large specialized kennels and bird mews. Bernabó Visconti, lord of Milan in 14C, had 5,000 hounds. Small landholders might have a single trained tracker. All landholders kept dogs and birds. Dogs were carefully bred, and many nobles knew their dogs' ancestry as well as they knew their own. Many hunting manuals suggested training dogs by feeding them bread at home and meat only at the site of a successful kill.

Falcons, hawks and other raptors were captured or purchased and carefully tamed and trained to hunt on command. Although prestigious, birds often did not return to their owner. A farmer who caught a bird wearing leather jesses could count on a hefty reward.

Farmers were not usually allowed to hunt, but did so for meat and to get rid of pests. In 1325, Charles V of France allowed everyone to hunt hares and rabbits away from warrens. In 1396, Charles VI of France forbade non-nobles to hunt any game without specific permission. In 1390, Richard II of England forbade anyone with an estate smaller than 40 s. per year to hunt with hounds, ferrets, or even snares. In 14C, Bernabó Visconti blinded a man caught hunting boar and burned down the house of a man who failed to pay the fine for illegal hunting. Artificers, butchers, laborers and other "low persons" were forbidden to hunt in parks on holy days. This suggests that they had hitherto been allowed to do so.

V. Governance

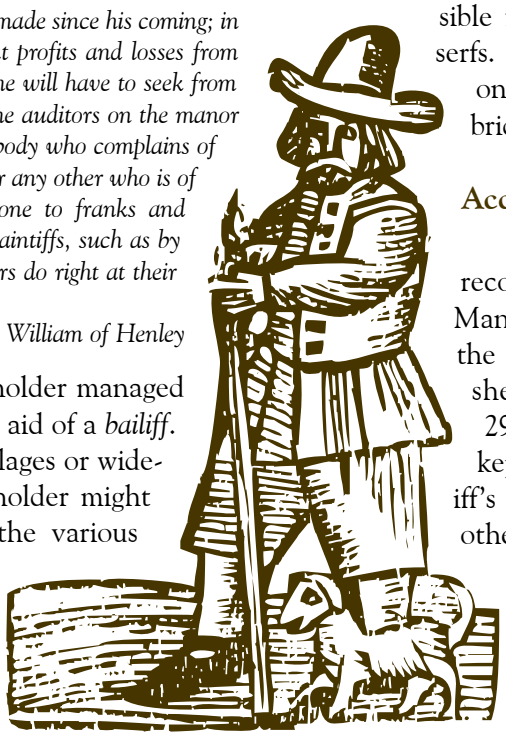
The manor was governed by three forces: its landholder, its priest, and its farmers. Their rights and responsibilities were mostly set by custom and tradition, not by written law. By 14C, some villages had books listing customary rights and obligations. Most disputes between farmers were settled among themselves, with occasional appeals to the landholder. The priest enforced the Church's rights and punished sins with penance.

By the Landholder

The lord ought to command and ordain that the accounts be heard every year, but not in one place but on all the manors, for so can one quickly know everything, and understand the profit and loss . . . The lord ought to inquire by his own men and others on his manors as many as there are, about his seneschal and his doings, and the approvments he has made since his coming; in the same way he ought to inquire about profits and losses from the bailiff and provost, and how much he will have to seek from both . . . The lord ought to command the auditors on the manor to hear the plaints and wrongs of everybody who complains of the seneschal, or provost, or hayward, or any other who is of the manor, and that full justice be done to franks and vileins, customary-tenants, and other plaintiffs, such as by inquest can be had; and that the auditors do right at their peril.

– William of Henley

On a knight's fee, the landholder managed affairs directly, perhaps with the aid of a *bailiff*. If a manor contained several villages or widely scattered holdings, the landholder might appoint *seneschals* to manage the various holdings. A seneschal visited each village two or three times a year to inquire about rents, services, customs, lands, and buildings. He was responsible for measuring the fields, inquiring about plows and mills, and trying to maintain harvest yields. The seneschal rarely had the power to remove a bailiff or other servants directly appointed by the landholder. Nor could he consent to a serf purchasing his or her freedom, marrying outside the manor, or taking holy orders.



Bailiffs were appointed by the landholder to handle daily management of a village. The bailiff was responsible for overseeing the fields, caring for animals, and ensuring that the landholder's rights were enforced. Landholders also appointed *reeves* to oversee their tenants.

If you must choose a bailiff or servant, do not chose them for kindred or liking, or other reasons, if they are not of good reputation, and let them be true and prudent and know things about cattle and tillage. Have no provosts or messers except from your own men, if you have them, and that by election of your tenants, for if they do no wrong you shall have recovery from them.

–William of Henley

Reeves collected debts, examined charters for land sales between villagers, and brought villagers to the manorial court. Reeves were also responsible for arresting and detaining fleeing serfs. Reeves sometimes were overseers on village projects like road repair or bridge building.

Account Rolls

Landholders' officers kept various records and accounts of their duties. Many English accounts were based on the Rolls of the Pipes made by every sheriff on Michaelmas (September 29). The royal Exchequer made and kept the Rolls based upon each sheriff's annual report. Bailiffs, reeves, and other officers made annual accounts in a similar format. Most date from 12-13C. Arithmetic was reported in Roman numerals, but may have been calculated using more simple methods. Math errors were common.

The landholder's primary concern was to enforce his or her labor rights. Serfs generally owed three days labor per week.

Usually, this was reckoned as one person's labor, so a serf could substitute a spouse or older child. During certain times of the year, serfs owed extra *boon work*, but while providing it they were paid by the landowner with a meal. In addition to labor, serfs

often owed a rent in fish, eggs, eels, honey, or other small game or crops.

Some landholders allowed serfs to pay "rent" in lieu of some labor services. This rent, the *quitrent* or *cens* was based on the land's value. In 13C, some urban merchants lent money to peasants for a permanent mortgage, the *sur-cens*, used by the merchants to invest without committing usury and by the peasant family to improve its land.

Peasants owed rent in the form of labor or money. A few owned both free and "servile" land, and owed labor for the latter. The amount was set by the amount of land the family held. A family holding 16 acres might owe 150 days' labor per year. When money was owed, the amount was fixed.

When inflation struck, it might be profitable for the farmer to pay in silver rather than sweat. On one manor in 1330, for example, a farmer holding 16 acres owed 5 s per year or 150 days' labor (which was worth 10 s).

Custom varied about when a farmer had to make up work due on holy days or delayed by severe weather. Generally, a sick farmer only had to make up plowing duties. If unable to plow, he or she was required to pay someone to do the work. A widow or widower was often given from three weeks to a month to mourn the death.

Nobles also protected their rights over forest animals. This often caused problems for the farmers, who were forbidden to harm forest animals, but

Sample Account Roll

Compotus of William Bullock, Reeve of Barkham from the feast of St. Gregory Pope, the fourth year of King Edward son of King Henry to the Purification of Blessed Virgin Mary next ensuing.

Rent of Assize

The same answers for 4 l 2 s 9 d yield of the whole rents of assize per annum.

Sum 4 l. 2. 9.

Works Sold

The same answers for 39 s 8 d yield of the rents and customs sold. And for 2 s 1 d yield of 10 cocks and 10 hens of Chirset sold. And for 3 d yield of 38½ eggs sold.

Sum 42 s

Issues of the Manor

The same answers for 2 s 5 d yield of the pannage of the hogs of the lord's tenants. And for 5 s yield of beechmast sold. And for 25 s 1 d for pasture sold. And for 4 s for the meadow sold and 9 d for furze sold. And 2 d for rushes sold; and 20 d for forage sold.

Sum 40 s 11 d

Sale of Grain

The same answers for 11 s 4 d yield of 2 quarters of rye, price per quarter 5 s 8 d. And of 15 s 8¼ d for 4 quarters, 1½ bushels of rye sold, price per quarter 4 s 8 d. And of 7 s for 3½ quarters of oats sold, price per quarter 2 s. And of 25 s 2 d for 13 quarters, 1 bushel of oats price per quarter 23 d

Sum 58 s 10¼ d

Talliage

The same answers for 20 s yield of the tailage of the whole manor.

Sum 20 s

Fines and Perquisites

The same answers for 9 s of William le Grand for entry on an encroachment which contains 6 acres. And for 7 s for a heriot of William Symond and for 8 s paid by his son William for entry on his father's lands. And for 2 s 4 d yield of pleas and perquisites.

Sum 26 s. 4 d

Sum of the whole receipts 13 l 10 s 10¼ d.

Acquittance

And he answers in acquittance of a Reeve for one year 10 s 2½ d And in Hedage [tolls at a wharf] paid 8 d.

Sum 10 s 10½ d

Expenses for Necessaries

The same answers for 1 quarter of oats bought for sowing 12 d, price per quarter 12 d. For plowing and harrowing 3 acres 17½ d. For the said oats and for 4 acres of grain and 3½ acres of oats, reaping and binding, 22½ d price per acre 3 d. For carriage of grain and oats 2 d. For 4 quarters, 5½ bushels of grain and 4 quarters 1 bushel of oats, threshing and winnowing, 12 d. For 1¼ quarters of grain bought 5 s, price per quarter 40 d. For 12½ quarters of oats bought 16 s 1¾ d, price per quarter 15½ d.

Sum 27 s 10 d

Sum of the total expenses 38 s 8½ d. And so he owes clear 11 l 12 s 1¾ d which he pays upon his account and is quit.

often poached for meat or to get rid of bothersome pests. On the island of Ré, off the French coast, in 1199, deer destroyed most of the grain and grapes. The abbot begged Raoul of Mauléon to renounce his rights over the animals. Raoul agreed to let the peasants kill deer, but not rabbits or hares, in return for 10 s per vineyard plot and each *setter* of land. When forest animals were not grazing on crops, farmers also had to be wary of the landholder's mounts and dogs which might trample fields during a hunt.

Landholders had the right of justice over their farmers. Some regions divided this right into *high justice* (crimes punishable by death), which included adultery, false weights and measures, homicide, treason, and theft; *middle justice* (crimes punishable by amputation and branding or fines over 60 *s*), and *low justice* (all other crimes with fines under 60 *s*). In theory, peasants and free tenants could appeal to royal justice. In practice, this right was hard to exercise. Serfs had almost no appeal rights.

The right of justice was a lucrative source of income. Farmers paid a fee to bring the case, a fee for settling out of court, a fee for a decision by the landholder, and, of course, the fine imposed. In 15C, some kingdoms split fines between the landholder and the Church. Landholders were constantly accused of taking bribes and of corruption.

Some fineable offenses were insulting anyone above one's station; being a scold or gossip; trespass; neglect or damage to fields, hedges, or buildings; moving boundary stones; playing or gambling on holy days; and assaults or brawls. Punishments ranged from fines to public humiliation to maiming to banishment. A landholder needed the right of high justice to punish a crime with death. Otherwise the accused was held until the next royal assize, transported to it, and tried.

Serious crimes were rare, despite the prevalence of knives, swords, and other weapons. Weapons were brandished, but rarely used. Montaillou, a village of 250 in southern France, had only one murder in over 20 years in mid-14C. If convicted of a major crime, most farmers were hanged. Peasants, and rarely serfs, could be banished for arrears in rent or labor, for decrepitude, or for other crimes.

In criminal cases, the accuser and accused could settle matters by combat. Combat was also used to settle accusations against one's honor, to settle disputes over land, and to settle claims of murder or treason. Trial by combat was fairly rare in England and Italy, but common in the Holy Roman Empire and northern France. Defendants younger than 21, older than 60, women, or priests could hire a champion.

Clergy were forbidden to engage in combat; women sometimes did. Weapons were set by the accused's status. If a knight accused a peasant, then the battle was fought with a peasant's customary weapons. If a peasant accused a knight, then they fought with knightly weapons. Pope Innocent III publicly condemned trial by combat in 1215.

Most farmers did not have recourse to ecclesiastical courts, which handled offenses by clergy and offenses against the Church. Clergy were forbidden to shed blood, so many ecclesiastical courts handed the condemned to civil authorities for execution. High clergy – bishops and abbots – often inflicted death sentences exactly as secular nobles.



Fees (England)

Item	Year	Amount	Location
Avoid service as reeve	1314	20 *s*	Brigstock
Fine, Baking bread in own oven [see **Monopolies**]	1231	½ *d*	Edlinebrugge
Fine, Illegal fishing	1337	2 *d*	Iver
Fine, Killing goat	c.1000	2 *d*	
Fine, Killing horse	c.1000	30 *s*	
Fine, Killing human	c.1000	1 *l*	
Fine, Killing ox	c.1000	30 *d*	
Fine, Killing sheep	c.1000	1 *s*	
Fine, Moving field marker	13C	12 *d*	
Fine, Soliciting a prostitute	1369-70	2 *l*	Rodez, France
Fine, Rape	1369-70	5 *l*	Rodez, France
Fine, Attempted Rape	1307	20 *l*	Montaillou, France
Fine, Selling supplies to English	1369-70	5 *l*	Rodez, France
Fine, Settling without leave	1289	6 *d*	Farnham
Fine, Settling without leave	1301	3 *d*	Farnham
Gable (fee to use land)	pre-11C	1 *d*/acre	
Herbaticum (pasture fee)	11C	1 animal per 40 pastured	Sicily
Leave to settle suit	1382-1429	2-3 *d*	Writtle
Leave to withdraw suit	1382-1429	2-3 *d*	Writtle
Leywrite [Fee for fornication outside of marriage]	1305-22	12 *d*	
Leywrite	1322-40	3 *d* - 6 *d*	
Leywrite	1359	5 *s* 4 *d*	
License to marry landed widow by her right (i.e. use of land for her life)	1379	20 *s*	Coltenham
License to marry landed widow	1310	6 *s* 8 *d*	Coltenham
License to marry landed widow	1318	4 *s*	Coltenham
Manumission	1223	12 *d*	Farnham
Manumission	1267	5 *s*	Farnham
Manumission	1278	40 *s*	Farnham
Merchet [Marriage fee]	1261	10 *s*	Gawlingay
Merchet	1272	6 *s* 8 *d*	Stillington
Merchet	1272	20 *s*	Stillington
Merchet	1272	1 *s*	Stillington
Merchet	1289	½ to 1 *s*	Farnham
Merchet	1291	6 *d*	Cuxham
Merchet, general license (ave.)	1398-1458	73 *d*	Ramsey
Merchet, marry freeman (ave.)	1398-1458	80 *d*	Ramsey
Merchet, typical (ave.)	1398-1458	56 *d*	Ramsey
Pannage	11C	1 pig per 30 pigs grazing	Sicily
Payment, Serf leaving manor	1292	6 *d*	Farnham
Payment, Stranger to settle	1246	1 *s*	Farnham
Taking Holy Orders	1235	6 *s* 8 *d*	Wolrichston

Sample Court Rolls

The bailiff has accused Adam the miller that he dug white earth [chalk] in the way between Ledecumbe and Chelry to the hurt of his neighbors of Ledecumbe, and he says that he has not, and puts himself upon inquisition and let an inquisition be taken; in respite until next court

– Letcombe Reggis, Berks, November 23, 1268

John Daunsere in mercy for damages done in the lord's wood by breaking and cutting down the lord's thorns on the heath, by pledge. Sum 42 d.

– Brightwaltham, August 20, 1272

John Shad in mercy for a trespass made in Howelotesfeld with his draught cattle, pledge John atte Welle, fine 3 d.

Thomas Fox for a trespass made in the wood, also Hugh Gibbe in mercy for the same 3 d.

Rose Neuman for a trespass made with her sheep in the grass, pledge Thomas Sox 3 d.

John Wolward in mercy for his oxen in the wood, pledge W. Fox 3 d.

– Addington, Surrey, 1313

By the Clergy

The clergy governed the manor through punishment for evading tithes and customary fees and by penance for sins. The *tithe* (more fully discussed on pp. 64-66) was the Church's primary source of revenue and was vigorously enforced. The Church also had several customary fees: the *heusire* (rent for a serf's house and garden on an ecclesiastical manor); the *Peter's Pence* (assessed on a serf's cattle (1 *d* per 30 *d* value of cattle for married serfs, half that for unmarried serfs); and the *ploualmes* (assessed on every plow yoked between Easter and Pentecost).

The Church had its own courts which handled cases involving the inheritance of goods, but not land, divorce, and other cases involving marriage. Any cleric had the right to appeal to ecclesiastical justice, but laymen could rarely ask for it.

Penance

The parish priest also listened to his parishioners' confessions and adjudged penance according to tradition and sometimes written penitentials. Isidore of Seville, a noted theologian, wrote that "there are eight chief vices – from which arise a copious multitude of faults – gluttony, fornication, avarice, languor, wrath, dejection, vainglory, and lastly the very leader and queen of these, pride." Sins were a matter for the Church, which imposed penances ranging from self-denial to exile and forced pilgrimages. In assigning penance, the Church saw itself as a physician of the soul, seeking to cure the sickness of sin. Penance varied by gender, age, class, marital status, and the nature of the offense. It was imposed separately from ecclesiastical and civil punishments.

Confessions could be made in public or in private depending on the confessee's standing. By 9C at least confessions made in private were made under a seal of secrecy. While not publicly performed, penance was easily observable by one's neighbors and likely a subject of general speculation and gossip. Before 13C, it seems likely that confessions were rarely made, probably just before leaving for long journeys, pilgrimages, war, or when confronted with life-threatening illness. The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) mandated that every Christian be confessed once per year and receive communion at Easter. Otherwise the Christian might be denied entrance to the church and denied a Christian burial. The Christian had to confess to the priest having jurisdiction over his or her diocese, or could confess to another with the first's permission. A few matters, like bigamy, fornication with a virgin, and murder of clergy could only be heard by bishops.

At the end of this chapter there is a sampling of penances from various medieval penitentials (mostly 6-9C); these penitentials are now historical documents and do not reflect the current practices of the Catholic Church. When a penance is listed, it generally includes: 3 days of each week without wine, mead, and meat, plus fasting until evening and eating dry food; for three 40 day periods (Advent, Lent, and Pentecost) only eating dry food and fasting 3 days until noon and 3 days until the evening vespers service (fasting on Sundays was forbidden); and on Sundays and certain holy days, the penitent could eat as much as his or her family or companions.

Penance could sometimes be satisfied by other measures. A year's penance could be exchanged for 3,000 lashes reciting a psalm at each 100. A month's penance could be exchanged for singing 1,200

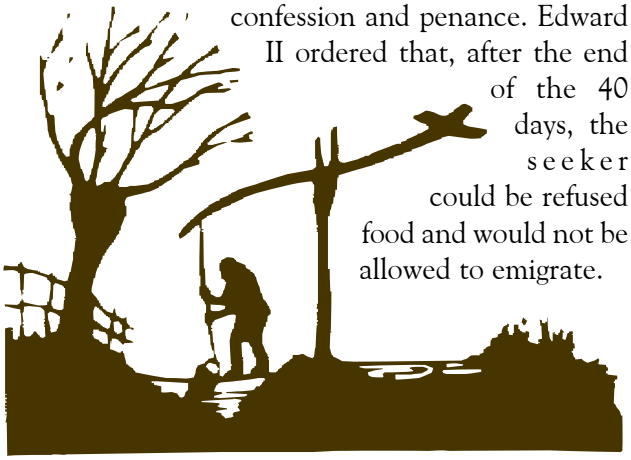
psalms while kneeling. They could also be satisfied by fines: in 10C England, one day's fast equaled 1 d, a whole year equaled 30 s. In the 14C, the Church began to evolve the *indulgence* system where sinners could do penance for sins they had not yet committed. Clergy entrusted with granting indulgences were called *quaestors* or *pardoners*.

Sanctuary

The right to sanctuary allowed any Christian to seek shelter from civil law in a church for 40 days. The right was commonly claimed by those in political trouble and by thieves. The sanctuary seeker was fed by the church and was subject to civil justice if he or she left the church grounds. The church could refuse to give sanctuary, especially to clergy seeking it or to those who had committed crimes against the Church.

Most pursuers, even the crown, would respect the church grounds, but there are a few exceptions. In 955, a mob tried to break open a Welsh church where a man had taken refuge. In 1284, a London goldsmith who had wounded a man was himself murdered on church grounds by the man's friends. The murderers were successful in making the crime look like a suicide at first. When a witness came forward, the conspirators were arrested. Several were excommunicated and then executed by drawing and quartering. One was burnt. The church was interdicted by the archbishop; its door and window were stopped up with thorns.

The sanctuary seeker could use the 40 days to confess and do penance; to ask the clergy to intercede with the civil authorities; or to escape from whomever might be watching the church. At times, the seeker was allowed to emigrate after confession and penance. Edward II ordered that, after the end of the 40 days, the seeker could be refused food and would not be allowed to emigrate.



By the Villagers

The villagers themselves set many of their own rules and judged many of their disputes. The weight of a farmer's vote depended on how much land his or her family held. In some matters, the landholder's consent was required. In others, serfs were allowed a voice. In general, however, serfs and landless laborers were rarely consulted.

The landholder often pressured villagers to hold regular councils and to settle their differences there. He or she could fine peasants for not attending regular council meetings.

Villagers appointed or nominated several officials including *wardens* (to oversee other officers), *provosts* (to oversee animals and prevent stealing during harvest), *messors* (to defend against trespassers), and *woodwardens* (to monitor use of the forest). Most of the officers were married men. Some women served in these posts, especially as ale-tasters. How often women served and whether they voted for officers is uncertain. Most historians believe such service to be rare.

Almost none of these important officers were paid for their services. Where an officer had duties to the landholder, he or she might be paid with a parcel of land, an allotment of grain, or a share of fines. Other officials included ale-tasters (to ensure that ale was properly made), jurors (to judge disputes between farmers), grange-keepers and barn-keepers (to measure and monitor winter stores), and tax collectors.

Manors did not have police forces. English villagers organized themselves into *tithings* of ten adult (over age 12) males led by a tithingman (*decennarius*). All of a tithing's members were liable for the actions of each other. They were expected to report crimes committed within their group and could be collectively fined. Each year, tithings gathered to induct new members and fine those illegally outside the system. Women, it appears, were never members of tithings because they were legal dependents of a male member.

Unmarried women and widows were expected to attend manorial courts. They did infrequently give pledges for legal debts of family and neighbors. On the whole, however, they had little official role in the village's governance.

Sample Penances

Abortion, 39 or fewer days from conception	1 year
Abortion, 40+ days from conception	3 years
Adultery	1 year
Baptism, allowing child to die unbaptized	1 year
Bathing with someone of other sex	1 year
Bestiality, offender under 15	40 days, animal killed
Bestiality, offender under 20	15 years, animal killed
Bestiality, married offender over 20	20 years, animal killed
Bestiality, married offender over 50	No communion until deathbed, animal killed
Bigamy with 2nd spouse	1 year
Bigamy with 3+ spouses	7 years
Burglary	3 years, one of which on bread and water
Celebrating Passover with Jews	Driven from Church
Communion, knowingly giving to heretics or Jews	10 years
Conjuring storms	7 years
Cross dressing	3 years
Cursing	1 week plus apologize to target
Divination, performing	5 years
Drunkenness of priest	2 months
Drunkenness, until vomiting	15 days
Eating or drinking beside pagan sacred places; knowing	two 40-day periods
Eating or drinking beside pagan sacred places; unknowing	40 days on bread and water
Eating unclean flesh or carrion unless necessary to prevent starving	40 days
Embezzlement, church funds	3 years plus restitution
Embezzlement, money for poor	3 years plus restitution
Fornication by a bishop	13 years plus lose rank
Fornication, desire but unable to do so	40 days
Fornication with parent	3 years
Fornication with virgin	1 year plus fine paid to parent
Fraud by bishop	13 years plus lose rank
Fraud with false weights and measure	20 days on bread and water
Giving "serious" sacrifices to demons	10 years
Giving "trivial" sacrifices to demons	1 year
Gluttony, until vomiting	3 days
"Guiding" (teaching/leading) the barbarians if any Christian is thereby killed	Penance for life
"Guiding" the barbarians if no Christian is thereby killed	14 years
Heresy by baptized Christian	12 years
Homosexual acts between women	3 years
Homosexual acts between men, if frequent	10-15 years
Homosexual acts between men, if infrequent	3 years

Sample Penances

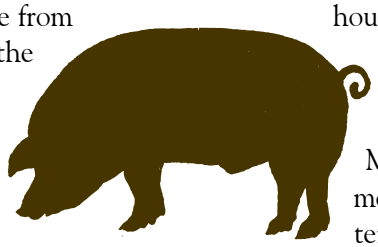
Magical amulets, making	3 years
Mass, unknowingly allowing to be said by heretic	1 year
Mass, unknowingly allowing heretic to participate	40 days
Murder, accidental	1 year
Murder, with anger	3 years
Murder, to avenge parent or sibling	4 years
Murder, by bishop	13 years, plus lose rank
Murder, of clergy	7 years
Murder, of Jew or pagan	40 days
Murder, at liege's command	40 days
Murder, premeditated	Exile for life
Murder, in war	40 days
Perjury, committed in a church	11 years
Perjury, inducing another to commit	7 years
Perjury, knowing	4 years
Perjury, suspicion but not actual knowledge that may be untrue	2 years
Perjury, unknowing	1 year
Praying with Jews	1 week
Receiving stolen goods	6 months
Robbery	6 months
Slander	3 years on bread and water
Sodomy, with spouse	40 days
Touching or kissing woman, by priest	40 days
Theft, animal	fine of 2-5 similar animals
Theft, food, 1st offense	1 year
Theft, money	replace x4 if from church; x2 if from secular person, plus 7 years' penance if frequent
Theft, property	replace goods plus fine of good's price
Theft, during war (plunder)	40 days plus 1/3 to be given to Church or poor
Usury	3 years
Violating a tomb	5 years
Vow made on pagan sacred object	3 years
Worshiping demons or idol	3 years
Wounding in brawl	pay leech's fee, plus fine, plus make up any lost work



VI. Husbandry

A manor's animals fit into two categories: work animals and food animals. All animals were treated harshly. They weren't believed to have human-like feelings, or reason (though they were believed to have *estimativa* which let them perceive intent and emotions), or souls. Thus, humans did not owe animals any affection or loyalty.

Food animals were usually owned by individual families. Work animals were sometimes jointly owned by families. In Italy, a farmer could lease a food animal in return for half its wool, cheese or other products. Work animals could be leased for a fixed payment and restitution of the animal's value if lost or for some fraction (usually 1/4) of the profits made from using the animal and restitution of the value if lost.



Food Animals

Cattle, goats, pigs, and sheep were the manor's basic food animals. Many animals were killed the same year they were born, so the manor only worried about keeping one male per village or per two or three villages and several breeding females healthy for the next year. Otherwise, food animals subsisted on fodder and rubbish with minimal supervision. Children kept animals out of the fields.

At the end of autumn, landholders and peasants took careful stock of their animals and fodder and decided which animals to slaughter. Pigs were stickled for black pudding and then butchered for pork. Sheep were butchered for mutton and their skins sold for parchment. The winter slaughter required a fair amount of salt to preserve the meat and hide. Eight pounds of salt could brine-cure 100 pounds of meat. A pound of salt was needed per pound of cattle, horse, and deer hide preserved. A half-pound of salt was needed per pound of sheep hide. Too little salt caused spoilage. Too much salt caused hard, dry, barely edible meat.

Animals surviving the slaughter were moved into shelter for the winter. The landholder's animals lived in barns. Farmers' animals often shared part of the house.

Wolves preyed on food animals in all seasons, but especially in winter. Wolves were feared not only because they preyed on livestock, but because they sometimes ate humans too. Soldiers saw wolves feasting on dead horses and men after a battle. They believed that once wolves acquired a taste for human flesh they would eat nothing else.

In France, wolves were hunted for sport. Elsewhere they were hunted as pests. Wolf meat was considered inedible – hunters placed mutton in the cavity of a slain wolf for the dogs. By the end of the Middle Ages, wolves were all but extinct in Europe.

Cattle were kept either in enclosed fields or in wooden cow sheds. In the winter, at least, they were housed at night to protect them from wolves and to add their heat to the family home. Few bulls were kept – one could service the cows from three villages. Most males were gelded to make them more docile. Young calves were slaughtered in the spring for their skin, which became vellum. Cows were also valued for their milk: a cow produced 120 to 150 gallons of milk per year; whereas a sheep produced only 7 to 12 gallons of milk each year.

Goats were kept for meat, milk, wool, and fertilizer, but performed the task less well than sheep. Goats, however, were hardy and able to graze on nearly any greenery. Sheep outnumbered goats by about 10 to 1. Goat skin, especially kid skin, was used for gloves.

Pigs were either kept in loose herds watched by a swineherd or kept in a sty. By 14-15C, the sty was increasingly more common, but less efficient than herding. A sow will provide 2 litters per year of 6 or more piglets. By its second year, a pig was a reasonable size for meat. By 13C, wandering adult pigs were fitted with iron nose rings to discourage destructive rooting.

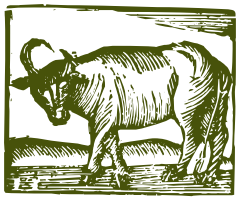
Sheep were raised to provide meat, milk, wool, and fertilizer. Sheep, not cows, were the primary source of a farmer's milk. In the French Pyrénées, the number of sheep a farmer owned was as important in measuring status as the amount of land owned. A farmer who owned a dozen sheep was considered well off.

Before 8C, sheep were mostly kept for meat. After 8C, and especially after 11C, they were raised

for wool. Women washed and sheared the sheep, producing about a pound of wool per sheep per year. Sheep were raised in four basic colors: white, black, grey, and brown. Unlike pigs, sheep need careful tending – they cannot defend themselves against predators nor adapt well to weather changes. Sheep must be kept out of the fields because they crop so closely to the soil that cows and even horses can find little to eat after the sheep are done. Sheep were marked with bells, an ochre dye (*riddle*), and clipped ears.

Landholders in England and France had the sole right to build dovecots. Doves produced dung to fertilize the fields and meat for feasts. Landholders also kept rabbits in warrens or in walled, paved courtyards. Newborn or unborn rabbits were not considered "meat" and could be eaten on meatless fast days. Landholders often forbade villagers to own dogs or harm rabbits.

Landholders built beehives for honey and wax. Hives were made of straw bound into a spiral in a dome or flat shape. To keep them dry, some were built into walls or gables, others were protected with a straw "hat". Finally, landholders built fish ponds to supply fish for Church-imposed meatless days. Tenants might get *piscary* – the right to fish in the landholder's pond.



Work Animals

Horses and oxen were the basic work animals. They pulled carts, hauled logs and stones, and plowed the fields. Once the padded horse collar and iron horseshoes had been introduced, the horse replaced the ox for most chores. The decision of which to use depended on speed (horses are faster), strength (oxen are stronger), and food required (oxen are cheaper to feed).

Work animals were well cared for because they were expensive to replace. When they became too old to work, they were killed and sold for their hides. An ox's working life was about 2-3 years. In 13C, the hides and meat of 16 old oxen could buy 14 new ones. The hides of 16 old horses could only buy seven new ones. Oxen were roasted for their meat. In continental Europe, horse meat was eaten; in England it was not. Ox hide was used for shoe leather. Horse hide was used for shoe leather, clothing, and furnishings.

The basic types of horses were the *affer* (work horse), *destrier* (war horse), and *palfry* (riding horse). Work horses lasted about 15-20 years. There were a few texts on equine veterinary medicine. Jordanus Ruffus, a horse veterinarian to Frederick II Barbarossa, wrote *De Medicine Equorum* sometime between 1250 and 1256. Teodorico Borgognoni and Laurentius Rusius also wrote noted books on equine surgery in 1276 and early 14C respectively.

Horses were, at first, allowed to roam wild in forests and small pastures (called parks). Every year, landholders rounded up the foals. Some were trained as riding horses, others as work horses. From 12C onward, large landholders and abbeys began systematic breeding programs. This successfully developed the large warhorse. Landholders quickly learned that it was far easier to lose a trait than to gain it. Mares began to be kept more carefully to keep undesirable stallions from getting to them.

The Franks discovered Arabian horses during battles with Moors in 8C. In 964, Charles II of France forbade his subjects to give Vikings byrunics (mail coats), arms, or horses, as ransom, or for any other reason. Violators were executed as traitors. English and French landholders bought breeding stock from Spain, Lombardy, Denmark, Frisia, and Holland.

Small landholders rarely had the land or food to breed horses. If left to graze, a horse needs a large pasture because it will not eat grass near its own droppings. A landholder would also need to hire a stallion to breed with his or her mares, or could purchase horses at need. In an attempt to breed more war horses, Philip III of France ordered every noble with 200 livre of land or more and every "bourgois" with more than 1,500 livre of property to possess a brood mare. Every abbot, baron, count, and duke was required to have 4-6 breedable mares.

Landholders kept dogs and falcons for hunting. There were several breeds of dogs: the *lymer* (tracker), *brachet* (hare hunter), *greyhound* (small game chaser), and *alnut* (bear and boar hunter). A modest landholder might own 3 to 4 dogs and join with neighbors for large hunts. The crown might own a pack of 50 or more dogs for its hunting. A Burgundian law punished dog theft by requiring the thief to publicly kiss the dog's posterior. Hunting birds included the *gerfalcon*, *sparrow hawk*, *kestrel*, and *goshawk*. A hunting falcon's theft was punished by letting the bird eat 6 oz. of flesh from the thief's breast or head.

VII. Monopolies

Among the landholder's privileges was that of *bans* or *banalités* (traditional monopolies). The most common were the mill; bread oven; brewhouse; cider, olive, and wine presses; smithy; tanneries; and iron forges.

Brewing

In England, ale brewing was regulated by the 13C Assize of Bread and Ale (*Assisa panis et cervisie*). The Assize allowed landholders to fine those who used false weights and measures and charged higher than the proscribed price. The price was based upon the price of grain, limiting speculation and the opportunity for profit. Anyone who sold ale for profit was required to pay a fee at the regular manorial court. Landholders were also customarily entitled to the *tolcester*, one gallon from every batch of ale brewed by their tenants. After the Black Plague in 14C, ale brewing slowly became a full-time profession instead of a widespread hobby.



Everyone, from children to the elderly, from farmers to nobles, drank ale throughout the day. Water was often polluted. Milk was used for cheese and butter. Wine was too expensive for any but the nobles. So ale was drunk in large quantities. Edward I provided his soldiers with about a gallon of ale per day. That allotment appears in household accounts, monastic ledgers, and even charitable allowances for the poor.

In continental Europe, beer was a more common drink. For local consumption, ale was likely brewed by farmers since it required less skill and fewer utensils. Ale was sweeter than beer, but soured in a few days, thus creating a consistent strong demand. Beer, although more bitter, produced more alcoholic results from less grain, lasted longer, and was more likely to survive rough transportation to markets.

Nearly every female farmer knew how to make ale and many sporadically sold their excess for profit. A few women, perhaps 40 in a total population of 1,400, concentrated on ale-making and often controlled 60% or more of a manor's production. Most were married women assisted by their husbands and children. Men sometimes competed in brewing, especially in regions where men spent more time in seasonal jobs like fishing and husbandry than in farming.

Brewing was time-consuming and required several adults or an adult assisted by older children. Barley, oats, wheat, or some combination thereof was ground, soaked for several days, then drained of excess water, piled into a couch, germinated into malt, and cured in a kiln. The dried malt was then mixed with hot water to ferment it. The wort was drained and herbs added. To make beer, the malt was seethed for an hour or two with hops, colled, and the yeast and seasonings added.

A bushel of grain produced between 6 ½ (very strong) and 12 (very weak) gallons of ale. On average, a bushel of malt produced 8 or 9 gallons of "indifferent" ale or 18 to 20 gallons of "very good" beer.

A batch of ale could be ready within a day or less. Unfortunately, it soured within a few days. At a castle in Worcestershire in 1446, ale brewers were forbidden to sell ale more than four days old. Ale also spoiled quickly if jostled during transport or forced to endure temperature changes. Most ale was sold or drunk where it was made.

Beer or hopped ale swiftly became popular when it was introduced to England in 14-15C. Although beer was clearer, cheaper, and easier to preserve and transport, the necessary hops had to be imported from the continent, making it an unlikely product for most small villages.

Most households had the basic supplies for brewing – grain, a large soaking vat, a trough or ladle to draw off water, and shovels or forks to turn grain

in the couch. Only a malt kiln could not commonly be found in a farmer's house. Although the process for making beer was similar, the necessity for imported hops and for more fuel made it a more expensive product for villagers to produce.

Mills



The landholder could build a water or wind powered grain mill. While only serfs were required to grind grain there, the only alternatives for peasants were to use inefficient hand mills or to travel to another landholder or town's mills. Serfs could be fined for taking their grain elsewhere (20 *s* in 12C England) or for possessing hand mills. If a mill was so busy that it could not take more grain, or if the mill pond was lowered by drought, the serfs needed to wait 1½ to 3 days before seeking other mills.

Landholders usually rented mills to a peasant for an initial fee (26 *s* 8 *d* in 1208, Farnham; 2½ *l* 3½ *s* in 1348, Dewsbury) and an annual rent (10 *s* 3 *d*, Farnham). The miller then charged a fee (*multure*) for grinding grain. Multure was commonly 1/13 of the grain or flour for serfs and 1/24 of the grain or flour for peasants. Peasants could also pay a fee to jump a line of serfs and have their grain ground immediately.

The miller was one of the least popular members of a village. Most were suspected of stealing grain, mixing lesser grain with a customer's, and levying exorbitant fees.

Ovens

A shortage of wood for cooking in England led to communal baking ovens and ale brewing vats. The landholder became the only person who could build a communal oven. Again, serfs were required to use them regardless of the ability or honesty of the baker. Peasants were free, in theory, to find another oven, but rarely did so.

Landholders appointed a peasant to be their baker. Some paid an entry fee (6 *s* 8 *d* for 3 years, Tintinhull, 1438; 10 *s* for 1 year, Tintinhull, 1459) and an annual rent. Others paid a portion of the oven's profits. Bakers were allowed a profit of 4 *d* and the bran for each quarter of wheat and 2 loaves for the baking fee. He or she was expected to make 418 pounds of bread from every 8 bushels of grain. Anything above that amount the baker could keep.



VIII. Population

Medieval society saw itself as divided into three classes – nobles (those who fought), clergy (those who prayed), and peasants (those who worked). Manors were home to about 90% of all three classes until about 13C. Thereafter, towns and cities began to grow in both size and importance.

Life on a manor was cooperative, public, and tenuous. Villagers needed to work together to survive. Farmers shared plows, work animals, and tools. They worked together to plant and harvest their fields. They were liable as a group for duties owed by their officials to the landholder. Cooperation was essential, but that didn't mean the village was harmonious. There are hundreds of records in manor rolls of suits over trespassing, petty theft, and dishonored loans, and about the quality of labor and pay.

Village life was intensely public. Everyone knew everyone else from birth; most families were intermarried. Both confession and penance were public, as were the village and manorial courts. Gossip, church, and the courts were about the only diversion from the familiar rut of village life. Conversely, there was also a concern for privacy and confidentiality. There were lawsuits over gossip, eavesdropping, and disclosing confidential matters.

Villagers rarely traveled beyond the sound of their church's bells. A few went as far as the nearest market town; fewer still ran away to try their luck in the cities. Sometimes a family came to the nearest market town to settle. There was an intense fear of strangers, and disdain for those on neighboring manors.

Life was tenuous. Villagers were at best a harvest or two away from starvation. They were dependent on the landholder to protect the fields from bandits and war. They relied on the Church to protect their fields from bad weather, crop disease, and pests. Education and medical care were folklore handed down from parent to child and from priest to parishioner.

Some of the basic social divisions were between landholder, peasant, and serf. Farmers were divided among themselves by land divisions. A wealthy serf family might hold 30 acres, a poor serf family 15 acres, and a cotter family five acres.

Population density varied. The adult male population of Bigstock, a holding of 1,400 acres, ranged from a low of 355 to a high of 495 between 1287 and 1348. Women and minor children likely quadrupled that figure to reach a total population of between 1,420 to 1,980.



Serfs

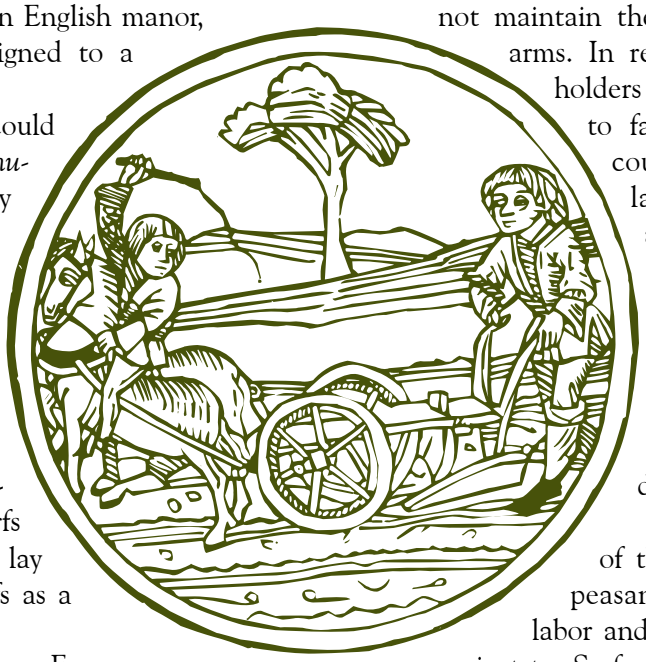
And we prohibit anyone to sell a man out of the country. But if he, who wishes to make his serf free, hand him over to the sheriff by his right hand in full assembly, he must proclaim him quit of the yoke of servitude by manumission and show him free ways . . .
– Laws of William the Conqueror

We wish it to be known to the present generation and to posterity that Emma and Ikha, two pious women, belonging to the ancient stock of our church, have lost by fire the charter of their liberty, have come to us, and have sought from us that we would give them another. Now we, already assured of the truth of their statements, grant freely, and by this charter confirm them, liberty for themselves, and their posterity.
– Gery, Abbot of St-Trond, 1172

Being a serf was just about the bottom rung of medieval society. The only lower classes were criminals and slaves. (Slavery existed in parts of medieval Europe; most were owned by wealthy merchants as household staff.) Jews were forbidden by the Fourth Lateran Council to own Christian slaves or serfs. Serfs were by far the most numerous part of medieval society.

A person became a serf by birth, voluntary submission, or, rarely, by marriage to a serf. Children of serfs were often themselves serfs. (In England, they

took the status of their mother. In northern Italy, children of mixed serf and peasant marriage were part serf and part peasant; if twins, one was a serf and the other peasant.) Eleventh century canon law deemed children and spouses of clergy as serfs. This custom was ignored by 14C. One could pay for the right to become a serf on a manor. The candidate was often a refugee or a criminal trading freedom for the chance to make a living as a farmer. When an outsider became a serf on an English manor, he or she was usually assigned to a tithing.



Once a serf, a person could regain their freedom by *manumission* (purchasing it), by residence in a chartered city, by taking holy orders (see below), or, rarely, by marriage to a free person. Manumission's price varied depending on the relative bargaining power of serf and landholder. Canon law forbade clergy to manumit serfs except for fair market value; lay nobles sometimes freed serfs as a charitable act.

With the rise of northern European chartered cities in 12C, a serf who could escape to a city and survive there for a year and one day became free. In Italian cities, the communes resisted granting freedom to runaway farmers; in many a serf had to survive for 10 years before becoming free. Large landholders, some of whom controlled unchartered cities, often had agreements to return escaped serfs.

In 10C northern Italy, the records of some manors had become so confused that imperial delegates had trouble telling whether a given farmer was a serf or peasant. Emperor Otto III complained that serfs lied. On manors where landholders had been negligent about enforcing their rights, farmers demanded poof of their own servitude. The Emperor responded by ruling in 998 that a serf who declared himself free was required to duel the landholder or the landholder's champion. The Emperor also forbade without exception the liberation of any serf held by the Church.

A serf was partly property. Legally, a serf owned nothing. Practically, a serf owned some tools and farming implements. If part of a manor was sold or transferred, the serfs who worked that land went with it. Some landholders managed their serfs' marriages with as much attention and care as when breeding their horses and dogs. If serfs from two different manors married, the respective landholders agreed how the children would be divided.

Serfs had some enforceable rights. Landholders needed serf labor in the fields. Without it, they could not maintain their castles, warhorses, and arms. In return for that labor, landholders guaranteed the serfs' right to farm their strips. The serf could buy, sell, and devise land within their families and to other villagers without landholder interference. They could only be evicted for rare reasons like murder, treason, or absolute and total neglect of their fields and labor duties.

The distinguishing mark of the serf, as opposed to the peasant, was what compulsory labor and duties he or she was subject to. Serfs owed uncompensated labor based on how much land the family "held." Many owed additional labor as needed. In some villages, they also owed various payments in kind. In Farnham, the serfs together owed their landholder 380 chickens and 3,000 eggs per year. In addition, serfs were subject to various marriage fees (*merchet*) and inheritance taxes (*heriot*).

The average serf household is believed to have been four to six persons including spouses, children, and grandparents. Serf women performed much of the family's labor – the margin for survival was too narrow to allow otherwise. Men held the plow; women guided the team. Both men and women harrowed, seeded, weeded, reaped, and harvested. Women were more likely to tend the family's animals and sew its cloth. Men were more likely to do heavy labor and boon work. There are no records of women holding traditional serf offices like constable, reeve, or bailiff, but some were ale-testers and wardens. It is not clear if women who held land spoke at village meetings.

Peasants

The next major rung up the social ladder was the peasant. "Peasant" first appears in English writing in 1313 and then referred to a very small number of farmers, perhaps 2% or less of those on a manor. One could become a peasant by birth, marriage, or manumission.

A peasant's daily life was little different from a serf's. Instead of paying for the right to live on the manor with labor, the peasant paid rent in coin or crops or animals instead of in sweat. Instead of paying heriot, a peasant's heirs paid a fee of 1 *s* to 13½ *s* to receive the land. Peasants also had the rarely exercised right to appeal the landholder's decisions to royal courts and to sue therein. Some English farmers sued in royal court to have their status determined. Important tests included whether the farmer in question had ever paid a merchet or held traditional serf posts like reeve and bailiff.

Crafters

The manor's crafters were more likely to be peasants than serfs. Most learned their trade from their parents. On small manors, a crafter might work part-time at a craft and part-time in the fields. Most carpenters and smiths were men, who were aided by their wives and daughters. Widows inherited their husband's tools and trades. A few were recognized as *femmes soles*, crafters in their own right.

The most notable manor crafters were blacksmiths and carpenters. Millers and bakers were also crafters. In addition, even a small manor had its brewers, weavers, and others who produced their wares for the village and landholder. Larger manors might have armorers, fletchers, harness-makers, and tailors. Ecclesiastical manors might employ glaziers, enamelers, even goldsmiths.

A manor's blacksmith made and repaired farm implements, nails, and horseshoes. The main parts of a wheeled plow – the share and the coulter – were made of iron and needed frequent repair. Most smiths could make crude repairs on armor and weapons, but actually making either was a specialized trade. Being a blacksmith was a prestigious profession. Turning raw iron into tool or weapon quality steel required significant skill. Blacksmiths were reputed to be allies of dark powers. They could cast or break spells, cure disease, and repair broken bones.

Blast furnaces appeared on large manors and towns in mid-14C. Water wheels pumped large bellows which increased the temperature in the furnace. The new furnace produced a steel that was 4% carbon and 96% iron. It allowed smiths to cast iron and to produce steel with less ore and at less cost. Cauldrons and better tools became affordable.

A manor's carpenter made and repaired most of its buildings, fences, wagons, harrows, and tool handles. The carpenter and smith worked together to make many tools.

Pottery was often a part-time craft for some farmers. Jugs, cooking vessels, bowls, mugs, and tiles were produced wherever there was suitable clay. Glazed tiles or a glazed jug were rare luxuries for the average farmer. Brick chimneys and brick-lined hearths became increasingly common in 15C.

Tanning and tawing animal hides was an elaborate, messy, smelly process which again was likely a part-time craft for some farmers. In the cities and towns, large tanneries purchased the surrounding countryside's deadstock and turned it into leather.



Servants

Both landholders and wealthy peasants had household servants. Full-time servants could comprise 6-10% of a village's population. Single peasant men and women traveled as itinerant laborers. When they married, they settled as farmers. Other laborers learned their trade from their parents and usually inherited the post when their parents grew too old or sick to perform their duties. Common servants on small manors included a gateskeeper (who often doubled as the manor's carpenter), a dairymaid, carters, drovers, cooks, stable hands, and animal traders.

Servants were paid partly in cash, partly in kind, and partly in food. A dairymaid on Farnham was

CRAFTER AND SERVANT WAGES (ENGLAND)

Job	Year	Wages (per day)	Comments
Armorer	1287-1305	18 d/wk.	
Carpenter	1210	1½ - 2 d	
Carpenter	1250	3 d	
Carter	13C	2 d per ton per mile 1 d per ton per mile	for hauling grain
Carter	1299	1-2 d	
Carter	14C	2½ d	
Carter	1366-7	6 s/yr.	
Carter with cart	1280	4 d	
Dairymaid	1301	2 d/mo.	Plus 1 cheese/yr. and grain ration
Dairymaid	1366-7	5 s/yr.	
Dairymaid	1455	10 s/yr.	
Gate-keeper	1290	6 s 8 d/yr.	
Guard, 5	1222	2 d/day for 16 days	
Harper	13C	5 s	
Horse Groom	1210	1½ d	
Hunts master	13-14C	½ d	Plus two hides per year
Hunts master, royal	1311	12 d	+ ½ d per day for each hunting dog
Hunter, berner	1311	3 d	
Hunter, fewterer	1311	2 d	
Hunts master, royal	1322	7 ½ d	
Hunts master, royal	1323, 1326	9 d	
Laborer	1369-70	2 s 6 d/day	for hauling stone (women paid ½ rate)
Mason	1246	3 d	
Mason	1287-1305	9 d - 2 s/wk	
Musician	1464	7½ d	
Musician	15C	12 d	royal musicians accompanying king to war in France
Oxherd	1366-7	5 s/yr.	
Plowdriver	1366-7	5 s/yr.	
Plowholder	1366-7	6 s/yr.	
Reaper or binder	1380	4 d	male and female
Reaper w. scythe	13C	1 d if fed, 2 d if not	male
Reaper w. sickle	13C	½ d if fed, 1 d if not	female
Reaper w. scythe	14C	3 d if fed	male
Reaper w. sickle	14C	2½ d if fed	female
Shepherd	1366-7	6 s/yr.	
Stonecutter	1369-70	4 s 8 d/day	
Swineherd	1366-7	5 s/yr.	

paid 2 *d* per month, received one cheese per year, and was allocated 2 quarters of grain every 6 months. She had the right to take some milk and cheese from her animals. The huntsmaster received the hide of game taken with his animals. He also received an ox skin in the winter for dog leashes and a cow hide in the summer for his boots. Those who flayed an animal got its head and shoulders. Other servants received a quarter of grain every eight weeks.

Clergy

Despite the sheer number of clergy in medieval Europe (2-3% of 13C England), a small manor was likely part of a larger parish and so would not have its own resident priest. The average parish had 4 to 5 male clergy to tend its 300 parishioners. These usually resided together at a collegiate church and rarely traveled to the outlying villages. Even if the village had its own church, many priests did not reside on their parish. Many collected the *benefice* (fee) of the parish and hired a lesser cleric to actually tend it. Other clergy held more than one benefice and again hired a lesser cleric to tend their various parishes.

Most priests were "Mass" priests – they lived near urban areas and said masses on behalf of the dead for a small fee (4 *d* to 5 *s*). The parish priest was often born of a small landholder or peasant family within the parish. Priests were allowed to marry until 12C; married priests were found well into 13C.

Clerical celibacy was first mandated by Gregory VII in 1074, but sporadically enforced. Some parishioners preferred a married advisor who understood their problems; others disliked supporting the priest's family and feared that the role would become hereditary.

A resident priest might be assisted by a boy who performed household chores and a female housekeeper. After 13C, he might be assisted by churchwardens, who were elected from the parishioners to manage the building, vestments, and vessels in return for a small stipend.

Why did anyone seek ordination? No matter how illiterate the cleric, no matter how poor the parish, a priest had status. All clergy had benefit of ecclesiastical law for any crime other than misdemeanors or high treason. In general, clergy could expect more lenient treatment from their own courts than from civil authorities. Low-born clergy had a greater opportunity for advancement and a greater chance for salvation than their secular relatives.

The parish priest had several responsibilities. First, he was expected to teach parishioners about their faith, correct their sins, prevent heresy, and perform the sacraments. He baptized babies and told parents how to perform an emergency baptism if he were not present for the birth; arranged children's confirmation; cared for the sick; buried the dead; and said the appropriate masses.

By 14C, he was expected to expound on the 14 articles of the faith, the seven sacraments (see pg. 43), the seven works of mercy (corporal: feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, harbor strangers, visit the sick, minister to prisoners, and bury the dead; spiritual: convert sinners, instruct the ignorant, counsel the doubtful, comfort the sorrowful, bear wrongs patiently, forgive injuries, and pray for the living and the dead), the seven virtues (faith, hope, charity, justice, prudence, temperance, and fortitude), the ten commandments of the Old Testament and the two commandments of the Gospel, and the seven sins (pride, covetousness, lust, envy, gluttony, anger, and sloth).



The priest was also expected to give charity to the poor and hospitality to travelers. The parish expected him to provide supernatural protection against natural disasters. Excommunication rituals were used to kill eels in lakes, banish sparrows from a church, and destroy pests like caterpillars and "palmer worms."

Statues of saints and relics were carried into the fields to summon rain, banish hail, and slay insects. The priest blessed the fields, animals, and harvest alike. Church bells were rung to disperse storms and scatter demons. Landholders and farmers alike looked to the church to ward off famine and plague.

The parish priest was expected to provide for himself and the Church by farming the *glebe* (parish's freehold); collecting *benefice* (tithe), *cure* (mortuary offerings), and fees; and passing on the appropriate share to the bishop (see pg 29). The glebe, intermingled in the village's fields, was equal to or larger than the holding of a wealthy farmer. Some priests had the right to graze their animals on the common lands, to collect fallen wood for repairs, to cut peat, and to cut a Yule log. Priests did not collect money during mass, but some charged for performing baptism and marriage.

The Church strongly discouraged priests from requiring payment for sacraments. Instead, parishioners made offerings at Christmas, Easter, the festival of the church's patron saint, and the festival of the church's dedication. They gave "mass pennies" for bread and wine shared at mass. "Plow pennies" were offered for a spring blessing of the plow and its team. Offerings were made to have a mass said on the anniversary of a loved one's death, to announce bans, at weddings and churchings, and at funerals.

Parishioners often supplied bread, wax, candles, eggs at Easter, cheese at Whitsuntide (the seventh week after Easter), and fowl at Christmas. In those few rural churches that had pews, the priest rented them.



Priests could and did charge to say special masses for the dead. Benedictines were granted the unique ability to absolve sins. If a Benedictine said a mass every day for 30 days on behalf of a single person, that soul was believed to ascend directly to Heaven freed of Purgatory. A single priest could say four such masses each day. Large churches were filled with altars to allow several priests to celebrate mass at once. Canterbury Cathedral had at one point some 400 altars and 600 priests each to celebrate masses for the dead.

The Church had a series of problems with its rural priests. The most important were ignorance, nonresidence, and holding multiple benefices. Many resident rural clergy were ignorant of even basic theology. In 1222, five of seventeen priests serving the chapter of Salisbury cathedral were unable to translate the first sentence of the first prayer in the Canon of the Mass.

Part of the problem, however, was a change in the priest's perceived role. Before 12C, a parish priest was expected to correctly perform the rituals and instruct parishioners. After 12-13C, a parish priest was expected to take an active role in combating ignorance, heresy, and traces of pagan customs. The priest was more tightly supervised by the bishop and his delegates. He also had to compete with mendicant friars. Thus, the problem may not have been as much ignorance as changing duties.

Other complaints about resident clergy included being too "secular" – keeping horses; hunting; wearing fine clothes; eating fine meals; gambling; letting their tonsure grow out; and acting as merchant, moneylender, tavern keeper, seneschal, bailiff, or other secular roles. Other complaints included bigamy, embezzlement, murder, nepotism, simony, sodomy, witchcraft, and usury.

Nonresident clergy were a persistent problem for the Church. Priests and canons (members of a cathedral chapter or a collegiate church) needed the permission of their bishop to be absent. They received it to study at universities, to attend a noble as a clerk or chaplain, to go on Crusade, to visit parishes or estates abroad, to go on holiday or pilgrimage, or even to escape "bad weather." Many popes, including Innocent III, condemned nonresident clergy, but the practice continued well into 15C. Certainly they produced a fair amount of dissatisfaction among the parishioners, who saw the

bulk of their tithes being sent off the parish to a distant priest.

Clergy with multiple benefices were a similar persistent problem for the Church. The average gross tithe income for a parish was 10 *s* per year; a very small number exceeded 5 *l* per year. After division, that left perhaps 2 ½ *s* per year for the priest. To support priests who taught at universities or held major offices, the Church allowed priests to hold more than one parish, receive its tithe, and hire someone to say the services at that church. By 14C, many priests held 2 or 3 benefices and received an annual income of 26-30 *l*. A priest holding a single benefice in 14C might earn 8-10 *l* per year. The Church could do little about the problem but exert strong social pressures on offenders, and discourage bishops from appointing clergy to multiple benefices.

Mass, Sacraments, and Rituals

The seven sacraments of the Church are baptism, confirmation, confession, communion, marriage, last rites, and (for males only) ordination. In an emergency, any Christian can perform a baptism or last rites. An ordained priest can perform those rites plus confession, communion, and marriage. Only a bishop can perform confirmation and ordination.

The most common religious ceremony was mass. A priest often said mass daily for himself and any guests or servants. On Sunday, he said three masses for the entire parish – Matins, High Mass, and Evensong. Matins were begun near dawn and were sparsely attended. A few hours later, the priest rang the church bell for High Mass. Everyone in the parish was, in theory, required to attend unless prevented by illness or some other grave excuse. In many areas, only about half the villagers regularly attended services. Before the service, many visited the adjacent graveyard.

Parishioners knelt or sat on the straw covered floor. Landholders brought stools, and sometimes their hunting dogs and falcons. The service was in Latin and there was little for parishioners to do – most could not read the Bible and hymns were rare (the Ave Maria appeared in France in early 13C). Many parishioners talked and gossiped. Those that paid attention complained that their priest mumbled, clipped words, and whispered passages. Wealthy landholders and farmers might own primers, beads, and breviaries to study during mass. Everyone wore their best clothing, but their best and the priest's vestments alike might be quite tattered and patched.

As discussed under **Clothing**, a priest ideally had special garments worn just for mass – the *alb*, *chasuble*, hood or collar, and a stole. He also carried an embroidered *maniple* (essentially a towel used to handle and clean the chalice used for Mass).

The priest read the Gospel and then announced whether there were any holy days or fast days in the upcoming week. He offered specific prayers for the pope, bishop, clergy in general, the king, landholder, and for any parishioner in need of spiritual aid. He then offered prayers for the church's benefactors, for those who had committed deadly sin or who were in debt, for pilgrims, and for the souls of the dead. A sermon in the vernacular followed (sometimes read or cribbed from a book of sermons) along with a theology lesson and local announcements.

Before 13C, most rural priests were not expected to preach. Few knew how. Bishops licensed monks and later friars to preach doctrine, but most stayed in the cities. Franciscans were willing to preach in the countryside, but could only preach morals, unless specifically licensed to preach doctrine.

Communion was rarely offered. Indeed, the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) only required that Christians take it once a year at Easter. Before a parishioner received communion, he or she con-

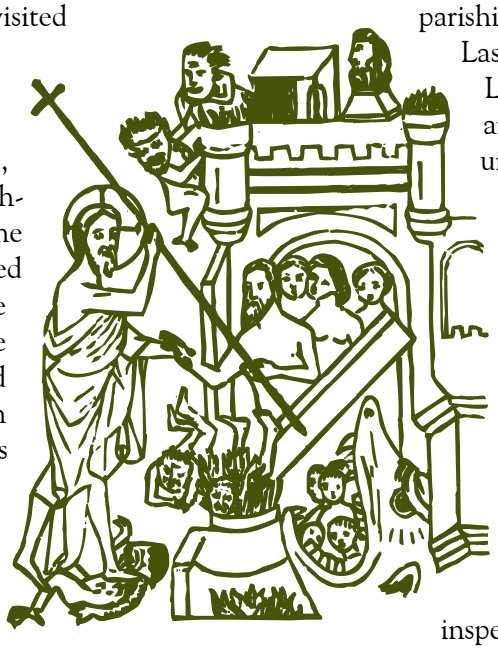
Church Feasts

The Church set aside a number of days on which work was technically forbidden, but often was performed. The usual days were: 12 days at Yule; February 15th (commemorating when Christ overcame the Devil); March 12th, the Feast of St. Gregory; 7 days before and 7 days after Easter; June 19th (commemorating Sts. Peter and Paul); the week before St. Mary's Mass (September 8th); All Hallows Eve; and 4 Wednesdays in 4 Ember Weeks (week after first Sunday in Lent, after Whitsunday, after September 14, and after December 13). The festival of the patron saint of the village's church and the festival of its consecration were local feast days.

fessed in a long process covering the past year and taking several hours. The priest gave absolution, delivered communion, and assigned penance. It was critical that the parishioner be in a state of grace when receiving communion. Villagers would also receive communion as part of the Last Rites.

At weekly services, the parishioners paid for the village baker to make a loaf of bread (*pain bénit*) which was divided among the parishioners as a symbol of community. When the doctrine of transubstantiation was enunciated in 1215, priests began to hold the host and consecrated wine in even more reverence. Many withheld the chalice from their parishioners to keep the Blood of Christ from being spilled and offered instead a sip of unconsecrated wine from a less ornate chalice.

After High Mass, the priest visited the sick in the parish. Parishioners were instructed to spend the day on works of mercy and kindness. Many danced, drank, and played in the churchyard and surrounding fields. The Church hierarchy was scandalized by what it saw as disrespect for the dignity of the church and for the sanctity of the day, but it could enforce few reforms. When an archbishop of Rouen came across peasants plowing a field on a saint's day, he confiscated the plow team and demanded a fine. This enforcement was so rare, however, that the tale has survived since 1264.



Vespers was said in the early evening, and the parishioners could then go home.

In addition to the major sacraments, parishioners had a variety of blessings and customs. On Easter Sunday in parts of England, all the fires in the village were extinguished. A new fire was kindled in the church. All the village fires were rekindled from it. The church's fire was tended to burn continuously until next Easter. Plows, plow beasts, and seeds were blessed each spring. Children received blessings at birth, their first haircut, and, for men, their first shave.

Peasants and serfs made a public confession about once a year. Nobles and clergy might confess more often. (See pg. 29) Confession was the major time when clergy could inquire into their parishioners' beliefs and actions. Confessors were expected to cross-examine their parishioners carefully. Foresters and other civil officials were warned not to hold "confessions" on pain of excommunication.

The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) required each parishioner to confess once a year to his or her local parish priest. Boniface VIII's bull *Summa Cathedram* (1300) allowed friars to receive confessions with the permission of the local priest or bishop. This created a massive theological and political dispute within the Church, in part because it allowed malefactors to bypass their local priest and confess to a (perhaps more lenient) stranger.

Another priestly duty was to ensure that every parishioner was baptized and received Last Rites before death. Baptism and Last Rites were the only sacraments any Christian could give in a genuine emergency. Even if the words were spoken in the vulgar tongue, even if the wrong words were spoken, so long as the intention was good, the rite was considered successful.

Confirmation (sometimes called "Bishoping" in England) was necessary for a baptized Christian to partake of communion. Children as young as 1 year old were brought before the bishop when he made his annual inspection of the parish.

While not a sacrament, women were "churched" after giving birth to purify themselves. The custom came from an Old Testament rule that a women was "impure" for six weeks following childbirth and thus could not attend mass. At the end of the six weeks, she was welcomed back into the community with a "churching" ceremony.

Baptismal and Proprietary Churches

Churches were divided between baptismal churches and proprietary churches. As the name implies, a baptismal church had been given by its bishop the right to have a baptismal font and burial ground. Baptismal churches were important in Italy and less critical in other areas. The distinction

between baptismal churches and proprietary churches is primarily important in figuring out which church is entitled to tithes if there is more than one church in a parish. The distinction is also important in deciding who is responsible for supporting the church and who can sell its land, vestments, and vessels. In 12C, the distinction became less important as more rights were granted to proprietary churches. This led to a shift from the baptismal *plebeium* to the general *parish*.

Baptismal churches had the sole right to perform baptisms. On Palm Sunday, the olive or palm branches were blessed at its baptistry. Other *litanies* (solemn processions) and important ecclesiastical banquets were held there. Parishioners were required to visit baptismal churches on important church festivals. Clergy in subject churches were often required to vow obedience to the rector of the baptismal church and to pay a small fee as a token of subordination.

The church's rector was nominated by the parish and approved by the bishop. Rectors were required to attend the bishop's annual synod and to host the bishop during periodic visits to the diocese. Large baptismal churches were "collegiate" churches where several clergy lived together as a religious community. In these churches, the clergy chose one of their number to act as an "archpriest" or *plebanus*.

CHURCH INCOMES AND EXPENSES

Item	Year	Cost or Annual Wage	Comments
Alb with amice	1389	3 s	Cambridge
Bell, church	13C	18-20 l	
Bible	1331	110 l	England
Chalice	1389	10 s	Cambridge
Chaplain	13C	14 l	
Chaplain	1224	50 s	
Chaplain, stipendary	13C	66 s 8 d	
Chrism	until 12C	6 d/year	After 12C no cost
Churchwarden	14C	1 s	
Clerk	1220	20 s	Stunning
Clerk	1229	40 s	Wincester
Deacon	1236	4 l	Bamburgh
Fee, avoid churchwarden duty	1363	20 pullets (chickens)	England
Fee, avoid churchwarden duty	1364	1 s 6 d	England
Fee, avoid synod	13C	1-2 s	
Priest, "pluralist"	13C	26-30 l	with 2-3 prebends
Fee, for funeral	1369-70	8 d	Rodez, France (technically illegal under canon law)
Indulgence	1307	10-20 l	Rome
Indulgence	1300	12 d	Montaillou, France
Priest	1236	8 l	Barnburgh
Priest, parish	13C	14 l	Hereford
Priest, parish	1295	3 l 6 s 8 d	
Subdeacon	1236	3 l 6 s 8 d	Bamburgh
Vestments, simple	13C	10-20 s	
Vicar	13C	8-10 s	
Vicar	1214	40 s	
Vicar	1214	1 d/day	2 d/day on certain feast days
Wafer (host) maker	13C	6 s 8 d	

Proprietary churches were those built by a lay landholder or his or her ancestors. Their land was still owned by the landholder who could sell, rent, or bequeath it at will. The landholder nominated the priest, subject to the bishop's approval. A proprietary church could not have a baptismal font. Often, a baptismal church's rector traveled to proprietary churches to say mass on the feast of the proprietary church's saint.



Friars and Pardoners

Friars often visited rural parishes. The major mendicant movements were established in 13C. The friars were clergy who, unlike monks, lived among the laity and preached directly to them. In 1300, Boniface's bull *Summa Cathedram* established the rights of friars and other clergy. Friars could preach in a parish by invitation of its priest or in a diocese by invitation of its bishop. They could preach in public places, but not in the parish church unless invited. They could hear confession, but were required to give a quarter of all offerings and legacies received to the parish priest. The number of friars authorized to receive confessions was limited by the friars themselves.

The laity flocked to friars because they were usually better educated and better traveled than their local counterparts. Their preaching was plain and lively-they told stories about their travels, joked, and read poetry. They even asked their audience to join in and encouraged heckling. Many friars were openly contemptuous of parish clergy and preached against them to their own parishioners. As tithes and gifts flowed to their orders, the other clergy complained to the bishops and to the papacy.

In 14C, friars were joined by itinerant pardoners. A complicated rationalization had convinced the Church that it had an unlimited "treasury" of good deeds done by the saints which it could sell to expiate a sinner's deeds or those of his ancestors. Pardoners were licensed by the church to disburse this treasury. Authorized pardoners bore letters from the papacy or a local bishop certifying their respectability. Unauthorized pardoners also wandered about, much in the fashion of friars, preaching, showing their relics, and selling indulgences.

Heretics

There were a number of prominent heretical movements in the countryside of medieval Europe. Among them were the Cathars and Waldensians of southern and eastern France, the Brethren of the Free Spirit, and others. The doctrinal differences between the movements are perhaps less relevant to a small manor than their similarities.

Most appeared in areas where the parish clergy and local monasteries had been lax and corrupt for years. Heretics preached directly to the populace in the vernacular. Some even translated the Bible, with varying degrees of accuracy, and urged the faithful to study it for themselves. Many were well-trained theologians. Catholic bishops sent to debate Cathar theologians in southern France often found themselves losing on fine points of scripture. (Dominicans and Franciscans fared better in their debates.) Many heretics were demonstrably poor – they lived simple lives in the community and did not take tithes for their income. Many of the major heretical movements allowed women to preach and act as full members of the clergy.

The Church took a strong stand against heresy and expected its bishops and priests to combat it wherever it appeared. Eventually, the Church created the Inquisition to examine the beliefs of parishioners, particularly in areas like Southern France and Spain which had strong heretical movements.

Nobles

Certain barons have enormous power because of their land, domains, and the nobility that goes with them. Thereby, their wives have considerable status. These women must be highly knowledgeable about government, and wise – in fact, far wiser than most other such women in power. The knowledge of a baroness must be comprehensive that she can understand everything. Of her a philosopher might have said: "No one is wise who does not know some part of everything." Moreover, she must have the courage of a man . . . If barons wish to be honored as they deserve, they spend very little time in their manors and on their own lands. Going to war, attending their prince's court, and traveling are three primary duties of such a lord. So the lady, his companion, must represent him at home during his absences . . . When wronged, her men must be able to turn to her for refuge . . . She must be knowledgeable in the mores of her locality and instructed in its usages, rights, and customs. She must be a good speaker . . . Again, she should have a man's heart. She must know the laws of arms and all things pertaining to warfare, ever prepared to command her men if there is need of it. She has to know both assault and defense tactics to insure that her fortresses are well defended, if she has any expectation of attack or believes she must initiate military action . . .

A slightly different manner of life from that of the baronesses is suitable for ladies and demoiselles living in fortified places or on their lands outside of town . . . These women spend much of their lives in households without husbands . . . So the ladies will have responsibilities for managing their property, their revenues, and their lands. She must know the yearly income from her estate. The lady or demoiselle must be well informed about the rights of domains of fiefs and secondary fiefs, about contributions, the lord's rights of harvest, shared crops, and all other rights of possession, and the customs both local and foreign . . . Farming also is this good housekeeper's domain. In what weather and in what season the fields should be fertilized; whether the land is moist or dry; the best way to have furrows run according to the lay of the land; their proper depth, straightness, and parallel layout; and the favorable time for sowing with seed suited to the land – all this she must know . . . The excellent keeper of the household sometimes brings in more profit than derives from the rents and income of the land itself.

– Christian de Pizan, Le Livre des Trois Vertus (1405)

"Nobles" are not an easily defined class – they varied from those holding knight's fees, who lived little better than peasants, to great counts and kings. In general, they all owned sufficient land to support themselves and their families. Men and women both were trained in warfare. Men were trained from childhood to prove their mettle in battle and tournament. Women were trained to defend their manors during their husband's frequent absences.

From the farmer's perspective, it mattered little whether the landholder was a secular noble or a cleric. The farmer was far more concerned about whether he or she was efficient or lax, conservative or profligate, present or absent, a caring manager or renowned as a "flayer of rustics."

Toward the end of the Middle Ages, knighthood became separate from landholding. A man could be knighted by his father, uncle, a local noble, or by royalty. Women were admitted to certain chivalric orders – St. James of Compostelle, St. John of Jerusalem, the Servants of Virtue, the Order of the Cordeliers, and others-and referred to as *equitissa* or *chavaliére*, but they were apparently not considered "knights". In Bretagne, unmarried women who inherited land were called "knights", but again their status is unclear. Knighthood ceremonies were fairly simple until the end of 12C; the clerical trappings of knighthood, including vigils, appear in the mid-13C.

Noble men had primary responsibility for defending the manor, but were rarely present to do so. They spent most of the summer away from the manor at tournaments, war, their liege's court, or on Crusade. When home, they were expected to defend the manor from bandits, brigands, and foraging expeditions.

Noble women had limited political power. In England, they were often considered under the protection of their father, husband, or other guardian. It was highly unlikely that a single woman with any sort of land would remain unmarried. On the other hand, a noble woman was most likely to know the fief's accounts and affairs because she remained there while her husband went to tournaments and war. She was the more likely landholder to be literate in Latin and French. She oversaw servants and laborers, handled transactions, and helped weave and sew the clothing her family wore. As a widow,

The lord ought to love God and justice, and be faithful and true in his sayings and doing, and he ought to hate sin and injustice, and evil-doing. The lord ought not to take counsel with young men full of young blood, and ready courage, who know little or nothing of business, nor any juggler, flatterer, or idle taker, nor such as bear witness by present, but he ought to take counsel with worthy and faithful men, ripe in years, who have seen much, and know much, and who are known to be of good fame, and who never were caught or convicted for treachery or any wrong doing . . .

–William of Henley

she was entitled to 1/3 to 2/3 of the land in her own right and had the right to reside in the remainder for her life provided she remained chaste. Her children remained with her until age 7 or so. Many were then sent away to be educated by their uncles, aunts, cousins, godparents, or other patrons.

The landholder's primary source of income was his or her own fields, customary monopolies, and rights. Ransom from prisoners taken in war and at tournaments could be lucrative income, but then the landholder risked being captured himself. War also brought opportunities for pillage. A few landholders even robbed travelers in times of relative peace.

A landholder's expenses began with basic family needs including food and clothing. He or she needed to retain servants appropriate to his or her station. The landholder and his or her soldiers needed arms, armor, and war horses. Then there were payments owed to the landholder's liege and to the Church. What remained went to amusements – feasts (including receptions, marriages, knightings, holy days, etc.), hunting, and tournaments.

Generosity was a virtue; frugality and avarice a vice. Landholders seemed constantly in need of money, constantly in debt. When a landholder's income failed, he or she could sell liberties back to the farmers and could borrow money from the Church and from Jewish and Italian moneylenders.

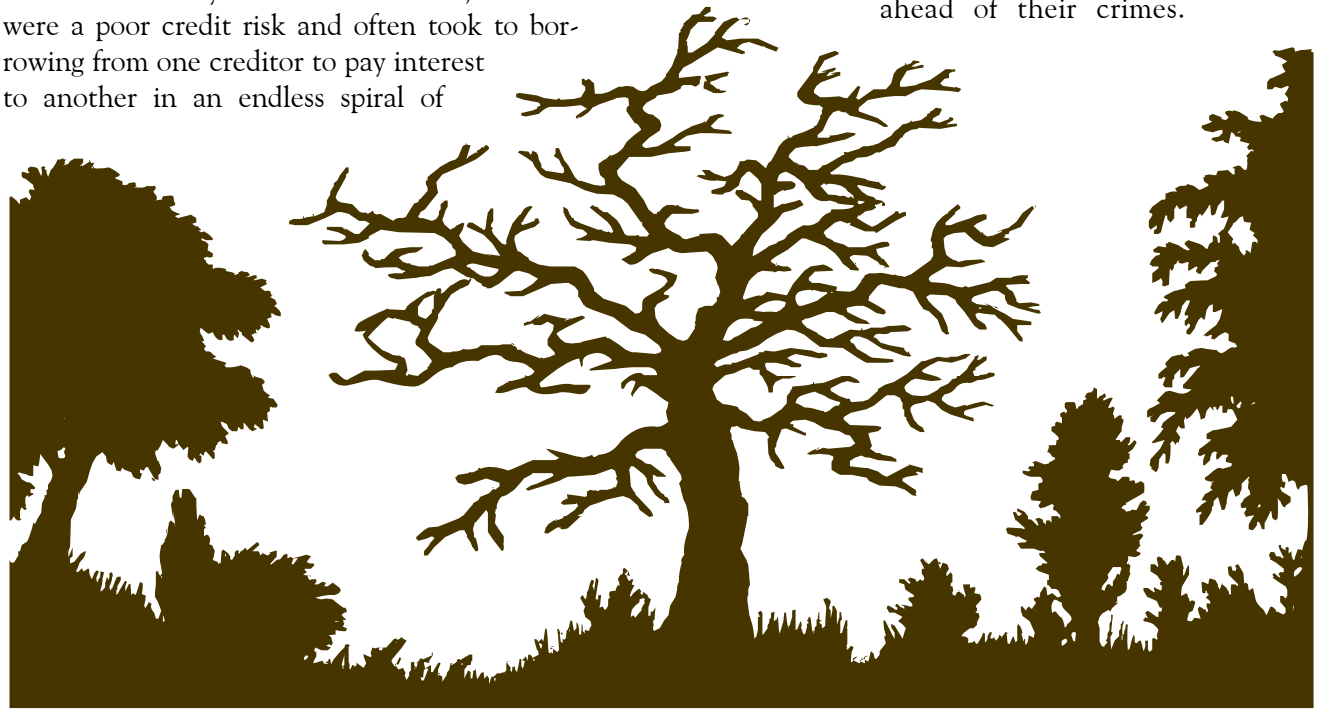
Unfortunately for their creditors, landholders were a poor credit risk and often took to borrowing from one creditor to pay interest to another in an endless spiral of debt. Since neither the Church nor the royal protectors of the Jews and Italian bankers were generally willing to root a recalcitrant landholder from his or her castle, defaults were common.

Travelers

Even a small manor might be visited by lay travelers as well as by friars and other clergy. Like friars, these wanderers brought stories of the wider world to nobles and farmers alike. Travelers might be criminals and vagabonds, herbalists, messengers, peddlers, and pilgrims.

On the one hand, they were suspicious and untrusted because they did not have any local person to vouch for their behavior. A stranger traveling at night might quickly be accused of any unsolved thefts or mischief. On the other hand, they were deemed deserving of charity and prayer because they did not have the protection of local patrons. Noble travelers, their servants, and minstrels might be invited guests of a local monastery. Others might seek refuge in the nearest church. Poor travelers might be allowed to sleep in a hay loft or on the church floor.

Criminals were commonly banished. Those banished (*outlaw*, m., *weyve*, f.) were literally outside the law. They could be killed by anyone who encountered them. Intermingled with those actually outside the law were robbers and thieves traveling just ahead of their crimes.



Runaway serfs, artisans, and other vagabonds sometimes found their way into villages seeking work.

Entertainers of various types traveled from town to town and occasionally performed at small manors enroute. There were many jugglers, musicians, singers, and animal trainers. Their repertoires ranged from learned ballads of courtly love and knights' deeds, to saints' lives and Bible stories, to coarse drinking songs. Since a small manor could probably not afford a professional resident entertainer, a wanderer's visit was likely quite welcome.

A number of travelers sold herbal remedies of one sort or another. Both England and France issued royal laws prohibiting unlicenced physicians in 14C. Given the average knowledge and skill of a university educated physician in 14C, however, a patient might fare no worse at the hands of a wandering herbalist.



Although not a traveler *per se*, a hermit might be near a village. Occasionally, a person might decide to take up solitary residence in the forest and pray. To prevent imposters, the Church issued testimonial letters to hermits discussing their purpose and dedication to God. In Germany and France, a village might also be visited by penitent flagellants (14C) who whipped themselves with knotted cords. The flagellants were condemned by the papacy in 1349; archbishops and bishops were ordered to imprison them.

Large landholders and officials had messengers who carried letters and important documents. Merchants, small landholders, and farmers often relied on travelers to deliver their letters. In general, a messenger was unlikely to visit a small manor unless it lay near a major road. If one did, he was likely extended every courtesy, including being allowed to take a short-cut through the fields.

Pilgrims were common, starting in 12C. Some traveled to the great shrines of Jerusalem, Rome, and Santiago de Compostelle in Spain. Others journeyed to more convenient sites like Canterbury, Mont-St-Michel, or Rochmadour. Their motives ranged from religious devotion, to fulfilling a vow or expiating a sin, to adventure, to escaping family or duties. Most were merchants, clergy, and nobles; farmers could rarely afford the journey. The pilgrimage routes to major destinations were along major roads with inns maintained by the major monastic orders. Unless a small manor lay near one of those routes or near a significant minor shrine, it was unlikely to receive many pilgrims.

To limit false pilgrims, Richard II decreed in 1388 that each must get a letter of passage from appointed royal officials. Those traveling by sea had to get a license at certain ports (Boston, Bristol, Dartmouth, Dover, Kingston-upon-Hull, London, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Plymouth, Sandwich, Southampton, and Yarmouth) or else they could not be taken on any ship. In 1389, the crown limited departing pilgrims to leaving from Dover or Plymouth. Returning pilgrims often carried small lead or pewter medallions sewn on their garments as souvenirs of the trip. Usually, they had stories of their adventures and of the wider world.

In mountainous regions, villages might be annually visited by migrating shepherds and their flocks. The shepherds spent their summers in mountain pastures and their winters in the lowlands. Twice each year they brought their entire flock across the countryside. Local landholders negotiated with shepherds about where their flocks would spend the night, and deposit their valuable manure. Shepherds were used as messengers by farmers, and widely credited with magical powers.

Mountainous villages sometimes lay near shepherd fields. Villagers working in distant fields or gathering wood in the forest might take shelter from bad weather in the shepherds communal home, the *cabane*. A typical cabane was made of stone and held six to ten shepherds. Sheep, often in flocks of 200-300, were protected from wolves, bears and lynx in a *cortal* (a fenced shelter). The cortal was also used as a shelter for temporary workers or visitors. Shepherds in southern France were known to shelter Cathars and other heretics from the Inquisition.

Hidden Presences: Crown, Liege and Bishop

A number of important people could influence the manor without setting foot on it. They included the crown, the landholder's liege, and the local bishop. The landholder's liege and the bishop often had a right to demand hospitality (shelter and food) from the manor, and regularly exercised it to keep down their own expenses.



The crown had its greatest effect through its tax collectors and its courts. The English crown divided the countryside into *shires*. Each shire had an assembly called a *moot*, and its *sheriff*. The shire was divided into *hundreds*, each with its own hundred-moot and hundred-reeve. Local landholders replaced the hundred-reeve by the end of 10C, but the hundred-moot survived as a farmers' assembly. A 9C royal ordinance said that hundred courts met every month in a central place. In late 10C, the English crown created several *ship-hundreds* to supply a royal fleet of 60 ships. The ship-hundreds were not governed by sheriffs, but by whoever was responsible for each ship.

In post-Conquest England, the sheriff was a common intermediary between the crown and the manors. The sheriff was charged with collecting royal taxes, delivering writs, attaching property, purchasing or seizing supplies for the royal army, and empaneling jurors for royal courts. Landholders could summon him to enforce rents and services and to dispel riots. The Magna Carta limited the sheriff to two visits per year because his presence caused a loss of time and money. In 1258, another royal reform limited sheriffs to one year terms and required them to hear all complaints of injustices in their shires. The sheriff was also charged with aiding other royal officers, including foresters and hunts masters. As the Robin Hood ballads suggest, sheriffs were not popular with farmers. Many were accused of cruelty and harshness, especially in attaching property and collecting royal taxes.

Another common royal official was the coroner, who was charged with investigating sudden or unnatural deaths. Each county elected four coroners from its landholders. When a body was found, the coroner was summoned and the bailiff summoned a jury from the village and neighboring villages to investigate the death. The coroner and the jury then examined the body and questioned family, neighbors, and witnesses. If an item was responsible for an accidental death, it was confiscated and sold to pay for prayers for the deceased's soul. (The deceased had, after all, died without the sacrament of Last Rites.) The coroner was responsible for collecting the item and turning it over to the royal treasury.

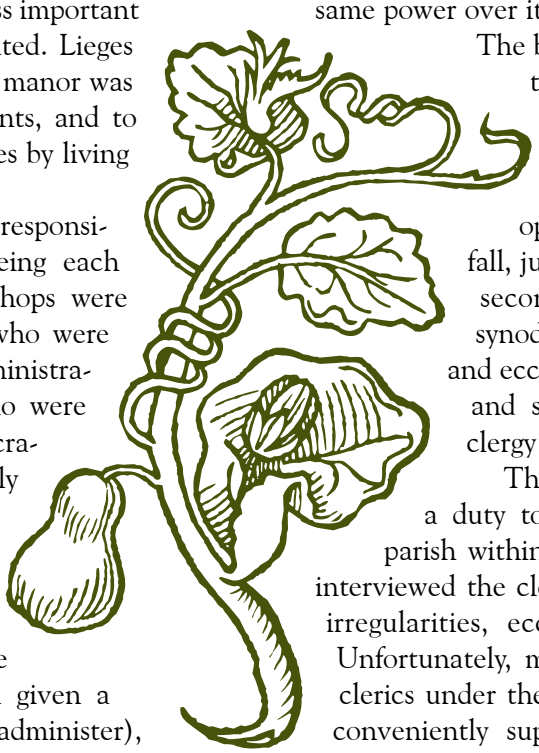
The crown also sent itinerant royal judges to investigate royal officials. The Magna Carta fixed their inquests to four per year. There were also the various forest officials discussed on pages 22-23.

The French system, created by Philippe II Auguste in mid-12C, relied on *ballis*. The ballis was an administrator, diplomat, judicial officer, and had control of the royal troops. Often, a ballis held one or more important castles for the crown. He also enforced royal laws, especially criminal laws. The Counts of Savoy used a less powerful ballis and relied upon castellans, who were obliged to provide an annual accounting to a tribunal of clerks.

The king himself was seen by peasants as their protector, with a holy duty to guarantee peace and justice. Peasants believed that their king could not wish them to be unhappy and would not tolerate

corrupt officials. Their only explanation for rapacious royal officials was that the king was being deceived by sycophants at court. Thus, when peasants revolted, they often hoped the crown would make a personal appearance and set right the wrongs done them.

The landholder's liege had a powerful influence. The liege might be the crown, an intermediate landholder, a cleric, or a city or town. The liege had two powerful rights – to compel the landholder to attend his or her court, and to demand hospitality when visiting. A landholder was often called to court to advise his or her liege, to witness important events, or merely to be evaluated. Lieges visited frequently to see how a manor was managed, to listen to complaints, and to reduce their household expenses by living off the landholder's supplies.



The medieval bishop was responsible for ordaining and overseeing each parish within his diocese. Bishops were divided into the "Ordinary," who were more concerned with royal administration, and the "Suffragan," who were responsible for the bishop's sacramental duties. A diocese usually had 2-6 suffragan bishops. A bishop often delegated his tasks to various aides, including the *archdeacon* (charged with collecting the bishop's share of tithes, often given a defined geographic region to administer), *archpriest* (later *dean*) (ceremonial), *chancellor* (private secretary, head of cathedral school, library, and archives, judge of cases not handled by archdeacons and appeals from archdeacon's decisions), *vicar forane* (later *rural dean*) (regional administrative and investigative), and *vicar general* (Pre-13C, special confessor for sins only a bishop can absolve. Post 13C, the bishop's deputy able to exercise ordinary jurisdiction as if he were the bishop). Of the above, the archdeacon is most likely to actually visit parishes, investigate matters there, perform confirmations, examine priests, and ordain them.

Until 11C, bishops were usually elected by lay leaders in their community. In 11C, the cathedral chapter began to elect the bishop. In practice, the bishop was usually chosen from a list of nominees drafted by powerful nobles or the crown. The Chapter of Salisbury was once arrested when it failed to elect the king's candidate. A papal legate intervened to prevent the chapter from being charged with treason. The candidate was elected on a second ballot.

The involvement of nobles in choosing bishops led to an investiture conflict between Pope Gregory VIII and Emperor Henry of the Holy Roman Empire. In England, the pope appointed the bishop of Worcester. All other bishops were appointed by the crown. No other European kingdom had the same power over its bishops.

The bishop had the right to compel all the clergy in his diocese to attend his annual synod. Some allowed clergy to pay a fee of 1-2 *s* to avoid the trip. Most bishops held their synods in the early fall, just after the harvest. A few held a second session in the spring. The synod provided an occasion where civil and ecclesiastical lawsuits could be heard and settled, reforms announced, and clergy educated.

The local bishop, theoretically, had a duty to make an annual visit to each parish within his diocese. On these visits, he interviewed the clergy and parishioners looking for irregularities, ecclesiastical crimes, and so on. Unfortunately, most bishops had 2,000 to 3,000 clerics under their care, and diocese too large to conveniently supervise. Bishops delegated their investigatory duty to an archdeacon or rural dean. If the manor's church was a proprietary one, it was subject to the rural archpriest of the local baptismal church. The rural archpriest had many of the powers of a petty bishop and had a duty to visit each church to say mass on the feast of its patron saint.

A bishop's visit was a significant strain on a parish's supplies. He could arrive with 30 to 40 servants and their horses, all of which needed shelter and food. The Third Lateran Council (1179) recognized this problem and suggested limits. An archbishop could only demand hospitality for himself and 50 others. A bishop could bring a retinue of 30. An archdean was limited to 7 and a dean to 2. There didn't seem to be any formal limit on how long the visit could last, however.

IX. Society

The manor was the heart of medieval society. In addition to supporting its farmers, it provided the vast majority of the food eaten by royalty, guild masters, artisans, bishops, knights, and beggars. But its inhabitants were generally illiterate and ill-traveled. Almost all lived their entire lives without ever traveling beyond the sound of their church's bell (about a 5 mile radius).

Given their isolation, customs varied tremendously by time and place, even between neighboring manors. Record keeping was sparse, often limited to terse court rolls and tax records. Those rare writers who concerned themselves with small manors were rarely insiders, and often had an agenda or view they wished to spread in their works. This section should be taken as a gross generalization, at best.



Children

Childbirth was a mystery to most medieval men. Women gave birth alone, or surrounded by other women. Even gynecological texts rarely include a description of a birth, although some do describe breach births and cesarean sections. Childbirth was dangerous, but most women and infants survived it.

After birth, the child was washed in warm water mixed with oil, salt, rose petals, or other herbs. The mother or midwife cut the umbilical cord. If the child were unhealthy, it was baptized immediately. Otherwise, it was presented to the father. Folklore holds that in some regions, the father could reject the child at this point. If he held it, washed it, and named it, the child was accepted. If he did not, the child could be abandoned, presumably after a lay baptism. It does not appear from surviving records that infanticide was common in rural or urban areas.

If the infant had not already been baptized, he or she was taken to the church for baptism. The infant's godparents, the father, the midwife, and other family members were all present. After the priest made certain the infant was not already baptized, the child was baptized in the font and anointed with chrism. The child was then brought to the altar where the godparents made a profession of faith on its behalf. A feast often followed the ceremony.

Infants were tightly wrapped in swaddling clothes and left in a cradle for most of the first two years. The mother or older children were responsible for baby-sitting. The swaddling clothes made the infant less mobile and less able to get into trouble if left unattended or taken into the fields while his or her parents worked. In Italy, farm women might also have infants from local nobles and wealthy merchants in their home to wet nurse.

Toddlers, age 2-3, were allowed to wander and play. At this point, children began to spend time divided by sex. Boys followed their fathers into the fields. Girls remained in the house and garden. Now free to wander, toddlers often injured themselves with the hearth fire, brewing and cooking pots, the well, and with farm tools. From ages 4 to 6, children were given increasingly responsible chores.

At ages 8 to 12, children were given productive chores. They watched younger children and animals, fetched water, fished, gathered, and helped with field and household tasks. In some households, their work allowed their mother the time to brew, spin, or otherwise try to make market products. At age 12, boys joined tithing groups. Children could not inherit freely until age 20 or 21.

Clothing

Let a man at rest have a pellice, and a cote or bilaut provided with sleeves and openings, slit at the crotch. Braies are needed to cover the lower limbs, and stockings or chauces should be worn around the legs, while covering the feet with laced boots or leather shoes. An undershirt of muslin, silk, or cotton, or linen- the fur of the outer mantle should be gris or vair, or rabbit, or lérot, and the mantle's edging can be of sable or marten, or beaver, or otter, or fox fur . . .

– Alexander Neckam c. 1180

Male small landholders, lesser clergy, and farmers all wore the same basic styles of clothing – simple tunics and leggings of wool or perhaps linen. Women wore similar basic styles of wool or linen dresses and leggings. Cotton was grown in Italy and Spain, but it was rarely used for everyday clothing. Silk, imported from Byzantium and later from Italy, was reserved for the finest clothing and vestments. Sumptuary laws were for cities and royal courts. Small landholders could not afford the materials that would violate them.

Clothing included linen undershorts (*braies*), an undershirt (*chainse*) or underdress (*chemise* or *kirtle*), and an outer layer (*cote*, *bliaut*, or *sorcot*). In cold weather, one might add a fur-lined *pellice* and mantle. When saying Mass a priest or monk ideally wore a white linen undertunic (*alb*) and a decorated overtunic (*chasuble*). The ornateness and cleanliness of the garments depended greatly on the wealth of the parish. A deacon assisting a priest at a wealthy parish might even wear a silk *dalmatic* or linen *tunicle* (both kinds of upper tunics worn over the alb).

Medieval clothing did not have pockets; belongings were kept in belt pouches and sacks, or tied in long sleeves.

Most of the clothing was made of fabric made on the manor. A landholder or wealthy peasant might add a fur trim or lining. Boots, shoes, and belts were likely also made of local leather. Some farmers might have leather shoes; most wore wooden clogs or cloth wrappings.

For farmers and crafters, styles changed slowly. Ambitious or vain small landholders might try to follow the changing styles of the royal courts and the cities.

A landholder or exceptionally wealthy peasant's clothing might be accented with jewelry. Precious stones were given as gifts and were seen as investments and as collateral. Gems included diamonds,



sapphires, rubies, pearls, turquoises, emeralds, jet, coral, amber, garnet, and beryl. Certain gems were believed to have magical or medicinal powers. Gems were set into ring brooches used to fasten cloaks, belts, rings, neck chains, or sewn onto clothing. Almost all gems were imported, and would be rare on a small landholding except as family treasures, gifts, ransom, or war booty.

Diet

The diet of those living on the manor was as simple as their clothing. In the early Middle Ages, the major difference was volume and quality. Landholders could eat larger meals, and were more likely to have game meat included in the meal. Their bread was more finely ground; the flour was less likely to be stretched with chestnuts or acorns.

In 13C, a peasant family of four ate six quarters, five bushels of grain; two *flitches* (sides) of bacon; and unknown amounts of milk and cheese; some garden produce; and barley ale each year. Pottage made from beans, peas, and oatmeal was a staple. Grain was made into a coarse bread which contained enough abrasive grit to wear a peasant's teeth flat.

Everyone drank ale and cider made from the farmers' crops. A 13C landholder might eat 2-3 pounds of meat or fish per day and about 4,000 to 5,000 total calories per day. Children and the elderly likely drank goats' milk. Even in regions where wine was not grown, small landholders and parish

clergy managed to have it imported. Wine was pressed each fall and stored in barrels. By summer, it was nearly sour.

Everyone on the manor ate small game (like rabbits and hares), small birds, acorns, and fish. Pigs were raised exclusively for food, thus pork was common. Horses, oxen, and sheep were more rarely eaten. Landholders, both male and female, hunted incessantly and added their game to the table. Since game meat was more tender, it could be roasted. Farmers usually stewed their meat. Landholders also ate bream, carp, eels, geese, and swans from fish ponds and streams. A landholder's food budget could be 1/3 to 2/3 of their income.



It was the mark of a good host to offer a fine table to superiors and neighbors. Few nobles or clergy traveled without a large retinue of armed escorts, family, servants, staff, and carters. A single feast could quickly deplete a manor's stores. On a single feast day in 1310, one English manor consumed 600 bundles of firewood to roast 14 oxen, 78 sheep, 24 pigs, 22 calves, and miscellaneous fish and fowl. The guests were served 320 gallons of wine and more than 1,100 gallons of ale. Over ten quarters of wheat were needed to make 1,000 loaves served.

Horseflesh and some other meats were taboo. Some theologians cautioned against eating hares because it might make one a pedophile. During famines, there were stories about cannibalism in the cities and towns. It would be nearly impossible for someone to vanish into the stewpot on a small manor, but there were tales of desperate parents who ate their children during famines.

Cannibalism tales also arose during peasant rebellions. Froissart, a 14C historian, wrote about French peasants during the Jacquiere uprising (1358) who "slew a knight and after did put him on a broach and roasted him at the fire in the sight of the lady his wife and his children; and after the lady had been enforced and ravished with ten or twelve, they made her perforce eat of her husband."

Inheritance

Landholders and farmers alike were preoccupied with providing for their children. Unfortunately, there are few records from which one can discern how small inheritances were passed along. The deceased's estate passed by local custom, which varied widely, unless he or she made a written will. The clergy had a monopoly on drafting wills, witnessing dying dispositions, and acting as executors. Their fee for a will in 1197 was 3 marks. Often, the Church could benefit handsomely from a dying person's bad conscience.

There is great debate about whether a male landholder could devise land which owed military service to a woman. Visigoth law allowed men and women to share equally in inheritance. Salic law forbade women to inherit land. The Italian *Libri Fedruorum* allowed daughters to inherit land if permitted by the liege and if they paid a relief for the privilege. The German *provisium* (12-13C) allowed daughters to inherit and sons to hold land in joint tenure. In England, an estimated 10-15% of a manor's lands might be controlled by women, mostly widows.

A widow's dower gave her rights over a third of the marital property. Some customs allowed a widow a "free bench" or the use of from half to all of the marital property until her death. Free bench lands could not be sold without the consent of the widow's husband's heirs, but she could lease them. She could also buy out the husband's heirs, sell the lands secretly, or sell lands to a third party through the heirs. At remarriage, the new groom might pay an entry fee to retain the use of the land.

Landholders might also transfer the widow's land to her heirs and direct that the heirs support her. The current consensus is that, at least before 13C, land could be held by women without cumbersome guardianships. In southern France and in Italy, land could also be held jointly by a group of heirs. The Italian *consorzerie* was one type of "corporate" landholder.

For a male farmer, his right to till the land passed to his widow, so long as she remained single (*ad viduitatem*). Children's rights varied. One system passed land to his eldest son, to his eldest daughter, and to other children in the same order. If his widow had not survived him and he did not have any children, his land passed to his eldest brother, to his eld-

est sister, and then to cousins in the same order. Illegitimate children were not entitled to an inheritance unless acknowledged by their father. If no legal heir could be found, that fact was proclaimed after mass at Martinmass (November 11) and Hockaday (2nd Tuesday after Easter). If no one came forward after the second proclamation, the land escheated to the landholder. Personal property passed to his widow for her maintenance, then was divided equally among his children.

Another system passed land entirely either to the eldest son (*primogeniture*) or youngest son (*Borough English*), if there were no sons, the land was divided equally among any daughters. A third English system found near Rockingham Forest passed all of the land the family had purchased during the father's life to the eldest son and all of the land the father had inherited to the younger son. Again, if there were no sons, the land was divided equally among any daughters.

In Northern France, particularly Anjou and Normandie, peasants divided their holdings equally among either all of their sons or all of their children. In Southern France, the senior male had the absolute right to designate his own successor, at the expense of any descendants or claimants. Other children were given a dowery (legitimate portion) or *fratrisia* (fraternal portion), which remained the property of the child even after marriage.

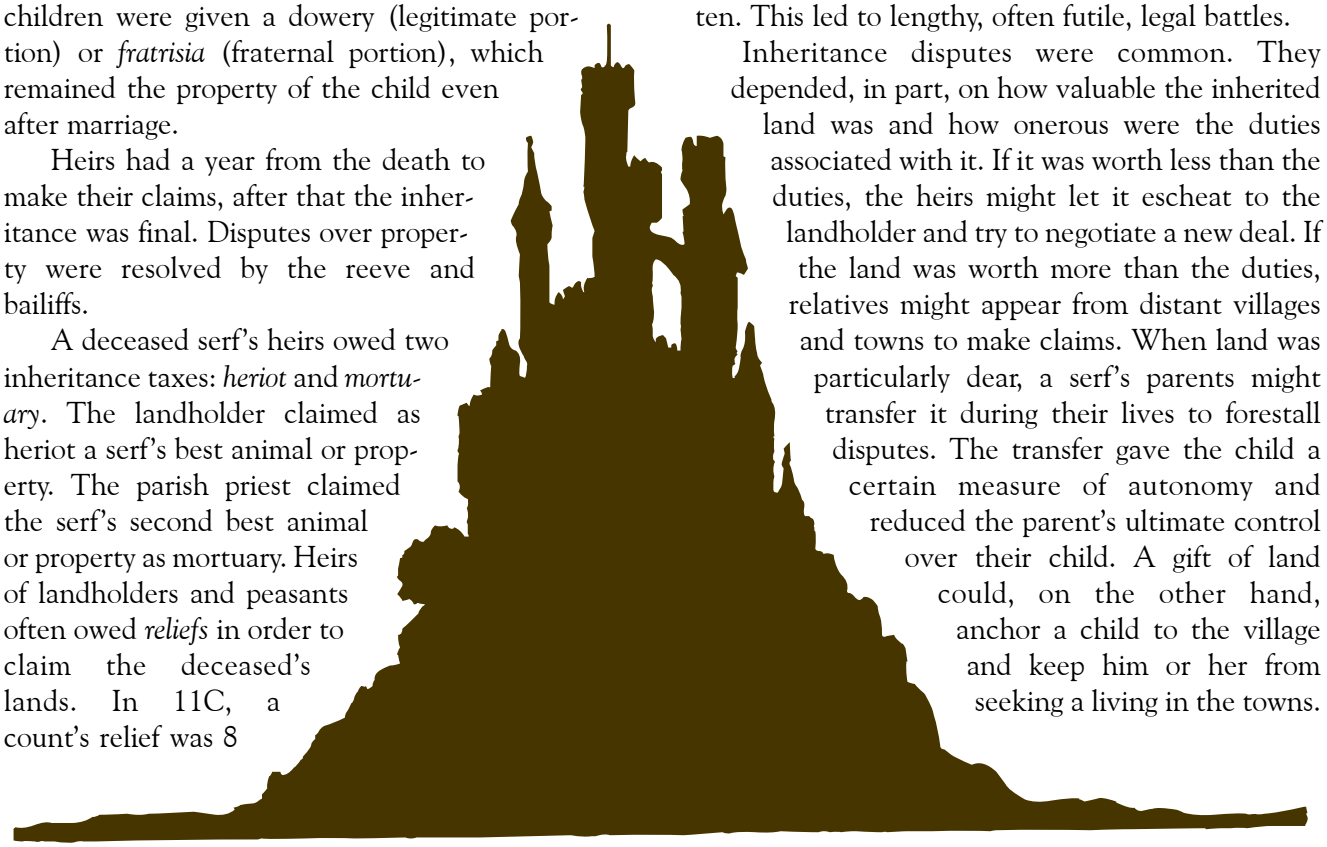
Heirs had a year from the death to make their claims, after that the inheritance was final. Disputes over property were resolved by the reeve and bailiffs.

A deceased serf's heirs owed two inheritance taxes: *heriot* and *mortuary*. The landholder claimed as heriot a serf's best animal or property. The parish priest claimed the serf's second best animal or property as mortuary. Heirs of landholders and peasants often owed *reliefs* in order to claim the deceased's lands. In 11C, a count's relief was 8 horses, 4 breast-plates, 4 helmets, 4 lances, 4 shields, and 4 swords. A baron's relief was 4 horses, 2 breast-plates, 2 shields, 2 helmets, 2 lances, and 2 swords. A knight's relief was 1 horse, 1 breast-plate, 1 helmet, 1 shield, 1 lance, and 1 sword; or paying 200 *s*. A peasant's relief was a year's rent. (The Magna Carta fixed a knight's relief at 100 solidi).

Heirs to a fief had to renew their oaths as vassal and landholder. Within two to three generations, the memory that the liege had given the heir's ancestors the land had faded. The renewed oath was a matter of personal honor and status, not a property contract. Heirs thought of the inherited land as *theirs*, as freely transferable, and as inalienable except by a legal judgement.

A liege might try to influence who a landholder chose as an heir, but landholders expected to be able to devise their property to their heirs without significant interference. Where the land had been given to the landholder's ancestors by the Church, it could only be devised to those named in the original grant. The Church, which was forbidden to permanently sell its land, transferred the land for the grantee's life, or sometimes for several lifetimes. Unfortunately, two or three generations later, the fact that the grant was conditional might be forgotten. This led to lengthy, often futile, legal battles.

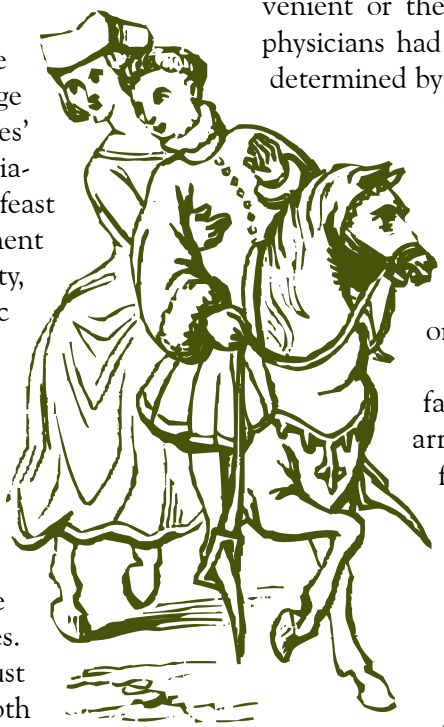
Inheritance disputes were common. They depended, in part, on how valuable the inherited land was and how onerous were the duties associated with it. If it was worth less than the duties, the heirs might let it escheat to the landholder and try to negotiate a new deal. If the land was worth more than the duties, relatives might appear from distant villages and towns to make claims. When land was particularly dear, a serf's parents might transfer it during their lives to forestall disputes. The transfer gave the child a certain measure of autonomy and reduced the parent's ultimate control over their child. A gift of land could, on the other hand, anchor a child to the village and keep him or her from seeking a living in the towns.



Marriage

Landholders and farmers worried about making good marriages for their children. Marriage was both a sacrament *and* a legal contract. For nobles, it involved tedious negotiations over property rights cemented by a hand-fasting or "troth-plight" at the church door. The church wedding was performed months or even years later, usually after the marriage had proven fertile.

Noble marriages included *dowery* (property given from the bride's family to the groom's) and the *dos* (countergift of coins or a ring from the groom to the bride). It was often followed by a large feast which displayed the families' wealth. For farmers, property negotiations were a lesser concern and the feast was more modest, but an agreement between the families about property, an exchange of vows, and a public feast were still important. The church wedding still usually took place after several children had been born.



The Church defended brides, who were frequently much younger than their grooms. The higher the couples' social class, the greater the likely disparity in ages. The Church insisted that both must consent to the marriage. It gave both parties enforceable rights to demand sexual satisfaction from the other. (At this time, women were thought to be "insatiable"). It enforced an incest taboo by denying marriage to people too closely related. (The Church included those related within seven degrees (pre-1215) or four degrees (post-1215), as well as spiritual kinship (godparents). The marriage contract gave a noble woman rights to her dower and to her inheritance.

Since men were the primary owners and heirs to land, women married into their husband's household and moved to his home. Often she shared the same house with his parents, grandparents, and unmarried siblings. Historians believe that this system, now called *patrilocality*, is one of the strongest factors in rural traditionalism, conservatism, and in enforcing patriarchal authority. It forces the bride to give up many of her family customs and ties. If her home is not on or near her husband's, it also means she has less protection and support from her family and neighbors and must depend on her husband's family and community.

Custom allowed both widows and widowers to remarry, but the Church discouraged it. Custom allowed husbands to repudiate their wives for adultery, but not vice-versa. Again, the Church discouraged this. The Church did permit divorce for consanguinity (close kinship). In practice, this was used as an excuse when an alliance had become inconvenient or the wife did not bear sons. (Medieval physicians had not discovered that a child's sex is determined by the father's sperm).

Farmers intermarried within the manor despite the near certainty of violating the consanguinity ban. The Church seems to have ignored this problem, even levying the customary landholder's fine (*merchet*) on women who married outside a Church held manor. Since few farmers had a nuptial mass, their arrangements were disregarded. De facto divorces were easy to arrange if the marriage itself had not been publicly celebrated. For both nobles and farmers, early death tended to end marriages after an average of 15 to 17 years.

The merchet (England) or *fro-mariageo* (France) was a fee paid in goods when a female serf or, more rarely, a female peasant, married someone outside the manor. A similar fee was due if a serf took holy orders without permission. The amount of the fee varied, but rarely exceeded 5 *s*.

A detailed study of English merchets in late 14C found that most were paid by brides or their mothers, likely from their own earnings as laborers. Otherwise their fathers or family paid the fee. The merchet was one of the few occasions when women sought sureties to guarantee their payment. It may have been intended to reimburse the landholder for the serf's children's lost labor. In some cases it may have been a tax on the property the bride brought out of the manor into her husband's household. It may even merely have been based on the bride's ability to pay a fee. Landholders sometimes replaced



the fine with an agreement with the groom's landholder dividing the children between the manors.

A recent survey of historians has been unable to find any historical basis for the infamous *droit de seigneur* or *jus primae noctis* (alleged right of a male landholder to sleep with a bride on her wedding night). Landholders could collect a *leywrite* from female serfs who had sexual relations before the marriage. The amount varied, but did not exceed 2 *s*. In theory, this reimbursed the landholder for the serf's diminished value in marriage. Entire villages could be fined for concealing a leywrite or merchet due. In Germany and parts of England, landholders could force the marriage of a serf widow. This right was usually contested and resulted in the payment of a fee for remaining unmarried.

To preserve their wealth from dissipating among grandchildren, some families married off their daughters and only one son. Younger sons were sent into the clergy. Other sons, the *juvenes*, sought powerful patrons and wealth by tournament victories or by marriage to a wealthy heiress. It was common for men to marry when they had established their livelihood (30+), and to marry young women (late teens) who could bear many healthy heirs.

Plague

The Black Plague reached England in 1348. It first appeared in Dorsetshire around the feast of St. Peter (June 29) and reached London around the feast of All Saints (November 1). As one historian later wrote: "Then towns once full of men became destitute of inhabitants; and so violently did the pestilence increase that the living were scarce able to bury the dead. Indeed, in certain houses of men of religion, scarcely two out of twenty men survived. It has been estimated by many that hardly a tenth part of mankind had been left behind. A murrain among animals followed immediately upon this pestilence; then rents ceased; then the land because of the lack of tenants, who were nowhere to be found, remained uncultivated."

The Plague was a disaster on an unprecedented scale. Whole villages perished. With the diminished workforce, harvests failed. The English crown issued orders to its sheriffs in 1351 to compel men and women younger than 60 to work at pre-Plague wages. Those who refused were imprisoned.

The English crown also forbade landholders to pay more than the pre-Plague rate and tried to enforce "reasonable" price controls on food vendors, bakers, and butchers. Similar steps were taken by local authorities in France, Germany, and Italy. Nevertheless, the deaths so reduced the workforce that farmers were easily able to find additional land. Wages and peasant rights rose dramatically.

Tournaments

A knight cannot shine in war if he has not been prepared for it in the tournaments. He must have seen his own blood flow, have heard his teeth crackle under the blows of his adversaries, have been dashed to the earth with such force as to feel the weight of his foes, and, disarmed twenty times, he must twenty times have retrieved his failures, more set than ever upon the combat. Thus, will he be able to confront actual war with the hope of being victorious.

– Roger of Hoveden (English chronicler)

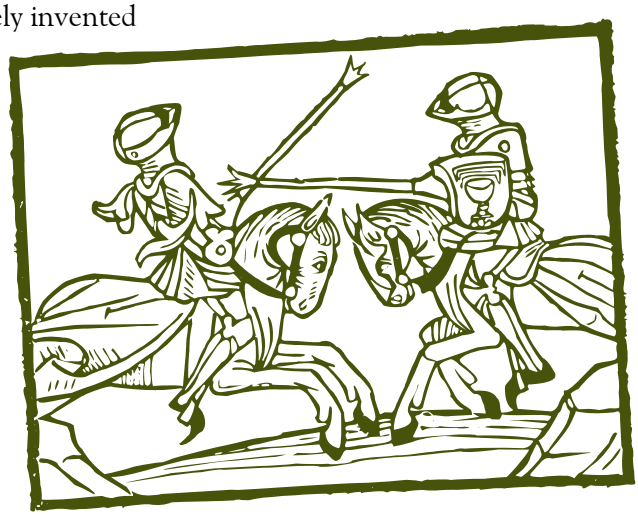
The tournament was a male landholder's principal peacetime hobby. Tournament goers ranged in age from 23 to 55, averaging 30 from 1293 to 1334. It was said, in fact, that almost every fortnight there was a tournament in one place or another. Many were held to celebrate weddings and coronations. Others were held in conjunction with markets and fairs.

Tournaments originated in France and were referred to elsewhere as *Conflictus Gallicus* or *batailles francaises*. The term referred specifically to massed combats or mêlées between knights; eventually it came to refer to all knightly combat competitions. The "joust," part of most tournaments, was a

combat between two individual knights, usually mounted at first and continuing on foot.

Tournaments came in two basic forms: *à plaisance* (with blunted weapons) or *à outrance* (with sharpened weapons). There was even a water-joust form where the contestants stood in the front of a boat and tried to strike other contestants or a target mounted on a pole. In 15C, tournaments included a *kolbenturnier* ("baton course") in which contestants tried to knock each other's helms off with wooden maces. Another German format, the *scharfrennen*, used saddles without front or rear supports – the object was to unhorse one's opponent.

The tournament was likely invented by Geoffrey de Preuilly around 1062. Early tournaments were little more than agreed-upon battles between opponents. The only difference between an early tournament and war was the participants' intent. Knights used sharpened weapons and did not consider any strokes "foul" or any tactics "forbidden." Groups of knights might waylay a single knight; tourneyers were attacked after they had lost vital pieces of armor, or were shot with arrows. One could even hold back one's forces until after the battle was joined, or join in after the start. The only rules were to honor various refuges for knights to rest and rearm, and to capture and ransom the opponent, not kill him. It was considered unethical and foolish to injure a contestant's horse. Foolish, because the victor often won his opponent's horse as a prize.



Fatal accidents happened. In 1095, Evrardus held a tournament near Tournai, Flanders. Count Henri III of Louvain invited Jocelyn of Vorst, a vassal, to enter the lists against him. Jocelyn reluctantly did so and tried to unhorse Henri. The blow struck in the chest, killing the Count.

Tournaments became popular around 1170. Many were held in conjunction with markets and fairs so that a tourneyer could buy armor, arms, harnesses, and horses. In a few cases, knights on opposite sides of sieges sometimes agreed to a few lance passes to relieve boredom. Most tournaments were held near the borders between England and France (near Calais especially), and between England and Scotland.

Mêlée tournaments in 12-14C involved teams of 20 to 250 contestants. The day before the tournament was filled with trial jousts and, when the Church permitted, masses. The tournament commenced with a series of individual jousts (*commençailles*), then the mêlée tournaments with lance, then sword. Those captured moved outside the list to arrange terms with their captors. Others could rest and rearm in refuges called *recets*.

Tournaments were an investment. Contestants, of course, had to pay for their own travel, lodgings, and horse care. In 1285-6, John of Brittany spent 100 *l* on four months of tournament going. Some households traveled to tournaments together and used them to train the household forces and retainers as a unit. These household knights and retainers then looked to their patrons for payments to replace ransomed or wounded horses and to care for those injured or killed in battle.

In pre-13C tournaments, mounted contestants were often accompanied by foot soldiers and archers. Successful unlanded knights or those with small holdings might find important patrons. Successful large landholders might attract household knights and retainers. Mercenary leaders also followed the tournaments and might be more easily hired by successful contestants.

In many cases, the winner was awarded the loser's armor and horse, which he could keep or sell. The winner could also often claim a ransom from the loser himself. In one fabliau, a knight is described as "ne vigne, ne terre" who lived on what he made in ransom. When he became too old to win tournaments, he fell into poverty.

Often the vanquished promised to pay the ransom and was then freed on parole to return home and raise it. If the vanquished failed to pay, the victor could sue the vanquished, sue any sureties, or

challeng the vanquished to a judicial duel. He or she could also publically humiliate the vanquished by hanging the vanquished's coat of arms or image in degrading positions in public places.

The first mention of a prize for a tournament victory is a golden lion awarded to Sir Roger Mortimer at Kenilworth in 1279. By 14C, prizes were limited to those formally awarded; a victor could no longer claim his foes' arms or horse. Among the more successful combatants was William Marshall, who captured 103 knights, their horses, armor, and baggage in a single year.

Towards the end of 12C, mêlée tournaments became less popular and jousts began to be arranged. Later tournaments included both jousts by individuals and mêlée between groups of up to 40 on a side. Contrary to modern beliefs, the jousting goal was to break the lance, thus showing a clean blow. An intact lance was the sign of a glancing blow or complete miss. Some involved a fixed number of passes; one in Toury, France, in 1380 involved three courses with the lance, three exchanged blows with battle-axe, and three dagger thrusts.



In late 14C, some knights developed an alternative to jousts. They would hold a pass or bridge, denying passage to any knight who would not joust with them. One of the most famous jousts of this type was arranged by Boucicault in 1390 at St-Inglevert between Calais and Boulogne. The heralds cried for three months that Boucicault and two companions would hold the field for thirty days (March 20 to April 20) and would joust with any knight or squire who approached. No combats would be allowed on Fridays, Saturdays, or Sundays, in keeping with the Truce of God. Those who were enemies of France would run a course of five strokes with sharpened lances. Friends of the king were restricted to blunted lances.

Boucicault and his companions set up a pavilion shaded by a great elm. Two shields were hung, one denoting peace, the other war. Beside them lay five sharpened lances and five blunted lances. A horn hung from a branch of the tree. The challenger was to sound the horn and strike the shield indicating the contest desired. Each shield also carried the arms of the three defending knights so a challenger could choose which champion would appear.

Beyond the defenders' pavilion was another one for the arming and retiring of knights. Wine and food was provided in generous supply by Boucicault. Some 40 foreign and 120 French knights took Boucicault's challenge.

In 13-14C, tournament armor and weapons began to sharply diverge from those used for combat. A vamplate was added to the lance to protect the arm. It was also tipped with a coronal to catch armor without piercing it. A lance rest was added to the breast-plate. By 14C, tourneyers began to need two separate sets of helmets and breast plates. Armor became heavier and saddles sturdier.

By 15C, tournament armor was completely unsuited for the battlefield. It had even become too expensive for all but the wealthiest of knights, some of whom commissioned "loaner" armor for their guests. Tournaments had become a courtly spectacle. Since each participant brought with him two squires, a half-dozen attendants, and sundry armorers and weaponers, the potential profit attracted artisans, entertainers, merchants, mountebanks, pickpockets, and prostitutes.

In 1430, Philippe le Bon, Duke of Bourgogne, held a week-long tournament to celebrate his marriage to Isabella of Portugal. For three days the knights were divided into teams, but jousted individually in a divided market square. The best knight and squire from each team was given a jewel or a golden chain.

King Réné of Anjou wrote a treatise on tournaments in the mid-15C. He discussed how feasts and dances should be held each evening; how the defending and attacking knights should choose their relative supporters for the mêlée; the role of heralds and pursuivants; and how judges were to be chosen. His treatise discussed when the participants should arrive at the site and in what order they should enter the town.

They should display their arms on long poles at the door of their lodging and their banners from an upper window. The helms and banners of each noble were to be displayed before the tournament began to be certain that all had the right to take part. The tournament would last for 5 days – the day of arrival, the day of display, the day for all contestants to take the necessary oaths, a day or two of tournaments, and a day for feasting and awarding prizes.

Tournaments were condemned by the Church and banned by many secular rulers. They made it more likely that a knight would accidently kill another Christian, and even more likely that he would commit the sin of pride. Tourneyers and their followers were also brawlers. A Rochester tournament held in 1251 turned into a riot as foreign knights were chased into the town. The Church offered the Crusades as an alternative challenge, but knights saw no reason not to participate in both pastimes.

In 12-13C, church burial was technically forbidden to anyone fatally wounded in the sport. In practice, many of the higher clergy were members of the contestants' noble families and were willing to come to some sort of understanding. The ban did spark a number of folk legends about the ghosts of tourneyers wandering in search of revenge. Often household knights of bishops participated in the sport alongside those of secular nobles.



Knighting ceremonies became more mystical, including blessings and vigils, in 13C, perhaps to counteract the secular influence of the tournament. The various papal bans were lifted by John XXII in 1316, who feared that the numbers of potential Crusaders had been too badly limited by forbidding participation of excommunicated tourneyers.

Secular authorities were also concerned about tournaments. Some feared bands of armed knights roaming the countryside. Others feared that tournaments would provide a cover for major landholders planning rebellion. And there was the possibility that a tournament fatality might be a well concealed murder. Tourneyers were sometimes ambushed enroute, and tournaments sometimes turned into riots between feuding factions. The Boston fair of 1288, for example, turned into a riot in which the marketplace was burned.

The English crown alone tried to regulate tournament locations. In 1194, Richard I ordered that tournaments could only be held under a charter. Participants paid for entry by rank. An earl paid 20 marks, a baron 10 marks, a landed knight 4 marks, and landless knights 2 marks. In 1477, the fees were changed to 10 marks for an earl, 4 *l* for a baron, 40 *s* for a landed knight, and 20 *s* 8 *p* for an esquire. The crown tried to forbid foreign knights from attending English tournaments, and set forth rules for conduct. Violations were punished by forfeiting a horse and armor, imprisonment, and fines.

The crown authorized five *lists* (tournament fields), all south of the river Trent. One was near Wiltshire, another near Warwickshire, another near Suffolk, a fourth near Northamptonshire, and the last near Nottinghamshire. The site restriction and the ban on foreigners quickly fell by the wayside, but other restrictions survived.

In 1292, Edward I limited each tourneyer to three armed esquires as attendants. Each had to be identified with the noble's arms, and could only be armed with broadswords. Each tourneyer could have an unlimited number of unarmed escorts. The audience and heralds were forbidden to carry arms. Edward I's restrictions sharply decreased the number of riots and brawls between factions.

Travel

Landholders with large estates traveled incessantly from holding to holding. Lesser landholders and clergy owed a duty to host their superiors and a customary number of retainers. A large group, or a lengthy stay, could quickly bankrupt a small manor or parish. Noble travelers could expect hospitality in another noble's household if their families were not foes, and if the noble were present. Often a bailiff or steward was not authorized to accept guests without prior permission. Travelers could also take refuge in a church or monastery. Travelers so often abused church hospi-

tality, that Edward I forbade anyone to seek lodging in a religious house unless he or she were invited by its superior or had founded it.

A household's luggage might include kitchen utensils, baking implements, bedding, furniture, personal effects, and extra food. Rather than supplying several manor houses in a fief, its landholder maintained one set of household necessities. All guests, even royalty, were expected to bring what they needed for their comfort. Only the armories were kept fully equipped.

Transportation methods were primitive; roads were little better than rutted tracks. Most landholders traveled by horse, often with pack horses, carts, and even carriages for supplies and luggage. Carts were used for cargo. They had fixed front wheels and could not turn well. Two-wheeled *plaustrum* were maneuverable, but easily bogged down in muddy or uneven ground. Rivers were commonly used to transport bulky goods like grain. They were crossed at ferries, fords, and bridges. All three often involved some form of toll for maintenance.

Besides being physically unsafe, the roads were often targets of bandits. In at least one case, the bandit who assaulted a group of travelers in "Cannock Wood" was none other than a wandering knight and two of his squires. The travelers were taken to a nearby priory; their goods were apportioned, and the bandits proceeded on to another priory. Denied entrance by its abbess, they broke into the barn and stole fodder for their horses. They were later apprehended by the local bailiff and several guards.

TOURNAMENT AND WAR EXPENSES

(England, unless otherwise noted)

Item	Date	Cost
Arrow	1300-05	1/4 d for 2
Arrow	1347	1 s 4 d for sheaf
Arrow	1480	1 ½ d
Bascinet (helmet)	1300-05	2 s 2 ½ d
Bascinet	1324	10 s
Bascinet	1337	3 s
Bascinet	1350	13 s
Bolt, shaft	1277	26 s - 34 s 4 d per thousand
Bolt, iron head	1277	14 d - 16 d per thousand
Crossbow, large	1277	5 s - 7 s
Crossbow, small	1277	3 s - 5 s
Gauntlets, iron	1337	1 s
Gauntlets, plate	1350	6 s 8 d
Greaves, plate	1324	15 s
Greaves, plate	1350	26 s 8 d (burnished and decorated)
Habegeon (mail shirt)	1200	13 s 4 p
Habegeon	1324	2 l 10 s
Haketon (leather shirt)	1312	10 s
Haketon	1337	5 s
Hauberk (long mail shirt)	1200	5 s
Hauberk and iron grieves	1224	6 s 8 d (pledged for debt)
Helmet, tournament	1391	2 l 13 s 4 d
Helmet, war	1350	10 s
Horse, war	1160	10 s
Horse, war	1194	11 l 12 s
Horse, war	1171-2	40 s
Horse, war	1216	14 - 50 l

TOURNAMENT AND WAR EXPENSES

(Continued from Page 61)

Item	Date	Cost	
Horse, war	1337	28 l 12 s	
Horse, war	1339	64 l 8 s	
Horse, war	1359	36 l	
Horse feed	1314-15	6¼-7½ d per day	
Lance	1300-05	6 d	
Lance	1337	3 d	
Long bow	1227	12 d - 1 s 6 d	
Long bow	1324	6 s 8 d	
Long bow	1347	1 s 3 d	
Long bow (unseasoned)	1418	1 s 6 d	
Long bow (seasoned)	1418	2 s	
Long bow (yew)	1475	3 s 4 d	Royally set max. price
Long bow	1480	2 s	
Quiver	1480	9 d	
Quiver, belt	1480	2 d	
Ransom, war, English king	1193	100,00 l	
Ransom, war, French king	1249	50,000 l	
Ransom, war, knight	1297	1,000 l	
Ransom, war, small landholder	1317	30 l	
Ransom, war, knight	1337	2,000 l	
Ransom, war, count	1346	3,000 l	
Ransom, war, du Guesclin	1363	30,000 l	
Ransom, war, du Guesclin	1365	40,000 l	
Ransom, war, du Guesclin	1367	100,000 l	
Ransom, war, knight banneret	1424	14,000 l	
Stableboy	1314-15	2 d per day	
Sword	1324	3 s 4 d	
Tent	1324	1 l 19 s 15 d	





Supplies for a Tournament held at Windsor, England

Ailettes (buckram) (pair)	1278	8 d
Arms and armor	1278	7 s-25 s
Arms and armor of Earl of Lincon	1278	33 s 4 d
Helmet (leather)	1278	2 s
Helmet (gilded leather)	1278	14 s
Sword (whalebone)	1278	7 d
Sword (silvered whalebone)	1278	25 s 7 d
Sword (silvered whalebone w. gilded hilt)	1278	28 s 13 d
Shield (wooden, unpainted)	1278	5 d

X. Taxes, Tithes, and Tolls

As has been noted elsewhere in *Fief*, a medieval manor was basically self-sufficient. Nevertheless, some of its earnings did leave it in royal taxes, tithes, and payment for certain trade goods. When it did need to trade, its goods were subject to various taxes, tolls, and market fees. Taxes and tithes not only drained part of a manor's income, they often drained its supply of coinage because a purse of silver was far easier and cheaper for the landholder and priest to transport than a cart of grain.

Taxes

Both the crown and superior landholders imposed taxes on their vassals. Churches had been immune from taxes since 6-7C. In England, the most commonly imposed royal tax was the *danegeld*, collected mostly from the poor. It was abolished by Henry III in 1162. Edward III imposed a tax on movable goods in 14C. There were poll taxes in 1379 and 1381. Other notable English royal taxes included the Saladin "Tithe" in 1188 and the ransom of Richard I in 1193. These royal taxes were collected by the sheriff and paid to the Royal Exchequer. There was a long-running debate about whether clergy were subject to royal taxes. Edward I enforced their tax obligations by denying access to royal law to clergy who refused to pay his taxes.



The Saladin Tithe was an odd mix of royal and clerical tax. Designed to finance the Crusades, it consisted of one-tenth of rents and movable goods except knightly and clerical arms, clothing, and books. The tithe was collected in the presence of the parish priest, rural dean, a Templar, a Hospitaller, a royal servant, and the bishop's clerk. Anyone who did not pay the tithe was threatened with excommunication.

Edward III gave London a letter patent to charge a tax on all carts and horses bringing goods into the city. The tax was designed to repair and maintain the roads around the city. Carts and horses bringing provisions to nobles were exempt from the tax. Other royal taxes included tolls on imports and exports – often fixed in a license issued by the Exchequer.

In France, royal taxes were first imposed by Chilperic in 6C and caused an immediate tax revolt in Limoges. The crown suppressed the rebellion, killing many of the rebels and any clergy suspected of supporting the rebellion. In 9C, the crown collected the *heribannum*, a graduated tax on free persons based on the value of their movable goods (i.e. everything but land and buildings). A few centuries later, royal taxes were imposed for support of the Kingdom of Jerusalem.

In 1166, Louis VII imposed a five year tax on the property and rents of his subjects. Henry II of England imposed the same tax on his tenants in France at double the rate for the first year. Starting in 1272, Philippe III began taxing his subjects who did not join him on military campaigns. Over the next 30 years, that tax was extended to those who did not normally serve (women and clergy), and finally even to those who served in his army.

Taxes

Item	Year	Country	Amount
Danegeld	1042-66	England	7 d per hide of land (paid in 2 installments)
Danegeld	1083	England	6 s per hide of land
Danegeld,	1096	England	4 s per hide of land
Entry Tax, London	14C	England	1 d per cart, 1 farthing per horse entering or leaving the city; carts bringing sand, gravel, or clay paid 3 d per week
Heribannum	9C	France	3 l for 6 l+ of movable goods 6 s for 3-6 l of movable goods 5 s for 1-3 l of movable goods
Property tax, royal	1166	France	1 d per 1 l value of property and rents
Rent, land on manor		typical	1 mark per virgate (32 acres)
Saladin Tithe	1188	England	1/10 of rents and most movable goods
Taille for Jean II of France's ransom	1356-80	France	6 s per town hearth, 2 s per rural hearth sales tax of 12 d per l l.

Tithes

The tithe was the most widespread tax in medieval Europe. It touched every Christian family and provided vital support to every church, monastery, and bishop. Parishioners were vitally concerned about what goods and rents were subject to the tithe and often did their best to avoid its reach. Clergy depended on tithes for their livelihood and fought vigorously to avoid evasion and keep control over tithe revenues. Church records are full of disputes between clergy over who was entitled to which tithe and how it might be spent.



Like "fief," "tithe" was used to describe a wide variety of circumstances. Its most common meaning was a tax of one-tenth of every family's gross income from agriculture and certain other sources. In Italy, it described a tax of one-tenth the produce from agriculture paid by tenant farmers to landholders. Elsewhere, it was used to describe a tax paid by tenant farmers to landholders for the use of forest and common lands. In 13-14C, it described a Church tax on clerical income used to fund the Crusades. It was used to describe some secular taxes like the English "Saladin Tithe." It was used to describe a one-tenth income tax imposed by Italian communes. "Tithe" could even be used to describe certain customs duties.

In *Fief*, "tithe" refers to the first of those, the fee imposed by the Church on every Christian family. Early references appear in 5C; secular enforcement began in 10C. According to a 9C Church council, neither hardship, nor poverty, nor slavery was an excuse for not paying the tithe. Everyone was subject to it, even clergy. In practice, most clergy paid tithe obligations on their lands and animals from their tithe income from parishioners. In 1160, Pope Adrian IV ruled that the Cistercian, Hospitaller, and Templar orders were exempt from the tithe on lands they directly managed. In some cases, monks were also exempt from tithes on land they cultivated themselves. In 1215, Innocent III added the Premonstatensian order to the list of those exempt from the tithe.

Tithes were paid on income from crops and animals. In 13C, it was extended to all labor and profit. Some sources say that "unsavory" gains from usurers, jongleurs, and prostitutes was not subject to tithe. In 1228, Bishop Roger le Noir of London con-

firmed that city-dwellers paying 20 *s* per year rent owed the Church ½ *d* each Sunday and every Apostle's fast day (8 total). Those who paid 10 *s* per year rent owed ¼ *d* on the same days. In 1343, a Canterbury synod ordered the tithe extended to timber. The English House of Commons objected and prohibited secular enforcement of any collection for old timber. In 1398, Archbishop Arundel of Canturbury added 22 saints' days to those on which city-dwellers owed tithe, adding nearly 1/3 to the Church's income.

In practice, parishioners seemed to have rounded the one-tenth in their favor. In 1311, for example, 74 lambs were born on Farnham; 6 were given to the parish church as tithes. In 1309, 94 lambs were born on Farnham; 8 were given as tithes. Using that ratio, farmers might avoid the worst effects of the tithe on their livestock. Parishioners were often suspected of cheating tithes, thus mortuary (death tax) was justified as "for tithes wilfully, or ignorantly detained or imperfectly paid."

Tithes, mortuary beasts, and donations were stored in Church-owned barns or sometimes in churches themselves. The Capitulary of Mantua (813) provided that each parish would elect 4 to 8 parishioners to witness tithe payments. Those who did not pay received 3 warnings from the parish priest. After the third warning, they were shut out of the church. Thereafter, they could be fined 6 *s* by the landholder. As a last resort, the priest could have their house closed up and the debtor imprisoned and fined if he or she tried to re-enter the dwelling.

Tithe disputes could be held in either ecclesiastical or secular courts. It was not until 13C that English secular courts ceded tithe disputes to the clergy. In 12C, the papacy increasingly became involved in disputes between clergy over tithe revenues. The ecclesiastical procedures were long, expensive, and involved many opportunities for appeals and delay. Secular courts, when available, allowed the use of *compurgation* (having others swear to one's honesty), ordeals, and judicial duels (all forbidden in ecclesiastical procedure).

To whom were tithes due? Leo IV wrote in 847 that tithes should be paid to churches where holy baptism was given. Every church was given a fixed group of estates from which it collected tithes. At first, priests regarded tithes as payment for giving the sacraments. In 835, for example, one priest withheld communion from parishioners who did not pay the tithe. The Church disagreed with this approach. In a 909 synod, it maintained that priests must administer sacraments even if they received no tithes or offerings.

Under 8C practice, churches received tithes in order of seniority – if a new church were built, it could not infringe on the tithe revenues of existing churches. In 8C, monasteries and abbeys began keeping tithes from their own lands for their use, thus depriving existing churches of their revenues. After many disputes, the Church affirmed the monks' rights.



In 9C Italy, tithe rights were strongly tied to baptismal churches. Elsewhere, tithes were collected according to local customs. By 10C, most secular landholders gave the tithes of their estates as they pleased; the Church permitted any church performing pastoral functions to receive a share of tithes. Fractions of tithes were given to various churches and monasteries. Wine tithes were popularly given to monasteries.

Tithes were a critical source of income to parish priests. In late 12C, Alexander III actively encouraged bishops and archbishops to enforce their tithe rights. A Westminister synod in 1175 ordered all tithes to be paid according to custom and hurled anathemas and excommunications against violators.

By 11-12C, many tithes had been granted to distant monasteries and orders. They sold the right to collect the tithe to local bailiffs for a fixed annual fee. In 13C, the Church finally accepted the reality that secular landholders received and controlled a fair portion of tithe revenues. In late 13C, tithes paid in coin began to replace tithes paid in grain and animals. This was a benefit to the clergy and the farm-

ers. Coin was easier to transport and allowed a papal banking system to transfer tithe credits across Europe. In lean years, clergy benefitted from a tithe calculated on average harvests. In good years, or when inflation devalued coins, farmers benefitted from the fixed sum.

In 5-6C, the tithe was believed to belong to God and was to be used exclusively for pilgrims, captives, and the poor. The sums were paid to the clergy to prevent evasion and to prevent confusion with alms. Later, tithes were considered subject to a customary distribution between bishop, clergy, fabric (physical maintenance of a church), and the poor (*quadripartition*), or between bishop, clergy, and fabric (*tripartition*). Quadripartion was common in England, Germany, and Italy. Tripartion was common in France and Spain. Local clergy received the tithes and sent their bishops an annual accounting. Bishops were expected to examine the accounts for signs of fraud or misuse. In some areas, bishops could assign the share for the fabric and the poor outside the parish, often to a monastery.

Tithes made their way to the Papacy through its internal tax system. In 1199, Pope Innocent II imposed a direct tax on the Church to finance the Fourth Crusade. The tax was again imposed in 1215 for the Fifth Crusade. The papal tax system was dramatically overhauled by John XXII (1316-34).

Tolls

Tolls were mainly fees charged on travelers and merchandise to build, maintain, and repair roads and bridges. Landholders whose land contained navigable rivers or minor roads levied tolls. The French crown tried to reduce tolls in 8-9C in order to improve trade. The English crown created royal highways in 13C which were free of tolls. In 1187, William II of Sicily abolished all tolls on bridges, rivers, and roads in his royal demise. In theory, pilgrims and students were immune to tolls; in practice, it depended on the landholder's whims.

Excessive tolls encouraged traffic to find other routes and so tended to be self-limiting. One abbot charged a toll for use of a bridge by anyone except armed knights (whom he feared). A noble charged a toll on every cart of merchandise that used his road and spent the money on repairing the road. In 1353, Edward III granted a patent for a tax on all merchandise going to the staple (market) at Westminister, the proceeds to be used to repair that road. Cities charged tolls on crafters and on goods passing through their gates. Coblenz, Germany, for example, charged a toll of one loaf of bread per week from each of its bakers, 8 *d* per year from cobblers, and imposed a tax on foreign shoemakers trading in the town.



XI. Trade

Though markets and fairs are terms often used indiscriminately, there is a difference between them, for fairs deal with larger things and only once in the year, or at least rarely in the same place, and to them come men from afar. But markets are for lesser things, the daily necessities of life; they are held weekly and only people from near at hand come. Hence markets are morally worse than fairs. They are held on feast days, and men miss thereby the divine office and the sermon and even disobey the precept of hearing Mass, and attend these meetings against the Church's command. Sometimes, too, they are held in graveyards and other holy places . . . Sometimes again the lord is defrauded of market dues, which is perfidy and disloyalty . . . Sometimes, too, quarrels happen and violent disputes . . . Drinking is occasioned . . .

– Humbert de Romans (1194-1277)

A manor was nearly self-sufficient. Given average weather and conditions, it supplied all the food necessary to feed its residents and animals, all of the raw wool needed for their clothing, all of the wood needed for building, cooking, heat, and tools, and all of the labor it needed. It had a mill to grind its grain and an oven for its bread. Its crafters built and maintained its buildings, fences, and tools.

But even in average years, it often needed to import some things. If not located on a shore, it needed salt to preserve meat for the winter. If not located on a river or coast, it needed fish for meals on Church meatless days. If its landholder did not have the right to take wood from a nearby forest, it needed wood for buildings and heat. It might also need pitch, tar, and heavy stone for construction and repair. It might need iron and other metals for tools and weapons. The church needed wine for services; landholders wanted wine for their tables. Although taxes and tithes could be paid in goods, it was often easier to pay in coin. Occasionally, a manor might import skilled laborers, especially stone masons and, of course, would need coins to pay the laborers' salary. Finally, a manor needed to exchange some of its goods for coin to pay those officials owed cash salaries.

Thus, even in average years, a manor had to engage in some trade. It exported ale, apples, beer, deadstock (hides and meat), garden crops, grain (often wheat), hay, livestock, nuts, wood, and wool. On some manors, farmers first had to offer their cattle and horses to the landholder, who could purchase at 2-4 *d* below the market price. If a manor was located near a cloth manufacturing city, like those in Flanders or northern Italy, its women might be hired as spinners and weavers. The wool factor would sell them the raw wool or raw thread and buy back the finished thread or cloth.

Unfortunately, most of its exports went to local markets, which shared basically the same weather and resources. If a manor had a good year, chances were its neighbors did as well, and the local market prices were depressed by the surplus. If a manor had a bad year, again its neighbors did as well, and the local grain price rose. Transporting heavy grain over large distances was difficult and costly. In most regions, wagons pulled by oxen carried grain to market. In mountainous regions, goods were carried in baskets and bundles on human backs. In these areas portability was a major component of trade.

Only a manor blessed with a navigable river, major road, or port could break out of its local markets and perhaps grow into a profitable holding or even a regional trade center.



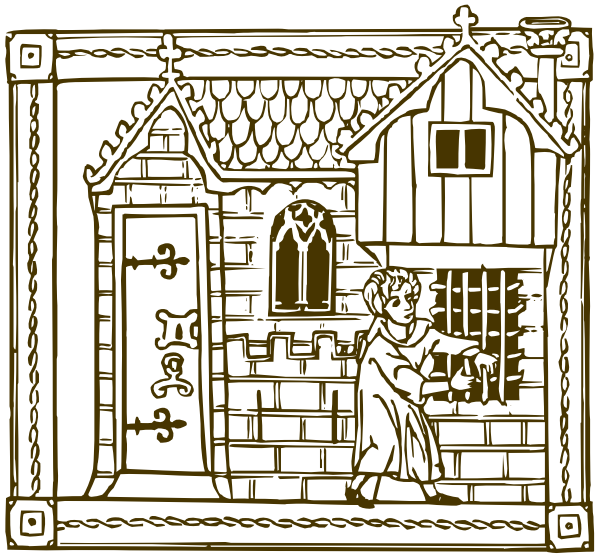
Debt

If you can improve your lands by tillage or cattle, or other means beyond the extent, put the surplus in reserve, for if corn fails, or cattle die, or fire befall you, or other mishap, then what you have saved will help you. If you spend in a year the value of your lands and profit, and one of these chances befall you, you have no recovery except by borrowing, and he who borrows from another robs himself.

– William of Henley

Landholders were chronically in debt. A manor faced enough disasters to upset its average equilibrium. Society made a virtue of generosity and a vice of frugality. Thus, in good years a landholder was expected to demonstrate his or her good fortune with feasts and gifts. In a bad year, there were few reserves and little ready cash for supplies. Even if a landholder were frugal, a single reign by a profligate successor could drain a manor's reserves of decades of careful management.

After a bad harvest, a landholder might look to his or her neighbors and liege. Unfortunately, they would likely be suffering as well. Bad weather, disease, natural disasters, or war had likely hit the entire region. The landholder might look to the Church or his or her family, but again risked that they had been struck by the same disaster.



Problems were also built into the manor's economics. The landholder's income was mostly in labor and in kind. Fees and fines were fixed by custom and could not easily be raised. It was thus hard for landholders to react to inflation or coin devaluations.

Meanwhile, a landholder's needs were becoming more expensive. Armor was heavier and more elaborate in 13-15C than in 9-12C. A knight needed a heavier war horse to bear the extra weight, which was more expensive to breed and to feed. As reliefs and tithes began to be paid in coin, not kind, the landholder had to sell surplus for coin or borrow.

Landholders could turn to either the "Lombards" or to Jewish moneylenders. During 9-15C, the Church forbade Christians to lend money to other Christians at interest. The "Lombards" were northern Italian bankers who found various subterfuges to avoid this prohibition. Lombard bankers were common in many European cities. Jewish rabbis did not prohibit Jews from lending at interest to non-Jews. Faced with Christian prohibitions and prejudices against Jews in the guilds and trades, many Jewish communities and families turned to moneylending to survive.

In 13C England, small landholders were the bulk of the Jewish moneylenders' clients. They offered three basic loan systems. First, one could *pawn* (pledge) some valuable item for the debt. If the pawn was not redeemed during the term of the loan, the moneylender could sell it. Jewish moneylenders could not take church vessels, bloodstained or damp clothing, an artisan or crafter's tools, or unwinnowed grain as pawns.

Second, one could borrow money by contract, often secured by land or by property remaining in the debtor's possession. The debt contract was sealed, often by royal officials charged with this task. Copies of the contract were kept by the lender, debtor, and crown. Interest rates were high. Phillippe II of France capped the legal rate of interest in 13C Franc at 2 *d* per 1 *l* per week, or 43% per year. (It was difficult to foreclose on an armed landholder in a fortified manor house, however). The Church sometimes ordered Jews to stay or forgive debts of Crusaders. The crown sometimes seized Jewish leaders to force them to forgive debts. At times compound interest was allowed; at times it was forbidden. At times the crown ordered Jews to let debtors have three years to repay, free of additional interest; sometimes it rigorously enforced debts.

Third, one could assign a right to income – bridge tolls, mill multure, taxes, even tithes – for a fixed period. In this case, the creditor took over all collection efforts until the period ended. The debtor

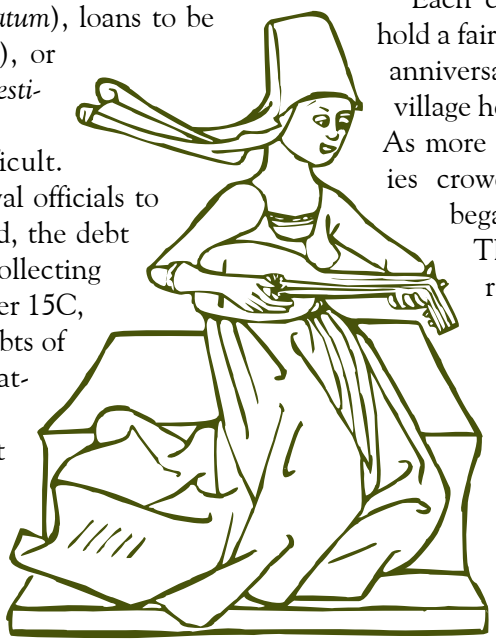
Fair Fees

Item	Date	Location	Price
Bed, rented	1250-1320	Huntingdonshire	4 ½ d for fair
Bed, rented	1250-1320	Winchester	½ d per night
Entry fee, cider	1250-1320	Winchester	4 d per cask
Entry fee, geese	1250-1320	Winchester	1 goose of 13
Entry fee, wheat	1250-1320	Winchester	2 d per cartload
Entry fee, wine	1250-1320	Winchester	4 d per cask
Fine, juror's failure to appear	1250-1320	Winchester	6 d
House, purchase, near fairgrounds	1250-1320	Winchester	30 l
Stall rental	1250-1320	Winchester	3 d per day

could be sued in royal court if he or she interfered with the collection.

Farmers also borrowed money, usually from each other. They bought goods and services on credit or installment payments, pledged to make annual payments, and pledged as sureties on each others' debts. The sums were small. In 1382-1429, a study of Writtle's court found debt collection suits ranged in amounts from 2 to 10 *s*. The debts were either loans of goods to be returned (*commodatum*), loans to be paid in money or grain (*mutuum*), or loans to be repaid in services (*prestitum*).

Enforcing loans was difficult. Moneylenders often turned to royal officials to foreclose on property. If that failed, the debt was sold to someone capable of collecting it, often a rival of the debtor. In later 15C, large landholders began buying debts of smaller landholders and consolidating their lands. Collection suits between farmers could be brought up to ten years after the default, even if the creditor and debtor had both died.



Moneylenders were, not surprisingly, very unpopular. Partly this was because they were foreigners (Italians) or of a different faith (Jews). Partly it was because moneylenders lived in towns and cities, rarely having any personal ties to their clients. One of the first things that happened in any uprising was for a moneylender's books to be destroyed and the moneylender himself killed.

Local Fairs

Most of a manor's trade was done at local fairs and nearby market towns. Markets were held weekly in larger villages, in towns, and at the gates of some abbeys and castles. These traded grain, food, and local crafts. Local officials were supposed to ensure fair dealing, but strangers were considered fair game for swindles.

Each church had a traditional right to hold a fair on the feast of its saint and on the anniversary of its dedication. Thus, each village held at least one local fair each year. As more chapels, churches, and monasteries crowded the countryside, their fairs began stealing each others' markets. The English crown eventually required landholders to either have a license (*morlat*) to hold a fair or to demonstrate a customary right to hold it. In applying for a morlat, the landholder had to assert that the fair would not prejudice the rights of existing fairs. The crown often required fairs to be at least 7 miles apart – a reasonable distance assuming a farmer traveled 1/3 of a day to the fair, spent 1/3 of a day at the fair, and returned home in the remaining 1/3 of a day. Multiday fairs had a larger minimum distance, estimated at about 20 miles. Moreover, in 1328, Edward III required landholders to announce at the beginning of each fair how long it would last so that both the landholder and mer-

chants would depart at the end of the chartered duration. The fair holder also had to cry any applicable assizes (often those fixing prices for bread and ale), test weights and measures, and test the quality of any wine sold.



At first, local fairs were held in the church's yard. The Church disapproved because fairs were often associated with brawls, dancing, drinking, and other unchurchly activities. In 1283, Edward I forbade fairs and markets to be held in churchyards.

Larger fairs divided merchants into various groups. Livestock was sold outside the town or village proper. Grain was sold in another area and wool in a third. A farmer might find himself or herself moving from market to market to sell their wares. Some entered into temporary partnerships to maximize their sales.

Because all of the local farmers were gathered at a fair, it was a good time for the landholder to call a manorial court and make important announcements. Many fairs were followed by a communal feast called a lee-ale or scot-ale. Villagers each paid a fee to provide food for these feasts.

Various ball games were often played between rival villages. In general the rules were simple, the teams large, and the action furious. Broken bones and even accidental deaths were reported in several court rolls. Ball games included the ancestors of soccer, hockey, cricket, bowling, handball, and tennis. Wrestling and archery competitions, foot races, bear-baiting, and cock fighting were common.

Disputes between vendors and fairgoers at local fairs were settled by the village's reeve. The reeve and 2-3 others also witnessed contracts. Disputes at large fairs were settled by the Court of Pie-Powder (from *pieds poudres* – dusty feet). The court tried cases before a jury of traders and settled contracts for goods, disturbances at the fair, and slander of wares. Its jurisdiction was only over actions at the fair and within its bounds. It could only punish a thief, for example, if he stole from the fair's merchants and was caught within its grounds. In 1478, Edward IV reformed these courts following allegations of corruption and abuse.

At large French fairs, judges were appointed by the regional landholder to settle disputes. In 1349, Philippe VI ordered that every royally chartered fair could have two wardens, one chancellor for its seal, two lieutenants, 40 notaries, and 100 sergeants. The wardens and chancellors made annual reports of the state of the fair to the Chamber of Accounts in Paris. A 1349 law also dealt with the payment and settlement of contracts made at the fair and required each contract to be marked with the fair's seal if it were to be enforced by the fair's judges.

The largest fairs were those held in Champagne, Novgorod, Aix-la-Chapelle, Geneva, Cologne, Frankfort, Bruges, and Stourbridge. The St. Ives fair, Huntingdonshire (1 month following Easter), and St. Giles fair, Winchester (first two weeks of September), were among England's major fairs. In 15C, Florence's fairs took in at least 15-16 million *l* per year. These fairs were international centers for trade lasting for several weeks, where vast amounts of goods and coin were exchanged. Unless a manor was on one of these fair's trade routes or near the fair itself, they would have little effect on its economy.



PRICES

Item	Date	Location	Price
Ale, per gallon	1301	Oxford, England	1 ½ d
Ale, per gallon	1356	London	1 ½ d
Ass	1326-50	Pistoia	11 l
Ass	1350	Ravenna	8 l
Ass	1351-75	Pistoia, Italy	15 l (ave)
Ass	1376-1400	Pistoia, Italy	20 l 8 s (ave)
Ass	1400-25	Pistoia, Italy	16 l 4 s (ave)
Barley, per bushel	1210	Farnham, England	1 s 6 d
Barley, per bushel	1213	Farnham, England	2 s 4 d
Barley, per bushel	1301	Oxford, England	7 ½ d
Barley, per bushel	1356	London	7 ½ d
Barley, per bushel	1370	London	7 d
Barley, per bushel	1387	London	6 d
Beer, 3 persons, 1 day	1210	Newcastle, England	4 d
Bread, 3 persons, 1 day	1331	Newcastle, England	2 d
Butter, per pound	1299	Farnham, England	1 d
Butter, per pound	1301	Farnham, England	½ d
Calf	1326-50	Pistoia, Italy	17 l 3 s (ave)
Calf	1351-75	Pistoia, Italy	19 l 9 s (ave)
Calf	1376-1400	Pistoia, Italy	30 l (ave)
Calf	1400-25	Pistoia, Italy	20 l 2 s (ave)
Cannon	1350s	England	13 s 4 d
Carriage	1333	England	1,000 l
Carriage	1397	England	400 l
Cart, body	1313-14	Glatton, England	18 d
Cart, farm, used	1303	Farnham, England	9 s
Cart, fit wheel to axle	1356-7	Pittington, England	3 d
Cart, wheel	1313-14	Glatton, England	8 d
Cart, wheel	1293-4	Knowle, England	8 d
Cask, empty	1300-05	England	8 d
Cheese, per 182 lbs	1210	Farnham, England	6 s 5 d
Cheese, per 182 lbs	1248	Farnham, England	7 s
Cheese, per 182 lbs	1290	Farnham, England	9 s
Chicken	1213	Farnham, England	½ d
Chicken	1232	Farnham, England	1 d
Coal, sea, per bushel	1300-05	England	1 d
Coffer, ornamented	1384	Florence, Italy	7-8 l (pair)
Cow	mid-8C	England	3 s
Cow	1213	Farnham, England	2 s
Cow	1262	Farnham, England	9 s 9 d
Cow	1263-4	Pistolia, Italy	21 l 8 s (ave)
Cow	14C	England	9 s 5 d
Cow	1302	Pisa	18 l
Cow	1326-50	Pistoia, Italy	21 l 8 s (ave)

PRICES

Item	Date	Location	Price
Cow	1348-9	Waltham, England	3 s 4½ d
Cow	1350	Ravenna	10 l
Cow	1351-75	Pistoia, Italy	37 l 7 s (ave)
Cow	1376-1400	Pistoia, Italy	49 l 5 s (ave)
Cow	1400-25	Pistoia, Italy	35 l 7 s (ave)
Eggs, per thousand	1220	Farnham, England	1 s 8 d
Eggs, per thousand	1232	Farnham, England	2 s 6 d
Fetters	1222	Farnham, England	6 d
Fodder, 3 horses, 1 day	1331	Newcastle, England	10 d
Fowl	14C	England	1 d
Goat	1326-50	Pistoia, Italy	2 l 1 s (ave)
Goat	1351-75	Pistoia, Italy	2 l 8 s (ave)
Goat	1376-1400	Pistoia, Italy	3 l 3 s (ave)
Goat	1400-25	Pistoia, Italy	3 l 2 s (ave)
Ginger	13C	England	70 s
Goshawk, female †	15C	England	3 l 10 s
Goshawk, male †	15C	England	28 s
Herring, per thousand	1220	London, England	5 s
Horse, cart/work	1250-1350	England	28 s 6 d
Horse, cart	1348-9	Waltham, England	7 s 10¾ d
Horse, courser	1154-89	England	20-30 s
Horse, courser	1250-1350	England	10-50 l
Horse, courser	1302	Artois, France	60 l
Horse, destrier	1154-89	England	30-60 s
Horse, destrier	1250-1350	England	50-100 l
Horse, "hobby"	1250-1350	England	40 s - 2 l
Horse, "pack"	1250-1350	England	7-8 s
Horse, palfry	11C	England	20-30 s
Horse, palfry	1250-1350	England	10-50 l
Horse, palfry	1302	Artois, France	50 l
Horse, plow	mid-8C	England	12 s
Horse, plow	1208	Farnham, England	6 s 1 d
Horse, plow	1225	Farnham, England	6 s 5 d
Horse, plow	1326-50	Pistoia, Italy	24 l 7 s (ave)
Horse, plow	1351-75	Pistoia, Italy	36 l 4 s (ave)
Horse, plow	1376-1400	Pistoia, Italy	38 l 3 s (ave)
Horse, plow	1400-25	Pistoia, Italy	41 l 2 s (ave)
Horse, rouncy	1250-1350	England	5-10 l
Horse, rouncy	1302	Artois, France	34 l
Horse, war (see pg 34)			
Horse, work	1348-9	Waltham, England	2 s 6 d
Millet, per bushel	1170	Pisa, Italy	½ s

† hunting bird

PRICES

Item	Date	Location	Price
Millet, per bushel	1173	Pisa, Italy	3½ s
Millet, per bushel	1174	Pisa, Italy	6 s
Millet, per bushel	1371	Verona, Italy	30 s
Millstone	1285	Farnham, England	40 s
Millstone	1287	Farnham, England	37½ s
Mule	1326-50	Pistoia, Italy	75 l 9 s (ave)
Mule	1351-75	Pistoia, Italy	76 l 1 s (ave)
Mule	1376-1400	Pistoia, Italy	81 l 6 s (ave)
Mule	1400-25	Pistoia, Italy	62 l 3 s (ave)
Oats, per bushel	1170	Pisa, Italy	2 s
Oats, per bushel	1174	Pisa, Italy	5 s
Oats, per bushel	1210	Farnham, England	1 s 3 d
Oats, per bushel	1251	Farnham, England	1 s 10 d
Oats, per bushel	1301	Oxford, England	4 d
Ox	1182-88	England	4 s 2 d
Ox	1192	England	3 s
Ox	1201	England	7 s
Ox	1210	Farnham, England	5 s 7 d
Ox	1246	Farnham, England	6 s
Ox	14C	England	13 s 1 d
Ox	1306	Siena, Italy	16 l 10 s
Ox	1326-50	Pistoia, Italy	19 l 8 s (ave)
Ox	1348-9	Waltham, England	9 s 4 d
Ox	1351-75	Pistoia, Italy	34 l 3 s (ave)
Ox	1376-1400	Pistoia, Italy	48 l 6 s (ave)
Ox	1400-25	Pistoia, Italy	32 l 8 s (ave)
Pig	118-1192	England	2 s
Pig	1201	England	2 s
Pig	1222	Farnham, England	2 s
Pig	1287	Farnham, England	1 s 6 d
Pig	1348-9	Waltham, England	3 s
Plates	1303	England	1 s
Plaustrum, wheel	1276-7	Knowle, England	20 d
Pot, brass	1303	England	4 s
Pot, water	1303	England	12 d
Rye, per bushel	1210	Farnham, England	2 s
Salt, per bushel	1289	Farnham, England	3 d
Salt, per pound	1287	England	½ d
Salt, per pound	1300	England	1 1/4 d
Sheep	1180s	England	6 d
Sheep	1192	England	4 d
Sheep	1201	England	10 d
Sheep	1265	Farnham, England	1 s 3 d
Sheep	14C	England	1 s 5 d

PRICES

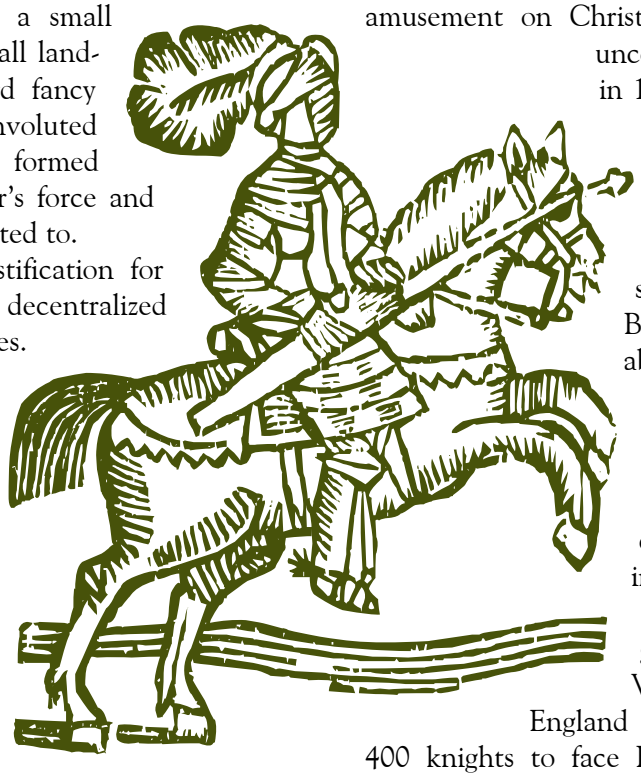
Item	Date	Location	Price
Sheep	1326-50	Pistoia, Italy	1 l 8 s (ave)
Sheep	1351-75	Pistoia, Italy	2 l 2 s (ave)
Sheep	1376-1400	Pistoia, Italy	3 l 4 s (ave)
Sheep	1401-25	Pistoia, Italy	2 l 5 s (ave)
Sheep, 20 †	1307	Montaillou, France	10 l
Springald ††	1350s	England	3 l 6 s 8 d
Sword & sheath	mid-8C	England	7 s
Tripod and andiron	1303	England	6 d
Tub and brewing apparatus	1303	England	2 s
Vat, brewing	1303	England	2 s
Wheat, per bushel	1165	England	1 s 9½ d
Wheat, per bushel	1170	Pisa, Italy	3 s
Wheat, per bushel	1173	Pisa, Italy	4 s
Wheat, per bushel	1174	Pisa, Italy	9 s
Wheat, per bushel	1178	England	1 s 7 d
Wheat, per bushel	1184	England	1 s 10 d
Wheat, per bushel	1210	Farnham, England	3 s
Wheat, per bushel	1213	Farnham, England	2 s
Wheat, per bushel	1251	Farnham, England	3 s
Wheat, per bushel	1301	Oxford, England	1 s
Wheat, per bushel	1346	Lincon, England	3 d
Wheat, per bushel	1369	Verona, Italy	27 d
Wheat, per bushel	1371	Verona, Italy	55 d
Wine, per gallon	1170	Pisa, Italy	4 s
Wine, per gallon	1173	Pisa, Italy	8 s
Wine, per gallon	1174	Pisa, Italy	15 s
Wine, per gallon	1290	Farnham, England	3½ d
Wine, per gallon	1300	England	2 ½ d
Wool, per pound	1208	Farnham, England	1½ d
Wool, per pound	1251	Farnham, England	2½ d
Wool, per pound	1298	Farnham, England	2½ d

† plus 6 l for their wool
†† fixed crossbow used for sieges



XII. Warfare

There are many fine books on medieval weapons and armor. *Fief* can barely scratch the surface of the styles of armor and weapons, knights' tactics, and the history of battles. And most of those refinements were outside a small landholder's concerns. Small landholders could rarely afford fancy equipment or evolve convoluted tactics. Most often, they formed part of a larger landholder's force and served as they were instructed to.



The main military justification for manors was to support a decentralized cavalry and support forces. From a landholder's perspective, the manor provided a steady supply of food, feed and fodder, scattered fortifications, labor on fortifications and roads, and money for armor and weapons. From a farmer's perspective, the manor provided a nearby fortification and a trained, armored warrior to respond quickly to brigands and greedy neighbors. From a higher noble's perspective, manors provided a body of trained warriors and fortifications which he or she did not need to maintain. The noble needed only provide some support for contingencies.

In 1307, Humphrey de Bohun, Earl of Hereford, retained Sir Bartholomew de Enfield, a landless knight, for life. In peace, Sir Bartholomew received hay and oats for four horses, wages for three men and his chamberlain, and could dine in Earl Humphrey's hall. In war, Sir Bartholomew received hay and oats for eight horses, wages for seven men and his chamberlain, and sufficient horses for himself in war and in tournament. In addition, Sir Bartholomew received land worth 40 silver marks per annum (3 *l* 5 *s* 4 *p*), which could be seized by the earl if he failed to perform the military services due.

There were a few manors held for nonmilitary duties called sergeanties. The landowner might be obligated to look after a liege's hawks or dogs, or provide equipment or naval vessels. In one particularly silly example, the holder of Hemingstone in Suffolk was obligated to leap, whistle, and fart for the king's amusement on Christmas Day. Sergeanties were uncommon, and were phased out in 13C in favor of military service or rents.

Armies

Medieval armies were small. The entire force at the Battle of Hastings (1066) was about 8,000 soldiers, of which 2,000-3,000 were cavalry. William the Conqueror's post-conquest army consisted of 5,000-6,000 knights, each owing 2 months service in war and 40 days' service in peace, not counting castle garrison duties. When Louis VI of France faced Henry I of England at Brémule (1119), he had 400 knights to face Henry's 500 knights. Three French knights were killed, 140 were taken prisoner (common soldiers and peasants were often beneath the notice of chroniclers).

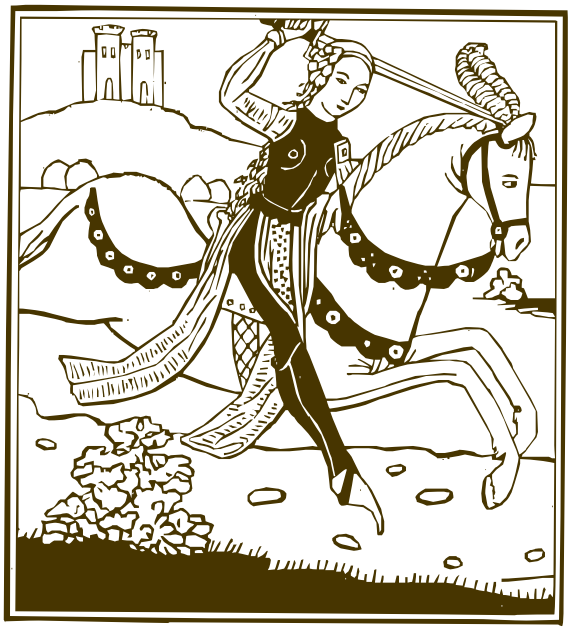
The army was loosely organized into units of major landholders and their vassals. There were no standing armies or organized regiments. Each group had its own loyalties, goals, and rivalries. The French, in particular, were cursed with poor discipline in the Hundred Years War. Knights rode over each other and their own auxiliary forces in their haste to engage the English and capture knights for ransom. In addition to the landholder's units, there might also be mercenaries, auxiliaries, servants, and camp followers.

Heraldry came into fashion in mid-13C as a way to distinguish armored knights and their units in battle or on the tournament field. Heraldry started as a fairly simple system, but quickly evolved a complex set of rules about colors, images, and their posi-

tions. Heralds appeared in early 14C to identify tournament combatants, supervise festivals, and sort out the heraldic rules.

Some landholders served in armies as part of their duties to their liege. When that obligation ended, the landholders were free to return home unless paid. Many landholders disputed just what military service they owed. In 1171, the English crown found that landholders claimed to owe about half the fighters the crown thought were due.

Sometimes landholders were paid from the start. In December, 1181, Count Baldwin V of Hainault spent 1,850 silver marks to go to war, remain there, and return in five weeks. The Count also had to pay mercenaries to defend his own fief. He paid 600 *l* to one group in a village near Valenciennes and 400 *l* to another at a village near Brabant.



Summoning the Army

The English army was summoned when the crown sent sheriffs to serve a writ of summons on its royal vassals. The writ gave a specific time and place to gather for military service. The vassals, who each owed a fixed number of fighters, then sent summons to their vassals, and so on until all those who owed service were notified. It took about three to eight weeks to gather the royal army.

If a landholder disobeyed a summons to war, the consequences ranged from a fine (40-50 *s* in 11C) to forfeiture of one's lands, depending on the type of summons and the landholder's specific obligations.

Landholder's Obligations

Landholders and landless knights served as the army's cavalry. In 11-12C, anyone who fought on horseback was a knight (*milites*). By 14C, mounted warriors were divided into bannerets, knights, squires, sergeants, and valets. The distinction was based on skill, wealth, and social status. Bannerets were paid twice as much as knights, who were in turn paid twice as much as squires and sergeants.

Bannerets commanded and supported between ten and fifteen knights, their equipment, and retainers – an expensive undertaking beyond the means of a small landholder. "Knight" described any mounted warrior. It was often a hereditary rank, depending primarily on whether the candidate had the wealth to maintain the necessary armor and horses. In 1224 and 1241, the English king ordered that every adult man holding 80 *l* worth of land should be knighted. The law was unpopular and only sporadically obeyed by landholders, who wished to avoid the financial costs of knighthood.

Sergeants appeared as a rank in late 12C. These were also mounted warriors who seem to have owed their landholder military service separately from their right to hold their land. Squires and valets were lesser-paid mounted warriors – the ranks are sometimes used interchangeably.

Landless knights were members of a large landholder's household. Some were given small amounts of land (*berwicks*) which supplied their food and clothing, but were too small to support their arms, armor, and horses.

War required a significant investment. In 12C, a knight's armor and weapons cost perhaps 30 *s*. This included chain armor, a metal helmet, a lance or spear, a sword, and a shield. By the end of 13C, it cost 50 *s*. This now included heavier mixed chain and plate armor, a metal helmet, a lance, a sword, a shield, and likely horse armor. The extra weight required a larger horse, which in turn was more expensive to breed and to feed. Until 13C, every knight was expected to have three horses: a warhorse, and two riding horses (rounceys). Many wealthy knights maintained four or five horses during war. After 13C, the cost of maintaining horses had become so expensive, that some landholders who had the revenues to become knights refused the honor. These non-knight warriors were sometimes called men-at-arms (*homines ad arma*).

The reason that a knight needed so many horses was that if one were forced to do heavy work (like carrying a knight around a battlefield) for more than 3 hours per day over 5 or 6 days it would collapse from overwork. Knights maintained several horses so they could rotate them on campaign. On top of this, horses were expensive to feed. A single horse needs 10 pounds of hay and 8 gallons of water per day. If it is doing heavy work, it needs an additional 10 pounds of oats per day.

The return on the landholder's investment was speculative. In battle, the landholder risked his life, his health, and his wealth. If captured, he could be held for ransom. Custom held that the amount should not bankrupt him, but any lesser amount was acceptable. (In some cases, the landholder or household knight's liege might pay the ransom, compensate for crippling injuries, and replaced damaged equipment and wounded horses). If successful, however, the landholder could win rich ransoms and pillage spoils. After a successful campaign, a monarch or liege also often awarded cash bonuses or land for outstanding valor.



The English Assize of Arms (1181) required "every holder of a knight's fee have a hauberk, helmet, a shield, and a lance." In 1282, Edward I required all of his subjects with at least 30 *l* in landed income to keep a warhorse and armor. An English Assize of Arms (1347) required landholders with 30 *s* of land to supply one man-at-arms (usually the landholder) and one archer. Some small landholders held a *sergeanty of archery* which required them to serve 40 days each year with a crossbow.

The French *Etablishments de Saint Louis* (c.1270) required barons and royal vassals to serve for 40 days and 40 nights to defend the kingdom and set the rate for paid service after that term ended. If called to fight outside the kingdom, even if paid, a landholder did not have to serve. By 1282, Charles of Anjou expected a knight to have 4 horses and 3 aides (an esquire and 2 "boys") armed with sword and dagger.

The Norman Kingdom of Sicily in 12C required nearly any male who could supply a war horse (a *destrenus* or a *ronzinus*) to do so. The war horse could not be used for farming, and had to be fed with barley. Farmers (likely free peasants) could serve as royal knights on occasion. The Norman army also included *servientes,* who seem to be equivalent to unlanded household knights. Many served the crown by garrisoning royal castles.

Scutage

At first, English landholders were expected to serve 2 months in war and 40 days in peace. By 13C, a landholder could substitute a fee for this direct personal service. The commutation, called *scutage* or *scutagium,* was eventually used to escape military service altogether. The rate in late 12C was approximately 6 *d* per day owed. In 1277 it was 2 *s* per day owed for a knight and 1 *s* per day owed for a sergeant/man-at-arms.

Scutage was primarily an English custom and was more rarely allowed in France and Germany. Italian landholders had few formal military duties. Their armies were mostly composed of hired mercenaries.

There are several theories about why the English monarchs allowed landholders to pay scutage. Perhaps it was easier to accept payment which could supply and support a smaller army rather than try to maintain and transport a large force drawn from the entire island. A monarch had more use for a few hundred knights who would campaign for a year rather than a host of thousands of knights who would serve for only a month.

Edward I (1272-1307) increasingly relied on paid knights and soldiers rather than relying on feudal duties. Although some barons resisted becoming, in effect, royal mercenaries, many were happy for the coin.

Peasant's Obligations

Despite the impression given by the *chansons de geste* (knightly romances), the medieval army was more than just mounted knights. It included foot soldiers (*pedites*), *sergeants*, and archers, who were usually peasants and townspeople. Some soldiers were small landholders who could not afford a knight's equipment.

In 1181, Henry II ruled that all free English men could be summoned to defend the kingdom and the crown. All those in Henry's continental possessions with 100 *l* worth of movable goods were to have a horse and knight's equipment. Those with 20 *l* to 40 *l* worth of movable goods were to have a haubergeon (mail shirt), spear, and sword. The poorest were to have a gambeson (quilted cloth shirt), iron cap, spear, and sword or bow and arrows. For England, those with an annual income or movable goods worth 40 *l* were to have a complete set of knight's armor. Those with 28 *l* to 40 *l* of income or goods were to have a haubergeon, iron headpiece, and lance. The poorest were to have a gambeson, iron headpiece, and spear. English law also regulated the sale, pawn, and export of weapons.



Starting in late 13C, soldiers were recruited by royal commissioners of array. The royal commissioners were given a quota of soldiers to recruit from a given county or region. Abuse and corruption were common. Villages and small towns saw commissions as a way to rid themselves of troublemakers and criminals. For some farmers, however, a soldier's pay and the chance of booty was a reasonable incentive to volunteer.

English royal foot soldiers were loosely organized into units of twenty under a *vintenar*, and one hundred under a constable. There was frequent change among the members of a unit and no sense of regimental identity. Desertion, especially when the army was near its home territory or working with better paid mercenary units, was common.

Foot soldiers were needed for sieges and for castle garrisons. In a siege, they stormed walls and foraged for supplies. In a peace-time garrison, they defended a fortification from bandits, peasant uprisings, and sudden attacks. In war, the garrison doubled or tripled so that it could protect the fortification and harass opposing armies, foraging parties, and scouts. A major royal castle might have a wartime garrison of 500 soldiers and 150 knights.

Peasants were allowed to own weapons to protect their homes from bandits and criminals. Indeed, royal accounts suggest that monarchs did not equip "conscripted" troops. Peasants were expected to bring their own weapons or be supplied by their village or landholder. Peasants were not allowed to carry weapons except during war. In 1152, Emperor Frederick I ordered judges to fine any peasant who carried arms.

In war, a soldier's equipment included a steel cap, mail coif, hauberk, leather gorget, soft leather leg armor, chausses with metal studs, and an axe or pole-arm. The soldier's armor was likely a generation or two out of date. Other weapons might include a sword or bow. Unlike knights, soldiers were always paid, either by their landholder or by whoever summoned the army. Their pay did not include food. The English monarch bought and transported large quantities of food to its armies, where it was sold at a profit or given as a reward for success. Food might also be distributed in lieu of wages.

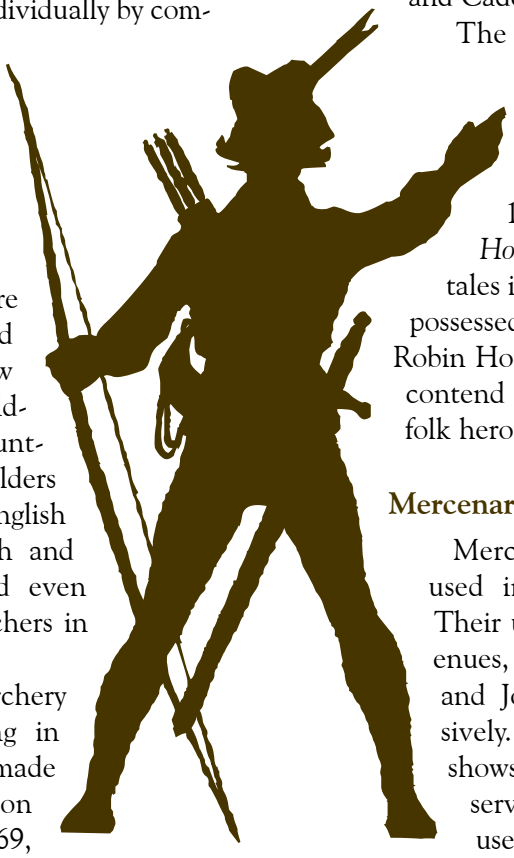
Count Bouchard of Vendôme secured the town guards' services from April to August in one year. For April to May, he paid the guards' wages from his own pocket. For June to August, he paid their wages from a tax (*gaitagium*) on the townspeople. For the remainder of the year, his vassals each sent one month's garrison as part of their duties.

Being a solider was dangerous. Knights considered it dishonorable to be captured by peasants or mercenaries. They also knew that some soldiers, particularly the Flemish and Swiss, often killed knights rather than take ransoms. Knights also realized that peasant and mercenary armor and weapons were

rarely worth the effort of capturing them. Thus, knights rode down soldiers while looking for more "worthy" adversaries. Even worse, the knights on one's own side sometimes rode down their own soldiers in their haste to engage other knights. Finally, archers and soldiers were outside the chivalric code; they could be tortured and executed with impunity.

Archers

The English relied heavily on archers. Unlike soldiers, archers were usually recruited as part of a noble's retinue, not conscripted individually by commissioners of array. In 1345-46, a landholder owning 5 *l* of land was asked to provide one archer for the royal army, those owning 10 *l* a mounted archer (hobelar), and those owning 10 *l* to 20 *l* one man at arms.



Their principal weapons were the long bow (likely introduced around mid-11C) and the crossbow (introduced in 12C). Both landholders and peasants used bows for hunting and competitions, but landholders did not use bows in battle. The English preferred long bows. The French and Italians preferred crossbows, and even introduced mounted crossbow archers in mid-13C.

There are records of regular archery competitions in England starting in early 13C. In 1363, Edward III made archery contests compulsory on Sundays and feast days. In 1369, Edward III ordered sheriffs in London to forbid healthy men from any other sport – "throwing of stones, wood, iron, handball, football, bandyball, cambuck, or cock fighting, nor other such like vain plays" – and instead to practice archery. Edward IV issued another ban on dice and other amusements in 1470.

In 1472, Edward IV noted the dearness of bows and regulated prices and orders. Merchants were required to import 4 bow staves per ton of merchandise with their wares.

The French, having been victims of English longbows in several battles, did train their own archers. The French crown did not promote archery as the English, but it did encourage corporations of archers in major towns.

The Scots had also often been victims of English archers. James I of Scotland ordered in 1424 that all men practice as archers from age 12. The command was sporadically followed until muskets began to replace bows in 16C.

Having a reserve of trained archers was dangerous. Many of Wat Tyler's followers in the 1281 Peasant Rebellion were archers. Archers were also prominent in the 1414 Oldcastle rebellion and Cade's rebellion of 1450.

The legend of Robin Hood, England's most famous archer, is mentioned in *Piers Plowman* in 1377; a number of Robin Hood ballads were collected in 1495 in the *Lytell Geste of Robyn Hode* (The Robin Hood of these tales is a yeoman, a peasant, not a dispossessed noble). Some historians believe Robin Hood was an actual person; others contend he was a composite of various folk heroes.

Mercenaries

Mercenaries were most commonly used in Italy and southern France. Their use depended upon reliable revenues, usually from scutage. Richard I and John I used mercenaries extensively. The royal accounts from 1215 shows 375 foreign knights in John's service. Politically, mercenaries were useful – they expected to be reliably paid, not granted land or political favors for their service. They were also more reliable soldiers for unpopular monarchs, like John I. For similar reasons, mercenaries were very unpopular with the nobles. They were also perceived as cruel and undisciplined, with no respect for the clergy or for nobles.

Louis VII of France and Emperor Frederick Barbarossa of the Holy Roman Empire agreed in the 1160s to expel mercenaries from their lands. Mercenaries were condemned by the Vatican's Third Lateran Council of 1179. The Magna Carta (1215) promised that all foreign knights, crossbowmen, sergeants, and paid soldiers would be removed

from the kingdom. Mercenaries reappeared in northern Europe during the Hundred Years War (14-15C) when their usefulness outweighed their political cost.

As troops, mercenaries were effective so long as they were steadily paid and kept busy. There is not much information available about who composed the mercenary forces or how they were trained. It is likely that many were younger sons of small landholders, artisans, peasants, and escaped serfs.



Naval Service

In the Norman Kingdom of Sicily, some landholders paid a royal tax, the *marinarios*, for upkeep of the royal navy. Other landholders were liable to provide ships and sailors. In 12C, Caltagirone owed 250 sailors for the fleet; Nicosia owed 296 sailors; the bishop of Patti owed 20 sailors. The obligations were reduced in early 13C. Other landholders owed duty watching the coast and supplying wood, pitch, and other naval supplies.

Serfs' Obligations

Originally, the ability to bear arms was a mark of freedom. If a landholder armed a serf, the serf was thereby manumitted. Conversely, if a free man refused to serve when called, he could be made a serf. In 1225, the English crown gave serfs the responsibility of bearing arms in defense of the kingdom. Those who possessed 20 *s* in movable goods were to have an iron headpiece and padded doublet. Those with 40 *s* in movable goods were to have an axe and spear. In 1264, each village had to chose four to eight soldiers to be armed with spears, bows and arrows, crossbows, and swords to serve the crown.

Bandits, Mercenaries, and Foraging Parties

Bandits were an ongoing menace to manors. Criminals, runaway serfs, and other vagabonds commonly lived in the forests and marshes near manors where they could steal crops and waylay travelers. Occasionally, a bold bandit might try to capture an ill-defended small manor. The capture generally lasted until the landholder's neighbors or liege recaptured the manor.

In war, a small manor's most likely foe was not a large siege, but wandering groups of mercenaries. Dismissed by the crown or a major landholder after a battle, these wandering groups would often pillage the countryside on their way to their next employer. Walter Map described the bands in 1180 as an abominable heretical sect, thousands strong, armed with leather and iron, who pillaged, violated, and devastated everything. Some captured castles or fortified monasteries, declared themselves the landholders, and began to exact services from the countryside. When peace returned, the major landholders were forced to root them out of their lairs.

England had less problems with mercenaries than France and Italy. The Magna Carta obliged the crown to send away "all foreign knights and crossbowmen and mercenaries who had crossed over with their arms and horses to harm the land."

Another threat was foraging parties. Medieval armies did not travel with supply trains before 15C; they lived off the countryside. It was common for armies to deny their foes forage by burning and trampling crops, looting and burning villages, and slaughtering animals. Being on the fringes of a siege could be as devasting to a small manor as being its target. Fortunately, unless a manor was located on a contested border, this was a once-in-a-lifetime event.

Robber Knights

The massive changes following the Plague of 1347-48 impoverished many landholders. Grain prices fell sharply because of decreased demand and increased use of the best arable land. The cost of maintaining ever more elaborate armor, and larger horses to carry it, rose. Peasants and serfs fled the countryside for better pay in the cities. Those landholders who could not find bureaucratic posts or

work as mercenaries sometimes turned into "robber barons" who attacked wealthy travelers, imposed ruinous tolls, incited border wars, and raided their neighbors to maintain their wealth. One German count raided three villages for a total of 226 cows, 95 horses, 50 pigs and 1,005 sheep in 1364-65.

To be successful, a robber knight needed skill in picking his victims so as to exact the maximum profit without provoking retaliation by his or her feudal superiors or a dangerous peasant uprising.

Sieges

War was often a series of sieges and skirmishes, occasionally interrupted by a large field battle. The siege began with an offer of surrender terms and various threats. If no terms were offered, the attacker could pillage and slaughter at will. A defender might promise to surrender if no relieving force arrived within a specific period – often a month to two months.

If negotiations were unsuccessful, the attacker began filling defensive ditches and moats, battering walls, and building siege engines. If the defender made a reasonable effort to resist, he or she could negotiate with the attacker to avoid the horrific consequences of a successful assault or unconditional surrender. A landholder could set conditions for the surrender of a bailiff or seneschal; commonly the defender had to hold out for a specified period – usually one to three months – before negotiating to give the landholder time to relieve the siege.

The defenders might respond with their own siege engines, boiling oil and water poured on attackers, and forays from small gates. Both sides suffered from dysentery and disease. In one siege in 1415, dysentery killed far more than the actual fighting. Often neither side had enough cooks to keep ravenous troops from eating half-cooked meat and spoiled bread, leading to further disease and deaths.

If the defenders negotiated a surrender, they might be allowed to keep certain belongings or given safe passage to the nearest friendly force. If the defenders were forced into an unconditional surrender, they were at their attacker's mercy.

Farnham was captured by the French in 1216-1217. The records do not show whether its garrison resisted. They do show that the manor's life continued basically as it had before the occupation. The French depleted its stores but did not destroy any major buildings. William Marshall besieged Farnham in March, 1217, and recaptured it after 6 days. The French garrison was offered safe conduct to London. The French tried to storm it again in April, but were only able to capture an outer bailey.



MILITARY WAGES

(English unless otherwise noted)

Role	Date	Amount Per Day	Comments
Archer	1260	3 d	
Archer	1277	3 d	
Archer	1299	3 d	
Archer	1355	3-4 d	
Archer	1415	6 d	
Archer, crossbow	1199	3 d	
Archer, crossbow	1282	3 d	
Archer, mounted	1199	7½ d; 15 d if archer had 2 horses	
Archer, mounted	1340s	6 d	
Archer, mounted	1415	20 marks/year, 6 d/day when in France	
Baron	1415	4 s	
Carpenter, master	1300	9 d	siege engineer
Chaplain	1355	6 d	
Duke	1355	13 s 4 d	
Duke	1415	13 s 4 d	
Earl	1355	6 s 8 d	
Earl	1415	6 s 8 d	
Hobelar	1300	6 d	"light calvary" used in open countryside like Scotland and Wales
Hobelar	1325	6 d	
Knight	1165	8 d	
Knight	1200	2-3 s	
Knight	1202	7 s 6 d	French
Knight	1212	2 s	
Knight	1215	2 s	
Knight	1277	1 s	
Knight	1295	15 s	French
Knight	1300	2 s	
Knight	1355	2 s	
Knight	1415	2 s	
Knight, bannerett	1300	4 s	
Knight, bannerett	1355	4 s	
Sergeant	1165	1 d	
Sergeant	1200	6 d	mounted, with hauberk
Sergeant	1200	4 d	mounted, with only one horse and no hauberk
Sergeant	1200	2 d	on foot
Sergeant	1212	1 s	
Sergeant	1300	1 s	
Soldier	1165	1 d	
Soldier	1200	2 d	
Soldier	1202	10 d	French
Soldier	1212	2 d	

MILITARY WAGES

(Continued from page 81)

Role	Date	Amount Per Day	Comments
Soldier	1215	2 d	
Soldier	1277	2 d	
Soldier	1295	12 d	French
Soldier	1300	2 d	
Soldier	1322	4 d	fully equipped with padded jerkin, helmet and iron gauntlets
Soldier	1322	3 d	"half" equipped
Soldier	1322	2 d	unequipped
Soldier	1355	1 s	
Soldier	1415	1 s	
Soldier	1415	40 marks/year	12 d/day when in France
Spy	1338	18 d	very rare to find records of actual spies as opposed to payment to opportunistic informants.
Squire	1277	6-8 d with unarmored horse	
Squire	1277	1 s with armored horse	
Squire, bishop's	1329	13 s 4 d/year	
Squire	1415	2 s	

Chevauchée

An alternative to the siege was a destructive raid of "fire and sword" to pacify a region by destroying its crops and buildings. William I pacified both the county of Maine in France and the north of England in 11C using punitive raids to destroy the lands of any landholder who opposed him. The Scots used similar raids against English border areas in early 14C. The raiding army essentially supplies itself from the crops and money it plunders, making it a very cost-effective tactic.

The chevauchée reached its height in the first half of the Hundred Years War, when the English burned large swaths of northern France and Aquitaine (General Sherman's march to Atlanta during the American Civil War is a more modern example of a chevauchée). A French peasant uprising in the late 1350s and raids by mercenary Free Companies after 1361 added to the rural devastation.

A landholder caught in the path of a chevauchée had few options. If the landholder retreated to the safety of a castle, then the surrounding fields and buildings were destroyed. Crops could be replanted, but expensive buildings like mills might be impossible to replace. Generally raiders were more numerous and better trained than a castle garrison, and if the landholder battled the raiders and succeeded, he or she only bought time until the next raid. The best option was often to parlay with the raiders and bribe them to raid elsewhere. The raiders, of course, offered only short truces and would swiftly return to collect another payment.

On Campaign

From a small landholder's or peasant's perspective, war was nothing like the minstrels' sagas. It was not a view of brightly colored nobles in shining armor charging for the glory of their monarch across fields of spring flowers. Like war in any century, it was about mud, dirt, rain, rust, rot, disease, poor food, greedy suppliers, spoiled rations, fear of injury and infection, and the stench of unburied bodies after a major engagement. It was about being cold and wet, sleeping in armor, having to tie one's horse to one's body while asleep to keep it from running off. It was about uncertainty and being at the whim of one's liege and monarch.

The realities of warfare bore most heavily on small landholders who had neither political power or expensive equipment to support them in the field.

XIII. Decline of the Manor

Fief has already mentioned most of the factors that ended manorialism. Its military role vanished because the necessary equipment and horses became too expensive for small landholders to maintain. Its fortified manor houses and castles became easier prey for improved siege engines and cannon.

Its economic role diminished because labor became more expensive. The Plague depopulated Europe and reduced demands for food. Farmers concentrated their efforts on the best land and improved their output. Lands which had been marginal were turned back to forest or pasturage. Those peasants whose labor was no longer necessary left the manor for the cities. Mass deaths also allowed the survivors to inherit more money, goods, and land. Wages rose; land values fell. Coin replaced in-kind payments and forced labor. Increasing wealth led to higher demands for meat, dairy products, wine, and for crops used for textiles and dyes. Farmers who survived the Plague bargained for greater freedoms with landholders. By 1500, England's peasants are generally believed to have had the greatest legal freedoms in Europe.

The Plague made Europeans more attentive to their souls and afterlife. A large influx of donations to the Church led to massive corruption and tensions within it. The Church responded by suppressing heresy and channeling reformers into orthodox movements like the friars. Increased education and better administration placed more demands on the parish clergy, and conversely gave them greater opportunities for advancement. The problems caused doubt about the power of the Church and called into question the legitimacy of the entire system.

Although there were large peasant rebellions before the Plague, they reached a height in 14C. Rebellions ranged from those on a single manor to vast risings across entire counties. The rebellions were brutally suppressed and the ringleaders tortured, maimed, and slain. The tensions continued after the Middle Ages and merged into the rural violence of the Protestant Reformation and Counter-Reformation.

The manor was eventually transformed from a small, virtually independent entity into a part of much larger estates. In England, many smaller manors vanished when land became more valuable for sheep pasture than for grain. Over the next century, the network of fief, manor, and parish vanished.



Appendix

Norman Sicily and Italian Sharecropping

Fief concentrates primarily on Norman customs in England and northern France. The Normans also conquered southern Italy (the Kingdom of Naples) and Sicily in a series of battles from 1016 to 1091. The society they created used some of the same traditions found in Normandie and England, adapted to a multiracial, multi-cultural society at the crossroads of Mediterranean commerce.

When the Normans began their Italian conquest, southern Italy and Sicily were controlled by a variety of Muslim, Byzantine, and local rulers. Backed by the Papacy, the Normans eventually evicted the Muslims and Byzantines and brought the region under a somewhat centralized monarchy.

The Norman monarchs were absolute rulers, at least in theory. Roger I once said "there must be no dispute about judgments made by the King; for it is a form of sacrilege to question his judgments and acts or his statutes and resolutions, or to contest the fitness of anyone chosen and appointed by the King." In practice, their kingdom was isolated by terrain. Mountainous valleys, low population density, and poor roads made it easy for various dukes resist royal authority and even rebel. The kingdom was frequently torn apart by civil war. African Muslims and Byzantine forces intermittently raided the long coastline and supported various landholders in their rebellions.

The Normans monarchs were eventually replaced by French Angevin monarchs in 1267. The Angevins were evicted from Sicily by a rebellion backed by Spanish Aragon in 1282. The Angevins were evicted from Naples by the Aragonese in 1442.

The Norman monarchs divided their kingdom into a large royal demesne and various duchies and other subinfeudations which the crown tried to strictly control. Many grants were not technically hereditary, and came with onerous military duties. The crown also tried to maintain a strict monopoly on justice. Frederick II gave the Kingdom of Sicily a unified legal code, the Constitutions of Melfi, which firmly established the crown and its royal justiciars as the source of justice. The crown carefully managed its estates and exploited monopolies on timber, pitch, salt, and mining.

Under Frederick II, each province in the royal demise had a "master of farms" assisted by a notary who collected rents, regulated farmers, and set target yields for crops. Pasturage was strictly regulated. Unless a farmer could claim a customary right to pasture animals, he or she had to pay a fee to graze in the fields after the harvest.

The Normans did not farm their lands as intensively as Italians in Lombardy and Tuscany. Their farms supported a population of half to a third as large as in northern Italy. There were fewer towns, fewer good harbors, and almost no native merchant class. Sicilian commerce was controlled by Genoese, Pisan, and Venetian merchants who lived in "colonies" (walled neighborhoods with protected legal rights) in the major ports.

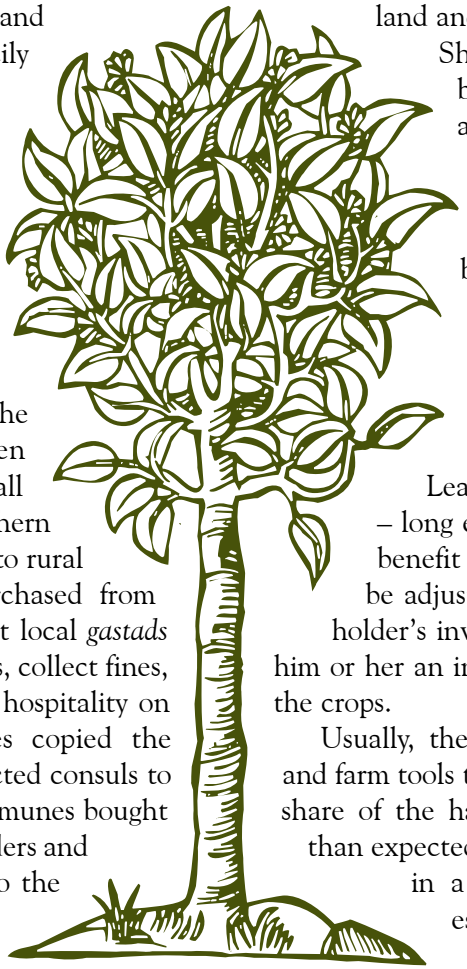


Sharecropping

The Normans primarily relied upon a manorial system; however, Italy also used a sharecropping system. In the sharecropping system (*mezzadria* or *métayage*), landowners leased fields to tenants for a certain time, usually three years. Instead of the interlocking duties of the northern European manor, Italian landowners relied on a commercial rental agreement. The landowner provided half of the seed for crops and received half of the harvest. The landowner might also lease livestock to the farmer on similar terms of rent plus half of any births. The tenant might also owe gifts to the landowner of first

fruits, chickens, eggs, etc. or labor such as carrying both the tenant and landowner's share of the crop to market. The Sicilian version of this system was called *massarie*.

Sharecropping was not practiced on all Italian fields. In fact, there were a wide variety of relationships practiced from Sicily to the Alps. Italy had developed some traditional feudal institutions when Northern Italy was conquered by the Carolingians and distantly ruled by the Holy Roman Empire. Traditional manorial relationships could often be found on fiefs managed by clergy and some secular nobles. In Norman Sicily and southern Italy, the feudal system was strong and pervasive. In the Papal States occupying central Italy, most landholders were clergy or large noble families. In Tuscany and the northern Po River plain, Italian landholding did evolve away from feudal encumbrances into contractual agreements.



Sharecropping had existed in the Roman Empire, but had been replaced by feudal rents after the fall of the Empire. In 10C-11C, northern Italian farmers began to organize into rural communes. These communes purchased from their landholders the rights to elect local *gastads* (similar to bailiffs), hold local courts, collect fines, and limit the landholder's right to hospitality on the manor. Eventually communes copied the northern Italian city-states and elected consuls to govern them. By 13C, wealthy communes bought all of the feudal rights from landholders and made themselves directly subject to the dominant city-state.

Where city-states governed their surrounding countryside (*condato*) as a communal landholder, rural communities were expected to supply levies for defense, sell their produce in the city, and submit to the jurisdiction of city courts and laws. The Italian climate favored vineyards, olive groves, and fruit trees, which were grown in rectangular plots by individual families instead of the intermingled strips of Northern European villages.

The first surviving recorded sharecropping contract was signed by an abbot in southern Tuscany in 821. There are a few scattered surviving contracts from 9-10C and intermittent surviving contracts from 11-12C. Sharecropping expanded in Italy and in the rest of Europe, especially near cities, in 13C. By 14C, more than three-quarters of the leases around Siena in 1316 were for sharecropping.

A peasant sharecropper was not independent. He or she rented from a large rural landholder or urban merchant. Cities, anxious to protect vital food supplies, regulated the sale of land and the price for crops. Cities punished peasants who left their land and thereby broke their lease.

Sharecropping was a compromise between the theoretical freedom of a peasant to sell his or her fields at any time and the dependability of a serf bound to the land for life. A sharecropper was generally bound to the land for several years, but could depart or renegotiate the lease at its end. Leases could be general, or could specifically require a minimum number of ploughings or adequate manuring. Leases lasted from three to nine years – long enough for the peasant to reap the benefit of hard work, but short enough to be adjusted for changing prices. The landholder's investment in seed and animals gave him or her an incentive to protect the farmer and the crops.

Usually, the landholder leased seed, animals, and farm tools to the farmer in return for a greater share of the harvest. If the harvest was smaller than expected, the farmer might become caught in a cycle of debt that was hard to escape.

The consensus of historians is that medieval sharecropping was just as exploitive and abusive as its modern counterparts. The landholder held most of the power to make and enforce the contract. The landholder kept the records of seed cost and debts, and set the size of parcels. By careful manipulation of the contract, he or she could earn as much surplus as from a traditional manor, with a smaller duty to the peasant farmers. Peasant farmers had little bargaining power so long as the supply of land was smaller than the supply of labor.

Timeline

The timeline includes major dates in medieval history, which provide some reference points for readers. It also includes many natural events, like famines, floods, and plagues, which may help show conditions affecting various regions. Finally, it includes laws and uprisings which might especially effect small landholders and farmers.

395 Roman Empire divided between East and West
410 Rome sacked
451 Halley's Comet appears; Huns raid France
460 Celts arrive in Bretagne from England
472 Vesuvius erupts
476 Odovacar and the Goths sack Rome (End of the Western Roman Empire)
481 Clovis begins his rule of France
496 Clovis baptized
511 Clovis' rule ends
520 St. Benedict of Nursia begins compiling the Benedictine Rule for monasteries
542 Plague in Constantinople
571 Muhammad born
579 Peasant revolt against King Chiperich near Limoges, France.
590 Pope Gregory I "the Great" begins reign
604 Pope Gregory I dies
622 Hegira - Muhammad flees Mecca for Medina
632 Muhammad dies
636 Muslims capture Damascus and Jerusalem
686 All churches with burial ground entitled to tithes of associated estate
687 Pepin of Heristal becomes first Carolingian leader
711 Arabs invade Spain
714 Charles Martel begins reign in France
732 Arabs defeated at Tours, France, by Charles Martel
751 Pepin the Short becomes King of France, Merovingian dynasty ends
754 St. Boniface dies
755 Umayyad caliphate begins in Spain
768 Charlemagne begins reign
778 Attack on Charlemagne's rear guard inspires the *Song of Roland*
787 Danish raids on England begin
800 Charlemagne crowned Roman Emperor of the West ("Holy Roman Empire")
809 Arab Empire reaches its height
814 Charlemagne dies; Although no comet is seen outside Europe, one is recorded as having appeared to mark his passing
817 St. Benedict of Aniane expands and revises the Benedictine Rule; Fire devastates Rome
827 Arabs seize Sicily
841 Peasant revolt against King Louis "the Pious" in Saxony, Germany
842 Danes pillage London
843 Carolingian Empire collapses; Treaty of Verdun divides it into three parts.
844 Danes raid Spain
845 Danes pillage Paris and Hamburg
854 All Franks required to swear fealty to the crown
873 All immigrants must swear loyalty to Frankish crown if they wish to hold property
878 Alfred the Great of England defeats the Danes at Eddington
858 Alfred the Great recaptures London
909 Monastery at Cluny founded
911 King Charles the Simple enters into a treaty with the Norse chieftain Rolf which creates the Duchy of Normandie; England begins paying Danegeld
987 Capetians replace Carolingians as French Kings
989 Church begins proclaiming the "Peace of God"
996 Peasant uprising in Normandie
1000 Serf rebellion in Normandie
1002 First Cathar executed
1006 Supernova visible
1009 Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem burned by Arabs. Orléans Jews blamed for instigating the destruction
1017 Truce of God outlaws combat on Sundays
1033 Famine Year; solar eclipse visible in Europe
1057 Patarene revolt begins in Milan's countryside
1060 Norman conquest of Sicily begins
1062 Tournaments invented
1066 Norman invasion of England; Halley's Comet appears
1071 Sicily recaptured by Normans
1075 Pope Gregory VII bans lay investiture; Patarene revolt in Milan ends
1082-85 Outbreaks of St. Anthony's Fire (rye ergot poisoning) in Normandy
1084 Carthusian order founded by St. Bruno at Grande Chartreuse; Robert Giscard's Normans sack Rome
1085 Capture of Toledo by Christians; Domesday book (English census); Robert Giscard defeated
1086 Famine, animal murrain in England
1095 First Crusade begins; Council of Clermont
1098 Crusaders take Edessa and Antioch; Cistercian order founded at Citeaux
1099 First Crusade ends with the capture of Jerusalem
1103 Famine, animal murrain in England
1106 Venice hit by floods and fire
1111 Animal murrain in England
1124 Crusaders take Tyre and occupy most of the Palestinian coast
1128 Knights Templar founded
1131 Animal murrain in England
1139 Second Lateran Council outlaws use of crossbows against Christians
1141 Crusaders driven from Edessa

1142 *Decretum Gratiani* codifies church law
1143 Monks at Cluny translate the *Koran* into Latin
1147 Second Crusade begins
1149 Second Crusade ends
1150 Po shifts its banks and floods Ferrara
1151 Emperor Frederick I proclaims peace; restricts carrying unnecessary arms
1157 Richard the Lionhearted born
1160 Waldensian movement begins
1162 Last recorded taking of *danegeld* in England
1167 Temujin (Genghis Khan) born
1169 Mount Etna erupts
1170 St. Dominic of Spain born; Thomas Becket of Canterbury murdered
1173 Famine in Pisa; Jews accused of using children's blood in their rites ("blood libel")
1174 Famine in Pisa
1179 Third Lateran Council begins
1180 Maimonides begins writing the *Misheneh Torah*; Peasant uprising in Rosny-sur-Bois, near Paris, France
1181 St. Francis of Assisi born; Assize of Arms passed in England
1184 Waldensians excommunicated
1187 Jerusalem recaptured by the Arabs; Crusaders retain only Tyre, Tripoli, and Antioch; William II of Sicily abolishes all tolls at bridges, rivers, and roads in the royal demise
1189 Third Crusade begins
1191 Crusaders recapture Acre; 3,000 Muslim prisoners massacred
1192 Third Crusade ends with a three year truce
1193 Saladin dies in Damascus, civil war ensues
1194 Fire partly destroys Chartres cathedral; famine in Bourgogne, Champagne, and Île
1195 Flood at Auxerre; famine in Champagne
1196 Major flood strikes Paris
1198 Innocent III becomes pope
1199 Richard the Lionhearted dies
1200 Famine in Egypt from low rainfall
1201 Fourth Crusade begins; famine and sheep murrain in England
1204 Crusaders seize Constantinople
1205 Flood at Caen
1206 Temujin (Genghis Khan) chosen supreme ruler of the Mongols; Tremors felt in Bourgone and Limousin; flood in Paris
1207 Stedinger peasant revolt in Germany begins
1208 Papal legate killed in Languedoc
1209 Albigensian crusade against heretics in southern France begins
1210 Franciscan order founded
1212 Christian victory at Las Navas de Tolos; Children's Crusade; Fire destroys London
1215 *Magna Carta* signed; Fourth Lateran Council
1216 Dominican order founded
1218 Murder of Mongol traders sparks Mongol attacks on Persia
1219 Flood devastates Grenoble
1220 Dominican rule confirmed
1221 St. Dominic of Spain dies; tornados cause heavy damage between Paris and Beauvais
1222 Earthquake damages cities on Cyprus
1223 Franciscan rule confirmed; earthquake in Aquitaine
1225 Sheep murrain in England
1226 St. Francis of Assisi dies
1227 Genghis Khan dies
1229 Al-Kamil delivers Jerusalem to Emperor Frederick II; Treaty of Meaux ends Languedoc rebellion
1230 Tiber floods Rome
1231 Papal Inquisition begun; death penalty for heretics in Germany and France; anti-Italian violence in England; Pope Gregory IX proclaims crusade against Stedinger "heretics" in Germany
1234 Stedinger peasant revolt ends at battle of Altenesch, Germany
1236 Castile captures Cordova
1242 Dominican Inquisitors assassinated in Avigonet by Cathar followers
1244 Jerusalem lost for the last time; the Cathar stronghold of Montséguer surrenders
1245 Council of Lyon sends diplomatic mission to the Mongols
1248 Seville captured by Christians
1250 Serf rebellion in Normandie
1251 *Pastoureaux* uprisings near Paris
1252 Genoa reintroduces gold coins
1258 Simon de Montfort II leads English barons' revolt; famine (worst of 13C) and sheep murrain in England
1261 Constantinople returns to Byzantine control
1264 First English Parliament
1265 Simon de Montfort II defeated and killed by Edward I
1267 Tremors felt on Cyprus
1271 Marco Polo begins his voyages; Languedoc becomes a French province
1274 Thomas Aquinas dies
1275 French ordinance imposes fines on non-nobles who acquire fiefs
1276 Tiber floods Rome
1277 Floods devastate Holland near the Zuider Zee; sheep murrain in England
1280 Peasant uprising in Burton-on-Trent, England
1282 Sicilian uprising against Charles of Anjou (Sicilian Vespers Massacre)
1283 Sheep murrain in England
1285 Edward I prescribes burning at the stake for convicted sodomites (male homosexuals)
1289 French law enacted to regulate fishing nets and improve yields
1290 England annexes Wales; First Swiss union; bad harvest in England
1291 Acre captured by Mamluks; Crusaders driven from Palestine
1297 Mortmain Act passed in England
1300 Dante begins *The Divine Comedy*
1302 French defeated at Courtrai; Comet appears
1303 French take Pope Boniface VIII prisoner and seize political control of the Papacy; Tremors felt on Cyprus
1304-05 Bad harvest in France

1305 Clement V becomes Pope
1306 Jews expelled from France
1309 Papacy moves to Avignon
1314 Bad harvest in England (heavy rains); Hand-held cannon used by Italian mercenaries (unreliable and primitive); Robert Bruce establishes Scots independence at Bannockburn; Swiss pikemen defeat Austrians at Morgarten
1315 Louis X frees the serfs; bad harvest in England (heavy rains and floods); famine in England
1316 Bad harvest, famine, widespread sheep murrain, typhoid epidemic in England
1317 Famine continues in France, average harvest in England
1318 Plentiful harvest in England, famine ends in England, lessens in France
1320 Poor harvest in England (drought)
1321 Sheep murrain ravages Scotland and Ireland; bad harvest in England
1323 Serf uprising in Flanders begins
1324 Sheep murrain ravages Ireland
1325 Drought in England; Ibn Battuta's travels begin
1326 Drought in England
1328 Serf uprising in Flanders ends after defeat at Cassel, Flanders
1333 Arno floods Florence
1336 Tamerlane (a.k.a. Timur) born
1337 Hundred Years' War begins
1338 Artillery first appears
1345-46 Bad harvest in France
1346 Mortar first appears; French slaughtered by longbows at Crecy
1347 Black Plague reaches Genoa; St. Vitus' Dance epidemics
1350 Boccaccio completes *Decameron*
1355 Ibn Battuta's travels end
1356 Battle of Poitiers
1357 English crown forbids bows to be exported
1358 Jacquerie peasant uprising in France
1363 Edward III orders sheriffs to enforce archery practice
1365 English crown forbids archers to leave England without royal license and forbids appeal of cases to any court outside royal jurisdiction (i.e. the papacy)
1369 English crown forbids bows to be exported
1377 Papacy returns to Rome
1378 Beginning of the Great Schism: Urban VI and Clement VII elected pope at the same time by opposing factions; Ciompi rebellion in Florence
1381 Peasants Revolt in England (Wat Tyler's Rebellion)
1382 Harelle rebellion in France
1383 Tamerlane's invasion of eastern Europe begins
1400 Chaucer completes the *Canterbury Tales*
1401 Council of Pisa elects Alexander V as third pope of the Schism; English law proscribes death for relapsed and impenitent heretics
1404 Severe flooding in Flanders, France
1405 Tamerlane dies, Mongol threat to Europe ends
1412 Jeanne d'Arc born in Domrémy, France
1413 Carboche rebellion in Paris
1414 Council of Constance begins
1415 Battle of Agincourt, more French knights killed by English longbows; John Huss tried and executed
1417 Martin V elected pope, other popes deposed; Armagnacs massacred in Paris; Gypsies seen in Hamburg
1418 Council of Constance ends; Henry the Navigator begins reign
1421 Dikes near Dort, Holland, fail destroying 72 villages
1422 Gypsies seen in Rome
1425 Lollardism (English heresy) declared on par with treason and felonies
1427 Gypsies seen in Paris
1429 Jeanne d'Arc successfully leads French troops against the English
1431 Jeanne d'Arc burned at the stake in Rouen; Lollards branded traitors to the English crown
1436 Paris recaptured from the English
1437-8 Famine in England, Flanders, France, Germany, and Switzerland
1444 Cape Verde discovered by Portugal
1449 Rouen recaptured from the English
1450 Full plate armor appears; arquebus appears
1452 Leonardo da Vinci born
1453 Constantinople falls to Ottoman Turks; Hundred Years' War ends
1455 Printing press invented by Gutenberg; Wars of the Roses begin
1456 Earthquake devastates Naples
1460 Matchlock pistol appears; Henry the Navigator dies
1461 Peasant uprising near Verona
1465 Ragusa begins quarantining incoming ships for 40 days
1469 Fredinand and Isabella begin rule; Sir Thomas Malory completes *Morte d'Arthur* (in prison)
1475 Michelangelo born
1476 Bombard appears
1477 Last Burgundy duke dies; parts of Burgundy annexed to French crown
1478 Papal Bull creates the Spanish Inquisition
1481 Inquisition begins in Spain
1483 Torquemada becomes Grand Inquisitor of Spain; Raphael born
1484 Portuguese discover Congo River
1485 Venice begins quarantining incoming ships for 40 days; Coronation of Henry VII replaces York dynasty with Tudors
1488 Cape of Good Hope rounded by Bartholomeu Dias de Novias; envoys from the Kingdom of Kongo reach Lisbon
1490 Syphilis epidemics begin
1492 Columbus discovers America; Grenada falls to Christians; Jews expelled from Spain
1494 Charles VIII of France invades Italy
1495 Charles VIII of France occupies Rome and Naples before being driven back to France
1497 Vasco de Gama rounds Africa and reaches India by sea
1499 Louis XII of France invades Italy and captures Milan
1525 German Peasant War

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