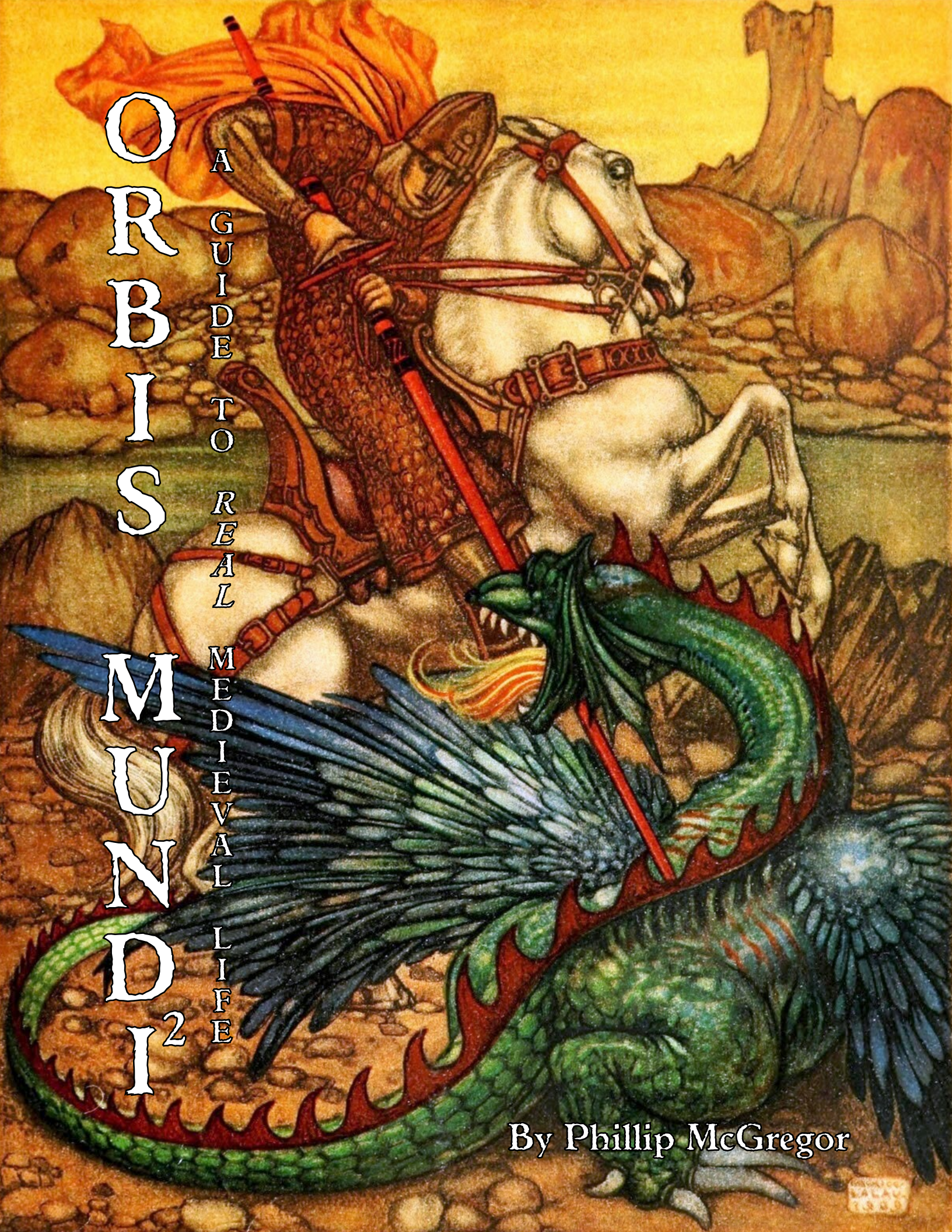


ORBIS MUNDI²

A GUIDE TO *REAL* MEDIEVAL LIFE

By Phillip McGregor

ORBIS MUNDI^2

A GUIDE TO *REAL* MEDIEVAL LIFE

GAME DESIGNER: Phillip McGregor

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DEDICATION:

These rules are dedicated to the memory of my parents, Bevan George (1913-1999) and Alice Lorna McGregor (1919-2008) who never really understood what it was I did on my weekends and in much of my spare time (a lot of it sitting before a computer screen, which they didn't really understand either) for the last 35 years or so, but who was always supportive of whatever it was I did. Great parents and really nice guys. I miss you both a lot.


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MAURICE LALAU 1909

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FOREWORD

FOREWORD

I've been playing Role Playing Games for quite a while (since the first White Box Edition of ***Dungeons & Dragons***, c. 1974) after playing Board Wargames since 1970 when I came across an advert for Avalon Hill's *Panzerblitz* in ***Analog*** ... mainly because I have always been fascinated with History.

*Yep. I also co-wrote **Space Opera** and was the sole writer of some supplementary material for it as well as for **Chivalry & Sorcery** for FGU way way back, and, slightly more recently, wrote the first edition of the **Rigger Black Book** for FASA.*

*I've also written a series of RPG supplements for my own concern, **PGD,** notably the 1st Edition of **Orbis Mundi;** an alternate history RPG sourcebook, **Displaced**; and, last year, **Road to Armageddon** (three Core Rulebooks, 4 Adventure Books) which was the result of a modestly successful **Kickstarter Campaign**.*

In fact, I ended up doing a double History Major at University and then spent 37 years teaching History (of course) – and I kept on keeping up *with* History, devouring History books like they were cheap novels. Increasingly I noticed that the generalist texts we were teaching medieval history from, or that I had used when doing it at Uni, were, not to put too fine a point on it ... badly wrong and wildly misleading.

To be fair, this was only partly because they'd been that way from the get go and partly because the writers hadn't made any effort to keep up up with the latest research and a *lot* of new information that had come to light during those decades.

And it's on those *shaky* foundations that most Fantasy RPGs are based – especially the ones nominally based on *medieval* history.

If you've been playing Role Playing Games for any length of time you've almost certainly picked up some historical knowledge – most RPGs are, after all, set either in earth's past history or borrow elements of that history as the basis for much of their setting.

Unfortunately, most Fantasy RPG backgrounds pay only lip service to the historical periods they are set in and do even that badly. You can't avoid picking up on this the longer you play beyond the most superficial monty haul *'let's loot another dungeon tonight!'* level.

They ignore real world constraints that *made* the templates what they were – that *forced* them to behave or do things in certain ways or which applied unbreakable limits on what they were able to do.

They also ignore the real world social, religious and other cultural norms that encouraged (or discouraged) particular belief systems, social courtesies or behavioural peculiarities.

In short, they treat the people and societies in the game in wholly unrealistic ways – as if they were 20th century people wearing funny clothes or modern nation states without modern technology.

Now, there's absolutely nothing wrong with that sort of thing if you're happy with it – but there's no reason why a little (or a *lot*) of historical verisimilitude can't be added into the mix – and, in my opinion anyway, it can add a lot of extra fun to an otherwise bland gaming experience.

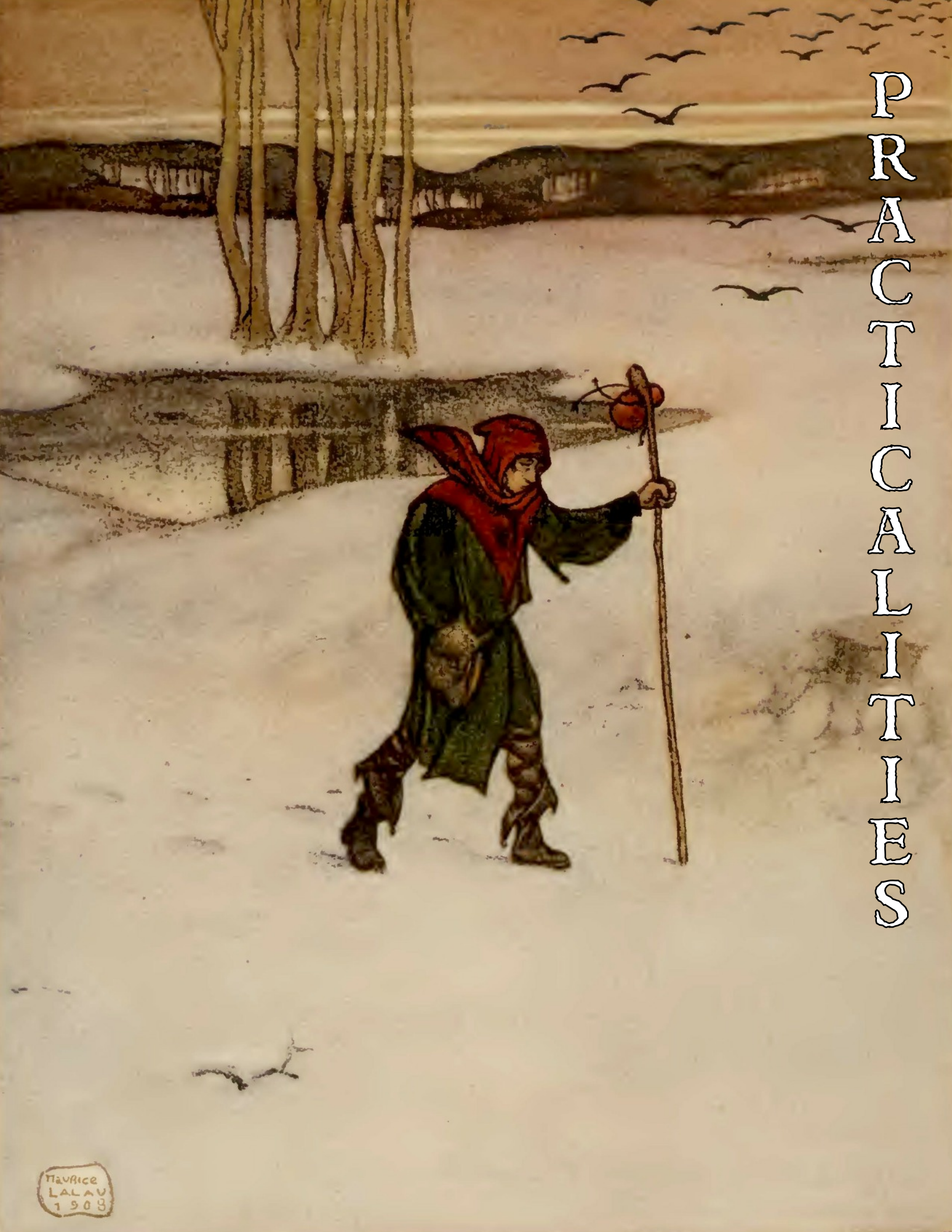
I put this idea into practise with ***Orbis Mundi: An Annotated Guide to Aspects of the Medieval World*** way back in 2006 and it is quite a popular seller on RPGNow and DriveThruRPG, currently standing as a *Popular Silver Pick* with a 4 star rating.

But, like I said, I've been reading and researching in the intervening decade and a bit and found some things that I'd included need revision ... and I've accumulated a *lot* more information that could be useful in running anything from a gritty realistic historical RPG with minimal magic through to, well, *anything* that purports to have a basically medieval background.

When I started writing a revised edition of ***OM***, I figured that I'd probably end up with a book double the size of the original (which was 112 pages) – but the core 'setting' book has finished up as close to 420 pages, *and* that *doesn't* include the annotated ***Price Lists*** which were ~60 pages in the original and which will be a completely separate book in this series.

Don't feel the need to use all of what's included herein – just the bits that make your campaign more interesting. Of course, *'interesting'* can become a curse word under the right circumstances – but it will keep your players on their toes as they come to grips with the reality of medieval life, society and technology in ways that probably contradict their entire gaming experience to date!

– Phil McGregor, August 2017


PRACTICALITIES
MAURICE
LALAU
1903

. . . AND PROBLEMS

Most commercial RPGs are poorly done historical pastiches – a hodge-podge of disparate elements borrowed from a variety of cultures from different places and times. What, at first, seems "cool", often ends up gratingly annoying for all involved.

*Those that bother to have any sort of history other than the most superficial ... or, in many cases, any 'history' at all ... and what they **do** which rarely bears much scrutiny before serious questions start to arise amongst anyone with a modicum of historical knowledge.*

Just think of one common example – a "typical" fantasy RPG background is based on a pseudo-medieval society, but one that has remained *completely static* for many hundreds or, often, thousands of years.

European "medievalism", depending on how you define it, lasted for about 600 years, from c. 800 AD (the crowning of Charlemagne) to c. 1450 AD (Gutenberg's Printing Press) – but even the most cursory examination of the period shows that society *and* technology was anything *but* static.

So why would *anyone* believe that a fantasy background would be any different? Reasons are rarely, if ever, given ... or even hinted at. Mainly because there *is* no real believable reason that can be put forward.

- Are the humans (and other races) in the game world *stupider* than in our world?

  *They really can't be if they are to be recognisably human (or human-**like**). How would your players play 'stupider' races, anyway?*

  *No human culture has ever **managed** to remain in a social or technological stasis – some are alleged to have tried, but close examination reveals ... **failure**.*

- Are they more resistant to technological change?



  *They **all** have to be, and have to be **to the exact same degree**, or one group will do what Western Europe did to China ... and do it at least as quickly (i.e. in a couple of hundred years). In any case, China was anything **but** conservative and resistant to change, they just went about it in a different way.*

  *Yet, of course, all the societies have to be **different** culturally, technologically and socially.*

  This is more than a minor contradiction!

- Are they more socially conservative?

  As above, they all have to be conservative to the exact same degree ... or flow on effects from changes in one of the competing societies will inevitably have an impact on the social structure and institutions of another (even if only by conquest).

  *For example, the 'Feudal system' only **seems** monolithic because most historians (especially those aiming at a general audience, or for High School, or for College/University 'survey' courses) tend to concentrate on specific areas (mainly the British Isles, specifically England, parts of France, mostly the North) which are **not** representative even of all of their own specific 'state' and tend to deal only with similarities rather than look at the very real differences that existed.*

  They also tend to pick and choose bits from the whole 600 years and mash them up in ways that are misleading at best or outright fiction at worst.

  *Assuming that English, French, Iberian or Germanic Feudalisms are identical rather than occasionally similar is **completely** wrong – as you'll find.*

- Is there some physical factor that limits them, *and what is it?*

  *No. Sorry. **'It's the will of the Gods'** or **'Magic makes it so'** really doesn't cut it.*

  *There are too many **really** simple technologies that **really** accelerate change that don't require what we late 20th century types consider to be 'high tech.'*

  *Anyway, Magic **either** enables historical technological developments to be closely replicated **or** it will be steamrollered **by** technology.*

  *Human beings are **always** looking for an **advantage** ... and if Gunpowder or Crossbows are better than*

*magic, they **will** dominate. Just as Magic will if it is better than Gunpowder or Crossbows!*

- Are they resource poor? What resource do they lack?

*This might **seem** to be a better bet on the face of it. However, even a cursory examination makes it plain that it is no better an idea than any of the others.*

*You have to find a resource whose lack will prevent social and technological change dead in its tracks **or** slow it down to an infinitesimal crawl. Yet you simultaneously have to have all that is required to create and maintain a medieval (and usually **late** medieval) level of technology.*

*Maybe **you** can think of one that doesn't fall apart when looked at. I can only say that **I've** never been able to come up with one ... and none of the attempts by others to do so have worked, at least if you know anything about history or the history of technology.*

***Or** they involve creating something that is nothing at all like Medieval Europe ... which is rather self defeating for the specific purposes of this book!*

Reality Bites . . .

Ultimately the *only* certainty we have about human societies is that *they change* – and do so ***far*** more rapidly than historians usually think they do. Any *perceived* social or technological 'stasis' is generally the result of faulty or biased analysis or, as often as not, lack of knowledge of the society and era.

*It may **seem** that really primitive (paleolithic and neolithic, generally) societies can remain static for very long periods ... but change **did** occur – just very, **very** slowly (and a lot of it is probably missed because of the paucity of remains. Oetzi, the "Iceman" and his gear gives us an idea of the technological sophistication of these periods).*

Historians and writers from the Renaissance through to the 20th century have, on the one hand, pushed the idea that the medieval period was a 'dark age' between the fall of the Roman Empire in the west (AD 476) and the invention of printing (AD 1440) and, on the other hand, trustingly accepted and reiterated it.

More recently, historians and other scholars have examined the actual written sources, considered the increasing body of archaeological evidence and evidence gleaned from historical re-enactment and has shown ***that*** older idea to be completely wrong.

*Technology and Science **did** develop, especially after the end of the chaotic period of the barbarian invasions and the consolidation into Feudal states ca. AD 800 or so (the coronation of Charlemagne as King of the Franks).*

*The **Mouldboard Plough** (allowing heavier, richer, soils*



A Medieval Cog

*to be brought under cultivation), the **Overshot Waterwheel** (allowing almost year-round power), the **Pole Windmill** (expanding the range of non-muscle power sources) and the **Cog** (**clinker-built** construction), the **sternpost rudder**, **improved rigging** for tacking against the wind and, eventually, cannon and **gunpowder**) as shown on these pages are just some of the many examples of important technologies developed and improved during the period.*

Still, there ***were*** real constraints that limited them – and these are dealt with in the remainder of the book.

The Medieval Mind . . .

It's very difficult to role-play a character from a different culture ... even where modern cultures are involved. There are ingrained and inherent ways of thinking that are so very different from ours ... and that's in a world with instant communication and computer assisted research.

The further one goes back in history the more foreign the culture actually becomes, even if it is our own ... and even if it *seems* to be similar. It is all too easy to end up role-playing a character that is really just a 20th century person in funny medieval clothes.

The misinformation in most RPG's doesn't help good roleplaying much, either ... and, to be fair, while it's easy enough to find out information about *what* people did and *how* they acted back in the day, understanding ***why*** they did what they did and the *reasons* for their actions is ***much*** more difficult, and made more so because the limited information that exists (almost all of it inferential rather than direct) relates to the Nobility or to rich (or at least well-to-do) Commoners, ***not** to* ordinary people.

Worse, a lot of what little has survived that ***seems*** to explain why even the well-to-do acted the way they did is deliberately self-serving ***or*** describes a perfect world fantasy that probably never existed outside the mind of some Troubadour trying to cadge a meal from the local Baron or a theologian with no concept of how the ordinary world worked or how ordinary people behaved (or why).

Which isn't to say that it's impossible to glean some

reasonably likely behavioural underpinnings ... just very *very* hard.

Unfortunately, many (if not most) of them are most definitely ***not*** politically correct ... and can be downright offensive to modern sensibilities ... while others can be offensive in being far more direct or 'earthy' than many people are used to.

For that reason, some of these cultural and religious underpinnings are glossed over ... though there will be limited information provided that will hint at the underlying non-PC attitudes.

It is *not* suggested that you incorporate these into your game, and there is no reason at all why Players should incorporate them into their character's mental make-up ... if you prefer, you can ignore them completely or simply assign them to cartoon character villains.

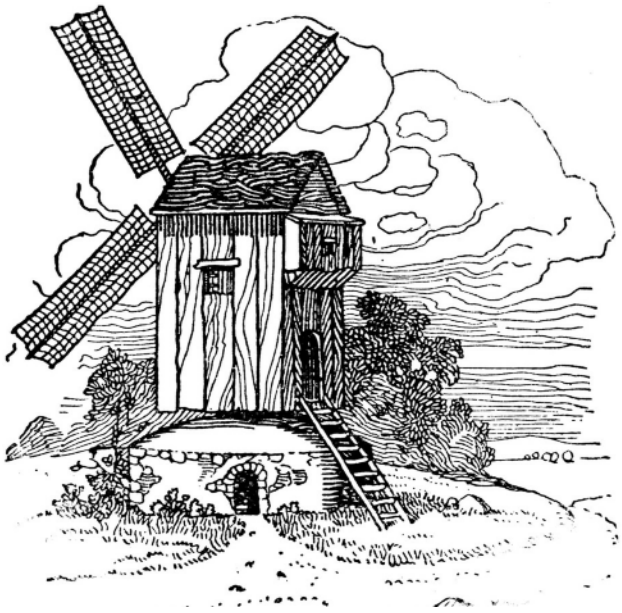
The information is provided as a matter of historical completeness and is *not* intended to consciously (or otherwise) imply any value judgement on any particular matter.

. . . And, Finally

While every attempt has been made to provide an accurate picture of what the medieval world was like, there are inherent problems with any such attempt.

Firstly, a lot of what was once 'received wisdom' has been challenged and overturned, which makes it likely that a lot of what 'everyone knows' is *wrong*. Either it hasn't started to filter in from more academic works to more generalist works *or* it hasn't yet been subject to any critical examination.

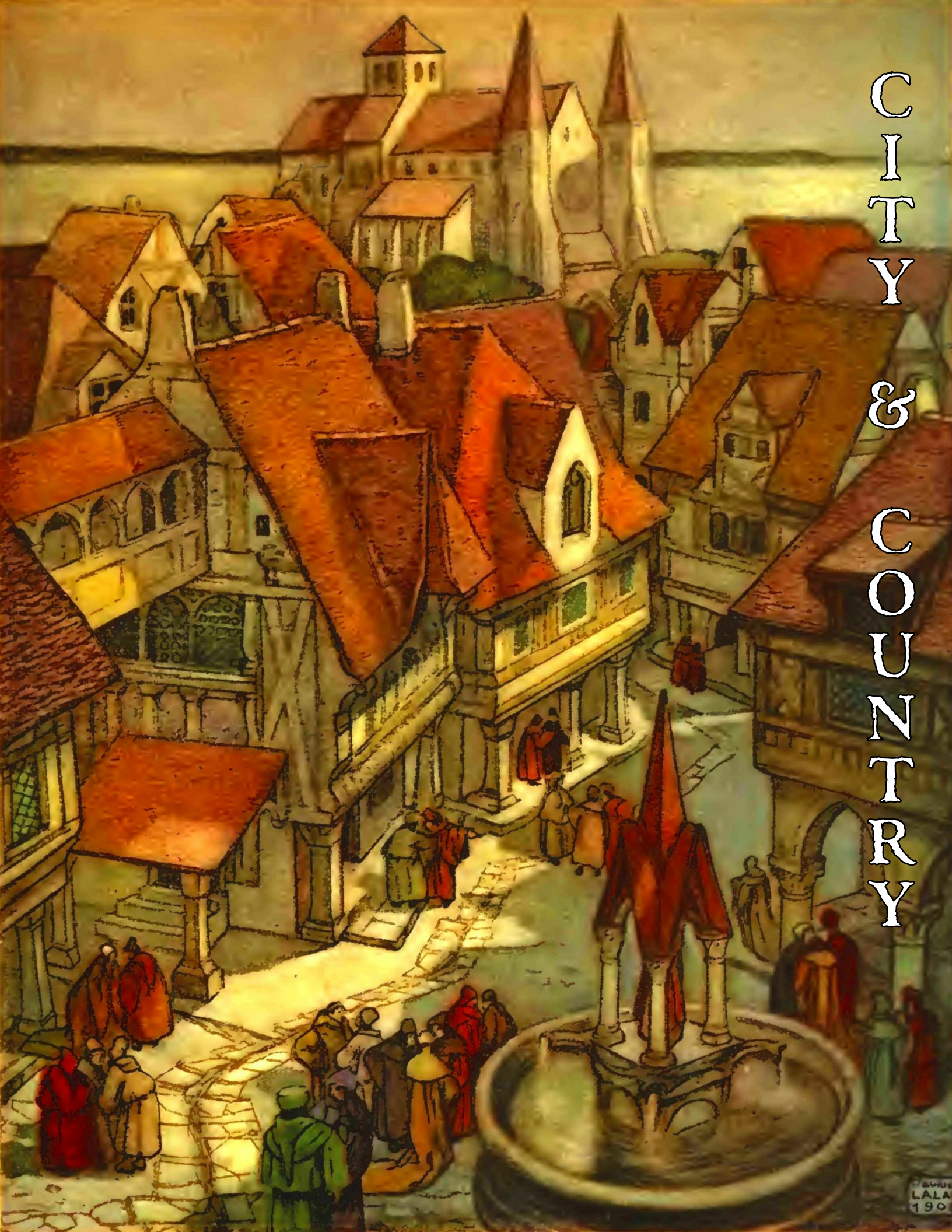
That said, not every issue covered herein is certainly decided ... I have taken the side that seems to have the best arguments and/or the best evidence, but the whole field is in a state of flux.



Secondly, as alluded to above, much 'common knowledge' ***in*** the English speaking world refers almost exclusively ***to*** the English speaking world and its Norman-French antecedents ... yet the experiences of the rest of the Mediterranean and Northern European world during the Middle Ages were ***not*** identical.

*This is made worse by the simple fact that there are very few readily available **and** up-to-date books **in English** on other parts of Europe ... and since, sadly, my only language **is** English, the information I have gleaned is likewise limited and incomplete.*

Or, in short, the best has been done allowing for the above (and other) limitations, and the product is *far*, ***far*** more realistic than any 'medieval' fantasy RPG on the market today ... *but it is by no means perfect.*


CITY & COUNTRY

Cities & Civics

"Civilisation" is an interesting word – it comes from the Latin ***'Civitas'*** *(City)* and was, until quite recently, used to *only* for sedentary cultures that had *cities*. This usage is quite apt relative to the medieval period because there were pronounced differences between City and Country.

This meaning is no longer regarded as politically correct, as it demeans non-urban cultures, which you may agree with or not – but it has ***also*** *fallen out of favour as archaeological work has shown a more complex gradation between nomadic and semi-nomadic, largely pre-agricultural, cultures and sedentary agricultural ones.*

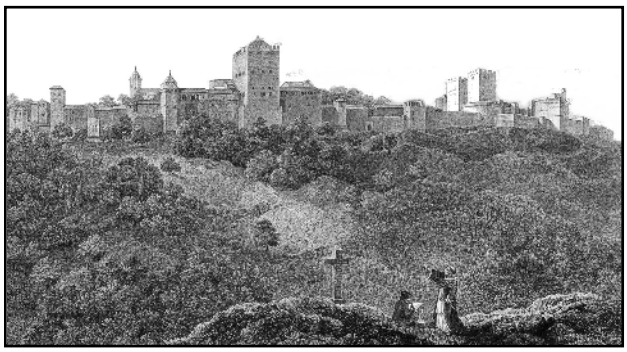
The pre- and proto-agricultural cattle-herding Town of Çatalhöyük (10,000 inhabitants at its height, and averaging 5-7000, and dating back to 7500 BC) in Anatolia, for example, doesn't fit into the older schema – nor does the sedentary but largely salmon-fishing Coastal Salish (and other) Indian villages of the Pacific Northwest of North America.

Cities and Towns were the underpinning of medieval civilisation – ***Towns*** were centers of trade and what passed for industry. ***Villages*** were simply agricultural settlements.

Which isn't to say it was 100% clear-cut. In small Towns a significant part of the population might engage in farming all or part of the time and in larger Villages there might be a number of craft specialists present who did ***not*** *farm, either full time or at all.*

Towns had a ***Market*** *and Villages* ***didn't*** *... Villagers made the weekly trip* ***to*** *the local Market to sell their surplus and buy goods not produced locally.*

Townspeople rarely had a driving need to go to a local Village – though they might travel to a larger regional ***Town****, or to a regional, national or international* ***Fair****, to sell their products or to buy items unobtainable locally. Depending on the destination, they might do this weekly, but more likely monthly or seasonally and, for the great international Fairs, yearly.*



Civic Organisation

Medieval Towns and Cities are ... *complicated.* For every instance described below there are likely to be exceptions, and probably *multiple* exceptions *even within the same region*, and, almost certainly, *within the same realm.*

The examples are drawn mostly from NW France and the Low Countries, England (and, to a lesser extent, Scotland) with a smattering of information from Spain, Portugal and Germany.

There are, however, some specific ***Case Studies*** *for cities that are* ***not*** *in those areas to give an idea of what some possible differences might be.*

Towns and Markets

As noted above the difference between a Village and a Town (or City) in *England* was that the latter had a ***Market*** ... but this rule doesn't universally apply on the Continent, where the degree of independence the settlement had from the local, regional or national overlord(s) was more important.

In England, a degree of independence went ***with*** *the granting of the right to hold a Market. How much depended on the specific of the agreement but, more importantly, on whether it was with a local, regional or national ruler.*

A Town with a Charter granted by a local Baron had much less in the way of independence and legal status than one which had regional Duke or Earl or, indeed, which had a Royal Charter.

On the Continent . . .

On the continent things worked, for the most part, in a similar fashion – however, there were also a number of Towns and Cities that were set up (or became) ***administrative*** centers for Regional and National rulers and which were not granted the same degree of independence (or, indeed, in some cases, were not granted ***any*** independence ***at all***) as chartered or independent Cities (found especially in Spain and Portugal, Poland and parts of the Balkans).

In some cases, this was a transitional state, and they later gained a Charter with greater rights. Most of them had market rights, but often these were not Markets intended for ***trade*** *with the surrounding countryside and regions, or even with the wider world, but mainly places where the locals could buy produce and manufactured goods that were not grown or made on site.*

Also, some Cities were independent City-***States*** which 'owned' the surrounding lands ... which could be under a Charter from a higher level (regional or national) overlord (common in the German states and the Holy Roman Empire) ***or*** could be off their own power and authority (common in Italy).

In the case of cities chartered by or in the HRE the common practise was to insist that the City itself had the only legal Market in the wider domain – deliberately done with the intent of ensuring the economic dominance of the city proper over the surrounding villages and rural areas.

A similar state of affairs often existed in the City-States of the Italian peninsula, though, if their domain was large enough to include Towns as well as Villages, those Towns usually had limited Market rights as well.

Civic Charters

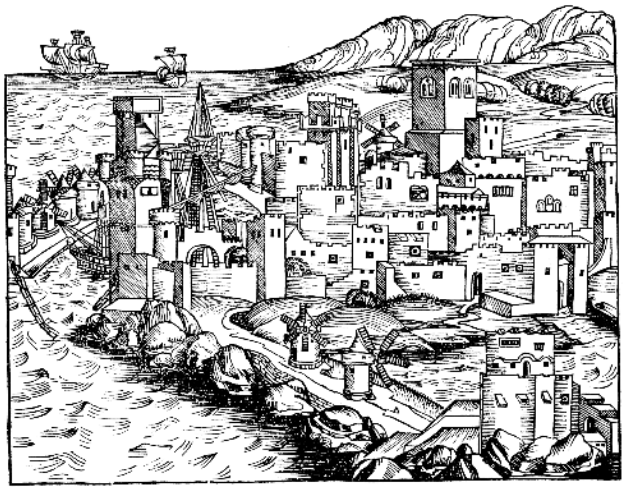
Towns and Cities had *Charters* which gave them a specific set of rights compared to Villages, which were lumped together as part of the countryside as a whole.

No two Town Charters were likely to be identical, but there were are number of key elements that appeared in all of them –

- A degree of self government including the right to create, apply and enforce its own laws.
- The status of **Burgess** for citizens of the Town.
- The right to raise a City Watch and Militia and the right to erect defensive Walls and other military works and fortifications.
- The right to levy Taxes, Tolls and other Charges for specific purposes.
- The right to carry on Trade within the Town (normally the right to hold a regular Market as well)
- Port Towns often had the right to have ships anchoring there unloaded and for freemen to have the right of first refusal for any goods they carried.
- Freedom from some, possibly all, Taxes, Tolls and Charges levied by the authority granting the Charter in return for a set yearly or quarterly lump sum payment or other specified service(s).

None of these rights were unlimited, they were always circumscribed by the terms of the Charter which, in turn, was limited by the legal status and power of the issuing authority.

Likewise, they were rarely granted in perpetuity (even if the wording of the Charter might indicate otherwise)



and could be revoked or renegotiated when it suited the parties involved (*usually* the issuing party).

From time to time various English Kings revoked Town Charters when they felt the Town was becoming uncooperative and/or not living up to the specified or assumed duties to assist them.

*Lump sum Tax revenues were also renegotiated semi-regularly **or** were subject to measures that were based on the level of economic activity, possibly both for really successful Cities. Of course, the City Corporations always tried to drive the hardest possible bargain.*

London & York

Examples of the sort of Charter that a Medieval Town might aspire to are shown on the following pages along with definitions for unfamiliar terms.

Being issued by the King made both of these Charters *very* powerful indeed – the City Corporation (i.e. the wealthiest Freemen, generally self-selecting) could appoint a ***Sheriff*** (London, later a ***Mayor***, then a ***Lord Mayor*** and ***Aldermen*** as well) or *Mayor* and *Aldermen* (York) rather than have one appointed by the King and could also appoint their own *Judges* (or allow the Mayor, or the Mayor and Aldermen to act *as* Judges) who could hear all legal cases (except appeals directly to the Crown acting as an effective Court of Appeal).

The cities had the right to pass and enforce its own laws (through the medium of the *Hustings or Folkmoot*, *Shrievalty* or local *Courts* – though these local laws couldn't contravene ***Royal*** Law and could be appealed to the Royal Courts.

Charters were subject to the whims of the granting noble and could be revoked for cause (disloyalty or perceived disloyalty, factionalism, anarchy etc) or simply 'because.' Even (especially) London. But care was needed not to kill the golden goose.

Such revocations were rarely permanent – towns were wealthy enough to buy back their rights very quickly as medieval monarchs were always short of money.

CHARTER OF LONDON, 1131

Henry, by the grace of God, King of England, Duke of Normandy. Know that I have granted to my citizens of London, themselves and their heirs, the ***Shrievalty*** of London and Middlesex of me and my heirs for a ***Farm*** of £100 by ***Tale***.

The citizens may appoint as Sheriff and Judge whomever they want to take charge of pleas of the Crown and supervise their conduct. If any citizen is accused in a plea of the Crown, he may defend himself by an oath to be adjudicated in the City.

They are exempted from ***Scot and Lot***, ***Danegeld***, and ***Murdrum***, and none of them need undertake [trial by] battle.

Within the walls of the city no-one need be ***billeted***, not [members] of my household nor anyone else, [nor] is any billet to be taken by force.

All London men and their goods are to be exempt from and free of ***Toll, Passage, Lastage*** and all other customs throughout all England.

The Churches, Barons, and Citizens may have and hold their **Sokes** with all customs, on condition that visitors given hospitality there pay no customs, except to him whose Soke it is or his officer.

A Londoner may not be penalized by an ***amercement*** greater than his **Were** (100/-). Furthermore, ***miskenning*** is not applicable in the ***Husting*** or the ***Folkmoot***, nor in any other ***Pleas*** within the city.

A Husting may be held once a week, that is, on Monday. I will ensure my citizens have [justice regarding] their lands, pledges and debts, inside the city and outside. Concerning lands for which they bring a complaint before me, I shall uphold their rights according to the law of the city.

If anyone exacts toll or customs from citizens of London, the citizens may in the city recover, from [members of] the borough or town where the toll or customs were taken, the same amount given by a Londoner for toll, and applicable damages.

All debtors owing to citizens must repay them or provide evidence in a London court that they are not indebted. If they are unwilling to repay the debt or to come and defend themselves the citizens owed may make ***distraint*** within the City, from *any* citizen of the Borough or Town or County in which the delinquent debtor resides.

The citizens may have their hunting rights in the fullest and best form they were had by their ancestors, that is, in the Chilterns, Middlesex and Surrey.

Amercement: A fine imposed by a Court.

Billet: Forcible requirement to accommodate a soldier or member of a noble household in your home. A much hated form of taxation.

Citizens: Freemen of the City, not the property of a Feudal Lord and who owns/rents property there. Such people literally had the *'Freedom of the City'* and were protected by the terms of its Charter.

Danegeld: A Land Tax collected in Anglo-Saxon England to fund protection money to the Danes in northern England. Last collected in 1161-62.

Distraint: Seizure of property for failure to pay money owed, often for rent past due.

Farm: Estimated (tax) revenue due to the authority granting the Charter (in this case, the King).

London's Farm was nominally £525, but there had been recent serious fires which reduced its tax base.

Husting/Folkmoot: Public assembly gathered to elect officials and listen to and discuss legal propositions and decide on local administrative matters.

Miskenning: A fee paid for varying a pleading in a Court case. A legal error leading to such a variation.

Murdrum: The crime of killing an unknown man, for which the parish or tithing was assessed a fine of 40 Marks. Abolished by Edward III (1327-1377).

Pleas: Legal jurisdictions or courts overseeing such.

Scot & Lot: From the Old English, *Sceot* ('payment'), a generic term for any Tax, especially *Tallage.*

Shrievalty: Office, Jurisdiction or Term of a Sheriff.

Soke: Both the right to exercise feudal jurisdiction and the area over which that right may be exercised.

Tale (**Tallage**)**:** A Land tax in the countryside, effectively a Poll Tax in the Cities and Towns. Abolished in 1340, but not collected after 1332.

Toll, Passage and Lastage: A variety of small Taxes or Tolls paid, in theory, to maintain local infrastructure (roads, gates, bridges etc.).

Were: *Weregeld* – the assessed worth of a person for damages (literally *'man price'*), paid fully for their death or partly for injury. Compensation/Damages.

Note: *The text of the Charter has been abridged and simplified to make it easier to understand.*

Lesser Charters

Some Towns were only chartered by *regional* Nobles (Counts, Earls and Dukes) and were only exempt from Taxes within the area under his control and would be subject Royal Justices on their regular rounds.

Other Towns might only have a charter from a local Noble (a Baron) and would only be exempt from Taxes within his lands – and would be subject to Regional Courts as well as Royal Justices on their regular rounds.

*Towns operating under lesser charters had **far** fewer rights, especially to self-government, and their administration was at dominated by, if not under complete control of, the chartering Lord.*

*They might also have **no** right to have an armed Militia, though they would still be subject to any Feudal Service through the **Arrière-ban** or general feudal levy under the command and control of their Feudal overlord rather than the City authorities.*

If this was the case they might also not be allowed to have Town Walls or those Walls might be guarded by soldiers in the service of the chartering Lord – and these soldiers would often based in a Castle overlooking the Town and held by the Lord or his designated governor.

An example of the Ordinances of such a Town (Bridgewater, near the mouth of the Bristol) is shown in the Sidebar on the following page. Note that the town is under the control of an elected ***Steward*** rather than a Mayor ... a 'Steward' normally administered territory or property on behalf of another.

In this case it was an elective position but would have had a duty to the Lord of the domain as well that could conflict with any duty that he might owe to the Burgesses who elected him

Civic Organisation

To understand the organisation of medieval Towns and Cities it is important to understand that they held an unusual position in the Feudal System ... in a real way, they stood to one side, looking in, if not being completely outside of it.

Royal Boroughs, Towns and Cities

The inhabitants of these settlements were of three broad classes – ordinary inhabitants (*'Commons'*) who, while personally free *while in the Borough limits*, had no special rights; those who enjoyed the *Freedom of the Borough*, which usually required the payment of a yearly fee (12d) and, of the latter, those who also possessed or rented a certain amount of landed or moveable property (£40 of land), the *Burgesses*.

A Serf who managed to reach the safety of a Borough with a Royal Charter could not (theoretically) be seized



by his feudal overlord and, as long as he (or she) remained free for a year and day was absolved of all feudal dues and gained the status of a free man (though not necessarily the Freedom of the Borough, of course).

The amounts listed for the yearly Freedom of the Borough fee and for being accepted as a Burgess are for the13th-14th centuries.

Anyone enjoying the *Freedom of the Borough* was exempt from taxes and tolls levied by all other Towns and Cities and from all those levied by lesser Nobles.

*See the **London: A Royal Borough** Sidebar, overleaf, for one example of the way this system worked.*

The Freemen and Burgesses, and even the Commons, owed no *direct* feudal dues or duty to Baron, Noble or King – and, after 1297, each Borough elected two Burgesses to sit in the House of Commons (the same number as a Shire, which elected two Knights).

Any duties these Burgesses, Freemen and Commons owed were to the *Town or City*, either as determined by the terms of its Charter or by decision of the citizenry and civic administration (or, more usually, by a combination of both) – it was the Town/City that then owed (corporate) fealty to the King.

So, for example, in time of war (foreign or civil), the City Militia would owe feudal service to the King, but would carry out that service under officers elected by the Burgesses or Guilds or Civic Authorities (or combination).

Cities were divided into Wards or Parishes and the Freemen of each of these units elected or chose a number of Ward officers from anyone of their number and Aldermen from the Burgesses of the Ward.

See ***London: A Royal Borough*** *(previous page)* for the sort of organisational structure that you would likely encounter. Of course, other Boroughs had far fewer inhabitants and fewer Wards in rough proportion and the size of the *Common Council* would be in rough proportion to the number of Wards as well.

The size of the Night/Marching Watch was also smaller, typically 4-6 men per Ward (or possibly for the whole Town) for the smaller Market Towns up to a dozen for the very largest – though this could vary widely from place to place.

Charter of York, 1393

Richard, by the grace of God King of England and France and Lord of Ireland. Know that by our special grace and at the petition of our well-loved subjects, the mayor and citizens of our city of York, we have granted and given licence to the mayor and citizens that they may acquire and hold lands, tenements and rents with appurtenances up to the value of £100 annually, to be held of us in ***burgage*** within our city and its suburbs in return for the perpetual maintenance and support of the bridges across the Ouse and Foss and for priests to celebrate mass and charitable acts in the chapel on the Ouse bridge notwithstanding the statute of ***mortmain***.

We also confirm that the Mayor and Citizens have jurisdiction over all kinds of pleas related to land within the city and its suburbs as well as jurisdiction over pleas of ***novel disseisin***, ***mort d'ancestor*** relating to all lands and tenements within the city and its suburbs.

We also grant to mayor and citizens that no justices of the peace or other justices within the county of York or in any other place may in any way meddle within our city or its suburbs or liberties, nor outside, concerning anything done or occurring within the city, suburbs or liberties.

We grant to the Mayor and 2-4 of the 12 Aldermen right to hear cases concerning all kinds of felonies, ***misprisions***, extortions and other pleas within or pertaining to the city though reserving to ourself the fines, amercements, revenues and other profits.

Furthermore, considering that the bridge over our fishery the Foss urgently needs repairs we have given licence that they may place undertake such repairs.

Burgage. Town ('Borough') rental property owned by the King or the Lord chartering the Town.

Misprisions. The *deliberate* act of concealing knowledge of a felony or treason.

Mortmain. Land or tenements held *inalienably* by a Town or Ecclesiastical corporation.

Mort d'ancestor. Action to forcibly allow the taking possession of inherited property.

Novel Disseisin. 'Recent Dispossesion' – the return of items provably taken from the plaintiff *before* determining ownership.

Tenement. A piece of land held by an owner.

Note: *The text of the Charter has been abridged, rewritten and simplified to make it easier to understand.*

Ordinances of Bridgewater, ~1199

In order to promote amity and good feelings, quell discord and rancour, by our common agreement and assent we have ordained all that follows.

First, we wish to elect annually two Stewards of our gild and, to assist them, one Bailiff elected. The Stewards may have the power to punish anyone who commits an offence against these ordinances.

Anyone slandering any of his peers who is convicted before the Stewards is to be ***amerced*** 12d.

If one of us ***impleads*** outside the Borough any of his peers for any cause without first having the case tried in the borough is to be **amerced** 12d.

Anyone summoned by the Bailiff to come before the Stewards who does not attend is to be **amerced** 6d for the first offence, and 12d for a repeat offence.

Anyone who opposes or obstructs the Bailiff from executing [his duties] or a ***distraint*** which the Stewards have ordered is to be ***amerced*** 40d.

Anyone who refuses to cooperate with the Bailiff in the performance of his duties is to be **amerced** 12d.

No-one is to buy meat or fresh fish in the town before the third hour, for purposes of reselling by retail. If anyone does they must pay a fine equal to the amount the fish or meat was bought or sold for.

Anyone elected as Steward of Town Church, Keeper of the Town Bridge, or Bailiff must render account of all revenues to the Stewards whenever demanded.

The Stewards are to render account of the same to the community each year on 2 January.

Amerced: Fined.

Distraint. Seizure of property for failure to pay money owed, often for rent past due.

Implead. Suing a third party in a lawsuit already underway by claim that they may be liable for the claim that is the subject of the suit.

Bridgewater was part of a Fief granted William Brewer in 1199 under which he was allowed to grant the Village and informal Port of Bridegwater a Charter.

Though the citizens had Market rights and freedom from tolls in the area under his control, the Brewer family retained control of the Courts for any but internal matters and collected Market and land Rents, Toll fees from other users as their own ... this remained its status until it became a full Borough in1468.

Other Chartered Towns

The administrative organisation of other Chartered settlements depended on the nature of the Charter they operated under.

If the local or regional Lord had granted them self-government, then they would have an organisation similar to that of one of the Royal Boroughs ... though, of course, few such privately chartered towns had very large populations.

The status of the Townspeople also varied. Unless there was a degree of freedom from feudal status and duties there wasn't any reason for a settlement to attract settlers and business, so there would always be something very like *Freemen* or *Burgess* status.

*The main difference would lay in the status of the Commons ... especially runaway serfs. The 'year and a day' system for gaining freedom from serfdom would not apply to serfs from the estates of the Lord granting the Charter, of course, but they **may** allow serfs from **other** fiefs to acquire it in a limited sort of way ...*

*Since the Chartering noble couldn't overrule an equal, the changed status would only apply on the estates **of** the Chartering noble. On the other hand, if the Chartering noble was the feudal superior of the serf's lord, then there could be some wriggle room – especially in the labour shortage and social flux of the period after the Great Death in the middle of the 14th century.*

If the Charter was more restrictive (see that of ***Bridgewater***, previous page), the Town might only have limited control of internal matters and be under the wider authority of the chartering Lord ... or they may not even have that level of control.

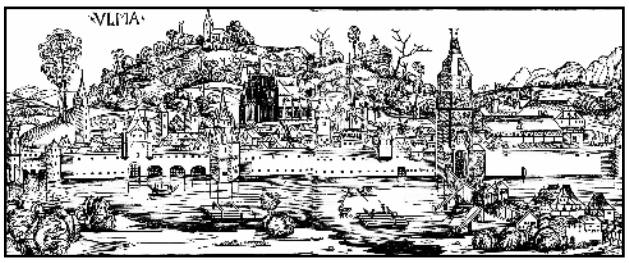
As mentioned elsewhere, a restrictive Charter might not allow the inhabitants to have their own Militia and, furthermore, might not even allow them to have their own Night Watch ... which would then be provided by Men at Arms in the Lord's service.

A generous Lord *might* grant rights close to those offered by Royal Charters ... and, in any case, it was common for successful Towns to eventually purchase a Royal Charter and sidestep their original one, since the King's writ overrode that of any of his vassals.

Towns attracted and encouraged trade and generally increased the Lord's income no matter what. Even if the Town gained a Royal Charter.

The Rest of the British Isles

There were some towns in the *other* areas of the British Isles – though they were often very new foundations and were generally far smaller in population than the average English town and more widely spaced geographically.



Eire

The first identifiable towns date back only to the mid to late 10th century and came in two types – *Viking* foundations (Dublin, Wexford, Waterford, Cork and Limerick) which followed Scandinavian patterns (see below) and *Monastic* foundations (Armagh being the main one) which operated under monastic protection and modified ecclesiastical law.

The main period of town building follows on from the Norman conquest (~50 towns were founded or re-founded, mostly in the 13th century), and towns follow Anglo-Norman administrative structures.

Scotland

The first (Royal) ***Burhs*** (*'Fortress'*) date back no earlier than the early to mid 11th century and held Royal Charters of sorts, granting similar legal status and privilege to those English towns had attained (and some Charters were actually verbatim copies of English charters!). There were around 15 in the first half of that century, some, at least, may have been existing settlements granted new privileges, but others seem to have been new foundations.

The number of Royal Burhs had increased to 55 by the end of the 13th century – Baronial Burhs only start to be chartered in serious numbers from the 15th century ... and, as in England, had lesser rights and privileges than the Royal Burhs.

Population levels were generally low – many, perhaps most, had less than 1000 people ... though Edinburgh may have had as many as 10,000 by the end of the 15th century (but probably only 2-3000 in the 14th).

Wales

Prior to the Norman conquest there do not seem to have been any urban centers in Wales – all of the medieval Towns are post-Norman creations and follow Anglo-Norman norms.

The main difference is that many of them were founded around or near, or were protected by, major Anglo-Norman castles.

Urban populations seem to have been quite low, probably under 1000 for most (Cardiff, the largest, had ~2200 inhabitants in 1300 and Caernarvon had between 1-2000). It is not certain that the overall urban population was even the 10% average for medieval Europe as a whole.

London: A Royal Borough

The original basis for civic government was the ***Court of Husting***, a combined judicial and administrative body consisting of the ***Aldermen*** (literally 'Elders').

By the 13th century, the *Court of Husting* was mainly used for judicial work and the ***Court of Aldermen*** had taken over administrative functions and, by this time, both bodies seem to have met at least once a week.

From 1191 the City was given the right to elect two ***Sheriffs*** and, from 1215, they were granted the right elect their own ***Mayor*** (later ***Lord Mayor***) annually.

As the administration became more complex, the Aldermen began to'wise and discreet' burgesses as the ***Common Council*** which took over the functions of the *Court of Aldermen* (40 Councillors).

Wards

London was divided into 25 ***Wards***, each of which elected *Aldermen* who ran weekly ***Wardmotes*** (of the *Burgesses*) which also elected local officials ... including the *Ward Constable*, *Beadle*, *Scavenger* and *Raker*.

*Only **Burgesses** with property worth at least £40 worth of property had a say at such meetings.*

- The ***Constable*** was responsible for law and order in the Ward and for the ***Night*** (or *Marching*) ***Watch***.

  *The **Marching Watch** consisted of a dozen of the Freemen per Ward, six of whom patrolled from dusk to dawn, enforcing curfew while the remainder guarded the City's access points (7 Gates, 2 Bars, 13 Water Gates and assorted Postern Gates). An extremely unpopular duty, many Freemen actually paid a substitute to stand the watch for them.*

- The ***Beadle*** was responsible for dealing with the administration, minor crime and record keeping.

- The ***Scavenger*** was responsible for ensuring streets were not blocked by garbage and refuse (usually by coercion of shopkeepers and householders who were supposed to keep their section of street clean).

- The ***Raker*** (later *'Muckraker'*) was employed to clear of the worst of the refuse that could not be attributed to individual householders.

  The work was filthy, but being a 'public service' job was better paid than ordinary unskilled labour.

The Common Council

Members were elected by *Wardmotes* and elected the *Mayor* and *Sheriffs* for yearly terms (with unlimited re-election possible) and acted as an advisory and semi-legislative body for the administration of the City.

*The Sheriffs, being **theoretically** personal representatives of the King even though elected by the Burgesses, had to be approved **by** the King (such approval seems to have rarely, if ever, been withheld).*

The Council also appointed the ***Chamberlain***, ***Recorder*** and the ***Common Clerk in Council*** who served at their pleasure (i.e. indefinitely).

- The ***Chamberlain*** was responsible for collection of revenues and the disbursement of funds to pay for the operations of the City and keeping careful and accurate accounts of same.

- The ***Common Clerk*** was responsible for the *administrative* running of Council Meetings and the keeping of accounts and records for the City (though he would have a staff to assist).

  *Anyone enjoying the **Freedom of the Borough** could apply to the Common Clerk for official documentation of their status. This might be necessary to establish their rights to freedom from Tolls and other matters while travelling.*

- The ***Recorder*** *(Clerk)* was responsible for the keeping of records relating the Land and Land Titles and all related matters (also with a staff).

The Council originally met at St. Paul's Cross (in the eponymous Churchyard) but, by this period, at the Guildhall.

The Sheriffs

These were normally Royal officials, but (as noted above) were elected by the *Common Council* in London. They were responsible for carrying out Royal Writs (legal orders), managing Crown property to 'discover' criminals (to be delivered to the *Crown Assizes* for trial), try some offences against the Crown and some other matters and for choosing a ***Coroner*** (responsible for keeping legal records for use in later trials, investigating violent/suspicious deaths and required to be present for a legal execution).

They had the power to requisition food and supplies for the King and also to summons a ***posse comitatus*** for the maintenance of good public order.

The (Lord) Mayor

There have been elective ***Mayors*** (chosen annually, but often re-elected continuously for long periods) since 1189, but they are only ***Lord*** Mayors after 1354.

They run day to day operations of the City (at least in theory), presides over the *Court of Aldermen* and the *Common Council* (acting rather like a civic Parliament) and is the Chief Justice of the City (and is senior to all other Judges in such courts)

The Continent

As you might expect, the way that Towns and Cities were administered was somewhat different on the Continent. Some selected examples are provided in the following sections.

France (Other than Paris)

Other French Cities and Towns were organised along similar lines to Paris but it was possible for the ***Eschevin*** *(Aldermen)* of the Guilds to organise to *buy* the office of *Royal Provost* and, eventually, some of the Towns mentioned become self-governing with similar rights to those of Paris or a *Royal Borough* in England.

Such towns were administered by a Mayor, assisted by judicial officers called ***Jurés*** *('Magistrates').*

Towns under Royal overlordship were allowed some rights of self government even so. They were allowed to provide a yearly list of three candidates to the King who would then choose one to be the Mayor.

The 'aldermen' had the right to select a number (up to 12, depending on the population) of *Eschevin* and a like number of *Jurés* to sit on cases involving low and middle justice, but the King's officers retained jurisdiction over all cases involving high justice.

In Occitan (southern France), however, Cities and Towns tended to have officials who used the same (or similar) Titles to those used in the Italian City-States ... so you have ***Consuls*** *rather than Mayors etc.*

France (Paris)

Paris was administered as a Royal domain by a ***Prévôt*** *(Royal Provost* assisted by 3 ***Lieutenants***, one each for Civil, Capital Petty crime; 2 ***Examiners*** (prosecutors); a ***Chevalier du Guet*** (Commander of the Watch) and Clerks acting as notaries and record keepers.

The ***Guet****, or Night Watch, was originally raised from the Guilds and was almost entirely ineffectual, and seems to have consisted of six watchmen for each of the city districts, each city gate and at key points around the city (eg the Chatelet prison and Royal Palace).*

This was supplemented by a force under the ***Chevalier****, consisting of 12 Sergeants during the day and 20 foot and 12 mounted Sergeants at night – the foot Sergeants patrolled the streets and the mounted Sergeants did rounds of the Watch posts manned by the Guilds.*

There was a separate ***Receveur*** who was responsible for financial matters.

Germany and the Holy Roman Empire

There were a variety of systems used, but the most common was that of the *Hanseatic League* cities (and variations of this organisation were used even more widely – even into Poland and Eastern Europe).



The Town or City was to be governed by a ***Rat*** *(Council)* of (usually) 20 ***Ratsherrn*** *(Councillors)* selected (*not* elected) by existing Councillors from the (upper) ranks of the City's most important (and wealthiest) Guilds (mostly Merchant Guilds or Lawyers).

Councillors were *theoretically* selected for a two year term but, barring a huge political upset, were asked to remain on the Council as a matter of course ... so it was often an effective life appointment.

Fathers and sons, or Brothers, could not be selected to serve on the Rat at the same time as a measure to prevent any one powerful family from having ***too*** *much power over the town's administration.*

The *Rat* then elected a ***Burgomeister*** *(Mayor)* who was the effective CEO ... and, in larger Cities, there might be up to four, with the most senior having a casting vote if required.

Some cities in those parts of Germany reigned over by the *Holy Roman Empire* were ***Freie Reichsstadt*** *(Free Imperial Cities)* chartered *by* the Emperor, and had similar rights to Royal Boroughs in England.

Other cities in the HRE could be chartered by local or regional nobles in a similar way to the 'system' that existed in England and were had the lesser status of ***Landstadt*** *(Regional or Territorial City/Town).*

Interestingly, the principle of ***Stadtluft macht frei*** *('City air makes you free') applied in most* ***non-imperial cities*** *(where it was abolished in 1231-32)... that is, as in England, a serf who managed to reside in a Town or City for a year and a day was freed of all feudal bonds.*

Italy (City States)

Italian City-States varied widely in their organisation but usually had a ***Senate*** which was oligarchic in nature (i.e. consisting of the wealthiest citizens) which was presided over and in turn elected a number of ***Consuls*** who acted as the City's Executive.

To confuse things, there might also be a differentiation between ***Consuls of the Commune*** (the chief Executives, as above) and ***Consuls of Justice*** *(Magistrates)* who handled serious legal cases (some cities also had ***Consuls of Merchants*** who dealt with cases relating to

Charter of St. Omer, 1127

I, William, by the grace of God, Count of Flanders, not wishing to reject the petition of the citizens of St. Omer grant them the laws written below and command that those laws remain inviolate.

I will protect and defend the citizens and grant that justice be done to all of them by my Bailiffs.

If any citizen of St. Omer is owed money and it is unpaid on the agreed date, the debtor or his goods may be detained until all be paid on the testimony of two Bailiffs or Freemen.

Freemen of the town are free of toll throughout all the land of Flanders and any lands acquired by me. They are also to be free of toll throughout Peronne as well as France and, if peace is made with England and Boulogne, there as well according to treaty terms. In return, the Town will pay annually 100s.

All Freemen of the Town are exempt from *cavagium* [poll-tax], and from suit of [my] court and I shall require from them no Scot, or Taille or forced loan.

The £30 farm [Taxes] I grant for the restoration and for the maintenance of the Town. The burgesses shall see to it that a good and stable coinage is issued.

The guards who garrison the castle of St. Omer are forbidden to take anything above their stipend.

I grant for their use the pasture in the wood called Lo, the marshes, meadows, whins and fallow lands, except the land of the lepers, s it was in times past.

Charter of Barcelona, 1232

James I, King of Aragon grants this Charter to establish order and good civil government at the expense of feudal dignitaries.

By this charter we enfranchise all of our beloved and faithful citizens of Barcelona, both now and in the future.

We also free you from bridge, municipal and other tolls and customs and from all taxes throughout all places in our kingdoms and under our dominion.

We decree that no Toll or Tax Collector, Prefect, Majordomo, Treasurer, Justiciar, Baillie, Justice or Judge, Alcalde, Mayor, Bailiff or any other official of ours shall impede, take or detain you or any of your goods or merchandise.

Any official who shall attempt to tax you or your goods or merchandise will have incurred both our anger and a penalty of £1000 and must make restitution of double what he charged you.

trade – especially trade with non-citizens and non-residents). There were also ***Arbiters*** who dealt with small claims of under 200 lire.

The Militia *(**Popolo**)* was organised by Wards *(**Populi**)*, often based on a City Gate or sections of the City's walls. Ward leaders were chosen by the ***Uomini Buoni*** *('Good Men'* – Aldermen) and were, again, often confusingly, referred to as *Consuls*.

North France, Belgium and The Low Countries

Cities and Towns in these areas gained some or all of the following rights either from local or regional lords or, less commonly, from the King (see ***'The Charter of St. Omer, 1127'*** Sidebar on the previous page for an example for such an agreement).

The right to *Self-governance* and make *local laws*, to hold *Markets*, collect *Tolls*, levy *Taxes* and *Mint* coins and the right to erect a defensive *Wall* and raise a *Civic Militia*. A few were granted *Monopolies* – the exclusive right to trade/manufacture specific goods.

*Again, the principle of **Stadslucht maakt vrij** (or equivalent (applied in most cases.*

Spain (Northern)

Most towns had a ***Fuero*** *(Charter)* which granted a variety of liberties. Typically the city government was led by a ***Iudex*** *or* ***Juez*** who was elected (or chosen, depending on the degree of municipal freedom granted by the Charter), normally for a one year term, by a ***Concejo*** *(Council)* of ***Boni Homines*** (*'Good Men'* – Aldermen).

The *Juex* was assisted by several ***Alcaldes***, also elected annually by the constituent ***Colaciones*** *(Parishes)* of the settlement, who had judicial functions; ***Iurati*** *or* ***Fideles*** (fiscal officers), Market Inspectors (responsible for ensuring honest weights and measures were used) and other lesser officials who were in charge of minor administrative and policing functions.

There would also be an ***Alcaide*** *(Royal Governor)* who was responsible for looking after the rights of the Crown, whatever they were, ensuring safety and public order and, if there was an ***Alcazar*** *(Citadel)*, was also responsible for its garrison and defense.

Spain (Southern)

Towns in southern Spain *(al Andalus* – areas recovered from the Moors), had no organs of self-government. They were directly administered by Royal officials – the ***Sahib al-Madina*** *(Prefect of the City)* who was assisted by a ***Quadi*** *(Judge)* and an ***Al-muhtasib*** *(Market Inspector).*

These titles would have been gradually replaced by Spanish language ones ... but that process is outside of the period in question (the last Moorish enclave, Grana-

da, fell to the Reconquista in 1492, and forced conversions, despite treaty provisions, of the remaining muslims triggered a widespread revolt in 1499 and the final forced conversion of all those remaining in 1502).

Sweden

A municipality that wished to gain Town status had to meet certain criteria, as well as gain the assent of either the *Riksdag (Parliament)* or *King*. Minimum requirements were normally that it possess a Council Hall and a Prison (which generally meant a population large enough to afford such).

The initial level was *Market Town (**Köping**)* which, of course, had the right to hold a regular Market, but had limited rights otherwise.

The next step was a *City (**Stad**)* which had a Royal Charter in much the same way as *Royal Boroughs* did in England.

*There were some exceptions, direct Royal foundations, such as **Christianstad** and **Karlskrona**.*

The Cityscape

What did a Medieval City or Town look like? What sort of buildings and businesses could you find within? The following items are a representative selection –

Specific examples are taken mainly from London, but similar features would be found in most european cities of the medieval era.

Alehouses

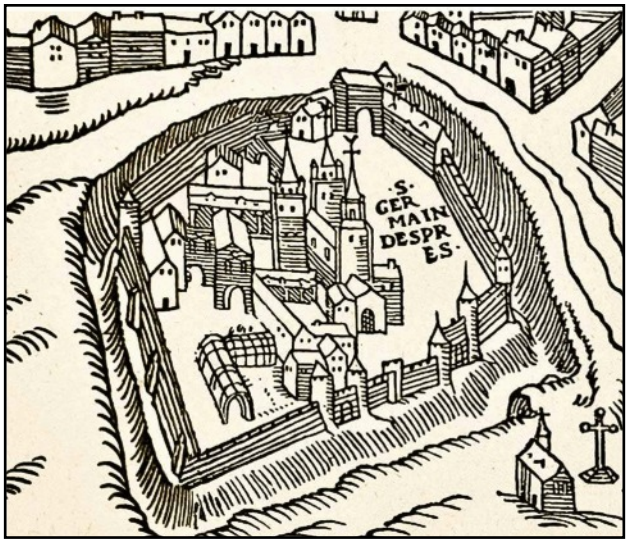
Ale was not generally produced on a commercial basis – many housewives brewed it as part of their domestic arrangements and sold at least part of what they brewed to make extra money.

Alehouses were simply private residences where the housewife was doing such – they provided no food, no lodging, merely Ale. All they required was some mugs and, usually, a place to sit while supping. This might simply be a bench outside the front door or window.

*Prices were strictly controlled under the **Assize of Bread and Ale** ... basic prices were set as follows (but could vary up or down in direct ratio to the current grain prices).*

"When a quarter [512 lbs] of Wheat sells for 3s to 3/4d, a quarter of Barley for 20-24d and a quarter of Oats for 15d Brewers in cities must sell two gallons of Ale for 1d, and out of cities three gallons for 1d."

The Assize also provided for 'Ale Conners' (Tasters) to regularly taste test the Ale produced by those offering it for sale to make sure it as of good (saleable) quality and also to check that they were selling it for the approved prices based on the current grain prices locally.



Bakers

Bakers did not just bake bread – they also baked pies, rolls and other items for sale *and* offered space in their ovens for householders to bake their own meals as many households in urban areas did not have the ovens (or space for them, or the fuel to run them).

*Prices were governed by the **Assize of Bread and Ale**. This set the price of a loaf of the 'best white bread' at **roughly** three times the price of grain (so if Wheat was selling at 36d a Quarter [512 lbs], a 4 lb loaf would be 4¾d). Lesser quality breads would be priced proportionally less.*

Chophouses

Large towns and cities had the medieval equivalent of 'fast food' joints that were open 24/7 and offered pre-cooked/quickly cooked food for sale or you could bring along your own meat or fish to be cooked.

*Details beyond their existence (and praise for their convenience by travellers) are sketchy, but they are described in later sources (such as **Pepy's Diaries**) as 'Ordinaries' and seem to have been something like a modern restaurant ... mostly sit down meals, but it seems likely that simpler meals may have been take-away.*

*A **Chop House** served **only** cuts of meat, but some of these businesses offered a variety of ready to eat meals in all price ranges ... Pottage, Stews, Soups and Fish. Bread, Cheese and Savouries and some of them, at least, offered to cook joints of meat/fish or other foods that customers brought with them, to order.*

Churches

There was always at least one (for the smallest Market Towns) and, typically, one for every 200-300 people in larger Towns (London had around 150 or so). Some towns might have *Minsters* or *Cathedrals* as well.

The number of London Parishes varied over time, old ones being disestablished or replaced or being absorbed and new ones being created (and that doesn't include

Typical Inn Prices

Private Room, 1s per night and up
Bed (place in), ½-1d per night
Servants Bed, ¼d per night
Place on Dining Room floor, ¼d per night.
Stabling Horse, summer, 1½d per night
Stabling Horse, winter, 3d per night
Food, common (including Ale), 1d
Food, average (including Beer), 1½-2½d

*For services in **red** the Innkeeper (or Staff) would **expect** tips. All prices are variable to the degree that the potential guest seems to be able to afford more.*

***Note:** Beds in the Common Rooms and Private Rooms could cost more in winter to cover the cost of fuel, as they often had a fireplace for warmth. Typically add +1d per nigh for a private room and ¼d per night per person in a Common Room.*

Medieval Innkeepers & the Law

Medieval Innkeepers had strict duties under the law, some of which included –

- Innkeepers were required to serve any traveller who asked for food and/or a room, subject to space available and other 'reasonable excuse' ...

  Drunken and disorderly applicants could be refused or those who looked as if they could not pay (though if they could show they had the means to do so, he could not refuse on grounds of appearance alone).

  *As noted elsewhere they were also not **supposed** to take mounted guests in preference to those on foot. Food and accommodation were to be provided on a strictly first come, first served, basis.*

- The Innkeeper was held legally responsible for informing his guests of the requirements of the local curfew, laws on the bearing of arms etc.

  He was also responsible for monitoring their behaviour in a world where travellers were suspect.

- He had to provide for the safety of guests and their property against robbers attempting to gain entry, or from potential thieves amongst the guests.

- Only *Private* Rooms had to be protected against outside threats.

  Handing over the room key indicated that there was a contract between the Innkeeper and the guest.

- Innkeepers could seize property of guests who could not pay ... or of dead guests to do the same.

  Theoretically this was limited to the recovery of actual costs.

the new ones created as 'London' spread beyond its walls). Similar patterns would have applied to other English cities and to cities in other parts of Europe.

Around 1/3 of all space inside the walls was walled off Church land – not all belonging to Parish Churches, which was more or less public space. Some belonged to Monastic orders or to important Church officials (Abbots, Bishops etc.) for their 'Town' residences.

Hospices

A Medieval *Hospice* serves one of two functions (and normally only *one* of them) – *either* it is an institution providing accommodation for travellers *or* it provides care for the sick or dying.

Monastic Houses normally provided accommodation for travellers as part of the religious duty, but this would be uncommon in a Town where Inns would normally provide such accommodation. In a pinch, a Traveller would be provided with a bed in an empty Monk's cell or, possibly, a shared bed in a dormitory.

A simple meal would also be provided for a traveller, usually eaten separately from the Monks – and normally meatless (even if the Monks were dining on meat!).

In larger Towns there was occasionally a purpose built Hospice intended for the care of the sick or dying and run by a religious order. Such institutions were for the poor or those who had no family who could provide basic nursing care.

Typically they provided dormitory style accommodation and patients were given space in a shared bed. Food, basic nursing care and simple medicines were provided and there would usually be someone available on staff with basic medical and surgical knowledge.

Given the state of medical knowledge at the time (more on this in a later chapter), the efficacy of the care provided varied wildly. More often than not such institutions provided a place where the poor could die with a small degree of dignity and not much more.

Clocks & Time

The first mechanical clock in England is installed in St. Albans Abbey some time after 1336. By the middle of the 14th century there were mechanical clocks in most, if not all, of the Royal Palaces.

The earliest clocks did not have clock-face, they were intended to ring a bell to indicate the passage of time – and, when clock faces *were* introduced, they only had an *hour* hand.

Traditional timekeeping divided the Day and Night into 12 equal hours each, regardless of their actual length (which obviously varied according to the time

of year) – and, during daytime, people estimated time (usually only to the nearest half or quarter hour).

With the introduction of clocks, hours began to be equal in length day and night and you then needed to be careful. For example *'the 9th hour'* indicated time according to the old system while *'the 9th hour of the clock'* is according to a standardised hour.

Shopping Hours. Shops and Markets traditionally opened as soon as the Bell (or Clock) struck ***Prime*** *(~7 am)* and closed at Dusk (~16 hours in midsummer and ~8 hours in midwinter).

Shops are often closed for Lunch and there were usually mid-morning and mid-afternoon breaks as well. Averaged over a whole year, allowing for breaks, a working day was around 9 hours of actual work.

Houses

The typical town house has a street frontage of 8-16' and were around 25' deep. If the building was the home of a craftsman, then it would have a counter taking up about 6-8' of the frontage and opening onto the main room where the craftsman and his apprentices would work and do business.

Shop counters fold down for business during the day and fold up to block off entry at night. The main doors at the front and back would typically be of heavy oak.

Windows were generally unglazed holes with shutters ... though you might find some with oiled parchment or horn to provide some protection from external draughts while allowing in a minimal amount of light.

Newer houses were typically three storeys high and the upper storeys were often 'jettied', and older ones 1-1½ (the latter with space under the roof).

Except in the very poorest tenements there was usually an enclosed yard at the back for, amongst other things, the Outhouse/Cesspit and a variety of other uses, depending on its actual size.

*These dimensions are for houses of the common through to the moderately well-to-do. Wealthier folk could afford bigger buildings with wider frontages, and the **very** wealthy would have walled compounds with freestanding buildings inside. Small gardens, both for pleasure and for growing herbs/vegetables might also be found.*

'Jettied' houses had upper storeys that projected out over the streets – and the upper storeys often came within a few feet of the similarly jettied houses on the other side of the relatively narrow streets.

The rear yard could house chickens, goats or pigs and, in some bigger households, a cow to provide milk. Some businesses might have space for a Cart and Horse. Very



large yards of the well-to-do might have a vegetable plot or even a small garden as well ... only the walled compounds of the very wealthy would have stables for horses and actual pleasure gardens.

Houses on the main streets of the larger towns would normally be of stone construction. Most others would be Wattle & Daub or Half Timbered.

Most houses on the main streets (those of the well-to-do craftsmen) would be occupied by a single (extended) family, their apprentices and servants.

In less well off areas each floor might be rented out separately, and in the very poor areas each room might be ... in the most wretched areas you would find people who would only be able to afford *space* in a room along with, potentially, many others.

In these poorer areas there will rarely be any yard, as the space will have been filled in with extra rooms by the landlords ... slumlords are not a new thing!

There may not even be space for an outhouse, and people will literally have to do their business in the narrow alleyways (or empty their chamberpots there) ... or find one of the few public outhouses or cesspits.

Inns

An Inn was an establishment where travellers could find accommodation and food – often it was prohibited from serving meals to non-guests (who would be expected to go to a *Tavern*). The best Inns were on the main streets (those running from the [main] gates to the Market Square or some other central location).

***All** Inns tended to be a 'cut above' and the main point of differentiation would have been the number of rooms and whether there were any private rooms available.*

A typical Inn consisted of a walled compound with a blank wall pierced by a strong double gate facing the street. The gate would open at dawn (or whenever the business day began) and close at dusk (or curfew) and allow access to the courtyard, which may or may not be surfaced (with cobbles or other materials).

Courtyard size would be proportional to the size of the

Inn ... but they were not intended to handle carriages (which didn't really exist yet) or waggons and carts.

There would be a Stables on one side of the compound, normally with a double storey, which would have space for the likely number of horses expected travellers would bring. The upper floor might be for storing Hay or for servants belonging to the Guests (and, perhaps, for some of the live-in Inn servants).

*Though, legally, Innkeepers were **supposed** to offer accommodation for all travellers arriving before curfew, there was always a preference for mounted travellers (who were presumably wealthy!). Late arrivals might well find themselves only offered space in the Stables with the animals or might even be turned away.*

Mounted parties usually sent servants ahead to secure rooms/beds so the rest who could travel more sedately.

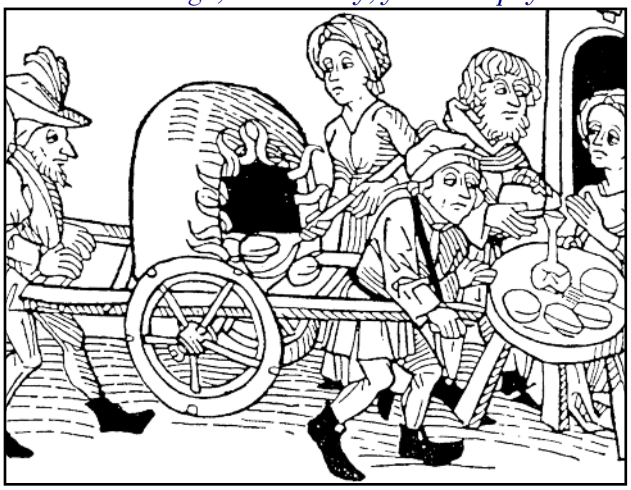
Two of the other sides would commonly have wings of the main building – normally of two storeys. The First floor (US 2nd) might be entered from the Ground floor or from and external staircase and gallery.

The Ground floor of the main building contained Common Room (open right to the unlined ceiling) and Kitchens as well as the necessary storerooms for the household (and, possibly, Brewing facilities, as most households made their own Ale or Beer).

Poorer travellers, or any late arrivals if the Inn's rooms and other areas were full, could sleep on the floor in the Common Room (which may not have been too much of a hardship, see elsewhere).

There might be rooms for the Kitchen staff and the Innkeeper and family. Upper floors were divided into guest rooms – each with 3-12 beds and very little other furniture (possibly a chest and table, maybe some stools, probably several chamber pots, a jug of water and a basin and some hand towels).

Beds were shared between 2-3 people, depending on their size ... though, theoretically, you could pay to have one to yourself by paying for all the spaces. The Beds themselves may have been simple frame beds or, in more expensive rooms, curtained four posters.



*Married couples got first dibs on a bed and were supposed to get it by themselves for the price of two – but did **not** get the whole room to themselves if there was more than one bed. Otherwise, rooms were divided so they were either entirely male or entirely female, as the numbers of each sex determined.*

Somewhere in the courtyard there would be an Outhouse and Cesspit and, a Well (hopefully *well* lined and well *away* from the Cesspit!). The Common and Private rooms would, of course, have Chamberpots that would be emptied each morning by the staff.

Or you could stumble out in the dark to the Outhouse.

Some of the more upmarket Inns were starting to offer 'private' chambers that had a single four poster bed, possibly with the usual truckle (roll-away) beds for servants, and which could be hired by a single party (which might be several people in the main bed, plus servants in the truckles). Such rooms were individually lockable and tended to have more furniture ... a table, several chairs (not stools), and two or more lockable storage chests as well as shelves on the walls.

A small Market Town might only have a single Inn, a medium sized one might have 4-5 and a large provincial 'capital' might have 10-20. A large city like London would have double that.

Laundries

In Towns, while poorer households still did their laundry themselves as did some of the wealthier ones, there was usually a number of paid for laundry services available.

The very poor may not have enough clothes to make washing possible – having only the set that they were wearing. Most people had enough so that they could wash one set while wearing a second ... and wealthier people usually had several sets of clothing.

Laundresses used soft soap (usually a harsh grey liquid form sold by the barrel) for washing, as clothing in this period was still basically linen and wool that *could* be washed without damage.

At the very beginning of the period stale urine might still be in use for cleaning purposes, but soap was rapidly replacing it. The soap used for laundering was caustic and laundresses could easily be identified by the rough and reddish, possibly blistered, skin on their arms.

They would either do their work on the banks of a local stream or river in conjunction with manual

possing (i.e. beating clothes with a stick or rubbing on a corrugated board) or soak them and do the same in barrels or cauldrons at their home or place of work.

Cloth and clothing was still expensive enough that most people, even the extremely wealthy, didn't have enough clothing and household linen to go more than a week or two without having to have them laundered.

Marketplace

Originally this was a large open square *or* Churchyard, usually fronted by the main (or only) Church if the former and with a *Market Cross* (in England and Scotland, at least) prominently located.

These large open areas rarely survived, and were quickly filled by semi-permanent stalls which then quickly developed into permanent shops and residents, leaving only a small remnant open space.

*Settlements large enough to have a purpose built Marketplace often **originally** held it in a Churchyard.*

In larger Towns and in Cities there would likely be several Marketplaces – each specialising in a single type of item (or related items) and there were usually clusters of shops of related trades nearby.

If anywhere inside a Town or City had paved streets, it would be the Market Square and the main street leading to it. Paving was normally in the form of stone cobbles, but in some places it might be rammed wood pavers which served the same function. Stone flagstones were uncommon, as was the use of gravel.

Prisons

All towns had some sort of gaol facilities – in smaller towns it might only be cages out in the open intended for only short term incarceration while in larger towns and cities there would be converted or purpose built (less commonly) structures.

*Prisons were only intended to hold people for long enough for them to be tried and, if convicted for a whatever was regarded locally as serious crime, for a short period before they were hung (or otherwise executed) – they were not **intended** for long term incarceration or as a place for holding long term convicts.*

*Settlements which had their own Sheriffs **usually** had little delay between arrest and trial, though there was always a backlog. The **accused** could be arrested, tried, convicted (or acquitted) and hung all on the same day – but a delay of several days or more was more likely and it was possible that it might stretch out to weeks or months.*

In smaller Towns without a Sheriff, prisoners held for serious (capital) crimes might have to wait for the next Assize (presided over by peripatetic Royal Judges and held quarterly) ... possibly even longer.



A Moneylender or Banker

Prisons were often farmed out to private contractors who then extorted money from the prisoners for better food and treatment. Anyone who couldn't pay was of no interest and it was all too common for people to die of disease (possibly triggered by malnutrition) in prison ... in general they were horrible, dirty and overcrowded.

*London had six prisons – **The Fleet, The King's Bench, Ludgate, Newgate** (which seems to have been both purpose built **and** the worst) and, for very important prisoners, **The Tower of London.** There were two more over the river in Southwark (administratively separate from the City – **The Clink** and **The Marshalsea**.*

*Florence had one of the first purpose-built prisons in Italy, if not all of Europe, in **Le Stinche** (c. 1300). Verona had a Prison called **The Inferno**.*

*In Paris the **Bastille** was a Royal Prison while the **Chatelet** was administered by the City authorities.*

Physically, the Cells were relatively large and intended for multiple occupancy (and do not seem to have been routinely overcrowded) but were none to clean.

It was usually possible for better off prisoners to pay the Prison keeper for a single occupancy cell and for other personal items, and for better food etc.

In fact, Prisons were often leased out and run 'for profit.' A bare minimum of food and accommodation would be provided for those too poor to pay for better and death rates amongst these prisoners were high – and those with money would be charged for all sorts of little extras, according to their status and what they could afford.

Prisoners would normally sleep on the floor (which was probably covered in rushes) unless they could 'rent' a bed (mattress) from the Prison keeper and sanitation would consist of a common slop bucket that would be emptied irregularly.

Public Baths

These were surprisingly common throughout Europe, despite modern 'received knowledge' about how filthy people were in the Middle Ages.

There were, for example, 32 Public Bath-houses in mid 13th century Paris and, of course, in London there were 18 in Southwark (note that not all 'Stews' were Bath-houses ... but, in Southwark at least, it seems that all Bathhouses were Stews).

The cost of fuel to heat the water required was high, putting them out of reach of the very poor, but the tub was used over and over until the water was no longer very hot and it was not uncommon for people to have eat and drink in them (like a modern jacuzzi party).

*Those towns that had hot springs nearby often had bathing facilities built around them ... the pre-Roman and Roman Baths at **Bath** (Roman **Aquae Sulis**) were still in use in medieval times ... one for general use by the commons, and one reserved (it seems) for the well-to-do.*

In some towns, in order to cut down on fuel costs, Bakers would also run Public bathhouses ... using the residual heat from their ovens to reduce heating costs.

Bathtubs were just that – large wooden Tubs of varying sizes and capacities and, to prevent the bathers from getting splinters, they were lined with linen cloths draped over the inside.

Were they sex-segregated? Sources are not really any clearer than they are for the Roman period ... which is to say that, in some places and some times, they *may* have been, while in *other* places at *other* times they may *not* have been.

*German and Swiss communities were **much** less inhibited than elsewhere and mixed bathing was common or, at least, if there were sex-segregated pools or tubs, there was no curtain or wall between them – this sort of attitude was so common in some places that city authorities felt the need to pass laws to try and force those on their way to and from the Baths to be 'properly attired' ... laws that do not seem to have been routinely successful, as they were often reissued on a regular basis.*



Travellers from other parts of Europe always professed shock at this behaviour, strongly indicating it was limited to Germanic areas.

Shops

The most important things to know is that there was *no such thing* as a ***General*** *or* ***Department Store*** (Medieval stores *specialised*) and that stores selling manufactured goods rarely had much finished stock on hand, they produced items to order**.**

Food

For ***food*** you *mostly* went to a *Market* ... but there *were* specialist stores.

Bakers (Bread and Baked goods) and ***Brewers*** (mainly Beer, as Ale did not keep) were the most common, but larger towns would have ***Butchers*** (maybe even ***Horse Butchers*** in some places) for all sorts of meat products (mostly freshly slaughtered, but some preserved as sausages or smallgoods).

Bakers *also sold pies and pastries as well as cooking meals brought in by local householders who did not have an oven ... and so they tended to be scattered somewhat evenly all over the town.*

Brewers *needed to be near a good source of fresh water ... a conduit, well, or spring fed stream if possible (and in an outer part of the town due to the smells associated with the brewing process.*

Butchers *concentrated around the livestock Market which was usually in the outer part of the town by this period to remove an obvious concentration of foul smells and rotting waste from the more residential areas.*

*Smoked and Dried meat was not common, though Bacon and Salt meat was. Butchers sold a **lot** more of an animal than would be saleable today – **sweetmeats** or **sweetbreads** (offal) were popular, for example.*

Fishmongers (salted, smoked or dried fish ... fresh fish was bought at the waterfront or in the Market) and ***Grocers*** (who sold *spices*, not vegetables).

Fishmongers *sold salt fish from beds or trays (like sardines or herring) or barrels of brine. Smoked and dried fish was somewhat less common. As with Butchers, foul smells meant they were commonly isolated.*

Location

By the 12th or 13th centuries most towns had started to enforce strict laws on where certain types of trades had to be located ... or where they *couldn't* be located.

Noxious Trades. Those trades that used foul smelling processes or foul smelling materials or which generated foul smelling byproducts were increasingly forced to either relocate either to an isolated or distinct suburb or, eventually, outside the city walls.

They were also increasingly required to be located where any waste they generated would not be dumped in streams or rivers that provided drinking water for the city ... or that they did so *downstream*.

*Such Trades included **Butchers** (rotting offal and other organic refuse), **Dyers** (who used stale Urine as a mordant, to make dyes colour fast, at the beginning of the period), **Tanners** (who used rotted **Dog Turds** in some tanning processes) in others), **Candle Making** (for **Tallow** Candles, which required rendered animal fat), **Bleaching** (which used urine or sulphur) and **Vinegar Making** (amongst others).*

Bulk Trades. Trades requiring access for bulk or bulky goods were required to be on the same street, with access to one of the main streets so that ordinary foot traffic was not blocked.

*For example, **Butchers** and **Tanners** required access to the Livestock Markets which, in turn, required wide streets to minimise the blockages that moving larger herds and flocks of animals would inevitably create.*

*Which is not to say that the streets **were** all that wide by modern standards ... or that they were even wide by medieval standards, just that they were **supposed** to be.*

Concentration of Trades. While you *could* find shops of a particular trade scattered around a Town if it had a large population, most trades tended to concentrate along a particular street or collection of streets. In some towns the Council, or the relevant Guild, might *require* that a trade congregate in a specific area.

The result was that you will often find 'The Street of *This Trade*' or the '*Square of That Craft*' or '*<Craft Name> Road-Street-Alley* ... and that's where you'll find the *majority* of the shops related to that specific trade.

*It was common for Trades or Crafts that were related to specific Markets to be located close by to the location of those Markets ... though, sometimes, that meant close to the **original** location of the Market if it had since moved.*

Towns with Sea, River or Lake Ports might also have Shops belonging to trades who relied on imports from elsewhere in the country or internationally situated in nearby streets ... very few shopkeepers and merchants except for the very wealthiest had separate warehouses.

Smaller Towns may only have a single marketplace, but larger Towns may have separate ones ... and, of course, either size might have seasonal Markets of a Regional or



International scope. In such cases, shops belonging to Trades or Crafts that would use goods sold at such markets would still be nearby, if possible.

*A **Livestock Market** would have **Butchers, Tanners** and **Poulterers** set up shop nearby.*

*A weekly, monthly or yearly **Cloth Market** would usually have **Drapers, Dyers, Milliners, Cloth Merchants** and **Tailors** close by ... and so on.*

Manufactured Goods (and Services)

For anything else, you went to a specialist store ... and they were *intensely* specialised. Some examples are –

Blacksmiths. were generalists and could turn their hand to most things that could be made with iron – they might smelt their own materials from ore (or buy it in the form of bar stock) and then use that to make horseshoes, nails, hinges, farming tools, craft tools, knives and other utensils.

*They could even make **very** simple weapons and **very** basic armour in a pinch. Perhaps literally 'beating ploughshares into swords ...'*

They would have basic items in small quantities on hand (horseshoe blanks, for example, were a moderately common trade item). Depending on the size of the local market they might have a small selection of craft, household and farming tools available – but, again, most would need to be made to order.

*Blacksmiths were supposed to, as part of their apprenticeship, make **all** of their own tools ... so, of course, with a few basic tools they could build a whole smithy (the metalworking parts, anyway) almost from scratch.*

Clothes. If you wanted some new clothes, you went to a ***Draper*** to buy a length of cloth that you liked (lace was bought separately from a ***Lacemaker***) ... unless, of course, it was silk, linen or fustian (cotton) cloth, in which case you went to a ***Mercer*** ... and then you took it to a ***Tailor*** to be made up.

*Fine detail work such as beading or embroidery, however, **was** generally part of their craft.*

Ordinance of Stewholders, 1161

1) No brothel-keeper to prevent his whores entering or leaving the premises at will. Fine: 3/4d.

3) No brothel-keeper to open for business on holy days. Fine: £2/10/-. No whore to remain in the Liberty between 8:00am and 11:00am, or between 1:00pm and 5:00pm. Fine: 6/8d, a session on the Cucking stool and expulsion from the Liberty.

5) Quarterly searches of every brothel must be carried out to ensure no woman is imprisoned there against her will. If any such woman is found, Bishop's officers must escort her safely out of the Liberty.

6) No brothel-keeper to lend any whore more than 6/8d. Sums above that are void in the Bishop's courts.

8) No brothel-keeper to employ general staff beyond his wife, one Washerwoman and one Ostler.

9) All whores to wear an agreed garment indicating their profession. Each whore to pay brothel-keeper 14d/week for her chamber. No whore to be prevented from boarding wherever she wishes. Fine: £1.

10) No brothel-keeper to imprison any customer on his premises for refusing to pay. Defaulters must be taken to court. Fine: £1.

11) No brothel-keeper to knowingly accept a nun or another man's wife as one of his whores without permission from the Bishop's officials. Fine: 1s.

12) All brothel-keepers must register new whores with the Bishop's officials. Penalty, Brothel-keeper, £2; Whore: £1, Cucking stool and expulsion.

13) All brothel-keepers to safely return any customers' property left with them for safekeeping. Fine: £1.

14) No whore to entice any man into the brothel. Fine: £1. No brothel-keeper's wife likewise. Fine: £2.

16) Constables to search every brothel once a week for any infringements. Fine for impeding this search: £5.

19) No whore to keep a lover of her own. Penalty: 3 weeks gaol, 6/8d, Cucking stool and expulsion.

32) No brothel-keeper to let any whore work on his premises if he knows she has "the burning sickness" (probably gonorrhea). Fine: £1.

36) No brothel-keeper to sell food or drink. Fine is set at the discretion of the steward and the constables.

39) No brothel-keeper to allow cursing or blasphemy on his premises.

*A Tailor **might** have **samples** of cloth on hand for a potential customer to inspect, but nothing more than that.*

Of course, if you wanted *shoes*, then you had to go to a ***Cobbler*** ... though he would probably have a small stock of leather and, possibly, some partly finished shoes that could be sized and completed quickly.

If you wanted finer leather, you would probably have to buy it yourself and bring it to the Cobbler.

Gloves? You needed to find a ***Glover***. Hats? A ***Milliner***. You want ***buttons*** on your clothes you went to a ***Button Maker*** (the first Button Maker's Guild dates back to the mid 13th century) or a ***Haberdasher*** (who sold small sewing related items).

*Though buttons were **mainly** decorative rather than practical in this period they **were** used as fasteners or for closures, and the first reinforced buttonholes were introduced in the mid 13th century as well. Before then, buttons were coupled with loops ... and regular clothing closures were in the form of cloth ties, pins or broaches.*

You *could* but second-hand clothes from ***Upholders***, who specialised in such, but sometimes *Tailors* might have items for sale where customers couldn't pay for the work and, of course, for expensive clothes, ***Pawnbrokers*** would very likely have some.

Goldsmiths (*Metalsmiths*) and Jewellers. ***Goldsmiths*** (including *Silversmithing*, fine enamel work and gem polishing or carving) was the most prestigious metal-working Guild, but ***Copper, Bronze*** and ***Brass Smiths*** were more common and used the same skills to do the same fine work in baser metals.

*Goldsmiths, having valuable materials on the premises, had secure storage (guards, heavy doors, strongrooms, locked chests etc.) and could offer secure storage to others ... for a fee. The same sort of **Safety Deposit Box** type services as modern Banks do.*

*They did **not**, generally, lend money – though they could act as money **changers**. If you wanted a loan they **might** be able to take your gold or silver items as security (**Pawn**) for medium amounts, as they would be lending their own capital ... or **should** be ... as any gold or silver they held for other clients was **not** supposed to be lent ('deposits for loan' are a later development).*

Moneylenders. If you needed to borrow larger amounts of money and didn't have the moveable goods to *pawn* (see *Pawnbrokers*) you could borrow money from a *Moneylender* against land, revenue producing assets or moveable property that otherwise remained in your possession (eg, tools of trade for a craftsman).

In the early medieval period, the canon law prohibit-

ion against usury (charging interest for *profit*) meant that, in theory, only non-Christians could operate in this area ... and, since Islam had the same restrictions, that meant that most moneylenders were Jews.

However, by the early late 13th century merchants with wide international contacts such as the *Lombards* had replaced them and could provide *very* large loans.

*Interest was charged **yearly** for larger loans with security and was typically around 30%. For loans without security or without full security (or which were otherwise high risk) the interest rates could go as high as 65% and might be charged monthly.*

There is some evidence that the interest charged on such loans was charged only on the principal, and not on the accumulated interest ... at least in some cases.

Pawnbrokers. For most ordinary people the easiest way to borrow money was through a ***Pawnbroker***, who loaned money on security of items left with them more or less as they still do today.

***Despite** the general Canon Law prohibition on the charging of interest, Pawnbrokers were **specifically** allowed to charge enough interest to cover their operating costs by the **First Lateran Council** (1123).*

The earliest Pawnshops were the ***Monte di Pietà*** ('Mounts of Piety) which were founded as early as the late 12th century (though they were not called *Monte di Pietà* until the 14th century) and spread to the rest of Europe, reaching England by the mid 14th century ... they loaned money at no interest, operating expenses being paid for out of charitable donations. All eventually failed.

*The rule was that the **Monte di Pietà** would offer a loan equal to 2/3rds the assessed value of the item, for terms of up to a year after which it had to be redeemed or could be sold to cover costs. A subsidised interest rate was charged ... typically 7½ to10%.*

The ***Franciscan Order*** is known to have been involved in lending money from at least the 12th century, presumably for charitable purposes, though no real details are known. It is possible that if there is a Franciscan House in the Town that they may operate as a Pawnbroker and for similar interest rates.

For larger amounts, wealthier people would pawn their items with *Goldsmiths*, *Merchants* or *Moneylenders* (see those entries).

Stews (Brothels)

The medieval attitude towards prostitution was even more contradictory and conflicted than the modern day one. In general it was allowed because it could be taxed (and made money for the authorities) but was



Idealised activities in the Stews

deplored as immoral and, in theory, heavily restricted.

*The Church condemned all sexual activity a) outside of marriage and b) undertaken for any reason **other** than procreation. Most governments **professed** to follow these precepts ... or **seem** to enforce them on the 'common folk.'*

*There were **some** attempts to provide alternatives – the **Order of St. Mary Magdalene** ('White Ladies') was set up to provide convents for prostitutes and some Lords (temporal and spiritual) offered dowries so that they could marry and leave the profession, recognising that for some women it was an economic necessity.*

Such efforts had mixed success and, on more than one occasion, convents set up for protection of these women were found, instead, to have become corrupted by them and to have become hotbeds of prostitution themselves.

Restrictions might be that the Prostitutes have to be registered with the authorities (as in Paris) or be required to wear identifying marks on their clothing; that Brothels be geographically limited to certain parts of the city and operate under restrictive rules (such as preventing them from selling food and drink). Some of all of the above.

The reality was that prostitution was easily identifiable and readily taxable and, since medieval Lords were always short of money, taxation trumped morality. Even for the Lords of the Church.

*In London, for example, the city's Brothels were initially confined to **Southwark**, a manor held by the Bishop of Winchester across London Bridge. And the Bishop was more than happy to take their money while occasionally deploring 'modern morals.'*

*See the **Ordinances Touching the Government of the Stewholders in Southwark under the Direction of the Bishop of Winchester (1161)** on a previous page for some of the rules and restrictions they operated under.*

These laws were often ineffectual (surprise!) and

Northampton Tolls, 1224

Per Cart from another County carrying Goods, 1d.
Per Horseload of goods more than 1 Bushel, 1/4d.
Per Horse, Ox or Cow, ½d.
Per 10 Sheep, Goats or Pigs, 1d.
Per 4 Sheep, Goats or Pigs, 1/2d.

Meysham Tolls, 1272

Per Horse, 1d.
Per Ox, per eight Sheep, per 4-5 Pigs, 1d.
Per Cart load of goods, 1d.
Per Man load of goods, ¼d.

These Tolls only applied to goods to be sold in the Market ... goods brought in by local householders for their own consumption or by local merchants and craftsmen for their own use were exempt.

Also note that goods worth less than 3d were exempt as well, as this covered most business that the local Serfs and Peasants would have carried out.

In general, Tolls were no more than 1% of the value of the goods.

York Tolls, 1590

Per Horse, Gelding, Mare or Foal, 1d.
Per Ox, Cow or Cow and Calf, ½d
Per two Heifers, less than 2 years old, ½d.
Per 10 Sheep or Five Sheep with Lambs, ½d
Per 10 Lambs, ½d.

Even though almost a century after the period covered, the Tolls are reasonably indicative of what they would have been a century earlier as the evidence strongly suggests that Toll charges were traditional and never adjusted for inflation. Towns and Cities still made a profit from the overall expansion of Trade even so.

Market Stalls

The Toll (rental) for a Market Stall with a standard frontage of 12' was 2d per day for a regular weekly Market – but only for outsiders (i.e. those who did not enjoy immunity from Tolls or who were not local Freemen or Burgesses).

Locals who wanted a Stall would be allocated one by the Town or City authorities (possibly by a Market Bailiff), though most local craftsmen and merchants had their own Shops (typically with a 12' counter at the front opening directly onto the work area, but that width would only be a proportion of a wider street frontage).

Fairs

The Tolls and Charges for entry into the large regional, national or international fairs were much higher, but covered the several days of such events and paid for additional services and infrastructure not normally found in a regular weekly Market.

Tolls in Dublin, 1250

- Grain or flour, 1 Crannock, ¼d
- Jug of wine, 1, 2d.
- Jug of honey, 1, 4d.
- Wool Fleece, 1, 1d.
- Hides, Bundle, 1d.
- Deer, Goat or Horse hides, Bundle, ½d.
- Per large ship, 16d.
- Per small ship, 8d.
- English or foreign cloth, 1 Piece, ½d.
- Irish cloth, 1 Piece, ¼d.
- Woad, 1 Crannock, 2d.
- Salt, 1 Crannock, ¼d.
- Iron Bar, 1, ½d.
- Herrings, 1 Crannock, ¼d.
- Ox, Cow, or Mare 1d ea.
- Sheep, 8, 1d.
- Hog, 1, or side of bacon, ¼d.
- Wooden Boards, 100, ¼d.
- Horseshoes, 100, ½d.
- Onions, butter or fat, 1 Crannock, ½d.
- Pepper, 100 lbs, 2d.
- Wax, 100 lbs, 2d.
- Alum, 100 lbs, 2d.
- Mill-stone, 1, ½d.
- Linen cloth, 100 Ells, 1d.
- Canvas cloth, 100 Ells 1d.
- Lead, 1 cwt, 2d.
- Beans, 1 Crannock ¼d.
- Kitchen utensils, 12, ½d.
- Metal, 100 lbs, 1d.
- Fat pork, 100 lbs, 1d.
- Fat or Lard, 100 lbs, 1d.
- General Merchandise to the value of 3s, ¼d.
- Lamb-skins, 100, ½d.
- Squirrel-skins, 100, 1d.
- Pitch, 100 lbs, ½d.
- Iron, 100 lbs, 1/2d.
- Linden cords, 12, ¼d.

Crannock. A measure of weight equal to 2 Stone (28 lbs) common in Ireland and the west of England.

Ell. A measure of length equal to 39".

*Those items shown in **red text** were charged a Toll when entering **and** when leaving the Port.*

These Tolls were to pay for the erection of the City Walls and were supposedly for a fixed term, but in many cases cities managed to hang onto them permanently claiming they were needed for ongoing maintenance and future expansion. Certainly, an earlier grant of Tolls of 1233, for three years, had proved insufficient for Dublin to pay for the construction.

***Note:** Some of the weights and measures listed in the original text have been changed for clarity (and because there don't seem to be modern equivalents and/or there are no online definitions).*

Brothels or Prostitution proved to not be easy to limit to specific areas by law – for example, some street names in Medieval London are thought to indicate the presence of sex workers and Brothels.

Cocks Lane, ***Bathestrares*** *('Bath-keeper in Anglo-Saxon)* ***Lane***, ***Stew Lane***, ***Bordhaw Lane*** *and* ***Cunt-grope Lane*** *(the latter name, or variants, being known in other important English towns of the period as well) are all recorded in London during the 13th century.*

Presumably the authorities attempted to enforce South-wark-style rules to these upstart areas ... and probably with about as much ongoing success.

Efforts on the continent ran along the same lines, and had no more long term success.

Streets

Most streets, even the main ones leading from the Town Gates to the Market Cross, were usually dirt or, at best, indifferently gravelled and none too wide.

In most places ***main*** *streets were* ***supposed*** *to be wide enough for two Carts to pass side-by-side (or four horses side-by-side in each direction)* ***and*** *any projecting upper house storeys were supposed to be at least 12' from the road level (the nominal height of a horse and rider).*

There were no footpaths, houses opened directly onto the street surface, whatever it was. There might be a central gutter, or there might be one on either side, or just one one side, mainly for drainage but commonly used as a place to dump household and business waste.

Chroniclers report that it was common to see feral dogs, roaming pigs and rats in the rubbish strewn streets of London ... though this may well be exaggeration, possibly wildly so (often intended to make a moral point).

Theoretically the ***Scavenger*** *and* ***Rakers*** *(in London, but most Towns had similar arrangements) were to keep the streets clean and, in some towns at least, their might be something like a regular 'garbage collection' effort, or barrels of water might be sloshed on sections of street that got* ***too*** *foul ... but, in general, the streets remained absolutely filthy most of the time.*

Side streets were progressively narrower, on a random basis, though the poorer the area of the town the narrower the streets would be. In the very poorest areas they might be barely wide enough for two adults to squeeze by each other sideways.

The section of street in front of each House was *theoretically* the responsibility of the Householder to keep clear and passable, but enforcing this rule was difficult to do and done sporadically at best.

In wealthier (or simply longer established) towns, one of



the entry- or business-tolls would be ***Pavage****, which covered maintenance of the main streets (the ones from the Gates to the Market Cross or other central location) and this would usually be enough for them to be paved with cobblestones (or, less commonly, wood pavers).*

In towns dating back to Roman times, some of the roads might still be of Roman origin and haphazardly and ***much*** *crudely maintained.*

At night each Householder was *supposed* to put out a lantern or torch in front of their house to burn all night for minimal lighting – this was as difficult to enforce, and enforcement was done as sporadically, as road maintenance was.

At best you could expect ***some*** *of the Householders along the main streets and around the Market Square to have some sort of light put out at night, and there was usually a Porter on duty at the front door of most Churches where there* ***might*** *be a light as well ... in the poorer areas and the back alleys? Forget it!*

Even if there were a light put out, the sources available at the time were simply to dim to make much of a difference beyond a few yards ... and it was common for them to burn out or run out of oil well before sunrise.

Taverns

These were establishments that served food *and* drink to patrons, unlike *Alehouses*, but did *not* provide accommodation as did *Inns*.

They were legally ***prohibited*** *from renting rooms to travellers so that the authorities would know where to find any 'foreigners' at need ('foreigner' being anyone from more than a half a day's walk away!)*

They were *supposed* to close when the Curfew bell was rung (~8pm depending on the time of year) and the Tavern keeper could be prosecuted if he did not.

According to the sources they served 'cheap' food ... Pottage, Stews or cheap cuts of meat. They ***might*** *serve Ale, but more likely Beer and Wine (by the cup, and imported from France, Spain or Germany [in that order]).*

Most would consist of a single large common room, *possibly* with a separate kitchen, but more likely with food being cooked in cauldrons or on spits over the fire or hearth.

The Assize of Arms

Knights and Barons

Holders of a ***Knights fee*** must have a Horse, Hauberk, Helmet, Shield, Sword and Lance.

Barons or Knights holding more than one Knight's Fee should have as many Horses, Hauberks, Helmets, Shields and Lances as they have Knights' fees in their lordship.

Many Knights held a single Knight's Fee – but some held more than one and, while most Lords distributed most of their lands amongst their supporters, they kept a portion for themselves. In both instances they are expected to field as many Knights as they have Knight's Fees ... these would be Household Knights, contractors in a sense, rather than landowners.

Freemen

With chattels or rent of 16 Marks (£10/13/4d) must have a Hauberk, Helmet, Shield and Spear.

With chattels or rent of 10 Marks (£6/13/4d) must have a Light Hauberk, Iron cap and a Spear.

With chattels or rent of £2-£5 must have a Gambeson, Iron Cap and Spear.

With property worth less than £2 must have Scythes, Halberds and other small arms.

Burgesses must have a Gambeson, an Iron Cap, a Spear.

*In England, any Freeman with property worth £2 or more had to have a Longbow. In other places they were generally expected to have a Spear or, in France during the Hundred Years War, a **Shortbow** (a failed attempt to match English pre-eminence in archery).*

*In other places, other weapons might be required – in Flanders, Civic Militia were expected to be armed with **Pikes**, for example, as were many Italian Civic Militia, and Genoa was famous for its **Crossbowmen** who served both in the Militia and as Mercenaries.*

*Freemen would also, as a matter of course, have some sort of sidearm – a **Short Sword** for those able to afford them, a **Long Knife** for those who couldn't ... and a **Hatchet** for the even less fortunate. These would rarely be top of the line weapons, they were usually hand me downs, either older (or broken and ground down) Knightly weapons or spoils of war passed down within a family.*

The laws often required that arms and armour held by a family be, at the very least, passed down from father to son and not be alienated or sold overseas. In some places anyone other than an Armourer or Merchant could not possess more than one set of armour/arms.

Accommodation for the Taverner and their family would either be at the rear or in an upper storey.

Toll Gate/City Walls

Not all settlements had walls, or not to start ... and not all were *authorised* to have them (especially those Towns under non-Royal charters), but all of them had some sort of border marker(s) to indicate the area of land under the jurisdiction of the Town or City.

Such 'borders' might be in the form of a Ditch, a wooden Fence or Fence Posts and was usually more elaborate where a road entered ... where there was normally some form of symbolic barrier that could be closed (a rope or chain strung between posts was common).

Many Towns erected stone-built 'Gates' with included Tollhouses as a matter of prestige and, if they later gained the right (or collected enough money) to erect walls, these gates might be included in the wall circuit.

The Towers of the City Gates were often large enough to have living space inside, spread over several levels, and were often granted to mid to high ranking civic officials as residences.

Such residences would somewhat cosier and easier to heat than your typical stone built castle, where rooms in the Keep were much larger.

Town Hall/Guildhall

Not all Towns had an actual Town Hall (or *Rathaus* or *Hôtel de Ville*), sometimes referred to as a *Gild* (or *Guild*) Hall – in smaller Towns the Council and other officers would often meet in the Market Square or in the Churchyard of the main Church, out in the open (or, in inclement weather, in the Church itself).

*Yes, there **is** a difference between the Gild/Guild of **Freemen** of the Town (sometimes referred to as the Town/City **Corporation** ... in the sense that it had a corporate existence as single entity representing all the Freemen and Burgesses) and the **Merchant** or **Trade** Gilds/Guilds but, legally, the 'Gild' was the most common term for this level of non-commercial organisation in the period covered by **Orbis Mundi**.*

*Churchyards were **expected** to be used for public events – and even the interior **might** be pressed into service in inclement weather or for very special occasions (Yes, the Priests often complained of this – but were equally often ignored by the Parishioners).*

Since this was symbolic of the City and the City Corporation, it was built to be impressive – almost always of stone (less commonly, brick), at least by the period covered, and had offices and meeting places for the Town's administrative officers and clerks and, often, a ceremonial hall where important government and social functions would be held when needed.

Brick was less common because of the fuel cost of firing the clay ... stone was actually less expensive! In long established settlements you might still find half-timbered buildings that had not yet been replaced by the more substantial (and expensive) stone or brick construction – or the latter might be in the process of being built.

The Mayor (or Sheriffs) might have apartments in the Town Hall – and in larger, wealthier, cities, the Mayor may have an official dwelling (which would, of course, reflect the power and wealth of the Town Corporation in the same way as the Town Hall).

Water Supply

This could be in the form of public wells but, preferably, water was brought in via *'conduits'* from springs outside the town and distributed in a ***Conduit*** (House or Houses) inside the walls. Structures surrounding Wells and Conduits were usually quite substantial.

*A **conduit** was a simple aqueduct or channel (usually open, rarely covered) while a **Conduit** was a covered reservoir fed by the same where householders would go to collect water. Often the water level was reached by descending some steps down to the basin.*

Only the very wealthiest households could afford a direct connection by pipe (which they had to pay for to be installed and maintained) and even then the water was usually only 'turned on' for a few days a week and used to fill household cisterns.

*Such private pipes were **normally** made from wooden logs drilled through and butted together (and probably sealed watertight with pitch and hemp) ... and required regular replacement.*

Weights & Measures

Market Towns had prominently displayed standard Measures (Weight, Length, Volume) often placed (permanently or on Market Days) in a central location in the Market Square, often near the Market Cross.

Permanent shopowners were legally obliged to have their weights and measures checked quarterly.

*In England weights and measures were largely standardised by the 13th century, **except for Cornwall** (which was **weird** ... even the English admitted it) but in France there were widely different local 'standards' despite attempts by the King to enforce a national standard.*

*In other jurisdictions, local standards applied and could vary considerably, but merchants might make deals in specified standards from **other**, more prominent, jurisdictions **amongst themselves**.*

When selling to the townspeople, however, there was usually a requirement that measurements be those set by the Council ... making it confusing to all and sundry.



Civic Militia & Garrisons

Medieval states *required* military service – theoretically *all* male inhabitants were obligated to serve. The *reality* was different, and is dealt with elsewhere.

Major Towns and Cities, however, being centers of trade (and wealth) were unusual in the medieval context in that they were able to field considerably better equipped levies than rural areas.

Militia

Each Burgess or Freeman had to serve – and, for defence of the City they would do so, defending sections of the walls according to Ward or Craft organisation. For service outside the City, however, the usual requirement would be for each *household* or *group of householders* to provide a militiaman.

For example, London, with a population of around 40,000, was able to field 8000 militia – possibly 2000 Cavalry and 6000 Infantry.

This would presumably have been the full militia call out for home defence – for campaigns further afield units of 100 or 1000 are sometimes mentioned (100 Cavalry and 1000 Infantry?).

Smaller (and larger) Towns would have proportionally around the same.

Simple economics prevents the fielding of more than 5% of overall population for any but the shortest period ... though, since Towns were centers of wealth, they would be able to field a proportionally larger number than the poorer, much more labour intensive, rural areas.

There was rarely anything like an 'armoury' or 'armouries' which held weapons and equipment to arm the citizenry ... citizens were expected to provide and pay for their own arms and equipment.

*Such armouries as **did** exist, but were generally very small and usually held only siege engines or artillery (or the bits needed to make them) rather than personal weapons and armour.*

Southampton Merchant Guild Rules

1. [T]here shall be elected ... an Alderman, a Steward, a Chaplain, 4 Skevins [Assistants?], and an Usher. [The] Alderman shall receive from each one new member 4d; the Steward, 2d; the Chaplain, 2d; and the Usher, 1d ... the Guild shall meet twice a year ... on the Sunday next after St. John the Baptist's day, and on the Sunday next after St. Mary's day.

2. When the Guild [is] sitting no one is to bring in any stranger, except when required by the Alderman or Steward ... [the] Alderman shall have a Sergeant to serve ... him, the Steward another Sergeant, and the Chaplain shall have his Clerk.

3. When the Guild sit[s], the Alderman and Steward are to have, each, 2 gallons of wine and 2 candles; the 4 Skevins and Chaplain, each, 1 gallon of wine and 1 candle, the Usher 1 gallon of wine.

4. When the Guild sit[s], the lepers of *La Madeleine*, the sick of *God's House* and *St. Julian* hall have 2 sesters of ale [c. 8 gallons]. The Friars Minor shall have 2 sesters of ale and 1 sester of wine and 4 sesters of ale shall be given to the poor ...

6. [When the Guild is sitting] if a Guildsman is ill two loaves of bread, a gallon of wine and a dish from the kitchen [shall be sent to him] and two approved men shall visit and [enquire] after [him].

7. [W]hen a guild[master] dies, all [Masters] in the city shall bear the body to the [cemetery]. [During] the Vigil and the Mass [the guild will provide, each night] 4 candles, each of 2 lbs or more ...

8. The Steward ought to keep the rolls and treasures ... under the seal of the Alderman ...

9. When a Master dies, his eldest son or his next heir shall have [his] seat [at no cost]. [No-one can have a seat through his wife or through his wife's ancestors.]

Fullers & Weavers (Winchester, 1209)

No Weaver or Fuller may dry or dye cloth nor go outside the city to sell it on pain of forfeiture. They may sell their cloth to no foreigner, but only to merchants of the city.

Neither the Weaver nor the Fuller may buy anything except for his trade but by making an agreement with the mayor.

No free man can be accused by a Weaver or a Fuller, nor can they bear testimony against a free man.

If any of them become rich, and wish to give up his trade, he may forswear it and turn his tools out of the house, and then do as much for the city as he is able in his freedom.

Militia Equipment

A Burgess was expected to have a Mail Hauberk, Shield and appropriate weapons (Sword and Spear, possibly a Bow or Crossbow) and the wealthiest might be expected to serve as Cavalry (mostly as Sergeants, but some armed, if not trained, as Knights).

Some Italian City-States had 'City Knights,' wealthy Burgesses expected to serve as 'knightly' (medium or heavy) Cavalry – and, of course, those that controlled rural territories as well, could field actual Knights.

Freemen had lesser requirements, lighter armour (Mail, a Brigandine or Gambeson, a Shield) and simpler weapons – possibly a Sword, but more likely a Spear or a Bow or Crossbow. Poorer Freemen who could not individually afford even this lesser level of equipment were usually banded together into groups who were then required to equip one of their number.

For defense, organisation was by the Alderman of a Ward or the chosen officers of the Craft Guilds under the direction of the Mayor or Sheriffs. Unit level officers were still elective.

The level of training varied widely. The London Militia seem to have performed very well, but Flemish and Italian Militia were much more variable in their abilities and performed best when in static defensive positions ***or*** *after several weeks on campaign when they would have gained some experience in maneuvering.*

In reality, most cities had a small core of professional military officers on hand who would provide military advice to the part-timers.

Often these professionals would be in overall command of the City Watch or the guard responsible for the Treasury (oftentimes the same body did both), or, possibly, simply a 'Captain' given quarters in one of the Gate Towers and in charge of training during peacetime.

Garrisons

Chartered cities did not have garrisons *as such*, not beyond the required Watch/Night Watch – but it was not uncommon for such rich places to contain a Royal or Noble Castle or Palace within or as part of its defences which, of course, had permanent garrisons.

Palaces were generally not garrisoned. If the owner ***wasn't*** *present and, depending on the size of the complex, it would probably only have a Night Porter and a couple of Night Watchmen. If the owner* ***was*** *present, then whatever security there was would depend on the number of retainers they had with them ... though the Lord and his chief officials were usually Knights and so would be able to fight as such.*

Castles rarely had large permanent garrisons, and even large ones such as *Edinburgh Castle* or the *Tower*

of London historically had only a dozen or so Knights, perhaps twice that many Sergeants or Hobilars and about the same number of Archers/Men-at-Arms.

*If the Owner of the Castle was present his entourage would include Knights and Men-at-arms ... and, if **on campaign**, there would be additional troops (possibly so many a small castle may not hold all inside its walls).*

***Note:** One of the most hated impositions of lordship was the forcible quartering of troops on the civilian populace. Chartered Towns and Cities were normally immune.*

GUILDS

There were two types of Guild – the *Merchant's* Guild and the *Craft* Guild.

MERCHANT GUILDS

Merchant Guilds were the earliest to be formally organised and consisted of those merchants who were involved, directly or indirectly, in long distance (international) trade and who then re-sold their merchandise in their home cities on a wholesale basis.

Such Guilds could be of *international* importance so it was important for *all* state parties involved to ensure guild members were well treated as they formed the largest element of their money economy – making them prime sources for revenue and generators of economic activity on a level above mere barter.

So important were such guilds that the local ruler was often induced to grant them rights of independence and self-government within their municipal bases in return for financial inducements, direct and indirect.

While such grants often seemed a good deal at the time, they rarely remained so – the money generating capacity of free Cities was such that they could end up by being the tail that wagged the whole Kingdom.

*This was a perennial problem until the establishment of more formal state structures at the end of the Renaissance and in the Early Modern period (and **well** outside the period covered).*

THE ROLE OF MERCHANT GUILDS

The main role performed by Merchant Guilds was to provide a legal structural framework to make international trade economically feasible in the fragmented Europe of the post-Roman period.

They provided a system of communal responsibility to enforce good trading practise – Guilds were divided into *"Nations"* at major foreign trade entrepots.

*If a member of a "nation" defaulted on their commitments then **all** other members of the Guild could be held responsible and their property could be confiscated to*



pay any fines or debts due. The out-of-pocket merchants would have to begin legal proceedings in their home jurisdiction to regain any losses that accrued as a result

Such Guilds could make or break a trade route or fair if local rulers were too predatory. They would simply boycott it and favour another until the economic damage hit hard and forced the ruler to back down.

*Even **threatening** such a boycott could have severe repercussions. Rulers angered the guilds at the risk of crippling their entire money economy.*

CRAFT GUILDS

Craft Guilds were *originally* more like *Trade Unions*, intended to protect the livelihood of their members (ensuring they were fair pay/treatment and a standard of service or product) though they were subverted and turned into oligarchies as the period progressed.

THE ROLE OF CRAFT GUILDS

To do this, they utilised their economic and labour "muscle" through boycotts, strikes – and, in a more lawless period than today, the ever popular *riot*.

In the later medieval and renaissance periods the growing economic power of the guild***masters*** was such that they lost any commonality of purpose with their employees and gained much in common with the nobility whom they had struggled against initially.

In such a case, they soon transformed the Guilds from proto-Unions to oligarchical monopolies more interested in oppressing the workers.

*This process took a considerable time, and was never **completely** successful – especially the larger the number of journeymen employed by a guild within a city.*

GUILD ORGANISATION

Guilds were large and financially complex and so needed a complex organisational structure for their governance. Members (***Masters*** only) would meet *at least* once a year to elect officers, examine accounts, discuss Guild business and vote on new/amended rules – and, later, on what *new* Masters to accept.

IN ENGLAND

The highest elected officer was the ***Alderman*** who managed the activities of the lesser officials.

Stewards were the financial comptrollers and kept records of all income and expenditure that would be examined at least once a year by all members.

Craft Guilds of London

During the medieval period, the following Craft Guilds were granted guild status and/or royal charters in the City of London *and still exist today* – and should give an indication of the breadth of coverage of medieval guilds (of course, many no longer exist or only exist as charitable organisations).

Armourers and Braziers (Armourers and Brassworkers) (1322), *Bakers* (before 1155), *Barbers* (1308, includes *Surgeons*), *Blacksmiths* (1325), *Bowyers* (1363), *Brewers* (1437), *Broderers* (Embroiderers) (1376), *Butchers* (before 1331), *Carpenters* (1271), *Cooks* (1170), *Coopers* (1298), *Cordwainers* (workers in fine leather) (1278), *Curriers* (Leatherworkers and Tanners) (1276), *Cutlers* (knife makers) (1344), *Drapers* (Cloth merchants) (1364), *Dyers* (1310), *Farriers* (1356), *Fishmongers* (1272), *Fletchers* (1371), *Fruiterers* (1463), *Girdlers* (Girdle and Belt makers) (1327), *Glaziers* (1328), *Glovers* (1349), *Goldsmiths* (1327), *Grocers* (including *Apothecaries*) (1180, originally the *Pepperers*), *Horners* (workers in Bone) (1284), *Haberdashers* (1371), *Innholders* (1473), *Ironmongers* (1300), *Joiners and Ceilers* (Wood craftsmen) (before 1375), *Leathersellers* (1444), *Loriners* (Harness makers for horses) (1261), *Mercers* (General Merchants) (before 1348), *Merchant Taylors* (Tailors) (before 1328), *Musicians* (before 1500), *Painter-Stainers* (Stainers, 1268; Painters, 1283, combined, 1502), *Pattenmakers* (Wooden shoes and clogs) (1379), *Paviors* (street construction & maintenance) (1276), *Pewterers* (1348), *Plumbers* (1365), *Poulters* (sellers of Poultry) (1368), *Saddlers* (before 1068), *Scriveners* (Notaries) (1373), *Shipwrights* (12th century), *Skinners* (13th century), *Stationers* (1403), *Tallow Chandlers* (before 1456), *Turners* (1295), *Tylers and Bricklayers* (before 1416), *Vintners* (before 1364), *Wax Chandlers* (Church Candlemakers) (1358), *Weavers* (1130) and *Woolmen* (winders and packers of wool) (1180).

The official title of a Guild is typically ***The Worshipful Company of [fill in the blank]*** ... though it could be significantly longer and more detailed, for example –

"The Master and Wardens and Brethren and Sisters of the Guild or Fraternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Mystery of ***Drapers*** *of the City of London"*

Other Craft Guilds

The list of London Guilds is not meant to be comprehensive or limiting – other cities and towns may have had some of the same types of Guilds, or completely different ones.

For example, many continental European cities had Guilds of ***Prostitutes*** and often had guilds of ***Seamstresses*** in addition to *Tailors* Guilds.

Paris had a Guild of ***River Merchants*** who became so powerful that their coat of arms is now the coat of arms of the City itself.

Florentine Guilds

Italy was well placed to begin an economic recovery much earlier than the rest of western Europe simply because of her geographical position and the trade with the East Roman Empire and Muslim world that this enabled.

As a result, she had a much wider variety of Guilds in existence by the 14th century –

Combmaker, *Arte della Lana* (wool), *Carpenters and Saddlers*, *St. Mary's Gate* (silk), *Spicers*, *Physicians*, *Furriers*, *Retail Wine Merchants*, *Butchers*, *Cobblers*, *Smiths*, *Linen and Yarn merchants*, *Locksmiths*, *Mattress-makers*, *Stonemasons and Woodcutters*, *Clothiers* (sellers of cloth), *Grain merchants*, *Armourers*, *Tanners*, *Brass Workers*, *Bakers*, *Goldsmiths*, *Purse Makers*, *Innkeepers*, *Chest and Trunk makers*, *Harness and Beltmakers*, *Coopers* (Barrelmakers including Coffin makers), *Saddlers*, *Cloth-folders and Finishers of French cloth*, *Cooks*, *Cloth-folders and finishers of Florentine cloth*, *Tallow Merchants*, *Greengrocers*, *Waggon or Carriage makers*, *Hat and Cap makers*, *Hauliers* (Waggon men), *Dyers*, *Painters*, *Bowlmakers and Woodturners*, *Proprietors of Bath-houses*, *Hand Porters*, *Barbers*, *Teachers*, *Glaziers*, *Town Criers*, *Judges and Notaries*, *Moneychangers and Bankers*, *Bookbinders*, *Sewer Cleaners* (including garbage workers), *Seamstresses*, *Weavers*, *Fletchers* (Arrow Makers), *Public Weighers*, *Smelters and Assayers*, *Packers*, *Dicemakers*, *City River Fishermen*, *Brickmakers* (including makers of earthenware pottery), *Bell Founders*, *Wheelwrights*, *Millstone Makers*, *Brokers*, *Quarrymen*, *Crossbow Makers and Bowyers*, *Basket Makers*.

Again, as with London, the list is not exhaustive!

Parisian (and French) Guilds

French Guilds were called ***Corps de Métiers*** and were different from English Guilds in that they specialised to a ***much*** greater degree ... whereas, for example, in London there was a single *Blacksmith's Guild* in Paris there were *separate* Guilds for *Farriers*, *Knife Makers*, *Locksmiths*, *Chain Forgers* and *Nail Makers*.

Likewise, in Paris there were separate Guilds of *Helmet Makers*, *Shield Makers*, *Armour Makers* and *Armour Polishers*.

With the increasing centralised and autocratic nature of the Royal Government, the Guild system in France began to collapse in the 1400s and it was replaced by what can loosely be called *Labour* Associations (precursors to Trade Unions, in a sense) consisting of the Journeymen who believed, rightly, that they were being oppressed by the oligarchic nature of the older, government supported, Guild system.

Deans acted as the enforcement arm of the Guild, ensuring that members kept the Guild rules – or were prosecuted and fined if they did not.

They also policed activities of non-members who tried to set up in opposition to the Guild, or who tried to import foreign goods of the sort that the Guild made in an attempt to damage the business of the Guild.

On the Continent

Continental Guilds were run by two ***Syndics*** or ***Doyens*** assisted by a *Secretary*, *Treasurer* and six or more *'Jurymen'* (***Jurés, Assesseurs, Trouveurs*** or ***Prud'hommes***) all elected by the Masters of the Guild.

In ***Flanders***| Guilds further organised themselves into ***Confréries Militaires*** *(Military Brotherhoods)*, nominally religious bodies that were, in fact, organised Militia ... normally Crossbow or Pike armed.

As noted elsewhere, such Militias tended to perform best on the defense, especially if in pre-organised positions.

The last European states to develop a Guild system were Spain and Portugal, where the first Guild were only being formed in the mid to late 15th century.

Membership Structures

Guilds were organised around a single trade or craft and the members were divided into three grades –

- ***Apprentices***. Unpaid trainees. The apprenticeship period varied from 2-10 years.

  It was increasingly common for Masters to charge a substantial fee for taking on an Apprentice.

  As Apprentices gained skill and were able to undertake productive work as well they were usually paid a small amount by their Masters.

- ***Journeymen***. Those who had completed their apprenticeship and proved able to produce quality goods. They were paid standard rates, as set by the Guild, and could work towards becoming *Masters*.

- ***Masters***. Those who had completed their *Masterwork* and who had their own workshop and employed *Journeymen* and trained *Apprentices*.

  Towards the end of the period progressing from Journeyman to Master required a "masterwork." This was done to limit competition and kill shown became increasingly irrelevant if the Masters deemed there was no space.

Women as Guildmembers

Most Guilds did ***not*** allow women to become *members* (the exceptions were Guilds that had an all or mostly female membership – usually the weakest and least



powerful of all the Guilds in a medieval town or city) though they would supervise any (mostly widows) running an inherited workshop.

Master (and even Journeyman) were assisted by wives and daughters but, of course, they received no payment for, or acknowledgement of, their contributed labour.

Paradoxically, it was assumed the *wife* of a Master would assist in running the business and have the skills of a Journeyman and she was often allowed to continue running her husband's shop on his death.

The only restriction was that she could not maintain her status if she married a member of *another* Guild.

Guild Rules

These were intended to ensure that the consumer got standardised quality goods *and* that Guild workers (later, just the Guild *masters*) made a profit. Some of the more common rules were –

- Only items stamped with the Guild mark could be sold, and only Masters could use such a mark.

- Prices for all items were fixed and price-cutting was strictly prohibited.

- Trade secrets were guarded *(this was one of the key elements of the Apprenticeship system)* and severe penalties could be applied to anyone who revealed them to non-guild members.

- Apart from an agreed upon Guild sign or mark outside their workshop or place of business, *nothing* in the way of advertising was allowed (not that 'advertising' had been invented yet!).

- Hours of work for Journeymen and Apprentices were fixed, with night-time work being banned (again, to limit competition).

- Fixed holidays (mostly religious ones) were also designated, with the most important being for the Guild's patron saint/god/goddess.

Other rules would exist, but be dependent on the exact nature of the guild's work/products and its situation within the town or region where it was active.

Guild Benefits

Guilds provided a social safety net for their members in a society where no other forms of welfare existed.

They subsidised health care for members and families and large/wealthy Guilds might even build a *Hospice*. They also often provided a modest *pension* (food, clothing and lodging) for those members who were otherwise indigent and yet too old and sick to work.

Wealthy Guilds might have purpose built structures for such use, and often the Hospice did double duty.

Guilds also provided funds to assist in the burials, often endowing temples or churches to look after the needs of their members. Orphans were apprenticed free of charge and girls provided with dowries.

*Apprenticeships cost the family – for a prestigious Guild such as the London **Goldsmiths** a fee of from £100-£1000 might be charged.*

Other benefits depended on the local circumstances, but might include such things as special feast day dinners for the particular holy day of their patron saint/god/goddess and the organisation of entertainment for such feast days or civic celebrations.

Urban Populations in England, 1377

City	Taxpayers	Population
London	23314	>40000
York	7248	12100
Bristol	6345	10600
Coventry	4817	8000
Norwich	3952	6600
Lincoln	3569	5900
Salisbury	3226	5400
Lynn	3217	5400
Colchester	2955	4900
Boston	2871	4800
Beverly	2663	4400
Newcastle on Tyne	2647	4400
Canterbury	2574	4300
Bury St Edmunds	2445	4100
Oxford	2357	3900
Gloucester	2339	3700
Leicester	2101	3500
Shrewsbury	2083	3500
12 more with >1440 Taxpayers, >2400 Population		

The top 30 communities constitute ~170,000 or ~6-7% of the overall (estimated) population.

~200 more **Market Towns** of 400+ population constitute another 5-6%.

Overall, the Urban population is ~12% of the whole (approx 2½ million, plus or minus ¼ million).

Guilds as Citizens

Guilds played an important part in the civic government, and Masters from important Guilds were part of the ruling Council – in fact, Guilds (the Mercantile Guilds especially) were often the reason why towns managed to acquire, or maintain, their independence from feudal overlords.

The Guilds also helped defend the town by training and equipping their own members as militia for times of danger (which could give them, and the town as a whole, a considerable military value – and even enable them to display a degree of defiance to the royal government if needed).

Guilds also had a self-policing role in ensuring that members did not become involved (or at least *publicly* involved) in what we would nowadays call "public order" or "morals" offences.

Populate or Perish

Ancient and Medieval Cities are interesting because, ***without exception***, until the 19th century, *more people died there each year than were born*. In other words, they had ***negative*** growth rate.

*Pre-modern cities were **population sinks**. They jammed together people in closer proximity than in the villages and jammed together their **waste**.*

There were often no sewers (or the old Roman ones were no longer working), no garbage collection and the locals (even Physicians) had no understanding of what actually caused diseases and how they spread.

The combination made cities extremely unhealthy. Rural arrivals were exposed to a whole slew of diseases that rarely gained a foothold in their sparsely populated regions and so died at a much higher rate than the city born (who had acquired some immunity through long exposure) while child mortality was also much higher (and already high overall).

To simply *maintain* their population pre-modern cities needed net *immigration* from the countryside – and to *grow* it they needed much more than that.

Until the 17th century around 85-90% of the populace of a given region were *directly* involved in growing of food. Non-farming specialists came from the remaining 10-15% and were concentrated in cities.

Cities on major trade routes, however, tended to dominate entire regions or even entire nations, concentrating a much larger portion of that 10-15% in their boundaries than might normally be the case.

London and Paris are both good examples of this effect – especially London, which was by far the largest city in all of England during the entirety Middle Ages.

The 'drawing area' of a Town or City, the hinterland from which it drew migrants and regular market-goers was the distance that could be walked there and back in a day for *local* Markets (~ 5-7 miles) or with an overnight stay for *regional* Markets (~20 miles).

*International fairs, such as those of Champagne, Bruges, Cologne and Lyon, attracted travellers from all over Europe who might travel a month **each way**.*

By the 14th-15th centuries the largest cities in Europe are ***estimated*** to be mostly in the 25,000 to 50,000 range – and some may have had double that.

A major reason for this was the simple fact that food could not be *economically* transported any great distance. Normally this limit was around 20 miles by land (less, often much less, where difficult terrain had to be traversed), limiting the population of towns and cities not on navigable rivers or which were seaports.

Water transport, while cheaper per ton/mile, was also limited by the size of the ships (few were of more than 100 tons burden, and most were much smaller than that) and, of course, the need to transport the food by land ***to*** the port where it would be shipped from.

Port facilities, where they were more than simply pulling the ship onto a handy beach or mudflat, were usually limited in capacity. Loading and unloading would normally be done by stevedores (or the ship's crew for smaller items ... crews weren't very large) and there would rarely, if ever, be anything like a crane to assist.

The biggest cities, therefore, tended to be those where major land trade routes crossed major river or sea routes – an the *very* largest tended to be where all three were present.

Hard figures are rare and not always comprehensive so estimates can vary wildly – typically from between half and up to double the above range depending on the assumptions (and agenda!) of the estimator.

*For example, see the Table opposite showing the **estimated** population of the largest English Towns based on the number of Taxpaying Households on the civic records (which are thought to be fairly reliable).*

*How many people lived in each Household (that is, how many Family + Servants)? And how many **non**-Taxpaying Households were there? We simply **don't know**. The estimates provided are a conservative **guess**.*

*For Italian city-states the problem can be much more difficult. There are often reasonably good records but, again, they tend to be for Taxpayers ... and rarely, if ever, clearly indicate who actually lived in the Town and who was actually living in the surrounding **rural** areas.*

Estimates of the reliability of these figures, and the reliability of estimates based on them, again vary widely.

*There were also outliers in the general region. It is very likely that **Constantinople** still had a population in excess of 200,000 (perhaps well in excess, but declining towards the end of 14th century) and **Cairo** was very likely the same (and perhaps double that). **Cordoba** (prior to the Reconquista) and **Baghdad** (prior to its sacking by the Mongols) **may** have had 300,000 to half a million, possibly more.*

Population of selected European Cities

City	c. 1300	c. 1400
Augsburg	12,000	50,000
Antwerp	5000	20,000
Bruges	50,000	125,000
Cologne	40,000	45,000
Edirne (Adrianople)	28,000	125,000
Ghent	60000	70,000
Hamburg	8000	15000
Lisbon	35,000	50,000
Lyon	40,000	50,000
Lubeck	24,000	37,000
Mainz	20,000	24,000
Milan	90,000	200,000
Naples	50,000	200,000
Nuremberg	20,000	20,000
Paris	100,000	200,000
Prague	22,000	40,000
Rome	20,000	50,000
Thessalonika	100,000	100,000
Verona	20,000	40,000
Vienna	12,000	20,000

The population figures above are ... *iffy* ... those for Italian cities *probably* cover 'city state' and surrounding rural populations. Similar issues *probably* apply for Flemish cities (especially Bruges and Ghent). The same sources show London ~80-100,000 population when more recent figures (previous page) show half that ... so a proportional reduction may be in order.

Figures for the included Eastern European cities are, likewise, suspect, and may include surrounding rural populations.

With populations so low, compared to modern levels, and with towns much smaller as a percentage of overall population, what was the countryside like?

People tended to cluster together, so population densities could be quite high on a localised basis – but, overall, the landscape was *much* less populated than we take for granted today.

Outside of the regularly spaced (for the most part) settlements you will find that there is little evidence of the hand of man ...

As late as the 15th and 16th centuries large swathes of western Europe were covered by (relatively) trackless "forest primeval" – with islands of civilisation scattered amongst the trees.

Southwest Asia and North Africa were rather different – because the process of civilisation had been underway there for much longer.

Goats, charcoal burners and farmers had mostly deforested the "Middle East" by the 2nd century BC (even in Greece land degradation was well under way by the 4-5th centuries BC.

You'll also note that there just isn't all that much in the way of human based modifications outside of the Towns and Villages. Roads are overwhelmingly mere rights of way ... meandering dirt tracks whose course changes to avoid temporary or permanent obstacles ... the remaining Roman roads, where they still exist, are indifferently maintain; there are a handful of canals used for transport, and they are short and inefficient in their use of water; bridges are rare, generally poorly maintained, and narrow and river crossings are mostly at Fords or use Ferries and there is little or no sign of industry.

You'll also notice how much *quieter* it is ... the loudest sounds you will hear are those of animals and people, unless you are near a Watermill or Windmill, and even they don't generate the level of noise we are used to in modern times.

Rural Settlements

In most of Europe rural settlements followed a similar pattern – partly because of the level of technology available and partly because of the system of land ownership, the *feudal system*.

Generally poor levels of government stability and control also contributed to the nature of settlements in the medieval world ... organised violence and banditry were an ever present threat that was acknowledged in the way that any significant settlement was structured.

Manorial Estates

The most common way of organising a settlement in medieval times was the Manorial Estate. This was a grant of land made by a feudal overlord to one of their vassals that was nominally enough to support a fully equipped mounted warrior, a Knight, in return for a service and tax obligation to the granting lord.

*The Feudal System is described in greater detail elsewhere, but suffice it to say that it was a set of two way obligations. The Lord granted land to their vassal in return **for** service, both military and administrative, but, in return, offered military and administrative support **to** the vassal.*

The Knight could then lease out land to tenants (*Serfs*, later *Villeins*) in return for a portion of any crops grown as well as a service and tax obligation. If there were already people on the estate who owned their own land, then they would have only have a tax and a very limited service obligation.

The Serfs owed not only a portion of their crops (and herds, where relevant) but also labour service for the Lord's personal lands ... which was usually 2-3 days a week, except during harvest when they would normally be required to work an extra 1-2 days for the Lord.

A 'day' normally meant from sunrise to noon ... the serf would have the rest of the afternoon to work on their own plots – or, if they worked the whole day, it counted as two days work and the Lord was bound to feed them for Lunch and Dinner.

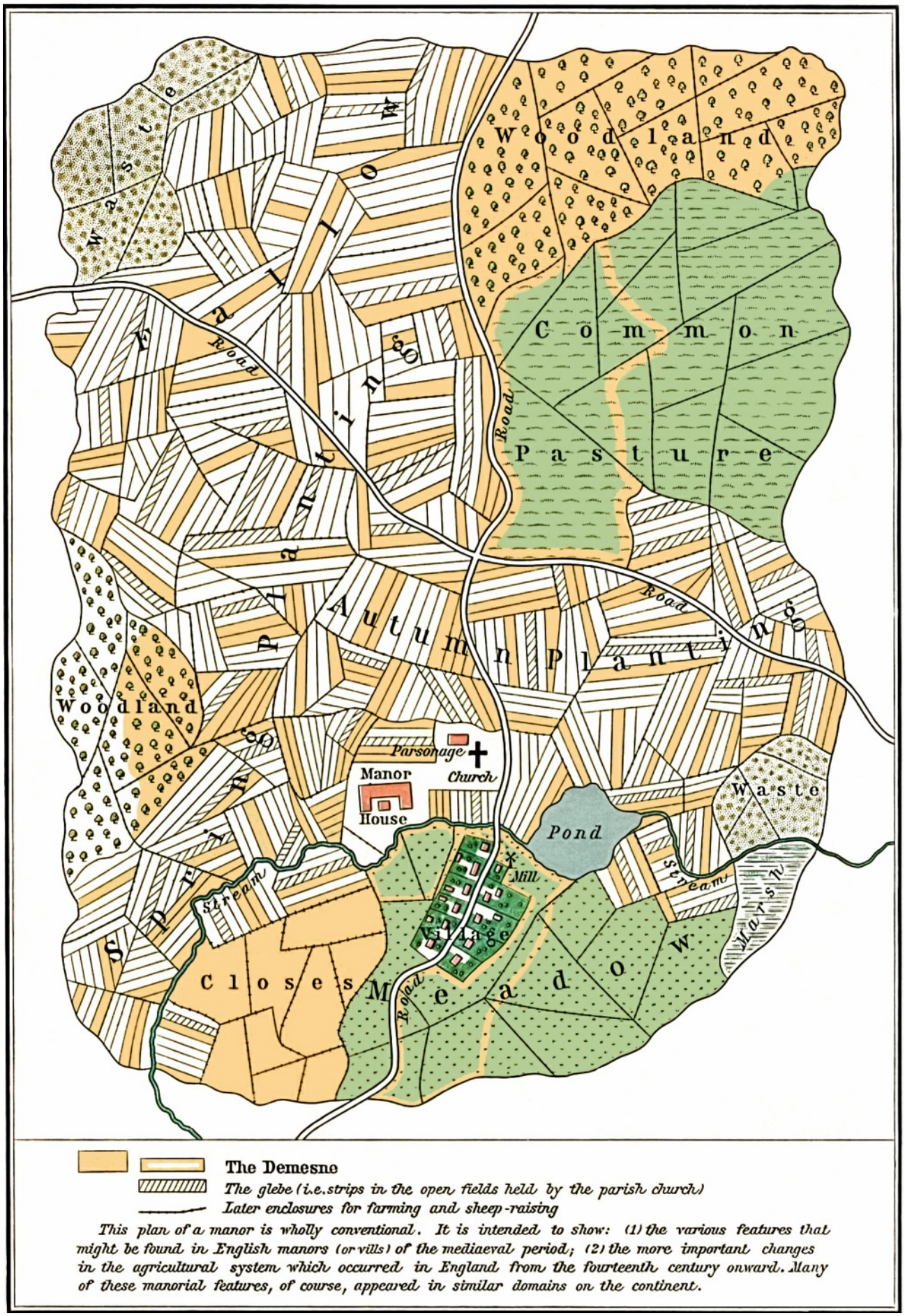
*Also, unless otherwise agreed, the labour service owed was only for **one** member of the Serf's household (or acceptable paid substitute) ... so the rest of their family was able to continue to work their plot.*

Serfs also owed military service ... for more details see the section on the Feudal System, elsewhere.

In return, the Knight offered protection – *directly*, in the form of himself and his direct retainers, and *indirectly*, in the form of their mutual obligation with the lord who granted the estate.

Freeholders only owed lease payments and tax payments required of everyone (some of which would be 'national' or 'regional', but some of which might be to the Knight) and a military service obligation.

Plan of a Mediaeval Manor.



This plan of a manor is wholly conventional. It is intended to show: (1) the various features that might be found in English manors (or vills) of the mediaeval period; (2) the more important changes in the agricultural system which occurred in England from the fourteenth century onward. Many of these manorial features, of course, appeared in similar domains on the continent.

Manneforde Manor, Wilts, 1086

The Church of St. Peter, Winchester, holds Manneforde.

*Here are ten ploughlands. Of this land five hides and a half a **yardland** are in Demesne [where there] are [also] two ploughs and five serfs. Eight Villeins and seven cottagers have two **ploughlands** and a half.*

*The Mill yields 12/6d. Here are ten acres of meadow. The pasture is half a mile long and a **furlong** broad. It was valued at £6, now at £8.*

Pantry. Storage and preparation area for breads and baked goods.

Buttery. Storage for alcoholic beverages (where the 'Butts' = barrels were stored).

Furlong. 220 yards.

Ploughland. Notionally 120 acres, the amount of land a team of 8 oxen could plough in a year.

Yardland. ¼ Hide, notionally (but never exactly), around 30 acres.

Chingford Manor House, Essex, 1265

The Manor consists of *"... a sufficient and handsome hall well ceiled with oak. On the western side is a worthy bed, on the ground, a stone chimney, a wardrobe and a certain other small chamber [toilet?]; at the eastern end is a **Pantry** and a **Buttery**. Between the Hall and the Chapel is a side-room.*

There is a decent Chapel covered with tiles, a portable altar and a small cross. In the hall are four tables on trestles.

There are likewise a good Kitchen, well covered with tiles, with a furnace and ovens, one large, the other small, for cakes, two tables, and alongside the Kitchen, a small house for baking. Also a new granary covered with oak shingles, and a building in which the dairy is contained, though it is divided.

Likewise a chamber suitable for clergyman and an inner chamber. Also a henhouse. These are within the inner gate.

Outside of that gate are an old house for the servants, a good Stable, long and divided, and to the east of the principal building, beyond the smaller stable, a Solar for the use of the servants ... [and] a building in which is contained a bed.

There are ... "two barns, one for wheat and one for oats [all are] enclosed with a moat, a wall, and a hedge ... beyond the middle gate is a good Barn, and a Stable of cows and another for oxen, these old and ruinous. Also beyond the outer gate is a Pigsty.

In return, they gained the mutual protection between themselves and the Manorial Lord and the mutual obligation the Knight had with his overlord.

Divers Manor Types

The *most common organisation* was more or less as described above ... roughly a third of the arable land to the Lord's Demesne, another third to his Tenants (free and unfree) and a third for common land and pasturage (divided between the Lord and the Tenants).

However, Manors where ***all*** the arable land was farmed out to free and unfree tenants (with the possible exception of a Manor House and small surrounding walled compound and garden) or where the ***entire Manor consisted of the Demesne*** (except for small allotments ... Toft and Croft ... to the largely unfree workers) were also recorded.

Urban Manors

As towns grew in size and importance the overflow population couldn't fit inside the (original) walls and overflowed into the surrounding lands ... which were usually independently owned Manorial estates. One of several cases would then apply –

- **Purchase.** Purchase, either outright (rare) or partial (less rare, but still uncommon), of the land and associated rights.

- **Encompass.** Extend the walls around the Manor, but leave it notionally intact ... and the Manorial lord would convert all the lands to urban uses.

  *This was moderately common. The Lord would get rid of the tenants, free and unfree, by buying out (or not renewing) their tenancies **or** by offering them more or better land on another estate.*

  He would then have much more valuable real estate to let out for housing or industry ... and for his own private Townhouse compound.

  You might also find the remnants of an otherwise purchased Manor ... often in the form of Church endowments for Monasteries or Nunneries, Parish Churches, Hospices and tenements let out for the support of the Church. These were usually fairly small areas in terms of the size of the original Manor.

- **Suburbanise.** Leave the Manor outside the walls, and governed by the Manorial lord, and simply let the overflow population live there.

  *This was also moderately common, often an intermediate stage before **encompassing** or **purchase**.*

  *The Manor of **Southwark**, on the opposite bank of the Thames to London, just off London Bridge, is a classic example.*

Freehold Settlements

There *were* the occasional 'freehold' settlements which were *not* part of a Manorial estate and which owed generally much more limited feudal duties ... usually directly to the King.

Such settlements might consist of a single *very* large freehold estate owned by a single family or might consist of a large estate and several smaller ones clustered together.

The main family holding of such a settlement would commonly be wealthy enough to owe military service as a mounted Sergeant or Hobilar (light cavalry) and lead any other militia the settlement owed.

Freehold Villages were not unknown, but uncommon.

A Note on Organisation

The portrayal of medieval Manors almost always mirrors the 'notional' organisation shown on the map on a previous page ... but this is entirely misleading.

Such a compact and coherent organisation was, in fact, quite rare!

Much more commonly a Manorial estate would include ***parts*** of *at least two, and possibly more* Villages ... usually miles from each other (at opposite ends of the actual lands) and, indeed, it was not unheard of for the lands of an estate to be split, geographically, by *another* estate making them completely separate.

It was also common that such divisions might mean that parts of an estate might be in different Parishes, which has tricky legal connotations as the Parish was the basis for the majority of national and much regional administrative organisation.

In fact, it was occasionally the case where an 'estate' might consist of a number of geographically separate (but relatively close) portions which were *not* adjacent.

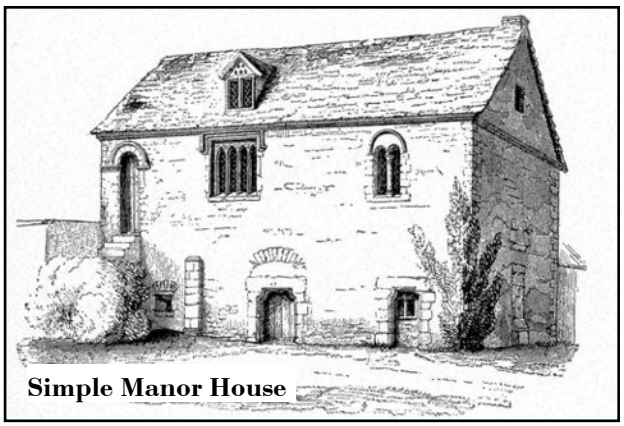
This often meant that feudal service had to be split between different ends of the Manor, or into the different portions if there were several and, indeed, usually ended up with labour service being commuted to money payments for the convenience of all involved.

Elsewhere in the British Isles

Eire

Ireland remained Tribal in land tenure prior to the Norman invasion and conquest (1169-1172). There were no Manors, but small settlements which were organised rather like Freeholds (see above) but which inevitably held the land.

The arrival of the Normans resulted in the gradual manorialisation of the countryside, and this was well underway by the end of the 14th century.



Simple Manor House

Scotland

Largely organised along clan lines and only unified around the beginning of the 10th century, Scottish land tenure was similar to that of Ireland ... until the early 11th century when the Scottish Kings introduced anglo-french style feudal organisation into the southern third, extending it into the middle third from the late 11th century (the Highlands and the North were never manorialised).

Wales

Wales was entirely rural, even more so than Ireland, and organised along what were effectively tribal lines under nobles who often styled themselves as (petty) Kings. It was only in the relatively short period before the final Norman conquest (12th century) that they even managed to coalesce into larger, but still rural and endemically fractious still, proto-states.

After the Norman conquest, the Anglo-Norman version of the Feudal system was imposed.

On the Continent

France

The 'English' system was heavily influenced by the Norman-French invaders who, in turn, had adopted the system used in NW France ... the social basis for feudalism was built on common Germanic roots in both countries ... so there is a great deal of similarity.

The main differences were due to the power and independence of the great Lords who often ignored any nominal feudal duty to the King coupled with the split in agricultural practise where the northern part of the country adopting the newer *three field system* and the organisational changes that it required while the southern part retained the older *two field system.*

Germany

Most of Germany was influenced by the situation in NW France and its own similar Germanic traditions ... but Nobles had much more power, and what passed for centralised authority had very little ...

One unusual feature of German manorialism and feudalism was the fact that most of the Knights were, legally, *serfs* (unfree) but socially minor nobility!

SOMERSHAM MANOR, 1222

THE DEMESNE

Demesne (Field). Next to the *Chapel of St Botulph* (18½ acres), *Otincroft* (40½ acres), *Scortstich* (13½ acres), *Middilfurlong* (14 acres), *Polfurlong* (7 acres), *Scortlond* (8 acres), *Lambecotefurlong* (4 acres), *Halefurlong* (5 acres), *Snellislond* (5½ acres).

Pidley Field. Next to *Litgate* (6 acres), *Brokefurlong* (18 acres), next to the *Croft of Alan* (4 acres), next to the *Croft of Robert* (9½ acres), *Reymundisfurlong* (18 acres), *Helmhaþe* (27½ acres), the ***other*** *Brokefurlong* (18 acres), *Middilfurlong* (25½ acres), *Struthil* (8 acres, 3 roods), *Holebrocke* (23 acres, 3 roods), *Digdewong* (8½ acres), *Longefurlong below Pidley* (47 acres, 1 rood), below the *Grange of Pidley* (16 acres, 3 roods), *New Assart* next to the Grange (29½ acres), *Hallecroft* (28½ acres), *Lanedicroft* (20 acres).

Bluntisham Field: *Barlicroft* (7 acres), below *Perleswell* (15 acres, 1 rood), *Buueton* (20 acres), *Tuncroft* (15 acres), next to the *Church of Bluntisham* towards the marsh (25½ acres), *Vaerhay* (10 acres), *Neþerhay* (15 acres, 1 rood), *Longefurlong* (12½ acres) in the *Assart* (78 acres).

Colne Field: Next to the *Croft of Geoffrey Bede* (8½ acres), around the *Monastery* (4 acres), *Madderton* (15 acres), next to the *Croft of Nigel Balle* (5 acres), *Bradewung* (25 acres, 1 rood), next to the *Croft of Bastard* (12 acres, 1 rood), *Hallewey* (6 acres), *Hoo* (3 acres), *Waterland* (3 acres), *Breriwong* (6 acres), next to the *Cross* (2½ acres), next to *Broc* (6½ acres), *Langefurlong* (8½ acres), *Neþerfurlong* (7½ acres), *Fouracres* (4 acres), *Nostredehech* (4 acres), *Lambecotehech* (2½ acres), *Smalheg* (2 acres).

Fishery. This begins at *Thachdolelake* and extends to *Partalemuþe* and contains 4 weirs. It is worth 5½ Marks per year.

FREEHOLD TENANTS

Richard de Argentem. Holds 200 acres in Colne as a ½ a Knight's Fee.

Henry Son of John de Colne. Holds 1 Virgate for service to the *Prior of Ely* supervising at Harvest (fed by the Prior); a Virgate in the new tenement for 6/8d pa, another Virgate plus 36 acres in the new tenement for 12s pa; two Cottages, one for 16d pa, the other for 20d pa.

Robert de Colne. Holds a a Virgate and 6 acres in the new tenement for 4s pa; a Cottage for 16d pa, a Messuage and 2 acres of Assart for 16d pa.

Simon the Clerk. Holds a Virgate for 2s pa plus a man for reaping and boonwork and is tallaged with the Villeins.

Azo de Colne and **Harvey.** Each holds a Virgate for 6/8d pa plus a man for reaping and boonwork and is tallaged with the Villeins. *Azo* also holds a Cottage for 16d and a Messuage for 8d pa.

Walter le Geg. Holds 2 Virgates, one as *Azo*, the other for 7s and a man for reaping and boonwork and is tallaged with the Villeins.

William the Smith. Holds a Messuage for 2s pa plus a man for boonwork.

Andrew Lidolf. Holds a Toft for 8d plus two men (one to be fed by the Lord) for boonwork, a Hen at Christmas and 6 Eggs at Easter.

VILLEINS

Gilbert son of Radulph. Holds a Virgate for 6d pa. He owes 3 days a week at Harvest and 2 days a week the rest of the year in labour except at Christmas and Epiphany. He most cut and carry 4 cartloads of wood to the river or to the Lord's Manor in lieu of 1 day's work. He must give Pannage of 2d for each yearling Pig and 1d for each young Pig except for one Sow each year at Michaelmas. He must provide carriage to Wisbech or Ditton in rota or in lieu of a day's work if done on a workday. He must provide 30 Sheaves of Oats, thresh 24 sheaves of Wheat and Malt 3 Quarters of Barley for the Lord. He must plough 3 acres for the Lord each week except at Michaelmas, Christmas, Easter and Pentecost.

William Bede, Edward de Hermotesurthe, Jordan son of Margar, Robert son of William, Reginald son of Alnod, Simon Neueman, Robert son of Margar, Nigel son of Gilbert, Richard Sauser, Richard le Broc, Nigel Balle, Clement, William son of Lieue, Alan Blund, Alexander son of Sylvester, William son of Ascelon, Gilbert Alnoth and **Alan Sutor.** Each of these holds a Virgate and owes rent and services as above.

COTTARS

Baldwin Messor, **Richard son of Luue, Silvester, Ingelmer, Henry With Robert son of Matill, Richard Testard** and **Sexburga.** Each holds a Cottage for 2d pa and 2 acres in the new assart for 16d pa. He also owes 3 days a week at Harvest and 1 day for the rest of the year, except Christmas, in work. From Christmas to Pentecost he must carry a bundle of Charcoal to the Manor House and plough 3 acres a year. He owes 6 hens and 6 eggs, a carrying service on horseback for firewood.

TOFTS

Ailward, Swain, Osgar, Gilbert Tugge and **Ralph son of Ingelmer** hold Tofts for 1d pa and a day's work a week except at Christmas and other works as the Cottars.

These ***Ministeriales*** (*Dienstmann*) could not alienate their lands, which belonged to their lord, had to gain permission to marry and had many feudal duties, not just military ones ... and there were *lesser* (only a single Knight's fee) and *greater* (with subordinate fees owing feudal military service to them) ones.

Italy

In ***Italy*** the situation was complicated by the existence of the various City States – some Villages remained under the control of local feudal nobles, but the nobles now owed allegiance to the Republic and many of them moved into the capital and, effectively, became a part of the oligarchy that ruled (or heavily influenced) these mini-states. Or the lands and attached feudal rights were bought by the urban elites.

In those areas that remained under noble control, the system was similar to that which existed in England – though the local magnates often owed (or affected to owe) only nominal loyalty to their nominal overlord and would ignore his demands as often as not.

Likewise, the *three field system* of crop rotation never replaced the older *two field system* in Italy and the physical organisation of the fields reflected this ... with the long strips in single large fields found in significant parts of England being less common.

Iberia (Spain and Portugal)

Spain. In some parts of Spain (Catalonia and the southern) there was a bitter ongoing struggle between the lords, their tenants and freeholders ... the former wanting a stricter, more harshly enforced, servility and the latter wanting 'traditional rights' upheld and greater rights to self-administration.

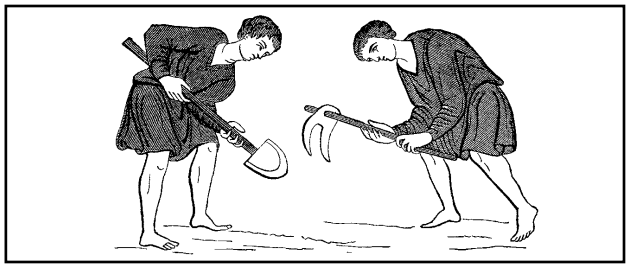
In most places the Royal Government maintained its power by supporting the tenants against the lords.

In other parts of Spain there was a more communal tradition and/or the domains held by the Lords were so fragmented as to reduce and limit their effectiveness and power (Northern Spain, except Catalonia)

Or the nature of land (the *Mesta* [Guild of Sheepherders and their annual *transhumance* migration] of Central Spain) use and tenure made it much more difficult for the lords to exert real control (Central Spain; except areas farmed by *Moriscos*, mainly in Aragon, who lived under semi-servile conditions).

Holdings mostly used the older pre-Roman *Celtic Fields* and, because of the dry Mediterranean climate, Two Field crop rotation was the norm

Settlements could *either* be centrally located with arable land around them *or*, in some areas, organised as geographically separate farmholdings (usually held and farmed by an extended family as one operation.



Portugal. Sparsely settled (compared to Spain) and covered by large swathes of forest interspersed with clearings containing settlements and fields of arable land surrounding them. The coastal plains were *somewhat* open and *relatively* more heavily settled.

Settlements tended to be centralised and communal in focus and the Royal Government mostly sided with the tenants in reducing the power (and abuses thereof) of the grandees in return for support against the lords.

Not that this freed them from feudal obligations – or even, in the long term, freed them from excessive taxation (but that's outside the period in question).

Settlements were farmed using the *two-field system* because of the lack of spring rainfall and were mostly communally organised.

Scandinavia

Denmark. Was unusual in that the freeholders gradually sold off their land to the noble magnates in return for long term leases ... because noble lands weren't subject to Royal taxation and the lease payments were less than taxes!

There were usually still some feudal service obligations, but only a fraction of what might be owed on an English or French Manor and rent was payable in Kind (the value of local coinage was too unstable).

There were relatively few unfree peasants in any part of Denmark (and in wider Scandinavia as a whole) – though there were a class of free (but very poor) and landless (or nearly so) labourers.

Norway and Sweden. Before the period, settlements in Norway and Sweden were largely free and run by communal assemblies (*Things*) balancing the *numbers* of the 'commons' and the wealth (and power) of the 'nobles' (neither of which was as well defined as later).

Land tenure was a mix of free, slave and serfs that developed into something *resembling* ***some*** *aspects* of manorialism by the 11th century.

The majority of the population (~300-500,000 in Norway, ~500-700,000 in Sweden) lived in isolated family farms with an average of ~10 people. Herding/dairying formed a much larger part of agricultural pursuits than in most places.

*The two largest towns in the area were **Bergen** and **Stockholm**, both of which had populations of ~7000.*

There was a large landless class who worked as hired labour – so, in the first round of the Great Plague, few farmsteads were left vacant as this class simply moved into those farmsteads where no-one (and no heirs) had survived. Slow population recovery, however, meant the later Plague outbreaks *did* result in some farm abandonment.

Social Organisation. This was, roughly, in the order – Slaves, Freemen, Tenants, Bönder ('Head of Family' but not a land*owner* – a better off Tenant) and *'Odal Born Men'* (land*owning* commoners) and the nobility.

Manorial Officials

There are a variety of officials on a typical Manor. The titles varied according to local language and other factors, but the tasks they fulfilled remained largely the same regardless of location ...

Ale Conner. Appointed under the *Assize of Bread and Ale* to ensure all those *selling* Ale provide a saleable (and drinkable) product and charge approved prices.

*The precursor(s) to the famous **Reinheitsgebot** ('Purity Order') for German Beer (based on a 1487 Munich law with older origins) not only set the only ingredients (Water, Hops and Barley) but also set the price (based on type/season) and profits Inn- -Keepers could make.*

Bailiff. May either be in charge of a single Manor *instead* of a *Steward* or may be the foreman of a Manor *under* a supervising Steward (who may or may not be in charge of several Manorial estates).

If acting as a *Steward* they take on those responsibilities (see above), otherwise they take the role of the day to day manager or *foreman*, supervising the active operational running of the estate.

Beadle. An elective position, he assisted the *Constable* (often with record keeping) and supervises the tenants at the Manorial Court sessions.



Peasants sharpening Scythes

Constable. Also elective, he was responsible for keeping the peace, assisted by a *Beadle*. They were in charge of any *Hue and Cry* raised and could arrest and hold suspects, especially *vagrants* or *foreigners* (i.e. anyone not known to the tenants of the estate).

Ditchward/Hayward/Hedgeward. Elective positions chosen by the tenants – they worked with/for the *Bailiff* supervising the relevant work teams.

The *Hayward* is responsible for organising the sowing, harvesting and reaping work on both the tenant's lands and on the Lord's Demesne. In the latter case he was responsible for ensuring that all the tenants who owed service to the Lord fulfilled their duties.

The offices of *Ditchward* and *Hedgeward* were mostly confined to very large estates ... elsewhere they were part of the responsibilities of the *Hayward.*

The *Ditchward* was responsible for the maintenance of drainage ditches (and, where they existed, irrigation ditches) while the *Hedgeward* was responsible for the siting and erection of hedges or fences to pen grazing animals in (or out) of fields and other places as required at different times of the agricultural year. He was responsible for impounding any animal that strayed where they should not and caused damage.

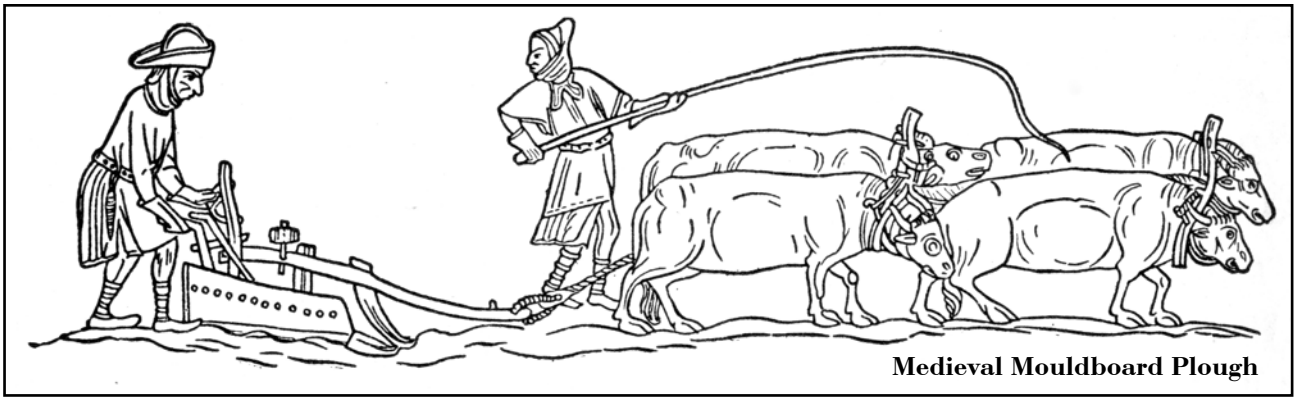
*These offices were not **necessarily** popular ones, as they could involve a lot of **extra** work for no real return, and most tenants tried to avoid being elected continually.*

Reeve. The *Reeve* is the most important elective office ... he is the direct subordinate of the *Bailiff* and acts as a sort of *under-foreman.* This was a prestigious position and, increasingly, went to tenants who were somewhat literate and/or well-to-do.

Steward. The Lord's appointed manager for *either* a single Manor *or* for several Manors (sometimes called the *Seneschal*, especially if well-born). Responsible for record keeping, finances and overall administration and management of an estate or estates rather than the active operational running of the estate.

Woodreeve. Usually appointed by the Lord of a Manor which had extensive woodlands attached ... especially if the Lord was the King and the woodlands came under *Forest Law.*

They were responsible supervising *estover* (the right to collect firewood), *turbage* (the right to cut turf, usually for fuel), *pannage* (the right to pasture Swine), *agistment* (the right to pasture other animals), *assarting* (clearing) of new fields, and preventing damaging/cutting down trees without permission.



Medieval Mouldboard Plough

The Manorscape

The common elements found on a 'typical' Manorial Estate (which, of course, really didn't exist) include the following –

The Vill (Village) and Hamlets

Most Manorial estates had at least a single ***Vill*** *(or* ***Village****)* though, as noted elsewhere, the tenants might actually be split between more than one. Those with larger populations or with geographically separated areas of arable land might also have separate ***Hamlets***.

Villages. Have their own Church, which might *not* be a Parish Church.

In England the point of differentiation between a ***Vill*** *and a* ***Hamlet*** *is that the former has a Church and the latter does not. In other countries, even those* ***very*** *similarly organised to England, this may not be the case.*

Hamlets. Were outlying settlements associated with a central *Village*, but which did *not* have a Church.

As noted in the ***Cities & Civics*** *section, the difference between a* ***Village*** *(and associated Hamlets) and a* ***Town*** *is that the latter have Market rights and the former don't.*

Croft and Toft

Peasant houses in the Vill usually comprised two parts – the *Croft* and the *Toft*. Physically, like the land the tenants possessed in the Great Fields (or whatever arrangement was used for the farm lands), this was almost always longer than wide to allow for part of it might need to be ploughed from time to time.

Toft. This was the whole of of land on which their house was erected, usually fronting the 'main road(s)' running through the Vill, connecting with whatever nearby road or track connected it to the wider world.

The Toft was demarcated by a ditch, hedge, fence or wall (or combination thereof) to prevent stock from getting loose (or getting *in*) as much as anything else. The main House was typically nearer the road, and might actually come close to fronting directly onto it.

The remainder of the area contained a variety of other farm buildings which could include stables, animal shelters, granaries and storehouses.

It was still common in this period for the main house to be used, at least in part, to stable the family's stock – sometimes only separated from the living area by a rude fence or part wall, at other times in a separate area connected by both an inside and outside door.

Croft. Mostly behind the Toft, it was an enclosed field used for what we would call 'market gardening' ... the family could grow whatever crops they desired and, oftentimes, have small orchards or truck garden.

Legally, an 'Orchard' was any piece of enclosed land with at least a dozen trees.

Some poorer tenants may *only* have *'toft and croft'* and rely on hiring out to feed their family ... while the very poorest may only have a *toft*, and a tiny garden.

Though uncertain, it is possible that ***Cottars*** *held only Toft and Croft, or even just a Toft, and had no actual farmland ... and the very poorest may not even have had traditional access to the Common Lands and Pasturage.*

Houses

What were the houses of ordinary people like?

Wood was in (artificially) short supply (woodlands were owned by the Lord and forests by the King), brick was fired with charcoal (i.e. wood) and stone was expensive to quarry and, more importantly, transport any distance.

That said, there were regional variations – in and around Dartmoor, for example, the wide availability of stone and the paucity of timbers meant that houses were constructed of drystone, or of stone mortared with clay or the like. Wood was limited to the roofbeams.

There were similar areas in most parts of Europe where the rocky terrain made stone construction actually cheaper than wattle and daub.

Most houses were of ***wattle and daub*** construction. That is, the main frame was of substantial pieces of timber, with smaller, mainly non-structural timbers in between ... but in the spaces between those ele-

ALWATON MANOR, 1279

The manor contains a ½ acre. The Vill Alwalton [has] 5 Hides [each of 5 Virgates, each of 25 acres] and 1½ Virgates of land.

DEMESNE

Consists of 1½ Hides of arable land, 8 acres of meadow, a pasture of 1 acre, three Mills, a Fish pond with a fish-weir on the Nene extending [2 leagues] to the mill of Newton and a Ferry with a boat.

FREE TENANTS

Thomas le Boteler holds a **Messuage** with a courtyard of 3¼ acres [for] 14s per annum.

The **Rector** of the Church of Alwalton holds 1 **Virgate**. 1 **Rood** [of this is held by a tenant who pays] 12d pa.

VILLEINS

Hugh Miller holds 1 Virgate of land for 3/1d [plus], except a week at Christmas, Easter and at Whitsuntide, 3 days work per week (with 1 man, 2 men in Autumn). He [also] does carrying to Peterborough and to Jakel.

He [owes] 1 Bushel of Wheat for seed and 18 Sheaves of Oats for foddercorn; 3 hens and 1 cock yearly and 5 eggs at Easter.

If he sells a brood mare for 10s or more, he shall pay 4d, [but] nothing [if for less].

He gives also **merchet** and **heriot**, and is **tallaged** at the feast of St. Michael.

There are also there 17 other Villeins – John of Ganesoupe, Robert son of Walter, Ralph son of the **Reeve**, Emma at Pertre, William son of Reginald, Thomas son of Gunnilda, Eda widow of Ralph, Ralph Reeve, William Reeve, William son of William Reeve, Thomas Flegg, Henry Abbott, William Hereward, Serle son of William Reeve, Walter Palmer, William Abbot and Henry Serle ... each of whom holds 1 Virgate owing just as the said Hugh Miller.

There are also 5 other Villeins – Simon Mariot, Robert of Hastone, Thomas Smith, John Mustard and William Carter each of whom holds a ½ Virgate paying half of [what] Hugh Miller does.

COTTARS

Henry, son of the Miller, holds a Cottage with a **croft** of 1 Rood for 2s and works for 3 days with 1 man and 1 day in Autumn cutting grain with 1 man.

Ralph Miller, Hugh Day, William Kendale, Geoffrey Note, Beatrice the Widow, Benedict Atelane and **Sara the Widow** with a cottage and croft of 1 Rood for 8d work[ing] as the said Henry.

William Russel holds a cottage with a croft a ½ Rood for 8d and working as the said Henry.

There are 5 other cotters – Walter Pestel, Ralph Shepherd, Henry Abbot, Matilda Tut and Jordan Mustard each with a cottage and croft of a ½ Rood, paying and working as William Russel.

Sara, Widow of Matthew Miller; Geoffrey Baker, Robert Prenk, Roger Doker and **Geoffrey Drake** with a cottage and croft of a ½ Rood for 4d and working as the said Henry.

William Drake holds a cottage with a croft of a ½ Rood for 6d and working as the said Henry.

There are six other cotters – William Drake the Younger, Amycia the Widow, Alice the Widow, Robert son of Eda, Willam Pepper and William Coleman, each with cottage and croft of a ½ Rood, paying and doing as the said William Drake.

William Arnold holds a cottage and croft of a ½ Rood, paying 2d and working as the said Henry.

Agnes the Widow holds a cottage with a croft which of 1 Rood for 12d and working as the said Henry.

Henry of Aylingtone holds a cottage and croft of a ½ Rood and 1 acre of land for 2/8d and working as the said Henry.

Beatrice of Hampton holds a cottage and croft of 1 Rood for 12d and working as the said Henry.

Hugh Miller holds 3 acres of land for 4/8d.

Thomas, son of Richard, holds a cottage and croft which of a ½ Rood and 3 acres of land for 4s. and he works as the said Henry.

Ralph Reeve holds a cottage with a croft of 1 Rood, and 1 acre of land for 2s and works as the said Henry.

Each of the said Cottars, except the widows, gives yearly after Christmas a Head Penny of 1d.

Croft. House plot and garden/vegetable plot.

Heriot. Payment of the best beast of chattel as a death duty.

Merchet. A fine for marrying a daughter outside the Manor.

Messuage. The land on which the principle dwelling of a holding is situated.

Tallage. A land tax. Abolished in 1340.

ments were woven from a lattice of wooden strips (easily grown by *coppicing*) in a basket-like manner.

These strips were then *daubed* with a sticky material – usually a mix of clay (possibly with some wet soil mixed in), straw and animal dung. This might then be covered over with plaster or clay outer surface.

*This construction is sometimes called **half timbered** – but that style may also use brick (fired or unfired, stones and planks (amongst other materials) as infill. The latter types much less common in houses belonging to common people – and, during this period, rare amongst those belonging to wealthier ones, at least in the countryside.*

Roofs were almost universally of ***thatch*** rather than expensive tile (fired) or shingles (wood) and there was rarely any sort of false ceiling ... the interior rooms were directly under the thatch and roof-frame.

Roofs rose from 18" eaves at chest height to roughly 25', on average and there were triangular openings at each long end, under the eaves, to allow smoke out.

*Chimneys were **occasionally** found in wealthier homes, but were extremely rare even there, and did not become common until **way** outside of the period covered.*

Chimneys actually let more heat escape than end openings and, considering that wood (or charcoal) was the most common fuel and was expensive, the older style end-openings were more efficient at keeping heat in and reducing fuel costs.

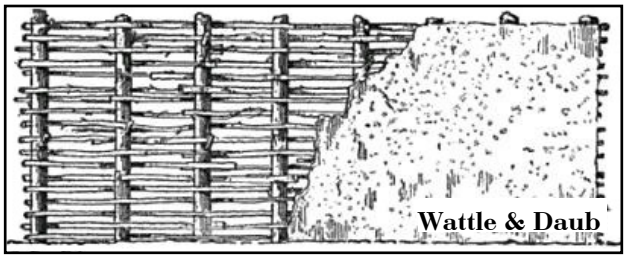
*Counterintuitively, thatch roofs were not **necessarily** all that flammable. They tended to hold enough damp in them to make them quite hard for sparks from the open fireplace(s) to actually catch and burn.*

The houses proper varied in size according owner's means but there was a limit imposed by the size of the main structural timbers which were laid straight into the ground, often with not even a stone base.

Despite what older texts may say, recent archaeological research makes it extremely unlikely that any houses had sunken floors ... and much more likely that they had either ground level floors of packed earth or, in better off homes, wooden floors, possibly with trapdoors to allow access to under-floor storage space).

Almost all homes were single storey, around 16-20' wide and 25-40' long (very wealthy families might have halls up to 60' long). Some few homes of the better off might have a half-floor underneath *part* of the roof for the parents to sleep in.

The longer the house, the more rooms it would have. The very poorest Cottars probably only had a single internal room ... anyone with any livestock commonly


Wattle & Daub

had at least two, one for the family and one for the stock, and the bigger homes might have had three or more rooms.

*As was the case with urban homes, even those of the wealthy, rooms open onto **other** rooms ... the idea of a corridor connecting rooms along the way was not yet developed and there might not even be **doors** in internal walls, merely door**ways**. So there was not much in the way of privacy ... not even for sleeping (unless you had a half floor, as mentioned above).*

There were few windows, and the ones that existed were mere holes in the walls ... glass was far too expensive for commoners!

*There would be wooden shutters (probably loose, hinges were of iron and, therefore **expensive**) for winter and inclement weather and better off households might have horn or oiled parchment in the frames to let in a little light. But most activity was outside, except at night.*

There was normally a *central* hearth which was mostly for heating and light, not *especially* for cooking ...

Cooking was normally done outdoors (except in winter or in poor weather). Wealthier, multi-room, houses might have a separate kitchen, but this was relatively rare.

Except on the smallest plots (Cottars, for example) there would be a variable number of outbuildings of similar construction ... Barns, Stables, Pigsties, Granaries, Dairies etc. etc.

The Manor House

Most *Manor Houses* are just that – ***houses***. They were *usually* of stone construction, though some were only partly stone or even completely half-timbered (and probably with wood, stone or brick rather than wattle & daub infill in the latter case).

*In France they were **Manoirs** or **Maisons-Forte**; in Germany, **Gutshäuse**; in Holland, **Hofstede** or **Landhuis** or simply **Huis** (amongst other things); in Poland, **Dwór**; in Spain, **Casa Solaregia**. Architectural styles differed on a regional basis, but all were fortified against 'minor' threats such as banditry and raiders.*

They were *always* surrounded by some sort of ditch and bank to delineate the actual 'house' area and they ***might*** have a *moat*, a *curtain wall* (probably without *battlements*) and a *fortified gatehouse*.

They were relatively cheap to construct and really only intended to hold off bandits ... none of their fortifications could hope to stand off even the most ill-equipped military force for any but the shortest length of time.

The House itself typically had a ***Great Hall*** (for meals and formal use) . apartments for the Lord and family (or the managing *Steward* or *Bailiff*), ***Barns*** (for stock, equipment and storage), ***Granaries*** (for Demesne produce, Tithes, consumption and seed) and other farm related structures (Dovecotes, Henhouses, Dairies etc.)

Only Knights with a single fief would normally live on site for the most part of the year – otherwise the owning Lord would, at most, visit for short to medium periods so his household could consume the surplus produce as it was too expensive to transport it for long distances.

*Knights always had **at least** one Manor, but could have several. Baronets always held several. Earls (or Counts) and Dukes held **many** – scores, possibly hundreds – and the Crown was likewise well endowed.*

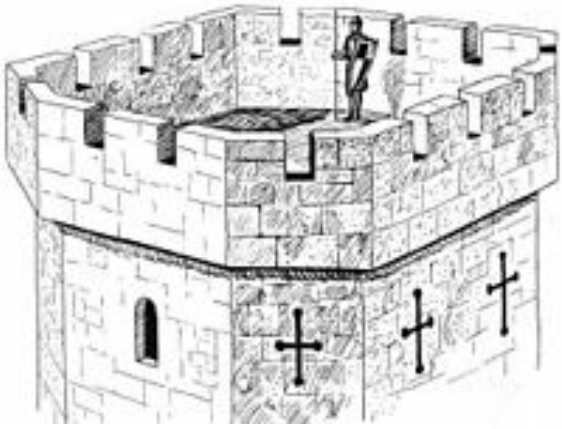
Castles

*While there **might** by a Castle (of some sort) **within** or **adjacent to** a Manor, they were not always **of** the Manor, but were **mostly** the separate possession of a Noble who, usually, owned a nearby Manor (which, again, wasn't necessarily **exactly** adjacent).*

*Whereas Manor Houses were (as noted above) intended primarily as **houses** (fortified residences), Castles were primarily fortifications which had some residential function ... but there was considerable crossover.*

*Some older books claim that Castles had to be licensed, at least in England, but the fact that licenses for only around 20% of them have actually been found or can be inferenced makes this claim ... unlikely. There is also no evidence that anyone asking for a license, even **after the fact**, was ever refused.*

*The same sources try and differentiate between Castles and Manor Houses by claiming that the former had **Battlements** (i.e. a walkway along the inside of a defensive wall with **crenellations/merlons** (i.e. the structures giving the protective top of the wall the classic gap-toothed appearance) ... but there are enough examples of Manor Houses having wall sections with such to make it a less than useful differentiation.*



Tower, Battlements and Crenellations

The issue is made more confusing by the fact that the 13th-15th centuries are a period where castles are being modernised to incorporate, or, in the case of new construction, include from the start, much improved private living quarters for the Lord, his Castellan, and other senior officers of his Household and/or the Castle Garrison. While not yet more palace than military structure, things were heading in that direction.

The Manorial Lands

There are several ways in which fields were organised during the Middle Ages with the main differences being in two areas – the *layout* of the fields and the system of *crop rotation*.

Despite what most generalist books seem to claim, the 'Open Field System' was NOT universal. Not even in places that were suited for ***three field crop rotation.***

*For a start, it was not found outside of England (you'd find **Latifundia** instead). Even **within** England it was mostly limited to the **Midlands and surrounding areas**.*

Large swathes (in marginal areas) were in the process of being turned into pasture for woolgrowing at the end of the period leading to the abandonment of many villages and manors which were no longer needed for the smaller populations needed to make grazing estates profitable.

It was ***not*** used elsewhere in England nor, as far as I can tell, ***anywhere*** on the Continent.

The Fields

Open Field. This can be used with either system of crop rotation (see below) and consists of either two or three large (possibly hundreds of acres) fields with hedges, ditches or other boundaries. Each field was subdivided into smaller strips (often called *furlongs* or something of similar meaning) which were narrower than they were long, divided from adjacent strips by mounds of earth wide enough to walk along that were turned up by repeated use of mouldboard ploughs.

This was *industrial farming* – depending on the sources you consult *either* every plot in each field was in the same rotation cycle and sown with the *same crop* (chosen by the Village community) *or* there might be some leeway for individuals to grow *different crops* that were still within the same rotational cycle.

Some sources suggest that it was possible to have individual strips within the larger fields at different stages of the rotational cycle ... but this is unlikely for

organisational and equity reasons (eg you can't simply manure one strip in an open field ... there's no way to physically wall it off (or not economically or easily).

Celtic Field. Despite the name, these are not specifically associated with the ancient Celts. They are a patchwork of more or less square fields of quite small size ... rarely more than half an acre but probably farmed by individual families in a manorial context ... they might be under two or three year crop rotational cycles as chosen by the owners.

*This seems to be the most common **actual** arrangement in England outside of those areas using the Open Field system and also the most common arrangement in non-Mediterranean Europe.*

Latifundia. Mostly associated with the Mediterranean areas of Europe (Iberia, parts of Italy [especially Sicily]) and some estates in the south of France. The exact arrangement of the fields is uncertain, but the larger size of the estates and centralised workforce increased efficiency and productivity in a similar way to the industrialised farming techniques that gave rise to the *Open Field System.*

Unlike the other two systems, Latifundia could, and did, specialise in non-cereal farming ... vineyards, orchards and olive groves, for example ... and could often specialise in stock raising for meat, wool or dairy.

In most places they ran to the *two field* system of crop rotation, but in al-Andalus (southern Spain) the Moorish irrigation systems allowed more efficient practices ... where it was kept operational and not allowed to degrade (as it did after the Mudejar [Muslims] were expelled from Spain and Portugal ... after the fall of Granada in 1492, after the period covered).

Travellers continually remarked on the green-ness and abundance of the fields run by the Mudejar in reconquered areas as well as in those areas that still remained under the control of the Granada Caliphate ... such comments dramatically decline after 1500 or so.

Crop Rotation

Two Field System. *The* system used in settled agrarian societies from Ancient through to early Medieval times ... and partly replaced by the *three field system* (see below) in areas with suitable climatic conditions.

Half of the available farmland is used to grow crops each year, the rest left fallow ... to grow grass and let animals graze on it. The next year, the two areas are reversed. This ensures nutrients in the soil are not depleted, which would depress crop yields if allowed.

Three Field System. Widely adopted in areas with suitable climates during the Middle Ages. One field is sown with Rye or Wheat in autumn, and germinates



the next spring for an early harvest, followed by a spring planting of Oats or Barley. A second field is sown with Peas, Lentils or Beans. The third field was left fallow.

The fields were then rotated through the sequence every year.

The adoption of this system coincided with the invention and widespread adoption of the mouldboard plough which also allowed richer soils to be worked than the older 'scratch' plough.

The increased amount of land under cultivation plus the increased amount that *could* be cultivated also slowly led to the replacement of Ox teams with Horses for ploughing and other farmwork.

All of these factors increased the efficiency and actual food output of farms using the system *much* more than the expected 1/6th (i.e. from half the land in use each year to 2/3^{rds}).

Unfortunately, the system was unsuitable for Mediterranean climes where unreliable or insufficient spring rains meant that the autumn planting would fail, so those areas retained the *seemingly* less efficient *two field system* and the *scratch plough* for the most part.

Ploughing

With no specialised farm implements (other than hand tools), the Plough was used for a wide variety of purposes, not *just* ploughing before sowing seed.

Fields would be cross-ploughed (that is, in one direction then at right angles to that) at least twice before the actual planting to both break up the ground *and* to disrupt the life cycle of the weeds that would grow up between the first and second effort.

After the autumn crop was harvested, the field would have to be cross-ploughed *again* ... and, in between, the intermediate field of the three field setup had to be cross-ploughed.

After harvest, and gleaning, animals would be allowed to run on the fields, but, before the winter snows came, the fields had to be ploughed *again* for

Surveying Lands & Tenements

First survey your courts, gardens, dove-houses, ***curtilages*** what they are worth yearly. [Then determine] how many acres are in the Demesne, how much in each [field], how many acres of all other pastures and wood[lands], [how much land is held by] free tenants and customary tenants, how much each holds and by what services [and their money value]. And of all [these] things put [down] what they are worth yearly.

Inquire how much of each sort of ***corn*** you can sow [per acre] and how [many] cattle you can have on each manor.

If your lands are divided in three*, one part for winter seed, the other part for spring seed, and the third part fallow, then is a plowland nine score acres.*

If your lands are divided in two*, as in many places, half sown with winter seed and spring seed, the other half fallow, then shall a plowland be eight score acres.*

Ploughing and Cultivating

You know well that a furlong ought to be forty perches long and four wide, and the king's perch is sixteen feet and a half; then an acre is sixty-six feet in width.

Now in ploughing go 36 times round to make the ridge narrower, and when the acre is plowed you have made seventy-two furlongs, which are six leagues, for be it known that twelve furlongs are a league.

The horse or ox must be very poor that cannot from the morning go easily in pace three leagues in length from his starting-place and return by three o'clock.

There are in the year fifty-two weeks. Take away eight weeks for holy days and other hindrances leaving forty-four working weeks. In that time the plow shall have to plow for *fallow* or for *spring or winter sowing* three roods and a half daily, and for *second fallowing* an acre.

At the beginning of fallowing and second fallowing and of sowing let the bailiff or the provost be all the time with the plowmen to see that they do their work well – because customary servants neglect their work it is necessary to guard against their fraud.

You know that an acre sown with wheat takes three plowings, except lands which are sown yearly and you need to sow 2 bushels per acre.

Curtilages. A house and adjoining land (aka 'Croft and Toft.'

Corn. An ancient term (*very* ancient) for whatever happens to be the locally grown cereal grain ***not*** for ***Indian (or Sweet) Corn.*** Depending on the area it could be *Wheat, Barley, Oats or something else.*

drainage to prevent them becoming waterlogged and damaging or destroying the seed sown in the autumn field and to prevent flooding in the other fields.

Even the Fallow field was ploughed, and cross ploughed, to turn the grass and other vegetable matter into the soil as part of the replenishment process.

In fact, apart for about a month or so in the depths of winter, ploughing, for one purpose or another, was almost continuous ... at least in England, northern France and Germany.

*Similar patterns applied in the Mediterranean margins ... though, in the Iberian states, for example, most villagers were too poor to own a plough and the requisite Ox team, and so there would be one or more professional Ploughmen (**Yugeros**) who would work most of the village's fields for a share of the crop (typically 20%) and who had a similar almost year-round work roster despite the differences of the two field system.*

The Commons

A part of most Manorial Estates were the *Commons*, or *Meadowland* ... which most people think of as being open pastures. While a large portion of any such *were* pastures, they were often bordered by wasteland (marshes, rocky terrain or even woods and forests), and all of those areas might be part of the 'commons'.

All such lands were used *in common* by all those villagers who had the right to do so.

Not all villagers had such rights – and they were jealously guarded. Freeholders mostly had them, though they may have also had their own privately owned or leased grazing lands; Villeins or Serfs normally did as well. Cottars, on the other hand, might or might not, depending on exactly how much of land their Croft and Toft consisted of and the specific rights that attached to it ... and it was this probable lack of access to the commons that made a Cottar's position so tenuous.

It was also possible for Cottars to pay for access, rather than have it by traditional right ... which would further disadvantage them when the enclosure movement began to get under way in the late 15th century.

Commons were normally *pastures* – used for running sheep, cattle, goats and pigs and, despite claims made by some modern sources, the number of animals each user was allowed to run was, at least *sometimes*, ***specified*** as part of their tenancy agreement.

Some parts of the Commons were used as *hayfields*, and the tenants of the manor would be entitled to harvest a certain portion of the hay there to feed their stock over winter.

Woodlands. Though woodlands were normally the

property of the Lord, and access and usage rights were strictly defined and limited, there were *some* manors where the woodlands (or parts of them, at least) were held in common and where the tenants *coppiced* for firewood or had the right to harvest a number of mature trees for commercial or domestic purposes.

Since wood was the main source of fuel for heat, light, cooking and industry, and since Woodlands were almost always owned by a Lord and Forests were owned by the King, wood fuel was relatively expensive ... especially since woodlands competed with the need for farmland.

*To maximise availability of fuel, woods were **coppiced** (whence the place name **'copse'**) ... that is, the trees were cut down to stumps or even roots to encourage regrowth. Normally a number of new shoots would result the next year and would grow to sapling size within 7-20 years, ready to be harvested again ... coppiced trees do not die, and the size of some stumps that it is thought they may have been regularly coppiced for many many centuries.*

The River

Not all estates were on a river or a stream, but if they were it is important to know that, as with woods and forests, *someone owns what's **in** it.*

Under Common Law those who ***own*** property fronting a *non-navigable* watercourse have equal rights to the water *and* have ownership rights to any fish or other aquatic creatures found in it.

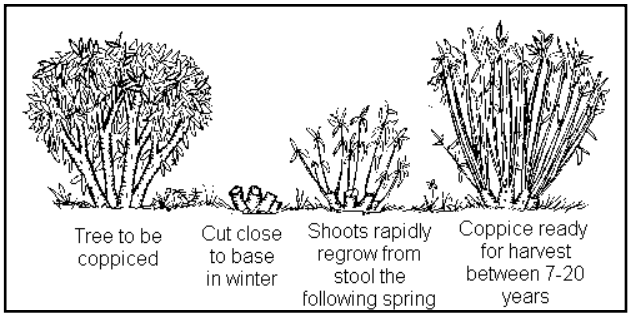
***Non-navigable** to ocean going or large riverine ships. A small boat doesn't count.*

*It also means anything that might impede the flow, dams, weirs, fish weirs, mill-ponds and associated works, need to be constructed in such a way as to **not** impede the overall **downstream** flow. You can **use** the water, but **not** exclusively.*

*In most cases fishponds and fish weirs, millponds, mill races and associated weirs don't cause a problem as they merely use the water and let it pass on. Dams, however, and irrigation works are more problematic ... and almost always lead to disputes. Most 'dams' in the medieval period were, in fact, **weirs** ... or were used mainly to divert the flow of a watercourse over a short section rather than block it completely.*

*Those dams that were built to assist drainage or to regulate water levels, as in the Low Countries, and actually **create** land, were less controversial ... but even those attempts could generate resistance (as was the case with the draining of The Fens in the 17th century).*

***Note:** In the middle east, dams and associated irrigation works were widely accepted by the populace because they were constructed to provide an overall, and obvious, social benefit to **all**, not just a single landowner.*



Fishing. The fish in a non-navigable river were ***private property*** – taking them *without the owner's permission* was poaching (***theft***). Many manorial estates had fish weirs constructed and stocked with fish – for a mix of private consumption (by the Lord and his family) and commercial sale and were particularly strict with anti-poaching measures.

In the medieval Germanies, fishing was legal by custom but prohibited by law ... and both difficult to, and rarely, enforced during the period. Polish practise in the period was similar.

In Scandinavia, river fishing was available to any free man – but fishponds and their contents were private property.

*Fish Weirs in the Germanies and Scandinavia, if completely surrounded by privately owned land, were more complex – fishing was more likely to be seen more in the terms of **trespass** rather than theft in Scandinavia and more problematic in the Germanies where there would be competing legal arguments.*

The Woods

First off, and most importantly, there is a *big* difference between ***Woods*** and ***Forests***.

Woods. Are privately owned land, not always with actual woods (some game do not necessarily prefer wooded terrain). They are almost always owned by a manorial estate and are preserved for the use of the lord of the manor ... usually (but not always) for hunting game. All of the game found *in* the woods is the property of the landowner.

Tenants of the estate usually have access to the Woods for limited purposes ... they are allowed to run Pigs there and gather fallen branches for firewood (they may pull down dead branches that haven't fallen, but this can lead to legal disputes). This 'right' may either be part of their tenancy agreement (and paid for by their rent or service dues) or it might be an 'extra' and paid for in addition to their normal rents.

The owner of the woods will often make arrangements with the Village (or local) Carpenter to allow them to cut down a specified number of trees each year for a set fee, and may allow additional trees to be cut down for an additional per-tree fee.

He will also generally allow his tenants to cut down enough wood for construction purposes for a new house, barn or other structure on the same basis.

Assarting. *Depending on a wide variety of factors, the owner of the land may allow it to be completely cleared for additional farmland – a process called* ***assarting****. This, of course, means the loss of hunting rights but increases his income from rents or produce sales.*

Gamekeepers. *To ensure that the game in the woods is not poached by his tenants, the Lord may employ a Gamekeeper (or -keepers) to guard his property ... especially at night. It is an offence to be found with hunting or trapping gear in the Woods ... and being found with poached game is, obviously, also a crime.*

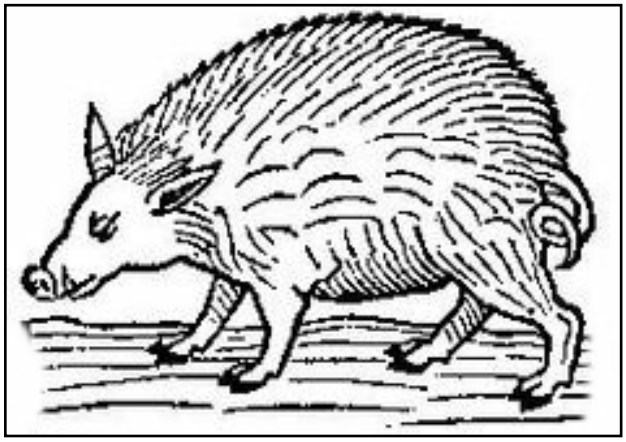
Woods without Woodlands. *Not all Woods were filled with trees ... they may be moorlands or other terrain where* ***game*** *would be found, and preserved from other uses for that reason. Some access to such lands might be allowed by the lord for the same sort of payments as for access to* ***actual*** *woods areas – for grazing or gathering hay at certain times of year, or for cutting peat for fuel.*

Forests. These are simply *woods* that are owned by the King ... and subject to *Forest Law*, which was more restrictive and much more strongly enforced than was the case with mere woodlands.

The purpose of the law was to preserve the major game animals – Deer, Boar, Fox Marten, Hare, Coney (Rabbit), Pheasant and Partridge.

Wolves were a special case – they were *theoretically* protected but, in fact, subject to being killed by anyone as they were widely accepted to be a danger.

Some villages already existed inside the Royal Forests when proclaimed (by William I 'The Conqueror') and they had to abide by the laws – freehold land that was not already cleared and under the plough was forbidden to be cleared and no inhabitant was allowed to keep hunting implements and dogs were banned, unless kept as watchdogs (in which case they had to have their front claws removed to prevent them being used for hunting).



Forest Officers. *Royal Forests required a number of officials to ensure the King's rights were not being infringed. The* ***Warden*** *was their chief, under him there were* ***Foresters*** *who had lands granted in the forest in return for service and who, in turn, supervised* ***Rangers*** *who did most of the day-to-day (and night-by-night) watching for poachers and other infringements.*

There ***were*** *other officials, but they tended to perform similar functions to the above and their titles were often very similar ... and some seem to have been exclusive to only some of the Royal Forests.*

Forest Lands were, in practise, much more complex in use and management than might seem at first – while large swathes were preserved for hunting, some areas were used for more commercial activities.

Charcoal burning, usually of areas that had been *coppiced*, was common in most and mining was also allowed, often for small deposits of iron ... and some smelting might take place in close proximity to these activities (all for payment of rents or fees to the Crown).

Likewise, the Crown found that it was lucrative to sell the rights to hunt a set number of game animals to the gentry and baronage, so private hunting parties of the wealthy could be found inside the bounds of supposedly 'royal' forests with some frequency (these parties would be accompanied by at least one *Forester* to ensure that they did not catch more than the number and type of animals they had paid for).

Any member of the Baronage (i.e. ***not*** *the Gentry) as well as Bishops and Archbishops were allowed to take 1-2 game animals as they travelled through a Royal Forest – but had to do so with the knowledge of one of the Forest officials* ***or****, if none were present, they had to have Hunting Horns blown while doing so to ensure that any present would know they were hunting openly under this special dispensation.*

Foresters were also often responsible for 'commercial' hunting of game for the Royal Household when it was in residence nearby as 'hunting for sport' would not normally bring in enough game for the Royal table.

The (Parish) Church

In England the difference between a Hamlet and a Village was whether it had a Church. Villages *did*, Hamlets *didn't*. That ***doesn't*** mean that the Church in a given Village was a *Parish* Church, though – as there might be (parts) of more than one Village in a Parish.

In England, Parishes had been been associated with civil ***and*** *ecclesiastical administrative units since the 7th century ... mainly because Priests were some of the few people who could read in those times. Even as literacy became more widespread, the lowest level of formal organisation remained the Parish.*

Theoretically, the Parish priest was appointed by his Church superiors ... but that was not always the case. It *could* be that the manorial Lord had the right (the 'gift' or 'living') – and some Lords had constructed a Church on their estate for just such a reason.

*Technically speaking, the rights to a particular Parish or Church is a **Benefice** – though the term may apply to payments associated with other church posts and offices.*

The population of a Parish could vary, and some were so small that they might not have a full-time Priest ... but be part of a series of such small Parishes that were granted a single Priest who served them in rotation.

All those living within the Parish Boundaries owed the Church (and the Priest holding the Benefice for it) a *tithe* – 10% of their crops/income – as well as fees for all sorts of specific services, such as marriages, baptisms, burials and special Masses.

The system was meant to provide 1/3rd for the Priest's living, 1/3rd for the operation of the Church and 1/3rd for Charity ... but there was no hard and fast rule.

Over time, it became more common for even quite large Parishes to be held by an absentee Priest (who could hold many such) who would then appoint a lowly paid Curate to do the actual work (though this only becomes a real issue towards the end of the period being covered).

Even in Parishes under a single Priest the disposition of Tithes and other money could also be diverted from one area to another at the whim of the Parish Priest.

A typical Parish will, of course, have a Church. It will also have a *Rectory* and, almost certainly, a *Tithe Barn* ... a non-Parish Church will have a Church and a Rectory, but probably not a Tithe Barn.

In the 10th century most churches were of wattle and daub, but rebuilt in stone as time passed. Parish Churches more likely so than non-Parish ones. Churches that were only 'manned' on a rotating basis would not have a Rectory, and the Priest would probably lodge in the Manor House if he needed to stay overnight.

The Rectory was more likely to be of stone than the Church ... and quite well appointed, if not quite to the standard of the Manor House.

Parish Churches also normally had a *Tithe Barn* in which to store the (grain/produce) tithes owed the Church by all the parishioners. These were always substantial structures, and often of stone.

How many Parishes were there?

There is evidence that 1066 to the late 13th century was a period where a massive number of churches were built, many (not not all) of which were Parish


Rectory

Churches. By 1500 there were 10,000 Parishes ... but no reliable figures for earlier periods.

*Organisation by Parish was a particularly English feature – while Parishes **did** exist on the Continent, their role in government, as opposed to ecclesiastical, administration was not as pronounced.*

Today there are ~12,500 CofE Parishes in England.

How *large* was a Parish? It depends. There doesn't seem to have been a minimum population nor any minimum or maximum size. There *does* seem to have been some confluence between these two factors ... but the best answer is simply 'it depends.'

Parishes could vary widely in size from as small as 1000 square yards in large cities such as London to 20+ square miles in sparsely populated rural locations. A lot of the reason for their sizes seems to have been 'tradition' as much as anything else.

Like Manors, Parish boundaries were not always clean and logical – they could, and did, take in parts of more than one manorial estate and could even be split between more than one County. It was also not at all uncommon for a Parish to include areas that were not geographically adjacent to each other, separated from the core of the Parish lands by *other* Parishes.

Such arrangements often led to considerable legal manoeuvering and were remarkably resistant to logic and common sense ... as there was always some money and prestige involved.

How often did Parishioners attend Church?

By all accounts, attendance was ***sporadic*** ... despite *repeated* pronouncements by church authorities requiring a minimum attendance. In desperation the 4th Lateran Council (1215) made attendance at Confession ***once per year*** mandatory ... and the evidence is that that requirement was widely ignored.

*Priests constantly complained that the Parishioners who **did** attend paid little attention to the services and spent most of their time chatting and gossiping.*

The modern idea of an all-powerful (Catholic) Church is the product of the Counter Reformation when the Church became much more prescriptive and controlling of its flock in order to guard them against the successful breakaway of the Protestant Churches.

That's ***services***. How often did they attend *Church* ...

What was the Church(yard) used for?

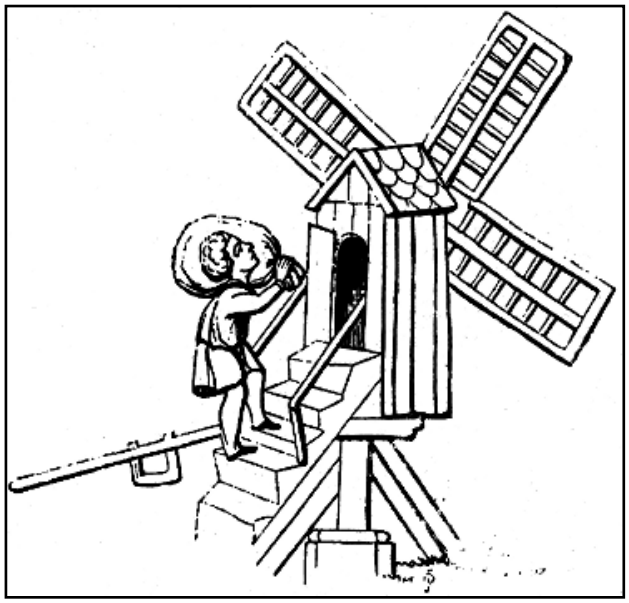
The Church and the Churchyard were traditionally used for all sorts of public events ... like a modern day (public) park and Community Hall. Even on Sunday ... *especially* on Sunday, as it was one of the few work-free days of the week.

They could be used for singing, dancing, games and any sort of public event ... and priests routinely complained about the noise and goings on (there were killjoys even in these pre-Puritan times) ... and were just as routinely ignored by all and sundry.

It was even common for locals to hold an impromptu 'market' at the Church Gate, or even ***inside*** *the Churchyard, on a Sunday despite nominal limits on Sunday trading (which were fairly anaemic) ... people had to eat, even on Sunday, and practicalities were* ***much*** *more important than doctrine!*

Burials. The Churchyard was also used for burials, at least for the common people ... wealthier parishioners might pay to be buried inside or in a crypt underneath the Church building, assuming it was even physically big enough (in some cases they were even buried within or underneath the walls of the church.

A plot in the graveyard was rarely marked (certainly not for an ordinary Villager), and not always individual (often it would be a common 'grave' used until full) – and bodies were only allowed to remain buried until the whole of the churchyard filled up and space was needed for new burials, at which time the bones were disinterred and placed in ossuraries ('bone houses') which might be a separate structure (usually partly underground) or might be a (series of) crypts beneath the Church itself.



The Mill(s)

Water Mills were ubiquitous – there were *thousands* all over *England* by the time of the Norman invasion – by the end of the 13th century there may have been as many as 15,000! They were put to a wide variety of uses, *not* limited, as many assume, to grinding grain – they were widely used in industry as well.

Windmills were not as common (perhaps 20-25% of the Water Mill total), and the more efficient Tower Mill didn't become common until the end of the 13th century (before that the Post Mill dominated). Because wind power was intermittent they were rarely used for anything other than grinding grain.

Tower (Wind)Mills are more expensive to build, but some are still in existence (and still working) today. Their advantage was that only the ***cap*** *of the Mill had to rotate to catch the wind, enabling the body of the Mill (the 'Tower') to be more robust and resistant to strong winds.*

Post Mills are simpler and cheaper but less robust – the entire structure has to be rotated to catch the wind and is built around a single central post. They were lighter, generally smaller, and more vulnerable to being blown over or taking damage in strong winds.

Windmills can develop 20-30 hp ... if the wind is strong enough and if it is blowing. Water Mills of the type used during the period could develop up to 5-10 hp, consistently, but many (probably most) were only rated at around 2 hp ... higher rated ones were usually Tidal mills (as was the case in London).

Despite what is often claimed, there was no particular requirement for the Villeins on *most* manorial estates to use the Lord's Mill, assuming he had one ... the limitation was the heavy capital cost, but even that didn't prevent their spread and it was not unheard of for the better off Villeins to start up their own mill in competition with that of the lord!

A Mill was ***expensive*** *– so most weren't owned by the Miller, they were* ***leased*** *on a long term basis in much the same way the freehold tenants leased land from the manorial lord ... mostly for a money rent, though there might be an obligation to give preferential treatment to the Lord, or grind a set amount of his grain for free or some other modified service.*

There was also no requirement that Villeins use ***any*** mill ... if they wanted to do the backbreaking work of grinding grain with a hand quern, good and well ... but it typically took around a half a day's work to grind enough grain for flour for a family's bread, work that could be done in minutes at the local mill.

*Yes, there are **some** instances recorded of the lord **attempting** to impose restrictions, but the overwhelming evidence is that these were unsuccessful except in the very short term – hence the rapid growth in the number of Watermills in England.*

What did it cost to use the Miller's Services?

Average fees were 1/12th to 1/16th of the grain milled, depending on the degree of fineness desired, but, as noted, the rapid rise in the number of mills meant that competition locally could bring these prices down.

*Millers **did** have a bad reputation for being greedy, and for getting up to all sorts of underhanded tricks to dupe the customers out of more flour than the agreed on amount ... but there seems to be no particular evidence in the existing records to show that they were the subject of court cases any more frequently than other business owners during the period. But it **was** a widespread trope.*

*Note that the Miller's fee is based on the **amount** of grain milled, and is not a fixed fee for service ... so they will do relatively well compared to the customer in time of drought or other crop failure.*

This may also be another source of the resentment that gave rise to the myth of the dishonest Miller ... but you need to take it with a grain of salt.

Taverns and Inns

Generally speaking, there ***weren't*** any. *Alewives* produced Ale and sold it out their front door or window as in Towns. There was ***no*** 'Village Tavern' (or Inn which, remember, was for travellers only).

*The main reason is that the Villages were normally **far** too small to support such an operation, given that the economic margins on which the Villeins (the majority of the population in most places) existed ... you ate and drank at home, as it was cheaper.*

So, where do travellers find food, drink and accommodations? If they're *gentry* or *barons*, they can expect hospitality at the Manor House – at least if the Lord is in residence. If he is *not*, then the Steward will be less welcoming to gentry, but may make basic accommodations available for important barons.

There is a tradition of hospitality, and it can be relied on to a degree ... but a simple Manor House is not going to be able to provide anything much for a large party. And, if it is one of a number owned by an absentee Lord, and the Lord isn't currently in residence, then there will be only a skeleton staff, little in the way of furniture and furnishings and, depending on the season, not much (or not much variety) in the way of food available.

If they're *commoners*, then individuals or small groups can expect to be put up by one (or more) of the wealthier freeholders, those who have some additional



space, probably in a hastily rearranged storeroom or barn, but possibly in the main common room if their house is large and has several separate rooms.

In such instances, individual Travellers can expect to share the family's meal, in return for conversation ... they're a source of news (and gossip) from far off places (maybe more than 20 miles ... or even further) after all.

*If there is a **party** of Travellers they may not be as easily accommodated, perhaps given space in the barn or the croft, and might be expected to pay for food ... depending on their numbers.*

Village Craftsmen

Most of the Villagers (apart from the Lord and his Household and the Priest) are full time farmers – but, except in the very smallest and poorest hamlets, there are at least *some* who aren't.

Blacksmith

There's an ongoing need for running repairs to farm equipment and, while iron is expensive and used as little as possible, it has to be used to some degree ... and the Blacksmith is the go to guy for making a lot of it and repairing pretty much all of it.

He will normally have *some* land, which he may farm himself or, in larger villages, will probably pay someone to farm for him (or maybe even sub-let it) but will make a variable portion of his income from smithing.

If you need a horse shoed, farm tools made or repaired, nails, hinges and basic hardware, *he's your man* ... and he can probably repair (effectively, if not to the same degree of finish), animal harness and tack, carts and waggons and most things made by specialist that contain some metal parts.

*As in the Towns, he will have a very limited amount of pre-made **anything** on hand ... he'll have the bar and rod stock, or ingots from which he'll hammer such (or the ore to be refined into ingots to be worked into such) as might be needed to **make** (or repair) almost anything, but it'll take **time**. About the only thing you can be reasonably certain he will have on hand in **small** quantities will be horseshoes and some nails.*

Repairing things is easier ... he can weld most anything of iron together, though it may look crude, and the weld will at the very least get you to where the appropriate specialist craftsmen are who can replace it.

He can copy broken parts on a 'cut and fit' basis – since even the idea of interchangeability and 'absolute tolerances' haven't even been thought of yet and refurbish worn tools (sharpening saws for the Carpenter or re-tempering sickle, scythe or plough blades).

Weapons? Not so much. He's a *generalist*, and armourers are *specialists*.

*He **can** make utility or special craft (agricultural) knives, spear- and arrowheads, but probably doesn't have much call to do even that. More likely he will, in emergencies, be called on to (not quite literally) 'beat plowshares into swords' ... scythes into makeshift polearms, for example.*

In areas with access to iron ore outcroppings and nearby coppices for charcoal he may have a well paying sideline in smelting down ore into ingots for sale elsewhere. Mostly, however, he will but the required metal stock at the market or in town.

Carpenter

A large majority of items in the village (and the wider world generally) are made partly or wholly of wood – and, while a lot of them can be made (or repaired) by the Villeins and their families, some require a specialist ... the Carpenter. If it is made primarily of wood, then it will be either made by the Village carpenter or can probably be repaired by them.

However, don't think of them in quite the same way as a modern carpenter who take *pre-cut pieces of wood* and turn them into ... whatever. Medieval carpenters take ***trees*** and turn them into ... whatever.

They also do double duty as ***builders*** ... any house or other structure not primarily built of stone or brick will either be completely built by a carpenter or the overall work will be supervised by them.

Even for stone and wood buildings, normally supervised by a Mason, there will be a need for a carpenter to do the interior and roof framework at the very least.



A Village carpenter will have the right to take so many trees from the Lord's woods, perhaps a yearly total or maybe a per-tree fee. He seasons them (either naturally, cheap but long term, or kiln-fired, faster but more expensive because fuel is expensive).

Sometimes, if the work needed to be done in a hurry and suitable timbers weren't available, a carpenter might use green or partly seasoned wood.

This would mostly be for items not expected to last long or, somewhat more commonly, where large baulks or timbers were needed in house or building construction and the inevitable warping could be compensated for by repairing or augmenting the wattle and daub infill in the wall sections affected.

Once the wood is seasoned, a carpenter will then cut it into planks or otherwise shape and form it for whatever the current job requires.

He will usually have a Pole Lathe (a springy branch turning a lathe spindle) to allow him to turn pieces of wood, though a village carpenter won't have the experience (or tools) for really complex turning. He may also be able to do some basic wood-carving.

As with the Blacksmith, he will have a very limited range of items for n hand – a handful of Trenchers, simple Bowls or Cups. Anything else will have to be ordered and then made ... as time and current workload permits.

Potter

Think of pottery (along with leather, bone and horn) as the medieval equivalent of plastic ... *relatively* cheap, *relatively* easy to work and ultimately disposable. It was thus ubiquitous.

The expense of the fuel needed for a kiln was such that it was economic only when done in moderately large batches ... larger than most villages would require. Unless they were close enough to a Town to make it worthwhile selling most of their output there.

The result was that few Villages had a Potter, and those that did usually had a Pottery and Kilns that produced on a semi-commercial basis, either as part of the Estate's direct operations or, more commonly, leased out by the Lord to a Potter for a money rent.

Cloth Trades

The widespread commercialisation of the cloth trades was only just beginning during this period. Fiber (wool and linen) was spun into thread largely by hand with the old fashioned drop spindle by all women in the village in any spare moment they had when not doing household chores, assisting in the fields ... or weaving cloth from the thread they'd spun.

Some of the cloth would be kept for making up clothing

for themselves and their family, some would be sold on to traders from the Town ... but such Village weavers generally made only homespun, not the more expensive fabrics that were becoming desirable.

They rarely dyed the fabrics, as this required specialist techniques and materials they rarely possessed.

Whatever cloth that may be available for sale will tend to be undyed homespun ... with one caveat. Medieval shepherds didn't cull non-white sheep so they were much more common ... and some weavers used the brown or black wool from these sheep to create undyed 'coloured' fabrics ... tartan-like patterns being found occasionally.

A lot of the thread spun locally was purchased by Weavers from the Towns and taken there to be woven into cloth by full-time weavers ... very little will be available for sale, and usually only as bolts (typically 22 yards) unless you can convince the weaver to sell whatever length is on their loom.

Towards the end of the period, the reverse could also be found – Town merchants contracting villagers to weave cloth for sale or trade, as village workers weren't covered by the restrictive Guild arrangements that Town weavers were and could be hired for much less.

Other Trades

It would be uncommon to find other trades in a Village ... *unless*, as for Potters, the products had a wider potential market and there was a nearby town to provide such a sales outlet.

This is an intermediate period – Towns are starting to specialise in crafts to the degree that they can mostly out-compete rural producers of the same product on terms of price or availability. They don't ***completely*** *dominate ...* ***yet*** *... and won't for centuries, but the changes* ***are*** *starting to bite.*

Shopping and Provisioning

Villages, by definition, *don't* have a Market ... you'll need to go to a local Town for that. They also don't *normally* have many (or any) craftsmen – apart from the Blacksmith and Carpenter (see opposite).

There are, likewise, ***no*** shops. And not much, other than food or rural products, for sale *anyway*.

If you want to buy food, then you'll be able to find someone who'll have some grain, maybe even some flour, for sale.

They may have some cheese or salt butter as well, freshly made as part of a batch for their own use they're prepared to sell for cash money.

They may also be prepared to sell some meat from any recently slaughtered animal ... or, if you're prepared



to pay for a *whole* animal, they may slaughter one for you. Easy money – they don't even have to drive it to market and be forced to sell it (relatively cheaply) to members of the Butcher's Guild!

Prices and availability for food items will depend on the season, recent crop yields, the recent weather and overall climate ... prices will be highest (and availability lowest) in late winter and early spring (i.e. when the previous year's stocks are running low and the new year's sowing not done, or the crops not yet ready for harvest) ... indeed, your best bet for food purchases at those times of year are in the nearby Towns, which will have much better (but still expensive) stocks.

Food prices will be lowest around harvest time, especially if you're happy to buy grain, not flour.

Note: *The best time to buy foodstuffs in a Village is at the impromptu Market that springs up at the Church (at the gate or inside the Churchyard) on a Sunday.*

Other items, *unless produced locally*, simply ***won't*** *be available*. Even if they are, it may be the case that you can *order* them, and then wait for them to be produced ... so it may be better to go to the nearest Town where there is a greater likelihood that common items will be on hand and available right away.

RES RUSTICA *'AGRICULTURE'*

As you've seen hinted at in ***Village & Villein***, farming and raising stock in the medieval period was quite different from modern times – and this section looks at some of the differences in greater detail.

THE FARMER'S YEAR

Medieval farmers had a regular yearly routine marked partly by seasonal and partly by calendrical markers. This varied according to the normal pattern of climate that applied to the broad region where they worked, and the monthly rota described below applies to England and NW Europe ... further south and east, and further north, the timetable would have been different, but the actual yearly routine would still have been similar, but occurring at different times.

MARCH-APRIL

Traditionally, the farming year began on March 25th (Lady Day) when the fields had thawed and were soft enough to be ploughed – starting with the Fallow Field.

Planting of the Spring crop would also begin as would weeding and other work on the crop sown the previous Winter (late Autumn), now germinating.

*Cereal crops were sown by the **broadcast** method – the sower would have a bag (or simply a fold in their tunic) full of seed and grab a handful as they moved along the length of the field, throwing the handful out in an arc in front of them with the seed simply landing on top of the ploughed soil.*

Some experience was needed to judge how closely to sow the seed, but the average seems to have been 2-3 bushels per acre for the best results (medieval sources differ).

MAY

Ploughing and sowing was completed and the newly planted fields were Harrowed – the soil turned to cover and protect the seed.



In the period between sowing and harrowing, careful measures were taken to minimise loss of seed to marauding birds, mainly Crows. Village children would use slings and thrown stones to scare them off (or kill them – always a welcome addition to the pot) and scarecrows were commonly erected as well.

Meanwhile, intense work on cultivating the croft gardens would be underway in any lull, or by the women and children of the family if they were not required in the fields ... this was mainly for private consumption (or used to pay Tithes or Rent), and the vegetables raised formed an important part of the peasant diet, though any surplus could be sold at the nearest market town.

The Dairying season also began, as Cows (and Ewes and Goats) begin to calve and their milk production begins to peak – some of the milk is used to make butter (salted, if it is to be preserved) and some to make cheese ... though cheese-making is a time consuming process that continues through to Autumn.

JUNE

The Hay harvest begins and continues through the month – normally harvested from the village's common lands as few peasants (and not many Lords) could afford to leave prime agricultural land unused for human crops.

The amount of Hay harvested was the prime determinant of how many animals could be kept over winter, as it was the main winter fodder.

The Spring planted field would be ploughed again, to turn the soil over and disrupt the growth of weeds that might otherwise compete with (and strangle) the main cereal (or legume) crop. Any manure available would be spread on the field at this time.

*On some Estates the Villeins and (less commonly) Freehold Tenants are required to pasture their sheep and cattle on the Demesne lands overnight ... ensuring that a large portion of their manure would enrich the **Lord's** soil.*

*In some areas, the peasants would gather **Marl** (a chalky-clayey soil rich in calcium) and spread it on acid soils to improve yields.*

If the village(r) had any sheep, shearing would normally begin late in the month, after the lambs had been weaned ... but usually only for 3-4 year old sheep, as younger ones produced relatively little fleece (not that adult fleeces were all that big by modern standards).

July

First and foremost, July is taken up with weeding the Spring field ... and most people were eking out what little remained of last year's harvest before the new crops came in.

Flax and Hemp plants, if cultivated locally, were harvested and started through their conversion into fibre to weave linen cloth.

August

Both the Winter *and* the Spring plantings will largely be harvested during the course of the month – which required warm, generally sunny, dry weather. If harvested wet grain could rot and was much reduced in quality and in the price it would attract at market even if it remained edible.

*The **Great Famine** of 1315-1317 was the result of untimely summer rains both during the normal summer ripening season **and** in the vital harvesting period. Crops rotted in the ground and even the little grain that could be harvested often did, or went mouldy, as well ... during 1315 and 1316. While there was some recovery (**less** bad weather) in 1317, unpredictable but generally bad (if not as widespread) weather meant that agricultural production didn't recover fully until **1322**.*

Unlike most medieval famines, which were localised, the Great Famine was so devastating because it affected the entire continent (and, indeed, the rest of the world) in the core years.

Figures are, as always, limited in availability and not completely reliable, but it is thought that, depending on the area, 10-25% of the population died of the direct or indirect results of the famine.

*There is also some suggestion that the generation of children growing up during the period had the development of their immune systems compromised (a known side effect of famine and malnutrition) and that this was an important factor in the massive initial die backs of the **Great Plague** (1338-75).*

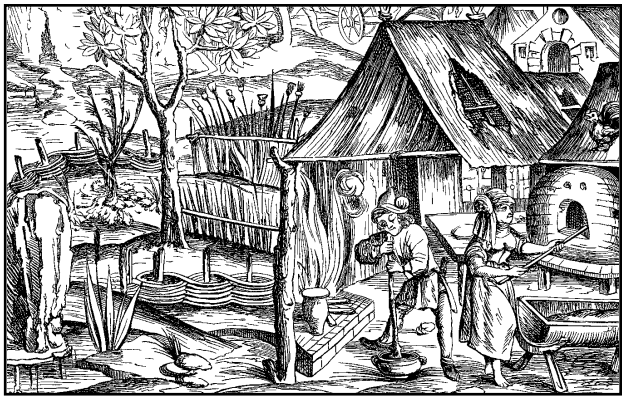
August is the only month of the year in which there will be no ploughing.

September

Harvest might continue into September if the weather had been poor and the legumes and non cereal crops (*less* subject to the vagaries of poor weather) would be harvested as soon as it was done.

*Grain was stored **as** grain, in which form it could remain edible (if kept dry) for many years – flour was only ground as needed as it went off much more quickly.*

The Wheat varieties grown in Medieval England were 'soft' grains and, if hermetically sealed (impossible in the medieval period) will last around 8 years at room temperature ... hard shelled wheat will last 10-12 years under similar conditions. Under the sorts of conditions that could be achieved in northern Europe during the medieval period, count on half, or slightly less than half, of that period.



Hard and soft varieties of other cereal grains last about the same period of time as for Wheat grain.

Peas and Beans (and other Pulses) will last 8-10 years of properly stored, but tend to dry out the longer the period – and may need to be ground to make them usable.

With the crops in, the grain would be threshed, preferably before end of the month as Michaelmas (29th) was the most common date at which rents and tithes, as well as other debts, came due.

October

The Fallow field is ploughed again, just before being sown with Winter crops. Threshing and winnowing continued as the weather allowed.

Wheat stubble was gathered and mixed with Hay to eke out its use as winter fodder and sheep, cattle and other domestic animals (other than horses) were allowed to forage on the harvested fields in order to manure than as much as possible.

Swine were allowed to run free in the Lord's forests (for which the peasants paid a small fee) and forage for acorns and beechnuts so they could be fattened for slaughter and sale.

November

Any excess stock not already sold at market was traditionally slaughtered around Martinmas (11th November) and eaten or salted (or smoked or dried) for later consumption and the byproducts (Bone, Horn, Skins) saved for further processing or sale.

Threshing and winnowing continued as the weather allowed and fields were ploughed, as needed, for drainage in order to prevent the Winter planting from becoming waterlogged and rotting in the ground.

The gathering of firewood or cutting of peat for winter

fires (for heating and cooking) also begins in earnest, as does gathering of reeds, sedge and bracken for thatching, floor covering and winter animal bedding.

December

Things are winding down, though maintenance work on farm buildings (both those belonging to the Lord and to the Peasants) continued ... as did maintenance of the ditches and hedges that surrounded the main fields *and* those that marked the boundaries of the individual plots within the fields.

Maintenance and repairs of farm equipment, such as it was, also continued. Some late ploughing for drainage might also continue into the early part of the month depending on the weather.

January

Continuing repairs and maintenance of ditches and drains and of houses and farm buildings. Very early lambing.

February

Pruning grapevines and fruit trees (to encourage spring growth to concentrate on the grapes or fruit rather than woody bits). Pruning and repair of hedges – or of fences in the rare cases where they were used and ongoing maintenance of ditches.

Main lambing and calving season. Spread Marl and Manure (as available) on the fields, make last minute repairs of plough, harness and other farm equipment.

Farming

Farming was *much* more manpower intensive, involved very little technology and was largely based on long established traditional routines that tended to change only very gradually – so yields were quite low compared to what we expect in modern times.

Cereal & Pulse Crop Yields

Estimating medieval crop yields is ... you guessed it ... *difficult.* The figures that exist are scanty or nonexistent before the early to mid 13th century and, even after that, need to be considered with care – they are overwhelmingly for Demesne lands held by the Church or



Noble families ... groups who were literate (or had access to employees who were) to keep records *and* the capital to spend on improving farm output through either through physical improvements or experimentation with different crops and variations, something a Villein would be unable to do, and for which even most well-to-do Freeholders would lack the resources.

There are ongoing arguments as to how representative the figures we have are – and what they represent.

*The few figures that exist for lands belonging to ordinary people **seem** to indicate that Demesne lands routinely doubled (or more!) On those yields. But **why**? Better record keeping? More (corvee) labour? More capital for improvements? More manure? There doesn't seem to be any definitive answer at the moment.*

The figures given in the table opposite are for the main cereal and other crops grown in ***England*** over several centuries and are drawn from the types of sources mentioned above. Note the differences between the types of bushels that *might* be being used.

*Just to keep things in perspective, by the late 19th century Wheat yields were ~27 bu/acre, Rye about the same, Barley ~24 bu/acre, Oats ~32 bu/acre and Peas & Beans ~18 bu/acre. And all that with **far** less labour.*

Early 21st century yields are – Wheat ~35-95 bu/acre, Rye ~23-60 bu/acre, ~Oats ~53-80 bu/acre, Barley ~45-89 bu/acre (non-irrigated/irrigated). Maize gives ~122-160 bu/acre and Rice 6800-7000 lbs per acre ... but neither were available in Medieval Europe.

Crop Yield Controversies

Older sources (and more recent books that *still* rely on them) may still cite net crop yields of 2 bushels/acre for cereal grains in early medieval times (usually either unspecified or 'corn' ... that is, *not* Maize, but whatever the commonest local cereal grain crop was).

The original primary source material on which this claim was based has now been thoroughly examined and shown to have been badly misinterpreted.

The 2 bu/acre yields were recorded ***after*** the locals had already paid their church tithes, taken out next years seed and, probably but not certainly, paid all the taxes and rents owed on their crops as well.

The yields shown in the table opposite are the net yields after next year's seed has been removed, but before any deductions for Tithes, Rents or Taxes.

Buckwheat and ***Millet*** were also grown in some areas – *Buckwheat* in the colder climes and shorter growing seasons of northern and north central Europe and *Millet* especially where drought resistance was particularly important (mostly in North and Central Africa).

Rice was widely grown in Muslim Spain until the fall of Granada, but seems to have gone into rapid decline in some of the reconquered areas (though not in all). Other than that it grown in Sicily and, from the early 15th century, in northern Italy and, somewhat later, southern France.

*Yes, that's **wetland Rice**, not Wild Rice.*

Secondary Crops

The productivity per acre of the gardens (Crofts) of Freeholders/Villeins are really not known – there are scattered figures that show the surplus sold at local markets, but the assumption is that the majority of what they raised was for their own consumption.

Certainly there are no (easily available) figures to indicate yields/acre.

Even for the Demesne, things are obscure – again, there are figures indicating what things were sold from their gardens (and other lands), but rarely (if ever) any indication of what the yields/acre were. The sales figures suggest that there was some production for sale going on – but, again, we cannot tell how much.

Fruit Orchards

Orchards were generally quite small, often less than an acre and were carefully protected (often by a ditch, hedge or even a fence or wall). Tree densities seem to have been quite low as well, mostly less that 750 trees per acre ... and tree spacing was usually irregular.

If the trees were incorporated into a walled, hedged or fenced 'garden' inside a castle or manor's walls (or nearby) the density of the trees was often much higher – but the area involved would be much much smaller.

Such 'gardens' would tend to have herb plots and other useful plants grown in at least some of the areas between the trees, whereas traditional orchards were typically widely spaced enough to grow in a grassy backdrop.

The most common fruits *grown* in European orchards were Apples, Bitter Oranges*, Cherry, Citrons, Lemon, Peaches, Pears, Plums, Pomegranates and Quinces.

** **Bitter Oranges** normally have to be cooked or candied to be palatable. They could also squeezed for a sweet smelling citrus oil. **Sweet** Oranges (Citrus Sinencis) were only starting to be introduced in the **15th** century.*

***Strawberries** and **Raspberries** were cultivated in gardens, but were tiny compared to modern varieties, and yields were so low that only the relatively wealthy normally bothered. They were also found wild, and, if the birds didn't get them first, were eagerly gathered by anyone and everyone.*

***Berries** in general weren't cultivated, but gathered wild, for immediate (or close to it) consumption as they came in season – if the birds didn't get them first.*

Average (Net) Crop Yields			
Crop	13th Century	14th Century	15th Century
Wheat	8-9	7½-8½	5½-6½
Rye	10-11	9½-10½	10-10½
Barley	9½-10½	9-10	8½-9½
Oats	6½-7½	6½-7½	6-6½
Peas & Beans	6-6½	5¾-6	5¼-5¾

Yields are in ***Bushels per Acre** (1 acre = ~2.5 hectares).*

A *Medieval* Bushel was 64 Tower Pounds (12oz/lb) or 48lbs 16oz (modern) pounds or ~21¾ kg.

Modern Bushels vary from 32 lbs for Oats (US) to 60 lb for Wheat (and vary between US and Imperial).

Yields given are *net* yields after seed for the next year's crop has been subtracted. The amount of seed required varied – Wheat & Rye ~2½ bushels/acre; Barley ~3½-4¼ bushels/acre' Peas & Beans ~2½-3 bushels per acre.

Vineyards

Vineyards were similarly small, but could, of course, be much more densely planted – however, the evidence suggests that, even in what are now considered prime wine producing areas, many plots were barely economic in terms of cost of production and seem to have been kept on for reasons of prestige.

*This sort of 'prestige' vineyard seems to have been more common in climatically marginal areas. Figures suggest **average** production on the order of 55/65 (Imperial/US gallons) per acre (for southern France and Spain). This may, in part, be because it seems that medieval practise was to plant the grape vines much further apart than is the case in modern times (which is consistent with their practise for fruit trees in orchards).*

*The **average** yield (for wine grapes) in modern Europe varies from 2-3 times that in Spain and Portugal through 5-5½ times that in Italy and France to 10 times that in Germany.*

Vegetables and Herbs

During the Middle Ages what we refer to as 'vegetables' were more commonly referred to as ***herbs***, a category that loosely covered all ground-based leafy or bushy non-cereal foods – so, if you see references to 'herb gardens' they are more likely to be *vegetable* gardens unless the growing of medicinal herbs is specifically mentioned.

Even where medicinal herbs *were* being grown, it is very likely that vegetables would have been grown alongside them.

The most common vegetables raised in medieval Europe included – Artichokes, Asparagus, Beetroot, Cabbage, Carrots*, Chard, Chickpeas, Cucumber, Fava Beans, Fennel, Garlic, Leeks, Lentils, Onion, Parsley, Parsnip, Peas, Radish, String Beans, Watercress

** **Carrots** were white (the original wild version, still a common in the period), red, purple or yellow ... orange carrots were first bred in the **16th** century.*

Note that the varieties grown in the medieval period are not necessarily those commonly found today.

*Where the same varieties are **still** grown the products are usually **much** larger due to use of pesticides and fertiliser, even though, overall, there is less variety than those grown commercially.*

Stock Raising

Stock raising was likewise hampered, mostly because farming was so inefficient and required much more land devoted to feeding the populace, leaving little left over for stock (and grain surpluses were so small that nothing like modern 'feed lots' existed).

That, coupled with generally low agricultural output, meant that there was a limited amount of feed that was available over winter – and that meant that most animals had to be slaughtered simply because there was not enough food.

What is more significant is that the largest animals tended to be the ones that were slaughtered (except for plough and working animals) to keep as many smaller ones as possible ... and the overall impact was that medieval breeds were *much* smaller than modern ones.

Even those medieval breeds that survived into modern times are generally bigger than the same ones raised in medieval times because of better nutrition.



Note that medieval breeds were normally *much* less specialised than is normal today. For example, you didn't have specialised breeds of Cattle for milk and meat, Chickens for eggs and meat, or Sheep for milk, meat and wool. Or, at least, such specialisation was either accidental or only just beginning ...

'Accidental' in the sense that some regional breeds (of cattle) might produce higher fat content milk or (of sheep) might have finer and longer strand wool (Merinos in Spain and North Africa).

Livestock

Typical adult stock weights were – Pigs, 70-80 kg; Sheep & Goats, 20-30 kg; Cattle, 100-300 kg.

Modern Cows average 500-900 kg, Bulls 800-1200 kg (depending on breed). Modern Sheep can vary from medieval sizes (and older breeds) to 70-125 kg for more recent breeds.

Modern breeds of Goat can vary from medieval sizes to 140 kg for large modern breeds. Modern Pigs can be up to 300-350 kg and have been bred to put on weight more quickly than the older breeds.

Chickens

These were smaller, too, and had *white*, rather than yellow, skin. Eggs were much smaller, perhaps ¼ the size of a modern standard egg, usually only 1-2 per week or so rather than the ~0.8-1 per day of a modern egg laying breed ... and medieval breeds (such as there were) were not specialised.

Medieval Chickens were entirely free-range, foraging for their food, and were generally about half the size of a modern breed.

You ate chicken when it stopped laying ... there were no specifically meat or egg breeds, unlike today.

They also didn't lay eggs year round – perhaps only for a six months in a year and none at all in winter (they stop laying because of low light levels).

Modern egg producers keep them in well-lit barns to fool their hormones into thinking it's still summer, and so keep up production all year round.

Rabbits

These are not native to the British Isles and were only introduced in the 13th century, mainly for their meat (and mainly for hunting – many nobles stocked warrens on their hunting estates especially for this).

They were, of course, common on the *mainland* of Europe and rabbits were widely hunted, raised for meat, fur, leather and hair (Angora Rabbits *may* have been being imported from Turkey during this period – the evidence is uncertain).

Fish

According to medieval though, 'fish' as a category included anything that didn't live fully on the land – so it included Porpoise, Whale, Beaver and *some* sea and riverine Birds, as well as Shellfish, Oysters, Mussels and Scallops.

***Whales** (North Atlantic Right Whales) were extensively hunted by Basque fishermen from both France and Spain – initially off those coasts, but by the 14th century they were making seasonal forays to southern Ireland and into the English Channel.*

Whale Oil was prized for use in lamps as it provided a brighter light than plant or animal oils. Baleen (bone plates from inside the mouth) was useful for applications where flexibility combined with strength was important and Whalebone was used widely for superior cutlery handles and higher quality 'bone' carvings.

Ambergris was used as a base for perfumes – but was more commonly found washed up on beaches or floating at sea than inside (Sperm) whale carcasses. Ambergris from inside a carcass smells, literally, like shit – floating or seashore recovered ambergris smells musk-like as it has been oxidised and broken down by sunlight.

Outside of coastal areas, fish was quite expensive – rivers were private property, as were the fish in them, as were the smaller lakes and much of what fish that was available came from fishponds on private estates which were deliberately commercial enterprises.

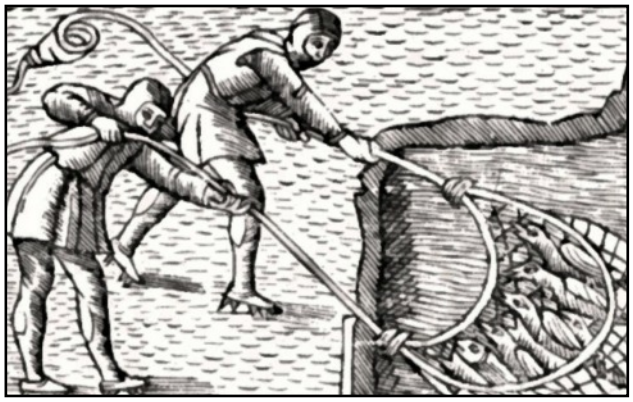
The main exception was ***Herring*** and ***Cod*** from the Atlantic and Baltic fisheries – often sold salted, smoked or dried and, in those forms, traded all over the Mediterranean, even as far east as Egypt and the Holy Lands.

*Herring was normally sold as **Kippers**, a whole fish split lengthways and butterflied ... then smoked, salted or dried. The Herring trade was so lucrative that it led to the creation of the **Hanseatic League**, and the **Skåne Market** (in the Öresund region of Denmark) held every year from August 24th to October 9th was the cornerstone of the trade (by the 14th century an average year's export was ~300,000 barrels ... and the tax revenue from this probably formed 1/3 of the Danish Crown's income!).*

*Butterflied and dried Cod was called **Stockfish** and was brought to Europe and the Mediterranean world by the Vikings, soon become a staple trade item.*

Horses

Medieval Horses, even Warhorses, were also considerably smaller than modern breeds – the average size in the 14th century was only 12-14 hands and Warhorses seem to have averaged 14-16 hands. These sizes seem to have remained stable across the entire period covered, *even for **Warhorses**.*



Modern 'light' riding Horses average14-16 hands, larger riding Horses are around 15-17 hands and Draught Horses are normally 16-18 hands.

Pack Horses (typically 13-14 hands) could carry a load of ~230-270 kg per horse.

The Horse Collar controversy

Despite what many secondary sources claim the harness used for horses in early medieval times was *not* based on the Ox-yoke and did *not* choke the horses it was used on.

The assertion is based on a 1910 experiment which claimed to show a medieval yoke limited horses to ~500 kg, while modern horse collars allowed 1500 kg.

Even at the time this was disputed, and more recent experiments have shown that this earlier experiment was based on a wrongly placed harness of incorrectly interpreted design.

Later experiments based on actual medieval designs, properly fitted, showed there was very little difference in pulling power between the two designs. Unfortunately, the latter experiments have, to date, mainly been circulated in academic journals and popular histories still cite the older, quite incorrect, claims, though there is some *slow* movement to correct this outdated information.

*As you've probably noticed by now, this sort of issue is an ongoing one. A small, but often significant, amount of **'common knowledge'** about the Middle Ages (indeed, about **any** historical period) is ... **wrong**, based on outdated material that is perpetuated by sloppy writers of generalist histories who refer to previous generalist works rather than specialist materials.*

*There's probably material in **this** book that, despite my best efforts, is like that too <sigh> ... though hopefully not much (I'm at least **aware** of the problem!).*

The Horse Collar's main *actual* advantage was that it allowed a lower attachment point for the mouldboard ploughs that were being introduced around that time, which had the effect of increasing the ***traction*** of the horses for *ploughing*.

Horses could plough roughly twice as much land in a given amount of time as oxen – and generally do so more efficiently.

Amongst their drawbacks was the fact that, initially, they were less efficient at pulling the newer mouldboard ploughs through the heavier, clayey, soils those devices were better at handling and that they required more carefully penned pasture compared to oxen, who tended ***not*** *to (want to) stray very far and which were incapable of jumping the hedges usually used to fence them in.*

Food and Famine

A recurring issue in the 12th-14th centuries (as well as before and after) was regular food shortages – periods where crop failures or shortfalls caused by various reasons (climate, mostly, but war or civil unrest could have the same effect) caused the price of staples to increase to the point where ordinary people could not afford to feed themselves or their families adequately.

Shortfall or Famine?

Shortfalls were more common, but survivable, causing rural dwellers to resort to 'famine foods' to supplement their reduced diet but being more serious for the labouring classes in the towns.

People would go hungry and the mortality rate would increase a little – mainly the very old and very young.

Prices of staples during periods of shortfall would typically be 2-3 times normal prices (i.e. around 6-10s per quarter of wheat).

Famines were, fortunately, less common, but far more serious and are defined by periods when the price of food, and its scarcity, caused obvious increases in the overall mortality rate ... of adults in their prime years as well as the young and the old. Deaths would not just be from starvation or malnutrition, but from disease ... in fact, probably more were from disease caused by weakened immune systems than from any other cause.

Prices of staples during periods of famine would typically be 4-6 times normal prices (i.e. around 12-20s per quarter of wheat) and, exceptionally, could go much higher.



During the Great Famine, the price of what little, inferior quality, grain available ran to 24/- per quarter in 1315 and had risen to 40/- a quarter by 1316.

So severe was the situation that, when Edward II stopped at St Albans on 10AUG15 he had trouble finding sufficient bread for himself and his companions. If there wasn't enough bread available for the royal party at any price things were ***extremely*** *serious.*

Frequency

Widespread (*Regional* or *National*) ***Famines*** occurred roughly one year in four or five, while ***Shortfalls*** occurred roughly four years in ten.

The end of the Medieval Warm Period was a particularly fraught time – and shortfalls and famines were more common for the first quarter of the 14th century – especially the Great Famine mentioned above. Other than that, famines and shortfalls were not really much more common in the 13th century than they were in the 14th century, on average.

Localised Famines and Shortfalls were more common, but, obviously, more limited in effect and could occur even in an otherwise favourable regional or national harvest. ***Every*** year there were areas of a region or a nation suffering from one or the other. ***Every year.***

In modern times, such local variations are of little import because modern transport makes it economically viable to transport staples across half a world if needed.

In the Middle Ages this was not the case – moving food more than a couple of dozen miles by land was uneconomic and sea or river transport rarely had the capacity to move enough even if it was available ... and national, regional (and even local) authorities didn't have the budget to subsidise the prices even if there was food to be moved.

It could literally be the case that there was famine on one side of a major river and plenty on the other.

One interesting thing to note is that shortfalls and famines were usually worse *in the countryside.* Rents and other feudal dues and fees didn't go down simply because the crops didn't do well – and the peasants often *had* to sell their crops (or pay in kind) to do pay those rents and fees.

On one hand, as the period progressed, many estates were bought, or their rights were, by the urban elites. On the other hand, towns were the powerhouses of the medieval economies and had money to buy whatever was available ... and more, even to the extent of buying grain from outside their normal region.

Historically, this is pretty normal. One of the more recent and egregious examples of this was the de-Kulakisation undertaken by Stalin and his starvation of the Ukrainian peasantry ... which was so bad peasants could be found in the towns begging for bread, which was plentiful as all the grain had been confiscated!

Medieval Calories

It is hard to estimate the caloric content on medieval diets, but the best estimates suggest that, in a good year, a Peasant (male) consumed 2900 calories per day (~2150 for a female). Those undertaking particularly heavy labour would have consumed more, probably around 3500 calories per day.

Modern nutritionists suggest an intake of ~2000 calories per day for females and ~2500 calories per day for males, on average, to maintain good health and not gain any weight.

*Of course, that is for **sedentary** work – those engaged in heavy physical labour need more, for example, three US Army MRE ration packs equal 3750 calories (1250 calories each).*

Modern western diets typically average 1000 to 1500 calories (3000-3500 for females and 3500-4000 for males) more than the recommended amounts, hence the increasing prevalence of the overweight and obese.

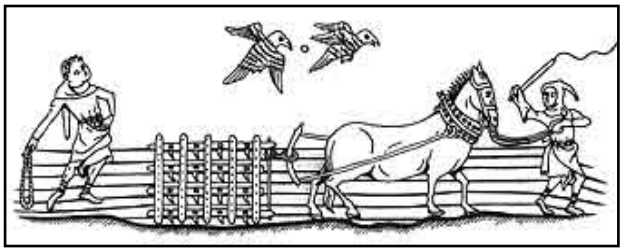
The middle and upper classes ate *much* more – as much as 4-5000 calories per day. Monastic diets could be even richer – the wealthiest monasteries have left records that show intakes of ~6000 calories per day on regular days and ~4500 calories per day on 'fast' days were normal.

As a result, many more were overweight and even obese – though even these wealthy medievals probably did, on average, more hard physical work than sedentary moderns and so the actual proportion of obesity was not as high ... especially in the lordly classes with their military orientation and required practise.

The Columbian Exchange

Many food crops we enjoy today were unavailable in medieval Europe – for the simple reason that they originated in the New World. Even after 1492 (roughly half a century after the end of the period primarily covered by this book) it took many generations to many centuries for these new crops to be brought back and then cultivated for food.

Some of the more important (or well known) foods in this broad category include – Amaranth*, ***Beans*** (Pinto, Lima, Kidney), Black Raspberry, Bell Peppers, Cashew (Nut), Chicle (Chewing Gum base), Chili Peppers, Cranberries, Coca (i.e. Cocaine base), Cocoa (Chocolate base), Jerusalem Artichoke, ***Maize*** (Indian



Corn, Sweet Corn)*, Manioc (Cassava, Tapioca), Papaya, Passionfruit, Pecan (Nut), Pineapple, ***Potato***, ***Pumpkin***, Quinoa, Squash, Sunflower, ***Sweet Potato***, Tobacco, Tomato, Vanilla (Bean), Zucchini.

** **Amaranth** was known outside of the New World, but was notan important grain crop. **Maize** (Zea Mays) is, confusingly to many, commonly called **'Corn'** (a shortening of **'Indian Corn'**) – but **Corn** (to most Europeans and Historians) is an ancient word that simply means 'the most common cereal grain grown in a particular region'. I have tried to clearly differentiate between the two uses herein as **Indian Corn** (for Maize) and **Corn** (for generic cereal grain).*

***Note:** Those crops shown in **Bold** are the ones that have had the greatest impact on agriculture and on diet in the Old World post-Columbian exchange.*

The only really significant animal that crossed the Atlantic to Europe as a food source was the Turkey.

Highways & Byways

We've now seen what things were like in both Urban areas and on a Manorial Estate and 'typical' Village ... but what were things like in the countryside *outside* these more settled areas?

The Natural Dimension

The rural landscape of England (and Europe) was quite different in the medieval period to what we are used to today – but not always in the ways we assume or have been led to believe.

Can't see the Forest for the Trees

Most of Europe had had high density agricultural populations for long enough for deforestation to be well and truly under way.

There *were* still tracts of the 'forest primeval' in many areas, but much less than had been the case even during Roman times ... and, in other areas, deforestation was almost total.

The areas that had the most woodlands and forests still in their primal state were those areas that had never been settled by 'civilisation' ... across the Rhine in the Germanies, and further east into Poland, the Baltics and Russia as well as in Norway and Sweden.

Consider the Lebanese Flag ... with its central, massive, Cedar tree. In this period, they are almost completely gone – despite attempts at conservation by the Emperor Hadrian! The only 'old growth' stands are in mountainous areas not easily or economically accessible.

The Wuduwasa ('Woodwose')

It once happened ... that a living creature was caught in the forest ... which no one could say definitely whether it was a man or animal. No one could get a word from it or be sure it understood human speech.

It had the human shape, however, in every detail, both as to hands and face and feet; but the entire body was covered with hair as beasts are and down the back it had a long coarse mane, like that of a horse, which fell to both sides and trailed along the ground when the creature stooped in walking.



Or consider mainland Greece. Hillsides bare of anything other than olive groves. Again, ancient 'old growth' stands only survive in isolated and mountainous areas.

Generally speaking, the longer an area has been 'civilised', the less old growth forest remains – though there will still be some coppiced or managed areas (for fuel, mainly ... charcoal). Still, it was said that a squirrel could cross England without touching the ground in at least one Arthurian Romance.

*It is estimated, for example, that what is modern day mainland Britain had lost **half** of its pre-agricultural woodlands by the time the Romans arrived! This was almost entirely due to human activity and farming.*

Even so, significantly more land was devoted to 'forests' than is common today, though there was probably only marginally more actual ***woodland*** (see *'Forests vs Woodlands'* below) than in modern times ... though they probably won't be in the same places or consist of the same trees or be of the same nature.

*In England, the native trees likely to be found include – (Common) Alder, Ash, Aspen, **Beech**, Box, Crab Apple, Crack Willow, Downy Birch, **Elm**, Hawthorn, **Hazel**, Holly, (Common) Juniper, (Large Leaved) **Lime**, (Pendiculate) **Oak**, Rowan, Sallow (Goat Willow), (Midland) Thorn, Whitebeam, White Willow, Wild Cherry, Wild Service Tree, **Wych Elm** and **Yew**.*

*Species in **bold** were by far the most common, and dominated most stands of woodland, The status of the **Beech** in England isn't certain ... its normal range may have been forced northwards into Scotland during the Medieval Warm Period and only starts to spread south again after 1300 or so.*

Forests vs Woodlands

Around 15% of England was covered by *Woodlands* in 1086, and a further 7% or so was covered by *Forests* (which included Moors, Heathland and other non-wooded areas where game such as Deer could be found) – so there was obviously some crossover.

*Forests in England, after the Norman invasion, meant areas subject to 'Forest Law' ... restrictive rules meant to preserve hunting areas for the King. 'Forests' were not **necessarily** covered by trees, as noted above).*

Lesser Lords than the King also valued 'forests' and other areas where large game could be found and attempted to preserve as much as possible – the more land owned, the more likely he was to have a 'Chase' (a private hunting area) for his own personal use.

Similar areas of land operating under similar rules existed in many european monarchies – for example, in Medieval France there were around 600,000 hectares (~1.5 million acres) or about 5% of the land in modern French borders.

Then there were *managed* woodlands, often coppiced for firewood or charcoal burning, but sometimes managed for relatively quick growing trees usable in construction.

There were still woodland areas all over Europe that were remnants of the natural pre-Roman forests, but a significant percentage of the medieval woodlands were, in fact, farmlands that had been abandoned with the collapse of the Roman Empire in the west and which were actually second growth.

Recovering and expanding populations recolonised abandoned farmlands as well as old growth forests and cleared them, especially in the 11th-14th centuries ... so the overall coverage of the woodlands in England and Europe changed quite noticeably in that period.

WASTELANDS

This is in the sense of 'not being used for anything' – even *Forests* are being used. Wastelands are those areas that are not much use for game and which, often, are not even part of a manorial estate ... indeed, they may still be Royal lands.

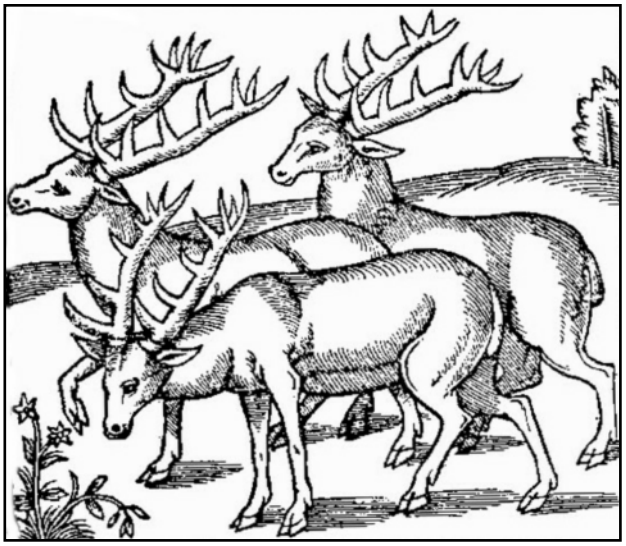
*Of course, if they are on the edges of an Estate, then some portion of the 'waste' might have been granted as **part** of the Estate ... or if the 'waste' is quite small (in relative terms) the same situation might have been applied. Indeed, if the area was small enough, the Lord may have begun, or even partly completed, improving the feature ... if they have the capital to support such efforts (which implies owning more than one Estate).*

Swamps, Marshes, Bogs, Estuarine and/or tidal Mud-flats, Mountains, Rocky and barren lands ... any land for which there is no obvious and immediate economic value (for the level of technology and the amount of investment capital available).

*Think the **Fens** – the (at this period) marshy area around **The Wash** in England. A Royal 'Forest' until some time in the 13th century, possibly to c. 1240 (and where King John lost his baggage train ... and 'treasure' ... fleeing from angry Barons!).*

There are remnants of Roman drainage systems, and some medieval works were done, but the area remained mostly untouched until the early 17th century – today most of this once-marsh is flat, well drained, highly fertile and productive farmland.

*Another (continental) example is the **Netherlands**. The precursors to the modern Polders date back to the 10th and 11th centuries, but serious reclamation didn't begin until the 12th and 13th ... financed by wealthy land-owners (often Monasteries).*



*The **really** major efforts only got underway in the 16th century ... and, of course, continue to modern times.*

So, in both cases, they are wastelands through the entire period covered by this book and well beyond.

Some of these medieval 'wastelands' remain wasteland – but much more has been modified or reclaimed for a variety of purposes, mostly (but not always) after the period covered (i.e. after the end of the 14th century).

There are a *lot* of such places – and they may be found *anywhere*, and can cover quite large areas.

For example, some of the bigger wetlands in Europe include the Briere Wetlands, north of the Loire estuary (in France) cover ~490 km^2, of which ~170 km^2 are swamps; Romney Marsh on the SE coat of England still covers ~260 km^2 (works to drain parts of it, the Walland and Denge areas, began in the 13th century) and the Pontine Marshes, along the coast SE of Rome and originally ~800 km^2, drainage of which only seriously began in the late 13th century; the Guadalquivir Marshes in southern Spain, ~400 km^2.

These areas were not *entirely* uninhabited – some of them had parcels of dry land scattered through them which were farmed and those that were tidal were occasionally used for salt-pans and they were often rich sources of smaller wildlife, fish and birds especially. In Scandinavia and northern Europe (especially Russian) Bogs and Swamps were the main sources of iron 'ore' ... and most of the iron in those areas came from these sources right through to the 16th century!

*Bogs don't produce a **lot** of iron nodules, but there were a **lot** of Bogs and Swamps to harvest ... and they are a renewable resource, a given Bog or Swamp area can be harvested roughly once a generation (20 years).*

Wildlife

With a *lot* fewer people and a *lot* less farmland (and a *lot* more Forest and Wastelands) than in modern times, there are a *lot* more wild animals in medieval Europe ... some native, some not, some still around, some now extinct.

The British Isles

The ***Beaver*** population was in serious decline and became extinct in England some time after the 12th century ... though it did not become extinct in Scotland until the 16th century.

Otters, on the other hand, were numerous and hunted for their pelts – as were ***Stoats, Weasels, Polecats*** and ***Pine Martens***. But no *Minks*.

The ***(Grey) Wolf*** and the ***Wild Boar*** both became extremely rare during this period and the *Boar* was probably extinct by the end of the 14th century. The *Wolf*, on the other hand probably did not go extinct until the last decades of the 15th century.

Lynxes were long extinct, probably from around the 7th century and ***Brown Bears*** were extinct from at least that time, and possibly earlier.

Fallow Deer *and* ***Pheasants*** were mainly introduced by the Normans in the late 12th and early 12th centuries (Roman attempts to do so had not stuck, as far as archaeological evidence can ascertain).

Population Density in England, 1377

Area	Taxpayers	Density
Bedfordshire	20339	73
Norfolk	88797	71
Suffolk	58610	65
Huntingdonshire	14169	64
Essex	47692	52
Rutland	5994	70
Northamptonshire	40225	66
Kent	56551	61
Dorset	34241	57
Hampshire	33241	34
Cornwall	34274	43
Devon	45635	29
Staffordshire	21465	31
Shropshire	23574	29
Lancashire	23880	22
Westmoreland	7389	16
Cumberland	11841	13

Population as recorded in Tax documentation (Pipe Rolls), which only counts tax*payers* (not families, not those too poor to pay tax).

Density is per square mile.

Rabbits, as noted elsewhere, are not native and the earliest evidence for their presence is the late Anglo-Saxon period, some time in the late 12th century.

Mainland Europe

Wolves were, of course, quite common – for example, in the winter of 1450 a pack of Wolves roamed the streets of Paris and killed around 40 citizens over a period of time before they were hunted down and killed! In rural areas, the problem was, of course, potentially much worse.

*Thousands of people were **still** being killed by wolves all over Europe right through to the 18th century, though continued hunting though the continued expansion of human populations and agricultural lands meant their range was continually being pushed northwards. Still, attacks in the reduced wilderness and forested areas of western Europe continued at a lesser rate.*

*The **Beast of Gévaudan**, for example, killed somewhere between 60 and 100 people over the period 1764-1767 in the province of the same name in the Margeride Mountains.*

Wild Boar were still common in Europe and the Mediterranean littoral ... even in North Africa and Egypt, not disappearing in most places until the 19th century (and rapidly re-establishing themselves in modern times, often from escaped 'farmed' animals).

The European ***Brown Bear*** was found all over Europe in the same sort of forest and woodland terrain as was common for the Wolf and Boar, though Bears were less likely to attack humans.

The ***Aurochs*** was largely extinct in its original range (all of Western Europe) but could still be found in Lithuania, Moldavia, Poland, Transylvania and East Prussia ... they went extinct somewhere in Poland by the 17th century.

The Human Dimension

Demographics

The most obvious difference was the *human* dimension – there were *far* fewer people in the landscape and, on top of that, the distribution was wildly different as well.

Population

Even the highest population estimates (~5 million) for England are only around 7½% of the modern (2015) 65 million for the UK ... and the lower estimates (~2½ million) are only 3¾%.

France (~13-17 million in the early 14th century) was about 20-24% of its modern population (~64 million). Germany was about 10-12% (~8-9 million compared to ~80 million), Italy about 20% (~8-10 million compared

to ~60 million), Spain and Portugal about 10% (~5-6 compared to ~ 60 million).

Other countries showed similar proportions ... and that assumes that the figures often quoted for medieval populations in these areas are more accurate than those for England in the same period, where there is a 100% variation (~2½ +/-¼ million or 5 +/-½ million).

The thing you'd notice as a modern, most obviously, is *how few people and how widely spread they are.*

The 14th century was particular hard, population wise – almost certainly due to direct and indirect effects of climate change (see below).

For the first time in many centuries, population *declined* ... on average (across western Europe, anyway), population dropped by 5-10% in the period 1315-25 (effects of *The Great Famine*); then, in 1348-49, it dropped 30-40% (*The Great Plague*); and, finally, in 1350-1400 it dropped a further 15-25% (recurrence of plague and famine).

Most countries didn't again reach their late 12th century population totals until the 17th century.

Population Density & Distribution

Population Density (see table opposite for England) varied according to climate and the availability of arable land – England had an overall average of 40 per square mile; France had the western European maximum of ~100 and Germany came in at ~90.

*The United Kingdom (2016) has a population density of ~700 per square mile (England, ~1000, Wales, ~388; Scotland, ~176.8). Modern France, ~317; modern Germany, ~608). Of course, population density is an **average** and, like all averages, can be misleading if you don't understand that it **is** an average.*

Urban populations have been dealt with in ***Cities & Civics***, earlier in this section – suffice it to say that in Medieval Europe (and the rest of the world) more people lived in the countryside and villages than did in cities and towns. Today, the reverse is true.

In Europe the average was 9-11 rural dwellers for every urban dweller ... varying according to a variety of factors (the more developed areas tended towards 9:1. Less developed areas trended to the other extreme.

In the modern developed world in excess of 50% of the populace of any given nation live in urban areas.

As of 2015, 90% of the population of the UK lived in urban areas (it was 79% in 1950).

In France, 79% of the population is urban (55% in 1950) and in Germany, 76% is (65% in 1950).

Age Pyramid			
Age	**Medieval**	**Age**	**Modern**
0-13	29%	0-13	8/7.2
14-17	7%	14-19	2.6/2.4
18-25	14%	20-24	2.9/2.8
26-30	8%	25-29	3.4/3.3
31-40	14%	30-39	7.1/7.0
41-50	12%	40-49	7.1/7.2
51-60	9%	50-59	6.9/7.4
61-70	5%	60-69	4.2/5.2
71-80	2%	70-79	2.5/3.8
81+	0.1%	80-84	0.5/1
		85-89	0.2/0.5
		90-94	0.0/0.1
		95+	0.0/0.0

An Age Pyramid indicates what each age group is as a percentage of the overall population.

As with all medieval figures, the ones above should be taken as broadly indicative rather than precise and do not differentiate between male and female.

In comparative terms, the medieval Age Pyramid is very close to the typical Age Pyramid for a early 21st century Third World Country.

Modern Figures show Male/Female percentages and are for modern (2016) Europe.

Note that where a value of 0.0 is recorded it simply means 'less than 0.1'

Age Pyramid

An *Age Pyramid* shows the distribution of populations by age – see the table above, which shows typical medieval distributions (based on a mix of written and archaeological records from the period) and a comparative distribution for a typical modern European or North American nation.

Medieval Age distribution is very similar to that of a modern (2016) Third World country – and for similar reasons (high infant mortality rates and generally higher adult mortality rates than is common in a typical First World country).

As mentioned, Towns are population sinks – but the very young and very old are particularly vulnerable both to the crowded conditions ... especially as this makes it easier for diseases to become endemic and spread more rapidly (see later sections for more details).

*This means that the percentage of very young (0-8 or so) and very old (60+, and 70+ especially) in urban areas is actually **less** than it would be expected to be in the countryside.*

Royal Roads ~1086

A ***Royal (King's) Highway*** is always open. No one can close or divert into a city or fortress or castle or royal town. The ***Highway*** sh[all] be wide enough for two wagons to meet and pass, for herdsmen to [touch] their Goads at full length (~10'), and for 16 knights, armed, to ride side by side.

Assault on anyone on the King's Highway (attack by surprise or from cover) is called ***Forestel*** and a[n on the spot] fine [bond?] of £5 shall be paid to the King.

Every town has as many main streets as it has [pairs of?] main gates appointed for the collection of tolls and dues.

Stretbreche occurs where someone destroys a road by closing it off or diverting it or digging it up, the fine for this is £5.

Royal Highways, 1285 (Edward I)

It is ... commanded that highways from Town to Town be widened where there are woods, hedges or ditches, so that [no-one can] hide with evil intent within two hundred feet [60 metres] of [either side of] the road ... [O]aks or ... large trees [are exempt] so long as it is clear underneath.

{I]f ... a lord [does not do this, and] robberies are committed, the lord shall be answerable: ... if murder is committed, the lord shall be fined ... [I]f the lord is unable to cut down the underwood, the district shall help him to do it.

Note: *Neither law makes any mention of a road* ***surface*** *as such ... they both refer to the 'rights of way.'*

Major non-Royal roads were ***also*** *rights of way, usually traditional, and subject to Royal (and local) law, but not specifically Royal Highway Law.*

Highways Act, 1555 & 1562

This Act of Parliament specifically placed the burden of maintenance on local Parishes and widely hated (and the absolute bare minimum of work was done). It was the first law to specify such responsibility and was the first change since the 1285 law.

Highways were defined as roads between or leading to Market Towns.

Maintenance works were to be announced at Easter, and completed on 4 days before June 24th by the whole Parish ... depending on how much land the Parishioner held they might be required to provide 2 men, a horse and cart for the wealthiest down to a single worker for the poorest family or pay for the hire of a substitute @ 1/- per day. Work was to be for a minimum of 8 hours per day allocated. Fines of up to 10/- per day could be levied for non-compliance.

Highways, Roads and Bridges

The vast majority of medieval land routes were merely ***rights of way*** rather than surfaced, marked or graded thoroughfares ... but there were exceptions ... and, especially in Woodlands, Forests and Wastelands they could, and evidently did, drift in their exact location.

Royal Roads or Highways: England

In England, at least from the Norman Conquest, the Crown regarded certain key roads to be under direct Royal authority and any offence committed on them to be a direct crime against the King's Peace.

The definition of a 'Royal Highway' is not stated in either the 1086 or 1285 laws, but evidence from other period sources suggests that it meant any road connecting two Market Towns or running to a Market Town (it is likely the 1555 Act was merely stating that in print for the first time).

The main requirement of these laws, however, was merely that the rights-of-way be kept clear of concealing bushes and underbrush for 60' on either side to make make ambushes by robbers more difficult.

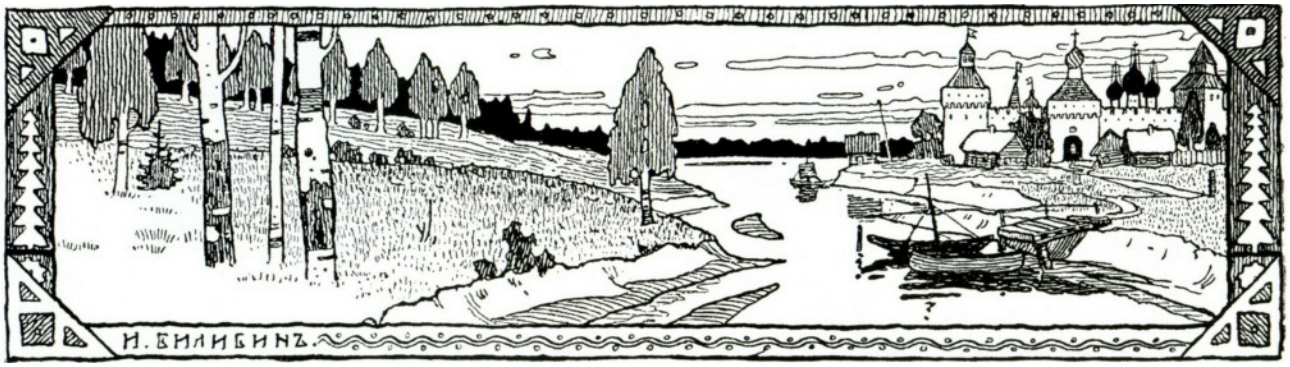
The difference between a Royal Road or Highway and any other Road or Track was mainly legal – most were simply dirt paths worn down by the passage of foot and animal traffic (including wheeled carts).

That said, there are surviving examples of Royal Proclamations from the period that order the landowners of specific stretches of specific highways to remove blockages and repair damage that ***had*** *prevented the Royal Household, or the Royal Party, from moving along that stretch road at sufficient speed ... but there is no evidence of a specific legal requirement that they were responsible for any maintenance or repairs on a regular basis short of these extraordinary proclamations.*

Some older sources suggest there were only *four* Royal Highways, the pre-Roman tracks of *Ermine Street*, *Watling Street*, *Fosse Way* and *Icknield Way*, but more recent scholarship has shown that these claims are based on now discredited medieval forgeries and/or unsupported claims.

All of these four roads were rebuilt by the ***Romans*** *and would have been gravelled (despite many photos implying otherwise, paving stone was used only rarely) with a proper subsurface foundation ... but by the 12th century they hadn't been properly maintained or repaired for something like 800 years. Even so, they were still very likely better than any of the other 'highways.'*

Note that the network of military roads built by the Romans in Britain (non-military roads were meandering dirt 'rights of way' as in medieval times), only an estimated 60% still connected places of importance (or that even ***existed****) by the 12th century.*



Royal Roads: The Continent

Despite usually being more populous, most western european states of the period were far less well organised on ... especially at the level of local government. The result was that there were fewer specifically 'Royal' roads within their state boundaries than was the case in England (however, see below).

There were, in fact, only two (possibly three) *major* 'Royal' roads in western Europe – the ***Via Regia*** (running from Santiago de Compostella in Spain through Bordeaux, Paris, Frankfurt, Leipzig, Breslau, Lublin and on to Moscow), the ***Via Imperii*** (from Rome, through the Innsbruck pass to Augsburg, Nuremberg, Leipzig and on to Stettin) and the ***Via Regiae Lusatiae Superioris*** (an offshoot of the *Via Regia*, running from Breslau through Krakow and on to Kiev).

There were also secondary 'Royal Roads' such as the ***Via Carolina*** (Nuremberg to Prague), the *(Westphalian)* ***Hellweg**** (Duisburg to Paderborn), the ***Burgundy Way*** (Frankfurt, Aachen, Brussels thence to Bruges and Amsterdam) and the ***Via Francigena*** (nominally Canterbury, thence to Calais, Reims, Besancon, Lausanne, Pavia, Piacenza, Siena, Rome) which were less important for trade or were mainly pilgrim routes.

** **Hellweg** = **'Heller Weg'** = 'Bright Way' (lit), with an actual meaning of something like 'clear way.'*

The parts in ex-Roman areas ran largely along the old Roman roads, and, despite 800 years of general neglect, were still better than mere 'rights of way' and were still mostly gravelled (or had the remains of gravelling on some sections).

These roads were subject to the 'King's Peace' in the same way as Royal Highways in England – possibly more successfully as they were also major trade routes connecting much larger populations (and therefore seeing much heavier traffic) than the English versions.

Maintenance was the responsibility of the King, but this was delegated to the local nobles, usually the Tenants-in-Chief, who then either routinely ignored it or delegated it to their tenants, who did much the same.

As in England, the main Roman (military) roads would have originally have been gravel on a well constructed base, but the farm roads would simply have been dirt tracks, really just 'rights of way.'

These roads were often part of ***Pilgrimage Ways*** and were served by feeder roads that criss-crossed NW Europe, Northern Spain and Italy ... the destinations ultimately being *Santiago de Compostella* (Spain) or *Rome* (Italy). While not 'royal' for the most part, they were well organised and heavily travelled and, even if only 'rights of way', came under the same sort of legal status as the Royal roads.

Roads and Tracks: The British Isles

Apart from the Royal Highways, and unless they happened to coincide with remnant stretches of old Roman military (gravelled, at the very least – see the Sidebar) roads, all other routes in the British Isles were merely rights of way ... or, possibly, traditional easements ... and basically tamped dirt.

What this meant, exactly, depended on local circumstances and how heavily trafficked the road was – the route could be anything from a mere foot- or bridle-path wide enough only for a single file passage by pedestrians or a chain of pack animals or it could be a slightly more defined right of way cut or worn through the countryside, meandering through an ill-defined area of passage up to 50-60' wide.

Where there was room to do so, roads and tracks would change the actual route within the overall right of way on a yearly, seasonal or even daily basis. If a tree fell and blocked the existing track, following parties would simply divert around it ... or if the existing route was turned into a quagmire by rain combined with heavy traffic, travellers would divert to the (hopefully) grassy verge for better purchase.

In wastelands, this meandering often meant that there would, in fact, be dozens, possibly scores, possibly even more, paths worn by travellers to suit themselves and the conditions of the moment as they passed through.

*There is no definite codification from the 11th-16th centuries as to the required width of such a right of way, but the (English) **Highways Act (1662)** stated a 'highway' (by this time a 'main road' in effect) should be 8 yards (24') wide ... but, again, that referred to the right of way on which the roadbed would then be constructed.*

Roman Roads

Outside of (Roman) Towns, Roman roads were *either* ***Via Terrena*** ('rights of way' in the sense as medieval dirt roads were) of dirt, though they *may* have been graded on sections rather than merely worn down by usage *or* they were ***Via Glareata***, an excavated gravel roadbed with either a gravel or paved surface (paved surfaces being rare, *in Britannia at least*).

Viae Terrenae could be of any width as they wound their way through the countryside between the fields and pastures (and other features), but were usually wide enough for a cart ... so *at least* 2-3 meters. They might be closed in by foliage or trees on either side as they were not military in nature and, generally speaking, there was less* chance of being robbed travelling along them than along the medieval equivalent.

** For some values of 'less' ... note the **Lex Julia di Via Publica** which made carrying a sword openly while travelling legal for civilians.*

Some sections or routes might be more like footpaths and only wide enough for foot traffic ... or might have been intended for use by pack animals.

Viae Glareatae tended to be much wider, normally wide enough for two carts to pass side by side, as they were military roads ... so at least as wide as the *Viae Terrenae*. The difference was that the areas on either side of the roadbed was kept clear of trees and vegetation and was actually the march route for the Legionaries and Cavalry, the roadbed being mainly for their heavy transport.

Military roads were usually, but *not* always, ruler straight, even when this meant traversing less than easy terrain, and mostly went straight up and down hillsides rather than using switchbacks.

Gradients of 10-12% are sometimes found in 'ordinary' terrain, and in mountainous areas you could find gradients of 15-20% ... such gradients were quite impractical for carts, waggons and most commercial traffic, but that is not the use the roads were intended for. Many stretches of surviving (into modern times) Roman roads are actually such steep stretches ... largely bypassed and abandoned with the fall of the Empire, or even before.

So many sections of these Via Glareata survived for the basic reason that they were designed to be as maintenance free as possible ... and even a few cartloads of indifferently graded rubble (not even proper gravel) dumped and leveled on worn or damaged sections could keep them *mostly* operational.

Still, by the 12th century, whole sections might have been diverted around or been destroyed and be little better than dirt tracks and it was not unknown for locals to 'mine' them for gravel or worked stone.

Prehistoric Trackways and Ridgeways. Many of the farm roads, and even sections of the old military roads, ran along routes that date back to prehistoric times. These were, of course, simply dirt tracks – rights of way – and ran along the *easiest* routes rather than the shortest.

Many such tracks ran along ridges because they were generally less forested, or even clear of trees, and offered less impediments to travel ... and, as land clearing progressed as populations grew, they were generally useless as farmland and so were rarely, if ever, impinged upon by development.

In some places, continuing the pathway meant traversing bogs or watercourses ... and even in ancient times the utility of these pathways was great enough such that the local people laid down log or corduroy roads and simple bridges (stone slab or a simple tree trunk) to ease passage.

*In many places such ancient trackways **seem** to connect places of cultural significance (either 'present' or past) ... and it has been theorised these sites were either placed along existing trackways or were the reason the trackways ran along a particular alignment.*

There is, sadly, no evidence that supports these claims and they have been widely debunked ... but they make for interesting possibilities in a roleplaying game!

While such paths often seem to be quite straight on a large scale map, they do avoid even minor obstacles as much as possible at the local level.

Roads and Tracks: The Continent

In those parts of Europe that had been part of the Roman Empire the medieval road network was still largely based on the older military and farm roads with a smattering of 'new' rights of way to connect settlements and towns that had come into existence after the fall of the Empire in the west.

The condition of such roads was much the same as it was in England, as was the degree of maintenance.

In ***Germany***, which had never been a Roman possession, and which had no network of properly laid out Roman gravelled roads to build on, you could find ***Hellweg*** (same base word as for the Royal Road) which were *rights of way*, usually through (what once may have been, or still was) a forest or wooded area and which connected the main towns in much the same was as was the case in England and elsewhere.

Such roads were, of course, almost entirely dirt tracks in meandering through of whatever right of way existed. By law the local landowner was supposed to keep the 'clear way' *clear* to a Lance width ... about 3 meters (~10 feet).

*As elsewhere, this requirement was routinely ignored unless someone far more important than them in the local scheme of things ... pointedly **insisted**.*

In ***Scandinavia*** and ***Muscovy*** (Russia) formal roads, other than traditional rights of way (dirt tracks, often along prehistoric routes) were nonexistent, certainly at the beginning of the period ... and even the tracks that existed were so poor that war and trade was often left until winter froze the ground and (many, most) watercourses and made cross country travel much easier than at other times of the year.

*Yes, crude skis ('**skíð**' – 'skeeth' or 'skith') **did** exist – they are certainly recorded in writing by the end of the 15th century, but with archaeological evidence of their existence and use dating back to at least the 5th and 6th millennia BC (and possibly as early as the 10th). They do not seem to have been used outside of Norway, Sweden, Finland and parts of Muscovy, however.*

BRIDGES: ENGLAND

From the sketchy records available from before the Norman invasion (1066) it is impossible to be entirely certain, but it seems likely that none (or close to) of the stone Bridges built by the Romans had survived ... and, of course, neither had any they had built of wood.

There were, of course, surviving 'bridges' from earlier periods ... often footpaths or bridle-paths would cross creeks via a 'bridge' made from a single slab of stone.

In other places, wider but still shallow, watercourses might be crossed by 'bridges' of slabs of stone laid between the banks and one or more drystone pillars placed directly on the stream bed.

While not strictly 'bridges', marshy, swampy or boggy areas might be crossed by causeways made from woven branches, wickerwork panels or even crude log corduroy paths laid down by local communities along a particularly convenient route (often a shortcut).

There is little or no *certain* evidence that the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms built *any* bridges of any sort, and little or no archaeological evidence to support such claims ... though there *are* many places where they built *causeways* across marshes or swamps.

From 1066 onwards, many more bridges were built – but rarely, if ever, by the *government*.

Some were built by Town corporations for their own purposes (to encourage trade), others by wealthy local lords, and both sorts generally charged a toll; others were built by Church authorities (often Monasteries) or by by wealthy individuals keen to show their piety – and these bridges were generally toll free.

The latter sort of Bridge invariably had a Chapel at one end or, rarely, in the middle, as a further sign of the piety of the constructing party.



Bridges built by Town corporations either charged no toll for those with the 'freedom' of the Town (i.e. citizens) or, at least, charged a lesser toll than for non-residents.

However, medieval Bridges were *rarely* what most of us would consider a Bridge should be like – at best they would be wide enough for a single cart or waggon but, more commonly, they were only wide enough for a pack animal!

Maintenance, especially of wooden structures, was haphazard at best and they were often so rickety they were dangerous to cross carrying any load, or even on horseback and travellers would actually use the original ford in preference.

Most bridges were built next to, or nearby, the Ford (or, on wider rivers, the Ferry) they were intended to replace.

London Bridge. The old Roman (wood) Bridge had either collapsed in disrepair or had been destroyed well before the medieval period, though there were fords and ferries over the Thames upstream from the remains of Roman *Londinium*.

A wooden structure was built, destroyed, and rebuilt at least once during the Anglo-Saxon period ... but details are extremely sketchy.

A new bridge was (re)built by William I (The Conqueror), destroyed by a storm in 1091, rebuilt by William II, again destroyed, by fire, in 1136 and rebuilt by King Stephen in 1163.

Construction of the medieval *stone* bridge was begun in 1176 and finished in 1209 ... and (effectively) sold to the City Corporation of London by the King in 1284.

The Bridge was 40' wide, ~900' long and the roadbed was 60' above the river sitting on 19 irregularly sized

arches which were so close spaced as to make the tide race between them quite dangerous to traverse.

There was a drawbridge between the sixth and seventh piers from the southern end which was regularly raised to allow ships through at high tide, twice a day ... though, by the late 14th century this was needed only once or twice a week as fewer and fewer ships sailed upriver, but rather used the docks on the down-stream side. There were defensive Gatehouses at each end of the Bridge as well.

By the middle of the 14th century there were 138 shops, houses and many latrines (including a multi-seat public one) on the structure which narrowed the actual roadway to 12-15' wide.

The weight of these structures put a great strain on the arches, and from time to time some of them had to be rebuilt or reinforced to keep the bridge operational.

Bridges: Scotland, Wales and Ireland

The information before the 10th century isn't completely clear, but it seems likely that there were few, if any, major bridges – significant bodies of water were crossed by fords (in most cases) or ferries.

After the Norman conquest(s) of Wales and Ireland and the partial feudalisation of Scotland, proper Bridges start to appear, but remain rarer than in England proper.

Bridges: The Continent

A significant number of Roman stone-built bridges survived on the continent as, being generally richer than the peripheral areas such as England, there were more stone bridges to begin with.

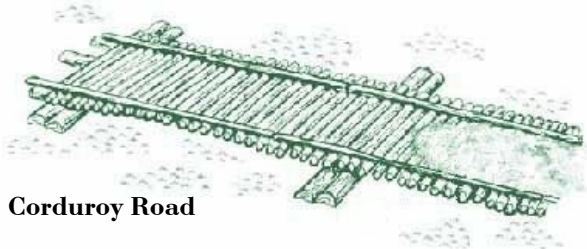
In ***France***, with its larger population and wealth, construction of new *stone* Bridges began in earnest in the 12th century and continued apace throughout.

Germany was less well served, and fewer stone bridges were built, some as early as the 12th century, but mostly in the 13th and 14th centuries.

Travel: Speed & Capacity

For greater detail, see ***Mercatoria*** (#302) in the ***Ars Mechanica*** Chapter.

A lone traveller ***on foot*** could usually manage 32-40 klicks per day (20-25 miles); small groups, ~32 klicks (20 miles) and large groups 16-24 klicks (10-15 miles).



Corduroy Road

*A realistic daily **average** for foot travellers was around 25-30 klicks (15-19 miles).*

*Male **Porters*** could carry ~42 kg (sustained) or ~65 kg (for short distances); *females* could carry 30 kg.

Riders could manage 48-56 klicks (30-35 miles) *without* changing horses, or up to 80 klicks (50 miles) if changing horses regularly.

*English **Royal Messengers** managed 48-64 klicks (30-45 miles), changing horses every 16 klicks (10 miles) by the late 14th century when the Crown paid for the horses used. In the 12th–13th centuries couriers were expected to pay for their own horses and the speeds were no better than the standard for a mounted man.*

Pack Horses could carry an *average* load of ~170kg for around 30-40 klicks*; ***Mules*** could manage ~150 kg for 50-60 klicks* and ***Donkeys*** ~150 kg.

Pack Horses can carry the rated loads for ~50 klicks, but only for a day or so at a time before risking permanent injury, and need at least a day's rest between such efforts. Even at the lower limit, they need a day's rest every 3-4 days.

*Mules, on the other hand, can manage the 50-60 klicks day in, day out, 6-7 days a week. They are constitutionally **much** stronger than horses. Donkeys are similar in nature to Mules.*

Waggons (and ***Carts***) could carry a load 14-22 miles (22-35 klicks) a day in flat terrain over in dry weather – assuming a horse drawn vehicle, if drawn by oxen that goes down to a normal maximum of only 10 miles (16 klicks) per day.

The average Cart (two wheels, one horse) had a capacity of ~500-600 kilos (roughly half a ton) and the average Waggon (four wheels, two horses) double this.

Oxen can only manage around 2 mph, and need at least an hour's rest and an hour or more to graze in a standard eight hour travel day

A day's transport *for average value items* by Cart or Waggon added ~1½% to item cost for *light* loads (Bales of Wool), ~15% for *medium heavy* loads (Grain) and 100% ***or more*** for *heavy* loads (Stone). Double that or more if using Pack animals and/or Porters.

*The **English Royal Household** (several hundred people) normally managed around 20 miles (32 klicks) per day on the Royal Highways in 7 hours of travel (assuming the King wasn't a slug-a-bed ... and some were) with an hour for the midday meal.*

Rural Inns & Accommodation

What about accommodation along the way? What did travellers do at the end of each day's travel if they had not reached a Town large enough to have an Inn?

Hospitality. Many people saw it as a Christian duty to offer hospitality to travellers *if they were able to do so* ... even Peasant households would try to do so if it were within their means.

What this 'hospitality' constituted varied – in the local Lord's Manor it would depend on whether the Lord was in residence or not and would only be offered to travellers of sufficient social status. In a Village, the better off (Freehold) tenants would be most likely to offer some shelter.

Hospitality meant that the host would provide some sort of shelter – which might only mean a space on the floor in the main room of the Manor House or a Peasant's Cottage, or space in the Stables, or it might mean a separate room, possibly shared with one or more other travellers.

It would typically mean providing a basic meal ... Peasants would simply share whatever it was they were eating that night, while at the Manor the food served would depend on the Lord's presence and the guest's social status.

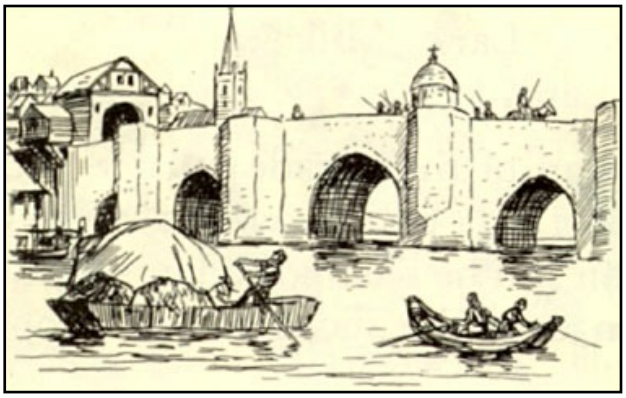
Payment was not required – not money payment, anyway. Guests were expected to pass on any news (or gossip) they had picked up along the way at the very least and, if they had the skills, might be expected to provide something in the way of entertainment (Troubadours or Minstrels, for example).

Legally, Hosts were responsible for the safety of their guests and their property. In return, at least early on in the period covered, they could seize at least some of their guests property if they died in their house.

At a Manorial Estate, the small staff present when the Lord was ***not*** *present would be more reluctant to provide hospitality in the Manor House (as opposed to the Stables, say) to travellers not perceived to be of a high enough social rank ... partly because they wouldn't have the staff and partly because they wouldn't have the furnishings (most of which would be travelling with the absent owner).*

Monasteries. If ordinary people felt a Christian obligation, for Monasteries it was seen as a duty – and many had purpose built Hospices for travellers.

Hospices were normally separate buildings from the main Monastery and accommodation was normally in Dormitories with shared beds (as was normally the case in Inns), possibly separate ones for males and females. Noble travellers of suitably high rank might



be invited to stay in the Monastery proper and dine with the Abbot, while less distinguished guests would be fed separately, possibly from a separate kitchen, and almost certainly a simpler meal than the Monks themselves were eating.

Where Monasteries did not have a separate Hospice, travellers might be accommodated in an unused Monk's cell or simply offered space in the Monastery's stables or cow byre. Again, food would almost certainly be different from what the Monks themselves were eating unless the traveller was of high enough rank to eat *with* the Monks.

While payment wasn't *theoretically* expected, the Monks did expect some sort of 'gift' or 'donation' from those with the means to do so.

Private Accommodation. On heavily travelled routes better off Peasants might have an extra bed, possibly in a private room, available for travellers and rent it out, with a meal, for extra money.

Such a private 'room' might simply be a storage area in which a bed was available, or a curtained off area of the main living area. As usual, the bed might be expected to be shared by 2-3 travellers.

Rural Inns. These were somewhat uncommon except on some of the most heavily travelled routes at the beginning of the period, and on those routes where there was a considerable distance between Towns.

They were similarly arranged to the Inns found in most towns, with some sort of external hedge, ditch or basic wall around the compound, and might also have an extended area available where large parties (or an overflow) could pitch tents or pavilions.

Camping. Large parties of travellers, especially those who were obviously armed, could, of course, simply camp by the side of the road if there was space, or on wasteland that was suitable ... but apart from the very wealthy few travellers had tents and they would have to construct (or find) some makeshift shelter.

For a small group or an individual, camping out in this manner could be potentially quite dangerous – camp

*with a campfire and you're a bandit magnet, camp without one and the locals may think that **you** are a bandit, a poacher, or generally up to no good!.*

In some areas, especially hilly and mountainous ones, there *might* be basic shelters erected by local landowners, or seasonal huts used by transhumance herders but not currently occupied (i.e. in autumn or winter) which could be used, but these sorts of arrangements were relatively rare.

Ports, Sea and River Travel

Even in modern times, transport by water is by far the cheapest method of moving goods and people on a ton/mile basis ... even cheaper than railways ... and that was the case in the medieval period as well.

For greater detail, see ***Mercatoria*** (#302) in the ***Ars Mechanica*** Chapter.

Medieval Ports, regardless of whether they were on a river or seacoast, are not at all like the modern day equivalents in a number of ways –

- **Ships.** The ships, boats and barges they handle are *much* smaller than modern merchant vessels. Most ships in NW European waters were under 100 tons, and many were of 50 tons or less at the beginning of the period ... but the maximum size grew, and by the 14th century ships of up to 200 tons are known to have existed.

  Many important ports in the medieval period are no longer in use because, while suitable for such small ships with limited draft, the actual harbours are far to small for any modern commercial vessels bigger than small to medium size fishing trawlers and pleasure craft or simply don't have the required draft (or, as commonly, both).

  Ships in the Mediterranean could be considerably larger – Dhows intended for long distance trade averaged out at almost 300 tons (but mostly plied the Indian Ocean routes) while Byzantine merchantmen could be as large or larger (Roman merchantmen of up to 1200 tons are known to have plied the Alexandria-Rome grain route).



  *Large seagoing ships suitable for extended voyages out of sight of land have been possible for some time (cf. Viking Longships and Arab Dhows), but are only **starting** to become common in the western Mediterranean and, for commercial purposes, NW Europe.*

  Still, even in these more heavily travelled regions, *most* ships engaged in trade were *much* smaller than the maximum sizes, and usually under (and well under) 100 tons.

  *For the ~3300 ships registered in Venice in 1423, **3000 were under 100 tons** ... mostly **well** under. Only **35** were greater than 240 tons.*

- **Loading & Unloading.** At the beginning of the period *most* ships simply beached themselves on the shore (or river bank) at high tide then unloaded over the beach at low tide – there was generally little or nothing in the way of actual port facilities.

  Many ship types had flat(ish) or wide and flat(ish) hull bottoms to assist this ... with obvious handling related issues (sideways drift).

  As the period progressed ports gradually developed, improved and increased their capital assets – quays were constructed so that larger ships could unload more easily and docks (enclosed or semi-enclosed areas of water) might be constructed to protect unloading ships from the vagaries of the weather ... even so, many ports still had large areas devoted to smaller vessels beaching themselves.

  Generally speaking, loading and unloading was done manually by the crew or locally hired stevedores carrying items on or off the vessel.

  Masts were generally not strong enough, or strongly stayed enough, to use as makeshift lifting points – so no joy there. Hard work and strong backs dominate.

  There were few ports that had cranes, and those that did were usually there for specific purposes – such as loading or unloading stone for a specific construction project (Castle, Cathedral or the like).

  Such cranes as might exist were of wood and hemp rope construction and man-powered, usually by one or more men in an treadmill, and were not mobile ... to move them they would have had to have been disassembled, moved, and then reassembled.

- **Tolls.** These were normally collected at Ports for seagoing vessels, and could, to an extent, be avoided as no state authority in medieval western Eur-

ope had anything like a Customs & Excise service ... and only the larger ports might have a royal (of Seigneurial) official present.

River transport was different. There were, for example, 31 Toll points on the Garonne between Toulouse and Bordeaux and 35 on the Rhine.

The burden added up and, in late 15th century added 50% to the cost of grain and doubled the price of salt over 200 miles on the Seine between Rouen and Chartres.

In some places, Tolls on inland waterways were so rapacious that it forced a diversion onto road transport – even though water transport was normally 1/12th the cost! In some cases it caused towns to join together to improve roads or even build canals – neither of which was an inexpensive proposition.

- **Canals & River Improvements.** Prior to the late 14th century and the introduction of the Pound Lock (invented in China around 3 centuries earlier) *most* canals in Europe were quite short and only connected watercourses at the same level.

  The first serious canal (still in use today) was constructed in Italy to connect Milan with the Ticino river, dropping 34 meters over its almost 50 km route ... it was built in stages between 1177 and was finally completed in 1272.

  In the late 14th–early 15th centuries the majority of canal building took place in what is now Belgium and the Netherlands – and were multi-purpose, for drainage and irrigation as well as water transport.

  Some territorial rulers also improved short stretches of navigable rivers in their lands by stabilising banks and constructing pathways for draught horses to use while pulling barges.

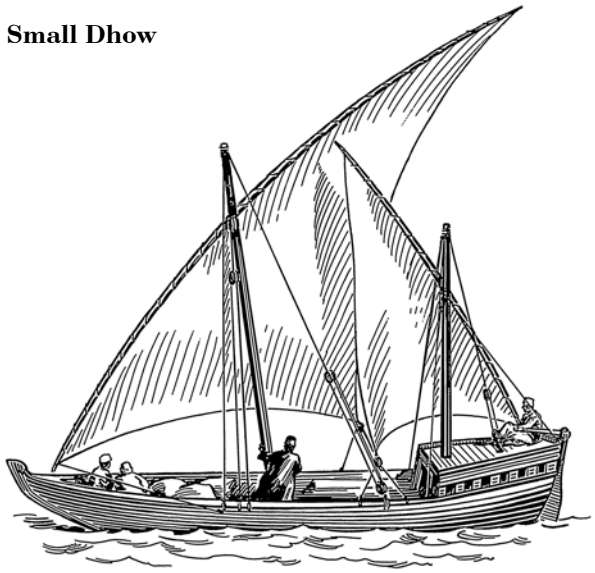
  Serious canal building didn't start to get underway until the late 15th century, and then only slowly – the main period of canal building is not until 17th and 18th centuries.

- **Regional Differences.** *England* enjoyed considerable advantages regarding the use of water transport ... geographically, no point in Britain is more than 70 miles from the sea and there are a number of year round navigable rivers that make internal transport even easier.

  The Avon (Warwickshire, Bristol), Humber, Mersey, Ouse (Yorkshire), Severn, Thames and Trent are the most important.

  France has some excellent navigable rivers, unfortunately they are often only navigable seasonally or

Small Dhow



are cut by non-navigable stretches that make their use as a coherent internal system problematic at best ... some of these problems were eventually solved by the construction of canals, but well after the period in question.

The lack of a strong centralised governmental authority in Medieval France and the regionalisation of power structures during the period also led to an excessive number of toll points along those rivers that were navigable. This eventually became counter-productive and forced traders to use less efficient, far more expensive, land routes and generally strangled overall development of trade.

Germany also has a number of major navigable rivers, the Rhine being the most obvious, but the overabundance of toll points (previously mentioned) due to the political fragmentation of the region made them less useful than they could have been until well into the early modern period.

Reality Check

So, you've got the lowdown on what things were in Towns and in the Countryside in the period between the 11th and 14th centuries ... and at least some of the reasons *why* things were the way they were. But there's more to the reality of the physical world of the medieval period than has been covered so far, much more – and this chapter is intended to cover some of the important factors that shaped the world –

Capital & Labour issues

This topic will be covered in more detail in following chapters, but is important enough to warrant at least a mention here –

Labour Productivity

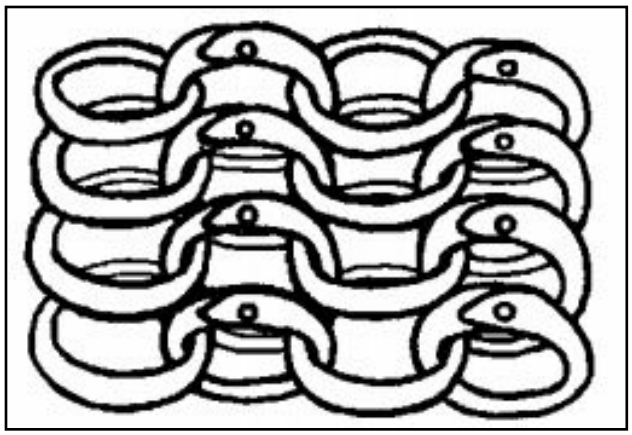
This was, overall, *extremely* low – lower even than the *average* of a modern third world country (which will have at least *some* access to modern technology).

Agricultural Productivity

As previously mentioned, 9:10 (in some areas as many as 10:11) workers were *directly* involved in agricultural pursuits at not much better than subsistence levels ... they could, in an average to good year, grow enough food to keep themselves and their family reasonably well fed and pay the taxes (or buy a minimal amount of 'manufactured goods') that supported the non-farming 1:10 (or 1:11) portion of the population.

There were many interlinked reasons, but all fall into one of two broad areas ... a lack of knowledge capital and a lack of physical capital.

Existing records show land farmed by those who had greater access to one or both of those sources of capital routinely experienced far greater crop (and husbandry) yields than land farmed by those who did not ... better record keeping, better use of (or simply more use of) manure, physical improvements such as better drainage etc. all contributed to the disproportionate results.



In effect, Monastic lands and Lordly Demesne land were best placed to enjoy such improved returns at the beginning of the period, with some move towards wealthier townsmen (who would have made their money through trade or 'manufacture') purchasing and improving estates towards the end of the period (and becoming ever more important thereafter).

Most Villeins could not afford, or simply did not have access to, the sort of capital assets needed to do similar improvements – *most*, but ***not*** all. It was quite possible for even relatively unfree Villeins to be successful enough agricultural entrepreneurs to buy their freedom and even their land and become freeholders ... and it was as common for successful freeholders to buy more and more land and become as wealthy as (or even wealthier than) the local lord.

Industrial Productivity

Well, in modern terms, there really wasn't any. What passed for medieval 'industry' is almost completely at a simple handcraft level. No mass production, nothing even vaguely like it, not even large scale production, and using basic hand tools and, usually, only human (or, occasionally, animal) muscle power.

There was often (usually) little in the way of specialisation, even within trades, though this did vary somewhat by trade and region –

So, for example, the armourer making your Mail shirt, while he probably bought the iron or steel from a specialist source then *probably* made the wire for the links by hand drawing it, then wound it around a mandrel and cut the individual rings from that, then flattened the edges of each open ring, then drilled a hole in each, then assembled them into a shirt, hauberk or whatever and then, possibly, hand hammered a bronze or iron 'rivet' or plug into each pair of drilled holes to close the links.

A high quality hauberk could take 8-10 months to make from the basic iron or steel ingots to finished product!

There would be limited 'specialisaton' in the form of apprentices of various degrees of training only being given the simpler, less skilled, work to do ... but the average size of a medieval workshop was 3-4 workers (which probably doesn't include female family members who often had the same skills and did the same work as the male 'Master' and his Journeymen and Apprentices).

Of course, that's for a fairly complex and high value item – but *everything* was like that, even simpler and cheaper items.

Capital Goods

One of the major issues with capital goods during the period is the simple fact that the medieval world was still in the Iron Age ... and most people have no idea what this actually *means*.

It means that iron was *available* – not that it was *ubiquitous*.

For example, the average output of iron producing forges in Europe at the beginning of the period was ~1½ kg per day. That's right. *One and a half kilos* – around 3½ pounds! *Per day*.

Sure, by the end of the period (the late 14th century – more on this later) this average had shot up to 15 kilos per day and, in the 15th century it hit 300 kilos per day (and kept on increasing).

Of course, it was about then that the medieval european world was hitting a wall – all the easily accessible and easily workable metal deposits found in the wake of the collapse of mining production with the fall of the Roman Empire in the west and during its recovery at the end of the Dark Ages were becoming exhausted ... and it was improved pump technology (using waterwheels as often as not) that somewhat ameliorated this issue.

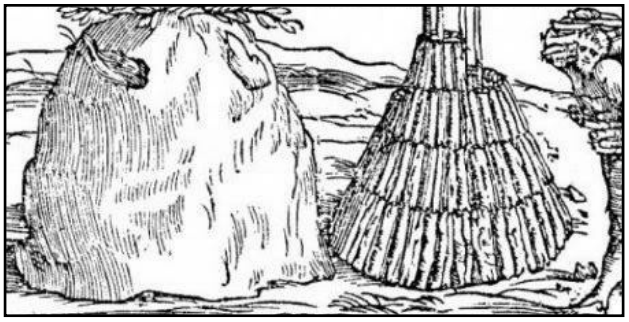
*So, while more and more iron was available, it was **still** not ubiquitous and, though becoming markedly cheaper (see the **Price Lists**), remained relatively expensive.*

In practical terms that meant that most items were made out of wood, leather, bone, horn (even stone), pottery with as little metal (and even less *iron* or *steel*) used as possible. Which, of course, meant that they were not particularly durable ...

Shovels and Spades, for example, were entirely made of wood except for a strip of iron at the very edge of the 'blade' ... door 'hinges' for most houses were often simple leather straps if there was a door at all. Ploughs were almost entirely wood except for the knife blade of the plough and the front edge of the mouldboard.

These sorts of items wore out *quickly* ... and were expensive to boot!

For example, the grindstones in a Watermill had to be re-dressed every 1-2 months (depending on the quality of the stone) which took 2-3 days, and the stones themselves had to be replaced every couple of years (again, allowing for the quality of the stone – paradoxically, composite stones held together by hot fitted iron hoops lasted longer than single piece stones)... the axle on which the mill wheel itself ran was wood, and had to be regularly shortened as it wore on its bearing points, and, even though they were deliberately cut long with this in mind, again only lasted a couple of years before the whole thing needed to be disassembled and the axle replaced!



Climate

The climate played an even greater role in human affairs than it does today as the limited transport and agricultural infrastructure made it *much* more difficult for individuals and regions to deal with the fallout from adverse climatic and weather events.

The Medieval Warm Period

From ~900-1300 AD Europe went through the ***Medieval Warm Period*** where surface temperatures were, on average, around 1°C *warmer* than today and the climate was generally drier (though, worldwide, average temperature was lower than it is currently).

The warmest years were between 950-1250 AD. The cause for the change are not fully understood but older theories that claim it was due to normal statistical variance are no longer supported.

Using the same programs used to model recent climate change the current belief is that the underlying cause was a combination of a slight increase in solar output, a decrease in worldwide volcanic activity and changes in ocean currents in the North Atlantic that brought warmer water further north than usual.

The climatic change was widespread, but patchy, and older theories based on the assumption it was more evenly spread worldwide are now being questioned and even revised and there is a growing body of research and evidence to suggest that there were periods of climatic instability in many parts of the world, rather like that which caused the *Great Famine*.

English Vineyards

The claim that wine growing was only possible in southern England during the MWP is ... completely unsupported by the facts.

There were 46 major vineyards in the Domesday Book, but there were around 139 by the 1490s.

*What **really** started to do them in was Henry VIII's dissolution of the Monasteries (52 of them had been owned by the Church) and the final nail in their coffin was the ongoing improvements in transport infrastructure that allowed more wine to be grown in better wine growing areas **and** then be transported to England cheaply than inferior local wines.*

The Great Famine

In the year of our Lord 1315, apart from the other hardships with which England was afflicted, hunger grew in the land ...

Meat and eggs began to run out, capons and fowl could hardly be found, animals died of pest, swine could not be fed because of the excessive price of fodder.

A quarter of wheat or beans or peas sold for £1 (In 1313 it was 5s), barley for a Mark, oats for 10s.

A quarter of salt was commonly sold for £1/15/-, which in former times was quite unheard of.

The land was so oppressed with want that when the king came to St. Albans on the feast of St. Laurence [August 10] it was hardly possible to find bread on sale to supply his immediate household....

The dearth began in the month of May and lasted until the feast of the Nativity of the Virgin [September 8]. The summer rains were so heavy that grain could not ripen. It could hardly be gathered and used to bake bread down to the said feast day unless it was first put in vessels to dry.

Around the end of autumn the dearth was mitigated in part, but toward Christmas it became as bad as before.

Bread did not have its usual nourishing power and strength because the grain was not nourished by the warmth of summer sunshine.

Hence those who ate it, even in large quantities, were hungry again after a little while. There can be no doubt that the poor wasted away when even the rich were constantly hungry ...

Fourpence worth of coarse bread was not enough to feed a common man for one day.

The usual kinds of meat, suitable for eating, were too scarce; horse meat was precious; plump dogs were stolen.

And, according to many reports, men and women in many places secretly ate their own children ...

– Johannes de Trokelowe, Annates

*There is **no** evidence of famine induced cannibalism in Western Europe or the Mediterranean world in general to date – though it is occasionally referred to in chronicles such as this. The accepted explanation is that such claims are 'urban myths' meant to both emphasise the horror of the famine and the (general) degeneracy of the common people.*

Farming, Economics and Marginal Lands

The warmer, drier, climate *did*, however, allow more marginal lands to be cultivated successfully and also made larger harvests possible even in good farmland. ... so, when the climate turned, there were inevitable consequences as these marginal lands became uneconomic, a serious problem in a society that was pushing on the limits of agriculture to feed its burgeoning population.

The major changes started around 1300 AD when dropping temperatures caused a disruption in long established climatic patterns – certainly in Europe and probably worldwide, especially in the first quarter of the 14th century.

Roughly speaking, for agriculture, higher temperatures = good and lower temperatures = bad.

The ultimate result of these changes were the *Great Famine* and, not long thereafter and almost certainly related to the former and to the climatic changes, the *Great Plague*, which, between them, caused many millions of death throughout Europe.

The Little Ice Age

Like the *Medieval Climate Optimum*, the ***Little Ice Age*** may have been worldwide, but it was still patchy and did not follow the exact same timetable as it did in NW Europe.

Climatic indicators show that changes started as early as 1250 but that, for Europe, the tipping point was reached around 1300 when the previously reliable expectation of warm summers, vital for the established agricultural patterns, stopped being realistic.

Overall temperatures were, on average, about 1°C *colder* than today though the worst cooling periods were after the period covered – around 1550, 1650, 1770 and the last one around 1850 (at the very end of the period of cooling) during which the worst of the effects of the climatic changes occurred.

The results were longer winters, shorter spring and summer growing seasons, increased rainfall and related flooding, more violent storms which, in coastal regions of NW Europe, led to large scale erosion and loss of coastal lands (and, later, storms so large and violent as to destroy whole communities and their farmlands).

Pack ice in the North Atlantic moved further south every year and Greenland was almost completely cut off from 1410 to the early 18th century and it increasingly closed Icelandic ports for extended periods.

*The Greenland settlements were already under stress, as there is evidence that the settled (and settle**able**) regions were being overgrazed because of overpopulation.*

Shorter growing seasons meant less fodder for livestock over winter and a growing dependence on fishing which, coupled with a collapse in export markets, led to a emigration and, ultimately, population collapse through malnutrition and starvation as the climate was too unfriendly to support a 'civilised' settled lifestyle ... which the Inuit managed to survive as they always had.

And things were progressively getting worse ...

Demography & Disease

Historically, there was little change in demographic factors from the classical era.

Women and Childbirth

The normal sex ratio at birth is 100 males for every 104-105 females and ***we*** expect *relatively* little variation from natural causes (allowing for greater male risk-taking behaviour) during later life.

During the medieval period this was the same *at birth* and mortality remained relatively balanced *until marriageable age* when it starts to decline quite dramatically *for* ***women***.

Childbearing and Mortality

There was roughly a 5% chance *per pregnancy* of a woman dying – and, there being no effective means of contraception (or none acceptable to the religious authorities and society as a whole), most women could expect to experience around 8-10 pregnancies during their childbearing years (averaging 2½ years between).

For a given age cohort, ***40%*** *of women will die during their childbearing years from pregnancy and childbirth (and related complications) alone, putting them way behind men in life expectancy in their prime adult years.*

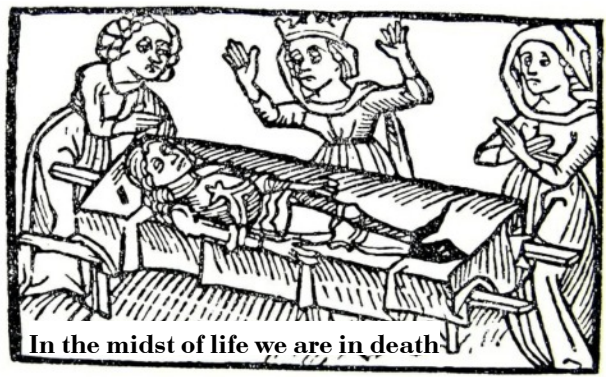
Where reliable figures are available (generally no earlier than the 15th century), maternal mortality ran to about ***twice*** *what is expected in the worst Third World country in modern times ... perhaps 14-15 per 1000 births.*

There ***were*** *abortifacents available, but they were not particularly reliable.*

The Church prohibited their use, but, at the beginning of the period, as general inability to determine pregnancy before the middle of the second trimester meant that they were less strict in the enforcement of such prohibitions as the remedies had other, legitimate, medical uses.

As medical knowledge improved, Church mandated strictures became much more limiting.

How much influence Church strictures had on the actual, as opposed to legal mandated, behaviours of women during the period is uncertain ... but, in general, before the Reformation and the Council of Trent (1545-


In the midst of life we are in death

1563), the medieval church was not particularly powerful in its influence on or oversight of day to day mores and, in fact, took relatively little direct interest in such.

The single biggest set of related killers of women until the mid to late 20th century were pregnancy, childbirth and related complications, when a variety of cancers has outweighed their historical dominance.

Age of Majority

The Church regarded the 'age of discretion', the minimum age at which a valid marriage could be contracted (and usually, of first Confession), to be 12 for girls and 14 for boys.

Civil authorities regarded 14-15 to be sufficient for males to perform military service, and some areas regarded 7 as being the age of criminal responsibility, with even the Death penalty being applicable

Marriageable Age

Marriageable age depended on the social status of a woman's parents and the local social mores.

Note that betrothals (promises of marriage) were common, especially amongst the wealthier classes, and even very young children could be promised in marriage ... but not all betrothals led to marriage. The legal status of such agreements could lead to problems with the Church or with the local legal system, but could rarely, if ever, prevent them from being broken.

Typically, women from wealthier families were married off earlier and women from poorer families later, at least in Northern Europe where newly married couples were expected to be able to set up an independent household.

In Southern Europe where it was more common for a multi-generation family to live together in the one house or on the one farm or estate, poorer women were able to marry at a comparatively younger age.

Also, marriage age was directly affected by the prevailing economic conditions ... in the period leading up to the Great Plague, marriage ages rose considerably as potential couples could not afford to set up their own household, and marriage ages were normally in the mid 20s for both the bride and the groom.

After the mass die back of the Great Plague, with much more land available pretty much for the asking, marriage ages dropped back to the teens for both parties.

Average marriage age in the 13th century, by region, was 17-19 in Southern Europe, 25-30 in Northern Europe, 25-30 for non-nobles and 21-22 for nobles in England.

Life expectancy

The average life expectancy was 30-40 years ... but this was dragged down by *infant* mortality.

The median age was roughly 21 (today it is 38). That is, half the population is above and below that age.

*About 10% of all births were **stillbirths** and, of live births who survive long enough to be christened (usually on the day of birth), ~ 1:6 will die before their first birthday.*

Around 25% of any particular age cohort would be dead by age 5 but, overall, around 2/3rds survived to age 20.

Sources that claim a death rate of 50% by age 20 are based on material that is no longer regarded as accurate.

If a *male* reached his 20th birthday you were much more likely to reach 45 or so, and if he reached 30, he was likely to make it into his 50s – perhaps even the Biblical three score years and ten (70).

There was less variation across social classes than you might expect on reaching adulthood. The Rich could eat expensive, generally unhealthy, foods and this shortened their life expectancy, while the Poor were forced to eat cheaper, and coincidentally healthier, foods but were more likely to die from malnourishment or overwork.

*Women came into their own if they managed to survive their childbearing years ... the modern expectation that women live longer than men from the get go is an artifact of medical advances occurring in the last century or so and has actually **been** the case for **less** than a century.*

Women had a 10% advantage over men in life expectancy until marriage, then it dropped to half the male rate, but went back to around 10% better when they reached menopause in their 40s.



Land Use

The pattern of land use in the medieval world was quite different than it is today – much more complex than it seems on the face of it.

Given that (as described previously) population densities are so low compared to the modern world it is easy to assume that the more land that is cleared for farming, the more people a country can support – but nothing could be further from the truth.

A lot of modern day farmland is only economically viable because of modern technology – and even the best farmland is much more productive than at any prior time for the same reasons.

Much more land can be devoted to crops that, *directly or indirectly*, feed humans or stock that can be fed to humans, or can be used as pasture for stock that can be fed to humans *and* much less land needs to be devoted to non-food crops required for other purposes.

The key interlocking limitations that *all* medieval land use had to deal with were –

Fertiliser

There was a considerable shortfall in the amount of fertiliser available in medieval Europe compared to what could have been put to good use, which is why the Two- or Three-Field crop rotation systems were so important in ensuring ongoing fertility.

Most of the crops grown in Medieval Europe quickly exhausted the nutrients in the soil and, while the Three Field Rotation did something to alleviate this, it still left 1/3 of the arable land fallow each year. The Two Field Rotation was, obviously, worse.

*The obvious solution would be to use more fertiliser – but where would it come from? Remember, animal manure was **it**. So that means raising more animals.*

Unfortunately, grazing pasture is incredibly inefficient as a means of growing food ... so there is a point where diminishing returns from more fertiliser and related increased crop yields is exceeded by the amount of yield lost to pasture.

The Three Field System was a major improvement over the older Two Field system as it created enough of an extra surplus to allow the changeover from Oxen as yoke animals for ploughing to Horses ...

By the end of the Medieval Warm Period, the gains from this had been largely canceled out as the additional fertiliser gained from the larger number of animals being run (coupled with the effects of climate change) could no longer make more marginal lands economically viable.

(Which is why the Great Famine was such a disaster, and almost certainly made the death toll from the Great Plague far worse than it would otherwise have been).

So there was no scope for more animal manure.

*How about 'night soil' (human waste)? It **was** widely used in East Asia and **is** widely used, in modern times, in some parts of Europe.*

*The problem is that it is, obviously when you think about it, a breeding ground for all sorts of nasty bacteria that just **love** humans ... but aren't at all any good for us in the wrong circumstances.*

To make night soil safe to use as fertiliser you have to compost it in such a way as to generate high enough temperatures to kill all of the nasty stuff ... they'd figure out how to do this in parts of East Asia, but the idea didn't spread to (or wasn't independently discovered in) Europe till many hundreds of years later.

*So, you have a dilemma. More pasture = more manure, but, at some point, gains from better fertilised fields are outweighed by an overall diminishment in the amount of **human** food grown as compared to animal fodder.*

Power

Animal (or muscle) power completely dominates *mobile* applications ... if you want to plough a field or if you want to run a crane to lift stone blocks, for example, you really have to use muscle power. Ox or Horse teams for the plough, or human-powered treadmills for the crane.

*Windmills and Watermills are fine – **IF** your desired application is right on top of the mill site. The geared drive mechanisms they used back in the period are not capable of distributing power over any distance (even less so than later, post-medieval improvements to the materials used made possible).*

*That said, **some** Smiths have foundries located on rivers or streams where the accordion bellows forcing air into their forges are operated by camshafts off of waterwheels ... and waterwheel powered swings allow them to draw lengths of wire through swages that are longer than the length of their arms.*

There are even camshaft powered triphammers for working iron ingots or other items in some of the most advanced sites. But these are still quite rare. Most Smiths 'power' their work with muscle – their own or that of their apprentices.

Mostly, however, it's muscle power – human or animal. Which, of course, means that the same limitations that apply to ***Fertliser*** (see above) apply to Power. You need more power for mechanisation and/or more efficient industrial processes ... but you can only get



this by devoting more arable land to pasture, which cuts into the land available for food production.

*Until you develop non-animal based power sources – the Steam Engine, for example (which as noted below in **Fuel**, requires coal mining – and is required **for** efficient coal mining ... Catch 22!) coupled with better means of transmitting that power (belt drives, metal gearing etc.) there's not much you can do.*

Fuel

In the medieval world there was ***one*** major fuel for *all* commercial, industrial and household purposes – ***wood*** (or, in a processed form, ***charcoal***) and, in some areas, ***peat***. Vegetable Oils, Animal Fats and Beeswax were used mainly for lighting, a small subset of 'fuel' – and were more expensive to grow than trees.

Charcoal (wood burnt in a low oxygen atmosphere) makes a high density fuel that is particularly suited to the major industrial processes of the era – smelting ores (and, especially, working Iron) and Brewing.

It was also less smoky and those who could afford it might use charcoal filled portable Braziers for close heating purposes, especially before the invention and widespread adoption of the Chimney made wood fires less problematic in that matter.

It also created a lot of carbon monoxide when burning and, where used in insufficiently ventilated enclosed spaces, could increase it to lethal levels (the Emperor Jovian died of this in a poorly ventilated tent in 364 AD).

This is *another* reason (apart from game for the nobility) why woodlands were so important ... dead branches and trees were a source of fuel, but never enough, and even *coppicing* (see elsewhere) didn't produce enough wood for fuel.

The obvious problem is that, eventually, growing populations would need more food, and that could be grown only by using more fertiliser on existing land or, more likely, making marginal land economically viable ... or clearing woodlands (or modifying wastelands) to make farmland.

But ***if*** you do that you cut into the supply of fuel you need for heat, light and industry.

And in northern Europe this is particularly problematic in winter ...

The solution was the adoption of coal and petroleum based fuels which, obviously, require the sequestration of tiny amounts of land, arable or otherwise, and which have a much higher inherent energy density than wood.

Unfortunately, that meant the need for deep mines, and medieval pump technology wasn't up to it – to achieve the power levels needed required steam engines to really reach takeoff (and steam engines required cheap fuel – coal! Catch 22!).

*Coal had other issues – as **coal**, it was usually too soft for use in smelting iron and, furthermore, a lot of European coals are high in sulphur content which is **really** bad for iron smelting (and that problem wasn't solved properly until after WW2) and which contaminates other industrial processes (in Brewing it made the Beer taste foully sulphurous, for example).*

*The development of **Coke** (coal burnt on a low oxygen atmosphere) ameliorated these issues, but, again, the problem was the need for deeper mines and to transport the coal or coke from the mines to where the industry was (wood/charcoal could be cut down and burnt nearby ... coal was it was, regardless of convenience).*

*So, another dilemma – land for fuel, which is vital for the industrial developments that make what technology there is possible **and** will make possible the developments that make the Industrial Revolution possible? Or less for fuel and more for food?*

Construction Material

The majority of structures built during the period were wood or wood-framed. Stone was used for prestige or military reasons, or in areas where wood was scarce and transport costs would have made its use prohibitive.

If stone was used due to a local scarcity of wood, structures were normally made from undressed (or very minimally so) stone roughly mortared (or held in place by clay used as mortar).

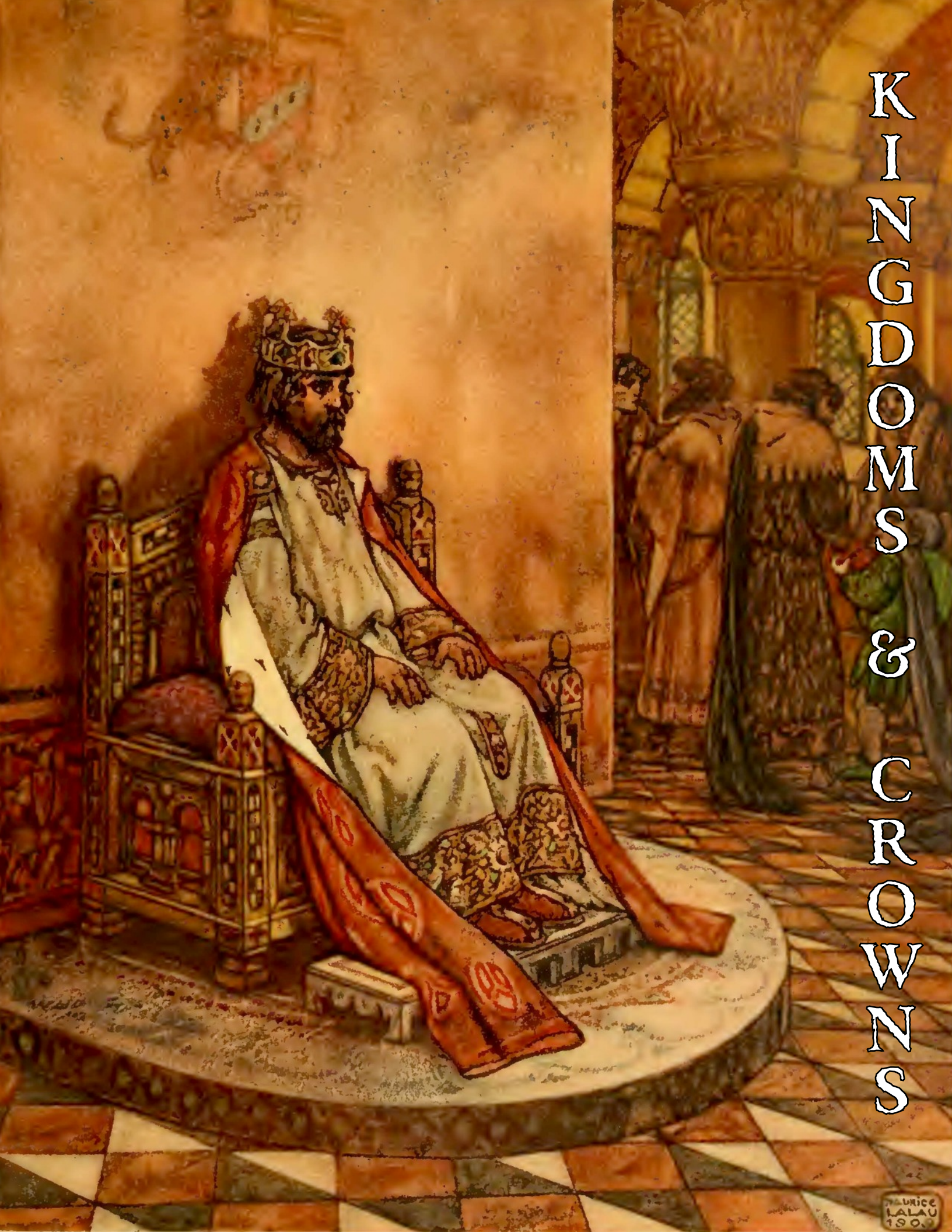


In some areas, the walls would even be of simple drystone (i.e. unmortared) construction.

Brick was used sparingly – because it had to be fired, and that meant the use of more wood as fuel. Brick could therefore be as expensive as stone, perhaps more so. It was found in structures designed to display affluence and built mainly for prestige purposes ... or as parts of structures that needed to be fire resistant.

In some instances, 'bricks' of sun dried clay were used as infill – especially in 'half timbered' houses, in place of wattle and daub – covered with plaster or daubed clay.

The problem is, again, one of balance – there are so many uses for the relatively limited amount of wood that is available.


KINGDOMS & CROWNS
MAURICE LALAU 1909

Lords & Vassals

With the collapse (however, see below) of the Roman Empire in the West in 476 AD and the *effective* destruction of its economic and government structures by the barbarian invaders of the the 5th century, *something* was needed to replace those structures.

The problem was that the barbarian societies were not capable of even *maintaining*, let alone *duplicating*, the sophisticated imperial administrative structures.

Their socio-political structures were simply too primitive – and the best they could come up with was the *Feudal System* which was about the simplest system that exists above mere primitive tribalism.

As time passed, the very simple forms and institutions of the minimalist (feudal) system of were found to be inadequate as the population, society, and the economy recovered and expanded, and their began to rival, or even exceed, that of the later empire.

Decline & Fall?

*Not much actually happened in 476 AD (conventionally given as the 'End of the Roman Empire' ... with an 'in the West' occasionally tacked on almost as an afterthought), **not as far as the Roman Emperor in Constantinople was concerned** ... the deposing of Romulus Augustulus, the titular Emperor in the West, by Odoacer, a 'loyal' Imperial official (well, he **professed** loyalty in return for a nominal Imperial office – but he would have, wouldn't he?) was neither here nor there, not politically.*

*Things may have looked a **little** different in the West, especially in Italy, but the barbarian successor states had already largely been established by then.*

The Late Classical World



The (East) Roman Empire

*The Eastern Empire, which did **not** collapse, had considerable difficulty in surviving ... and the governmental structures underwent some drastic changes from their older forms during that period of crisis and struggle.*

Still, the Empire maintained a relatively sophisticated system for the time and place, with regularly constituted administrative, judicial and military authorities – at least until the loss of Syria, Palestine, Egypt and North Africa to the Muslims and, eventually, the loss of Anatolia to the Ottoman Turks.

However, through a mix of bad luck and bad judgement by the beginning of the period covered, the Eastern Empire was a shadow of its former self both in terms of territory and economic power, but was still a regional power to be reckoned with ...

We're still Romans!

*The Emperor in Constantinople still styled himself **Autokrator** ('Imperator') and ruled over a state (**Basileia ton Rhomaion** – 'Imperium Romanum') whose many and diverse peoples still largely thought of, and called, themselves as **Rhomaioi** ('Romans') ... and even the break between the Western and Eastern branches of the 'One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church' into its Roman and Orthodox branches didn't happen until 1054 when the (dead) Pope Leo IX's representative, Cardinal Humbertus, threw a Bull of Excommunication at the feet of the Patriarch of Constantinople in that city.*

*The actual 'creation' of the term **'Byzantine'** and references to a **'Byzantine Empir**e' is a work of Renaissance (Western European) Historians keen to promote **their** claims to a renewed classicism by denigrating the actual continuing classical state – its earliest use can only be traced to 1557 (in German), and this is **way** outside of the period being covered by this book.*

Feudalism

Feudalism is *any* administrative system that is based on personal oaths between those involved – usually from the very highest to the very lowest levels of society and is usually connected to a system of land tenure based on such oath-taking.

That said, there is (*and never was*) no one size fits all model of feudalism, not even in the Mediterranean world and certainly not in NW Europe (England and France, primarily) which is almost always the focus of medieval role playing games.

The following sections and subsections will provide a

more detailed look at Feudalism as it actually existed ... a messy hodgepodge of arrangements that could vary widely even within a nominal feudal 'state' ... rather than the idealised structure that most game backgrounds impose.

Information will also be provided for *some* areas outside of the traditional Anglo-French focus, though this will be constrained by the lack of easily accessible sources in English and may be quite sketchy.

Problems with the sources

There's a reason why the vast majority of RPGs take an Anglo-French focus ... because that's the part of Medieval Europe that is best covered in English language sources. Even there, studies are hobbled by the fact that much of the primary source material is in forms of Latin or French (less so in English) that are no longer widely understood outside of limited academic circles and have not been either translated or fully studied as a result.

*Since the release of the original **D&D** in 1974 there has been much additional material made available covering a wide variety of medieval historical and social issues ... yet very little of this new material, material which often radically changes previous beliefs, seems to have had an impact on the background material for RPGs.*

*In fact, many RPGs today are based on second, third or fourth hand renderings of the backgrounds in either **previous** RPGs, or of previous **editions** of a game, and have become increasingly divorced from reality. The following material is, within the constraints of the material available, an attempt to update things.*

The theory of Feudalism

Feudalism was a minimalist and largely decentralised system of government based on land grants given by a central authority.

The theory of Feudalism was that the ***King*** owned ***all*** *the land within the Kingdom* but that he would "lease out" (the technical term was ***enfeoff***) part of that land *directly* to the more powerful and influential of his supporters (originally powerful tribal warband leaders) in return for personal oaths of loyalty ... and these lords were the ***Great Vassals*** of the King.

In turn, the *Great Vassals* did the same with of their own retinue – who would, in turn, swear personal oaths to *them*, and who were regarded as ***vassals***.

This process could be repeated through several levels, with each successive group of vassals owing fealty to a less powerful lord – down to the individual farmers who, freeholders or sharecroppers, tilled the farmland that was granted to the gentry and lords.

*It would be nice if the system ran something like this – **King** offers land to several **Dukes**, who offer some of the*



*land granted them to several **Counts**, who then granted some of **their** land grants to several **Barons** who, in turn, offer some of **their** grants to Baronets and Knights who then lease land to freeholders or sharecroppers who do the actual farming. But, of course, nothing is ever simple – and certainly not feudal organisation!*

*Even allowing for the fact that the system of noble titles was far more complex than that, the system was not at all 'ideal' ... at each level, the feudal lord would hold Manorial estates **directly** in some cases, or hold lands as part of a lesser title and the vassals that went with such.*

*So you could have a Manor that belonged directly to the King, and whose tenants were under his direct lordship ... or the King could own land as part of, say, the **Duchy of Somewhere**, and the vassals of that parcel of land would be vassals of the Duke, not of the King. The same situation applied to the Great Vassals and the lesser Vassals ... they would hold some manorial estates personally, others as part of lesser titles, and still others indirectly through **their** vassals.*

*Oh, and, except at very pre-medieval beginning, estates owned by a noble at any level of the feudal pyramid of titles would rarely be geographically consolidated ... they could be, and often were, scattered all over the map! Even in areas that were otherwise nominally under the lordship of **another** Noble!*

*To complicate things it was common for estates to be held at several different levels – so, for example, while the **Duke of Somewhere** would hold land in fealty to the **King** as a Great Vassal, it was quite common for him to also own estates that were, say, owing fealty to the **Count of Elsewhere** (or **Bishop of Bigtown**), or even as a simple Knight's Fee under **Baron Overthere**.*

*And some of that land might even be in another Kingdom – so, for a large part of the period covered, the King of England was the one of the most powerful nobles **in** France as well, holding huge swathes of land there ... often more land than was directly held by the actual Kings **of** France!*

Working out feudal relationships and obligations was a complex matter, as you can see.

The Laws of King Edgar (959-975)

The following rules for administration of a Hundred were laid down in late Anglo-Saxon times and give an indication of what its responsibilities were.

1. They should meet every four weeks and hold a Court for the settlement of claims.

2. The Hundred is responsible for pursuit of thieves and lawbreakers – the freemen of the Hundred must organise a pursuit.

Any fines arising from a prosecution are divided with half going to the victim and the other half divided equally between the Lord and the Hundred.

3. Any freeman who does not assist in the hunt for a criminal is to be fined 30d for a first offence, 60d for a second offence, 10s for a third offence and the confiscation of all his property and declaration of outlawry for a fourth offence.

4. 'Unknown' Cattle [i.e. those with no obvious owner] must be identified as such by testimony from 'a trusty man' of the Tithing or Hundred before they can be disposed of.

5. If a criminal is tracked into another Hundred, the freemen of that Hundred must, if they are notified of this, provide assistance in the pursuit or the Hundred will be fined 30/-, payable to the King.

6. If a criminal should escape justice [evade pursuit] then those who allowed him to escape must pay any compensation unless he can prove himself blameless.

7. The common law of the region must be followed in all cases and should be announced at each trial. Anyone not following the common law [punishing anyone in ways not in accordance with it], unless they have a decree of a Lord, shall be fined 30/-.

8. An Ox's Bell and Blast Horn worth 1s are to be used to summon a pursuit after a criminal. An accused person may be required to wear a Dog's collar (also worth 1s) while awaiting trial.

9. For a Trial by Ordeal the iron used must be of 3 pounds weight for a triple ordeal or of 1 pound for a single ordeal.

These were not by any means the only responsibilities of a Hundred ... the laws in question are incomplete.

Note also that the actual meanings of many of these clauses is still hotly debated and the form provided is not the only possible interpretation. Part of the problem is that many of the terms used in the original date back to very early Anglo-Saxon times and, therefore, their meaning is difficult to pin down.

The Practicalities of Feudal Tenure

The payoff for these fiefs, which quickly became hereditary in practise, was that the tenant (or *vassal*) owed both *homage* ('obedience') to their overlord and continuing military service.

Each Fief was to provide a set number of Knights and a variable number of lesser warriors based on the original grant ... which would have been based on the size and richness of the lands and properties granted.

*As time passed land came to be defined in terms of how many **Knight's Fees** it comprised – each such supposedly being capable of supporting a single Knight.*

*As even more time passed, with the complications of marriage dowries, inheritances, land sales, church endowments and the like led to estates being assessed as being worth such and such a **portion** of a Knight's Fee ... which could lead to complications as to exactly what level or type of military (or other) service might be owed (more on this later).*

There might also be other obligations, including payment of taxes, fees and other charges or fulfillment of specific special functions or duties (which might be of a local, regional, or even national scope).

A feudal King *wasn't* all powerful, and if they wanted to *remain* King, they would carefully consult with their *chief tenants/great vassals* to ensure that what he wanted was *not* going to annoy too many of them.

Theoretically the Nobility (and *their* tenants) ***had*** to do pretty much anything the King wanted them to do. The *reality* was ***very*** different.

All this was tempered by the reality that, especially for the *Great Vassals*, these Lords had their own military forces and, if pushed too far, could use them for their own ends and against the desires of the King.

*Kings who didn't carefully consider the wishes of their Great Vassals ... or, at least, the wishes of too many of them ... oftentimes found themselves with **serious** problems on their hands, up to and including civil wars!*

Feudal Government: The Basics

Strictly speaking, there was nothing we would, today, really recognise as a government to begin with.

National level

The ***King*** (or paramount noble of an independent principality) was expected to perform whatever minimal administrative functions were required at a *national* level but, of course, even for the minimal level of government that feudal states started off with in the 'Dark Ages', this was impossible.

*Given that there was **nothing** like the modern concept of*

*a **'nation'** until much, much later ... it is best to think of the medieval european world as being a shifting set of local and regional alliances based on such things as the original tribal affiliation of the barbarians who seized the area from the Romans, language, religion and many other, often unique, local and regional factors.*

The reality was that the King was 'assisted' ***by*** (or delegated power ***to***) officials of varying status and power within his Household who then did most of the actual administrative work under his overall direction and at who served at his personal pleasure ... and the bulk of the work these officials were responsible for was, of course, directly related to running the royal household and administering the royal lands with 'national' issues *almost* an afterthought.

The King was the executive, but, outside of his own lands, had relatively little direct power, and relied on the goodwill of his tenants-in-chief.

The Curia Regis (Royal Council): There was always a body of ***advisors*** to the King and, in independent Princedoms, Duchies, Counties and the like, there were similar bodies as well.

The names varied, but, at he beginning of the period they were called for consultation only at the King's pleasure. Members were chosen by the King and was could vary from session to session at his pleasure.

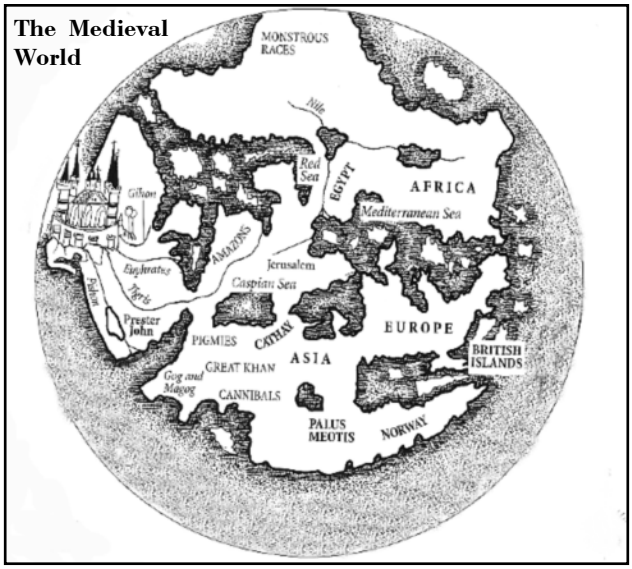
*Such Councils were **consultative**, with **no** legislative function – the King could ignore any advice that they gave, wholly or in part ... though it would have been unwise to ignore significant, strong, opposition to any proposals the King might present to them.*

*Typically they were called something like the **Concilium Regis** (Royal Council') as Latin was the language of learned men (those who kept the records ... still often clerics at the beginning of the period), though this might vary when translated into the local language or dialect.*

Assemblies and Parliaments: In most countries these early ad hoc advisory bodies developed into more formalised structures which universally undertook to control the King's ability to raise money by non-traditional means ... that is, by taxes and charges.

In some jurisdictions this developed into a power to *review* (and, possibly, *reject*) Royal legislation, in others it was more limited to specific grants in return for concessionary spending for a limited period ... few or none of these bodies had any specific power to create, discuss or pass legislation *of their own.*

*In **England** this began with Magna Carta (1215) for the Lay and Ecclesiastical Lords and added the Commons **consistently** from 1295 and which came to be called the **Parliamentum** ('a parley' or 'assembly').*



The Medieval World

*The earliest combined **Estates of Parliament** or **Colloquium of the Three Estates** in **Scotland** dates to 1326 and, unlike England, the and Ecclesiastical lords as well as the the Commons deliberated as a single body.*

*In **France** the **States General** (also called the **Estates General**) was set up in 1302 and included the Lay and Ecclesiastical Lords (the former directly chosen by the King, the latter included not only important Bishops but also Abbeys, Monasteries and Cathedral Chapters which elected their delegate) as well as representatives of the major Towns (which were actually treated rather like individual Lordships but which did elect their delegate(s) – though from a very restricted franchise).*

*In the **Iberian Peninsula**, a **Cortes** including commoners was first called for the Kingdom of Leon in 1188 ... other Kingdoms that eventually formed part of a unified Spain followed between 1218 (Catalonia) and Navarre (1300), but there was no **Cortes General** for the whole of Spain until 1812! The power and influence of each of these regional Cortes' varied considerably.*

Regional and Local Level

The great Tenants-in-Chief had similar households who performed similar functions, as did *their* noble tenants down to the Manorial lords – the main variant was the size of the Lord's household and the scope of its legal and administrative responsibilities.

The Households of the wealthier and more powerful Chief Vassals could be almost as large as those of the Royal Household, especially in States where there was a weak King and powerful sectional Lordships.`+

The powers granted the regional Lords was initially second only to that of the King ... and exceeded it in some areas and in some jurisdictions.

In *most* Kingdoms this was gradually limited and hemmed in as things became more settled and the economy began to allow more complex administrative

The Laws of William I (The Conqueror)

1. The King commands that one faith be followed throughout the Kingdom and that peace and security between all his subjects, English and Norman, be secured.

2. He also commands that all freemen shall swear an unconditional oath of loyalty to support the King and preserve his lands and authority against all enemies.

3. All his followers, now and in the future, are to be granted special protection. If any are killed the local Lord is to seize the murderer and present him to the authorities within five days or pay the King a fine of 46 Marks. If the Lord cannot pay, then the whole Hundred from which the murderer hails must pay in common.

4. All my followers and all Frenchmen (Normans) who were in England before my rule shall pay 'scot and lot' under English law.

5. Live cattle may only be sold at market Towns. Anyone breaching this rule must pay a fine equal to the price paid for such a sale.

6. If an Englishman is charged with a crime by a Frenchman (Norman) then a trial by Ordeal (hot irons) or by Combat (though if the accused is infirm he may choose a champion) shall be required, at the choice of the accused.

The loser of such a contest is to pay a fine of £2 to the King.

If an Englishman accuse a Frenchman (Norman) of the same crime, the Frenchman may decline the trial by Ordeal or Combat and be acquitted if he shall swear an oath of innocence.

7. All previous laws from before my reign shall remain in force except as modified in this decree.

8. Any freeman who is accused of a crime may pledge a surety or have others pledge such sureties to hold him for appearance before a Hundred or Shire court.

If they fail to appear, a portion of the surety will be seized for each such failure ... and on a fourth failure all of the surety is forfeit and the accused is to be branded 'out law' and all men's hands turned against him unless he shall present himself for judgement.

9. The King abolishes the sale of slaves outside of the country on pain of a fine payable to the Exchequer.

10. Convicted criminals are not to be hanged or executed – instead, they are to be blinded and castrated (possibly blinded *or* castrated) on pain of a fine to the Exchequer.

structures to be supported and which required a more co-ordinated *national* approach.

However, the majority of 'governmental' functions were at the Local, usually Manorial or Estate level – where the Lord of the Manor acted as an administrator, judge, and executive all in one ... and often retained their powers right through the period without much real change.

Feudal Taxation: The Basics

At the beginning of the period there was no differentiation between the personal income of the King (or Nobles) and revenue raised for purposes of government and administration ... as the limited scope of the Royal (and Noble) Households and administrators mentioned above would suggest.

The need for more money to support a more complex national (and regional) administration, especially (but not only) in times of war, led to greater demands for money than the Noble classes (and Town Burgers) were prepared to support ... or prepared to support *without significant concessions*. This led to the increased importance of consultative bodies such as the *Curia Regis* and their development into *parliament-**like*** institutions (mentioned above).

Sources of Revenue

Medieval rulers had five basic sources of revenue they could tap – income from their *personal lands*; income from *fines*, *dues*, *tolls* and other unavoidable (or not easily so) legal or administrative fees (including the widely hated use of *monopolies* such as that on the production of salt [in France and other places] and other unavoidable necessities); dues from *feudal rights* (which were generally ill-defined and widely abused by perpetually indigent Kings); the profits from *seignorage* (the minting of bullion coinage and fees paid by moneyers [those who minted the actual coinage] in those jurisdictions without a central, Royal, Mint) and money raised by taxation on a regional or national level.

If the need for money became desperate, a fairly common occurrence when Kings became involved in local or foreign wars, or when the King did not want to accede to demands from his subjects in parliament the Royal Government would impose (or attempt to impose) any and all historical revenue raising methods even if long defunct ... which inevitably led to widespread public opposition and discontent which could often be worse than simply giving in to any demands the Lords and Commons may have had in return for allowing a regularised and approved tax regime.

Of the five possible revenue streams the one with the greatest potential for generating the income needed to fund the increasingly sophisticated administrative and governmental services required was ***taxation***.

Unfortunately raising taxes was also the one which had the least legal and administrative justification in the minds of wider medieval society and caused the greatest and most long lasting opposition ... hence the usual trade-off between the King's needs and the desire for some control or oversight by the Lords and Commons (and the rise of consultative bodies).

*While the peasantry are estimated to have paid about **60%** of their income in rent, fees and charges and taxes the absolute **amount** collected was quite low, so there was little scope for raising extra income from **them**, and the biggest income earners, the feudal lords, were mostly exempt from taxes and objected strenuously to any attempt to gather more revenue from **them**.*

English Royal Revenue

It is estimated that the income of the English Crown in the 13th century was around £20,000 from landed property (the Crown held around 40% of all the land in England, around 1400 estates) and feudal dues, another £6-7000 in fines from the legal system, customs dues and other charges and up to £7000 from (traditional) taxes of various sorts, for a total of £33-34,000 per annum.

This was barely adequate to run the Royal Household, let alone the administration of an increasingly complex society and economy (and is estimated to have represented 1/12th of the whole coin supply of the realm!), and then only in peacetime.

*Theoretically, the feudal requirements for military service allowed a King to carry on a war, but the normal 40 day duty required was often inadequate, and after they were up the King had to **pay** for continued service.*

***Military Expenditures:** The cost of running a war simply overwhelmed the primitive feudal government and revenue systems, and extraordinary measures had to be taken to gather money for such purposes.*

It is known that the royal warchest of King John in the early part of the 13th century was around £140,000 (in coin – around half of all the coin theoretically in circulation in the entire Kingdom!) and that massive amount paid for less than a year's campaigning.

The cost of running a war simply overwhelmed the primitive feudal government and revenue systems, and extraordinary measures had to be taken to gather money for such purposes.

Financial Crises

The French and English kingdoms both staggered from financial crisis to financial crisis as a result of their penchant for dynastic wars.

In England, this led to the increasing power of Parliament which minimised political problems when taxes were properly authorised.



*In France, however, the success of the King and Nobles in denying the people any real say in government meant there were continuing problems (the **Jacquerie** of the 14th century and the **Fronde** of the 17th).*

*One key reasons (if not **the** key reason) for the failure of the more populous and wealthier French kingdom to gain regional and global dominance was that they couldn't work out how to finance their government expenditures **effectively** (which is why so much of the modern world's financial activity is **still** centered on London, and not on Paris – the Brits had a head start!).*

Government Jobs, Salaries and Budgets

What governmental jobs there were were generally unpaid, or were in receipt of a purely nominal salary – or, if there *was* a salary, it was usually way in arrears and inadequate to boot. Worse, government positions rarely had an adequate budget for performing whatever the actual job was, compounding the problems.

A feudal office often came with lands (or some other form of income, such as the right to a monopoly or to collect specific fees) attached, and the income from these often ***were*** the salary ***and*** the budget for performing whatever function went ***with*** the job title.

The problem at all levels was that there was no real separation of *personal* income from *governmental* income – after all, the person *was* the government – and the human tendency was to regard it *all* as *personal* income and complain about every single penny that had to be diverted to governmental functions.

English Feudalism

Naturally enough, the most easily accessible information on Feudalism and how it operated in the wild relates to its practise in England, especially after the Norman Conquest (1066).

*This is partly because the differences in the systems that existed in both places required some regularisation, which meant putting stuff down in writing that wasn't done in as much detail (if at all) in other places and partly because the conquest occurred at a point in time when the expansion of learning (and literacy) from a low point during the Dark Ages was reaching a state where the growth in the amount of **all** written records was accelerating.*

Crimes and Punishments

Chamberlain vs. Patsley (1207-8, Norfolk).

In Autumn of 1207, in Rainham (Norfolk), Herbert of Patsley hit Drew Chamberlain over the head with his Bow so hard that 'his brains poured out' and, 'not content', he stabbed him in the heart, killing him.

Drew's brother, John, accused John of murder and a duel was in the offing when the case came before the Royal Justices.

Thomas of Ingoldisthorp, a local notable and one of Herbert's Patsley kinsman bailed Herbert pending the duel. The delay seems to have been used to come to a settlement between the parties, the terms of which were – Herbert was to leave for Jerusalem within 40 days and, on arrival, serve God in the Holy Land for 7 years. If he returned before the end of the term he was liable to execution.

Thomas agreed to pay for one of Drew's kinsmen to become a Monk or Canon and also pay the Chamberlain family 40 Marks by installments before the following August.

Eight local knights stood surety for Thomas' proffer to the king, also perhaps for the settlement itself.

Caudel, in re William (1248-9, Wilts).

At the 1249 Eyre, the authorities of Startley Hundred named 5 men before the court for mortally wounding William Caudel.

Two had fled, and were, after hearing witnesses attesting to their guilt, were declared outlaw.

The remaining three, Simon atte Berne and his sons John and Henry, had initially been arrested and held, but had paid for a writ for an inquest that found Caudel had been killed in a matter unrelated to the three by the two culprits who had fled.

The Jurors at the Eyre attested to the innocence of the three.

The matter arose from the alleged theft of a dog belonging to the Atte Bernes by one of the relatives of William and, combined with excess drink, had led to ongoing clashes between family members (especially Henry) on both sides and some legal action that further increased animosity between the parties.

Though Henry survived this time, the clashes were evidently not at all over – and he was dead by the time of the next Eyre when another man was accused (and cleared) of his death.

As you can see, the administration of Justice was not as straightforward as even the limited laws that existed would suggest.

The 'system' as it came to be was a mix of Anglo-Saxon practise with a Norman French overlay and, while there is much in common with French practise (or, at least, the practise in NW France), it is sufficiently different as to limit its usefulness in relating to the situation as it existed in the latter country.

Basic Organisation

The countryside (Towns are dealt with elsewhere) was divided into districts for taxation and/or administrative purposes. Depending on the region the smallest such unit might be called a ***Carucate*** (Danelaw), a ***Hide*** or a ***Sulung*** (Kent).

__Nominally__ 120 acres, but __actually__ the amount of land an 8 Ox team could cultivate over a year – enough land to support a family.

By the 11th century, as recorded in the Domesday Book (1086), land producing an income of £1 p.a. was routinely assessed as being a 'Hide' – regardless of the actual acreage (i.e. it had become a notional taxation related assessment).

The next level up was the first active *administrative* unit(s) – the ***Hundred*** and/or the ***Manor*** (there was considerable overlap between them, but enough differences so they are described ***separately*** below).

The Hundred

The size and nature of this unit seems to have varied widely from place to place and time to time. Originally it seems to have referred to an area that could, at least nominally, provide 100 fighting men or which comprised of 100 families – but that was probably long superseded by the 11th century.

By the 11th century it was a unit of *nominally* 100 Hides – especially in west of England. In the South the size varied greatly while in Danelaw the equivalent unit was the *Wapentake* (in some areas these slowly morphed into *Hundreds*, in others they remained as *Wapentakes* just to confuse things even more).

The boundaries of the Hundred or Wapentake were independent of Manorial, Parish and Shire/County boundaries and it was entirely possible for a Hundred to straddle two (or more) of any or all of these divisions ... which could be a nightmare for administration in general and the administration of justice in particular (the lowest level Courts were the __Hundred Courts__ which were __either__ under the general authority of the Sheriff of a Shire/County __or__ of one the Lords of one of the constituent Manors. More confusion!)

Administrative Functions. Regular (usually annual) meetings of the freemen of the Hundred were responsible for the administration of tax levies ... deciding the allocation to the area's households (nominally based on the ability to pay) and its collection.

*The Hundred as a whole was **collectively** responsible for the Tax Bill – if a household couldn't pay its allocated share, then the rest of the householders would be required to make up any shortfall.*

Two local Knights were selected by the Sheriff to organise the administration and collection of Taxes (and the valuation of property on which taxes were due) from their Hundred and these two plus another two (also selected by the Sheriff) Knights were responsible for selecting 12 Freeholders to serve on the *Grand Assize (Jury)* (see below) for the Hundred Court as well as the election of the ***Bailiff*** who oversaw court sessions, for verifying reasons for ***non***-attendance *at* court hearings, to organise administrative records and bring them to the Sheriff as required.

And, as usual, either no payment was proffered for such duty or (later) it was entirely nominal and routinely far in arrears of simply never paid. Likewise, either no budget for administrative requirements was provided or it was left to each Hundred to find the money.

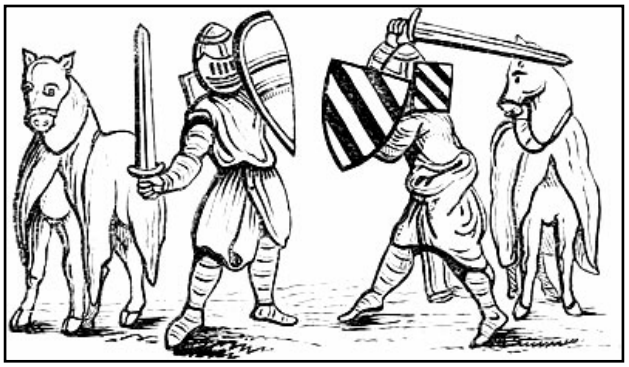
In some jurisdictions Hundreds were also responsible for traditional requirements relating to the upkeep of Royal Highways, though no budget was allocated and therefore they were reluctant to do anything but the most urgent work.

Legal Functions. The lowest level court with jurisdiction regarding freemen and most matters relating to King's Peace was the ***Hundred Court*** which consisted of 12 freemen chosen by the four Knights appointed to organise administration of the Hundred (see above), sitting as a *Grand Assize (Jury)*. In the 11th century these were held 12 times a year which was later increased to once a fortnight and then, in the early 13th century, reduced to once every three weeks.

For matters not involving a breach of the King's Peace it operated as a supervisor of the *frankenpledge* system (see ***Medieval Laws***, basically a system of joint responsibility) but where a breach of the King's Peace was involved it was presided over by the *Sheriff* or, in those Hundreds where all (or a majority) of the land was privately held by one Lord, the Lord's ***Steward*** could act as a Judge.

Crimes against property or crimes not breaching the King's Peace usually attracted a fine and/or some form of corporal punishment or shaming (being put in the Stocks or Pillory, Dunked on a Dunking stool in the local river or Pond etc.).

Crimes breaching the King's Peace could attract the death penalty. At the beginning of the period the Sheriffs could, and did, carry out such ... but, as the period progressed the King increasingly took control of such cases and they had to be transferred (with the accused) to the County Seat to wait for Royal Circuit Judges to



arrive ... usually once every quarter year (Epiphany, Easter, Midsummer and Michaelmas from 1388).

Some Hundred Courts under the jurisdiction of a Manorial Lord retained the right to apply Capital Punishment for breaches of the King's Peace throughout most of this period.

The Manor

This is dealt with in more detail in a previous section but, as far as 'national' administration was concerned, in those areas where most or all of the land was owned by the one Lord, they often retained the right, which became hereditary, to run the Hundred Courts and routinely appointed one or both of the two 'Local Knights' who oversaw local administration and collection of taxes and other administrative matters.

Even so, there wasn't a perfect overlap – like everything to do with the Feudal 'system' it was pretty darn messy and consistently inconsistent. It must have been a nightmare for anyone not familiar with local conditions to negotiate!

The interesting thing is that, where a Manor was *not* in the above category, it still often (but not always) retained a right to its own *Manorial Court* which was run by the Lord or his Steward ... the difference being that such a court had no rights to sit in judgement over any case involving a Freeholder or Freeman, which *had* to go to the Hundred Court.

Some such Manorial Courts retained the right to High Justice (Capital Punishment), but usually only for cases involving Villeins – and, in some cases, even if they attempted to flee the Manorial boundaries to avoid such judgement.

Other than that, the organisation was largely the same as for the Hundred.

The Parish

*Between the 11th and 14th centuries the Parish remained almost entirely an ecclesiastical structure and did not always conform with the boundaries of a single Hundred (or even a single Manor) ... its **later** importance as an administrative unit was as a **civil Parish**, quite different from the **ecclesiastical** Parish and, in any case, this development largely occurs after the 14th century*

and is closely associated with Henry VIII's break with Rome and the creation of the Church of England ... and only starts to become a seriously formalised matter late in the reign of Elizabeth I.

The Shire or County

The next level up from the *Hundred* is the *Shire* or *County*. Before the Norman conquest, the normal term was ***Shire*** and the chief official was the ***Shire Reeve*** – after the conquest these districts were *sometimes* referred to as ***Counties*** and the chief official became the ***Sheriff*** (a Norman-French corruption of the Anglo-Saxon *Shire Reeve*).

__Shire__ and __County__ were interchangeable when referring to rural districts, though Towns which had gained a civic charter were more usually referred to as __Counties__ in an administrative sense (when not referred to as __Boroughs__).

The Sheriff. The chief magistrate and administrative officer of a Shire and was chosen from the most influential and powerful landowners.

Most importantly, he was the King's representative in the Shire, and was responsible for carrying out the King's orders as transmitted to him in the form of Royal *Writs* or *Decrees.*

He was also responsible for maintaining law and order and, to that end, he was empowered do a number if things – arrest (suspected) criminals and carry out enquiries, hold regular sessions (usually every 4-6 weeks) of a ***Shire Court*** (which, at the beginning of the period, could impose the death penalty but soon had this power removed), declare those who had failed to attend four sessions of the Shire Court *outlaws*, pass on cases to the Royal Courts, maintain the County Gaol and keep financial records for submission to the Exchequer.

The __Grand Assize (Jury)__ of the Shire Courts was the venue for trying non-capital cases and any case involving two or more Lords as the latter could not be tried in Manorial or Hundred Courts and was chosen from the Knights and Lords of the Shire.



The Jury was also an important advisory and deliberative body which offered advice on local customary laws and administrative arrangements and, from the mid to late 13th century was usually the body from which Knights representing the Shire in Parliament and (County) Coroners were chosen.

The judicial powers of the Sheriff were increasingly circumscribed and eventually became largely a matter of hearing minor cases (except, see the __Coroner__), both civil and criminal where the penalty for the crime was £2 or less, that the Hundred Courts could not decide (or did not have the power to decide) or which did not warrant referral to the __Assizes__ or to the __Crown Courts.__

Under the same rule he was empowered to call out the ***Posse Comitatus***, all the able bodied men of the County (usually limited to freemen, Knights and Lords) to maintain public order in times of unrest and, if the King called out the feudal levies, the Sheriff was responsible for mustering, supplying and leading them to the nominated assembly (though not necessarily leading them in battle).

Once the levies reached the designated mustering point for the whole army the Sheriff's responsibility for their supply and ordering was terminated and the Royal administration became responsible for such.

The Sheriff was also responsible for administering any crown lands in the Shire and collecting any revenues from the same and was also responsible for collecting tax remittances from the Hundreds and passing all those monies on to the Exchequer.

To assist in all this, the Sheriff would need a staff of clerks and other, minor, officials who would __nominally__ be paid for by the Crown ... but often had to be (irregularly) paid for out of local fees and charges collected by the Sheriff as part of his remuneration for doing the job.

Coroner. The Coroner's office dated back to Anglo-Saxon times and was originally the chief administrative officer for (what passed as) the court and legal system – ensuring criminal cases were dealt with when the Royal Judges came around on their circuit, a record of all cases heard at the *Shire Court* and also a general record of important cases heard by the *Hundred Courts* of the Shire.

After the Conquest the office was sometimes used to assist in the collection of taxes and was responsible for investigating all deaths involving unidentified bodies ... for which a fine was payable by the community where such a body was found.

Initially this fine was much higher if the body was that of a Norman – but, gradually, this was relaxed and a lesser fine was applied for all unidentified deaths (aka '__murdrum__') until the middle of the 14th century when

the fine was abolished, but the office retained responsibility for investigating any suspicious or violent death.

*If a **Posse Comitatus** under the direction of the Sheriff (or his nominee) catches the outlaw subject to the summons of that body **and** they were accompanied by a **Coroner**, then the criminal **may** be beheaded on the spot (men) or taken to the nearest river or pond and drowned (women) ... some jurisdictions **never** took advantage of this wrinkle in the law even for the worst outlaws.*

Commissioners of the Peace: Selected by the Crown from local Knights of the Shire to assist in the maintenance of the Kings Peace, they first appear in 1308 with the right to arrest anyone suspected of a felony ... and from 1316 they were, *from time to time*, allowed to try any and all criminals held in the County Gaols with the express purpose of clearing them out.

*They were renamed **Guardians of the Peace** in 1344.*

They were usually selected from men who had served on the *Grand Assize (Jury)* of the County.

They soon proved inadequate to the task or corrupt – or both and were replaced by ...

Justices of the Peace. Replaced the *Guardians of the Peace* from 1361 ... for the purpose of ensuring that the King's Peace was maintained (see the sidebar for details of the law, which is *still* in force with minor amendments!)

The number of JPs increased over time and, by the end of the period, there was an average of ~18 JPs per Shire. Their area of responsibility was also widened – in 1368 they were given charge of offenses under the Statute of Labourers (i.e. paying workers more than the statutory set wages and charging more than the statutory set prices) and in 1383 they were empowered to arrest and detain *'vagabonds and vagrants.'*

*So important was the office deemed to be that, from 1388, JPs were (nominally) paid a very substantial **4/- per day** when carrying out their official duties.*

The Nation

In the 11th century national government was entirely the responsibility of the King and was run through his official household with a Royal Council consisting of a variable number of Lords, none permanent, chosen by the King acting in a purely advisory role.

By the end of the 14th century national administration was much more complex, still largely revolved around the King's household and its officials but now involved peripatetic Judges rotating through the Counties on a regular basis as well as some permanent Courts and administrative offices largely related to legal matters centrally located in London.

Justices of the Peace Act (1361)

Who shall be Justices of the Peace. Their Jurisdiction over Offenders, Rioters, Barrators. They may take Surety for good Behaviour.

[I]n every County of England shall be assigned for the keeping of the peace one Lord and with him three or four of the most worthy in the County, with some learned in the Law. They shall have power to restrain the offenders, rioters and all other barrators [those involved in official misconduct or common fraud], and to pursue, arrest, take, and chastise them according their trespass or offence and to cause them to be imprisoned and duly punished according to the law and customs of the realm and according to that which to them shall seem best to do by their discretions and good advisement ...

[...] to take and arrest all those that they may find by indictment or by suspicion and to put them in prison and to take [from] all ... that be of good fame [reputation] where they shall be found sufficient surety and mainprise [Bail] of their good behaviour towards the King and his people and ... to punish [them] to the intent that the people be not by such rioters or rebels troubled nor endamaged, nor the peace blemished, nor merchants nor other passing by the Highways of the realm disturbed, nor put in the peril which may happen of such offenders ...

[...] also to hear and determine at the King's suit all manner of felonies and trespasses done in the same county according to the laws and customs aforesaid; and that writs of Oyer and Terminer ['to hear and determine'] be granted according to the statutes thereof ... and that the Justices which shall be thereto assigned be named by the court and not by the party.

[...] the King will[s] that all general inquiries before this time granted within any seignories for the mischiefs and oppressions which have been done to the people by such inquiries shall cease utterly and be repealed and that fines which are to be made before justices for a trespass done by any person be reasonable and just, having regard to the quantity of the trespass and the causes for which they may be made.

*JPs gained a great deal more administrative and legal power after the **end** of the 14th century, becoming the main instrument of Royal (and, later, Parliamentary) administration ... and, even though these functions have since been taken over by other departments of government and the later (Tudor to 19th century) Justice of the Peace Acts have been repealed, the basics of the 1361 Act **remain in force today.***

*JPs have largely retained their character as **non-lawyers** dealing with a mix of administrative and lesser civil and criminal matters in those Commonwealth jurisdictions that still have them.*

The Royal administration was also 'assisted' by a formally elected or appointed *Parliament* that met regularly and which was becoming more than a mere advisory sounding board ... gaining real power over exceptional (i.e. non-historical) taxation that was increasingly needed to support foreign wars and other Royal adventures.

The Royal Household

During this period the Household was largely peripatetic ... virtually the entire household was on the move, on average, 7-12 times ***a month*** (between 80 and 140 times a year) until the early 14th century when the number of moves started to trend downward.

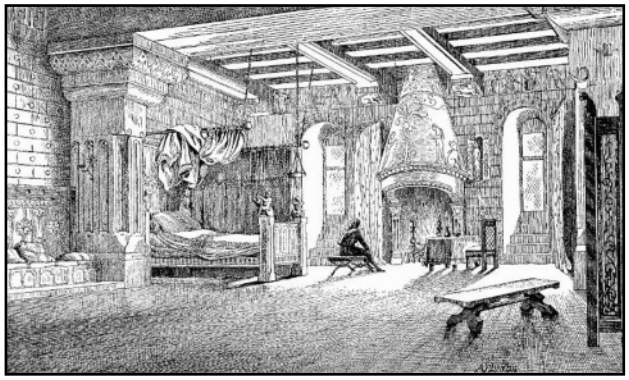
It was easier for the Royal Household to go where the food was than transport the food to a central location because of the truly horrible roads. As transport links improved, the need to move so frequently declined.

The range of destinations, however, was limited – perhaps 25 in the early 12th century, but down to only ten or so by the 14th and those mostly around London, which was becoming more and more important for administrative reasons meaning that the King and his principal officers had to be close by.

Not only did the bulk of the Household's *personnel* have to be moved from place to place, so did the bulk of the *furnishings* for the Royal Family and the great officers of the Household – the destinations only had a skeleton staff with scant furnishings beyond what was needed for *them* ... everything else came with the Household itself.

*As the number of routine destinations declined, more settled arrangements were gradually made, **mainly** for the immediate Royal Family, the King and Queen especially (of course), rarely for anyone else ... normally a suite of rooms **partly** furnished for their use (with space for the additional furnishings they still travelled with).*

The Royal Household (1392-93). Records for the year show that the Household consisted of 11 Officers (The Chamberlain, Steward, Controller of the Household, Keeper of the Wardrobe, Cofferer, Keeper of the Privy Seal, Secretary, Almoner, Physician, Surgeon and Dean of the Royal Chapel), 8 Chamber Knights, 25 Clerks, 3 Sergeants-at-Arms, 17 Sergeants of Offices, 101 Equites (Horsemen? Knights?), 10 Huntsmen, 20 Valets of the Chamber, 89 Valets of the Stable, 80 'Other' Valets (including 10-12 Royal Messengers), 53 Grooms, 14 Carters and 2 Cleaners ... around 400-450 people (and their possessions, and furniture and fittings for the more important amongst them) to move around every few days!



Controller/Comptroller of the Household. The Controller was in charge of the *accounts* for all purchases of clothes, armour and personal items (jewellery etc.) for the King and the Royal Family and was a member of the *Board of Green Cloth*. Having regular access to the person of the King made it a politically influential position.

The Household received block grants from the Exchequer and, along with the considerable amounts of gold, jewels and other treasure in the personal possession of the King, these monies were often used for secret diplomatic purposes and other purposes the Crown wished to remain secret – which meant the Comptroller was the paymaster for all manner of covert actions (and, based on later association, probably in charge of whatever spies the Crown sought fit to employ).

The Comptroller was also a permanent member of the Royal Council.

Keeper of the Wardrobe. The Keeper was responsible for the Clothing, Armour, Jewellery, Spices and other personal possessions of the Royal Family (not the accounts, though – see the *Controller/Comptroller*, above) and their maintenance as well as for the King's personal expenditure.

Before 1307 he was also responsible for the King's Privy Seal and, therefore, the King's personal clerk(s).

For a short period in the 13th century the Wardrobe was in charge of financing the Crown's foreign wars by borrowing against the King's Crown Jewels and other valuables.

Like the Comptroller, he was also a permanent member of the Royal Council and, later, of the Parliament.

Lord High Almoner. Usually a cleric, most often *nominally* a Bishop but the practical role was usually undertaken by a Dean, he was responsible for the distribution of alms (charity) to the (deserving) poor as the Royal Household went on its rounds.

On special occasions he would organise the distribution of actual money and/or clothing by the sovereign, a custom that survives as the distribution of Maundy Money on the day before Good Friday but which, in the Middle Ages, was more frequent and usually took place around the time of or during the high holy days.

Otherwise, he would be in nominal charge of the distribution of leftover food from the Royal Household to the local poor who gathered nearby ... though this would rarely be anything special as the lower members of the actual household had first rights to any left-over delicacies from the High Tables where the King and Nobles were served.

Cofferer. The Cofferer was responsible for the *physical* handling of all monies involved in the running of the Royal Household and the payment of (cash) wages to all the staff as well as ensuring their *'good demeanour and carriage.'*

The Great Officers of State

The chief officials of the Royal administration changed over time, as did their order of precedence.

Very roughly, the precedence that existed for much of the 12th-14th centuries was – Lord High Steward, Lord High Chancellor, Lord High Treasurer (aka *Lord Chancellor of the Exchequer*), Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal (aka *Lord Privy Seal*), Lord Great Chamberlain, Lord High Constable and Earl Marshal.

Lord High Steward. This was also a hereditary position and the holder had the right to personally serve the King at important dinners, banquets and other state functions ... giving him direct personal access and, therefore, considerable political influence. He was also entitled to a permanent seat in the Royal Council and, later, Parliament.

The office fell out of favour in the late 14th century and there have been no permanent appointments since 1421 (it has usually been appointed only for the duration of a Royal Coronation and is purely ceremonial).

*The Office of **Lord Steward** progressively replaced the position from 1399 and remained in charge of personal service to the King as well as auditing the household accounts and arranging all Royal travel as part of the **Board of Green Cloth** (Lord Steward, Treasurer of the Household, Comptroller of the Household, Cofferer, Masters of the Household and Clerks of the Green Cloth).*

Though the Lord High Steward held precedence and some influence, he was less *effectively* powerful than the Lord High Chancellor (see below).

Lord High Chancellor. The Chancellor was *almost* always a cleric (there were, as with most things medieval, *always* exceptions), usually a Bishop, during the 11th-14th centuries and was in charge of ***Chancery*** ... the Royal Household's office responsible for the production of official documents including Writs for people wanting to make legal cases in the Royal Courts. He was also the keeper of the Kingdom's ***Great Seal***, which had to be affixed to all offical *government* documents (not to be confused with the *Privy Seal*).



*Though second in precedence to the **Lord High Steward**, the Chancellor held more **real** power as he was in effective control of much of the actual administration of government whereas the Steward was limited in scope to aspects of the Royal Household establishment and its management.*

*The Chancellor was also the **'Keeper of the King's Conscience,'** which meant he was responsible for ensuring that the administration (especially of justice) was **equitable** – that is, followed rules of 'natural justice' rather than strict statute or common law rules (which could be 'inequitable' ... **harsh**). This was done in concert with the Royal Council until the 13th century when it was gradually hived off as a separate court.*

Originally the Chancellor and Clerks of Chancery travelled with the Royal Household, but this was increasingly inconvenient as more power was given to the Royal Courts which required Writs for actions to be issued by the Chancery ... so, by the 13th century it was permanently moved to *Westminster*.

*Up to 1232 the chief Officer of State was the **Justiciar**, who was the King's lieutenant or Chief Minister, acting on his behalf when the King was out of the country and who handled the major legal issues that were presented to the Royal Court.*

*Either because the holders of the Office were becoming too powerful or because the office was becoming overwhelmed by administrative and legal matters (or both?), it was split into three separate Law Courts – the **Court of Common Pleas**, the **Court of the King's Bench** and the **Court of the Exchequer** from the reign of King Edward I (1272-1307).*

Lord Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Chancellor was responsible for the collection of and accounting for all taxation and other monies (as usual, there were random exceptions) owing the Crown ... originally the office seems to have been as peripatetic as the rest of the Royal Household but, like Chancery, the increasingly complex administrative needs meant that by the 13th century it was permanently at Westminster.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer was also responsible for all legal matters relating to Crown revenues, originally in concert with the Royal Council but, like Chancery, as an independent Court from the early 13th century, assisted by professional Judges.

*The Exchequer was an actual **physical** object as well – a large table covered in a black and green chequer patterned cloth allowing it to be used as a primitive type of abacus ... each column being used to show £ounds, Shillings or Pence.*

Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal. As the main offices of State (Chancery and the Exchequer) settled down in Westminster, the Great Seal of the Kingdom needed to be located there as well, which meant that the King needed *another* Seal for his own correspondence to show that it was being done under his orders ('seal') if not by his own hand.

The *Lord Privy Seal* was the official in charge of this new private Seal and, therefore, was the King's principal private secretary and in charge of the Clerks who dealt with the King's correspondence.

From 1307 it was a major Office of State and, eventually (by the late 14th century), documents could not be sealed with the Great Seal alone unless the *Lord Privy Seal* had affixed that seal as well. By this time, the *Privy Seal* no longer needed the personal authorisation of the King to affix it to official government documentation.

*By the mid 14th century, the King's **Signet** became the seal that was used to authenticate documents personally arranged by the King (if not personally written by him), and this remained under the control of a new (or newly important) officer, the **King's Clerk** or **King's Secretary** who was responsible for his private correspondence (though even this office and the seal it controlled eventually became part of the government administrative apparatus ... mission creep was as unavoidable then as it still is today!).*

Lord Chamberlain. A senior official in the Household and in the government generally. Responsible for the King's 'Chamber' (the King's personal rooms in whatever Manor, Castle or Palace they might currently be staying at), he was in charge of all the servants directly involved with looking after the King and the Royal Family (including personal bodyguards).

He was also responsible for organising important ceremonies and entertainments for the King (and Court) and for general security.

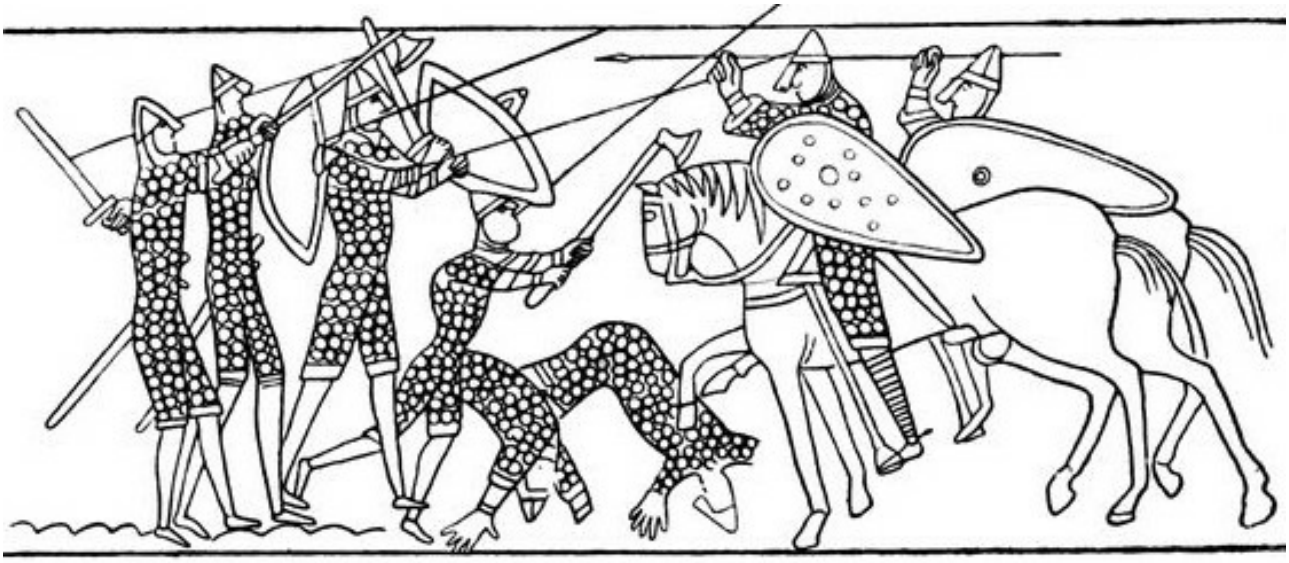
*Hiring and firing staff. Organising and paying for all the consumables and personal items other than the King's clothes (the responsibility of the **Keeper of the Wardrobe**).*

He had direct daily face-to-face contact with the King and, to a considerable degree, controlled access to the King's person and often carried news of the King's desires to the Royal Council (later, Parliament) both of which made him a personage of considerable political power.

***Lord Great Chamberlain.** This was a separate, hereditary, office held by one of the great noble families of the realm (originally a close supporter of William I) and, though nominally an important position, its hereditary nature gradually relegated it to a lesser importance (though still greater social status) than the **Lord Chamberlain's** office during (and after) the 14th century.*

Lord High Constable. Under William I, the Lord Constable was the commander of the Royal Armies if the King wasn't present, or the second in command if he was, and also acted as the *Master of the Horse* – but it became largely hereditary and gradually declined in real, if not political and social, power and prestige over the course of the 13th century.

*As **Master of the Horse** he was in **nominal** charge of the Stables, Coach-houses, all horses and hounds belonging to the King and their care, maintenance and breeding, though the actual administration was the responsibility of the **Earl Marshal** ... and the day to day management the responsibility of **Gentleman of the Horse**.*



He sat jointly with the Earl Marshall as the *Court of Chivalry*, which determined any matters relating to Heraldry, Noble status and precedence.

The office has been largely extinct since the reign of Henry VIII and is now only a temporary appointment for special occasions such as a Coronation.

Earl Marshal. The Earl Marshal was originally part f the establishment of the Royal Stables, second in precedence behind the *Lord High Constable*, and assisted in the actual administrative management of all the Royal horses and livestock as well as sitting on the *Court of Chivalry* with the Constable.

*The office has survived into modern times and the Earl Marshal is still in charge of the **High Court of Chivalry** though it rarely sits (only **once** since the 18th century ... in 1954) and deals only with matters relating to the **use** (rather than the **grant**) of heraldic arms.*

PARLIAMENT

The first *known* post-Conquest 'parliament' dates to 1212, though the term was not used to describe such gatherings until 1236. It was a gathering of 'prominent men' (mostly lesser nobles), *not* of the great 'Tenants in Chief' (who could be summonsed to attend the ***Curia Regis***, the 'Royal Council') and was, it seems, called at least once or twice a year for the purpose of allowing the King to consult with local men who could bring local knowledge (and air local grievances) to his attention as it related to the Royal government.

Very quickly (by the mid 13th century) these gatherings were asked to 'consult' over levying taxes to supplement the increasingly inadequate traditional revenue sources of the Crown and to consent to such increases ... after being convinced that the money raised was for an appropriate purpose and would be well spent. From 1325 no Parliament met without such representatives of the 'Commons' being called.

Initially this 'power' was merely to accept the notion of increased taxation but allow some negotiation about how *much* tax should be raised and how it should be spent, but, apart from this, the Commons had (theoretically) no power to discuss Crown policy or government administration.

Of course the *reality* was that having some control over tax led to inevitable discussions about the specifics of how it would be spent ... and whether it need be raised in the first place, which meant government policy that (increasingly) depended on tax revenues to be paid for became subject to discussion.

This led to the Commons being used as a venue for petitions of grievance to be presented to the Crown over administrative, legal and and economic matters and, gradually, the Crown began to present its own



'petitions' ('Bills') to the Commons in the hope of convincing them to support the (new) Royal policies.

Still, the reality was that until well into the 15th century (after the end of the period covered), Parliament remained largely a debating society which mostly *reviewed* Crown policy and tax demands rather than running their own show.

Membership (Lords). Originally, the Curia Regis consisted only of those Tenants-in-Chief the King summoned to attend ... not *all* of them by any means. As the Parliament developed, however, it became traditional to summons the attendance of all the nobility and clergy – Archbishops, Bishops, Abbots (the ***Lords Spiritual***); and the Earls and Barons (the ***Lords Temporal***).

*Knights were of the **gentry**, not of the nobility, and were part of the **Commons**. The division of the Lords Temporal into Dukes (none before 1337, then only Royal Dukes to the late 15th Century), Marquesses (only from 1385), Earls, Viscounts (only from 1440) and Barons is a later development*

Membership (Commons). From 1265 two 'Knights' from each Shire and two Burgesses from each Borough were to be elected and attend Parliament to represent their constituencies.

*Originally the electors were **probably** all Freeholders or Burgesses, the later requirement that they possess land or property valued at at least £2 can only be dated to an Act of 1430, well after the period covered.*

*Knights, for the purpose of election, came to mean any landholder who owned at least a Knight's Fee in terms of landed property (a member of the '**Gentry**'), while Burgesses were those who owned property and enjoyed the freedoms of the City in the various Boroughs (i.e. they were citizens of the Town Corporation, not merely residents).*

MAGNA CARTA LIBERTATUM (1215)

John, by the grace of God King of England, Lord of Ireland, Duke of Normandy and Aquitaine and Count of Anjou ... Know that before God ... [for] the better ordering of our kingdom ...

1) ... We have granted ... [and] confirmed ... that the English Church shall be free ... in perpetuity. To all Free Men ... we have also granted ... all the liberties written out below ...

2-5) [If a Chief Tenant dies, his heir shall inherit his lands on payment of a fixed fee ... £100 for an Earl down to £5 for a Knight's fee. If his heir is under age he is a ward of the King, but will pay no fee when he comes of age and inherits. The King shall take only reasonable fees to cover the cost of guardianship and shall maintain the lands and buildings.]

7-8) [A Widow may take her dower/marriage portion unencumbered. She shall not be *forced* to marry, but may *not* marry without Royal consent if she holds lands directly from the Crown.]

9) [Land or rents may not be seized from Debtors if the Debtor has moveable goods that may be seized.]

12) [No Scutage or Aid may be levied without 'general consent' unless it is for the ransom of the King's person, to make his eldest son a Knight or for the marriage of his eldest daughter. The Aid levied must be 'reasonable.']

13) [The City of London and all Royal Boroughs shall enjoy their ancient privileges.]

14) [Aids beyond those mentioned in (12) may not be levied without the consent of Parliament.]

17) Ordinary lawsuits shall not follow the Royal Court around, but shall be held at a fixed place.

20-22) [Fines levied in Court must be proportional to the seriousness of the offence and take into consideration the need of the a person to make a living.]

28, 30, 31) [No Constable, Sheriff or Royal Official shall take goods without paying first, unless the owner consents to a late payment.]

36) In future nothing shall be paid or accepted for the issue of a Writ of Inquisition of Life or Limbs. It shall be given gratis, and not refused.

38) In future no official shall place a man on trial upon his own unsupported statement without producing credible witnesses to the truth of it.

39) No free man shall be seized or imprisoned, or stripped of his rights or possessions, or outlawed or exiled, or deprived of his standing in any way, nor will we proceed with force against him, or send others to do so, except by the lawful judgment of his equals or by the law of the land.

40) To no one will we sell, to no one deny or delay right or justice.

(45) We will appoint as Justices, Constables, Sheriffs or other officials only men that know the law of the realm and are minded to keep it well.

(52) To any man whom we have deprived or dispossessed of lands, castles, liberties, or rights, without the lawful judgment of his equals, we will at once restore these. In cases of dispute the matter shall be resolved by the judgment of the twenty-five barons referred to below ...

(55) All fines that have been given to us unjustly and against the law of the land, and all fines that we have exacted unjustly, shall be entirely remitted or the matter decided by a majority judgment of the twenty-five barons referred to below ...

61) ... The barons shall elect twenty-five of their number to keep, and cause to be observed with all their might, the peace and liberties granted and confirmed to them by this charter.

If we, our chief justice, our officials, or any of our servants offend in any respect against any man, or transgress any of the articles of the peace or of this security, and the offence is made known to four of the said twenty-five barons, they shall come to us - or in our absence from the kingdom to the chief justice - to declare it and claim immediate redress. If we, or in our absence abroad the chief justice, make no redress within forty days, reckoning from the day on which the offence was declared to us or to him, the four barons shall refer the matter to the rest of the twenty-five barons, who may distrain upon and assail us in every way possible, with the support of the whole community of the land, by seizing our castles, lands, possessions, or anything else saving only our own person and those of the queen and our children, until they have secured such redress as they have determined upon. Having secured the redress, they may then resume their normal obedience to us.

Given by our hand in the meadow ... called Runnymede, between Windsor and Staines, on the 15th of June, 1215.

*These are **some** of the key clauses of Magna Carta – all of which John eventually reneged on, but, despite this, most were observed by later Kings and accepted as the basis for the liberties of all Englishmen.*



French Feudalism

Feudal organisation in France was, in many ways, *similar* to that in post-conquest England ... which is not surprising, as William I imposed the practises of NW French feudalism onto the existing Anglo-Saxon system (which, in itself, had been increasingly influenced by continental, largely French, practises in the period before the Conquest).

Yet there were also *differences* – mainly because the French King was relatively less (or barely more) powerful than some of his individual Tenants-in-Chief (and less powerful than combinations of like-minded Great Vassals) but also because France as a whole had been much more developed than England when the Roman Empire in the west collapsed.

Then there is the fact that France, in the Middle Ages, didn't really exist *as a nation*, at least not in the same way that England did. For a start, see the map on the following page which shows just how much France's borders changed in one short period of slightly more than 40 years ... and, even then, it didn't cover all of the territory that modern France does.

There was also a huge difference, socially and politically, between north and south – the north developed fairly standard feudal institutions on the collapse of the Carolingian Empire while in the south, land tenure was never militarised and remained civil in nature (though the most powerful landowners were expected to raise troops in time of war).

Likewise, the south spoke *Langue d'oc* (from '*oc*' = yes, so it is often referred to as *Occitan*) while the north they spoke *Langue d'oïl* (from '*oïl*' = yes, which slowly became the modern *oui* and modern French) – and in between was an area where the dialects were mixed.

*Even in the north and south there were multiple sub-dialects that were **mostly** intelligible to others from the same linguistic area, but less so to those from outside.*

Or, to put it another way – while *English* Feudalism and government was *fairly* consistent (with exceptions), *French* Feudalism and government was ***much*** less so and *much* more prone to exceptions (and these were *inconsistent* exceptions, at *all* levels – national, regional and local – as often as not).

Basic Organisation

The French feudal experience was both like and unlike the English one.

In the *southern* parts of France feudalism never took hold, land grants given in return for hereditary military service *simply **didn't** exist* (the ***Nobili***, or 'magnates', were expected to provide soldiers and kept bodies of *Fideles*, or 'sworn men', on their payroll for this reason – but that was because they were *Nobili*, and *not* because they were granted land).

In the *northern* parts of France (not all of which were actually *part* of France at the time), Feudalism did take hold ... but not always as strongly as it did in England (see *Fractured Feudalism*, below).

Serfdom, Manors, Magnates and Knights

Serfdom. Until the collapse of the Carolingian Empire in the 9th century, there were a significant number of Freemen who either owned or rented land but who had the right to participate in public assemblies and law courts and to serve in the Royal Armies ... but the breakdown of law and order that accompanied the Carolingian collapse, the Nobili took the opportunity to erode their rights and turn most of them into Serfs.

*An armed, independent, landholding peasantry is a **free** peasantry – making them dependent on the local Magnate, Knight or Abbey for defence against marauders (often **other** Magnates or Knights) in return for their forfeiting those rights was the road to serfdom.*

Manors. By the 11th century the *manorial* system was fully in place *in northern France* and almost identical to the one applied by William I in England – the same sort of organisation applied, just with different names and more of a reliance on Roman rather than Germanic law for legal and administrative purposes.

*As in England, this changed dramatically with the fallout from the massive depopulation resulting from the **Great Famine** and the **Great Plague** and most Lords, desperate for labour in a time of shortage, offered freedom from serfdom for those who would undertake to keep abandoned estates and lands in production.*

In *Southern France* land tenure remained based on customary, late Roman or Carolingian practises and the idea of feudal tenure (land in return for a military

service obligation) never developed ... though the great landed *Magnates* (see *Magnates and Knights* below) were still able to field military forces of *Fideles* ('Sworn Men', loosely).

Magnates and Knights. The owners of such estates, the ***nobili*** *('Lords')*, were a mix of wealthy ***Magnates*** with large estates which could *furnish* significant military levies, but who were mainly *administrators* and may have descended, at least in part, from late-Roman patricians and a newer class of ***Knights*** who owed direct personal military service to their overlord (possibly at the head of *other* Knights who, in turn owed service them) in return for land.

__All__ French Knights were (theoretically) both __Warriors__ and __Lords__ and held estates in return for military service, but __not__ all Lords were __Warriors__ and, although their __estates__ were often obligated to provide a number of warriors in wartime, they held the lands through heredity rather than as a military fief.

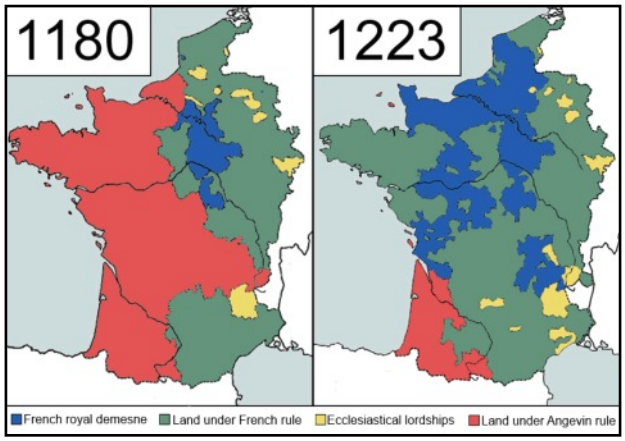
This is an important difference between French and Anglo-French feudalism – in England, lands held after the Conquest were held on condition of military service, even if they remained in English (as opposed to Norman) hands.

As usual, there are always exceptions to these general rules in both countries.

Fractured Feudalism. After the collapse of the Carolingian Empire the great Magnates competed to carve out their own semi-independent statelets, arrogating most previously Royal prerogatives and powers to themselves (see *Serfdom*, above), a process largely complete by the 11th century.

This process didn't stop *there*, however, and in many areas the chaos *spread*, and spread *downwards* to the lesser nobility who did exactly the same thing for themselves, fracturing *many* (but not all) the statelets.

In these areas, Feudalism on the English style didn't develop fully – and the idea of vassalage to greater lords was never fully accepted or adopted.



In other areas the Counties and Duchies remained under the more centralised control of the magnates who had seized control of them, e.g. Anjou, Flanders, Normandy and Toulouse, and this lasted well into the 12th century and, in Normandy and Flanders especially, much later.

In these areas Feudalism and vassalage developed much more strongly and was very similar in practise to that which existed in England.

Regional Organisation, Problems and Issues

What's the problem? That there isn't a whole heck of a lot of written material on this middle level of government administration ... or, at least, not in English. What little there is concentrates on the regional organisation of ***royal*** administration, which was generally quite weak through to the 14th century. As a result, all the information below is based on what's available and the shortcomings need to be clearly understood.

Prevots. The *Prevot* ('Provost') was an office established in the 11th century to collect all royal revenues within their jurisdiction, to raise local levies in time of war and to administer justice in local courts.

From the 12th century they were sold to the highest bidder for the farm of the Royal revenues, lost responsibility for the raising of military levies but retained jurisdiction over local courts.

Tax Farming *was a method of privatised tax collection ... the government sold the right to collect taxes to private individuals in return for an up front payment of cash and allowed the 'farmer' to then collect taxes.*

Theoretically the government was just discounting the difference between actual tax due and what the Farmer paid but, unless carefully monitored (even __if__ carefully monitored), the tendency was for the Farmer to gouge as much extra as he could any way that he could.

Baillis and Seneschals. The *Baillis* ('Bailiffs') were found in *northern* France and the *Seneschals* in *southern* France and they were fully in place (there were many hundreds of them) by the 13th century.

Both were, originally, peripatetic *magistrates* rather than the mere estate managers they were in England and were responsible for an area called a *baillage* ('bailiwick') or *senechaussee* which were originally tax collection districts.

By the 13th century they had largely ceased to be itinerant and were settled at one of the major Towns in their baillage or senechaussee.

They were paid officials of the central government, bureaucrats (Clerks and Lawyers) unlike the quasi-

military *Sheriffs* in England and held regular court sessions to hear administrative and civil cases as well as all cases involving a member of the *nobili*. Criminal cases were *usually* dealt with at the Manorial or *Prevot* level, but could be appealed to the *Baillis Court.*

*Heresy, Illegal bearing of arms, Insurrection, Kidnapping, Money Defacement, Rape, Sacrilege, Sedition and Treason, however, were **always** referred to the Baillis Courts. The actual Court sessions were usually conducted by a **Lieutenant-Baillie**.*

They were also responsible for the collection of taxes in an administrative sense

Parlement de Paris. Established in 1307, it was the only one in France until the middle of the 15th century and covered the entirety of the Royal lands as they existed *at that time*. Membership was largely hereditary and drawn entirely from the *nobili*.

As France expanded to encompass more and more of its modern lands, additional provincial Parlements were established to deal with the same matters but in the newly added domains ... but the earliest such addition (the Parlement of Toulouse, covering all of Languedoc) was not made until 1443, well outside the period covered by this book.

In French usage it was an *Appellate Court* for the *Baillis* or *Senechaussee Courts* and ***not*** a deliberative or legislative body as was the case in England, though Royal Edicts were not official until 'published' by it.

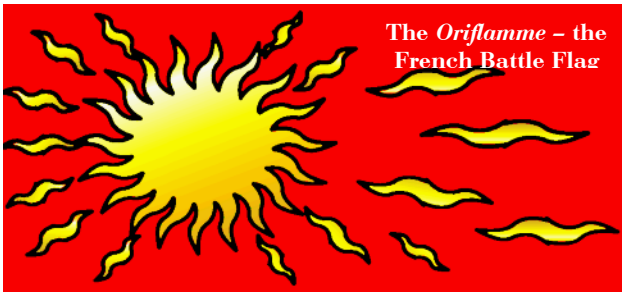
*The **Parlements** could be extremely obstructive and would often delay or refuse to 'publish' Royal Edicts they did not agree with ... usually (**always!**) in the most self-serving manner possible.*

States/Estates-General. In the late 13th century the French Kings had called irregular assemblies of lay and clerical Lords for 'consultation' ... but the two bodies met separately.

However, political difficulties led to the calling of a *States-General* in 1302, and this consisted of the Great Officers of the Crown plus the three Estates ... the Ecclesiastical Lords (the *First Estate)*, the Temporal (Lay) Lords (the *Second Estate*) and the Commons (the *Third Estate*).

The *Lay Lords* were ***not*** elected, they were the personal choice of the King as were *some* of the *Ecclesiastical Lords* (the exceptions were those Abbeys whose presence was called – the Monks selected a representative according to their Monastic rules, *some* of which involved elections).

The 'Commons' were no more 'democratic' a choice – only representatives from Chartered Towns were called to attend, no representatives from rural areas at all (even though 90-95% of the populace, almost all of whom were 'commons', lived there).


The *Oriflamme* – the French Battle Flag

The Royal Household (Maison du Roi)

The Royal Household consisted of the actual *Household* and the officers who administered it as well as the *Royal Council*, which was the chief advisory body of the Kings.

The Curia Regis (Royal Council)

The Royal Council dated back to before the Capetian Kings and was extremely influential and powerful through to the 15th century, though slowly declining in importance as early as the 14th century. It routinely consisted of the following regular members –

The Dauphin (Crown Prince). Assuming he was of a suitable age.

The 'Grands'. The wealthiest and most powerful of the *Nobili* and the *Clergy*.

As well as the *Grands officiers de la couronne de France* ("Great Officers of the French Crown") –

Connétable (Constable). The day to day commander of the French military, ranked ***as*** a *Lieutenant-General** under the King, coming immediately after the *Grands* in precedence and bearing, as a badge of office, the sword *Joyeuse†*.

** The **title** of 'Lieutenant-General of the Realm' was granted to the Dauphin in times of crisis when the King could not take the field themselves, and was, in effect, the commander in chief under those circumstances.*

*† **Not** the sword of legend borne by Charlemagne, it was borne in a blue scabbard decorated with Fleur-de-lis and was made of fragments of older swords.*

He was responsible for the organisation (including administration and justice) and financing of the army ... that is, the *Royal* (i.e. full time) forces and the castles and other military installations that had to be manned (on at least a skeleton level) at all times ... and, to a lesser extent, of the *Arrière-ban* (general feudal levy) when it was summonsed.

The Constable was only responsible for the broad organisation of the Feudal levies ... which operated under the

St Louis's Advice to his Son

St. Louis' letter of advice to advice his eldest son, the later Philip III, provides an important period-specific rundown of exactly what a Medieval (French) monarch felt was important in relation to administration of his kingdom.

3) Fix your whole heart upon God, and love Him with all your strength, for without this no one can be saved or be of any worth.

9) Have a tender pitiful heart for the poor and for all and, according to your ability, comfort and aid them with ... alms.

10) Maintain the good customs of your realm and put down the bad ones. Do not oppress [the] people nor burden them with tolls or tailles, except under very great necessity.

12) See to it that those of your household are upright and loyal, and remember the Scripture *"Love those who serve God and who render strict justice and hate covetousness"* and you will ... govern your kingdom well.

13) See to it that all your associates are upright, whether clerics or laymen, and have frequent good converse with them; and flee the society of the bad.

18) If you come to the throne strive to have that which befits a king, that is to say, that in justice and rectitude you hold yourself steadfast and loyal toward your subjects and your vassals without turning either to the right or to the left but always straight ... and if a poor man have a quarrel with a rich man, sustain the poor rather than the rich, until the truth is made clear, and when you know the truth, do justice to them.

19) If any one have entered into a suit against you ... be always for him and against yourself in the presence of your council ... until the truth be made known ... for those of your council might be backward in speaking against you and this you should not wish.

Command your judges that you be not in any way upheld more than any others, for thus will your councillors judge ... according to right and truth.

20) If you have anything belonging to another, either of yourself or through your predecessors ... give it up without delay, however great it may be, either in land or money or otherwise.

21) You should seek earnestly how your vassals and your subjects may live in peace and rectitude beneath your sway; likewise, the good towns and the good cities of your kingdom. To preserve them in the estate and the liberty in which your predecessors kept them, redress it, and if there be anything to amend, amend and preserve their favor and love.

For it is by the strength and the riches of your good cities and your good towns that the native and the foreigner, especially your peers and your barons, are deterred from doing ill to you. I will remember that Paris and the good towns of my kingdom aided me against the barons, when I was newly crowned.

22) Honor and love all the people of Holy Church, and be careful that no violence be done to them, and that their gifts and alms, which your predecessors have bestowed upon them, be not taken away or diminished.

24) I advise that you love and reverence your father and your mother, willingly remember and keep their commandments and be inclined to believe their good counsels.

25) Love your brothers and always wish their well-being and advancement ... but be watchful lest, for the love which you bear to one, you turn aside from right ... and do to the others that which is not meet.

27) I advise you that you try with all your strength to avoid warring against any Christian man, unless he have done you too much ill ... try several ways to see if you can find how you can secure your rights, before you make war and act thus in order to avoid the sins which are committed in warfare.

28) And if it fall out that it is needful that you should make war ... give diligent command that the poor folk who have done no wrong ... be protected from damage ... Be careful not to start the war before you have good counsel that the cause is most reasonable, and before you have summoned the offender to make amends ...

30) Seek diligently, most sweet son, to have good Baillis and good Prevots ... and inquire frequently concerning their doings, how they conduct themselves and if they administer justice well ...

32) Freely give power to persons of good character who know how to use it well ... strive to have wickednesses expelled from your land ...

In a wise and proper manner put a stop, in your land, to bodily sins, dicing, taverns, and other sins. Put down heresy so far as you can, and hold in especial abhorrence Jews, and all sorts of people who are hostile to the Faith, so that your land may be well purged of them ...

34) Take care that the expenses of your household are reasonable and moderate ...

(Abridged, from *'Medieval Civilisation'*, by D Munro, G C Sellery, The Century Company (NY), 1910)

usual Feudal arrangements and did not, theoretically, require pay or supply for the term of their obligation (typically 30 days, but possibly more or less).

Of course, as he was responsible for logistics ***in general*** *he would also bear some responsibility for at least making sure that supplies were available for the levies to purchase from the sutlers following the army or at markets arranged locally along its route of march.*

Chancelier (Chancellor). The chief legal and judicial officer, the Chancellor was responsible for the *administration* of justice and provision of legal advice to the Royal Council ... but had no actual *judicial* functions.

Grand Maître (Grand Master – Lord Steward). The Grand Master was in charge of the *Maison du Roi* (the Royal Household), replacing the earlier titles of *Mayor of the Palace* and *Seneschal* from the late 14th century.

By the later medieval period the office was *mostly* ceremonial and the actual duties of organising, administering and financing the Royal Household were actually carried out by Secretaries without much input from the Grand Master (somewhat different from the same role in the English Court).

Grand Chambrier (Grand Chamberlain). Until the early 14th century, the Grand Chamberlain was in charge of the Royal Estates etc. before these were vested in the ***Chambre des Comptes*** (see below). The position remained powerful as he was required to sign Charters (laws) and important Royal Letters etc.

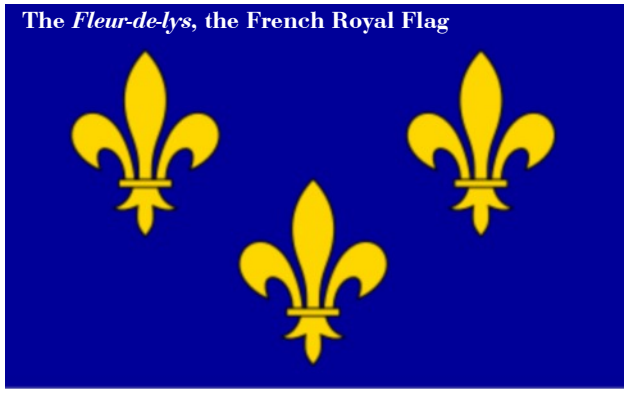
From 1311 the ***Superintendant des Finances*** *headed a separate and separated* ***Chambre des Comptes*** *(Chamber of Accounts), taking over the the Royal Estates, Treasury and Financial administration as well as forming an important Court for dealing with financial and tax related matters.*

The Chambre no longer formed a direct part of the Royal Household and the ***Superintendant*** *was not a member of the Curia Regis.*

Grand Chambellan (Grand Chamberlain). The Chamberlain (a different office to that of *Grand Chambrier*, even though both translate into English as *'Chamberlain'*) was in charge of the King's immediate personal servants, wardrobe, personal jewellery and immediate chambers wherever he was staying.

The Grand Chamberlain had day to day face to face contact with the King, making the position extremely influential.

Amiral (Admiral). An official position since the late 13th century, the Admiral was responsible for the coastal defence (mainly manning castles, city and port fortifications and using land troops in this role) of the


The *Fleur-de-lys*, the French Royal Flag

provinces of Aunis, Picardy, Normandy and Saintogne (other, lesser, but *independent*, Admirals were given charge of other coastal areas).

If there were any Royal Ships in commission (*extremely* uncommon, but not unheard of) in peacetime he was responsible for them and, during wartime, he was responsible for the gathering of merchant ships to form the French Fleet – and was empowered to issue Letters of Marque and Reprisal to Privateers.

His main importance lay in his judicial power – he was responsible for the Admiralty courts and was entitled to a portion of all fines levied as well as to all shipwrecks and 1/10th of all spoils taken in wartime (theoretically including those taken by Privateers operating under Letters of Marque he had issued).

Maréchal (Marshal). This was a title (*not* a rank as such) awarded to Generals of great distinction. Theoretically, if still on active service, they would be subordinate to the Constable (or King), but the distinction gave them a seat of the Royal Council.

Grand Écuyer (Grand Squire). Master of the Royal Stables – and, therefore, for the personal transport of the King and his immediate entourage. The Grand Squire was also responsible for the oversight of horse breeding (and purchasing) for military purposes.

Maison Militaire du Roi

Though not formally called the '*Military Household*' until the late 17th century, there were full time Household troops attached to the Royal Household from 1418 – the ***Garde Écossaise*** *(Scots Guard)*, which consisted of a mix of Bodyguards (Knights or Men-at-arms, or a number of Knight's 'lances' including Serjeants and Men-at-Arms) and Archers or Crossbowmen in Company strength.

Medieval military organisation being what it was, a 'Company' could be anywhere from around a hundred to several thousand men. The Scots Guard seems to have been at the low end of the scale – perhaps a two three hundred men all up (but don't confuse them with Scottish forces, often several thousand strong) sent to fight with the French against the English around the same time period as part of the Hundred Years War.

Maison Ecclésiastique du Roi

The '*Ecclesiastical Household*' or *Royal Chapel*, under the ***Grand Aumônier*** (*Grand Almoner*, normally a Bishop), was not a place, but an establishment of clerics who carried out religious duties and ceremonies for the Royal Family and Court ... regular (and special) Masses, Baptisms, Marriages, Funerals and also the management of the King's personal charitable works as well as those Charitable organisations in Paris and the Ile de France.

The office was also responsible for the appointment of the *Prédicateur du Roi*, who delivered sermons and homilies in the Court, and also the King's personal Confessor (who would often also act as Confessor for immediate members of his family).

Maison du Roi civile

The actual domestic household organisation for the Royal Court, it was divided into a number of separate departments including –

Bouche du Roi. Run by the *Premier Maître d'Hôtel*, which oversaw the provision of food, drink for the Court as well as their cooking and serving.

Argenterie, Menus Plaisirs et Affaires de la Chambre du Roi. This department (lit. *'Silver, small Entertainments and Affairs of the King's Chamber'*) was responsible for the *'lesser pleasures of the King'* which, in practise, meant the design and construction of all costumes and other materials used in entertainments and ceremonies as well as the order of service for such.

*The department became **much** larger and **much** more important in the course of the 16th and 17th centuries as the French Court became more settled and the revenues they were able to extract from the populace grew enormously ... and were used for the 'gloire' ('glory' or 'prestige') of the King.*

Royal Seal of Charles VI



Other Feudalisms

There's simply not a lot available in *readily accessible English-language sources* on the details of Feudalism and Feudal administration in Europe – in fact, there's often a lot more available on *non-European* feudalisms (parts of the Islamic world as well as China and Japan, notably).

Part of the reason for this relative dearth of information is that these '*other feudalisms*' were *either* on the peripheries *or* had taken root in areas where feudal states were late development, fragmented (and small) and likely (relatively) poor to boot.

The other key factor, probably related to the above, is that the bulk of the information available on them is available only in their own native language(s) which, while regionally important, have never had the economic, diplomatic or social clout of French and English ... so relatively little has been translated *into* English (even via French).

A limited amount of information about feudal organisation on those areas is provided below ... but it *is* limited. *Very* limited.

*Some readers of the original **Orbis Mundi** from outside of the Anglo-French microcosm it dealt with noted that **their** Feudalisms were **significantly** different ... and, given my lack of language skill (monoglot English, I'm afraid) and of translated or original works on their parts of the world **in** English, this is the best I can do.*

*If anyone is **really** interested in assisting in expanding these non-Anglo-French areas and have access to local language sources and are reasonably fluent in English, feel free to contact me and we may be able to work something out for a future edition.*

In general, however, you can *'fill in the [many] blanks'* with variations on the organisation and offices described for England and France ... there will very likely be an equivalent officer to the English *Lord High Constable* or the French *Connétable* in charge of the armies when the local ruler is not in the field etc.

***Note:** For **military** organisation (which often, but **not** always, directly reflects **social** organisation), see information in the first sections of **De Re Militari** on the military organisation of most European states from before the 10th to the 14th centuries.*

The British Isles

Ireland, Wales, and Scotland – were largely tribal societies: Ireland and Wales until conquered by the Anglo-Normans (Ireland from 1169-1171, Wales from 1081), after which they are part of the wider Anglo-Norman style of feudalism and Scotland until it began to voluntary feudalise in the 12th century.

IRELAND

Irish society was *tribal*, each ***Fine*** (Clan) nominally descended from a common ancestor (though adoption into the group was possible ***and*** fairly common) and each was headed by a *Cennfine* or *Toisech*. Allied or related clans would form part of a *Tuath* ruled by the ***Toisech*** of the most powerful clan.

By the period immediately before the Norman conquest began, these smaller entities had coalesced into larger *Tuaths* ruled by ***Ri*** ('Kings') of varying rank and with courts if varying impressiveness, but much less developed than those England.

SCOTLAND

Scotland was organisationally similar to Ireland – not surprising as it came to be dominated by a ruling class drawn from the ***Scotti*** of ***Dal Riada*** who were actually Irish invaders (*Scotti* = *Irish*)!

This began to change with Royal encouragement in the 12th century in response to the threat of the better organised and increasingly militant Anglo-Norman English Kingdom to the south.

WALES

A rural, almost entirely agrarian, society ruled by a warrior aristocracy. The most powerful war leaders gradually became Kings who had relatively little civil power beyond that needed to raise the taxes needed to support their warband(s).

THE GERMANIES (AND AUSTRIA)

The Germanies were a patchwork quilt of independent or quasi-independent Princedoms, Duchies, Counties, Archbishoprics and Free Cities – so the size and complexity of their Royal and Noble Courts varied according to the lands and wealth of the domain in question.

The 'Royal' (or Ducal, County or Episcopal) Courts were organised similarly to those in England and France, scaled according to the relative size of the principality in question and usually with, of course, Germanic terminology used for the offices.

Oberst-Kämmerer *(Grand Chamberlain),* ***Oberst-Schenk*** *(Grand Cup-Bearer),* ***Oberst-Truchseß*** *(Grand Steward),* ***Oberst-Marschall*** *(Grand Marshal),* ***Oberst-Jägermeister*** *(Grand Master of The Hunt) were* ***usually*** *ceremonial titles (in some smaller Courts they might only be, for example,* ***Kämmerer*** *or* ***Truchseß*** *... or those titles might be given to their assistants, the ones who would do the majority of their day to day duties).*

On the other hand, ***Oberhof- und Hausmarschall*** *(First Marshal of the Household),* ***OberZeremonienmeister*** *(Master of Ceremonies),* ***OberGewandkämmerer*** *(Master of the Wardrobe),* ***OberMundschenk*** *(Master Cellerer),* ***OberStallmeister*** *(Master of the Stables),* ***OberJägermeister*** *(Master of the Hunt),* ***OberSchloßhauptmann*** *(Commander of the Palace Guard),* ***OberKüchenmeister*** *(Master of the Kitchen) were usually practical officers in charge of whole departments (of various levels of staffing, power and influence) of the Court.*



Granadan Dinar

Higher level Feudal was based Feudal ***Lehen*** *(lit. 'Rights')* were not ***necessarily*** land.

They were normally heritable in the same way fiefs were, though, like fiefs, they could be leased or sold ... but *'lehen'* could *also* be the right to collect Rents, to operate or lease a Mill, to collect Tolls (Road, River or Port), Customs or other Dues, or to receive an income from the State Treasury or pretty much anything else.

For example, from ~1443, the House of Thurn and Taxis began a postal service for the Holy Roman Empire which eventually gained Imperial recognition and the ***Postlehen*** *('Postal Rights', from 1595) to run the mails throughout the Habsburg dominions (the Spanish Crown bought the local rights during the 17th century and Prussia bought the German rights in 1866).*

While similar 'rights' were, from time to time, made over to family members and favourites in the Courts of England and France, they were ***usually*** *either tied to* ***Offices*** *or were* ***life only****, reverting to the Crown on the holder's death. In other cases they were part of the remuneration for the Offices, but, again, not heritable.*

THE IBERIAN PENINSULA

Consists of Portugal and Spain, right? Wrong! The Iberian peninsula consisted of Portugal *plus a number of Islamic and Christian states until 1492*. Even with the conquest of Granada (the last Islamic state) by Castile, the eastern quarter of remained unincorporated/independent until the 16th century.

The Feudal institutions gradually incorporated into what became *Espana* were both similar and different, though, from the 15th century on the Castilian monarchs brought them to heel and, though differences remained, they were largely brought under centralised Royal control.

CHRISTIAN SPAIN

Relatively poor (compared to France, or even to England), divided, squabbling and heavily militarised (much more so than in the rest of Europe) in the many

centuries long *reconquista* ('reconquest') of southern Iberia from the Muslim invaders who had arrived in 711 AD and swept through two thirds of the peninsula.

The Catholic Church and related Military Orders held much more power in Christian Spain than they did elsewhere in Europe – especially because of the significant (and perpetually suspect) Muslim and Jewish populations in both long held and reconquered areas.

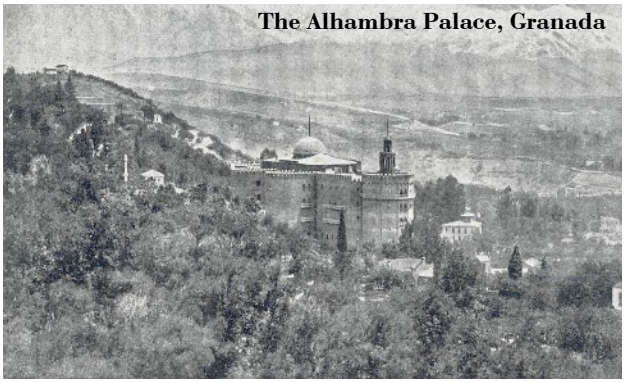
The Spanish Church was much more anti-semitic than the Church as a whole – though the attitudes of the local rulers could moderate this ... but, of course, such attitudes were only as permanent as the lifespan (or politico-economic interests) of said ruler. Ultimately, the position of Spanish Jews was always precarious.

Spanish attitudes towards Muslims were somewhat less confrontational ... though they were generally distrusted because it was believed (with considerable justification) that they were always more loyal to their co-religionists in the unconquered areas than to their nominal Christian overlords.

This general distrust resulted in increasing oppression that inevitably led to revolts of desperation – which, of course, confirmed the racist stereotypes and religious hatred that underpinned the issue. Inevitably, it led to the expulsion or forced conversion of both the Jews and the Muslims ... and poisoned the roots of Spanish society for centuries to come on the basis of 'purity of blood.'

Royal Court structure and upper level Feudal organisation were more similar to that of France than that of England. While the Towns and Commons originally had some level of influence and independence (probably more so than in France), this was constantly nibbled at by the various regional Kings and Great Nobles ... and, under the monolithic Crown of Castile, these structures were turned into mere rubber stamps (as was the case in France).

*The senior and most powerful Court Office of the Kingdom of Castile, for example, was the **Mayordomo del Rey de Castilla.** Most books that deal with the Royal Court of Castille only cover it as it was created by the first of the Habsburg monarchs of Castile and Aragon, **Charles I** (1516), who was **Charles V** of the Holy Roman Empire) who introduced the (foreign) traditions of the Burgundian court – so be warned.*



The Alhambra Palace, Granada

The Great (and lesser) Nobles worked long and hard to bring the commons under increasing harsh feudal rules, enforcing such with great brutality in many parts of Spain ... turning freeholders into serfs. In some of the smaller regional Kingdoms, this was done with little or no opposition from the Royal Court, and possibly with its active connivance. In other areas the Crown opposed, more or less successfully, the worst outrages of the nobility against the commons.

Ultimately the Crown of Castile sided with the Towns and the Commons against the nobility ... just long enough to secure and cement their own power, at which point they quickly marginalised the commons by co-opting the wealthier ones into the system.

Islamic Spain

This mirrored Islamic social and political structures from elsewhere – but based more on Arabian Tribal rather than European Feudal traditions (though there often wasn't a lot of practical difference).

A greater emphasis on trade and commercial agriculture compared to the european noble norms meant Islamic courts were richer and better organised, though the political fragmentation of Muslim Spain meant this could only slow the reconquista – for 700 years (pretty good, all things considered).

Portugal

Portugal was smaller, less populous, and poorer than Spain as a whole ... and, generally speaking, less harsh in its attitudes (though no friend to Jews or Muslims) because it could not afford the mechanisms of oppression and control, or not to the same degree, the relatively richer Spanish state could.

In general, the Portuguese Court and high level Feudal organisation mirrored that of France, but filtered through the Spanish experience (modified by the Habsburg introduction of the Burgundian system) ... on a coarser, less organised, looser level (due to its sparse population and relative poverty).

Scandinavia and Denmark

Scandinavia adopted Feudal forms and institutions quite late, and there were considerably different social underpinnings to what was adopted.

Denmark

The ***Rigsraadet*** *(Royal Council)* was a battleground between the King (who wished to maintain and expand his powers) and the great Magnates (who wished to restrict and lessen them).

The Council generally won. The Kings were forced to accept formal written statements of the limits to their

*powers (**Haandfæstning**) on accession from at least the late 13th century. That said, the Kings were still powerful and could, from time to time, ignore some portions of these agreements.*

Membership varied – Bishops, the ***Rigshofmester*** (*Steward of the Realm* or *Prime Minister*); ***Rigskanzler*** *(Royal Chancellor)* and ***Rigsmarsk*** (*Royal Marshal)* formed the core, supplemented by an indeterminate number of Magnates, some appointed by the King, some chosen by Magnates already in the Council.

Sweden

Royal administration was not regularised until after the 14th century and many later titles did not come into formal use until the Constitution of 1634.

The most powerful truly medieval office was that of ***Rikskanzler*** *(Royal Chancellor)*, usually a senior cleric, which can be reliably dated back to the 13th century.

Originally a stand-alone office with only the responsibilities the King might delegate, the increasing scope and responsibility granted led to the establishment of a *formal* ***Riksrådet*** *(Royal Council)* to assist.

An *informal* Royal Council of ***Stormänner*** *(Magnates) had* existed previously and from the 13th century it included *Great Officers of State* (in order of power) – the ***Riksdrots*** *(Lord High Steward)*, ***Riksmarsk*** *(Lord High Constable*) and, of course, the *Rikskanzler.*

Lesser officials included the ***Kammarmästare*** *(Chamberlain*), was responsible for the royal and government revenues (aka *Treasurer*) and Household in general; the ***Riksstallmästare*** *(King's Equerry – Stablemaster)*; the ***Riksjägmästaren*** *(Royal Forester* or *Royal Hunt Master)* and the ***Generalkvartermästaren*** *or* ***Rikstygmästaren*** *(General* or *Royal Quartermasters).*

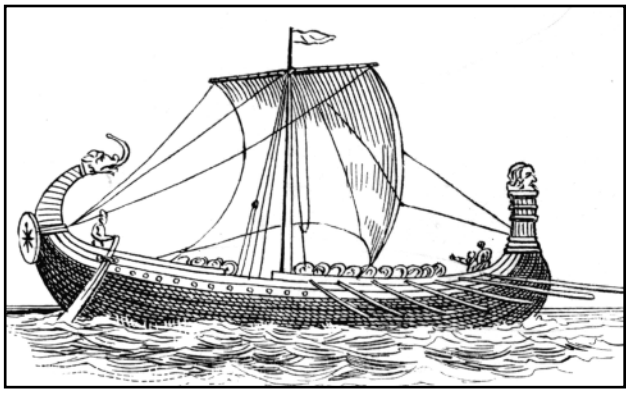
Norway

The Norwegian ***Riksrådet*** consisted of the Bishops (5 from mainland Norway, up to five more from overseas possessions (Iceland, Greenland, the Faeroes and Orkneys – though they rarely attended); the Provosts of the Royal Chapels in Oslo and Bergen and the commanders of the five strongest Castles (Bohus, Akershus [Oslo], Bergen, Tønsberg and Trondheim) plus an indeterminate number of Nobles.

By the 15th century the Council seems to have varied in strength from 30-40 members, and earlier numbers were probably comparable (though information is lacking).

*As in Denmark, Norwegian Kings were expected to abide by a **Haandfæstning** adopted on their accession and were slightly more likely to be held to it by the Royal Council than was the case in Denmark.*

The main officer of state was the ***Norges rikes kansler***



(Chancellor of Norway) who issued Royal Decrees and was responsible for day to day administration.

*The office was chosen entirely from the Clergy during the period covered and, from 1314, the holder of the office of **Provost of St Mary's Church** (Oslo) became the Chancellor on a permanent basis.*

Other Royal Officials were presumably similar in titles and powers to other Medieval states.

Between France and Germany

Medieval France and Germany did not conform to the modern borders as they existed during the 20th century (and, of course, they have changed as a result of WW1 and WW2 during that period) and, from time to time, incorporated parts of what are now the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg ... and French or German based systems of Feudalism and Royal (or Noble) government applied in those areas.

The Italian Peninsula & Sicily

Like The Germanies, there was no one Italian State – it was a patchwork quilt of City States (some ruled by Nobles, some nominal Republics that were, in reality, ruled by Merchant Oligarchies), Counties, Duchies, Princedoms and even Kingdoms ... some of which were actually part of foreign Kingdoms.

While something *like* Feudalism was widespread, it was, by the 13th century or so, heavily modified by the increasing dominance of the merchant classes even in those states that were still (sometimes nominally, sometimes actually) ruled by Nobles ... and Feudal Rights were seen more and more as commercial in nature, able to be bought and sold as well as inherited.

While there remained something like a 'Knightly' class in many of these commercially dominated states, they were now often city dwellers who simply had extensive rural landholdings rather than being the classic knightly class of old.

Government and administrative arrangements varied widely – from arrangements similar to those of France or Spain (and often even more backward than the most backward parts of those Kingdoms) to those more commercially oriented.

Law & Justice

Much of what is taken for granted about medieval justice is, at best, distorted by modern interpretations of medieval laws that read too much into them and which ignore the precedents on which they were based.

When the late western Empire collapsed, its system of (and administration of) justice *largely* (but *not* entirely) collapsed with it.

The barbarian successor states had their own, primitive, legal systems – based on a mix of customary law and royal/noble fiat decisions which were, barely, adequate to provide for a largely tribal society but completely inadequate for anything more complex.

In effect, there was *no* provision for *public* law enforcement in these successor states – which had important structural effects .

Law & Justice in England

There were considerable differences between the practise and administration of Justice and the nature of the Laws in England before and after the Norman Conquest (1066 AD).

This book deals mainly with the post-Conquest period – however, to gain a better grasp of post-1066 practise and the magnitude of the changes it is necessary to give an overview of the pre-Conquest (Anglo-Saxon) practise.

Before the Norman Conquest

Prior to the Norman Conquest the administration of Justice was almost entirely *local* – administered before and by an assembly of the local male freemen (a ***Moot***, or ***Folkmoot***).



There were *some* instances where cases *might* be referred to the *Shire Reeve* or, even less commonly, to the *King* – and powerful or influential individuals might be able to make appeals against the decisions of a lower court to a higher level authority, but these situations seem to have been relatively rare.

Customary and Statute Law

Almost all law was *customary* (i.e. *unwritten*) and was delivered in front of and by what eventually became ***Hundred Courts***.

*These were still (sometimes) called **Moots**, and consisted (at least in theory) of all the adult (normally 13 years or age or older) of the Hundred summonsed and presided over by the local Thane or Ealdorman and acting as a 'Grand Jury.'*

*Customary Law was called **Folk-Right** and was what was normally applied at the Hundred and Shire levels.*

There were *some* written laws, *statute laws*, usually in the form of Royal Decrees (still sometimes referred to as *Dooms*), though there were not any *specific* Courts or Judges to deal with any contravention of such.

*Statute laws were often referred to as **'privileges'**, as they were exactly that – **exceptions** to existing **folk-right** granted by the King.*

*One of the most important developments of **privilege** was an entirely new system of land tenure based, not on inheritance based on rigid and unchangeable rules of kinship relations, but coming with the **privilege** of being able to be passed on according to a written **testament** (Will) ... the privilege of **Book-land**.*

*Depending on how serious the contravention of such a **statute law** was, it might be dealt with in one of the many **Hundred Courts** or, if it were more contentious, at the court (acting as a **Court**) of the **Shire Reeve** (or **Sheriff**). Really serious cases, usually those where both parties were important noble or clerical figures, or individuals backed by such parties, might be heard at the court (again, acting as a **Court**) of the King.*

Anglo-Saxon law was based on the legal systems that had been common in North Sea Littoral (North Germany and Denmark), with some Scandinavian influences in the Danelaw. There was relatively little influence from Roman Law, and what there was was quite late and mostly introduced by the Church.

North German/Danish laws were quite different from the Central and South German tribal practices (such as

the Laws of the Franks) that applied in Germany and those parts of Western Europe that had been conquered by Germanic tribes from those areas all of which had been heavily influenced by admixtures of Roman Laws and Roman legal practises and theories overlaid on the earlier tribal practises.

Criminal and Civil Law

There was not always a clear distinction between the two during this period and it was not uncommon for there to be (to modern eyes) an overlap – especially since Anglo-Saxon society did not have (or was only starting to develop the need/means) to deal with complex commercial matters or social relationships.

Crimes like Murder, Manslaughter or Assault were obviously *criminal* matters. but what about breaking an oath (or a contract, which was seen to be a form of oath taking, regardless of whether oral or written)?

There's no simple or clear answer – or not one that can be definitive at a thousand year remove.

In general, Hundred Courts treated all matters the same – *if the matters ever came up before them.*

*This **is** important – see **Law Enforcement**, below, to understand why and how.*

If they did, the assembly decided guilt or innocence and then applied a penalty ... penalties were usually a monetary fine (even for serious crimes, such as *manslaughter* – possibly even for *murder*), but might possibly be (or include) public shaming or physical punishment as well as declaration of outlawry or, in extreme cases, even execution.

The emphasis was always on keeping the peace – and it was accepted that sometimes the best way of doing this was not by legal vengeance (which might trigger an ongoing blood feud), but by a negotiated settlement.

Law Enforcement

There was no state system of regulated enforcement of criminal laws – in other words, there were no Police.

Originally, enforcing the *criminal* law, such as it was, was *entirely* a private matter – between the injured parties (*and their families and supporters*).

By the 11th century, however, the existence of the *Hundred* and the ***Hundred Court*** presided over by the ***Hundred-Men*** (elected by the *Moot*, and usually local landowners or other notables) which met every four weeks and which had the responsibility of determining whether any crimes, local ones, or ones deemed to be *'against the King's Peace'* had been committed.

This meant criminals could be called to answer for their acts before the Court – but there were no Court officials



or Police to enforce such appearances, and 'enforcing' was usually left to the friends and family of any alleged victim ... so it was still pretty much a private matter.

*And it was not uncommon for powerful (criminally inclined) families to use the threat (or actuality) of force of arms to prevent any of their number being forced to attend – and, furthermore, to use threats an intimidation **at** the session of the Hundred Court to prevent any adverse decisions being made against their interests or those of any of their number accused of criminal acts.*

If a case brought before a *Hundred-Court* proved to be too difficult or too controversial for the locals to handle, or if the decision of the Moot was appealed, the case would go to the *Reeve's Court*, which was held only twice a year.

Appearance before Shrieval Court was also, theoretically, compulsory – but the Reeve had no more power to compel appearance of powerful individuals than did the Hundred Courts ... and he was only slightly less subject to the intimidation of powerful families using threats of violence.

Beyond that it was only a very unusual case that would go before the King.

Court Procedure

Hundred Court. The presiding *Hundred-Man* was assisted by a *Bailiff* and a *Recorder* (usually a Cleric, simply because literacy outside of Holy Orders was uncommon) who kept (minimal) records of the decisions of the Court and sealed any documents that needed official recording and notice.

Defendants were expected to have a number of *Tithing Men* stand up in court and testify to their innocence or general good character – the number required to so testify varying according to the nature of the crime and the social status of the accused (evidently the typical requirements were for 4, 6, 8 or 12 people to make such statements).

*There seems to have been no requirement for actual **investigation** or to hear (or question) witnesses – not beyond the accuser and his immediate supporters. Of*

Assize of the Forest (1184)

1. [It is] forbidden that any one shall commit any sort of offence touching his venison and his forests ...

2. {N]o-one shall have bows, arrows [or dogs] ... in his forests, unless [they have] the warrant of the king.

3. [It is forbidden for] persons to [damage] or waste [any] woods ... within the [Royal Forest] while ... they may take ... what ... may be necessary ... by view of the King's Forester.

4. [T]hose who have woods [in] the King's forest may put ... foresters in their woods [if they stand surety] ... should they commit ... offence[s] ...

5. [If] ... the woods are destroyed ... that compensation will be exacted from those [who caused the damage] ...

6. [Royal] foresters shall ... enforce the assize ... and ... not disturb [anyone] in [the enjoyment of] what the king has granted them with regard to their woods.

7. [I]n each county 12 knights shall be appointed to guard his [rights]; and 4 knights ... to [manage] agistment ... keep his pannage ... [and allow for] the ... King's agistment [from] 15 days before Michaelmas [to] 15 days after Michaelmas.

8. [W]hen a [Royal] Forester ... [allows] woods ... [to be] destroyed [without] good cause ... [he is responsible].

9. [Clergymen] ... [are forbidden] to commit any offences touching his venison or his forests.

10. [A]ssarts, both new and old, are to be inspected; likewise his purprestures and wastes of forests ...

11. ... Archbishops, Bishops, Earls, Barons, Knights, Freeholders and all men ... shall come to try the Pleas ... touching his forests ... in the county [court].

12. [A] first offence ... [shall accept] pledges [from the accused] ... likewise a second offense ... for [a] third offence no further pledges ... [only their] body ...

13. [E]very man ... [at least] 12 years of age [within the Forest] shall swear that peace; and clergy holding lay fees [shall do the same].

14.Mastiffs [with the Royal Forest shall be lamed].

15. [No] tanner or bleacher of hides shall dwell in his forests outside a borough.

16. [N]o one ... shall engage in any kind of [Hunt] at night ... and ... no one shall raise ... obstruction ... between his forest and [private lands] ... [on pain of imprisonment for one year and [a] fine] ...

*course, being an assembly of the male population of the Hundred, there would almost certainly have been 'spirited' discussion of the merits of the case amongst those present ... **and**, of course, the Hundred Men were expected to have a good knowledge of local goings on.*

*Very different from what we expect in modern court proceedings – which owe much more to post-conquest Norman developments (see **After the Norman Conquest** section for some indication of when and how some of those changes occurred).*

County & Royal Courts. These were run quite differently – the Sheriff or King (or Chancellor, in lieu of the King) sat in judgement, assisted by Clerks *'learned in law'* (usually Clerics, as noted elsewhere).

The presiding Judge then made judgements based on the evidence presented by the plaintiff and defendant (usually in the form of a written brief prepared by another legally trained Clerk) and their assessment of the applicability of the relevant laws (both customary and statute).

It was possible to appeal non-criminal cases 'decided' in the Count's court to the King's court – but unusual. Proceedings at either of these higher level Courts were expensive, especially the gathering of expert legal advice (and, of course, the 'gifts' required to bring your case to the attention of the authorities for something like speedy resolution).

Everyone needs to Belong ...

Since Justice was largely local and its enforcement relied on the agreement (or at least the acquiescence) of the majority of the local citizenry in the absence of a state-sanctioned policing and enforcement system, there was an obvious need to have some way of encouraging law abiding behaviour – which was done by the a *semi*-requirement everyone (males, anyway) belong to a group of ***Hirdmen*** under a ***Hlaflord***.

*Yes. This **is** a precursor to the **Frankenpledge** system that is detailed in the following section. The main difference is that this was still, slowly, being introduced and was not yet all-encompassing in the same way as the latter eventually became.*

These groups, typically of 8-10 adult males, were the responsibility of the *Hlaflord*.

He was held responsible for their good behaviour and, if they broke the law, he was responsible for organising the other members of the group (and other groups in the Hundred – and even beyond, if the criminal fled the area) to apprehend them and ensure their attendance in Court.

Of course, if the accused was held in some regard by his fellows, the *Hlaflord* would stand for him, and the

group would stand surety against his appearance in court (Bail, in effect).

Do it yourself policing. *Collective responsibility – which is generally regarded as a big no-no in most modern legal systems ... at least in those states that have something resembling a democratic government.*

Travellers (usually *Nobles*, *Merchants* and *Pilgrims*) and ***Vagrants*** were, therefore, *automatically* suspect if a crime was committed – and often it was easier to simply accuse such people on the basis that they had no-one to stand for them in a court appearance and no-one likely to stand witness in their favour.

Vagrants *were especially vulnerable to such accusations as they were, by definition, unknown to anyone in the locality and no-one was likely to stand surety for them or stand up for them at the Hundred Court.*

Travellers *might or might not be vulnerable, depending on their (apparent) social class. Nobles and Merchants would usually be given a free pass, unless their was actual overwhelming evidence of their involvement, because they were seem as 'men of substance' ... as is often the case even in the modern day.*

Pilgrims ***might*** *be treated with respect if they were 'just passing through' and bore some definite sign of being on (or returning from) a pilgrimage (there were specific items of dress common to those on pilgrimage and pilgrimage destinations routinely sold tokens that showed the successful completing of a pilgrimage which were proudly worn by those on their return leg, so Pilgrims were easy enough to identify with a degree of confidence).*

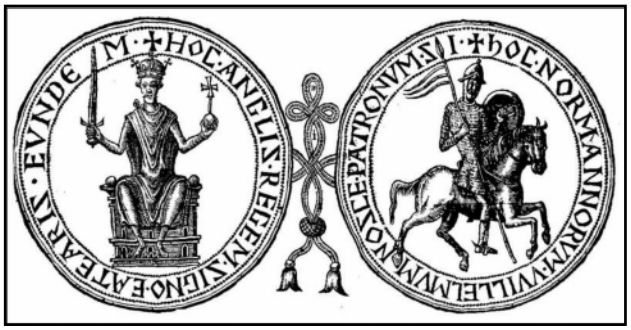
Punishment and Penalties

Social & Corporal Punishment. For minor crimes (misdemeanours) there were a variety of non-capital punishments that could be applied to the offender –

- They could be placed in ***Stocks*** (feet secured) or ***Pillory*** (wrists and neck secured) for a specified period and it was evidently allowable for passers by to abuse or throw (soft) items at them.
- They could be ***whipped*** or ***birched***, usually on the back but, possibly, on the soles of the feet.
- They could be ***fined*** (see below).

The intent of such punishments was to make the entirety of local society aware that the wrongdoer ***was*** *a wrongdoer – someone who could not be trusted and whose word was, at best, suspect.*

In a society where most people were illiterate and where there were no Police, a man's personal word was of great importance, so calling it into disrepute was a ***really*** *serious matter.*



Fines. If an accused person didn't wish to subject themselves to *Trial by Ordeal* they pay a *fine* under the the Common Law *Table of Maims* specifying the compensation due, body part by body part, injury by injury (and social class by social class).

Outlawry. If a man could not find the required number of oath takers to support his innocence, and could not or did not wish to pay the fine they could flee – which was regarded as an admission of guilt.

That is, they forfeited all their possessions and were declared *wolf's head* – which meant that they could be killed out of hand by *anyone*, just as wolves could be

Branding & Mutilation. For crimes not warranting the death penalty (or not right away) the offender could, at a basic level, be ***branded***, usually on the cheek or the forehead (so all who saw them would know of their status).

For more serious offences, ***amputation***, usually of the dominant hand (or part of the hand), ***blinding*** (by various means), ***castration*** and ***cutting out the tongue*** could be applied.

Capital Punishment. The most common means of capital punishment were ***hanging*** and ***beheading***.

Hanging was *not* done as modern executions are, so as to balance the weight of the body vs. the length of a drop so as to snap the neck and kill instantly – the accused was either hauled up bodily with a rope around their neck or were stood on a stool (or similar) and a rope placed around their neck before their footing was kicked from under them.

In such a situation death was ***not*** *by the neck being snapped, it was by slow asphyxiation – the neck muscles were usually strong enough to prevent immediate death and it could take anywhere up to fifteen minutes or more for the victim to kick and writhe their way to a most unpleasant end.*

Beheading was, in later times, done with a *sword* not an *Axe* (as was the case on the Continent) – though it is not certain what method the Anglo-Saxons used.

Swords aren't really suitable for beheadings ... the weight distribution is such that, even if they are very

Statute of Mortmain (Edward I, 1279)

Anyone who gains land (by Testament, Purchase, Lease or any other method) that owed feudal service and dues to the Crown, Tenant-in-Chief or other Tenant and who then refuses or otherwise fails to meet those service obligations and/or pay any monies due will lose all claim to such lands.

In such cases the immediate Lord may enter such land and seize them as if they were their own inheritance within the year, or, in the case of higher Lords over them, within a further six months, in return for the fulfillment of any service obligations or money or other dues owed to the Crown, Tenant-in-Chief or other Tenant from that point.

Though carefully worded (in the original, the above is an abridged and simplified summation) to include any and all persons or institutions who might attempt to wriggle out of feudal service or the taxation system, the main target was quite obviously the Church.

Lands granted the Church by the Anglo-Saxon and then by the Norman Kings had been exempt from such, but there had been no intent than any land acquired at a later date (unless by specific Royal Grant) be exempt – but the Church claimed that it was (or should be).

This was an ongoing issue of great concern to the Crown and was one of the reasons behind Henry VIII's dissolution of the Monasteries and seizure of Church lands.

Statute of Quia Emptores, 1290

From this time, the sale of lands (and related feudal rights and obligations) for money or goods is formally legalised as long as there is no attempt to avoid those obligations as stated in the *Statute of Mortmain*.

This Statute gave legal recognition to a practise that had been going on for at least two centuries – and is important because it was the final break in the link between land and feudal relationships, acknowledging the primacy of a money-based economy.

Note that actual cash money did not have to be used to purchase land ... the seller could accepts goods in lieu at an agreed on valuation.



*very sharp and the executioner **very** strong, they simply don't have the power and momentum needed to take the head off cleanly in one blow ... it can take two or, if you are **really** unfortunate, several, hacks to do the job.*

Axes, on the other hand, generally managed it with one good blow.

There is evidence to suggest that, in many cases, the body of the offender was left hanging or, in the case of those who were beheaded), the body and head impaled on a stake, and left on display for long enough for decomposition to set in.

The bodies were typically not buried in a Churchyard, but on the border of the Hundred, tipped into a common grave with other executed felons, and face down with (if beheaded) their heads between their legs.

***Note:** The death penalty could be, and frequently **was**, applied to those as young as **twelve years of age** ... the age at which children were regarded as adults.*

Imprisonment. This was not an option. Those accused of crimes *might* be held in a *makeshift* prison while awaiting trial – but it was ***not*** a punishment. Once punishment had been determined it was carried out within, usually, a few hours.

After the Norman Conquest

The Norman Conquest changed things – obviously. But not as much as you might expect. Anglo-Saxon laws continued to be applied, and Anglo-Saxon systems continued to work, but there was now an overlay of Norman French laws and practices to supplement, modify and overrule ... which reached into all aspects of life and down to all levels of society.

New systems of Law

The Normans continued with *customary* law as well as some of the *statute law* that had been introduced by the Anglo-Saxon Kings. To these they added elements of ***Roman Law,*** increasingly separate ***Canon Law*** and a whole new section of Statute Law – ***Forest Law.***

Roman (Civil) Law. The collapse of the Empire in the West (c. 476 AD) had meant that Roman Law was mostly extinguished there as well and almost entirely replaced with Germanic customary law until the 11th century when it was rediscovered by scholars.

It was soon found to have mechanisms for dealing with *commercial matters* far in advance of those existing under customary laws and was increasingly widely adopted by the various post-Roman states as society had become more complex and trade had started to recover from the post-Roman collapse.

Anglo-Saxon England had only started to adopt a some Roman legal concepts (as mentioned previously)

but even the arrival of the Normans and their continental attitudes to Roman Law did *not* result in it replacing earlier traditions (as was increasingly the case on the continent) as the local legal traditions were more developed and, therefore, more entrenched.

Thus, Medieval English Common Law worked side by side with elements of Roman Civil Law – and, as often as not, came out in front in the legal system.

*As a **very** rough rule, Common Law works on the rule that **'everything not forbidden is permitted'** while Civil (Roman) Law often works on the rule that **'everything not permitted is forbidden.'** A **very** rough rule.*

Canon Law. Prior to the Norman Conquest, religious matters were decided in regular courts, though they *may* have followed the rules of *Civil Law* rather than *Common Law* in the cases where they did so.

After the Conquest, the Normans split jurisdiction on religious matters to separate Church Courts (running according to Civil/Roman Law principles) which not only dealt with matters relating to the Clergy, Church property and Administration, but also gained partial or complete control over matters relating to Marriage and Divorce, Morals, Wills and Inheritance and Defamation (amongst many many other things).

Forest Law. Introduced by William the Conqueror and completely foreign to the Anglo-Saxon experience these laws were intended to protect the large game animals the Kings loved to hunt and also protect the forests (which might not be actual *forests* – just their normal habitat, whatever that was) in which they lived and bred. It was widely loathed by the common people and the cause of much discontent.

*See the edited text of the **Assize of the Forests**, opposite.*

*Animals **definitely** protected were the Hart and Hind (Red Deer), Boar (extinct by the 13th century), Hare and Wolf and those **probably** protected were the Buck and Doe (Fallow Deer), Fox, Marten, Roe Deer Coney, Pheasant, and Partridge. Local nobles could purchase Royal Warrants to hunt in Royal Forests.*

The Manorial Courts

Manorial ensured the efficient running of the Manor in question (at least from the point of view of the Lord). They limited power to deal with minor criminal offences and only somewhat more serious property matters ... but only for ***Serfs*** of the Manor.

Freemen were ***not*** required (and could not be forced) to attend Manorial Courts ... and any cases involving Freemen had to be referred to the ***Hundred Court*** (see below) for resolution.

Manorial Courts could generally only apply Fines or,



possibly, social punishments (time in the *Stocks* or *Pillory*, for example) with two exceptions (see *Infangenthef* and *Outfangenthef*, below).

While the Steward (or Lord, if he was present and desired to ... and often did at least once a year) presided over the court, decisions of guilt or innocence were the province of the Jury-men, 12 local *freemen*.

Infangenthef. Some Manorial (and some Abbey or City Courts of similar status) Courts had the right of summary justice (including capital punishment) for thieves from amongst the Manor's inhabitants (only, but see *Outfangenthef*) who were caught *in flagrante delicto* (with stolen goods in their possession).

*Up to the 13th century the right included **anyone** caught with stolen property within a Manor ... and allowed the ('hot') pursuit of a Thief into neighbouring jurisdictions.*

Outfangenthef. Less common than *Infangenthef*, this allowed the Manorial Court to apply summary justice to ***anyone*** caught with stolen goods on the Manor.

Despite being late Anglo-Saxon legal developments, these rights were more widely granted in the early years after the Norman Conquest until they were progressively limited and, mostly, removed from the 13th century on.

Court Leet. Some Manorial Courts had, either by grant or by purchase of the right from the Crown, the same powers as *Hundred Courts* (see below) and, where this was the case, worked identically.

The Hundred Courts

If a crime was committed *and* it was *not* (or not *obviously*) a Capital Crime (i.e. one involving the death penalty), *not* a matter for the Ecclesiastical Courts nor for the Royal Courts then it was a victim's personal responsibility (or that of their family) to swear out a complaint at the relevant ***Hundred Court***.

*Because the borders of individual Hundreds were not always regular or contiguous, this could lead to disputes over which Court might have jurisdiction ... and, often after much disagreement, such cases were often kicked upwards to the **Shrieval** (Sheriff's) **Courts**.*

The members of the Grand Assize of a Hundred Court would normally have enough legal knowledge to know if a matter was subject to Canon/Ecclesiastical or Royal Law and most locals would be able to get advice in advance as to whether the Hundred Court was competent to handle their particular case.

Swearing out a report required you declare the nature of the crime and name the person who had committed it before the ***Grand Assize***.

Generally speaking, the accused should have been informed of this before the Court date, but, if they hadn't been, they were expected to front up to the Court on the next session date.

*Sickness was a justification for non-attendance, but the Hundred-Men (or, later, the 4 Knights chosen to select the 12 Jury-men to serve as the **Grand Assize** [Grand Jury]) were supposed to check to see if those making such claims were **actually** sick.*

*Failure to turn up for a Court Session **five** times without a valid reason could result in a declaration of **Outlawry**.*

Note that there is NO Police Force. NOR is their any mechanism for forcing anyone to attend court – and there is NO means of enforcing Outlawry on those who have thumbed their noses at the Courts.

That said, it was the responsibility of the officials and citizens of the Hundred to collectively apprehend law breakers and ensure their attendance in Court – but criminal gangs/families or nobles with bands of loyal retainers were commonly able to flout any such attempts – and few locals would place themselves in danger.

Court Processes. Later in the period the Jury-men on the *Grand Assize* might question witnesses and other interested parties and decide guilt or innocence based on such as well as their own local knowledge. Even later the presiding JP might do so instead


Pleading before the Hundred Court

*Judge **and** Jury. The Jury-men were specifically chosen **because** they were expected to have wide local knowledge and be aware of all the goings on in the Hundred, including criminal activities.*

Determining Guilt or Innocence. Early in the period, following on from pre-conquest practise, the *accused* then had to come up with a number of men who would swear to his good character (and, *theoretically*, one's innocence) – twelve oaths were required, though the social class of the oath-taker could increase (or reduce) the value.

If they could not find enough men to protest his innocence, then he could take the next step – which, in civil or non-capital cases, a fine or some form of corporal punishment being applied.

Frankpledge System. A widely hated development of the late Anglo-Saxon *Hlaflord-Hirdmen* system imposed on the English by the Normans after the conquest.

Under it, all adult males (majority considered to be age 13) were required to belong to a group of 10-12 other adult citizens of a particular Hundred nominally under a ***Tithing Man*** *(literally 'Tenth Man')*.

They were collectively responsible for preventing any of their number breaking the law, for apprehending any who did so and ensuring the attendance of any such amongst their number at the Hundred Court.

*Tithings could 'arrest' **strangers** (and often did so if the wrongdoer wasn't immediately apparent, on the basis of suspicion) and, theoretically, haul you back to your home Hundred. Or simply hold you in **their** Hundred, in a cage or in stocks, until the next **Sheriff's Tourn**.*

The Hundred could also send the case to the County seat where they would be held in similar conditions until the next Shrieval Court or the next Quarter Sessions.

If they failed to fulfil any of these duties they were held collectively responsible and, at least potentially, subject to fines of that varied in severity (up to £10) according to the seriousness of the offence committed.

*If the **Grand Assize** believed a Frankpledge had made every reasonable effort to fulfil their required duties fines might be foregone or greatly reduced.*

*There was, however, the possibility that the Sheriff might, at his twice yearly visits (see **Sheriff's Tourn**) to the Hundred, choose to enforce the requirements more rigorously than the locals serving on the Grand Assize.*

The system was in its heyday from c. 1066 through to the 14th century by which time it was slowly being replaced by local *Constables* working for ***Justices of the Peace***, a process which was completed only in the 15th century, just after the end of the period covered.

Outlawry. If the accused did not appear in Court after being summonsed *four times*, then on the *fifth* they were declared ***outlaw*** ... literally *outside the law*, without any of its protections (such as they were). Killing an outlaw was *not* murder and not seen to be a crime.

Private Courts. Some Hundreds eventually came to consist entirely (or almost so) of land owned by a local Noble (any freeholders owing fealty to them).

In such courts the owner or, more commonly, his Steward, acted as Judge, though the Jury-men still had considerable power to moderate obviously biased judgements or decisions obviously unfavourable to the interests of the citizens of the Hundred.

It was not at all uncommon for jury-men to deliberately make findings against too excessively self-interested Lords ... effectively ***jury nullification*** *(where Juries make findings against the intent or letter of the a law either because they object to the law or because they feel the penalty is inappropriate for the specific situation).*

Such cases could not be appealed in criminal matters (the principle of ***double jeopardy*** *[the idea that you cannot be tried for the same crime twice – a 'Not Guilty' verdict being final] applying) and were difficult (and extremely expensive) to appeal to higher courts.*

Sheriff's Tourn. The Sheriff made rounds *(Tourn)* across the Shire (or County) and presided over a Hundred Court in each Hundred twice a year to hear cases serious enough to be referred to his judgement but not serious enough to warrant sending the case to the County/Shire seat for trial there.

Eventually, fewer and fewer serious cases could be referred to the Sheriff – Capital Cases had to be dealt with by Royal Judges of what eventually became the ***Eyre*** *or* ***Quarter Sessions*** *while complex cases involving landed property fell under the jurisdiction of the* ***Court of Common Pleas****, serious criminal matters came before the* ***Court of the King's Bench****, matters involving* ***equity*** *fell to the* ***Court of Chancery*** *and matters of equity and* ***natural justice*** *was given to the* ***Court of the Exchequer****.*

County Courts & Quarter Sessions

In the late Anglo-Saxon period and the early years of after the Norman conquest criminal matters involving the death penalty or complex civil cases were decided in *County* or *Shire* (*Shrieval*) Courts presided over by the Sheriff and rarely referred to the Crown.

See also ***Sheriff's Tourn*** *in* ***The Hundred Courts.***



During this period these courts imposed Norman-French imposed laws and legal concepts, with the deliberate intent of marginalising (if not actually terrorising) the local population into acquiescing to Norman control and dominance ... and were quite successful in doing just that

However, as Norman control firmed, the Kings gradually became aware that the system was being widely abused ... or may simply have decided that it had gone too far and needed to be reined in and the County Courts were replaced by special *local* courts – ***Courts of Quarter Sessions*** *(from 1348)* to deal with cases that could not be dealt with by *Hundred Courts*, but ***not*** with Capital Cases, which were now the province of the also newly created ***Courts of Assize*** *(from 1293*, see ***Justices in Eyre & Courts of Assize****).*

Courts of Quarter Sessions *were held (for several days, if the volume of cases warranted it) beginning on* ***Epiphany, Easter, Midsummer*** *and* ***Michaelmas****.*

They were staffed by at least three Justices of the Peace (one presiding and, at least in theory, at least one with some legal training or knowledge – there were supposed to be a minimum of four JPs per County or Shire) and a Jury of twelve Freemen of the County.

Justices in Eyre & Courts of Assize

The right to hear capital cases was removed from the County/Shrieval Courts and placed firmly in Royal hands through the mechanism of appointing, from time to time, ***Justices in Eyre*** *(or* ***Iter****, from 1194)* ... peripatetic Judges who did a circuit of several Counties or Shires and held regular sessions to deal with *serious* 'breaches of the King's Peace' (aka Capital matters – those potentially involving a death sentence) and civil matters too complex for the *Hundred Courts.*

These ***Justices in Eyre*** *were an interim measure, and were replaced by a |the* ***Courts of Quarter Session*** *(see previous section) and* ***Courts of Assize*** *(see below)*

THE ASSIZE OF CLARENDON, 1166

1. [I]nquest shall be made throughout the ... Counties, and ... [H]undreds, by 12 ... lawful men of the Hundred and ... 4 of each township – whether ... there be any[one] ... has been charged ... as being a Robber, Murderer or Thief; or [if] anyone [has harboured such] ... [reporting to] the Justices ... and Sheriffs.

*These panels were the ancestors of the **Grand Jury***

2. [Anyone found by such an Inquest to be a criminal or harbourer of such] ... shall be taken and shall go to the Ordeal of Water or shall swear that he was not [such] to the extent of 5/- [surety].

Failing the Trial by Water resulted either in the Death Penalty or amputation of a hand or foot. It was possibly better to forego it and go to trial.

3. [I]f the lord [or his representative] of him who has been taken demand him back within three days he and his chattels shall be remanded under surety until he shall have [appeared before the Court].

4. [If a Robber, Murderer or Thief shall flee into another jurisdiction the nearest Sheriff shall apprehend them and send word to the Justices asking where they should return them].

5. [Anyone taken by the Justices under this Oath is liable to the King's justice alone] ... in the case of those who shall be taken otherwise ... it shall be as it ordinarily is and ought to be.

*Anyone accused by a **Grand Jury** could no longer contend his innocence and have it supported by a set number of Oaths by his supporters – he had to go through an actual trial.*

6. [The Sheriffs must return them for justice without delay, and must receive any they have accused likewise, rendering them to justice without delay].

7. [Where there are no Gaols] ... such shall be made in the burgh or in some castle of the King [at his expense] that the Sheriffs may keep in them those taken.

8. [All Oaths (taken to support a plea of 'Not Guilty') must be taken at the County Seat for all those taken for any of the actions mentioned above].

9. [No-one may prevent the Sheriff from entering anyone's lands to see the Frankpledge or other Oaths].

10. [Cities and Boroughs must also allow access for the above purposes].

11. [Likewise no-one may prevent a Sheriff from taking any Murderers, Robbers or Thieves, or any who have harboured such from any lands, castle of Borough].

12. [A Robber caught with the goods and for whom no-one will stand oath shall be subject to Ordeal by Water without need for any trial other proceedings.]

13. Anyone [who] confess[es] before lawful men or in the Hundred and afterwards wish to deny it ... [cannot recant his confession].

14. [Anyone convicted of the above ... shall leave England within eight days, unless the wind detains them, and shall not return to England unless by the mercy of the lord king ... and if they return they shall be taken as outlaws].

Even those 'acquitted' by the Ordeal of Water were exiled – King Henry really didn't place any faith in the old system of Ordeals!

15. [A]ny waif ... (vagabond or unknown person) shall be [allowed to stay] anywhere except in the Burgh, and [only for] a night unless he [or his horse] become ill there ...

16. [I]f he shall have been there more than one night he shall be taken and held until his lord shall come to pledge him or until he himself shall procure safe pledges ... [as should those who allowed him to stay].

17. [If] a ... Sheriff ... send[s] word to another Sheriff that [criminals] have fled from his county into another county (the sheriff who is informed) shall capture them ... take them and keep them in custody until he have safe pledges from them.

18. [A]ll Sheriffs shall cause a register to be kept of all fugitives who shall flee from their counties ... and carry their names to the Justices ... so ... they may be sought for throughout all England and their chattels may be taken for the service of the king

19. [From time time the Sheriffs will be called before the Justices in Eyre and bring with them any new cases or criminals to be tried.]

20. [M]onks or canons or any religious house [may not allow] any one of the petty people [to take Holy Orders] until they know [where he comes from, unless he be near death].

21. Any [heretics or excommunicates or] anyone [who shelters] them ... shall be at the mercy of the lord king ... and shall be carried without the town and burned ... each Sheriff shall swear that he will observe this ...

22. And the lord king wills that this Assize shall be kept in his kingdom as long as it shall please him.

Justices assigned to ***Assizes*** worked a circuit (originally *four*, then *six* after 1328). The sessions were originally held once a year in each of the Counties or Shires within the circuit, later increased to twice a year and, as with the *Quarter Sessions* they would normally run for as long as there were cases to be heard).

Assizes consisted of a single Judge and his staff and usually relied on the local staff that supported the Quarter Sessions wherever the Assize was sitting.

Since the Judge was not a local (as a Royal appointee), the chances of an unbiased judgement was seen to be considerably higher than in the Quarter Sessions and preferred wherever bias was thought to be possible (i.e. where the plaintiff and the defendant could both afford legal counsel, but where the former believed that there was a probable imbalance in influence between the two).

Royal Courts – Royal Justice

Within a century and a half of the conquest, Hundred and County Courts were being challenged by the notion of *The King's Peace* – the idea that anything that disturbed the peace and good order of the realm was, ipso facto, of interest to the Crown.

While the concept had existed in pre-conquest Anglo-Saxon law and was the basis for many of the statutes (or *Dooms*) issued by various Anglo-Saxon Kings, it also existed in those continental law codes that had descended from or been influenced by Germanic tribal law (such as those of France [including Normandy] and Germany, amongst others).

It was understood by all that anyone could appeal cases to the King at the Royal Court, but this was difficult and (for most) prohibitively expensive to do – so most relied on the Hundred or County Courts (and, later, the *Courts of the Eyre* or *Quarter Sessions*).

*The various departments of the Royal Court responsible for dealing with legal matters tended to move around **with** the Royal Household in this early period ... so, if you wished to secure a Royal Writ to speed up the hearing of your case you had to track down exactly **where** the Court was **at the present**. This could involve considerable delay and consequent expense.*

After the Conquest as the political and social situation stabilised, the Kings became more interested in centralising power, including legal power, so the Royal Court began to formalise a system whereby ordinary people could easily, and relatively cheaply, bypass the potentially biased County Courts ... or even the less biased *Courts of they Eyre* or *Courts of Assize.*

The Crown also recognised that this was a potentially *very* lucrative way of making money – bypassing the fees paid to the Sheriffs or local lords and collecting them directly for the Crown!



So began a slow process whereby the different officers of the Court ceased to follow the Royal Household on its wanderings and settled down in London where those who wished to pursue direct *royal* justice could purchase the appropriate ***Writ*** (or ***Bill***, see below).

There were several such Departments, each (nominally) dealing with a different set of legal matters –

Court of the King's Bench. Formally ***The Court of the King before the King Himself***, presided over ***by*** the King, it came into existence not long after the conquest, around the end of the 12th century.

It was a Common Law court and originally dealt with serious criminal matters (usually those involving the wealthy and powerful), matters not claimed by other courts and any cases involving the King – as well as handling appeals from the *Exchequer* and *Common Pleas*, though it was *not* a general appeal court.

It started to sit regularly in Westminster Hall from 1318, when the King was in London but did not become a permanent Court under separate Judges there until 1421.

Court of Chancery. Originally held by the *Chancellor* in his role as *Keeper of the King's Conscience*, it developed into a separate Court responsible for all matters of ***equity*** or ***natural justice***.

The Chancellor (and, later, the Court) had wide ranging powers to actually overturn Common Law judgements and, in doing so, could set precedents that would then modify all related cases.

*The Chancellor (regularly from 1315, irregularly before that) and, later, the Court of Chancery (from 1345), held wide power to deal any matter where the plaintiff was able to show that the existing Common Law did not provide a remedy, or did not provide an **equitable** one or failed to provide **natural justice** (where the ends of the set processes were obviously inequitable).*

Court of the Exchequer. Split from the *Court of Chancery* in the late 12th century because of the long delays involved in the latter dealing with cases presented to it, the ***Exchequer of Pleas***, paradoxically,

dealt with *both* Common Law *and* Equity and covered much the same legal ground – and there was some competition between the two bodies as a result.

It seems to have been permanently sited at Westminster Hall from its creation.

Court of Common Pleas. Created sometime toward the end of the 12th or beginning of the 13th centuries it dealt with legal actions between subjects not involving the King. From 1215 it sat permanently at Westminster Hall under the terms of the *Magna Carta*.

It was a Common Law court and dealt mainly with matters related to real property in some way.

Writs and Bills. These were (written) legal instruments using *'boilerplate'* forms to provide a way of pre-classifying legal cases so the relevant courts could deal with them in a much speedier manner than would otherwise have been the case.

Writs were issued for all Royal Courts, *usually* by the clerks of *Chancery*. The *Court of the Exchequer*, however, issued ***Bills***, which were generally cheaper and more flexible – but only start to come into use from the very end of the 14th century.

Ecclesiastical Courts

Church Courts ran under *Civil* (aka *Roman*) Law – there was a panel of Judges (an odd number) acting in an inquisitorial role and no Jury. Guilt or innocence was decided by a majority decision.

Jurisdiction. The Ecclesiastical Courts claimed jurisdiction over *all* matters involving Priests and Clergy, even criminal cases, as well as all matters involving morality, oaths of any sorts (which included betrothals and marriage vows) and heresy ... and these areas often covered a much wider compass than it may seem at first glance.

So, for example, 'Oaths' covered all aspects of marriage, *including determination of inheritance* (and *determination of legitimacy of any heirs*).



There were clashes between what the Church claimed were its powers and what the State claimed were its prerogatives in some key areas – so, for example, in England the State took the view that Common (or Statute) law regarding Bastards denying them regular inheritance (without specific mention in a Will) overrode the Church's more nuanced interpretation.

In other areas, local social mores led to whole areas of Canon Law being routinely ignored – so extra-marital sexuality and adultery, while theoretically illegal under Canon Law, were so widespread and widely accepted by civil society that Ecclesiastical Courts rarely bothered with prosecutions unless the matter was tied up with something else.

In fact, so common was adultery that it was eventually, for a time, disallowed as a basis for annulment of a marriage or even for a legal separation in Ecclesiastical Courts (though Civil Courts recognised separations based on such in limited circumstances).

Lay Jurisdiction. Where the Church held Manorial estates, the situation was more confused. The Church would hold the right to hold Manorial Courts, but may also have (or simply arrogate to themselves) the right to extend this to otherwise canon-law matters.

This could lead to considerable confusion and bad blood between the inhabitants (Serf and Free) as the Church had the money and influence to use the power of the law against them more effectively than a mere manorial Lord, or even one of the greater nobles.

*An example of this confusion of jurisdictions is the situation of the **Manor Of Southwark** held by the Bishop of Winchester – an area of land on the south side of the Thames, opposite the City of London.*

It was not legally part of the City, or of legally the County of Surrey – and, at least from 1161, the Bishop gained the right to license Stewholders (Brothel Keepers) and Prostitutes within its bounds as well as other activities forbidden by the London or Surrey authorities.

*As a result, one of the Prisons for the London area, **The Clink**, was in Southwark and not directly under the control of the City authorities, but under the Bishop.*

Penalties. Ecclesiastical Courts mostly dealt with Civil matters – so there were mostly only *decisions* as to who was in the right (or wrong) and how the matter under contest was to be resolved.

In cases where there might be some physical penalty, the rule was that the Ecclesiastical Courts would hand over the miscreant to the State for disposition – whether that might be Capital or Corporal in nature.

This was especially important because of the suppos-

ed stricture (widely ignored in practise) that the Church was not be involved in the shedding of blood – so, if you had a Heretic who refused to recant, you handed them over to the Civil authorities who would hanging, pressing or burn them at the stake, leaving the Church's metaphorical hands unbloodied.

The Neck Verse (Privilegium Clericale). The Church claimed that only it had the right to try clergy, and only in Ecclesiastical Courts.

At first, the defendant had to appear in court tonsured and in clerical dress, but soon enough the recitation of the first line of the 51st Psalm became the key (and even the illiterate could memorise it) and it became known as "The Neck Verse." This was the definitive law of the land from 1351.

*"**Miserere mei, Deus, secundum misericordiam tuam**" – 'O God, have mercy upon me, according to thine heartfelt mercifulness.'*

*There are records from later periods that show Courts occasionally asking the claimant to read **another** (random passage) from the Bible if, it seems, they suspected that they were not **actually** clergy (and, therefore, most likely illiterates with a good memory).*

Women, of course, could not claim Benefit of Clergy.

Where this plea was accepted, Bishops would often not even bother to try the case and simply pardon the defendant ... though, rarely, they might have them imprisoned, demand a donation (fine) for charitable works or require a pilgrimage.

Pilgrimages were usually to the Holy Land for nobles and the well-to-do, and this was so dangerous that the chances of dying from disease, misadventure, criminal attacks or in the wars that wracked the Holy Land, was high enough to make it a fairly potent punishment.

Court Procedure

The Court was presided over by someone acting in the as Judge – one of the *Hundred Men* or a *JP* at a *Hundred Court*, the *Sheriff* (or *Under-Sheriff*) at the *County Court*, several *JPs* at *Quarter Sessions* or a *Royal Judge* at *Courts in Eyre*, *Assizes* or Royal Courts.

They were usually assisted by a *Clerk*, or *Recorder* (to keep track of relevant documents, handle correspondence and keep records) – possibly both, possibly more than one, and a *Bailiff* (possibly more than one) to keep order in the courtroom.

Hundred Courts. The *Plaintiff* presenting his case and providing any relevant witnesses followed by the *Defendant* doing the same for his case.

Since serious cases were normally dealt with at higher



*level courts it was rare for either side to have trained legal assistance **present**, though, from time to time, one or both sides may have had someone with legal training draw up a statement for them to present to the court.*

County Courts. Originally this would have run in a very similar to the *Hundred Courts*, with the plaintiff and defendant personally presenting their cases.

Since more complex cases were normally presented here it was somewhat more likely, but not by any means always the case, that a trained legal practitioner would be hired to present the case of one side or the other.

Courts of Quarter Session. These worked much the same way as the Hundred Courts, with the plaintiff and defendant personally presenting their cases.

*There was sometimes a Clerk-at-Law (the professions of **Barrister** and **Solicitor** don't yet exist) to act as the Prosecutor in the more complex criminal cases, but this was still rare.*

It was slightly more common for the Plaintiff and Defendant to have legal representation or have had their case drawn up by a legal practitioner for them to present.

Courts of the Eyre & Courts of Assize. These used something like modern day organisation and followed something closer to modern day procedure. The Judge was accompanied by one or more *Clerks-at-Law* who *might* also act as Prosecutors, but not always.

It was still rare for legal representatives to appear in Criminal trials, though it was somewhat more common for Civil proceedings.

*The Prosecution and the Defence counsel could read out their prepared cases and both sides were allowed to call witnesses and the witnesses could give evidence – but **neither** side could question them! The only part Counsel played other than to present the initial case statement was to query narrow points of law,*

*Only the **Judge** could do so, and that was only occasionally done. As a result, Trials tended to be very short and even the longest would rarely last more than half an hour.*

Royal Courts. These operated in much the same way as the *Courts of the Eyre* and *Courts of Assize*, but the cases presented before them were usually so complex

The Treason Act, 1351

According to the Act, there are two types of Treason – ***High Treason***, which is being disloyal to the Sovereign; and ***Petty Treason***, which is being disloyal to a subject who had a defined special standing in relation to the accused.

High Treason involved –

1) Planned (*'compassed or imagined'*) the death of the King, his wife or eldest son.

2) Violated the King's companion, eldest daughter (if unmarried) or the Wife of the King's eldest son.

3) Levied and waged war against the King in his Realm

4) 'Adhered to the King's enemies' – giving them aid or comfort within the Realm or elsewhere.

5) Counterfeits the ***Great Seal*** or ***Privy Seal.***

6) Counterfeits or knowingly imports counterfeited English coinage.

7) Kills the ***Chancellor, Treasurer*** or one of the ***King's Justices*** (of *King's Bench* or *Common Pleas*), a ***Justice in Eyre, Assize Judge*** and ***'all other Justices'*** while they were performing their offices.

8) *'And because that many other like Cases of Treason may happen in Time to come, which a Man cannot think nor declare at this present Time; it is accorded, That if any other Case, supposed Treason, which is not above specified, doth happen before any Justices, the Justices shall tarry without any going to Judgement of the Treason till the Cause be shewed and declared before the King and his Parliament, whether it ought to be judged Treason or other Felony.'*

Petty Treason, on the other hand, was the murder of someone who was your 'lawful superior' ... a Wife killing her Husband, a Servant killing their Master or Mistress or, theoretically, a Cleric killing his superior (though that would likely be taken to an Eccelsiastical Court).

Penalties. For *High Treason*, the penalty was death by *Hanging, Drawing and Quartering* for a man or *Drawing and Burning* for a woman.

For *Petty Treason*, the penalty was *Drawing and Hanging* only.

In both instances, all the Traitor's property was forfeit to either the Crown (for Treason) or their superior or the superior's heir (for Petty Treason).

The Act, significantly modified, is still in force in the UK and some ex-colonies.

that it was quite unusual for them *not* to be argued by legal professionals even at the very beginning of the period (when they would have been Clerics).

Attesting. On conviction, especially a Capital crime, the criminal was invited to 'attest' to the involvement of others who had been involved in that, or other, crimes with the assumption they were being truthful.

Corrupt Sheriffs were known to abuse this process and use it to extort money from those allegedly accused ... which could involve long periods in prison awaiting trial as they would refuse to accept Bail unless paid considerable bribes.

Such accusations in no way delayed or prevented the carrying out of any applicable sentence – and the criminal could attest the guilt of any number of people and yet be hung (or otherwise executed) within a few hours as was the normal practise.

Crimes against Normans. If a Norman was found dead within a *Hundred* the whole community was fined unless they produce the murderer.

The system could also be used *by* the powerful against the weak, making false accusations knowing that you would win the Trial by Battle (however, see below).

Judicial Powers. The Judge was the only person in any Court who could *question* Witnesses and could demand the Defendant answer (there was no *'Right to Remain Silent'*). They could also sum up the case once it was concluded (aka give their personal opinion of the matter – and were well known for showing bias) and demand a Jury explain their reasons for coming to a particular verdict, then demand that they reconsider it ... *or else.*

If the reasoning presented to the Judge was not regarded as adequate (or to his liking), they could fine the Jurors!

This would be rare, as the Jurors were substantial members of local society and getting them offside would be counterproductive for maintaining good order which, as we have seen, depended almost entirely on the good offices of that same portion of society.

Pleadings. The accused could choose to plead either *Guilty* or *Not Guilty* – if they refused to plead, they could be held in extreme conditions or tortured until they either died or relented and made a plea, though this was uncommon.

*The advantage of no plea was that in some cases, (eg Sedition, Treason or Rebellion) being convicted resulted in the confiscation of all the defendant's property. It was rare, but some Gentry and Nobles refused to plead and were tortured till they died ... **nominally** still 'Not Guilty' ... so their heirs could inherit their estate.*

*The torture of **Peine forte et dure** ('Hard and forceful punishment') originally involved being held in harsh conditions in prison, but developed into a requirement the weights be placed on the accused's chest until he plead or died (the weights were not added to to the point where the rib cage would be crushed – the accused would be left under the weights for up to several days until they died of stress and/or difficulties breathing).*

*Yes. **Just** like Giles Corey during the Salem Witch Trials.*

It was better for the Accused to plead *Not Guilty*, and Judges often encouraged it, as, *if* they were then found guilty, the Judge could apply leniency on his own discretion ... but if they plead *Guilty*, there was no provision for discretion and the Judge had to apply the stated (maximum) sentence.

Trial by Combat. In the aftermath of the Conquest, for a brief(ish) period, the system was restructured by the Normans to require *any* accusation (for *any* legal matter, criminal or civil – possibly only those against a Norman, though this is not certain) be settled *only* by ***Trial by Ordeal*** or ***Trial by Battle*** – *unless the accuser was a woman* (or elderly, or infirm etc).

*The result was that over half of all murder cases brought in the early years after the Conquest were brought by **women**. Which didn't change the requirement – women (and the elderly [those 60 years of age or older] or infirm) had to find someone to act as their substitute.*

Combat was with wooden staves and was more an all-in wrestling match which continued until only one man was left standing, though either could surrender (calling *'craven'*).

If an accuser *failed* to prove the "truth" of their case in such a Trial, then they would be subject to severe financial penalties for "false accusation." If the defendant lost, he could either be declared outlaw or, for criminal cases, castrated and blinded.

This situation lasted only until 1219, when Jury decisions replaced the system *in most instances* and by 1300 it was rarely used, though it remained on the books until finally abolished by Parliament in 1819.

*Originally, each party was assisted by a 'Squire' and, as part of the pre-battle preparations, these would meet and, increasingly, discuss alternatives to an actual combat – and this led to a system of negotiation between **lawyers** for either side which gradually became the norm, so most cases were being resolved without need for trial or going to Jury trial as a less 'all or nothing' option.*

Trial by Ordeal. This was a pre-Conquest possibility that was continued by the Normans (who added *'Trial by Combat'* to the possible 'ordeals', see above) and was, theoretically, only applied to those accused who



were regarded as not being of 'good repute' (normally Nobles or the very wealthy) or who could not find the required number of people to support their claims of innocence – but, gradually, Juries at Hundred Courts formally decided whether there was even a need for an Ordeal, and the system went largely out of fashion and there are no records of it being used after 1219.

Part of the reason was almost certainly the directive by Pope Innocent III at the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) that Priests were forbidden to participate in such proceedings – and, since they were supposed to represent the will of God, this made the procedure unusable.

Punishment & Penalties

There were no gaols *in the modern sense* – only places where *accused* criminals (those who could find no *Guarantors*) were held until trial or where *convicted* criminals were held until their execution.

*Gaols were **not** places of punishment.*

As with most aspects of medieval government, while Sheriffs were supposed to *construct* (and, theoretically, *maintain*) prisons for the above mentioned purposes, they were not provided with a budget to do so. Nor were they provided with the budget to run the prisons.

*They preferred to think of the pot of money paid by the Crown for everything in their jurisdiction as their own **personal** pot, and not to be spent on such unimportant trivialities as providing, say, purpose-built Gaols.*

The result was that most gaols were hastily (and marginally) converted from other uses – underground storerooms or wall towers in the Sheriff's castle, abandoned fortifications, dry wells or pits (often hastily cleared dung-pits), roughly constructed open air cages (in the Market Square or, more likely, the Castle Courtyard) and similar ad hoc constructions.

*They were generally filthy, poorly sited, and the diet and care so inadequate it was common for inmates to catch **Gaol Fever** (a catch-all diagnosis) and **die** if the delay between arrest and trial was at all extended.*

The nobility and the wealthy, in the unlikely case that

they could find no *Guarantors*, and were actually imprisoned, could (and did, as a matter of routine) *pay* for better treatment – cleaner cells, servants, the right to have their own furniture brought in for their use, better food etc.

This was quite lucrative – and the reasons corrupt Sheriffs encouraged condemned criminals 'attesting' the guilt of anyone and everyone so that money could be extorted from them for better treatment.

Capital Punishment. The actual *form* of execution could vary widely – the only common thread was that, whatever the form, it would be (by modern standards) brutal *and* would be done *as publicly as possible*.

The idea of punishment was that it be ***educational*** and it was *required* that all ***servants*** in the town (or all ***serfs*** in the countryside) to attend executions as an explicit *object lesson* as to what was in store for those who broke the law.

Even so, executions could be a somewhat festive occasion for the public – and it was common to find sellers of convenience food in close attendance to cater to this festive air.

Hanging and ***Beheading*** were ever popular (and are described in the previous section on pre-Conquest law as the actual process had not changed in either case).

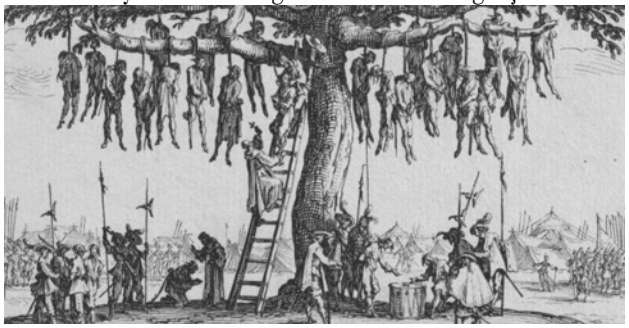
For those who had committed major offences, the body might be coated in tar and put in a metal cage to preserve it somewhat, and it could remain on public view for *years*.

For *really* serious crimes (*treason*, for example), the punishment was ***Hanging, Drawing and Quartering***.

This involved the accused being hung, but only to the point where they were ***almost*** dead.

They were then cut down and their belly cut open, their entrails removed and burnt in front of their eyes (in the unlikely event they survived this process).

Then their body was cut into parts and those parts hung on spikes or poles at key points around town (often above the gates), again as a public warning of the severity and thoroughness of the King's justice.



It was not *required* that those found guilty of crimes subject to capital punishment actually *be* executed. On occasion, the courts could choose to show leniency and merely subject them to "corporal" punishment.

Corporal Punishment. This was punishment to the *body* (though *not* the sort of corporal punishment once common in schools) and could be physical mutilation of some sort.

*It was **supposed** to be short of death. With available medical knowledge one wonders if the subject of supposedly "corporal" punishments would actually have survived!*

Thieves could have their hands cut off, ***Poachers*** their ears ripped off. ***Prostitutes*** could have the tips of their noses cut off or slit. ***Slanderers*** could have their tongue slit – or, if the slander was against a noble, possibly have it cut or ripped out.

People convicted of more serious offences, but for whom "mercy" was deemed appropriate, could also be subject to extremes of corporal punishment in lieu.

For such serious offenders any or all of the above punishments could be applied – eyes could be gouged out or testicles cut off.

There was the option of paying a fine to the wronged person (assuming you had the resources to do so) to avoid penalties. There is some evidence to suggest that these penalties were applied only to repeat offenders rather than first timers.

More commonly, offenders were placed in the ***Stocks*** or ***Pillory*** in the market square usually between sunrise and sunset, where they could be pelted with rubbish and, basically, humiliated.

For example, Bakers who short weighted on loaves would have a loaf hung around the neck and be either placed in the Stocks or Pillory or be dragged around town on a cart so all could see their shame and guilt.

Alternatively, a criminal could have a wooden collar locked around their necks, wide enough so that they could not reach their arms around, leaving them unable to eat or drink without outside assistance for a like period.

In some circumstances the collar might be left on for more than 24 hours straight, which would make it impossible for the criminal to even lay down and sleep ... or, indeed, rest their neck from the strain of having to support the heavy collar.

Whipping, in public – and on the back (even women) or *caning* (usually on the soles of the feet) could also be used as a more "lenient" punishment.

Law & Justice in Europe

The Barbarian successor states formed from the collapse of the Roman Empire in the West brought with them systems of tribal law that were basically Germanic and quite primitive and laid them over the remnants of the old Roman legal system ... almost completely replacing it, certainly outside of the relatively few remaining large towns and cities.

By the 11th century, however, these successor states had developed much more complex administrative and legal requirements – and the beginnings of the necessary administrative structures and legal systems to allow them to support these new requirements.

These developments were co-temporal with (re)growth of literacy and formal (higher) education that was beginning to spread beyond the almost exclusive confines of Church and Monastic walls.

With the growth of literacy levels and better access to education came a 'rediscovery' of classical (latin) texts – and, in the case of the Law, of late Roman Legal practices and Codes, especially the ***Codex Justinianus*** *(Codex of Justinian*, AD 529), the last formal codification of Roman law known in Western Europe.

The Codex Justinianus is sometimes referred to as the ***Codex Iuris Civilis*** *('Codex of Civil Law') – hence 'Roman' Law is usually often referred to as 'Civil' Law and dealt with matters between citizens, or between citizens and the state ... relations between* ***states*** *were the jurisdiction of the* ***Ius Gentium*** *('Law of Nations).*

Educators, Judges, Rulers and Lawmakers in Western Europe were dazzled by the glamour and authority of the Empire (and power of its Eastern remnants) and increasingly based their legislation and codification of existing and/or remnant tribal laws on this 'Civil Law.'

Civil Law vs Customary Law

The main difference between Civil Law and Customary or Common Law is that the latter places a greater weight on *precedent* (that is, on the decisions by other Judges in similar cases) while in Civil Law each case is judged in isolation, referring only to the relevant *statute(s)* – decisions by Judges, even in higher courts, were not (automatically) considered relevant.



Justinian presents the *Codex Iuris Civilis* to the Senate

There is also a difference between the way Civil Law Codes are written compared to Common or Customary Law Statutes – the latter often deal in very detailed, and often very lengthy, specific examples (or a series of specific examples), while the former are usually much briefer and outline general principles ***only****, completely eschewing specific examples.*

Another way of looking at the differences is the maxim that is often applied to Common or Customary Law – *"Everything which is not [specifically] forbidden is allowed"* ... whereas some authorities claim that Civil law operates under the maxim *"Everything which is not [specifically] allowed is forbidden."*

If you're a lawyer, yes, this is grossly simplified, but, for non-lawyers, gives a broad idea of an important area of difference between the two systems.

Enforcing the Law

None of the continental European states were any better supplied with a structured system of law enforcement than was England – simply put, ***they had no Police force(s) either.***

With the possible exception of Spain. There, lawlessness led to the rise of ***socially*** *(though not formally) sanctioned vigilante groups called* ***Hermandad*** *('Brotherhoods') who loosely enforced law and order in rural areas and on the main roads between the major towns.*

While such groups often ***seemed*** *to fade away once law and order was restored, they would reappear when circumstances demanded.*

The famous ***Santa Hermandad*** *('Holy Brotherhood') was founded by Ferdinand and Isabella at the end of the 15th century, way outside of the period covered, and held a combination of enforcement and judicial powers – up to and including capital punishment.*

Enforcement of the criminal law was achieved by similar ad hoc means as in England – local communities had something like a Constable, usually based around the local Villages and Hamlets who had some overall responsibility, but any actual enforcement or arrest normally had to be done by the local people themselves in something like a 'hue and cry.'

As in England, misdemeanours were mostly handled on a purely local basis, by petty courts – based on Manors or in a large regional town – or were enforced by local social pressures.

Civil matters had to be taken to courts organised by the local Tenant-in-Chief or, increasingly, before Magistrates appointed by the King ... and appeals were usually heard by regional *Parlements.*

As in England, there were no purpose-built Gaols, or

Skånske Lov (1202-1216)

The oldest provincial laws of Denmark covered *Skåneland*, which consisted of Scania, Halland, Blekinge and Bornholm (all eventually lost to Sweden).

The earliest versions of the law still allowed *Trial by Fire* to determine guilt, but this was removed after 1215 – unlike the other Danish provincial Codes, there was an ongoing serious level of dispute and related unrest over whether the local ***Things*** or the Royal Courts ... however, the Code is largely based on the existing customary laws of the region rather than on Civil Law.

*The Code begins with the statement **'Med lov skal man land bygge'** ('With law the Country shall be built') – see the introduction to the **Jyske Lov**, below.*

Codex Holmiensis – Jyske Lov (1241)

The second earliest set of provincial laws, those of Jutland, covered Jutland, Funen and Schleswig were prefaced with the following statement by the King –

With law shall the country be built but if all men were content with what is theirs and let others enjoy the same right, there would be no need for a law. But no law is as good as the truth, but if one wonders what the truth is, then shall the law show the truth. If the land had no law, then he would have the most who could grab the most by force.

The law must be honest, just, reasonable and according to the ways of the people. It must meet their needs and speak plainly, so that all men may know and understand, what the law is. It is not to be made in any man's favor, but for the needs of all them who live in the land. No man shall judge contrary to the law, which the king has given and the country chosen. [...] neither shall he [the king] take it back without the will of the people.

Trial Procedure in Denmark

Trials, when they took place, were originally held before the ***Thing*** and involved either a form of Oath swearing (a unanimous Oath as to the trustworthiness of the accused by 12 free men, a ***Tylftereth***) or, for serious crimes, *Trial by Fire* (but only to c. 1216).

After 1216 crimes brought before the *Thing* or the Courts were investigated (which might only mean that witnesses at the proceedings were *questioned*) by a (at least *sometimes*) permanent board of *'nominated men'* (***Sannendemaen*** – free men who owned goods worth at least 3 Marks, the fine for perjury) , often called *Men of Truth*, who had to –

"Swear when they give their oath [i.e. judgement] that 'So help him God that he shall not for goods or for kin or out of partiality do anything which he knows is not right and true when he acts as a man of truth.'"

none intended for holding convicted criminals as a punishment – such facilities as there were were intended to hold the accused before trial and, at most, for a short period after conviction before sentencing was carried out.

Civil Law Courts & Court Procedure

Unlike English (Common or Customary Law) courts, where there was usually some form of Jury which listened to the evidence and decided on Guilt, in Civil Law courts there was no Jury, and a Judge or, slowly, a panel of Judges (usually one being Senior), who heard the case and decided Guilt or Innocence.

There might be legally trained representatives for the plaintiff and accused, depending on the period – more likely, overall, than in England (and then very earliest periods), and increasing in likelihood as the period progressed.

Such representation was much more likely in civil rather than criminal cases, and increasingly likely the higher up the chain of appeal one went, as the issues (and legalities) became more complex.

Judges could question witnesses, including the plaintiff and the accused (as could English Judges in this period) but, as with English Courts, the other parties could only present their case or call witnesses and could only ask questions in very limited circumstances (usually procedural, directed at the Judge).

Crime & Punishment

Denmark. Like most medieval 'countries', Denmark had significantly different laws for its various provinces – Scania, Zealand and Jutland – all of which date, in their written form, to the late 13th century. Prior to that it is assumed that more traditional practices were still at least partly in use.

*Prior to the 13th century, Trials were carried out by the local or Regional **Things** – and they could levy fines (which were the most common judgements) or **outlaw** a convicted criminal.*

However, they had no means of forcing legal matters to be brought before them and it was not at all uncommon for the individuals or family groups involved to deal with criminal matters and civil disputes by negotiated settlements ... and possible blood feud (though the latter was increasingly rare).

The 13th century law codes provided for separate Royal and Ecclesiastical Courts operating under Civil Law rules and procedures. There were ongoing disputes between the two about issues of Marriage and legitimacy.

Capital Punishment was by beheading and the Headsman (*'Skarpretter'*), a Royal Employee from later in the period (or, perhaps, after), used an axe.

France. To medieval French legal authorities it was ***vital*** that the truth be uncovered so that the criminal could be made to atone, as their acts were believed to so damage the nation in the eyes of God as to be the (potential) root cause of any or all calamities which meant that even the most extraordinary measures of getting at the truth were completely justified.

Hanging was the most common method of execution, with decapitation reserved for the nobility. There were, however, other methods for specific types of crime – Heretics and Arsonists could be burned, Brigands and Murderers broken on the wheel, Counterfeiters boiled alive and Hanging, Drawing and Quartering for Traitors.

Germany. The right to inflict Capital Punishment was reserved for sovereign rulers – at first reserved for the King, but as the Holy Roman Empire devolved into a decentralised mess, it was seized by or transferred to the Tenants-in-Chief as part of their feudal rights by the 13th century.

*To symbolise this right, feudal rulers would fly the **Blood Banner** (**'Blutfahne'**), a solid red flag, alongside their heraldic banner. Later, some noble houses adopted a red field as the background for their arms to show they had this right, especially during times of war.*

The purpose of executing a criminal was to offer them a final chance for redemption and salvation (and a surprisingly large number seem to have done that), with a secondary purpose being (as in France) the purging of sinfulness from society for its wider good.

The most common method of execution was decapitation – and in most states it was done with an Axe, but in others a special executioner's sword was used.

Hanging was often reserved for cases where there was a perceived need for the complete humiliation of the victim (and, by extension, their entire family) ... usually for the most socially heinous of crimes.

Iberia (Christian). The legal system of both Spain and Portugal was heavily influenced by, and largely based on, the ***Visigothic Code***, which was a codification of Germanic tribal, late Roman and Church law. It was one of the earliest written law codes dating from the mid 7th century right through the 11th-14th centuries.

*In practise, it was very much like Civil Law for trials but heavily influenced by almost 'crusading' ideals – though not nearly as much as was the case later (the **Spanish Inquisition** was only established in the late 15th century ... and, legally speaking, things only really started to go downhill from around then and was never as bad as the **Black Libel** of the 16th century would have one believe [aka 'cruel, bigoted, exploitative and self-righteous in excess of reality').*



Iberia (Muslim). The parts of the Iberian peninsula conquered by the Muslims followed a mix of *Sharia* law for its muslim subjects and for any cases involving a muslim and non-muslim, but allowed non-muslims to follow their own laws otherwise (as long as they paid the *Zakat* tax) ... and this meant that the Visigothic Code also applied to Christians in areas controlled by the muslims.

*Shariah law is based on the **Quran** (the word of God as revealed to Muhammad) and the **Hadiths** (examples drawn from Muhammad's life and behaviour drawn which are from a variety of sources). Since it is based on **divine revelation** it is not subject to change though, of course, since Islam is a human institution, **interpretation** of the Quran and Hadiths **is** so subject.*

Not only are there major differences of interpretation between the two major Islamic Sects (Sunni & Shia) but there are also several different and competing schools of jurisprudence also in conflict.

*Two important underlying principles applicable in Islamic Spain (and, indeed, elsewhere in the Islamic world) are that **non-muslims** and **women** (both muslim and non-muslim) are **inherently unequal and discriminated against in all legal matters involving muslims** ... this is an explicit part of the Quran and Hadiths (of course, in Christian areas, Muslims were discriminated against as well ... often, strangely, less than Jews were, though).*

Sharia 'trials' are ***entirely Judge-centric***, even more so than Civil Law proceedings – there are no lawyers for either prosecution or defence, the ***Qadi*** (*Judge*) conducts all examination and questioning and evidence is almost entirely oral (written evidence is always trumped by oral evidence – though there is an exception for debt-related documents notarised by a Qadi) from eyewitnesses – circumstantial evidence of any sort is ***not*** allowed.

*Oaths are not taken **before** testimony – they are only required if either party demands it. It is common for participants to maintain their story **right up to the moment an oath has to be sworn**, then refuse ... effectively rendering the verdict for the opposing side.*

Lex Familie Wormatiensis (c.1014)

This lays out the laws of the domain of the Bishop of Worms (an Imperial Free City under the Holy Roman Empire, formerly part of the Kingdom of the Franks).

(**1**) A Bride holds her dowry [given her by her husband] for a year and a day. If the husband dies she retains the whole dowry until her death. If she dies first, it goes any children, and if she dies without children the husband's nearest kin inherit.

Property jointly acquired after marriage goes entirely to the surviving spouse if one dies.

Any property the woman brings into the marriage go to her children if she dies, or to her kin shall if she had no children, unless she makes some other bequest.

(**2**) If, due to debt, anyone wishes to sell any inherited property the right of first refusal goes to their heirs. If someone who holds a heritable piece of land dies and leaves behind an heir [too young to do feudal service] ... [a] kinsman may step in and do the service [in return for guardianship of the heir].

(**3**) If with a fief in the episcopal lands dies, the heir shall accept the lands without making a payment, and shall thereafter provide the customary service.

(**4**) If [a] person ... dies his nearest heirs inherit any goods he didn't bestow on his wife, unless ... an explicit bequest to [others] ... [has been made].

(**5**) To legally sell part of a wife's dowry or personal property the husband must have witnesses of her agreement.

(**6**) If anyone sells his property ... and one of his heirs is present [at the sale] and doesn't object or, if absent and keeps silent for a year, that heir shall lose his rights.

(**7**) Accused criminals ... shall be [judged] by [the bishop] ... [and forfeit their possessions if found guilty].

(**8**) If anyone has done an injustice against a member of his group ... [they] shall make restitution ...

(**9**) The weregeld [for killing] a [Royal Tenant] is £5 – half to the Treasury, half to his family.

(**10**) A son inherits land which owes service while a daughter will inherit the clothing and money of the mother. Anything else shall be divided equally.

(**11**) A sick person may not alienate any property that would be due their heirs, except for a small amount for the benefit of their soul (i.e. to the Church).

(**12**) If anyone does damage to his fellow ... and admits this ... let the local Magistrate and his fellow- citizens decide the case without taking oaths.

(**13**) If a Royal Tenant should act unjustly he must pay 5/- to the Bishop and 5/- to the injured party if a local or an ounce of gold if not.

(**14**) If anyone marries from the bishop's household into the fief of another, he shall take his law from the household. If ... he marries from the fief into the household, he shall answer to the lord of the fief.

(**15**) If anyone ... accepts a foreign wife ... when he dies, two thirds of his goods go to the Bishop.

(**16**) If a Royal Tenant marries a woman who is a Serf any children ... are Serfs ... as are children of a Serf who marries a woman who is a Royal Tenant.

(**17**) If a Royal Tenant acts in a disrespectful way in Court or does not attend ... then a Serf's evidence will be taken as equal to theirs.

(**18**) If accused of undertaking a Feud, the accused must have six Oath Helpers. If the case concerns the Bishop he must have eight Oath Helpers,

(**19**) If a debtor refuses to pay back a loan the lender may demand a Duel and, if a person of substance, may choose a champion to fight for him.

(**20**) Anyone [who] loses a Duel within the city must pay a fine of £3; outside the city he must pay a fine of £10 (£1 going to the Bishop).

(**23**) Anyone who takes a daughter [to attempt to force marriage] shall return her, pay her father triple the worth of the clothing she was wearing, pay a fine to the Bishop and pay 12 shields, 12 lances and a £1 to her family in reconciliation.

(**24-25**) Confessions, once made to an official, cannot be taken back.

(**26**) Land ... cannot be seized until rent is defaulted for three years and the defaulter then summonsed to Court three times to pay.

(**27**) Assault attracts a fine of £3 if the victim is knocked down, or 5/- if merely hit with a fist.

(**28**) Drawing a weapon of any sort with deadly intent attracts a fine of £3.

(**30**) Anyone guilty of intentional killing (i.e. not in self-defence) is to be fined weregeld and the family may not seek blood-feud. If they do so, they shall bne fined and branded on each cheek to show their status as oath-breakers and criminals.

Crimes such as Adultery, Apostasy, Drinking Alcohol, False accusations of illicit Sexual relations (anything outside of marriage), Fornication, Gambling, Highway Robbery (or Murder during such), Homosexuality and Offences against the Caliphate (including Rebellion, later extended to any Islamic state) were *unpardonable* – a sentence of death was mandatory and the punishment had to be carried out in public.

However, *even the slightest shadow of doubt in such cases was cause for an innocent verdict* and not all such crimes attracted a death penalty ... whipping and amputation of a hand or hands (or a foot or feet) were alternatives in some cases.

For those crimes where execution was mandatory, stoning, beheading and crucifixion were common forms.

*However, evidence strongly suggests that capital punishment was less common (and, for many crimes, seems **never** to have been applied) in medieval Islamic states than in those modern states that follow interpretations (literal or otherwise) of Sharia law.*

Murder and Assault, however, are civil, not criminal, matters and *could* be settled by demands for damages – though the victim (or their family) *could* demand retribution ('an eye for an eye'). Regardless, it was not seen as a crime against the state as in Civil or Common Law countries.

Norway. As in most of Scandinavia, law was the province of regional ***Gulaþing*** *(Things)* – but, instead of the whole assembly being involved, a select body of 12, 24 or even 36 free men would be selected to judge matters (the larger numbers for more serious crimes) *or* a ***Holmgang*** could be called for (*Trial by Combat*).

Outlawry *could* be imposed as an alternative ... usually when an accused person failed to present themselves for judgement before a *Gulaþing*.

Later, codified, laws prescribed the Death Penalty for the most serious crimes and fines (usually 1/3 to the victim, 1/3 to the Thing and 1/3 to the King) for those of lesser import.

Executions in Norway often incorporated elements of *torture* and included, amongst other forms, beheading (usually with an Axe).

Sweden. Up until the early to mid 14th century, law in Sweden was provincially based – law Codes are recorded for *Dalarna*, *Gotland*, *Hälsingland*, *Närke*, *Östergötland*, *Södermanland*, *Uppland*, *Värmland*, *Västergötland* and *Västmanland*. From 1350 Sweden became subject to a unified Royal Law code.

*Finland was a special case – in parts, local customary laws applied, but in other parts **Hälsingland** law did.*



Prior to the 13th century most justice was secured by *individual* action – by negotiated settlement between those involved, a fine set by the Regional ***Thing*** or a possible blood feud. Only in cases such as Treason or Sacrilege, seen as threats to the entire community, were there likely to be any attempts to organise concerted community action against wrongdoers.

Swedish laws were still concerned ***only*** with the *actual consequences* of an act ... and did ***not*** take any note of or interest in the *intent* behind the act.

So, for example, injuries inflicted by accident or in self defence were regarded as being as culpable as those dome in the commission of what we would consider to be a criminal act.

All this started to change and the provincial laws written down in the early 13th century (all those mentioned above) transferred the emphasis to *intent* – and in punishing only the criminal (i.e. the guilty). However, even though the Thing would pass sentence, executing it was still left to the plaintiff and their kin – even capital punishment.

Capital punishment, as it became formalised under the Royal Code from 1350, could be any one of the following – Decapitation (with an Axe), Hanging (with the body left to rot for a number of days or weeks), Breaking on the Wheel, Burning at the Stake, Stoning and being Buried alive.

Bullion & Budgets

This chapter presents information related to the economics of the later medieval period as represented in many fantasy role playing games (the period, that is, *not* the economics).

The information herein is intended to mesh with the that in the ***Marketplace*** – to create something more closely resembling the real world as it was at the time where real economics determines prices rather than designer *fiat* (which is all too often the case).

Money and Coinage

During the whole of the pre-modern period, throughout all of the Mediterranean world (and the civilised world in general) money in the known world is ***coinage***, either *bullion* (gold, electrum or silver) or *base metals* (copper, brass, bronze).

Bullion coinage is negotiable ***anywhere***, though foreign issues may have to be converted into the local coin for ease of use through the services of money-changers or bankers.

This is not because of any particular prejudice against foreign coin, *bullion* is *bullion* to a merchant after all, but because of unfamiliarity or, more importantly, the sad fact that many states issue coin that does not contain bullion equal to its face value.

Gold coin tends to be closer to face value (gold is used to pay out *international* debt, such as might exist), but silver coin varies widely – not only from state to state, but even from year to year *within* a state!

English Silver Coinage (13th-14th Century)

Date	Pence/Pound	Penny Wt	Troy £
1257	242	1.446 (92.5)	20/2d
1279	243	1.44 (92.5)	20/3d
1335	252	1.389 (83)	23/4d
1334 (Jan)	270	1.296 (92.5)	22/6d
1334 (Aug)	266	1.315 (92.5)	22/2d
1345	268	1.306 (92.5)	22/4d
1346	270	1.296 (92.5)	22/6d
1351	300	1.166 (92.5)	25/-
1411	360	0.972 (92.5)	30/-

Pence/Pound. The number of Silver Pennies minted from a Tower Pound (~373 grams).

Penny Weight. Weight of a Silver Penny in grams, percentage of silver.

Troy £. Value of a Troy Pound of Silver in £/s/d.

*For large transactions, coins are **almost never taken at their face value** – they are valued by weight and apparent purity. Weight is easy enough to measure – purity, not so much. Purity was assumed on the basis of the **apparent** (national) origin of the coin ... and this, of course, led to unscrupulous people minting coins purporting to be of a well-regarded origin which were either under-weight **or** debased ... or **both!***

***Note:** Non-Bullion coins are rarely accepted outside their state of issue and, if they are, only for their scrap metal value, rarely more than a fraction of face value.*

Scarcity of Precious Metals

Gold and Silver aren't all that common – *far*, ***far*** less common than you might gather from virtually any fantasy role playing game.

Estimates of the bullion supply (*not* just coins, but precious metals in *any* form) available for the entirety of Europe prior to the discovery of the Americas (1492+) are on the order of 5000 tons of gold and 50000 tons of silver. ***And it was nowhere near enough***.

Think about it. European population prior to the Black Death was ~100 million. That's approximately 1½ Troy pounds of gold (about 60 gold Nobles) and 15 Troy pounds of silver (about 3600 silver Pennies) per person.

***Sounds** a lot – but it includes **all** the bullion gewgaws of the Church, Nobility and rich Merchants (even wealthier peasants) as well as whatever proportion was left over for coinage to support the amount of actual economic activity ... it simply. wasn't. enough.*

Throughout the entire classical and medieval period Europe suffered a continual shortage of bullion – the amount of coin needed to support the amount of economic activity was far short of what was needed.

This could be, and *was*, for short periods, be ignored by the use of credit – but, at the slightest economic shock, would lead to widespread bankruptcies and debasement of the coinage to a greater or lesser degree.

English coinage was more stable than continental issues – debasement was relatively infrequent and never more that 20% over previous values. There was estimated to be ~ 20 million silver pennies in circulation during the 12th century, rising to ~100 million in the 13th century

The problem was never really solved, not even with the injection of massive amounts of bullion from the Americas from the early 16th century, until the development and adoption of Paper Money (and the idea

of Token currency in general) ... and even *that* has not been a perfect solution, as you will no doubt be aware (inflation and other economic woes are still with us, and governments have no more clue how to handle them than back in the day).

Bullion Flows. Because of relative price differentials between gold and silver, it was common for particular areas to experience outflows of one and inflows of the other until the ratios balanced.

For example, during the 10th-early 12th centuries gold flowed to the Middle East and the East Roman Empire from Western Europe, while silver flowed in the opposite direction because of differential ratios in each region. This is sometimes referred to as *'the European gold and Muslim silver famine.'*

The Crusades were a crucial part of normalising this situation – the Crusaders ripping out huge quantities of gold from the east, though as often as not through increased trade rather than military action.

However, by the end of the 14th century there was an increasing shortage of silver due to balance of trade issues – increased imports of Indian, Asian and Chinese luxury items (Cotton, Silk, Spices etc.) had to be paid for in silver as the exporters had no interest in common European export products (Woollen cloth, for example).

*The crisis became so bad that, by the middle of the 15th century, the Mint in the Tower of London was the **only** active Mint in all of Western Europe for a short period. All the rest had been closed down because of lack of silver.*

The crisis was partly resolved by improved smelting and mining technologies, increased trade due to the opening of new trade routes ... though the underlying balance of trade issue with Asia wasn't resolved until the Opium trade was forced on China in the 18th century.

Debasement of Coinage

Debasement most commonly occurs when, for whatever reason, the coin-issuing authority is short of money and makes it up by shortchanging everyone else or, less commonly, when the value of the bullion in coins is greater the their face value and it is economically imperative to reduce the actual bullion content or the coins will be debased (illegally) by others (by ***clipping*** or ***sweating***) or simply melted down and sold (usually exported) as bullion.

Clipping. Until the development of *milling* (which required screw presses, available c. 1550) it was possible to carefully snip off a thin strip of gold or silver from the edge of a coin – so small that it would not be visually obvious. While each coin would have a miniscule reduction in weight, if you 'clipped' *enough* coins you got what was essentially 'free' bullion.

English Coinage and Denominations

For most of the 11th-14th centuries the most common coin was the ***silver Penny***. The *pound* (£ibra = Roman pound weight) was a *money of account* (a *book-keeping* value) rather than an actual coin.

Some of the denominations in circulation in England by the 15th century include –

Angel (gold, 1465)	6/8d (80 pence)
Farthing (silver, c. 1300 +/-)	**¼d**
Florin (gold, 1344-1344)	**6/- (72 pence)**
Gold Penny (1257-1265?)	**1/8d (20 pence)**
Groat (silver, c. 1300 +/-)	**4d**
Half Angel/Noble (gold, 1472)	3/4d (40 pence)
Half Groat (silver)	**2d**
Halfpenny (silver, c. 1230 +/-)	**½d**
Noble (gold, from 1344)	**6/8d (80 pence)**
Penny (silver)	**1d**
Quarter Noble (gold, 1344)	**1/8d (20 pence)**
Sovereign (gold, 1489)	£1 (240 pence)
Testoon (silver, 1489?)	1/- (12 pence)

Coins in **red** are those that were issued sometime in the 11th-14th centuries.

Silver ***Pennies*** nominally weighed ~1½ grams (however, see *English Silver Coinage*, overleaf) and were ~18mm across.

*Relatively few **Halfpennies** and fewer **Farthings** were produced as they were really only of use to the poor (who would mostly have used Barter, anyway), most people simply cut a Penny into halves or quarters along the cross design on the back if they needed small change.*

Groats contained 5.8g of silver when first issued but were progressively short weighted and, by the end of the 14th century, had only 3.9g of silver.

Silver ***Shillings*** were not issued until the reign of Henry VII in the late 15th Century (called *'Testoons'*), and were uncommon until the reign of Henry VIII.

They were purely monies of account (i.e. used entirely for accounting purposes) during earlier periods.

The first ***Testoons*** weighed around 6 grams and were around 25mm (almost 1") in diameter.

The earliest common Gold coin was the ***Noble*** (first issued in 1344), and it weighed in at 9 grams and was 33-35 mm in diameter.

***Florins** were underweight for their value and quickly withdrawn to be melted down to make the **Noble**.*

In general, gold coins were devalued/debased at a slower rate than silver coins until after the 14th century.

Minting Technology

The only ancient coinage dies to have survived to modern times are of *Bronze*, though iron and (much later – at the end of the period) steel dies *were* used.

Coinage dies did not last forever – the hammer die lasting for a shorter time than the anvil die because it was subject to greater compressive stress.

Modern experiments suggest a life of 15,000-20,000 coins with a bronze Anvil die – each coin taking 2-4 blows for an impression (less if heated, more if cold). Hammer dies last around half as long as anvil dies.

In a large Mint, such as that (later) sited in London, the production rate could be 20,000 coins per day, meaning a new anvil die and two new hammer dies would be required (on average) every day.

New coins were generally struck ***cold***, normally requiring 3-4 blows to take a good impression, but existing coins could be remanufactured (hammering a new design over the existing one) in only two blows when they were ***heated*** before striking.

Because this was a handwork process *and* because there was no perceived need for a high degree of accuracy and uniformity there is often a great deal of variation even between coins struck from the same dies – though, by the Middle Ages, this had improved.

*Hand-hammered coins could not be made perfectly round because of the nature of the process – and this was one of the things that made **clipping** of coins easy.*

There are also common "errors" such as partial *shadowing* from double strikes that move the coin in the die slightly between blows – which can be so bad as to put two completely separate portions of the design onto one coin in some cases.

For technical reasons it seems that the lower (obverse) anvil die was the part that held the more complex portion of the engraving – the face of the ruler, deity or symbol associated with the issuing authority.

It is estimated from modern experimental reconstructions that a team of two could strike between 100 and 150 coins per hour – though it is likely skilled artisans making coins for a living could do more.

Milled coins (with raised and ridged rims) required a machine (screw) press which wasn't invented until the mid 16th century – and the fact they could be made perfectly round was as much an advantage against *clipping* as the milling itself.

There were around 50 (private) Mints scattered across England until the reign of Henry II (1133-89) who centralised all minting in London.

If caught, the act of *clipping* was regarded to be the same as *counterfeiting* – for which the punishment was usually ***death***.

Gresham's Law. *'Bad money drives out good.'* Simply put, if you have two silver Pennies (say) and one is ~1/240th of a Troy Pound (~1½ grams at ~92½% pure) and the other is (say), ~1 gram at the same purity, which the government says are legally equivalent in value, which one will you spend first? And which one will you melt down for the silver and export?

In effect, what happens is that whatever monetary pressures forced the coin issuer to debase their currency in the first place will rapidly cause an increasing shortage of bullion coinage ... unless handled very very carefully.

(Similar patterns are seen with modern Nation-States who print so much money that inflation ravages their economy as anyone who can trades their increasingly valueless paper for bullion, commodities, or foreign currencies issued by more stable economies ... the US$, £ Sterling, Euro etc.)

Likewise, international trade will become more complex as foreign nationals will not accept debased coins at their face value in any quantity, and, if *too* debased, may not accept them at all.

Sweating. Bullion coins were, even if debased, made from soft metals and, if you placed them in a soft leather bag and *shook* them for a long period of time, the simple act of them rubbing together would rub off tiny particles of the coin ... and, if the coin was of high purity gold or silver, this gold or silver 'dust' could be melted down. This was generally harder to detect than clipping as soft bullion coins wore down naturally in general use ...

Seigniorage. This was both the right to mint and issue coinage, reserved for Kings or independent Nobles or Cities, as well as an allowed for fee to cover the cost of running a Mint as well as a profit.

In England (see table at the beginning of the chapter) the the silver content of a Penny was normally 92½% of the *actual* weight ... the remaining 7½% represented the cost of minting (***Brassage***, typically 5½%) and the profit (***Seigniorage***, typically 2%).

*Continental Mints usually charged **much** more, even on their more debased coinage – 50% for combined **Brassage** and **Seigniorage** was about as far as you could go before the coins became essentially valueless outside of the area under the control of the authority minting the coins ... but in some parts of Europe 'silver' coins were so debased that they had **no silver at all** in them towards the 14th century and later (and were often called, in the local vernacular, **'Black Pennies'**).*

Bullion Coins

Medieval coinage systems were largely based on a system introduced by the Carolingian Kings – using a Roman (Troy) pound of 12 ounces (~373 grams) as the base for division.

A Troy Pound (***£ibra*** = *pound*) was nominally divided into 20 Shillings (***Schilling*** – from Norse or Old German *'Division'*), which was only a *money of account* till much later, and you could mint 20 silver pennies (***Denarii***) per ounce, thus £1 = 20 shillings = 240 pence.

Notation for this system is in the form £/s/d (Pounds – Shillings – Pence).

For example, £2/12/2d = Two Pounds, 12 Shillings and Tuppence (Two Pence).

If the amount is less than a Pound, it is written as 12/2 (12 Shillings and Tuppence) or 12/- (12 Shillings) or 2d (Tuppence).

***No-one** in medieval Europe used a decimal system.*

Gold vs Silver Ratio. This varied considerably over time. Historically, in the classical world (and earlier) it fell roughly between 1:9 and 1:11, but during the Middle Ages early attempts to issue gold coins at a 1:10 ratio failed in both England and France ... however, eventually, by the last half of period, things had settled back down to the 1:9 to 1:11 ratio and the next generation of gold issues were more successful.

*Note that this was the official ratio for **bullion**, not for coinage, though issuing authorities tried to pretend it was for both, which gave rise to problems (such as those mentioned immediately above) – the actual ratio to **coinage** varied even more wildly due to the effects of **debasement** and **Gresham's Law**.*

The various relative value figures given in the body text and sidebars are entirely notional ... though theoretically applicable for transactions of an official nature.

Precious Gems

***No-one** in Europe or the Mediterranean world used precious or semi-precious stones as **currency**.*

*They did not come in standard sizes or weights and assessing their value was difficult even for the tiny number of people who might have had some experience with doing so – especially as **faceting** had not yet come into widespread use and the types of gems deemed most valuable **today** were often not worth much at all when all that could be done was to polish them.*

*You **could** try and **barter** precious and semi-precious stones – but, if they're **really** valuable, you will find it difficult to find a buyer except in the biggest cities (and maybe so even there).*

Moneychanging

*"[The] silver [pennies] of **Montpellier** [are] so good that an examined pound failed of full measure by one penny or two at most. The same for the silver of **Flanders** whence the pound failed by four pence.*

*Silver of **Verona**, the pound usually lacked twelve pence. The silver of **Valencia** failed by eight pence; silver of **Pampelona**, the pound lacked two pence.*

*Concerning the denarii of **Venice**: a pound was under weight only by one penny. The same for the money of **Genoa**.*

*The legal money of **Cologne**: a pound lacked six pence. The false money of **Cologne**: whence a pound failed by three shillings.*

*The **Brussels pound** is commonly short three shillings. The **Marseilles pound** lacks six pence.*

But in these things the money-changer is watchful so that he may buy a pound of whatever silver he pleases according to what returns a better profit to himself rather than to what will redound to the profit of the king, wherefore the latter receives a fixed payment of ten pounds.

Wherefore, whether the money-changer is industrious or not the profit and not the loss will be the king's. But the king will not suffer from lack of diligence.

Moreover, from silver vessels the money-changer receives thirteen pence for each pound; and similarly from gold vessels. And if these vessels are intact and exposed for sale, what can be sold for profit over and above the weight ought to be sold.

And likewise concerning the profit on gold vessels when a gold cup is sometimes worth more than its weight by twenty shillings, or one mark, or ten shillings."

– From: Hubert Hall, ed., *"The Red Book of the Exchequer"*, (London: HMSO, 1896), p. 979

As you can see, the face value of coins was often nominal, and changing money from foreign denominations to local ones was often a complex process. In this case, the moneychangers get a fixed fee only if they do not make a loss for the Crown, but the Crown receives all profits made. Caveat Moneychanger!

In general, the Moneychanger was responsible for assessing the value of the coin in terms of either the local currency or bullion.

By no means all of them worked for the Crown (as in the example above), many operated as freelancers, often a sideline for Goldsmiths, and provided limited banking and financial facilities as well.

More Coinage Denominations

France

3 Deniers	1 Liard
12 Deniers	1 Sol/Sou
20 Sols/Sou	1 Livre
1 Livre Tournois* ('Pounds')	1 Écu ('Crown')

** The value of the Écu varied over time – 20s in the late 13th century, but 22/6 by the late 14th century for the same weight of gold. The weight coins and their precious metal content declined steadily – and with greater rapidity than in England.*

*From time to time, the Crown would issue a new **type** of coin (often with the same face value as older, debased, types) with a higher precious metal content than the older coins, but lower than what it should technically have been – and then the whole debasement process would begin all over again.*

This was, as in English system, based on the Carolingian system of *Denarius (denier) – Shilling (Sol) – Librum (Livre)* and the 12 Denier = 1 Sol/Sou and 20 Sol/Sou = 1 Pound (of silver) was the same in both.

Coin denominations issued included –

Angel (Gold, 1225?)	12/6d (150 pence)
Angel (gold, 1250?)	25/- (300 pence)
Demi Sol (silver)	6d
Denier (silver)	1d
Double Sol (silver)	2/- (24 pence)
Écu (gold, from 1266)	£1 (240 pence)
Écu (gold, from 1385)	£½/6d (270 pence)
Gros Tournois (silver, 1226)	2/- (24 pence)
Livre Tournois (*"Franc"*) (gold)	£1 (240 pence)
Obole (silver)	½d
Petit Tournois (silver, 1295)	6d
Pite (silver)	¼d
Sol (silver)	1/- (12 pence)

The ***Denier*** massed 1.65 g and was approximately 20 mm in diameter.

The ***Livre Tournois*** (*'Livre minted in Tours'*) was adopted as the official French coinage *weight* from the late 13th century (there were no actual Livre *coins* of any sort until the end of the 13th century). It was often referred to as a 'Franc' as part of the title of the King was *'Francorum Rex'* (*King of the French*).

Obole and Piste coins were uncommon for the same reason that Ha'pennies and Farthings were in England – they were only really of use to the poor. If the wealthy needed small change they'd simply cut up a Denier.

*The **Livre Parisis** ('Livre minted in Paris') was the other major coinage base in France, and the ratio between the two was 4 Livre Parisis = 5 Livres Tournois. It was obsolete as a coinage weight by the second quarter of the 14th century, though it persisted as a unit of account in and around the City of Paris right through to the 17th century.*

The Germanies

As noted elsewhere, the ongoing meltdown that was the Holy Roman Empire had no centralised coin issuing authority for most of this period. The most common coin was the ***silver Pfennig*** *('Penny'* – from the same root word as the English 'Penny'), but other denominations were issued from time to time and place to place –

Double Schilling (silver, 1380)	24d (24 pence)
Groschen (silver, 1338)	10d (10 pence)
Groschen (silver, 1368)	12d (14 pence)
Grosspfennig (silver)	2½d
Pfenning (silver)	1d
Schilling (silver)	6d
Schilling (silver)	12d (24 pence)

Note: *Duplicate names with different values were issued by different cities or princely states.*

German silver pennies rapidly debased from the last issue of sovereign HRE silver coins in the last quarter of the 13th century ... and by the end of the 14th century had no more than 50% by weight of silver and, as often as not, ***no silver at all*** (so called 'black silver' – ***Deniers noirs***).

Spanish Coinage

The basic Spanish silver coins were the ***Sueldo*** (silver) and ***Dinero*** (copper, with a silver wash), with 12d = 1s.

*Portuguese **Soldo** and **Dinheiro**, respectively. They also minted silver **Mealha** (½d), **Tornês**, (5/6d) and **Reales** (10 Soldo). At the very end of the period they also issued the **Real Branco** worth 70 Soldo, which also became the standard money of account.*

The basic gold coin was the ***Maravedi***, based on the gold ***Dinar*** minted by the Almoravids, initially almost 4 grams of gold in the mid 12th century (worth *15 Sueldo*) it was down to a mere 1 gram by the third quarter of the 13th century and, finally, converted to a silver coin (3.67g of silver in a 8g coin) before the end of the 13th century, worth *30 Dinero* (2/6d).

*The Portuguese minted gold **Marabtino** (15 Soldo, at least initially).*

From the mid 14th century Spain minted gold ***Reales*** ('Royals') which were worth 3 *Maravedi de Plata* (45 *Sueldo* – there was a difference between Maravedi *coins* and *Maravedi de Plata*, which was a money of account and worth *15 Sueldo*).

Feudal Dues and Taxes

Medieval governments were run on a mix of *personal (mostly estate-linked)* revenues, residual feudal dues collected from those below them in the feudal hierarchy, fees for (often nominal) service and a variety of feudal prerogatives.

*Records from the English Treasury in the 12th century show that ~40% came from Estate income (there were over **1400** Royal Manors in the Domesday Book!), 16% from Feudal Rights, 14% from Taxes and 12% from Court and Legal fees. By the end of the century, Estate income was down to 37%, Feudal Rights up to 25%, Taxation almost unchanged at 15% and Court & Legal fees up slightly to 14%.*

English Royal Revenues. Estimated revenue in 1284 was ~£26828 (£13000 was Estate revenue and £8000 Customs dues. The remainder was from miscellaneous sources such as those mentioned above).

French Royal Revenues. Estimated revenue was £20,178 Tournois (~£13000 sterling) from Royal Domains plus £30-60,000 Tournois (£19500-39000 sterling) in **1179;** £24607 Tournois (~£16000 sterling) from Royal Domains plus £115136 Tournois (£45000 sterling) in **1203** and £73,657 Tournois (~£48000 sterling) from Royal Domains and £194,898 Tournois (£57000 sterling) in **1221** (after the conquest of Normandy and Touraine).

Total French Royal revenues in 1286 were £605,000 (£400,000 sterling).

If this income was inadequate (and it *was*, right from the beginning) the Crown was forced to rely on increasingly desperate stopgaps – mostly *novel* (and unpopular) *nominal* "fee for service" charges, new tolls, market dues or anything that could be 'monetised.'

The other option was to ask Parliament (for those states that *had* one) for the right to gather an *extraordinary tax* which almost always involved making trade-offs *with* Parliament on matters that the crown generally did not *want* to make concessions on.

Medieval kings preferred to avoid this if at all possible.

Feudal Dues

This section provides information on a wide selection of the taxes levied in the Feudal Kingdoms of England and France during the medieval period.

These, or very similar taxes, were still applicable in the 15th century, which is the baseline background for this sourcebook.

Similar types of exactions were used throughout the medieval west, with considerable variation.



Aids

This was the most nebulous, and varied, of all the medieval taxes since it was based on the *homage* and *fealty* that vassals owed the King. In effect, it was a sort of "loyalty" payment with wide compass.

*Historical evidence indicates the idea of feudal **Aids** originated in Norman France, spread to England after the Conquest, and to Italy through Norman held Sicily and southern France.*

While there were similar payments recorded in the Germanies, they seem to never have been formalised or, indeed, made compulsory ... and there is no evidence to connect them with the original Norman developments.

*After **Magna Carta**, English Kings were limited to Aids for Marriage, Knighthood and Relief from the nobility and the wealthy townsmen. Guardianship and Wardship were allowed, but under strict financial constraints. They could **still** levy **Corvee** on the peasantry, though.*

Crusade. Mounting a Crusade, even considering many of the participants would at least partly, if not fully, self-fund, was *expensive* – and an excuse to sting the nobility, towns and peasantry for as big a chunk of the expense as you felt you could squeeze from them.

If the Crusade was overseas (in the Holy Land, for example), and not all were, then the Crown was usually on the hook for payments to organise the bulk of the shipping involved ... though richer Nobles would probably hire their own ships, this would be made easier by the amount of shipping attracted by Royal organisation and payments.

Then, of course, there were bribes and fees that, inevitably, had to be organised to keep the chosen route as

free from interference by the locals and local authorities as possible – and military supplies had to be made available, as did food and other consumables, and some of that expense had to be borne by the King.

Guardianship. The King was the formal guardian of all underage heirs to feudal estates and was responsible for estate management. In return for this onerous duty (sarcasm) he levied a fee equal to ... guess what? Yep. The *entire annual income* of the estates. Of course, the ward *would* be brought up in the Royal Court at the Royal expense, but, in effect, they were made to pay through the nose for the "privilege."

*A male heir could theoretically inherit at age 21, but sometimes the King would delay that until they paid a much greater than normal **Relief**.*

Knight Service. The ceremonies and celebrations related to the knighting of a noble son were as expensive as those for the marriage of a noble daughter – so, as with ***Marriage*** *(below)*, you passed down the cost as much as possible to your vassals (who passed it down as much as possible, ultimately, to the peasantry). This was normally only for the ceremonies involved with the Knighting of the first son.

Marriage. Noble marriages were expensive – dowries, celebrations, food, accommodation etc. all cost. So passing off part of the expenses to you Vassals was a cost saver. This was normally applied only for the marriage of the *eldest* daughter.

Purveyance. The right of the King and his household to be lodged at a vassal's estate *at the vassal's expense*. By the 15th century this was *usually* limited to once per year, for a set number of people for a set period of time.

*Queen Elizabeth I (**way** outside the period) is known to have **deliberately** stayed for extended periods with nobles she thought were plotting against her so that the financial burden of the presence of the royal household would be so onerous they would take years to recover and, of course, be unable to undertake the expensive business of plotting treason while they did so!|*



Ransom. This was, from time to time, levied when the feudal overlord was taken captive (usually in Battle) to pay his ransom ... which could be quite substantial.

*For example, Richard Coeur de Lion was ransomed for 150,000 Marks (£100,000) – **most** of which was paid. This was an astounding sum at the time, and it was regarded as equally astounding that the English Kingdom could raise (most) of such an enormous sum!*

Relief. This was a payment by the heir to a feudal estate to the King to formally approve of it being passed on to them. There was no specific amount, but a year's income from one's estates was normal – but, depending on how cash-strapped the King was, it could range *upwards* to as much as *five years income.*

Magna Carta set *Relief* at £100 for a *noble's estate* (belonging to anyone greater than the rank of Knight) and at £5 for a ***Knight's Fee***.

This was not as straightforward as it might seem – nobles and knights often had more than one estate, and the appropriate fee would have to be paid for each of them.

As time passed, certainly by the 15th century, it was customary to assess an estate according to how many ***Knight's fees*** it was the estimated to be the equivalent of and levy Relief according to that measure.

Serjeanty (Lesser). The exact nature of this status seems to have varied widely from time to time and place to place. In England it was a status less than a Knight, but greater than a Freeman – like a Knight, the Serjeant was given a ***fief*** for feudal service – this *might* be mounted (as Mounted Infantry or Archers or Light Cavalry) or might be as (armoured) Infantry like the Men-at-Arms of a Noble's retinue.

Depending on the exact nature of the grant they might owe the same number of days of service as a Knight (and that might end up subdivided as their lands were sold off or divided for inheritance) *or* they might owe a less number of days from the get go.

Apart from the different equipment required, *Serjeants*, unlike *Knights*, did not owe ***Scutage***.

Serjeanty proved to be relatively ephemeral in England – it was almost completely gone by the last quarter of the 13th century, by which time most had been converted either to Knight's Fees or to Socage tenure even though it continued to exist as a legal term until the Restoration.

Wardship. This applied where the heir (or *widow*) was female – the King had the right to determine who she

would marry. This could be ***very*** profitable as this could be put off for many years over the *theoretical* age of majority *because* the heir was female – and, of course, the right to marry the heiress could be ***sold***.

On occasion, heiresses and widows would marry quickly on the death of their father or husband in a deliberate attempt to avoid this royal rip-off process, and could get into severe trouble with the King.

*However, in reality, there was little the King **could** do if they stuck by their guns. Fines could be levied, though these would be less than the King would have been able to secure if he had been able to gain direct control of the heiress/widow and her estate for any length of time.*

Obligations

Arrière-ban. A general military levy of the inhabitants of either a specific area or of the whole nation – normally each family was required to provide one male, equipped for military service, for 30-90 days.

There were usually gradations of calls – most would only involve a portion of the Knights and Sergeants (Mounted and Foot), supplemented by the Yeomanry (Infantry, often Archers if in England) if there was a greater need – the entire community wouldn't be called on unless there was an immediate and severe emergency situation.

*In Anglo-Saxon England the **Fyrd** was the body called out for military service – but by the 11th century this was mostly what was called the **Select Fyrd**, the Thegns and Huscarles (Nobles and professional warriors) who were expected to have a sword, shield, spear, mail shirt and helm at the very minimum ... most would have been infantry, though some may have had horses and operated as Mounted Infantry. The **Great Fyrd** was only called out as a desperation measure.*

*After the Conquest, there was a melding of the **Fyrd** and the **Arrière-ban**, but the two were still somewhat separate as late as 1101-1102.*

This also involved Fortress garrison (***Castle Guard***) duties in peacetime (or nominal peacetime in the more unsettled areas – such as the Welsh and Scottish Marches for the English) for a rotating portion of the Knights and Sergeants for any castles belonging to their overlord over the course of a year ... usually only for a fraction of their overall duty obligation.

As the period progressed and Knight's Fees might be split up by inheritance or sale, the overall obligation would be split between the subdivided parts of a Fee, so the holder may only be obligated for a portion of the 30-90 day requirement.

Avera. Services performed in lieu of a money payment – normally something to do with providing a horse

On Heriots and Reliefs, c. 1016-1035

Heriots

An **Eorl's** Heriot is 8 horses (4 saddled, 4 unsaddled), 4 Helmets, 4 coats of Mail, 8 Spears, 8 Shields, 4 swords and £25. ...

A ***King's Thegn*** ... those who are nearest to him, 4 horses (2 saddled, two unsaddled), 2 Swords, 4 Spears, 4 Shields, a Helmet, Mail Coat and £6/5/-

A ***medial Thegn***, a horse, his trappings, arms and £2.

A ***King's Thegn*** *among the Danes*, £4 ... but, if he have further relation to the king, 2 horses (1 saddled), 1 Sword, 2 Spears, 2 shields and £6/5/- ... he who is of less means, £2.

Relief

The ***Relief*** of a ***Count***, *which belongs to the king*, is 8 horses (4 saddled and bridled plus 2 Palfreys and 2 Post horses with reins and bridles), 4 Breastplates, 4 Helmets, 4 Lances, 4 Shields and 4 swords.

The relief of a ***Baron*** is 4 horses (2 saddled and bridled plus a Palfrey and a Post Horse with reins and bridles), 2 Breastplates, 2 Shields, 2 Helmets, 2 Lances, 2 swords.

The relief of a ***Vavasor*** (the tenant of a Baron, with tenants under him), *to his liege lord*, is a horse which belonged to his father on the day of the latter's death; a Breastplate, Helmet, Shield, Lance and Sword *or* £5 in money.

The relief of a ***Villein*** is his best animal, whether it be an Ox or Horse.

The relief of him who holds land at an annual rent (***Freeman***) shall be a year's rent.

*After Magna Carta Relief was set at a year's profit from an Estate for a Tenant-in-Chief or a quarter of a year's profit for a lesser Tenant. There was an exception for under-age heirs (see **Wardship**, however) who, according to the Charter, did not have to pay Relief when they came of age.*

*Note, however, that King John repudiated the Magna Carta's provisions and that later Kings did not necessarily adhere to specific provisions – the importance of the Charter was that it laid out an understood legal framework on which later rulers were **expected** (and, increasingly, **constrained**) to follow.*

***Note:** This law of King Canute, which is pre-Norman Conquest, has both the traditional Germanic cum Anglo-Saxon **Heriot** alongside the new-fangled **Relief** of continental style feudalism that was being slowly imported into England. This split system probably continued at least for a period after 1066.*

(and rider/handler) for either carriage of goods (or messages) or ploughing (possibly for either or both).

The service obligation was for a specified number of *days* per year.

It is possible the service may have included the use of a cart or waggon ... or the horse(s) provided may have been used to pull a cart or waggon provided by the lord.

Chevage. A precursor, in some ways, to the ***Poll Tax*** (see following), but paid only by *serfs and villeins* to their overlord ***or*** by *Jews* to the King.

The later Poll Tax was 4d per head and Jews paid chevage of 3d per head, so it is likely that pre-Poll Tax chevage levied on villeins was less than both.

Corvee. Peasants were obliged to work for three days of each week on the Lord's land (no work on Sunday) or an unspecified number of days each year (usually between planting and harvesting) on Royal requirements (such as repairing Royal Highways).

During harvest this was increased by ***Boon Work*** to four or even five days a week until the ***Lord's*** lands had been harvested.

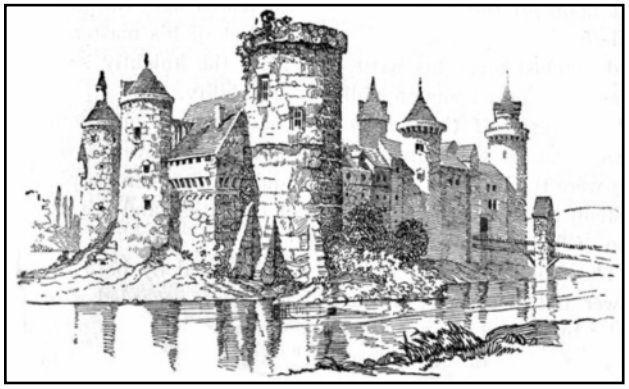
As with so many Feudal dues, better off peasants could pay the Lord to forego this labour.

*A normal '**days** work was from sunrise to around noon or early afternoon ... so those who owed labour service still had some time to work on their own plots.*

Depending on the work and time of year, the estate might be responsible for feeding the workers (a loaf of bread, some cheese or a bowl of pottage and a mug of beer or ale ... both of which make the requirement less onerous than it might seem at first.

*Corvee labour for the Crown, however, was done without any such 'payment', though it also seems to **usually** have been for the same half-day arrangement.*

Escheat. Don't die without an obvious heir or without leaving a valid Will if you have no heirs – because the Crown will ***take it all***.



*A declared **outlaw** lost **all** their property to the Crown, and their heirs lost any claim to the lands/properties as well (which was why it was sometime better to be tortured for **not** making a Plea and keep resisting until you **die** ... your heirs could then inherit as, technically, you'd never been convicted).*

*Sometimes Noble families would organise it so that they backed both sides in a Civil War so that they'd have one foot in the winning camp and be able to angle keeping the lands of the losing family member **in** the family.*

Heriot. Originally, before the 12th century, it was a payment representing the return of military equipment (horse, sword, armour) 'loaned' by the Lord to one of his Thegns, Huscarles or a member of the select Fyrd (in England, names differed elsewhere) – by the 12th century and the rise of the institution of Knighthood it gradually transformed into a form of death duty paid to a Lord by his (peasant) tenants, normally in the form of the "best beast" of the dead peasant's possessions or the money equivalent thereof.

*But it doesn't end there – the peasant's family had to pay the **Church** a fee called **Mortuary**, the family's second best animal (or monetary equivalent).*

In some places the 'best beast' might be the 'best suit of clothes' or, possibly, both.

Inward (also *Inguard*). The provision of guards for the Royal Household (nominally for the King) during a Royal visit. This could be commuted by a payment of 4d per Hide – normally commuted for cash if the King did not visit and could be granted the County Sheriff as part of his commission.

This may have only applied to the Shires in the eastern parts of England.

Merchet. A fee payable by a serf tenant for his Lord's permission for his daughter to be married, supposedly representing the potential loss of labour to the estate. Some sources suggest it was a payment to the Lord to forego his *droit de seigneur*, but there is no evidence that this right still existed by the 11th-12th centuries and evidence of it for earlier periods is limited.

***Droit de Seigneur** or **Ius Primae Noctis** was a supposed right of a Feudal Lord to take the 'first night' (virginity) of any serf woman who was about the be married.*

*The evidence for this supposed right is not particularly substantial, nor is it particularly convincing – and a lot of it is actually 18th and 19th century romaticists merely **asserting** its existence on the flimsiest of inferences.*

If a woman "lived in sin" and/or became pregnant out of wedlock then there was a fine for *that*, too, called ***Leywrite***. They got you one way or the other.

Rents. *Serfs and Villeins* (effectively *sharecroppers*) had to pay their Lord (or the landowner) ***one third*** of their crop and *one third* of any ***increase*** in the flocks or herds they grazed on the Common Lands (i.e. paying *in kind*) ... in addition to Feudal dues or Manorial Charges that might be specific to their tenancy.

*Well-to-do Serfs/Villeins could (and did) pay **quitrent** to their Lord in lieu of some or all of the Feudal Dues and might even buy themselves free of their status and become, in effect, renting Freeholders or, if particularly successful, even buying the land they worked.*

*It is estimated the typical Serf/Villein paid **~60% of their crops in taxes and charges** (33% for rent, 10% Tithe to the Church for a start). On top of **Corvee** (usually half of their work week during the year and as much as 5/6^{ths} during harvest.*

Freeholders working their *own* land only paid the other taxes and manorial charges listed, but the income from rents was part of the base on which a Noble's tax liability to their overlord or the crown was calculated.

*If a Freeholder **rented** land it was normally did a **Quit Rent** basis – paying **money** for the use of the land and to forego feudal dues, typically equivalent to 20-25% of the nominal crop yield value (money being scarce).*

Taxes

Carucage (1194-1224). A tax on land levied six times during the years indicated and intended to replace the Anglo-Saxon ***Geld*** (to pay ***Danegeld***), it was initially assessed at the rate of 2/- (later 3/-)per ***Carucate*** (nominally 120 acres, or the amount of land an ox team could plough during a ploughing season).

Carucage was only levied six times – in 1194, 1198 (Richard I); 1200 (John); 1217, 1220 and 1224 (Henry II) and was formally abolished ~1230.

Similar taxes with different names and levied at about the same rate continued through the medieval period and were an important percentage of crown revenue.

Townsmen and, occasionally, Clergy, were also expected to pay up – the former on a per capita basis collected by the Town Council, the latter probably only a partial assessment based on land value as for the peasantry.

The initial rate seems to have been 2/- per carucate in 1194, 5/- in 1198, 3/- in 1200 and 1217. The rate for 1220 is not known, but it is known that a number of counties and nobles refused to pay. The 1224 levy was only made on Church estates and, again, it is not known at what rate.

Fifteenths & Tenths (etc.). These were taxes on *moveable* (i.e. not landed) property and originally ranged from as much as ¼ to as little as 1/40th of assessed



value, probably to the late 13th century when it was regularised as 1/15th for Counties and Shires (i.e. for rural areas) and 1/10th for Towns (i.e. urban areas).

***Fifteenths** and **Tenths** were initially assessed on an individual basis, but very quickly (by the 14th century) became a whole community impost (see **Farming Taxes**), divided amongst the inhabitants of a town, city or village based on their capacity to pay as determined by the local governing body (Town or City council, or Manorial Court in consultation with the peasants).*

*As an indication of the sort of money they could raise, the County of Essex raised **£710** from Fifteenths in the early 13th century, increasing to **£1230** by the mid 14th century (just prior to the outbreak of the Black Death).*

*The total (nominal) assessed value for the entirety of the realm was **~£39,000** just before the beginning of the Hundred Years War – and the tax was divided up proportionally between the Shires and Towns based on previous collections.*

Not all goods were taxable, and the commissioners appointed to assess the tax due in each jurisdiction were supposedly given strict instructions as to what classes of property were exempt.

Import and Export Duties. The Crown had the ancient right to levy dues equal to 1/10th or 1/15th of the value of certain types of goods (Wine being the most notable – but Wool, Wax and Leather were also included) *entering **and** leaving* English Ports.

In the early 14th century the Crown semi-successfully imposed a 1¼% duty on *all* good passing through English ports and this was increased to 5% in 1347.

Surviving public records include many relating to corruption by Customs officers (usually local Merchants, or hired by the Town Council ... which represented the local Merchants) with regards to the collection of duties ... and as much corruption and embezzlement in the accounting of the monies that were actually collected.

*Towards the end of the period the Crown began to require that officials be from towns **other than** the one where they were working, in the hope that they would be less likely to fiddle things in favour of the locals.*

*Of course, all **that** did was increase the rate of bribery – cheaper to pay a percentage of the duty to the Officials as a bribe than to pay the actual Duties!*

Monopoly Rights. The Crown could grant monopoly rights (***Letters Patent***) on the sale and/or provision of a variety of goods and services – either for themselves or in return for payment by others, then enforce the monopoly so that the holder could make a profit.

For example John Kempe and a group of Flemish weavers was given a protection from (potentially irate) English Weavers (and their Guilds) in return for introducing improvements to weaving and textile production known on the continent into England as early as 1331.

*Not all **Letters Patent** were as sensibly targetted – most were mere revenue raisers.*

A fairly well known example of such Monopoly Rights include the Salt Tax or ***Gabelle*** *(Pays de grandes gabelles)* in *France.*

Salt normally cost between ½d and 5d a pound to produce, depending on the time and place, but the tax per pound could be between 2d to 2/- on top of this, depending on the region.

*In France, **everyone** over the age of 8 years was **required** to buy 7 **kilos** of salt per year – but couldn't use that salt to **make** any salted products (such as Cheese, for example), which was a capital crime.*

*Regional pricing was hugely variable and could be half or less than the maximum charged ... and some regions paid no Salt Tax at all. **Smuggling** salt across a Tax Border was, of course, a capital crime (and, naturally, widely done).*

Any wonder it was one of the most hated of taxes – and one of the most remunerative for the French crown?

Nobles could do the same on their own estates, but in a more limited way.



*The Lord of the Manor normally sold the rights to have a Mill on **his property** to a Miller and might **try** to force the Villeins and Serfs there to use it – in England, at least, this was not always successful, as freemen could not be forced to do so and would often set up their own Mill in competition on nearby land belonging to a less greedy Lord and charge market rates.*

The Lord might also try to enforce a monopoly on the baking of bread in his own ovens in the Village – onselling them to a Baker. As with Milling of flour, he could only force his Villeins and Serfs to use the Ovens – Freemen were generally exempt.

Poll Tax. A tax per (adult) head of population introduced in England in the late 14th century and was one of the reasons for the ***Peasants Revolt*** of 1381. The original rate was payable by everyone over 14 years of age (later increased to 16) and ranged from 4d per head for Villeins to £6/13/4d for Royal Dukes.

Thereafter it was abandoned ***except on foreigners***. However, a poll tax element was added to *other* taxes on (*Carucage*, *Fifteenths & Tenths* or *Tallage* etc).

Privy Seal (Forced) Loan. *Theoretically* this was a *voluntary* loan that was, in fact, *imposed* on wealthier members of society by the King (you *might* be able to avoid making such a loan, but it was possible that you might be imprisoned if you did!).

These "loans" were rarely, if ever, paid back and were a form of wealth tax (and were, of course, based on the value of the lands owned rather than *income*).

Scot & Lot. This was a tax on householders in a Town or Borough – it was an assessed portion of an overall tax owed by the Town (see ***Tallage***, below) to the Royal Government but might also include a charge for civic maintenance and defence on top of the royal charges.

*Burghers (i.e. those with citizen rights) who paid Scot & Lot almost always had voting rights in Town elections – and in many Towns, owning or renting property and this paying Scot & Lot meant you **gained** citizen rights.*

Scutage. A financial alternative to providing feudal military service, by the 12th century in England it had become a regular tax on each *Knight's Fee.*

Initially set at 13/4d (one Mark), it was raised to £1/6/8d by the early 13th century and an attempt by King John to raise it to £2 was one of the reasons for the Baron's revolt that led to the Magna Carta (which did not, in fact, prevent the *raising* of Scutage ***if*** Parliament approved the rate) ... and it fell back to £1 (6d a day for 40 days service).

It fell out of use by the early 14th century due to legal

disputes resulting from increasing *subinfeudation* (splitting Knight's Fees into fractions of a whole).

Socage. A form of feudal land tenure characterised by regularly spaced, defined, payments to the granting lord – initially seen as a form of rent, it was, by 1290, ***heritable*** and, eventually, became a form of freehold tenure. Like ***Serjeanty*** and ***Knight-Service***, a *Socman* owed his feudal overlord service in wartime.

*A **socman** was **not** a villein or serf, but he was also **not** a freeman ... he was something in between. This status (or, at least, this **named form** of this status) was most common in the Eastern counties of England.*

Tallage (~**1154**+). A tax on land in France and England. In England it applied to peasants on Crown lands (1/- per acre), to chartered towns and cities (based on their population) and, irregularly, to Jews (in addition to their share of any ***civic*** tallage) – it was last collected in 1332 and abolished in 1340.

Originally a NW French development, it arrived in England with the Norman conquest and, as was usually the case in the Classical and Medieval periods, the nobility and wealthier commoners avoided much of impost by squeezing their tenants for more money.

*In France it was eventually called the **Taille** and remained in use until abolished during the French Revolution. It was heavily used during the Hundred Years War.*

*Similar **minor** taxes existed in Germany, but gradually died out and never raised significant amounts.*

Tithes. A 10% levy on *gross* income paid to the *church*. It was, however, no more optional than government taxes are and is included here for that reason.

*Jews and Muslims were exempt from tithing, but were subject to extra taxation by the government in return for their "special" status (see **Tallage**) and protection (after a fashion) from the church's demands that they be expelled from any Christian state or imprisoned or forcibly converted or simply killed by the devout.*

Toll. On some manors, the Serfs and Villeins (but *not* the Freemen) had to offer any animal they wanted to sell at Market to the Lord (or his Bailiff) on a 'first refusal' basis ... or pay a per-animal fee for the right to sell it elsewhere.

Nominally to prevent the sale of vital work animals, such as oxen from a plough team, which would reduce the Manor's capacity to farm and, therefore, the amount of tax or rent it would produce for the Lord.

Collecting Taxes and Dues

As noted elsewhere, the administrative structures of medieval Europe were ... minimal (at least compared



to even the least bureaucratic modern nation state). At the beginning of the period they were positively skeletal, though their numbers and reach increased considerably as time went on ... even so, even by the end of the 14th century, they were *still* sketchy by modern day standards.

Almost all Taxes and Dues were, in fact, collected by ***local officials.*** In the *countryside* (Shires and Counties) this would, at the lowest level, be the responsibility of the Manorial Lord or his Bailiff – they would present the monies collected to representatives chosen by the ***Sheriff*** and, in turn, the Sheriff would pass on those monies his men collected to the Royal authorities.

In the *towns and cities*, responsibility for collecting taxes fell to officials chosen by the Town Council. The Council or Town Governor then passed the money on to the Royal authorities.

Tax Farming

In many places, from time to time during the period, even the above system was regarded as too expensive and uncertain by the authorities, so they *sold* the right to collect taxes to private entrepreneurs or to feudal lords ... for a fixed yearly sum.

*There was no risk to the **state** – but the Tax Farmer could find themselves on the hook in a bad year and, in fact, Tax Farming collapsed during and after the Great Famine and the Great Plague as a result of the shortfalls created by the decline in economic output in the former case and the collapse of population numbers in the latter.*

Theoretically there were controls on the exactions the Tax Farmers and their agents could impose on the populace but, in practise, they routinely overcharged them to a greater (mostly) or lesser (rarely) degree ... and this led to considerable friction and may have played a part in a number of popular uprisings in various places during the 11th-14th centuries.

Reality Check

Many people, and probably most readers of this book, assume (unconsciously, if not unthinkingly) that what we call ***Feudalism*** is/was a purely *European* institution – but nothing could be further from the truth.

European feudalism was *a system of political and social relationships based on providing service in return for land tenure* ... which ***also*** describes the organisational reality of a huge number of societies both in and outside of the European and Mediterranean world from the earliest civilisations.

So, why was this style of organisation so common all around the world?

Feudal Societies

Classic Feudal-type societies existed only in times and places where there was both a minimum and a maximum level of societal complexity –

Feudal organisation exists/ed only in those places and at those times of *low population* (and *density* of population), *low productivity* (of labour and capital), *limited literacy* and *slow percolation of knowledge*, *small scale trade* and *slow and expensive transportation* often (but *not* always) coupled with a society that has recently experienced *societal and governmental collapse* often caused (or accelerated) by a *'barbarian' invasion*.

*Government, in the modern sense, is **hard, complex** and, most of all, **expensive** ... even the most minimal sort that is capable of maintaining a modern state.*

*Despite what some SF authors (both of fiction and RPGs) would have you believe, classic feudalism simply won't work in a complex modern society – you might have some of the **trappings** of feudal societies (Nobles and Commoners, for example, or mostly ceremonial Feudal Titles such as Knighthoods) but none of it will be **based** on land ownership and nebulous feudal Aids and Dues. Only a Feudal **facade** over something else will remain.*



Population & Population Density

With the collapse of the Roman Empire in the west in the face of ongoing barbarian invasions the overall population levels took a hit ... especially ***urban*** population ... partly due to the chaos of the invasions but also coupled with collapse of the complex economy that supported them.

As noted elsewhere,~10:11 of classical populations were rural – urban were the remaining 1:11, somewhere around 5%. It was from this tiny portion, and the tinier subset that was literate and numerate, that administrators were drawn.

Many towns died during the invasions, more were reduced to villages subsisting in the ruins while very very few maintained some semblance of civic life.

The Church, largely operating out of Monasteries, was the repository of education and literacy, source of literate administrators (or what passed for such).

Royal and Noble courts were largely peripatetic – there may have been a notional 'capital', but it was rare for the court to be there for more than a few months (rarely contiguous) ... it wandered from place to place for the simple reason that that was where the food needed to feed the Court could be found (see ***Slow Transport***, below, for reasons).

*Such administrators as there were wandered **with** these Courts during the early medieval period before slowly settling down in some central location even as the Court itself remained (somewhat less) peripatetic.*

The result was that there were few written records, even fewer literate administrators, and it was hard to connect with both until the economy, and the urban populations, began to recover ... at which time the size and scope of the state apparatus began to grow, though it remained tiny by modern standards.

Most administrative matters relied on local or regional organisation and personnel, usually part-timers, even in the late 14th century ... there simply wasn't a big enough tax base (or pool of educated men) to support more.

Low Productivity

Around 90-95% of the population were involved in agriculture yet were only able to support 5-10% of the population from the surplus they created. ***All*** of the specialists had to be drawn from that small pool.

Consider, for example, that a modern farmer is as productive as 50 or more medieval farmers ... and modern

*manufacturing techniques make medieval craft guilds look like unskilled hobbyists in terms of productivity. Heck, even modern **hobbyists** with power tools make medieval craft guilds look like a joke!*

Almost everything is produced by hand tools that barely *allow* production, let alone boost productivity ... and production is powered by human or animal muscle with tools which are relatively expensive and/or of limited durability and short useful life.

The development of other power sources, wind and water based, was slow and the forms developed were, as with the other tools, not very durable.

There simply wasn't a lot of slack in the system because of the low productivity of both human and physical capital ... not enough for more than the most basic level of administration.

Yes, things *did* improve ... slowly ... but even at the end of the 14th century many of the underpinnings of what would become the *agricultural* and *industrial revolutions were* still barely developed ... or not developed at all ... hence the incremental improvements in administrative complexity and reach.

Limited Literacy

A consequence of *low population (density)* and, *low productivity*, a low level of literacy made meeting even the minimal administrative needs (public and private) of early feudal societies ... *difficult*. So they were limited to *very* simple mechanisms – and feudal land tenure/obligations are some of the easiest to organise with the limited degree of literacy that was available.

*No, feudalism **isn't** the only system of administration that can be organised at relatively low levels of literacy – for example, it is estimated that Old Kingdom Egypt could have been administered by no more than 2000 literate scribes ... but, of course, there are obvious feudal elements in Egyptian society, what little (and it **is** very little) we firmly know about it.*

As the population grew, as productivity increased and trade rebounded, the absolute and relative number of literate people increased ... fairly dramatically. This allowed more complex administrative systems, even though they were still limited, and, by the end of the period, there is far more in the way of written material of all sorts available than there is from the beginning, which is indicative of the degree of change.

Limited literacy also meant that much of the knowledge that had been accumulated by classical era Greece and Rome, was lost – outright or simply into obscurity ... and was only gradually rediscovered or regained. What knowledge there was was difficult and expensive to access, a problem that was not satisfactorily resolved until Gutenberg invented printing – but



that's another fifty years beyond the end of the set period (the end of the 14th century).

*Even then, the first 'How to' handbook, Agricola's **De Re Metallica** ('On the nature of Metals') wasn't published for more than a century after Gutenberg's Bible ... but things rapidly took off from there.*

*For example, one estimate suggests that the total number of **books** in all of Europe before the invention of the printing press was ~30,000. The typical private library held no more than ~25 books ... and Monastic or Church libraries might hold several hundred. There might have been larger libraries, but they were few and far between.*

Trade and Transportation

As noted elsewhere, transportation links were limited and the methods available slow – and travel was not always safe, even by the end of the 14th century.

This was mainly because trade levels had collapsed in the chaos of the barbarian invasions and the collapse of the Roman Empire in the west ... and took many centuries to recover.

This had obvious economic impacts – worsened by the fact that the prevailing economic theory was basically an early form of ***mercantilism*** ... the idea that economic activity and, specifically, trade, was a zero-sum game, that there were winners and losers and that, insofar as feudal states can be said to have had an 'economic policy' it was one that tried to limit the outflows of bullion and maximise the inflow.

Since trade was then, as it still is (obviously) a major generator of wealth, the limitations of the transport systems available and the prevailing economic theory limited the economic strength and resilience of most feudal states ... and feudalism was a way of running a state with minimal recourse to cash money.

That said, the economic situation actually worsened in one key aspect as the period progressed – the availability of money being the key problem.

As noted elsewhere, money in medieval Europe was based on bullion coinage – and, as trade and economic

activity in general recovered, there simply wasn't enough gold and silver to provide the amount of coinage needed to represent the improving levels of activity.

Credit could, and did, allow the situation to work beyond the physical limits of the money supply ... but, inevitably, eventually, and serially, credit crunches came, resulting in bankruptcies and recessions that affected large swathes of the continent.

Governments responded to these crises by debasing their coinage – which actually made the situation worse in many ways.

The only real solution would have been to do what was eventually done ... have governments issue fiat money based on their power to tax individuals and companies. That, however, requires a degree of administrative sophistication and large public service that simply didn't exist and wasn't possible in the Middle Ages.

Things were, of course, changing, quite dramatically, by the end of the 14th century, and many of the key features of the feudal system were being replaced by systems based on a more sophisticated economic model – and these changes continued, and accelerated, after the end of the period covered.

Pre-Modern Economics

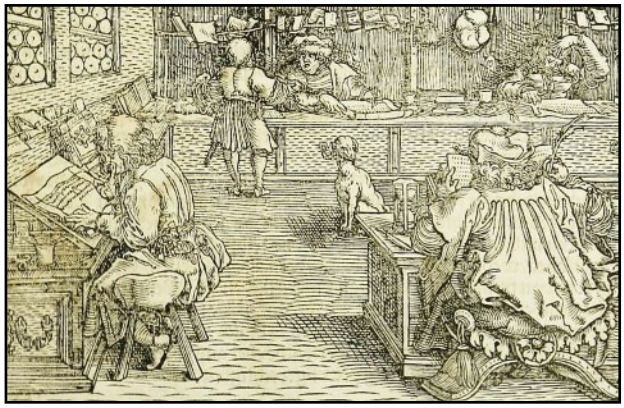
Some of the issues impacting pre-modern economics are alluded to above in ***Feudal Societies*** – but there are some key realities that need to be reinforced.

Bullion

There simply ***isn't***. all. that. much.

So, realistically, assuming a world like earth where the geophysics (and physics!) is much the same, there isn't going to be so much gold and silver that you'll have 1/10th pound coins (of either sort) and that you'll find huge hoards hidden in ancient, forgotten, tombs.

*For example, even assuming the Pyramids were tombs (for which there is no actual **evidence** – only theories and assertions), **none** of them were found with any treasure trove inside. Did you ever wonder why?*



The best conjecture I've seen, based on the fact that the goodies in Tutankhamun's tomb in the Valley of the Kings was mostly stuff belonging to relatives and that it was probably robbed at least twice, is that the Pyramids were 'robbed' in antiquity ... most likely by rulers who came not long after those who actually built them.

The chances of massive numbers of ancient tombs full of bullion (either as coins or jewellery etc) existing is as close to zero as possible.

*Or, if you're feeling generous, you'll either find debased coinage (copper with a thin wash of silver, for example – or copper or brass 'token' coinage which will have only scrap metal values) or, if the coinage of the grave robbers' **current** milieu is that (or more) debased, then they may find a handful (perhaps literally) of gold and a few handfuls of silver coins that are of **actual** gold or silver! Or maybe just **less** debased.*

Platinum. This was not certainly known of until 1557, at least in Europe – as an impurity of gold mined in parts of Central America (and which was simply thrown away ***as*** an *impurity* that *debased* the gold!), but was not studied or widely recognised in the scientific community for another 220 odd years!

Platinum melts at 1768.3°C (3214.9°F) compared to 1064.18°C, 1947.52°F for Gold and 961.78°C, 1763.2°F for Silver, which makes it extremely difficult to refine with medieval technology. There's also a heck of a lot less of it than there is of Gold even today (~250 tons vs ~3000 tons per annum production).

Examination of gold items found in Ancient Egyptian tombs shows some of the gold also has platinum impurities – but there is no evidence that they knew it was there.

So, no, ***no*** *Platinum coins either.*

Gems as Currency

In a word ... ***nope***. Most gems were simply polished, and gem cutting was in its infancy – the first diamond cutters only appear in France around 1380.

Most of what we regard as precious stones today look singularly unimpressive, even those that were seen to be valuable back then either had low *or* unreliably variable monetary values in medieval Europe (and most everywhere else) ... they were simply too naturally variable to be usable as coinage.

*As **trade goods**, sure. As **commodities**, fine.*

But no way are gems, precious or semi-precious, something you can walk into an Armourer's workshop and purchase a complete set of Plate Armour with.


DE CIVITATE DEI
MAURICE LALAU

De Civitate Dei

'The City of God', Augustine of Hippo.

Religion played a very important part in the life of medieval Europe and the Mediterranean world – a much greater part than it does today. This chapter looks at the major religious elements of the era – *Christianity* (Roman Catholic and Orthodox), *Judaism*, *Islam* (Sunni and Shia) and *Paganism*, their organisation, core religious beliefs, political power and influence and the interactions between them.

Christianity

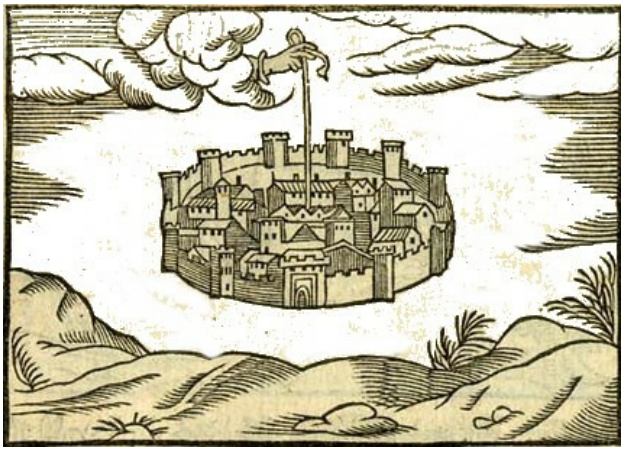
The official religion of all the major successor states resultant from the collapse of the Roman Empire in the west as well as many of those barbarian states that formed in what were originally the borderlands (though, in some cases, this was only achieved during the period covered) and also the official state religion of the East Roman Empire and of some of the states bordering it in the east.

*Until AD 1054 (more on which below) this was the **Catholic** ('Universal') Church, though there were significant and increasingly fractious differences between the Western and Eastern branches – after that date they were formally split into the **Roman Catholic** Church in the west and the various flavours of **Orthodox** Churches in the east.*

There were also Christian Churches beyond the old borders of the Empire as well – as far away as India and China in the east and Ethiopia in the south – but these were often regarded as heretical by both the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches.

Judaism

After the failure of the Great Revolt (66-73) and the destruction of the Temple and the later Bar Kokhba Revolt (132-136), Judaism was effectively made illegal and driven underground by Roman authorities for almost 70 years before it was legalised – though Jews were still subject to a discriminatory tax (the tithe that had originally gone to the Temple), were never allowed to settle back in Jerusalem and the Temple Mount remained as a Pagan Temple.



With the rise of Christianity as the official State religion, however, intolerance towards Jews grew and by the 10th century they were marginalised and persecuted everywhere, to a greater or lesser degree.

They were often forbidden to own land, especially in Western Europe where feudal tenure almost always involved taking oaths that involved aspects of Christian ceremonial and were often subject to laws that forbade them from undertaking certain professions and from normal interactions with non-Jews.

What protections they enjoyed was mainly because they acted as moneylenders (they had little choice, given they could not own land nor engage in most other trades) and the state authorities saw them as an easy source of finance – special taxes, fees and charges were routinely levied against them for minimal protections. Inevitably, when short of money, the Crown would extort 'loans' from them which, of course, were never repaid.

Islam

A constant threat to Christendom, lessened mainly by the fracturing of the Caliphate into competing, often mutually hostile, successor states, Islam gradually destroyed the rump East Roman Empire between the 10th and 14th centuries, effectively extinguishing it with the capture of Constantinople in 1453 ...

Islam dominated all of the East, encompassing all the old Roman possessions there as well as the Sassanian Empire, which it had also destroyed and absorbed, and had spread all along the southern Mediterranean littoral and into the Iberian peninsula which it had almost entirely conquered ... though the Christian kingdoms of what eventually became Spain and Portugal were engaged in an ongoing, and eventually successful, struggle to reconquer all of the lost lands.

Apart from that, Islam did not make any inroads into Western Europe and even Muslim traders and travellers were rare ... and there were no large communities anywhere (as there were of Jews).

Paganism

Classical Romano-Greek paganism was extinguished by the beginning of the period. The only areas still dominated by paganism(s) were in the borderlands between Western Europe and Russia and, at the beginning of the period, parts of Scandinavia.

Roman Catholic Church

The one main thing that defines the Roman version of the Catholic faith is the Bishop of Rome's claim to universal jurisdiction over the entire community of Christians and, to a great extent, this flavours all aspects of Church organisation and belief.

Regular and Secular Clergy

The Roman Catholic church consists of two parts – the *Secular Clergy*, who live 'in the world' (i.e. Priests), and the *Regular Clergy*, who follow the rules (*regula*) of the order to which they belong and, nominally, take specific vows such as poverty and obedience to the rule under which they have chosen to live.

The terms, and recognition of the division between them, was only fully articulated from the 8th century. All male regulars are referred to as Monks (even if Friars, Canons and Clerks) and all female regulars as Nuns.

Senior (Secular) Church Hierarchy

The senior Secular hierarchy began the period with complete dominance over the Regular hierarchy – but, as described elsewhere, this changed at the lower level (Bishops, especially) during the 10th-14th centuries.

The Bishop of Rome (Pope)

According to Roman Catholic belief the Bishop of Rome was the chosen successor of Saint Peter, to whom he passed the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven – a belief that was not accepted by most of the Eastern Churches (those that didn't eventually became the Orthodox Churches, those that did became the *Eastern Rite Catholic Church*).

*The usage of **'Pope'** as an exclusive title for the Bishop of Rome dates only to the mid 10th century – before that it was applied to all Bishops (and continued to be so applied in the Orthodox Churches).*

Though the Pope was the supreme administrative authority for the Church and had great influence in doctrinal matters, there was no firm concept of his 'infallibility' until the Reformation.

Cardinal

Senior clergy involved in the administration of the Church as a whole and *nominally* in charge of a Church in the City of Rome or one of its surrounding Dioceses.

The Pope must be chosen from the ranks of the Cardinals and the College of Cardinals votes on which of their number is to become Pope on the death of the previous Pope.

There are three ranks, from highest to lowest, *Cardinal Bishops (6), Cardinal Priests (25 to 1120, then 28)* and *Cardinal Deacons (18).*

Land, the Church and the State

The Church eventually came to control vast amounts of land and property through donations and legacies, and the wealth and power of the members of the senior hierarchy often exceeded that of the local nobility – and, taken as a whole, might even exceeded the wealth and power of the King.

This led to great tension between the State and the Church as their interests and needs could (and did) obviously differ in all sorts of ways.

*For example, land granted directly to the Church by the Crown did **not** come with regular feudal obligations, such as provision of military service – but what of lands originally granted to secular individuals in return for just such an obligation that was then given to the Church as a donation or as part of a legacy?*

The Church *tended* to take the attitude that no service was owed, that the act of donating the land or leaving it as a legacy extinguished any feudal obligation.

As you might suspect, smart operators developed the idea of 'giving' land to the Church and then 'leasing' it back from them for far less than the cost of meeting any feudal obligation that originally attached.

Obviously this was ***not*** in the interests of the Crown, and tension between the Church, desiring to enrich itself, and the Crown, desiring to prevent loss of revenue or service obligations, was an issue that was not easily resolved.

In fact, one of the important reasons behind the successful creation of the Church of England was the need to regain control of the vast swathes of England that were controlled by the Monasteries ... and, interestingly, a direct, causal, link has been established between monastic lands taken from the Church and then granted to local gentry and nobility and the speed of economic development of an area during the Agricultural and Industrial Revolutions.

Not only are there pronounced differences between Parishes in England which did/did not get such lands – there are even more pronounced differences between Parishes of similar characteristics in England and on the Continent.

Ministeriales and the German Church

The ***Ministeriales*** *(technically unfree Knights)* in Germany, however, are known to have served *as* Knights in the service of Bishops and Archbishops who possessed independent feudal status ... though they did not own land with feudal obligations as such, rather owing feudal obligations directly to an overlord who then granted them a living, either in the form of rents from a specific estate or properties or a salary drawn on their own fisc.

A 'TYPICAL' CATHEDRAL

Cathedrals, as the seat of a Bishopric, first appeared not long after Christianity became the State religion and the Church was encouraged to adopt (and adapt) the Basilica form previously used as the main public building in a large town for their own purposes – and, by the 12th century, adaptations of this original form had become the universal norm both for Catholic and Orthodox institutions.

By the 10th century, Cathedrals, always impressive, were becoming so large and complex that they were rarely completed in less than several decades – and, even then, successive Bishops would often angle to extend, modernise or otherwise enhance the structure both in the architectural fabric and in the interior and exterior decoration.

The vision of many Bishops often outreached the pocket-book of the congregation and it was common for buildings to be left semi-complete, or to be built in stages, and it might take several centuries for the original (and then amended) plans to actually reach completion.

The minimum time required for construction seems to have been 20-50 years, but around a century was more common (and 50-100 years still seems to be common for ***modern*** *Cathedrals) – and Cologne Cathedral took* ***600 years*** *to finish!*

ELY CATHEDRAL

Ely had been founded as an Abbey Church in 672 and was refounded as a Benedictine Abbey in 970 ... and the foundations of the structure from that period is in or near the Nave of the current Cathedral, as it was progressively demolished to make way for the Norman Cathedral from 1083.

The Nave and Transepts were completed by 1140, the western Tower and SW Transept by 1189; the Galilee Porch by 1220, the Presbytery and East End by 1252, the Lady Chapel by 1351.

The tower above the Crossing between the North and South Transepts collapsed (probably due to the footings being disturbed by the building works for the Lady Chapel) in 1322 and had to be rebuilt, and this was completed by 1337.

The Chantry Chapels off the Presbytery date from the late 15th century, well outside of the period this book covers.

NOMENCLATURE

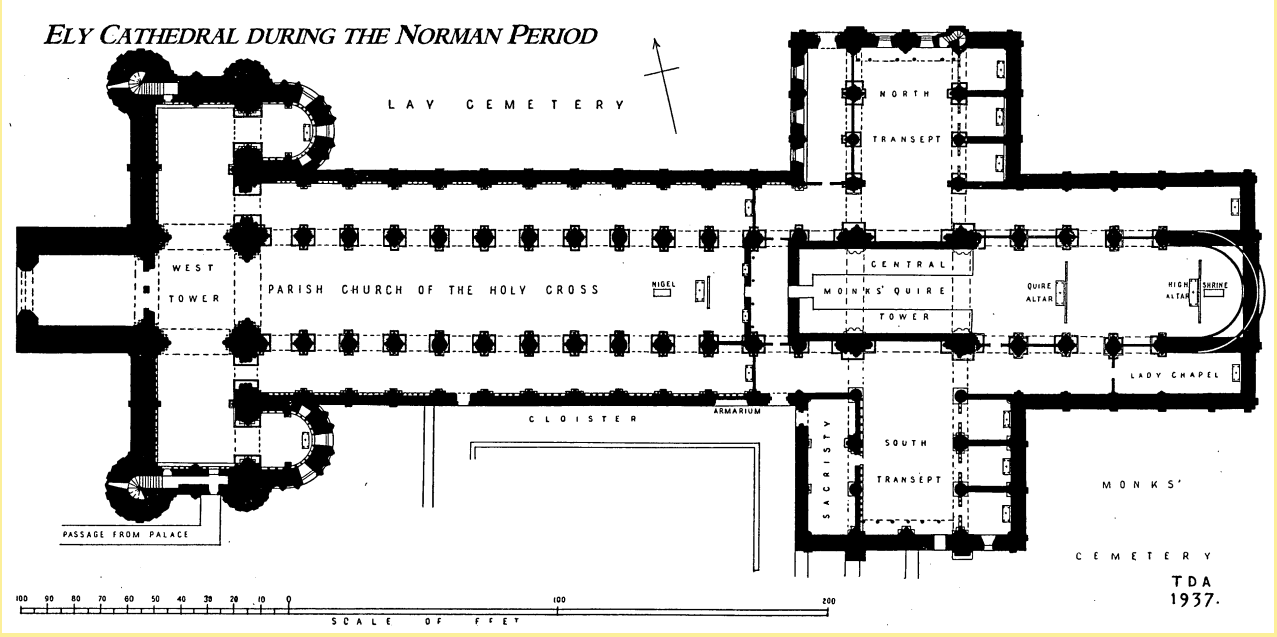
Aisle. Walkways running parallel to the Nave, Choir and Transept, normally separated from the main public areas by a row of pillars supporting the roof or, in some cases, arches which may support an upper floor (an ***Arcade***).

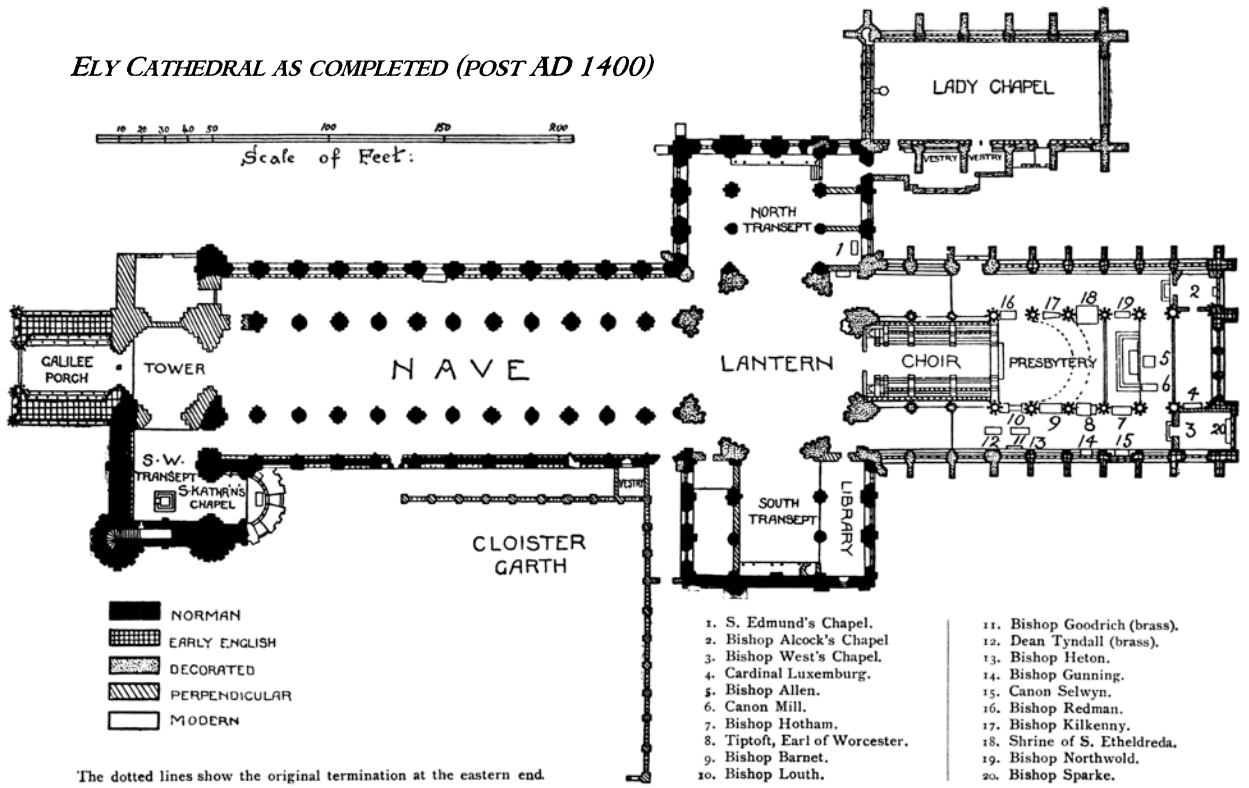
Ambulatory. A covered passage around the Choir or the East End of a Cathedral (also a covered walkway around a ***Cloister***), behind the High Altar.

Apse. The east end of the Cathedral. May be angular, square or circular.

Arcade. An ***Aisle*** where the walkway is in the form of a pair of pillars connected by arches that support the roof or, in some case, an upper floor. The Arcade is normally internal in Romanesque but may be internal or external in Gothic (or later) Cathedrals.

Buttress. A stone pier balancing the sideways and outwards thrust of the roof – it is normally hidden inside the ***aisle*** and attached galleries until the development of the Gothic *flying buttress* (from the 12th-16th centuries).





Choir. That part of a Church where the clergy attached to the Cathedral stood and chanted or sung the responses to the services being held. It is always east of the ***Transept*** and may be higher than the level of the ***Nave.***

Cloister. A quadrangle (either grassy, perhaps with a tree or trees for shade, or, possibly, a garden) surrounded by an ***Ambulatory*** on the outside of a Cathedral – normally on the South (sunny) side and indicating the Church was originally a Monastic foundation.

Crossing. The part of the Church where the East and West ***Transepts*** join – the ***Narthex*** and ***Nave*** are to the west and the ***Choir*** and ***Presbytery*** to the east.

Crypt. A stone chamber underneath a building. In a Church it is normally a burial place, though it may also act as a Chapel or as a Treasury to store valuable religious artifacts.

Facade. The West End of the Church where, traditionally, the main doors were situated.

Galilee Porch. A Chapel at the west end of the Church, often incorporated within the Facade, where penitents waited admission to the Church.

Lady Chapel. Common in British (from the 11th century), French (mostly from the 12th century) and some continental churches (after the 14th century), it is a Chapel dedicated to the *Blessed Virgin Mary*.

Narthex. That part of the Church west of the Crossing – the entry or lobby area.

Nave. Normally immediately inside the front doors, past the ***Narthex***, this is the main area where the congregation is seated (or stands) for the public ceremonies – Masses etc.

Radiating Chapels. These are situated off the ***Apse*** of the Church, accessed from the ***Ambulatory***. In most cases they are added well after the Apse is complete.

Sacristy. A room for the storage of priestly vestments church furnishings, sacred vessels and Church and Parish records and for the Priest(s) to robe and prepare themselves before and after the services. Later on, the ***Vestry***.

Sanctuary. The elevated platform on which the cleric(s) conducting the religious ceremonies stand and where the main altar and other associated religious elements are kept. It is normally situated in the ***Apse*** or ***Choir*** and is fenced off from the rest of the church.

Transept. Also called the ***Crossing*** *(which see).*

Vestry. A space where the Parish Council met to conduct the eclesiastical and secular administration of the Parish as that grew in importance. Sometimes also the ***Sacristy***.

Celebrating Mass

From the late 11th century, Priests were instructed to say only *one* regular Mass per day, with the possibility of performing a second *mortuary* Mass (for the dead) – but this was widely ignored and, for special Holy Days, two or even three Masses might be said.

From the early 12th century saying more than one Mass was prohibited *under normal circumstances* for *Priests* and, from the late 12th century, for Bishops and the higher clergy, from the late 12th century – with the exception of Christmas, when they might say three Masses.

This is the reason why Parishes with large congregations (or with widely dispersed ones with separate Chapels) would usually have more than one Priest – to allow all parishioners regular access to a Mass.

*What special circumstances allowed the saying of a second Mass? When not doing so would prevent a group of 20-30 people from having reasonable access to a regular Mass. In **exceptional** circumstances a Priest might be allowed to officiate over a **third** Mass.*

Celibacy

The early Church Fathers recommended marriage as a more spiritual state – but, as early as the 4th century, some authorities in the western Church began to promote the idea of *absolute* clerical celibacy and it is *likely* that it became a requirement for appointment to a Bishopric or higher office at some time thereafter.

*Monks were **always** expected to be celibate. Prior to 1074, many Priests disputed the demand for celibacy, even taking such disputes to Church Councils or to Ecclesiastical Courts ... and even today, some theologians still question it, though it has been reaffirmed as a requirement by a number of Popes and Church Councils in intervening years.*

Celibacy did not become *mandatory* until 1074 and, even then, a married priesthood continued, in a vestigial and threatened form, on the edges of Catholic Europe to the north and, with a regularised status, in the East where Latin Rite churches remained in uneasy co-existence with Orthodox ones as well as in Muslim areas.

*There's **celibacy** (i.e. not being married, and not allowed to marry), and then there's **celibacy** (forsaking any sort of physical sexual relations).*

*While the ban **theoretically** covered both, the reality was that it was only gradually effective at weeding out or preventing married Priests, but was **woefully** ineffective at preventing Priests (and Monks, Nuns and Friars) ... even Bishops, Archbishops and Cardinals (even some Popes) from engaging in illicit sexual activities, sometimes quite openly ...*

*Cardinals were not necessarily expected to base themselves **in** Rome or even be involved in the running of the Churches they were nominally in charge of there.*

Archbishop

The most senior rank of Bishop, usually in charge of a number of other Bishoprics as well as his own and which form an Ecclesiastical Province. An Archbishopric was normally based in a particular Town, though some are stand-alone Sees with no subordinate Bishoprics.

Bishops

Senior Priests in charge of the administration and pastoral care of a Diocese consisting of a variable amount of territory divided into a variable number Parishes under a Parish Priest.

*Archbishoprics and Bishoprics are normally run out of a **Cathedral** (**Dom, Duomo** etc) which contain the raised throne symbolising the power of their office.*

Members of the senior hierarchy were the ecclesiastical equivalent of secular Nobility and enjoyed a level of income and lifestyle that was very similar – something that had been expected of the Church ever since its status as a state religion had been instituted under the Roman Empire.

They also presided over ecclesiastical equivalents to Royal or Noble courts ... with similar administrative and social functions, mostly relating to the functioning of the Church institutions their Province or Diocese, but also involving lands held by the Church directly from the King or as legacies from those seeking to speed their path into heaven.

Lower (Secular) Church Hierarchy

The hierarchy below the level of Bishop was much more complex than is presented here, but many of the titles or offices that have been left out were mainly functional ones ('Cantors', for example, were simply Priests in charge of the Choir in a Cathedral Church) rather than specifically religious,

Priests

The majority of the Church's full time personnel, most Priests were be appointed to a particular Parish normally under the control of a Bishop. Priests were *ordained* – that is, authorised to officiate over Masses and other key church ceremonies (offering the Eucharist in a Mass and hearing Confessions being two key ones).

Not all Priests were so appointed – some were part of the Court of one of the members of the senior hierarchy, either directly in their presence or under their authority, while others were appointed to specific managerial or pastoral roles not otherwise part of a formal parish (such as in Cathedral Churches).

Parish Priest

A priest appointed to the pastoral care of a Parish and its inhabitants. Theoretically they would be in residence but, even in the 10th century, the practise of a Priest treating a Parish merely as a source of income, overseen by a *Curate*, while they themselves lived elsewhere, was becoming common.

*The practise of giving a Priest more than one 'living' (Parish) so they could enjoy a better lifestyle was the root cause of most absentee Priests – they would mostly be in residence in **one** of the Parishes they held, and might travel between them during the course of the year, but might also live elsewhere (e.g. the Bishop's or Archbishop's court) and never visit any of them.*

Curate

In some large Parishes (especially those in Towns and Cities), there might be a need for more than one Priest to be able to officiate over the number of Masses (see over) that needed to be said every day – and in other cases, the actual Parish Priest might have more than one 'living' (Parish) and only visit occasionally. In both cases, the Curate, being an ordained priest, would act in their stead.

Deacon

This rank mostly dead as an institution by 10th century, with a few exceptions – notably those attached to *Cathedrals*, where their role was mainly involved in day to day administration.

However, seminarians in their last year of training were often granted the status and title.

They had limited ecclesiastical powers – for example, they could assist in the Mass, but not officiate over it and they could read lessons from the Bible, but not preach as such.

The Regular Clergy

The Regular Clergy, as noted in the introduction, adhered to added (*stricter*) rules compared to the Secular Clergy and, by the 11th century, were increasingly organised into *religious institutes* – ***Monasteries***, under an *Abbot*; ***Nunneries***, under a *Prioresses*; ***Friaries***, under a *Guardian* and other organisations.

Celtic Monasticism

This was the earliest form of monasticism in the west, confined to the British Isles, with the first communities probably dating back to the 4th century. Celtic Monks were ***actual*** ascetics who promoted learning in conjunction with manual labour – under the *Rule of St Columbanos* which was *much* stricter than that of St. Benedict. By the 10th century few Monasteries still followed that rule *undivided*, but some followed it in conjunction with the rule of St Benedict.

Celtic Monasteries were governed by an ***Abbot***.



Roman Catholic Monasticism

Monks are *theoretically* ascetics who *separate* themselves from the world to follow lives of contemplation and prayer combined with manual labour and first appeared in an organised form *in the West* around the beginning of the 6th century, with the rules governing their lives and works formalised by ***St Benedict*** some time around 520 AD.

*Founding a new Order normally required Papal permission – the obvious exception being the Benedictines, as they were the very first. Typically, however, the founder (or founders) would first form a community, perhaps several, possibly under the nominal auspices of the Rule of St Benedict or one of the later Orders, and **then** they would apply, 'through channels', to the Pope for permission to be a new, separate, Order.*

Monasteries were supposed to be located in isolation – in the countryside, away from the attractions (and temptations) of town life and where the Monks could labour on their own lands or on religious pursuits.

*In reality communities of lay people grew up nearby to serve their needs (which were increasingly secular and not in the least ascetic) and work on the lands granted or given to the Monastery instead of the Brothers. There were even Monastic Houses built **within** the main towns and cities, nominally 'separated' from the secular surrounds by modestly high walls and nothing more.*

Other Monastic Orders included the *Cluniacs (c. 850-c. 1130)*, *Carthusians (1084)* and *Cistercians (1098)*.

From the 6th century, Monasteries (and their Abbots) were increasingly exempt from the control of the Bishop of the Diocese in which they were located – and, by the 12th century they were only responsible to the Pope and, in reality, almost completely independent, even to the extent of gaining the right to elect one of their number to the office of Abbot on the death of the previous Abbot.

*Likewise, as time passed, many Abbots were granted the right to wear (**supposedly**) simpler versions of the Episcopal Mitre and Gown and carry a (slightly differentiated and, again supposedly, less ornate) Crook of office.*

A 'TYPICAL' MONASTERY

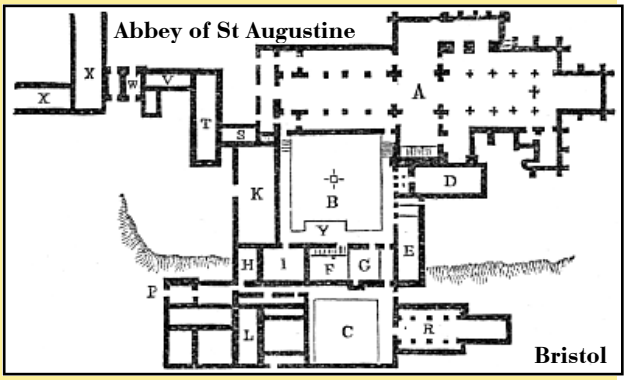
A typical Monastery was supposed to be sited in an out of the way place and be as self-contained as possible in order to minimise the need for any contact with the outside (secular) world ... and would mostly have had a wall or some sort of marked barrier (such as a ditch, a hedge, or even a combination of both) around its immediate perimeter, though the fields and pastures belonging to it would, of course, be outside.

Most post-celtic Monasteries and Abbeys followed a very similar plan pioneered by the Benedictines – and the ***Plan of St Gall Abbey*** *(opposite* and *below)*, though never built, is a fine example showing all the expected main features.

The Abbey was intended to cater for the needs of between 100 and 150 Monks as well as their guests (travellers and the indigent sick).

The Church and the attached structures, as well as the School, the Abbot's House, Guest House and Kitchen, Workshops, Bakery, Kiln, Mills and Mortar Houses and Granary would all have been constructed of stone – the other buildings (Barns, Hospice and Kitchen, Hostel would have been of half-timbered wood or similar).

Note that the Refectory is ***not*** *heated, and the Dormitory has limited heating (a single Hearth) and, apart from the Infirmary, Guest House, Hospice (and,* ***possibly****, the Hostel) and Abbot's House, none of the other structures used by the Monks are heated, either at all or completely (some have a single heater room – the* ***calefactory****) ... and St. Gall is in the Alps! Monks were not supposed to get too comfortable!*

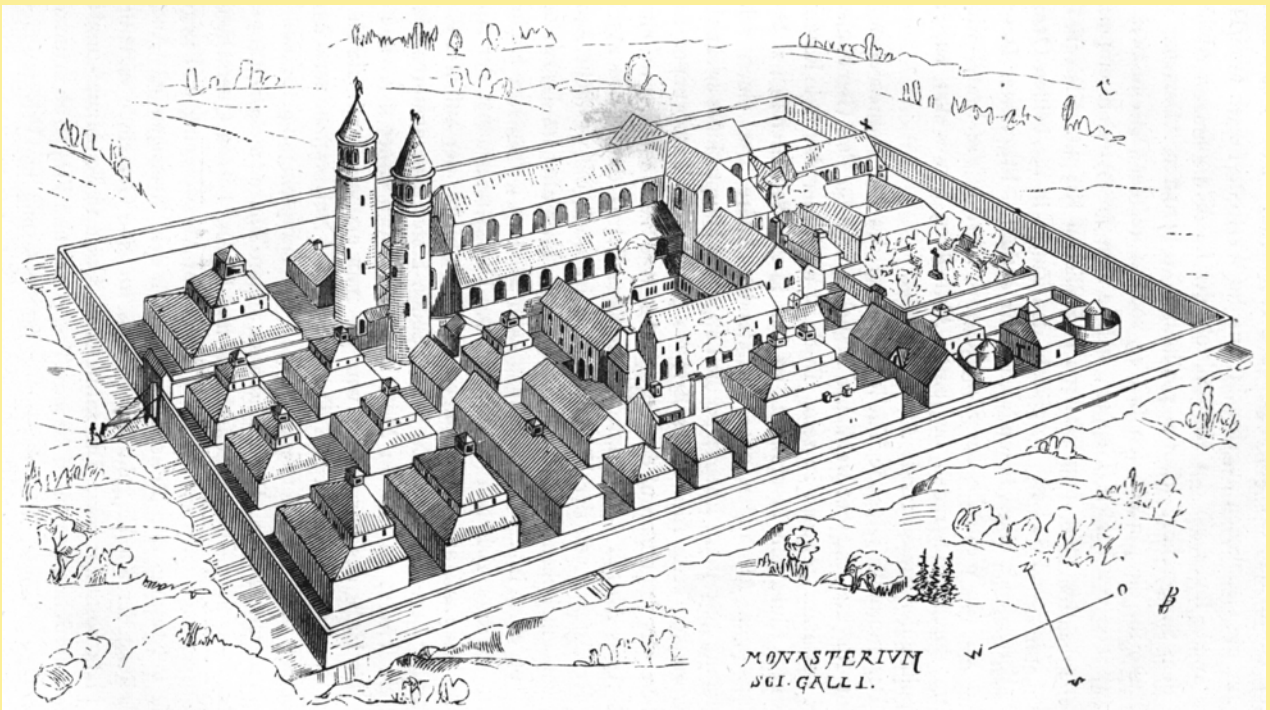


KEY TO ST. AUGUSTINE'S

A. Church
B. Great Cloister
C. Lesser Cloister
D. Chapter House
E. Calefactory
F. Refectory
G. Parlour
H. Kitchen
I. Kitchen Court
K. Cellars
L. Abbot's Hall
P. Abbot's Gateway
R. Infirmary
S. Friar's Lodging
T. King's Hall
V. Guest House
W. Abbey Gateway
X. Barns, Stables etc.
Y. Lavatory

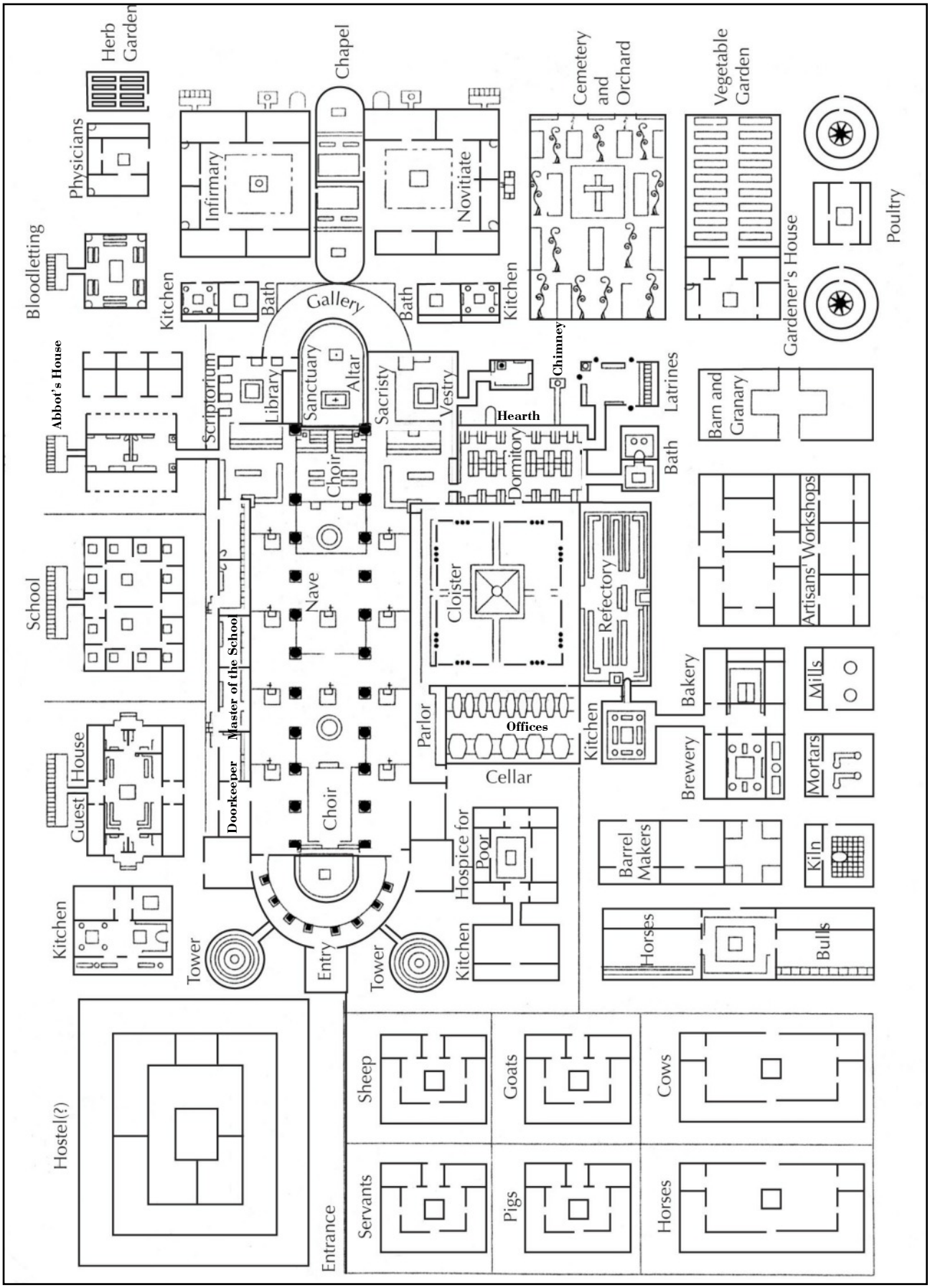
The ***Abbey of St Augustine*** *(Bristol, see diagram above)* was an Augustinian (***Friar's***) foundation, but differs only slightly from the Benedictine plan.

The main buildings shown on the plan were of stone construction, while the outbuildings and workshops that ***would*** *have been associated with the Abbey are not shown on the map, and would have been of half-timbered wood or similar as at St. Gall. As at St. Gall, only a few rooms or areas were normally heated – Friars were also expected to endure 'minor' discomfort.*



* Kloster Sanct Gallen nach dem Grundrisse vom Jahre 830. (Lasius).

Notional Plan of St. Gall Abbey (c. AD 820)



The Rule of St Benedict

St Benedict of Nursia (AD ~480-550) wrote these rules for governance of individual communities of Monks *or Nuns* living under the guidance of an Abbot (or *Abbess*) – but there is no evidence he intended to found a religious *order* and mention of a *'Benedictine Order'* doesn't come until many centuries later. Individual Abbeys remain independent and self-governing to the modern day.

There are 73 'rules' in all, some of the more important of which are, in summary –

5. Requires prompt, willing and absolute obedience to superiors

6. Requires moderation in unnecessary conversation, but not silence.

18-19. Regulates religious observation according to the eight canonical hours.

21. Requires appointment of a *Dean* for every 10 monks.

22. Dormitories are to be lit at night and each monk is to sleep in his habit so he can rise for the required observations. Each monk is to have a separate bed.

23-29. Scale of punishments from private public counseling through excommunication or expulsion.

31-32. Covers the appointment of Monks to take charge of the Monastery's goods.

33-34. Prohibits the private ownership of goods, but requires the Abbot to provide all necessities and have them distributed justly.

35. Requires all Brothers to take turns working in the Kitchens.

36-37. Provides for a special diet and other special care for the old, young, and sick.

38. Requires reading aloud by one of the Brothers during meals and that all others refrain from talking.

39-41. Rules on the quantity and quality of food – two meals a day, two cooked dishes in each. Each brother is allowed a pound of bread and a ¼ liter of wine. *The flesh of four footed animals is forbidden except for the sick and the weak.* Mealtimes are are prescribed, varying according to the time of year.

42. Requires silence after *Compline* in the evening and the reading of 'good works' by all brothers.

43-46. Penalties for minor faults.

47. Requires the Abbot to appoint Chanter and Readers for the Choir (i.e. to lead the assembled Brothers in their massed responses to Mass and other Holy ceremonies).

48. Requires a minimum of five hours of manual labour per day in winter, more in summer.

49. Recommends self-denial during Lent.

50-51. Rules for Brothers working in the fields or travelling, requires them to keep to the services of the canonical hours as much as possible.

53. Rules of Hospitality. Guests are to be looked after by a designated Brother – but not allowed to mix with the other Monks without special permission.

54. Prohibits the Brothers from receiving Letters or gifts without the Abbot's permission.

55. Each Brother is to have two sets of clothes, to allow for washing, plain and cheap – but 'better clothes' are allowed for Brother who are travelling.

57. Goods produced by the Brothers, if sold, are to be sold at *less* than the trade price.

58-59. Rules for admitting new members. At least 12 months at the Monastery, first as as Postulant, then as a Novice, before taking final vows.

63. Precedence is to be by date of admission, merit, or appointment by the Abbot to a position of responsibility.

64. The Abbott is to be elected by the Brothers.

65. Allows for the appointment of a *Provost* or *Prior*, serving (and dismissed) at the Abbot's leave.

66. Provides for the appointment of a *Porter* to interface with the outside world and allow the Brothers to keep as separate as possible.

67. Rules for behaviour when on a journey.

68-71. Rules for interpersonal relationships. No fighting. Obedient. Helpful.

72. Live in religious zeal and fraternal charity.

73. Explanation of the purpose of the rule as the *beginning* basis of organising a religious life (i.e. it was not meant to be prescriptively unchangeable).

As you might expect, many of the rules were observed more in the breach than otherwise – more on which overleaf.

*In some areas, Abbots grew so powerful as to rival, **even displace**, Bishops in the local hierarchy – and in some cases came to rule feudal territories in their own right. Certainly, by the 13th-14th centuries many were living an almost identical lifestyle to the great secular lords.*

*Monasteries gradually became corrupted and largely abandoned the **actuality** of their ascetic lifestyle (often using legalistic and specious arguments) while going to great lengths to **appear** to be adhering to it.*

*For example, the Rule of St Benedict forbade the eating of the flesh of 4-legged animals **in the Refectory** ... so Monasteries built an **additional** dining area, the **Misericord**, for the consumption of meat dishes. Theoretically half of the Monks would eat in the Refectory, the rest in the Misericord ... except on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday when **all** were supposed to eat in the former.*

Friaries & Friars

Usually referred to as 'Monks', their foundations were also often called Monasteries or Abbeys – the difference was that they were expected to take an active part in the wider world while also devoting themselves to a ordered religious lifestyle, supporting themselves directly through work in or for their community or from charity provided by members of the community.

The *main* orders that existed or were created from the 12th century were – the ***Carmelites*** (c. AD 1155, *'White Friars'* – but ***not*** the *Discalced Carmelites*, who were only founded in the 16th century), ***Franciscans*** (1209, *Friars Minor* or *'Brown Friars'*), ***Dominicans*** (c. 1216, *'Black Friars'*) and the ***Augustinians*** (1244, *'Hermits of St. Augustine'* or *'Austin Friars'*.

Lesser orders also existed, usually in limited geographical areas to begin with (and for most of the period to the end of the 14th century, at least) – the *Trinitarians* (1198, areas near Paris), *Mercedarians* (1218, Iberian Peninsula, founded to do charitable works and, especially, to ransom Christian slaves held by the Moors) and the *Servites* (1240, near Florence).

Nunneries & Nuns

These were the female equivalents of Monks and Monasteries, usually organised under the Rule of St Benedict, and ruled over by an (elected) Abbess – and were entirely religious cloistered religious orders ... there were no *official* or *recognised* female equivalents of the Friars.

Other Religious Institutes

In general, ***any*** lay religious organisation (i.e. one not under the strict control of the Pope or the local ecclesiastical authorities) was regarded with suspicion especially as the church became increasingly obsessed with rooting out heresy (real or imagined) from the 13th century onwards ... women, being the 'Daughters of Eve' and inherently flawed, were especially suspect.



Of all the groups mentioned below, only Anchorites and Hermits were well regarded by the Church – entirely because they *were* under the control and authority *of* the ecclesiastical hierarchy and could be expected to (or forced to) adhere to doctrinal norms.

All the rest, being subject only to their own consciences, were believed to be (and often were) easily led into heresy ... aka, not doing as they were told to do and not believing what they were told to believe by their 'betters.'

Anchorites. Relatively rare in Catholic Europe by the 11th century, *Anchorites* were individuals who made religious vows to live apart from secular society and, as much as possible, even from ecclesiastical society (they were responsible only to the local Bishop).

*By the 12th century about 80% of all Anchorites were **Anchoresses** (females) – but this number declined to around two thirds by the 15th century.*

Anchorites were tied to a single place – a cell (small chamber or room with limited access, typically walled in except for three small windows, one of which allowed a view of the Altar so they could take part in Masses) attached to a Church.

They spent their days in prayer and contemplation and were thought particularly holy by most people, especially commoners.

It was common for lay-persons to consult with an Anchorite on matters of personal faith.

Beguines. These were women who took simple, non-binding, vows to live a religious life while they lived in a Beguine House or Community, but were free to leave at any time. Like Friars they were expected to support themselves – by inherited income if wealthy or by work (such as educating children) if not.

The Avignon Popes tried to suppress them from the 13th century to the end of the Avignon Papacy; similar attempts to suppress them were made in some regions of the Germanies during the 13th century as well. In 1311 the movement as a whole was accused of spreading heresy by Pope Clement V and banned for a time.

Beghards. The male-only equivalent of the *Beguines*, but largely confined to the Towns of what would

eventually become Belgium and The Netherlands as well as parts of Germany.

Unlike the Beguines, they were a self-help organisation for those who wished to avoid being forced to live on charity or as beggars because of age, infirmity, or poverty and lived together in common as a means of achieving this end while also living a spiritual life ... many Beghard houses were exclusive to members of the Weaving or other Textile related Guilds.

*The Beghards were no better thought of by the Church and Civil authorities than the **Beguines** – and attempts to suppress them as heretical and unsupportive of the existing social order (they were accused of what we would call 'anarchist tendencies') were regularly made.*

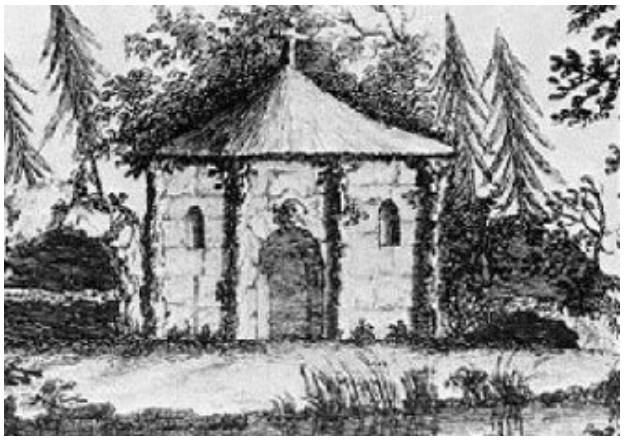
Gyrovagues. A wandering Monk, rather than those who settle in a Monastery. Increasingly uncommon by the 10th century, and always viewed with grave suspicion by the ecclesiastical authorities as troublemakers not under their direct control. Often regarded as little better than vagrants by the civil authorities ... but just as often well regarded by the common people.

Rare after the late 11th century, when the Rule of St. Benedict was well and truly established.

Hermits. A very old form of religious, Hermits were similar to *Anchorites*, but far less rigorous – merely living a (variably) solitary existence, often in an isolated location (a cave or hermitage, often in a forest in Catholic Europe), while supporting themselves and leading a life of prayer and contemplation.

Some Monastic orders made provision for Brothers who felt the need to withdraw from their communal life as much as possible to have small hermitages in separate areas on the wider monastic grounds.

Hermits of the non-monastic variety, like Anchorites, were regularly consulted by locals (or even pilgrims, if famous) on matters of personal faith ... but might also attract disciples under their spiritual guidance (though this was relatively uncommon in the Catholic West), losing their 'solitariness' in the process.



Sarabaites. Small groups of Christians who, like the *Beghards* or *Beguines*, lived a personally devout lifestyle without taking vows and not under any established monastic rule.

Sarabaite communities were rarely more than a half a dozen people and, more commonly, one 3-4.

They normally lived in or near towns and cities and supported themselves by working regular jobs ... and, like the *Beguines*, *Beghards* and *Gyrovagues*, were regarded with *deep* suspicion by church authorities as they did not come under the direct control of the established (bureaucratic) hierarchy.

The Liturgical Year

All branches of the Christian Church in the Middle Ages followed a set pattern and sequence of religious observances that divided up the year. The most important events of the liturgical year are related to the life, death, resurrection and ascension into Heaven of Jesus –

Advent. Preparation for the celebration of Christ's birth (and the expected Second Coming), runs from the fourth Sunday *before* Christmas to *Christmas Eve*.

Christmastide. Begins with Vespers (at Dusk) on Christmas Eve and runs through to either February 2nd or *Candlemas* (6th February) commemorating the 40 days between the birth of Jesus and (as per Jewish tradition) his presentation by Mary at the Temple.

*The period includes the **Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord** on January 6th, commemorating the adoration of the Magi.*

Lent. A period of purification and penance in the lead up to Easter, it ran from *Ash Wednesday* (40 days of fasting [less the 6 intervening Sundays which are feast days], or 46 days before Easter, which can vary wildly as does the date for Easter) through to *Maundy Thursday* (the day before *Good Friday*).

Easter. Begins with the Evening Mass on *Maundy Thursday* and runs for seven weeks through to *Pentecost* (the seventh Sunday after Easter Sunday).

*The Easter period concludes with the **Solemnity of the Pentecost (Whitsunday)**, followed by the **Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity**, the first Sunday after Whitsun.*

Other important ceremonies that occur during the liturgical year include –

The *Solemnity of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist* (June 24th), *Solemnity of Saints Peter & Paul* (June 29th), the *Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord* (August 6th), the *Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross* (September 14th), the *Solemnity of All Saints*

(November 1st), the *Commemoration of All Faithful Departed Souls* (November 2nd) and the *Feast of the Dedication of the Archbasilica of the Holy Saviour (St John Lateran) in Rome* (November 9th) and concludes with the *Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ the King of the Universe* on the Sunday before Advent.

*Dioceses, and even Parishes within a Diocese, could vary from the standard pattern, celebrating the feast days of their Patron Saint or the dedication of the Parish Church or Diocesan Cathedral. Individual Priests may also choose to celebrate those Feasts and Solemnities that do not fall on a Sunday on the **next** Sunday.*

***Solemnities** are the highest ranking Feast days, and supersede any lesser celebrations or Feasts that would normally occur on those days listed (which will mostly be as a result of the variable dates for Easter).*

Ceremonies and Sacraments

Some of the major ceremonies and rituals of the Church –

Baptism (Christening). This was performed as soon as possible after birth, usually within 8 days (unbaptised infants who died were excluded from heaven and couldn't be buried in consecrated ground). ***Anyone*** could perform a baptism ... so, for example, Midwives were expected to know the proper forms.

*At least one Godparent was **required** – and the link created an unacceptable degree of consanguinity.*

Confirmation. This was originally done at the same time as the baby was baptised – but, for the most part, was done much later, to those who had reached 'the age of reason,' by the 10th century. It was supposed to be done by a Bishop and, therefore, it was unusual for most common people to be confirmed.

*Very occasionally, in exceptional circumstances, a Bishop could grant specific priests the right to perform the ceremony – and **any** priest could do so if the recipient was in immediate danger of death.*

*Membership in the Roman Catholic Church and active participation in its ceremonies did **not** require the parishioner to have been confirmed.*

Communion (Eucharist). The saying of the Mass involved (amongst other things) the taking of bread and wine in memory of the Last Supper where Christ served the Apostles, was done in *Latin* (*not* the local vernacular), underwent some changes – from the 12th century on, congregants only got the bread, the priest only receiving the wine; and it was only from the 13th century the Host was lifted for viewing.

During the ceremony the Priest faced the *altar **not*** the *congregation*.

The Canonical Hours

According to the Rule of St. Benedict (paraphrased).

Chapter 8. In Winter, from the Kalends of November until Easter, the brothers shall rise at the eighth hour of the night (or *Matins*), so they may sleep slightly more than half the night and rise rested.

From Easter to the Kalends of November it should be arranged so the Morning Office (daybreak or *Lauds*) follows the Night Office after a short interval to deal with the necessities of nature.

Chapter 11. On Sunday the hour of rising for the Night Office should be earlier all the year round.

Chapter 14. On the Feasts of the Saints the rule for Sunday is to be followed.

Chapter 16. Let us praise to our Creator at the Night Office (Matins), the Morning Office (Lauds), Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers and Compline.

- ***Matins.** Night Office (of Prayer). Includes Compline (see below).*
- ***Lauds.** Morning Office (of Prayer). Starts after Matins and finishes with Prime (see below).*
- ***Prime (Dawn).** The first hour of daylight. The old Roman 'First Hour of the Day.' Nominally 6-7 am.*
- ***Terce.** Named after the third hour of daylight but, as per Roman practise, actually begins at the end of that hour (the beginning of the fourth hour by most standards). Nominally around 9-10 am.*
- ***Sext.** Named after the sixth hour of daylight but, as with Terce, actually begins with the end of that hour. Nominally around noon.*
- ***None.** As noted, this is at the end of the ninth hour of daylight nominally three hours after noon.*
- ***Vespers.** Evening (Sunset) prayers. Nominally around 6 pm, depending on the time of year.*
- ***Compline.** Night Prayers, nominally around midnight.*

*There were set orders of service (Prayers, Psalms and Hymns, Readings from the Bible and other ceremonials depending on the Canonical Hour, the part of the Liturgical Year and other factors) for all of these observances – more time consuming and complex for the Regular Clergy (Monks, Nuns and Friars), less so for the other ecclesiasticals – and not often observed much at all by the majority of the laity, except the **exceptionally** religiously inclined (who were uncommon but not unheard of).*

*Lay people attended Mass even less frequently than they do today – the Church attempted to force the issue repeatedly (indicating failure). By the 11th century attendance was **expected** only at Christmas, Easter and Whitsun (Pentecost) ... but the 4th Lateran Council (1215) required it only at Easter.*

In fact, some authorities regarded too frequent attendance at Mass as being disrespectful because of its great religious significance. Evidence suggests that even Monks probably attended Mass only once a Month on average.

Confession. This was only regarded as a sacrament from the 11th century ... though the practise dates back to at least the 4th century. The 4th Lateran Council required the making of Confession at least once a year.

*The most common penance was **fasting** (which did not necessarily mean what it does today – more commonly it meant giving up specific foods ... so, for example, you might give up Beef and Mutton, but happily dine on Fish and Poultry), followed by Prayer, Almsgiving or paying for a Mass (or Masses) to be said and Pilgrimage.*

It was possible (though the Church frowned on the practise) to pay another to perform the penance – most commonly (other than paying for a Mass) by paying someone to go on a pilgrimage on your behalf.

***Indulgences.** Offered to Pilgrims who visited a shrine, offering remission of **some** sin ... from the 11th century they still required Confession, Absolution and Penance.*

*It did **not** get you out of Purgatory nor did it absolve you of sins not yet committed ... those abuses (one of the many that triggered the Reformation) were in the future.*

Marriage. *Not* considered a sacrament and there was no requirement to publish the Banns or have a public ceremony until the 4th Lateran Council (1215).

*Even then, there was no requirement for a Church ceremony ... all that was needed was a formal (un-coerced and informed) agreement by both parties and a statement along the lines of **'I take you <name> as my legitimate wife/husband'** ... consummation was **not required** to validate a marriage (though it certainly made it more difficult to deny).*



Investment (Taking Holy Orders). This could be either ***major*** (the Priesthood or Diaconate – consecration as a Bishop required further ceremonies), where celibacy was (increasingly, as noted elsewhere) *required* or ***minor*** (Acolyte, Exorcist, Lector, Porter ... generically called 'Clerks') where celibacy was *not* required. Neither could be taken before age 25.

Extreme Unction ('Last Rites'). The ritual anointing of a seriously sick and probably dying person with blessed oil ... followed by the Sacrament of Penance (and absolution of sin) and, finally, the *Viaticum*, a final Mass for the dying person.

The 'Last Rites' may be performed by a Priest, Deacon or even a specially appointed Acolyte and Churches held pre-consecrated Host and Wine for such purposes so they would be ready on all occasions.

Heresy

*'Everyone who is not devoted to the Catholic Church and our Orthodox holy Faith' (**Codex Justinianus**)* is, by definition, a ***heretic*** ... but *excommunication* (and other punishment) is reserved for those who, *'obstinately and persistently refuse'* to recant their heretical beliefs and accept the orthodox teachings.

*Recanting of heretical beliefs was **normally** the end of the matter as far as the Church was concerned – unless the former heretic then lapsed back **into** heresy. A second fall into heresy and second recantation was accepted, but more rigorously examined and supervised – but a third lapse was normally punished by execution.*

The attitude of the Civil authorities, however, varied widely from time to time and place to place, but tended to harden from the 12th or 13th centuries onward – but note that national, regional or local laws targeting heretics and imposing severe (capital) punishment were not always enforced.

The only thing that can be said for sure is that things were consistently inconsistent.

*Also note that the local, regional or national **ecclesiastical** authorities were not always disposed to investigate accusations of heresy or, indeed, launch prosecutions, and disagreed with the imposition of that role on them by the Papacy and, indeed, with the imposition of severe punishment by the civil authorities.*

The Church as a whole was quite tolerant, within very strict limits, of people who held 'unorthodox' views – largely related to who those who held such views were, how many they were, and how influential they were.

Unusually intolerant priests or Bishops might go on a persecution shtick for a while, but generally they preferred softer methods ... preaching, co-option or even nonviolent (mostly) coercion.

Inquisitions and Heretics

Before the 11th century, heretical beliefs had largely been regional, so – the ***Arians*** (mostly confined to the Goths and Vandals in SW and Central Europe, surviving longest in the Iberian Peninsula and North Africa – suppressed by the 8th century), the ***Pelagians*** (Rome, Jerusalem and Egypt in small numbers, more common in the British Isles, gone by the 5th or 6th century), the ***Donatists*** (mostly confined to North Africa, destroyed by the Muslim conquests), the ***Marcionists*** (mostly in the East, outside East Roman control, largely gone by the 5th century) and the ***Montanists*** (Asia Minor, most extinct by the end of the 4th century, though isolated groups may have continued until as late as the 8th century) – were all limited geographically.

*Even though all of these had been condemned by one or more Ecumenical Councils and suppressed by the authorities, the ideas that underlay them were harder for the Church to deal with as they often **seemed** to contain more common sense than the finely split hairs of acceptable theological argument ... and it was especially easy (or so the Church hierarchy believed) for them to reappear in new guises amongst the uneducated or ill-educated (even amongst the clergy!).*

In the west, the Church was relatively relaxed about heresy between the 8th-11th centuries – for the simple reason that there were no *organised* and *mass* examples, and the treatment of heretics was relatively low key (mainly ignoring them, as noted opposite).

The Inquisition

By the 12th century, however, things were starting to change, and a variety of heretical movements had begun to spring up that consisted of large enough groups covering wide enough geographical areas as to be seen as a threat – and the first Church appointed ***Inquisitors*** appear from 1184 ... though there was no formal ***Inquisition*** until 1234.

*The **Tribunal del Santo Oficio de la Inquisición** – ('Tribunal of the Holy Office of the Inquisition' – the Spanish Inquisition) wasn't established until **1478**, to ensure the orthodox belief of **Conversos** (Jews converted to Christianity) and **Moriscos** (Muslims likewise), especially after forced conversions from 1492 onwards.*

Claims that the Holy Office was an organisation of all-powerful torture obsessed psychopaths do not stand up to scrutiny. Of the ~150,000 investigations carried out over 350 years, only ~3000 resulted in executions (imprisonment was more common) and the use of torture was, in fact, less common than in other jurisdictions.

It was only around the late 12th and early 13th centuries that ***civil*** authorities, not always (or entirely) at the urging of the church, institute more serious punishments. Most treated heresy as ***Treason*** on the (dubious) basis that a heretic's mere *existence* endangered the security of the state and the salvation of its citizens and punished accordingly.

England, for example, instituted the burning of Heretics at the stake only from 1222.

Defences against Charges of Heresy

There were positive defences, such as –

- Being under the influence of a demonic power (but you then needed to be *exorcised*) – which often meant accusing someone of being responsible (cf. the *much* later witch trials in Salem).
- Not yet at the age of reason – usually considered to be around 14. In a sense, not yet able to fully understand the nature of the theology involved.
- Old Age and, presumably, infirmity of mind (senility) ... *'not of sound mind.'*
- Being asleep (probably 'being drunk') or under emotional strain – again, *'not of sound mind.'*
- Being poorly taught or illiterate – but, of course, then *accepting* proper (orthodox) instruction and being rid of 'error.'

Making heretical statements ***while under duress***, however, or ***while one's life was being threatened***, were regarded as exceptionally *weak* defences.

*Suck it up – it was good enough for the **Martyrs**, it's good enough for **you** to die for your faith.*

Heresy and the Jews

Fairly early on the Church Fathers began to attempt to differentiate Christianity from Judaism – the change of the holy day from Saturday to Sunday being one obvious mechanism. This was due to the influence of ***Saint Paul*** who saw it as more universal than an inward dwelling, mostly Jewish, heresy plus the impact of the failure of the Jewish Rebellions against Rome (AD 66-73, AD 115-117 and AD 132-136) which made it progressively a better and better idea to distance Christians from Jews ...

When Constantine made Christianity the state religion (from AD 313), Jews were already being seen by the educated Graeco-Roman Church hierarchy as obstinate and persistent in not acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah – and things went downhill from there, with Pope St Gregory (540-6-4) railing against them as the source of ***all*** heretical belief.

There were up and down cycles thereafter, but from the late 12th century anti-Jewish feeling began to hit a peak in Western Europe.

Major Heresies in the Medieval West

The first of the 'new wave' of heretical beliefs to arrive in Europe since the rise of Islam were the ***Bogomils*** (a development of the ***Paulicians***, who were largely confined to Anatolia) who originated in Bulgaria and then spread into Dalmatia and northwards and their western offshoots, the ***Waldensians*** (parts of Italy, northern France and the Germanies) and the ***Cathars*** (in southern France).

Paulicians

Originated in Anatolia in the 7th century and was a dualist heresy – they based their teachings entirely on the New Testament and believed that there were actually two Gods, a good one who was responsible for the creation of men's souls and an evil one who made the physical world and everything in it.

*Catholic **and** Orthodox doctrine is strictly **monotheistic** – the belief that the **one God** created **everything**, 'visible and invisible.' Dualist beliefs such as the original **Manichaeism** (a combination of Zoroastrian Persian and Christian beliefs, fl. 212-386) have popped up again and again throughout history ... and are always heretical as far as both Churches are concerned.*

*The **Paulicians**, **Bogomils** and **Cathars** are all dualist and therefore heretical ... though the Church often took some time to become aware of and realise their nature, especially as the beliefs were, of course, far more complex than **just** being dualist.*

Bogomils

The Bogomils were basically forcibly resettled *Paulicians* and shared their dualist beliefs (God/Spiritual vs Satan/Material).

They were a perpetual thorn in the side of the authorities (lay and ecclesiastical) in Dalmatia, Bosnia and Croatia, and there were continued attempts to suppress or convert them which were only partly successful, but which lead to much unrest, violence, and intercommunal strife from the 10th-15th centuries

The Turkish conquest ended persecution and largely destroyed the movement in occupied areas.

Waldensians

Started by Peter Waldo, a layman from Lyon (France) who paid to have the Bible translated from Latin into Provencal and who believed in universal (lay) priesthood, voluntary poverty and that the Bible should be made available to all in their local ('vulgar') language.

Waldo's innovations were condemned by the 3rd Lateran Council (1179) and, when they continued in their public preaching and professions of their beliefs, they were declared heretics and excommunicated by the Synod of Verona in 1184.

They went underground, itinerant Preachers (*Barba*) serving the faithful in secret, successfully to begin with (Peter Waldo was never apprehended, probably dying in Germany in the early 13th century).

However, beginning with the burning of 80 at the stake in Strasbourg in 1211, persecution stepped up and continued beyond the end of the 14th century.

The Waldensians survived to the Protestant Reformation and decided they had more in common with the Reformed Churches and became part of the wider Protestant community ... and still exists today.

Cathars

A development of the Paulician heresy (or simply a heresy with key elements in common, take your pick) – one of the key doctrines was that the God of the New Testament was the 'good' god and the God of the Old Testament (the creator of the physical world) was the 'evil' god (or Satan, according to some).

*The Cathars (sometimes called **Albigensians** after the town of **Albi,** the cult centre in Languedoc) differentiated from the dualist heresies (above) in that they believed humans were (genderless) angels who were continually reincarnated (i.e. into 'evil' material bodies) which would continue to until they were 'purified' by a variant on (adult) baptism and became **Perfecti** ('Perfect Ones' – the Cathar Priestly class).*

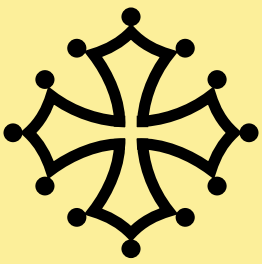
Another important point of difference (and dispute with the Church) was that they allowed women in leadership roles – even as Perfecti. Since, after all, they were really genderless angels trapped in (evil) material form

*The Cathars referred to themselves as **Good Men** ('Bons Hommes') or **Good Christians.***

The sect appears in 1143 at Cologne, spreading into northern, then southern France (*Languedoc*), where it reached its greatest extent before being targeted by the in the ***Albigensian Crusade*** (1208-1229) which largely wiped it out, though remnants persisted there and in northern Italy as late as the mid 14th century,

There were massacres, but many were forcibly converted (and forced to wear the Penitent's Cross) by the inquisitors.

Cathar Cross





Cathar Penitents Cross

*The Church hierarchy really didn't care about the beliefs of **ordinary** lay people for the most part – if Giles the Villein questioned the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ during the Eucharist, so what? He was a nobody.*

If, however, Giles the Villein was a gifted orator who somehow managed to convince large numbers of lay-people and threaten (or seem to threaten) the primacy of the Church hierarchy in matters of belief and doctrine, all bets were off.

*Likewise, if he was **Count** Giles and publically pronounced his heretical beliefs ... or if he was **Father** Giles and began preaching them from the parish pulpit (or, worse, the Cathedral's Throne!), **that** was regarded as **much** more serious, and prompt action would be taken to correct the heretic or suppress the heresy.*

Of course, even in the latter two instances, the Church would usually try and find a way of bringing the heterodox beliefs back into the orthodox range ... there was some degree of wriggle room in many cases.

*So, the local peasants worship the Old Gods at an ancient sacred site? No problem! Build a Church or a Chapel on top of it and 'discover' a new Saint ... one who just **happens** to have all of the key characteristics of the main pre-christian god worshipped there!*

The Babylonian Captivity

On the death of Pope Benedict XI (AD 1304), Pope Clement V, a Frenchman, was elected to the Papacy (1305) – and refused to leave France. In fact, in 1309 he moved the entire Papal Court to an enclave in Avignon in SE France where it fell under the close influence of the French Kings.

The next seven Popes were all French – and remained at Avignon until Gregory XI returned to Rome in 1377. However, when Gregory died in 1378, there was a rift between many of the (French influenced) Cardinals and the new (Roman) Pope, Urban VI (1378-1389), and they met in a separate conclave and elected a Pope of their own, Clement VII (1378-1394), followed by Benedict XIII (1394-1423), who are regarded *today* as ***Antipopes***, while Urban was followed by Boniface IX (1389-1404).

Even though Benedict XIII was eventually expelled from Avignon (1405), he remained a claimant supported by the Spanish monarchy, even though the Council of Constance (1417) had rejected his claim and elected Martin V as a now almost universally accepted Roman Pope.

On Benedict's death in 1423, three of the four Cardinals loyal to him elected Clement VIII ... but the remaining one 'elected' Benedict XIV!

Clement VIII eventually settled with Martin V, 'abdicating' as Pope and being granted the Bishopric of Mallorca (1429) ... Benedict XIV, on the other hand, was captured and imprisoned by Clement VIII (and excommunicated by Martin V) and died in prison in France in 1433.

While the bulk of the Avignon period extends beyond the terminal date of 1400 chosen for this book, the political and religious manoeuverings involved, firstly at the new Papal Court in Avignon, and, secondly, after the election of the first antipope, make for fascination role play opportunities!

The Papal Palace, Avignon



Orthodoxy vs Roman Catholicism

Tensions between the Eastern (Orthodox) and Western (Roman Catholic) branches of Christianity had been building up for centuries over a wide variety of issues, some of an administrative (church government) and others of a theological nature when, in 1054, a major and (so far) permanent rupture occurred. What were the causes of the building tension?

Church Government

Primacy. The *Roman Catholic Church* is of the opinion that the Bishop of Rome (the Pope) is the chosen and lineal descendant of St Peter and, therefore, the head of the Church universal.

The *Orthodox* Churches believe that the five ancient Patriarchs (the ***Pentarchy***) defined by the Quinisext Council (AD 692) are co-equal in authority and should administer the Church collegially though, even so, final decisions need to be made by General Church Councils (Synods).

*The **Pentarchy** is, in order of ceremonial pre-eminence, the Patriarch of the West (the Bishop of Rome), the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, the Patriarch of Alexandria and Pope of All Egypt, the Patriarch of Antioch and Pope of All the East and the Patriarch of Jerusalem (including the Arabian Peninsula)*

Celibacy. The *Roman Catholic Church* increasingly prohibited married priests – except in those Eastern Churches who remained loyal to the Bishop of Rome after 1054 where the Orthodox rule (see below) is generally followed.

The *Orthodox* Churches allow married men to become Parish Priests, but requires celibacy of Monks. Bishops must also be celibate and are, therefore, usually Monks – but married Priests *may* become Bishops if they take a vow of celibacy and their wives become Nuns.

Theology

Filioque ('Double Procession') Controversy. The original *Greek* of the ***Nicene Creed*** (modified by the 1st Council of Constantinople, AD 381) translates as ...

... who proceedeth from the Father ...

The Roman Catholic version, however, added ***filioque*** *('and the son')* after that phrase so that it read ...

*... who proceedeth from the Father **and the son** ...*

(Modern ... *I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father [**and the Son**]. Who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified.*)

The Orthodox position is that this addition is both *unsanctioned* by any Church Council and, at the very least, *confused* in its theology (separating the Son from the Father) and, at worst, *heretical.*

The Host (in the Eucharist). The *Roman Catholic* tradition follows that of the Old Testament (and Jewish practise during *Passover*) in mandating the use of ***unleavened bread*** as the Host in the Eucharist (Mass – for Holy Communion).

Most Orthodox Churches *forbid* the use of unleavened bread *requiring* bread with yeast to represent the *New Covenant* as represented in the *New Testament.*

The Great Schism (1054)

The proximate cause of the schism began in 1053 and the closing of all Latin Rite Churches in Constantinople by Michael I Cerularius, the Ecumenical Patriarch who, in turn, was responding to Pope Leo IX's closing of Greek Rite Churches in southern Italy or forcing them to conform to the Latin Rite.

In retaliation, the Pope sent a delegation to Constantinople to formally refuse to recognise Cerularius as Ecumenical Patriarch and insisting he recognise the Pope as the Head of the Church.

What happened next is confused (and confusing). According to some sources, Cerularius refused to formally and privately meet with Cardinal Humbert (the Pope's envoy) who, in disgust, threw a Bull of Excommunication down at his feet in public session.

Other sources, however, claim that there had been no attempt by the Latins to communicate or negotiate with Cerularius and the Bull thrown at Cerularius's feet was in *Latin* – and there were so few people fluent in Latin (the Eastern Empire ran almost entirely on Greek) that no-one knew what the ornate looking parchment was all about for some days.

As soon as Cerularius became aware of the nature of the document (whenever that was) he, in turn, formally Excommunicated Cardinal Humbert and all his fellow Legates.

Then there's the validity of the Excommunication – it was done in the name of Pope Leo who may, or may not, have delegated that power to Cardinal Humbert ... but, when it was thrown at Cerularius's feet, Pope Leo had been dead for some time.

Likewise, Cerularius' excommunication applied only to Humbert and the Legates *personally*.

Regardless, the Church split quite quickly on geographical and doctrinal lines, more or less along the same border that still separates the two today – though there have been occasional attempt to heal the rift, so far with a notable lack of success.

The Orthodox Church

The most obvious difference between the Orthodox Church(es) and the Roman Catholic Church is that they do not accept that the Bishop of Rome has sole and ultimate authority over the Church universal and operate in a more collegial manner.

*There are other differences, of course, some of which are described in the sidebar box opposite – but even these are not the whole story ... this is, however, a role playing game supplement and **neither** a theology **nor** a history text. Feel free to research the differences and disputes in more detail **if** they are **that** important to your campaign.*

Orthodox Churches

Unlike the Roman Catholic Church, there is *no one person* who has ultimate authority over the Orthodox Church(es). For that matter, depending on how you reckon such things, *there is no **one** Orthodox Church.*

(Eastern) Orthodox Church

The Eastern Orthodox Church is the main branch of the Orthodox Church (in numbers), accepts the Council of Chalcedon (unlike the *Oriental Orthodox Church*, see below) and accepts that the *Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople* is the second most senior Bishop after the Bishop of Rome and, after 1054, first amongst equals of all the constituent *autocephalous* and *autonomous* Churches.

*It was sometimes called the **Greek Orthodox Church**, but this had fallen out of favour by the 10th century due to the development of the regional autocephalous and autonomous 'branches' within mainstream Orthodoxy.*

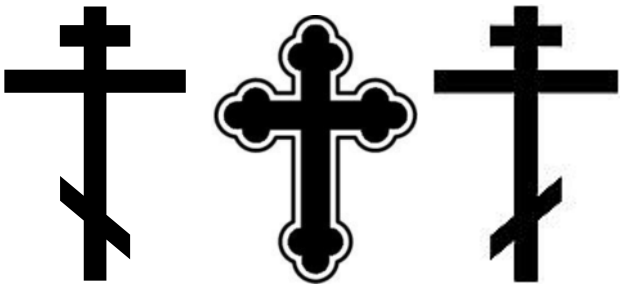
*The official title is the **Orthodox Catholic Church**.*

The Orthodox Churches do not recognise the primacy of the Bishop of Rome over the Church entire, though they *do* accept that he was the first amongst equals.

Apart from the matters of *filioque* and the use of *leavened or unleavened bread in the Eucharist*, there are a number of other important (religious) differences between Orthodox and Catholic belief.

These differences can be (*very*, ***very*** roughly) categorised as a more *mystical* approach to worship, belief and theology (based on ***Theoria***, or *'experience of God'*) taken in the East (in general) while the Catholic West developed a ***scholastic*** approach (based on ***pagan*** *Aristotelian logic*, which is ***not*** *scientific* logic!).

*Most Catholic theology is rejected as Orthodox theologians claim western theologians show (for the most part) little or, more often, **no** sign of having ever had a direct 'experience of God' and without this their scholastic arguments are sterile and mostly invalid (Catholic theologians, naturally enough, disagree!).*



Three variants of the Orthodox Cross

The following *autocephalous* Churches are part of the (Eastern) Orthodox communion – the *Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople*, the *Patriarchate of Antioch and all the East*, the *Patriarchate of Alexandria* (and Egypt, Libya, Ethiopia and all Africa), the *Patriarchate of Jerusalem* (and all Palestine, Syria and Arabia beyond the Jordan River), *Patriarchate of Bulgaria*, *Patriarchate of Georgia*, *Archbishopric of All Cyprus* and the *Archbishopric of Serbia* (1219-1346, *Patriarchate*, 1346-).

*If an area is known to have had a **significant** Orthodox presence during the 10th-14th centuries and isn't **specifically** mentioned above, it is usually a part of one of the Patriarchates (or Archbishoprics) mentioned. So, for example, Russia was part of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, as was Crete.*

(Oriental) Orthodox Church

Sometimes referred to as the ***Monophysite Church***, this branch of the Orthodox Church only accepts the first three Ecumenical Councils – and split with what then became the *Eastern Orthodox* Church over the decision of the ***fourth*** Council (Council of Chalcedon, AD 451) to declare that Jesus was one person (as agreed at the Council of Ephesus, AD 431, in rejection of *Nestorianism*), but that this person existed in two natures.

Nestorians *believed that Christ was two distinct, and separate, beings – human and divine. The Council of Ephesus had rejected this by stating that Christ existed 'of or from two natures' whereas the Council of Chalcedon changed this to 'in two natures' – and that wasn't acceptable to a significant minority of those attending.*

The Oriental Church(es) saw this as a plot to subvert orthodoxy and bring back Nestorianism and increasingly separated themselves from the Eastern Orthodox mainstream, especially in areas on the fringe of (or outside) of Imperial control, a process that was underway by the mid 6th century.

The Churches of the Oriental Orthodox faith include the following *autocephalous* Churches – *Armenian Orthodox* (Armenia), *Coptic Orthodox* (Egypt), *Ethiopian Orthodox* (Ethiopia), *Malankara Orthodox* (India) and *Syriac Orthodox* (Syria and the Holy Lands). They are in communion with each other, but do not recognise any authority over them by either the Bishop of

Rome or of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople and are, likewise, not in communion with any of the Orthodox Churches who recognise the authority of either of these two.

Autocephalous and Autonomous Churches

Autocephalous Churches. In the Orthodox tradition (both *Eastern* **and** *Oriental*) an *autocephalous* Church is a defined ecclesiastical province whose head (Patriarch, Archbishop or Bishop) is not subject to a higher authority (other than God, of course) and, therefore, has an equal vote to all other autocephalous in Church Synods.

Autocephalous status is either *foundational* (notably the ***Pentarchy***, the five original Patriarchies – Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem) or is *granted* by an Ecumenical Synod.

Autonomous Churches. An *autonomous* Church's Bishop or Archbishop is appointed by governing Patriarch of the region, but it is self governing at that and lower levels, being run by its own internal synods and councils, separate from those of the governing Patriarchate's.

This status is often a stepping stone between subordination and autocephaly.

Orthodox Hierarchy

The heads of the *autocephalous* Churches are the senior clerics of both Orthodox Churches – each having one (and only one) vote in Ecumenical Synods and Church Councils.

Patriarchs. These are the heads of the ***Pentarchy*** (the original five main ecclesiastic provinces recognised by the Roman state after Christianity was adopted as the State Religion), *less the Bishop of Rome*, ***plus*** the Patriarchs of the Georgian, Bulgarian and Serbian Orthodox Churches, which are considered more junior in *prestige*.



Seal of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople

As long as the Churches remain true to Orthodox theology as defined by the General Church Councils, they are all equal and independent ... if they do not accept some or all of those teachings and decisions they descend into error (and heresy) and the State authorities (if the East Roman State is in a position to do so) may want to suppress them or force them to recant, but, otherwise, remain independent and equal.

Archbishop. A (senior) Bishop of an Orthodox nation or Capital City, but *normally* under the jurisdiction of one of the *Patriarchs* (there are some exceptions – notably Cyprus and Serbia, which were *autocephalous* but not Patriarchates). They are, mostly, senior to *Metropolitans* and always senior to Bishops.

Metropolitan. A (senior) Bishop of a major city. In some cases they may be the Bishop of a Capital City, in which case they are the equal of an *Archbishop*. They are senior to Bishops.

Bishop. The cleric in charge of a *Eparchy* (the Greek equivalent of a western *Diocese*). This is the lowest ecclesiastical rank that can ordain Priests.

*Bishops are occasionally referred to **as** Eparchs, especially in written communications with the civil hierarchy of the eastern Empire.*

Auxiliary or Titular Bishop. This may be an honorary title for a Diocese that no longer exists (especially after the Muslim expansion begins) or an assistant to an *Eparch* (Diocesan Bishop).

*Bishops (including Titular and Auxiliary Bishops [or Eparchs]) and above are required to be celibate – which **mostly** (overwhelmingly) means they are chosen only from Monks ... though, as noted elsewhere, in some rare cases widowed or unmarried Priests may be promoted, and in **very** rare cases, married Priests may be promoted if the wife becomes a Nun and they vow celibacy.*

Archimandrite. A senior Abbot (*Hegumenos*) appointed to administer several Monasteries – usually a sign they are in line to be appointed to a Bishopric.

Hegumenos. The head of a Monastery, the functional equivalent of an *Abbot* in the western tradition.

Archpriest. A senior non-monastic Priest appointed to administer several Parishes. This is normally the highest rank possible for the married clergy.

Heiromonk. A Monk who is also an ordained Priest.

Priest. Someone ordained to administer the sacra-

ments. In the Orthodox tradition they are usually married (remarriage in the case of the wife's death is discouraged or disallowed).

Deacons (various). These are laypeople, not priests but who have been ordained to ***assist*** Bishops and Priests in the performance of the sacraments and conduct of masses. They cannot perform any of the sacraments (except Baptism, as any Christian may do, in an emergency).

Subdeacon. A layperson who has taken minor orders. They may assist Bishops and Priests *but **not** in administration of the Sacraments* (except as noted above for *Deacons* and baptism).

Reader. A *literate* layperson who has taken minor orders and who may read lessons from the Bible and, often, also performs those roles that a *Subdeacon* can.

There are many other minor orders and ecclesiastic titles, too many to list – some are unique to a particular autocephalous or autonomous church, often because they use a different language for their administration and liturgy, while others are based on late East Roman administrative offices and related titles.

The Liturgical Year

For the Orthodox Church, the Liturgical Year begins on September 1st and includes a series of fixed and moveable feasts as well as Bible Readings, Saints Days and other celebrations.

Liturgical Seasons

Great Lent. This is a period of 40 days of fasting which is measured backwards from the Saturday before Easter Saturday ... and fasting continues through to the morning vigil on Easter Sunday.

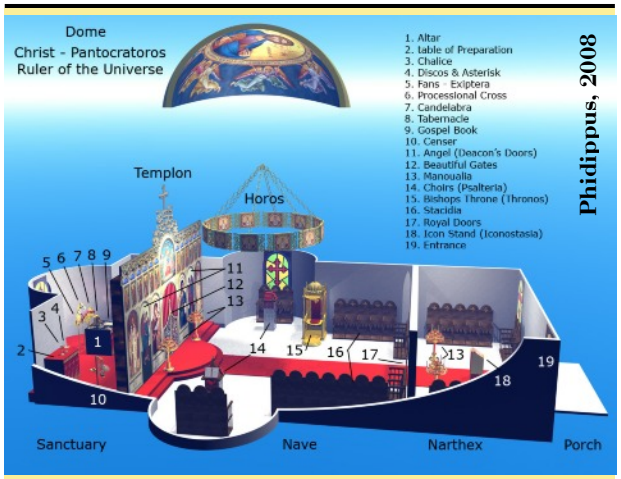
Nativity Fast. A period of 40 days of fasting before Christmas Day (what the Catholic West calls *Advent*), from November 15th.

Apostles' Fast. Begins on the second Monday *after* Pentecost (and so is variable) and continues to the *Feast of Saints Peter and Paul* (29th June).

Dormition Fast. Begins on August 4th and finishes on August 14th and culminates in the *Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God* (15th August), what Catholics call the *Assumption*.

Fasting means no meat, fish (but possibly not shellfish, depending on the rules of the local autocephalous church), eggs, dairy products, wine and oil ... except on Saturday and Sunday when wine and oil are allowed.

If the fasting period includes some specific Feast days, the rules are relaxed for those, normally allowing wine and oil and, in some cases, fish as well.



Typical Orthodox Churches

The layout of your typical Orthodox Church differs significantly from that of a typical Catholic one – and *some* of those differences are detailed below.

- They come in one of *four basic ground plans* – ***Circular***, ***Cruciform*** (cross shaped), an elongated (possibly with rounded corners) ***Rectangle*** (symbolising Noah's Ark), *Star Shaped*.

- Unbaptised worshippers and all non-Orthodox are confined to the *Narthex*. In Monastic Churches, all non-*Monks* are so confined as well.

- The ***Narthex*** is connected to the *Nave* by ***Royal Doors*** (for the Emperor to use, or for Christ as part of the Orthodox liturgy), flanked by candelabra.

- The ***Nave*** is the main body of the Church – but there is no seating as in the Catholic (Western) tradition. Orthodox worshippers *stand* before God – women on the left and men on the right.

  The *Nave* is topped by a *Dome* which has an Icon of *Christ Pantokrator* and the walls are covered from floor to ceiling with a mix of Icons and Biblical stories.

- The *Nave* is separated from the *Sanctuary* by the ***Iconostasis***, a screen (or wall) covered with *more* Icons which is pierced by three doors, one large central one for the Priests and one on either side for the Deacons. The central door will be open for most, but not all, of the service.

- The ***Sanctuary*** contains a *square* ***Altar*** which *always* contains a relic of a saint (preferably a Martyr). Behind it is a seven-branched candlestick from the Old Testament as well as a golden processional cross and other liturgical objects.

  Only Priests or those blessed by a Priest or Bishop may enter the Sanctuary and no *animal* products other than wool and beeswax is allowed inside.

Great Feasts

These are feasts celebrating major life events of Jesus Christ or the Virgin Mary. There are twelve fixed Feast Days and three moveable ones.

Fixed Feasts. The *Nativity of the Theotokos* (September 8th), *Elevation of the Holy Cross* (September 14th), *Presentation of the Theotokos* (November 21st), *Nativity of the Lord* (December 25th), *Theophany of the Lord* (January 6th, RC *Epiphany*), *Presentation of the Lord* (February 2nd), *Annunciation* (March 25th), *Transfiguration* (August 6th) and the *Dormition of the Theotokos* (August 15th).

*The Feast Day of the Patron Saint of a Parish Church is **also** treated as a 'Great Feast' for it alone.*

Moveable Feasts. Consists of *Palm Sunday* (i.e. the Sunday before Easter Sunday), *Ascension* (40 days after Easter) and *Pentecost* (50 days after Easter).

Holy Mysteries

These are the main ceremonies of the Orthodox Church, what are referred to as *Sacraments* by the Roman Catholic tradition.

Baptism. For newborns, this is normally done as soon after birth as possible. Normally requiring a Priest to officiate, it may be performed by any Orthodox Christian, though it is preferred if the ceremony is then formalised by a Priest at some later time.

Adult converts take on a new name to symbolise their newly proclaimed faith (usually a Saint's name, or one approved by the Orthodox Church) and will in the majority of cases require an Orthodox baptismal ceremony to be performed.

Holy Communion. All baptised Orthodox may participate, *even babies*, and the Priest delivers this by a spoon from the Chalice rather than by hand. The participant must have fasted from the evening (sunset) of the previous day and, for adults, will normally be expected to have *confessed* to a priest beforehand.



East Roman *Labarum* (Military Standard), 11th Century

Repentance (Confession). Confessions need not be made to an ordained Priest in the Orthodox tradition, but to a *Spiritual Guide* who may be *anyone* and may be *male or female*. However, once the penitent has confessed, only a Priest may read the *Prayer of Repentance* for them.

Marriage. An Orthodox marriage ceremony starts with the *exchange of rings* and is followed by a *procession*, a *declaration of intent*, the *lighting of candles* and the formal ceremony (including the wearing, and removal at the end, of Marriage Crowns).

As in the Catholic tradition, an ecclesiastical divorce is possible – and the conditions are somewhat more lenient (it is allowed in cases of Adultery or prolonged Absence, for example). Second marriages may be celebrated in the Church, but differ from the normal ceremony in that they are subject to a requirement for severe penitence.

*Priests may **be** married, but may **not** marry – that is, they have to be married **before** they are ordained. If their wife dies they may not marry again – and if they die before their wife, she is expected to become a Nun as soon as any children leave home.*

Holy Orders. This works much the same way as it does in the Catholic tradition – the main exception being (as noted above) that Orthodox priests are not required to be celibate *and* that women are allowed to take minor orders as *Deaconesses*, though this is rare.

Unction. This is similar to Roman Catholic practise in form, but differs in that it is made available to all who feel the need for spiritual or physical healing, not just those dying or near death ... and, on occasion, might be delivered to a whole congregation.

Major Heresies in the Orthodox East

Many of these 'heresies' date back to well before the 10th century – surviving in areas bordering the Roman Empire or in out of the way parts of that Empire some more openly than others.

Nestorians (Church of the East)

The Nestorians believe that Christ has two distinct natures, divine and human, a belief condemned by the 2nd Council of Ephesus (431).

*As an extension of this belief, they objected to the title of **Theotokos** ('Mother of God') for Mary, preferring that of **Christokos** ('Mother of Christ').*

*Also, if you wish to get **extremely** technical, many of the territories nominally a part of the Church of the East during the Middle Ages do **not** seem to have believed in the two natures of Christ, making them schismatic (in that they did not see themselves as owing obedience to Bishop of Rome and also saw the Patriarch of Constantinople as schismatic on other areas of doctrine).*

Despite this, it remained popular in those areas of the East that were under Sassanian (Persian) and, later, Muslim, control ... and expanded greatly into India, the Central Asian steppes and China but started to decline from the 1360s as political chaos enveloped China and Central Asia.

The Church of the East is, like all Orthodox Churches, headed by a Patriarch (title: *Catholicos*) who traced his succession back to the Apostles but is otherwise organised as an autocephalous Orthodox Church

Gnostics (Recurrent)

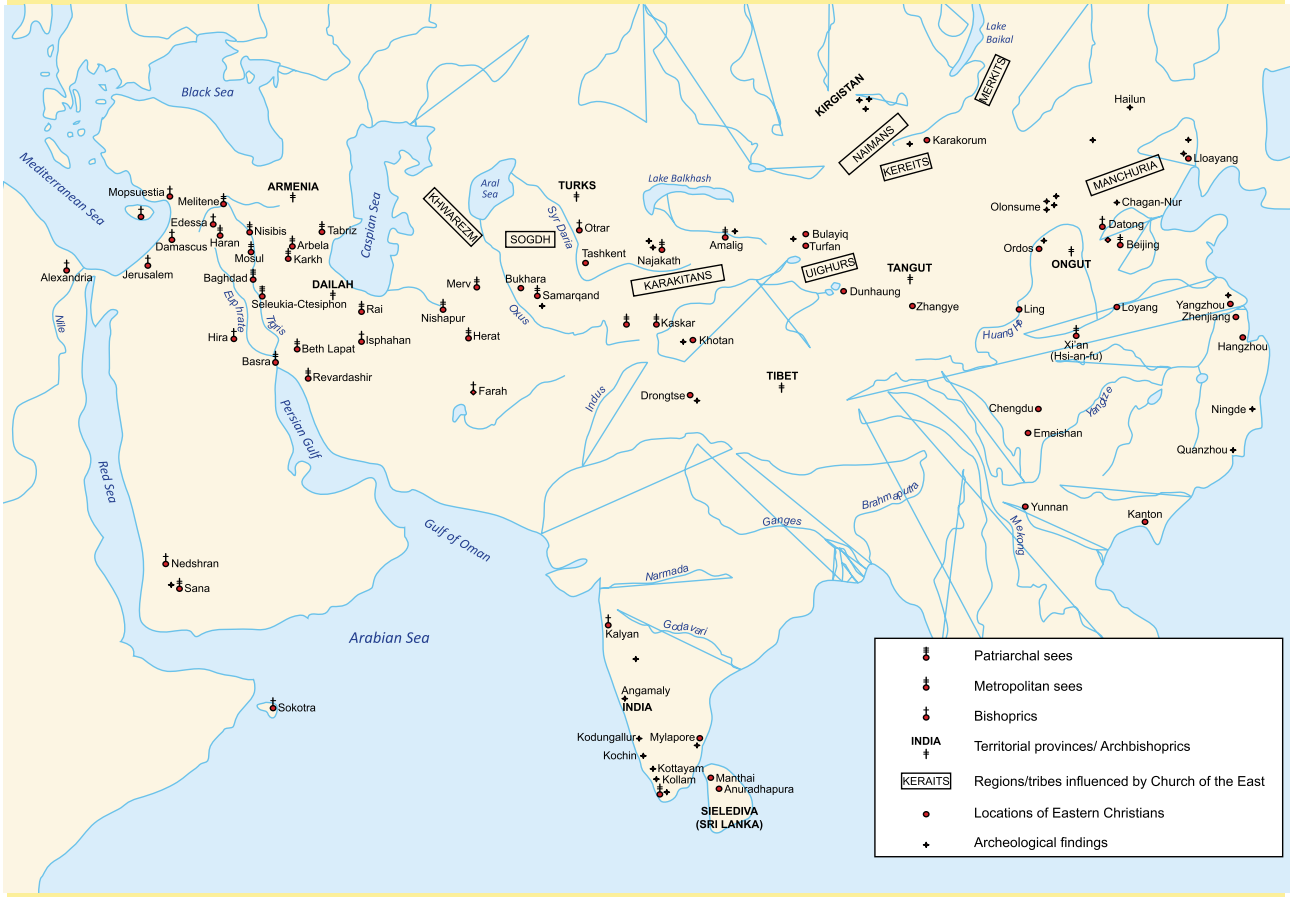
Gnostics took the stories of the Old and New Testaments and interpreted them quite differently to other Christians – in fact, in ways that all Christians (even most sects that are regarded as Heretical or Schismatic) regard as non-standard and heretical.

Gnostics believe some or all of the following – that a lesser deity created the physical world (which is why it is full of suffering and sin), that Christ was entirely divine and only *appeared* to be human (rejecting the Incarnation), that he did not transcend sin when he died but only escaped the (evil) physical world and that the New Testament was the only text relevant to Christian belief.

They also universally believed that they could be saved by revelations of divine knowledge (*gnosis*) from secret (sacred) texts.

Officially banned from the 4th century, and subject to the death penalty within the Roman Empire, the beliefs tended to reappear semi-regularly throughout the following centuries, not always in out of the way or isolated places and amongst the uneducated.

*The **Bogomils** and **Paulicians** were gnostics.*



Judaism

Judaism was not a major religion in Medieval Europe, especially in Western Europe, but there *were* areas where Jews could be found in reasonable numbers.

The main concentration of Jewish people was in the Iberian Peninsula – especially in those areas under Muslim rule, where they were protected as 'People of the Book' and their lesser status as *Dhimmi* was not onerous. Even in Christian areas (or areas reconquered by Christians), there were numbers of Jews, and even Jewish landowners and farmers. It is only after the end of the 14th century that the increasingly intolerant Spanish Christian court expel or forcibly convert the Jews (and Muslims).

Elsewhere, Jews were present almost exclusively in urban areas as it was impossible (except in a few areas) for them to own or work land ... feudal tenure requiring *christian* oaths to be sworn. They were also, commonly, prevented from undertaking some trades, and were routinely discriminated against everywhere else ... and, from time to time, expelled wholesale from entire jurisdictions.

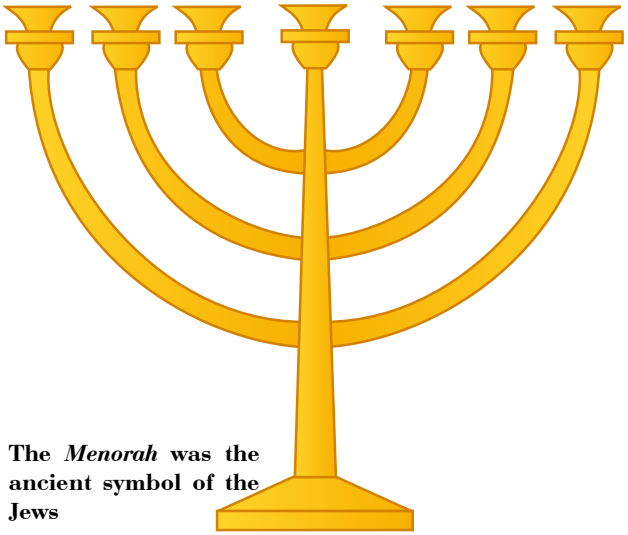
Background to Prejudice

'Auferre trucidare rapere falsis nominibus imperium, atque ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant.' Tacitus

(They rob, kill and plunder all under the deceiving name of Empire. They make a desert and call it peace.)

It's a really, *really*, ***really*** bad idea to stage a ***failed*** uprising against a ruthless imperial power – and the people of Judaea did it many, *many*, ***many*** times.

*The Tacitus quote is apposite even though it is nominally said by Calgacus, a Hibernian, in his panegyric to his father-in-law, Gnaeus Julius Agricola, referring to the Roman (and colonial) experience in Britannia. Upshot? Don't mess with the Romans ... subtext, unless you can win and win **big**.*



The *Menorah* was the ancient symbol of the Jews

The ***Great Revolt*** of 66-74 resulted in the deaths of at least a quarter of a million Jews and around 20,000 Roman Imperial Soldiers killed. The Temple was destroyed and pagan statues erected on its site and all Jews in the Empire were subject to a 'Jewish Tax.'

The ***Bar Kokhba Revolt*** of 132-136 resulted in the deaths of at least twice as many Jews and the destruction of one (*XXII Deiotoriana*), and possibly two (*IX Hispana*) legions as well as 'heavy casualties' in the others involved. The Emperor Hadrian had a pagan temple erected on the Temple Mount, renamed Jerusalem *Aelia Capitolina* and Judaea *Syria Palaestina* and banned Jews from the city except on *Tisha B'Av*.

*Because of these two events and their consequences, the Christian-Jewish sect gradually began to differentiate itself from Judaism proper ... even though this opened it to persecution for **not** being Jewish but **not** accepting the State (pagan) Religion.*

Even this wasn't enough – they tried to revolt *again* in 351-52 (against Gallus) and, as part of the final great Sassanian (Persian) war with and invasion of the Empire, did it again in 614-625 by actively supporting the Sassanians (or, in any case, fighting against the Romans) ... resulting in the expulsion of all Jews from the region or their forcible conversion.

Many historians believe the direct result of the latter war was to make it possible, or at least *easier*, for the Muslim Arabs to take the entire region in their expansionist phase – taking Jerusalem in 638.

Since the Romans became well disposed to Christianity under Constantine (c. 312) and adopted it as the official state religion from 380, their ongoing distrust of the Jews coupled with state patronage and support had a considerable, and obviously negative, influence on Jewish-Christian relations which had, in any case, been becoming more and more tense as Christianity consciously differentiated itself from Judaism in the decades and centuries after the Bar Kokhba Revolt.

Organisation

With the loss and destruction of the Temple (29/30 July AD 70) by the besieging Romans, the ***Great Sanhedrin*** (the Sanhedrin of Jerusalem), the universal governing body of the Jewish religion, was effectively destroyed and, though it continued to have a shadowy and regionalised existence, the last *known* official meeting was held, *in secret*, in 358 AD and the last *Nasi* ('Prince') died in 425.

There were nominally 71 'judges' (members) of the Great Sanhedrin, but it could transact business (as a court) with only 23 of them present.

Since then, and for the entire period of the 10th-14th centuries covered by this sourcebook, there has been

no universal authority for the Jewish religion – it effectively devolved onto regional and local communities around prestigious Rabbis and Synagogues and based on the existing body of the ***Halakha*** (the Oral and Written law as expressed in the Torah, Talmud and decisions of prestigious Rabbis after the fall of the Temple and the rise of rabbinic authority).

Rabbinic Judaism

With the fall of the Temple, the traditional daily sacrifices and other ceremonies held by the ***Kohanim*** (Priests) were no longer possible, and Jews had to find another way to worship ... this came to be centered on a ***Beit Tefilah*** *('House of Prayer')* where formal prayers could be said.

Since there was no longer a priest, these prayers could be said (or led) by any male who was thought by the community to be sufficiently learned (isolated prayer was possible, but group prayer was preferred) – though, for some prayers, a *Minyan* (of 10 adult males) was required.

These services inevitably led to the House of Prayer also becoming a ***Beit Midrash*** *('House of Study')* and, slowly, the leader of such studies also came to lead the prayers as the ***Rabbi*** *('Master' [of the Torah]).*

By the 12th century *Maimonides* (see opposite) made a ruling that every Jewish community large enough to do so should appoint a Rabbi to teach and lead the (religious) community – though there was, unlike Roman Catholic or Orthodox Christianity, no requirement for anything like *ordination.*

A Jewish community would simply choose the most learned (or most politically connected) candidate. In effect, all ***Synagogues*** (*Beit Tefilah/Beit Midrash*) are independent of one another.

There was no requirement that a Rabbi be appointed, and no universal acceptance of Maimonides admonition.

In addition to the Rabbi, a *large* Synagogue *may* also have a ***Chazzan*** *(Cantor)* who leads the congregation in prayer (with music and chanting) – though a Rabbi may do double duty in smaller congregations. *Cantors* must be of good moral character and have a well grounded education in the various elements of the services they will lead.

Divisions in Medieval Judaism

Since there has been no central, universally recognised, authority in Judaism since the 5th century AD, there are, technically, no ***heresies**** in Judaism – for the simple reason that there is no-one left who can make such a decision (which probably didn't stop a Rabbi who was sufficiently offended by *another* Rabbi's interpretation of the Law to sling such accusations around – but they would have no particular

The 13 Principles of Faith

There was no universally accepted statement of belief – but the most widely accepted is that propounded by ***Maimonides*** *(1138?-1204).*

1) I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, Blessed be His Name, is the Creator and Guide of everything that has been created; He alone has made, does make, and will make all things.

2) I believe ... the Creator ... is One, and that there is no unity in any manner like His, and that He alone is our God, who was, and is, and will be.

3) I believe ... the Creator ... has no body, and ... is free from all the properties of matter, and that there can be no (physical) comparison to Him whatsoever.

4) I believe ... the Creator ... is the first and the last.

5) I believe ... that to the Creator ... and to Him alone, it is right to pray, and that it is not right to pray to any being besides Him.

6) I believe ... all the words of the prophets are true.

7) I believe ... the prophecy of Moses ... was true, and that he was the chief of the prophets, both those who preceded him and those who followed him.

8) I believe ... the entire Torah that is now in our possession is the same that was given to Moses ...

9) I believe ... this Torah will not be [changed] and ... there will never be an[other] ...

10) I believe ... the Creator ... knows all the deeds of human beings and all their thoughts ...

11) I believe ... the Creator ... rewards those who keep and punishes those who transgress [his Commandments].

12) I believe ... in the coming of the Messiah; and even though he may tarry, nonetheless, I wait every day for his coming.

13) I believe ... there will be a revival of the dead at the time when it shall please the Creator ...

*(Use of an ellipsis [...] **mostly** replaces 'in perfect faith' or 'Blessed be His Name' for reasons of brevity)*

Even if some strains of Jewish belief reject or do not completely accept some or all of the above beliefs, they do universally recognise the Covenant between Abraham (as the Patriarch, or leader, of the Israelites) and those additions revealed by God to Moses on Mount Sinai (the 10 Commandments).

Generic Synagogues

There is no such thing as a 'typical' Synagogue – the architecture tends to follow local styles or trends and the floor plan is in no way set.

There are, however, some features that are found, in one form or another, in every Synagogue –

- **Torah Ark** (**Aron Kodesh**)**.** A cabinet in which the Torah Scrolls are kept and which always faces towards Jerusalem.
- **Reader's Platform** (**Bimah**)**.** A raised platform where the Torah Scroll is placed to be read to those assembled.
- **Eternal Light** (**Ner Tamid**)**.** A continually lit lamp, lantern or candle normally hanging from the ceiling in memory of the western lamp of the Menorah at the Temple in Jerusalem which was, likewise, kept perpetually lit.
- **Menorah.** *Most* Synagogues will have a large seven branched Menorah.
- **Seating.** Men and women are seated separately. In *Ashkenazi* Synagogues they *usually* faced the Torah, with the men in front and the women behind; in the east – in *Sephardic* Synagogues they sat on either side of the Torah, men on the right and women on the left.

  Other arrangements might be adopted to separate male and female worshippers – for example, women might be seated on a balcony overlooking the ground floor or behind a screen between them and the male sections.
- **Artworks.** No 3D statuary or any depictions of the human body are allowed as this is regarded as a potential breach of the first (*'Thou shalt have no other gods before me'*) and second (*'Thou shalt not worship any graven image'*) commandments.

Because of the dangers perceived in 'provoking' the local religion (Christianity or Islam), Synagogues were relatively uncommon.



Worship mostly occurred in rooms in private homes of the local community as a simple meeting of a *minyan* rather than as formal services (though some attempt was normally made to follow the liturgical cycle that would normally be used in a Synagogue).

force) – but the fact that there are no *heresies* doesn't mean there are no ***divisions***.

** Though you **could** make an exception for (understandably, from the Jewish perspective) Christianity.*

Ashkenazi

Ashkenazi are the descendants of Jews who had migrated from the Middle East under the Roman Empire, mostly into the central and eastern Mediterranean littoral (initially Greece, the Balkans and Italy). After the collapse of the Empire in the West, they expanded into what became the Holy Roman Empire and, by the 10th century, were firmly established even in Germany, Poland and Central Europe in general ...

By this time they mostly spoke Yiddish (a form of German with Aramaic and Hebrew loan words and written with Hebrew letters) and followed the 'Babylonian' tradition (i.e. the rabbinic tradition that flourished in Persia and the East after the Jewish Wars).

Ashkenazi religious practices differ from those of Sephardic Jews in a number of ways, two of the more obvious being – they freely mix fish, meat and milk products and do no eat legumes or grains during Passover.

Haymanot

The *Haymanot* are an isolated community of Jews who live in the Kingdom of Aksum (modern Ethiopia) and who are believed to have lived there since the 10th century BC and the rule of King Solomon (in Israel).

The Haymanot version of the Bible contains fewer canonical Books than the Tanakh (or accords some books lesser importance), also includes some texts not accepted by mainstream Judaism and are written in Ge'ez (which is also the liturgical language and also Semitic in origin) rather than Hebrew.

Aksumite Jews also have slightly different interpretations of Jewish Law, Dietary Law and have a slightly different calendar to mainstream Jews.

*You are very unlikely to encounter any Haymanot outside of Ethiopia during the Middle Ages and any that **are** encountered will usually be individuals or small groups of traders or travellers (and even these will be rare).*

Karaites

Karaite Judaism only recognises the *Tanakh* (the Jewish 'Bible') as the basis for *Halakha* (religious law) and explicitly rejects the oral interpretations as written down in the *Midrash* or *Talmud*. Though there were similar movements and tendencies as early as the 1st-2nd centuries AD, the more formalised expression of their beliefs dates only to the 8th century at the earliest and initially confined to areas of the Middle East under Muslim control.

*Karaism is sometimes seen as **anti-rabbinic Judaism** as it encourages individuals to study the Tanakh and reach their own conclusions as to what it means. Some historians argue that they are actually a development of the **Sadducees** or, at least, share some beliefs in common.*

*Note that Karaites do not **reject** the Midrash or Talmud, they simply do not regard it as **equally** authoritative as the Tanakh ... it is merely an opinion worth no more than the opinion of any learned Jew.*

Samaritans

The Samaritans are *either* ignorant non-Jewish Israelites *or* the closest thing Judaism has to a heretical belief, depending on which authority you consult.

They date back to the 8th Century BC at least, and survived the Jewish rebellions against Rome and into the Muslim period. Even though they were regarded as 'People of the Book' by early Muslim rulers, this changed and, by the 9th century, they were regarded as infidels and were persecuted and/or forced to convert.

They were mostly confined to the Holy Land and, during the period it was controlled by the Crusaders, were less badly discriminated against than Jews.

*The main obvious difference between Samaritan and Jewish belief is that they believe **Mount Gerizim** is the true sanctuary chosen by God, not the Temple Mount. They also reject the Talmud, Mishnah, collections of the Oral Torah and rabbinical works that post date the Torah. They call themselves 'Children of Israel,' **not** Jews.*

Sephardi

Sephardi Jews have been present in the Iberian peninsula since at least the 2nd century AD, and possibly earlier – but there seems to have been a considerable boost in their numbers around the 9th or 10th centuries (which may simply be that they were les persecuted in Muslim areas of Spain and Portugal than they had been in the same areas when they were controlled by Christian rulers in the post Roman Imperial period).

Sephardi Jews normally speak a dialect of Spanish or Portuguese as well as the local language and, during the period in question, were much more active (and widely recognised) in scholarship than were the Ashkenazi – their more formalised liturgy, a liturgy that differs from that of the Ashkenazi in a number of areas even though they both are descended from the Babylonian tradition.

*Some of the religious differences are noted above in the **Ashkenazi** section – and the differences were a matter of some dispute where the two communities came in contact.*

Sephardi don't spread into North Africa, the Balkans and elsewhere (where most modern Sephardi originated) until after the expulsion of Jews from Spain and Portugal, which occurs after the end of the 14th century.



The Jewish Liturgical Year

The three main observances of the Jewish year are the ancient 'pilgrimage' festivals which *originally* involved a journey to the Temple in Jerusalem if possible –

Traditionally Sabbath and Holy Days begin at sundown of the previous day and conclude at nightfall of the day.

Pesach (Passover). This begins on the evening of the 14th of Nisan, lasts for eight days and remembers the Exodus from Egypt. No leavened grain products may be consumed during the celebrations and should not even be inside the home.

Shavuot/Bikim (Feast of Weeks, or of First Fruits). Celebrated on the 6th Sivan, celebrating the day God gave the Torah to the assembled Jews at Mount Sinai. The end of the seven weeks of Passover.

Sukkot (Tabernacles, or Festival of Booths). Celebrated on 15th Tishrei and lasting for seven days, commemorating the 40 years the Israelites spent wandering in the desert on their way to the Promised Land. Representational 'shelters' in memory of those used during the wandering are erected and all meals are eaten in them during the festival.

Other 'High Holy Days' are –

Rosh Hashanah (Day or Remembrance or Feast of the Trumpets). A two day celebration beginning on the 1st Tishrei commemorating the creation of Adam and Eve (and, purely coincidentally of course, the beginning of the Civil Year and a new Agricultural season).

*Karaites and Samaritans call it by its ancient name, **Yom Teruah (Feast of Trumpets).***

Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement). Celebrated on 10th Tishrei to commemorate Moses receiving the Ten Commandments from God and involves atonement for worshipping the Golden Calf – it is a day of fasting (no eating or drinking, wearing leather shoes, bathing

The Jewish Calendar

The Jewish people use a unique calendar of their own to regulate their religious year. It is a lunisolar calendar (lunar months within a solar year) and is ~11 days shorter than the actual solar year, running on a 19 year cycle that adds an extra month 7 times in that period.

*It's also ~6'40" **longer** than the mean tropical year, so that it will fall a day behind the Gregorian calendar every 231 years.*

Year Numbering

Until the 12th century, Jews in western Europe counted the years from the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD. Thereafter, following the work of the sephardic sage, Maimonides, they began to number the years from the creation of the world ('Anno Mundi' or AM) on 1st Tishrei, AM 1 ... add 3760 or 3761 to Julian AD 1 to get the Jewish Anno Mundi (as the years starts on Rosh Hashanah, which may occur anywhere between 5th September and 5th October (inclusive).

Months

The original months were simply numbered 1-12, and that is preferred by the Karaites and Samaritans – other Jews adopted Babylonian names – Nisan (30 days), Iyar (29), Sivan (30), Tammuz (29), Av (30), Elul (29), Tishrei (30), Marchesvan (29 or 30), Kislev (30 or 29), Tevet (29), Shevat (29) and Adar (29). In Leap Years, an additional *month*, Adar I (30) is added after Shevat and Adar becomes Adar II.

The placement of Leap Years is based on the requirement that Passover occurs in the northern Spring – and when the calendar became fixed (mathematically) rather than observation (seasonal) these were also fixed at at years 3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 17 and 19 in the cycle.

*The variable lengths of Marchesvan and Kislev are the result of a requirement that Rosh Hashanah **not** occur on Sunday, Wednesday or Friday so that Yom Kippur doesn't precede or follow a Saturday (Shabbat).*

Days of the Week

The Jews use a seven day cycle, beginning on *Yom Rishon ('First Day')*, Sunday; *Yom Sheni (Second Day)*, Monday, *Yom Shlishi*, *Yom Revi'i*, *Yom Chamishi*, *Yom Shishi* and *Yom Shabbat (or just Shabbat)*. Days run from Sunset of the previous day to sunset of the day in question, based on local sunset.

Hours of the Day

'Hours' are 1/12th of the time from sunrise to sunset ... but the hours of the night are 1/12th of the period from sunset to sunrise as well.

Hours are divided (notionally) into 1080 *Halakim* ('parts') or, notionally, 1/18th of a standard (i.e. fixed, modern) minute.

or washing, anointing with lotions or perfumes or sex – only for males over 13 and females over 12 for whom it would not be medically inadvisable), prayer (including a recitation of the Temple rituals that would have taken place in the Temple on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem prior to the Great Revolt and its destruction) and repentance (including formal confession), but celebrations (including festive meals) begin on the 9th with additional morning and afternoon prayers (amongst other things).

*The admonition to prayer is usually seen to require **no work** – and many Jews will spend most of the day in Synagogue or prayer in a private home (as part of a **minyan**, if at all possible).*

Purim (Lots). Celebrated on 14th Adar, remembering the foiling of a plot to kill all the Jews in exile in the Persian Empire (5th Century BC) by Esther, her cousin and her adoptive father. The festival involves the giving charity to the poor, swapping gifts of food and (alcoholic) drink, feasting, wearing of masks and costumes and special prayers and ceremonies.

Hanukkah (Festival of Lights). An eight day festival, starting on 25th Kislev, commemorating the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem (the Second Temple) during the Maccabean Revolt against the Persians (2nd Century BC).

The ceremonial part involves the lighting of a new candle on a *nine* branched Menorah with the candle of the central branch each night and celebrations involve eating oil cakes, fried food and dairy products and (often) giving of nightly gifts.

Technically, it is not a 'High Holy Day' and normal daily activities are undertaken without constraint – also, it was much less commonly celebrated, or less overtly so, in pre-20th century (and medieval) times. Its prominence is mainly a late 20the century development.

Tisha B'Av (The Ninth of Av). A fast day held in mourning for the destruction of the First Temple (by the Babylonians) and the Second Temple (by the Romans), the defeat of the Bar Kokhba Revolt as well as other, lesser, but notable calamities (especially medieval massacres). Held, obviously, on the 9th of Av.

Religious Observances

Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Ceremonial coming of age, at 12 for females and 13 for males. This is the age at which they become responsible for their own actions – become adults, in effect.

Circumcision. Normally done to male babies eight days after birth along with the formal naming (for their Hebrew name).

Kashrut. Observant Jews follow strict dietary laws

which can be quite complex. In general, most rules apply to animal based foods – mammals, for example, are kosher only if they have split hooves and chew their cud (so Pigs, have the former but do not do the latter, are most definitely *not* kosher!), Seafood must have fins and scales (no shellfish or crustaceans, no eels), all Amphibians and Reptiles and most insects are prohibited.

Other rules include – a requirement that the slaughter of animals be as quick and painless as possible, that blood, some animal fats, and any part of an animal around the sciatic nerve (basically the hip and rear legs) aren't consumed. Likewise, meat and dairy products cannot be consumed at the same meal (though, in the Middle Ages, some communities did not regard Poultry as meat for this purpose) and wine (or grape juice) prepared by non-Jews is forbidden.

*Slaughtering of animals requires a trained **Shochet** – in theory. Many medieval Jewish communities were too small to have one, and slaughtered their own animals by following kosher rules as best they could.*

*Likewise, large communities might have a **Mashgiach** who would supervise the production of kosher foods (i.e. those intended for sale) ... wine, for example ... though a Rabbi could do in a pinch and, as with slaughtering, many communities were too small to have one and did the best they could with whomever was deemed most knowledgeable about such in the local community.*

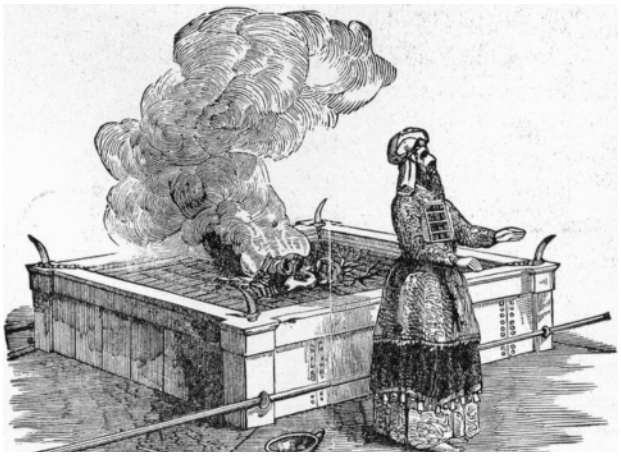
Prayer. On a normal day, prayers are said three times – in the morning *(Shacharit)*, during the afternoon *(Mincha)* and in the evening/at night *(Ma'ariv)*. On *Shabbat*, an additional series of prayers *(Mussaf)* is added to the morning prayers – and on *Yom Kippur*, a fifth series of prayers *(Ne'ila)* is added to end the day.

Jewish Prayer Books with set prayers existed as early as the 6th century AD, but some communities had their own sets of prayers and it was not unusual for the older practise of individuals making up their own prayers to be found in some places as late as the 12th century.

Readings from the Torah. A core part of Shabbat ... the whole of the Torah is read over a year, starting on *Simchat Torah* just after the festival of *Sukkot*.

Ritual Purity and Mikveh (Ritual Baths). Menstruating women are regarded as ritually impure, and they were expected to avoid sex (and even sleeping in the same bed as) their husbands from the beginning of their menses until seven days after they ceased and are purified in a *mikveh* (a ritual bath, requiring full immersion in natural water).'

*Mikveh were so important a Jewish community was required to raise the funds needed and construct one **before** they raised funds for and built a Synagogue.*



Women were also expected to purify themselves after childbirth. Men could also be required to purify themselves in certain circumstances such as contact with a menstruating woman or anything that had been in contact with her, after having sex and for those with some skin conditions (psoriasis and similar).

*Mikveh were supposed to use 'living' (**flowing**) water – from natural springs or wells, or fed with flowing water from rainwater cisterns. For practical reasons they were often situated below ground level or in the basement of a building.*

Shabbat. The day of rest commemorating God's rest after the six days of creation – lasts from just before sundown on Friday to nightfall on Saturday. During Shabbat Jews are forbidden to do any activity that is deemed to constitute 'work' (not all of which would seem to be such to outside observers) or 'creation.'

There are 39 categories including (very broadly) most anything related to farming and animal husbandry (or activities similar to such), cooking (or finishing and preparing food), sewing, writing, construction or demolition (creation, completion or destruction of any mechanism, building or structure, or an integral component of such) and lighting or extinguishing a fire.

The rules are complex, and became more so as technology became more complex than that common to the rural, agrarian type of society they were originally intended for.

Rabbis spent a huge amount of time, effort and argument on defining exactly what was, or wasn't, allowed – but changes in rulings could not be enforced, as there was no central authority, and acceptance had to be by force of argument, so it is quite possible that specific prohibited (or allowed) behaviour in one community will not be accepted as such in another.

Antisemitism in the Pre-Modern World

Antisemitism actually *predates* Christianity – anti-Jewish sentiments and practises date back as early as the 2nd century BC when the Seleucid Persians required all their subjects to be 'hellenised' ... and follow pagan *polytheistic* religious practises.

They specifically targetted Jews and made many Jewish religious customs and possessions subject to the death penalty ... which resulted in the Maccabean Revolt and the (re)creation of a Jewish state under the Hasmoneans, which lasted down to Roman times.

Background Tension

There was ongoing tension between the large rural Jewish population of the area, who were quite conservative (though not fundamentalist extremists for the most part) and the rural (Jewish) aristocracy, who were more progressive and adopted many hellenistic lifestyle practises which tended to outrage the conservative elements.

This was made more fraught because of the existence of the largely 'Greek' (or at least Hellenised) coastal cities who tended to side with the Jewish aristocracy, with whom they had more in common, and treated the rural Jewish population with contempt – and these were the people that the Roman occupiers relied on to administer the province.

The situation was worsened by the Roman practise of requiring citizens (and subjects) to make sacrifices to their (pagan) gods as a demonstration of their loyalty – which was obviously impossible for a monotheistic Jew to do. This led, ultimately, to the Great Revolt and the Roman-Jewish Wars of 66-135.

Hellenised city dwellers usually saw the largely rural originating Jewish populace as rubes and country bumpkins – and targetted their conservative and (seemingly) intolerant monotheistic practices for ridicule and because they were seen to undermine civic solidarity as represented by the local patron (polytheistic) gods and goddesses.

This often resulted in anti-Jewish riots and/or desecration of Jewish Temples – and these could cause considerable casualties to both sides (though the authorities tended to side with the non-Jews as a matter of course).

The Christian-Jewish split

During this period, Christianity largely split away from mainstream Judaism and deliberately differentiated itself ... and, co-temporally with this process, began to adopt the anti-semitic attitudes of their non-Jewish, often Hellenize or Romanised, converts.

This led to theological arguments against the Jews – that they had killed Jesus (God), refused to convert or to acknowledge the authority of the New Testament, engaged in anti-Christian activities and, possibly, actively seeking converts and, therefore, competing with Christian proselytism etc.

This gave rise to Imperial persecution of *Christians* as a *religio illicita* ('illegal religion') as they ***weren't*** Jews ... and therefore *should* have had no problem with demonstrating their loyalty to the State by making sacrifices to the (pagan) State Pantheon.

Jews were widely distrusted, discriminated against and paid a 10% tax no other religion or ethnic group did as part of that discrimination – but the Romans knew that there was no way they would make pagan sacrifices (it only took three wars to get through to them!).

The Christians on the other hand – either they were Jews, and trying to rip off the state for the Jewish Tax owed, or they were not covered by the understanding that Jews (and only Jews) didn't have to make pagan sacrifices to show loyalty. Rock and a hard place.

Christianity becomes the State Religion

When Christianity became the State Religion, the Roman State began to more actively target Jews and Jewish practices with discriminatory laws (in the same way it had Christians previously) while, at the same time, Christian rhetoric against the Jews continued to grow ... and these attitudes took firm root even in the barbarian successor states after the collapse of the western empire.

While the initial waves of barbarians tended to be remarkably free of anti-semitic proclivities, even if they were already some variety of Christian, they quickly came to rely heavily on Church structures to administer their lands ... and the Church carried over the anti-Jewish attitudes of the Imperial authorities.

The Dark Ages to the Middle Ages

There was a lull in anti-semitic activities in the west between the 5th and 10th centuries as the barbarian states organised and reorganised into their medieval forms, but by the time of the First Crusade (1098), it was on the uptick and continued that way during the entire period covered by this book.

Christian authorities placed a variety of restrictions on Jews living under their jurisdiction – forbidding them from undertaking some trades or professions or from owning land being the two most common.

*The restrictions could be so severe as to prevent Jews from doing anything productive and force them into becoming rent or tax collectors or into moneylending ... not professions guaranteed to win the love of the local populace, especially as the medieval Church had a profound theological animus towards the whole concept of moneylending ... which they deemed **usury**.*

Sicut Judaeis (*'and thus to the Jews'*)

The title of a Papal Bull of 1120 (Calixtus II) *theoretically* intended to protect the Jews, triggered by the slaughter of ~5000 of them during the period from the beginning of the First Crusade.

It was regularly reissued by many following Popes – *always a sure indication of its general ineffectiveness.* Especially since the Church had no enforcement powers (and, usually, local Church authorities had no desire to actively enforce the Bull's requirements).

The Bull made any Christian who harmed or stole from a Jew, tried to forcibly convert them, attacked and disrupted their festivals or interfered with their cemeteries in any way subject to *excommunication.*

Restrictions and Discrimination

On top of restrictions as to what trades and professions they could undertake, a variety of other discriminatory restrictions were applied from time to time in various places around Europe –

- The number of Jews who were allowed to live in an area was often restricted.

- Jews were forced to dwell in specified areas within those towns they were permitted to live in.

  *They weren't **ghettoes** until **after** 1516, when the term was applied to the Jewish quarter of Venice.*

- They were *usually* prevented from owning land under feudal title (i.e. rural estates) because such land required swearing a *Christian* oath to the Feudal overlord granting the land.

  *There were a **few** places in **mainland** Europe where this rule did not apply.*

- They could be forced to wear identifying clothing of some sort.

  This requirement was first instituted by the 4th Lateran Council (1215) which applied it to Saracens (Muslims) as well.

  The type of identification was not specified – in some areas (mainly France) it was a cloth ring (sometimes and oval) worn on the breast and could be of any colour, though normally white or yellow; in England the badge was of yellow felt in the form of the tables on which the 10 Commandments were given Moses.

  *In German speaking areas, identifying badges were uncommon and Jews were expected to wear a unique conical hat known as a **Judenhut.** In Spain and Portugal where Jews tended to wear **turbans** after the Muslim fashion the requirement to wear a badge was not immediately applied – coming gradually into force over the next century.*

  Jewish communities would often 'buy' an exemption from the requirement from the local authorities or, more commonly, the King ... but the duration of such exemptions was fungible (lasting until the next time the bribed authorities felt the need to extort more money).

- Jews were often charged a toll to leave their ghetto or to enter a Town, or they could be charged a higher toll than would otherwise apply.

- Jews could be arbitrarily extorted for protection money by local or national authorities and were occasionally subject to expulsion (they were expelled from England in 1290, for example).

Blood Libel

Claims that Jews require non-Jewish blood (human sacrifices) for some ceremonial purposes, dates back to Roman times, even before the Great Revolt. In the Middle Ages it was claimed that Jews required the blood of Christians – especially children – and became worse around the time of the First Crusade.

So serious was the threat deemed that rabbinical authorities allowed communities in parts of western Europe to forego the use of red wine for ceremonial purposes to avoid any possibility of being so accused.

A number of unexplained child murders, usually around Easter, were the trigger for anti-Jewish riots and pogroms – and the victims occasionally came to be seen to be martyrs and venerated as Saints. Two examples are –

Saint William of Norwich. Found stabbed to death in the woods outside of Norwich at Easter in 1144 – there was no real evidence that Jews were involved, but the locals blamed them. The Sheriff ordered the local Jews to his castle to protect them until the furore died down and they could return home.

As a 'victim' of the Jews, and therefore a martyr, William's body was venerated and he was regarded as a Saint, though a minor one.

Werner of Oberwesel. A 16 year old, his body was found near Bacharach on Maundy Thursday, 1287 – local Christians claimed it was part of a Jewish ritual. Pogroms and murders spread rapidly through the Rhine and Moselle valleys until King Rudolf, who believed the claims were groundless, fined the murderers and suppressed the disturbances.

As with William of Norwich, Werner's body was soon being venerated as a martyr and eventually as a Saint.

Islam

With two exceptions (one obviously major and long-term, the other relatively minor and short term), there was relatively little muslim presence in Western Europe – these being the Iberian Peninsula (*Spain* and *Portugal*), where the Muslim presence lasted for over 700 years (and right through the period of the 11th-14th centuries covered by this book, and beyond), and *Sicily*, where it lasted only a little longer than two centuries (and barely into the 11th century which is the start of the period covered by this sourcebook).

What *is* Islam?

Islam is built on five pillars – testifying that there is no god but God (the *Shahada*), that Mohammed is the Messenger of God, saying prayers (*Salat*), giving charity (*Zakat*), making a pilgrimage *(Hajj*) to Mecca and fasting (*Sawm*) during Ramadan.

The Shahada: ***"La ilaha illa'llah"*** *...* ***"Muhammadun rasul Allah"*** *– 'There is no god but God'... 'Mohammed is the Messenger of God.'*

Both *statements are in the Qu'uran, but* ***not*** *together ... and the Qu'uran does* ***not*** *treat them as* ***the*** *single defining statement of what it is to be Muslim.*

Mohammed's beliefs were heavily influenced by those of Judaism and Christianity – but he (and his followers) believed that he was the *final* Prophet of God, sent to restore true belief as the Jews and Christians had misunderstood or corrupted the messages of God's previous Prophets.

Mohammed and the beginning of Islam

Abu al-Qasim Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib ibn Hashim (AD ~570-632) was born in Mecca into the Banu Hashim clan of the prominent Quraysh tribe. His father died soon after he was born and his mother when he was six and he eventually became the ward of *Abd al-Muttalib*, his paternal uncle.

As he grew older, he accompanied his uncle on trading trips into Syria and, in adulthood, he seems to have become a merchant, gaining a reputation for probity. In 595 he accepted a proposal by *Khadijah*, a 40 year old widow and they were (evidently happily) married.

The Black Standard (Mohammed's Flag)

The first Revelations. According to tradition, in 610 he began to make prayer vigils in a cave near Mecca for several weeks every year and was visited by the Archangel Gabriel who dictated verses of what would become the Qu'uran to him ... and, despite early doubts and depression based on a fear no-one would believe him, he began actively preaching and proselytising some time in AD ~613.

He initially attracted followers from those on the margins of society in Mecca, or those whose fortunes were on the wane and his preaching against the existing polytheistic status quo was regarded as a threat by the local elites.

Intermittently persecuted, the number of his followers increased – including more powerful members of the local community but, in 619, his uncle died and was replaced as head of the Banu Hashim by Abu Lahab, who was a confirmed opponent.

The Hijra and Yathrib (Medina)

In a search for a place of refuge, Mohammed found support amongst the people of *Yathrib* (later: *Medina*) and, in AD 622, he and his followers left Mecca and made the journey (*Hijjra*) to that city where he was accepted by the competing local power groups as a mediator in their violent ongoing inter-clan struggles.

An inspiring leader, he was able to convince the majority of the local population (with the exception of the Jewish community) to accept his teachings.

The conquest of Mecca. A period of conflict between his newly increased number of followers and Meccan commercial interests ensued resulting in an escalating series of skirmishes, battles and sieges and, eventually, the Muslims prevailed, seizing Mecca with an army of 10,000 followers in AD 630.

The conquest of Arabia. There followed a period of escalating tension with the other tribes of the Arabian peninsula who felt threatened by the growing power of the Muslims – and there was fighting between them and Mohammed's followers up to (and beyond) his death in AD 632, which basically united the entire Peninsula under the banner of Islam and set the stage for the massive conquests that followed.

Early Conquests (al-Futuhat al-Islamiyya)

In the three decades after Mohammed's death (AD 632-661) Arab tribes who had converted to Islam swept out of the Arabian peninsula conquering large swathes of the East Roman Empire (as far west as Libya and as far north as Anatolia) and effectively destroyed the Sassanid Persian state, even though parts would not be conquered for another century.

Within a century and a half they had conquered all of North Africa and had crossed the Straits of Gibralt-

ar and conquered almost all of Spain, destroying the Visigothic Kingdom, and had even (for a short period) taken parts of SE France.

Why were they so successful? There are no easy answers – there are few reliable sources for the period (people understandably had more to worry about than writing historical chronicles!) and they tend to be fragmentary, partisan and contradictory.

*The Muslim view is that their victories were pre-ordained by Allah – while the view of their opponents is rarely coherent (and, in the case of the Sassanid Persians, effectively doesn't exist – since their state **ceased** to exist) and often resorts to religious explanations as well ... **their** God (or Gods) had abandoned them for this, that or the other reason (insufficient piety on behalf of the Rulers/Priests or Commons [or all] and/or allowance of heresy being two common tropes).*

A more mundane explanation is that they just *happened* to unite under what became (*for a time*) a militant and expansionist religious belief at the same time the two regional powers, the (East) Romans and Sassanids had just finished (largely due to total exhaustion) decades of conflict in the region ... *and* that ongoing religious tensions within both (Orthodox vs. Christian Heresies and Jews in the Roman Empire and Sassanian Mazdaenism vs. Jewish and Christian minorities).

Even that's simplistic. In the battles and campaigns that were fought, local Heretics were likely to welcome the Muslims who, they knew, would allow them far more religious freedom than their existing overlords – but Christian Arab tribes often fought against the Muslims alongside the East Romans or Sassanians and Christian forces changed sides for personal political reasons to support the Muslims.

The Civil Wars

The papered over conflicts between the Arabian tribes that had adopted Islam lasted less than 30 years before the *Rashidun ('Rightly Guided') Caliphs* (AD 631-662) were overthrown by the *Ummayyads* (AD 662-750) who lasted only 90 years before being overthrown by the *Abbasids* (AD 750-1258) who, in turn, were replaced by the *Mamluks* (AD 1261-1517).

The Ummayad Caliphate was the most expansive – the Abbasids lost the Mahgreb (western North Africa) and the Iberian Peninsula and the Mamluks only controlled Egypt, parts of Libya, Mecca and Medina, the Holy Land and parts of Syria and SE Anatolia.

The breakup is not particularly surprising – it is probably more surprising that they remained as united as they did for so long – before they were 'united' by religion the tribes of the Arabian peninsula (and the Arab tribes outside) openly hated and distrusted each other. And, of course, immediately on Mohammed's death there were

Caliphs and the Caliphate

The Caliph is the chosen successor of Mohammed who rules over the Muslim community – the term is seen to be a short form of either *Khalifat Allah* ('Successor to God') or *Khalifat rasul Allah* ('Successor to the Messenger of God).

*Note that some modern scholars have suggested that the original phrase was 'successor **selected** by God.'*

The first five Caliphs, the *'Rightly Guided'* Caliphs were chosen (at least nominally) by the whole community of Muslims (this had been the traditional way in which Tribal Kings *[Malik]* had been chosen in pre-Islamic Arabia) and had (at least nominally) religious *and* civil powers.

*The Caliph, from Abu Bakr, was sometimes referred to as the **Amir al-Mu'minin**, or 'Commander of Believers') and some regional rulers (who did not always claim to be Caliphs, even though they **did** claim independence from the Umayyads or Abbasids (etc.) claimed that title for themselves, but only with regard to the believers in the areas they controlled.*

After the fifth Caliph, the office was seized by the Umayyads and became *hereditary* – and this remained the case for the entire period covered by this book, even for the successor dynasties.

The Shia-Sunni Split

Even though Mohammed had tried to have ***Ali***, his son-in-law and cousin, acknowledged as his successor, it was ***Abu-Bakr***, his father-in-law (through *Aisha*, his daughter) who was present in the capital, Medina, when the local community leaders met to decide what to do in the face of splits, rebellion, apostasy and heresy in the wider muslim community after Mohammed's death who was elected as his successor.

Abu-Bakr was succeeded by *Umar* (assassinated), who was followed by *Uthman* (assassinated) who, in turn, was succeeded by ***Ali*** (assassinated).

Shia (~13-17% of modern Muslims)

Though Ali himself seems to have accepted Abu-Bakr and his two successors as legitimate (and he and his sons fought on their side and in their defence against rebels), Shia believe that Ali himself was the first legitimate Caliph and the first Imam and was succeeded by his son, *Hasan* and whose brother *Husayn* was murdered by the Umayyads.

Sunni (~80% of modern Muslims)

If you follow Sunni tradition, you believe that Abu-Bakr and his successors down to Ali, and then from Muawiyah, are legitimate and you prefer not to think about or mention *Hasan* (Ali's son) or *Husayn* (Ali's son, Hasan's brother) and certainly don't accept Shia claims.

controversies and splits that became more and more bitter as time passed – and continue to be so even today.

The Conquest of Hispania

Starting with what was probably only intended to be one of a long historic succession of raids from North Africa, a largely Berber (and only recently converted) force of ~1500 men under Tariq ibn Ziyad landed in Gibraltar in AD 711 ... and, probably through blind luck, found the Visigothic Kingdom divided in a civil war. Tariq was able to defeat the (usurper) King Roderick at Guadalete and, as a result, was reinforced from Ifriqiya (North Africa), probably bringing the Muslim army up to ~10-15000 men.

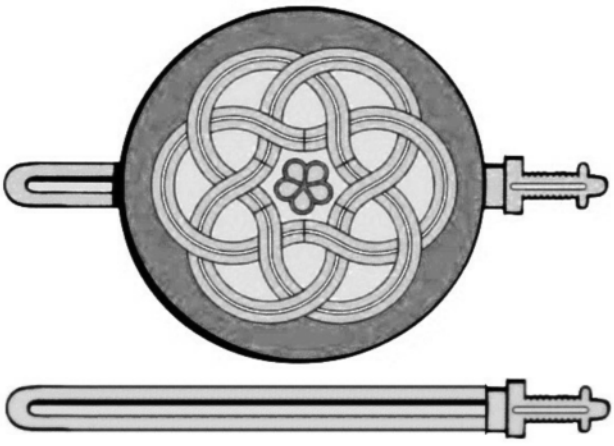
The Muslims swept the disorganised Visigothic forces before them and, by 717, had crossed into the Frankish province of Septimania (and into Provence by 734) having conquered all of Iberia except for the NW quarter (what eventually became the Kingdoms of Leon and Castile).

In AD 756 *Abd ar-Rahman*, an *Umayyad* fleeing the *Abbasid* victory in the east seized power and declared himself *Emir* – effectively becoming independent of the Caliphate (not the first, nor the last, possession to break away).

The dynasty lasted until the 11th century (a *Caliphate* from 939-1031) followed by the *Almoravids* (1086-1094), *Almohads* (1146-1173) and *Marinids* (from 1269) as *Emirs* – none of whom were able to prevent fragmentation or who proved able to stem the slow, but seemingly inexorable, Christian *reconquista*.

The last Muslim possession, the Emirate of Granada, fell to the Christians in 1492.

The last Moriscos (forcibly converted Muslims) were not expelled from Spain until 1614.



***Zulfiqar* (possibly 'Spine Splitter'), Ali's sword, and his shield, as presented to him by Mohammed**

"La fata 'illa 'Ali; la sayf 'illa Du l-Fiqar."
"There is no hero like Ali; There is no sword like Dhu-l-Fiqar"

Islamic Organisation

There is, theoretically, no such thing as a *Cleric* in Islam – which is defined by (amongst other things) individuals having a *direct personal* relation with God.

That said, there are *some* organisational structures – prayers in a Mosque are led by an ***Imam*** *(lit. 'leader')* who will normally be someone with a deep (or the deepest *available*) knowledge of the Qu'uran but who has no other function.

Likewise, those who have studied the Qu'uran and Sunnah (life and behaviour of Mohammed) and who have been granted (or recognised as having) a qualification in Islamic law and religious tradition is granted the title of *Alim ('Scholar')* as part of the *Ulema ('The learned ones')*.

They are responsible for delivering arguments on what is (and is not) acceptable behaviour or belief for a Muslim ... though there was (in the period covered) *no formal* hierarchy amongst them, and it is normal for there to be competing interpretations or resolutions of the same issue that are, *nominally*, of equal authority.

*These differing interpretations **may** be resolved through argument but there is no one body which can make a formal ruling one way or another. Often these differences will be culturally or geographically defined.*

*Most of the other titles we are familiar with are either of modern creation (or have only become widely used as **titles** in modern times) or came into existence as formalised titles under the Ottomans ... and certainly weren't used routinely (if at all) in the period covered by OM²! Many of them are more honorifics or of a political rather than religious nature in any case.*

*(Note: That doesn't mean that you **couldn't** run into Sheykhs, Muftis, Ayatollahs and the like – merely that the were uncommonly used titles and the later (Ottoman) 'ranks' didn't apply if the title **were** used.*

The Five Pillars

The various divisions and sects of Islam don't agree on everything about their religious beliefs any more than the various Christian and Jewish groups do, but they *do* believe in the following *'five pillars'* –

Declaration of Faith (Shahada)

To become a Muslim one must make a standardised declaration of faith known as the *Shahada (literally, 'Testimony')* ... normally in Arabic ... and the statement is a formal part of the five daily prayers that all Muslims are supposed to make as the second of the Five Pillars

Sunni** Muslims* use the form – *Wa ashadu 'an ('I testify that') ... **'La ilaha illa'llah'** ... **'Muhammadun rasul

Islamic Sects and Heresies

Islam quickly proved no less able to produce divisive theological splits than Christianity – the basis of the Sunni/Shia dispute (ongoing) is dealt with elsewhere, but the situation is more complex than that.

*The **Sunni**, as a group, are remarkably free of sectarianism ... and, numerically, are the mainstream. The **Shia** have proved to be more fractious.*

Shia Sects

Shia Islam has split into a large number of variant beliefs with wide degrees of difference. A small selection of these different sects include –

Alawites. They believe that Allah actually has three aspects – and are seen *either* as a minor variant of the *Twelvers* by some, or as little better than pagans and/or heretics by others because of this.

Historically Alawites have remained extremely secretive about their actual beliefs and have been widely persecuted for them in the past, even more so than regular Shia or even Twelvers.

Druze. While they are definitely monotheists, their religion incorporates elements of Christianity, Gnosticism, Ismailism and Judaism and are not only not considered Muslims by the wider Islamic world, but are often subject to persecution.

Ghulat. This is a catch-all term used by Shia to refer to sects that are deemed to have incorrectly ascribed divine characteristics to a religious leader or historical figure within Islam.

***Ghali** may descend into heresy if they deem that Allah can/has taken residence in one (or more) of the Imams or that Islamic Law is not obligatory (amongst other things).*

Ismailis. Are similar in belief to the *Twelvers* down to the Imam *Ja'far al-Sadiq* ... the latter believe that he was succeeded by *Musa al-Khadim* while the Ismailis believe that *Isma'il ibn Jafar* was the true successor. They tend to take a more esoteric and mystical view of Islam as a whole.

Seveners. Believe that *Isma'il ibn Jafar* was the seventh and last Imam and that his son, Muhammad ibn Isma'il will one day reappear as the Mahdi.

Twelvers. Believe in the hadiths of their own Imams which claim that there will be twelve divinely inspired Imams and that the *last* Imam, *Muhammad al-Mahdi*, will one day reappear with Jesus at his side to fight against the *Masih ad-Dajjal* ('False Prophet') and bring on a reign of justice and peace.

Zaydi. A Shia group who revere Zayd ibn 'Ali's (failed) uprising against the corrupt Umayyad Caliphate. They differ from other Shia groups in that they do not believe in the infallibility of Imams (as well as other things, of course).

They are seen by many other Shia as being particularly close to being Sunni.

Khawarijites

During the struggle between the Shia and Sunni in the years after Mohammed's death over who should be/was the true Caliph, Ali (Mohammed's cousin) was supported by, amongst other groups, those who eventually became the *Khawarijites ('The Outsiders')*.

However, when Ali agreed to arbitration over who should be Caliph with Muawiyah at the Battle of Siffin (AD 657), they saw this as a betrayal ... citing the Qu'uran.

'The decision is only for Allah. He relates the truth, and He is the best of deciders.', 6:57

Very simplistically they saw the choice of Caliph wasn't Ali's to allow to be discussed and that he should have relied on the outcome of the battle (which he had been winning). They also believed that *anyone* of sufficient moral purity, regardless of their ethnic origin or whether they were descended from Mohammed or not, could be Caliph.

So angered were they that one of their number, *Abd -al-Rahman ibn Muljam*, finally assassinated Ali. Ever since the epithet has been applied by both Sunni and Shia on any person or group who is not sufficiently 'pure' (some would say *fanatical* or *fundamentalist*) in their interpretation, application or adherence to the Qu'uran (they do *not* regard the Hadiths as a legitimate source for Islamic law or practise).

Ever since, those classified as such (whether they identified themselves as *Khawarij* or not) have been a constantly recurring problem for Islamic authorities – since all those other than themselves are, by their definition, *kufr* ... ***infidels** or **unbelievers**.*

***Mainstream** Muslim authorities, Sunni **and** Shia, believe individuals or groups can only be declared to be a **kafir** after careful, usually quite legalistic, consideration by learned Islamic Judges.*

*Khawarijites, on the other hand, are much more extreme – and even the extremes can have extremes. They **can** believe even the slightest deviation from the Qu'uran renders one a kafir ... and that any such should be slaughtered if they do not repent.*

Some authorities regard ISIS/ISIL as their philosophical descendants.

Allah' *('There is no god but God (and) Muhammad is the messenger of God') to which* ***Shia*** *Muslims add* ***'wa 'alliyyun waliyyu-llah'*** *('and Ali is the friend of God').*

(Which obviously makes it easy to figure out who they are and, of course, discriminate against them!)

Salat (Daily Prayers)

Muslims are expected to pray five times a day – at ***Fajr*** *(Dawn* – before sunrise*)*, ***Dhuhr*** *(Noon* – after the sun has passed its Zenith*)*, ***'Asr*** *(Afternoon* – before Sunset*)*, ***Maghrib*** *(Evening* – after sunset*)* and ***'Isha*** *(Night* – before Midnight*)*.

In settlements (or other places) that have a Mosque (or Mosques) with a paid staff, the *Muezzin* (who is a responsible and reliable person, but ***not*** any sort of cleric) will make the call to prayers from somewhere their voice can carry from (mostly *minarets* in Muslim dominated areas by this period – otherwise it might simply be done from high rooftop).

Prayers can be said *anywhere*, but saying them is a Mosque, communally, is always preferable as Islam encourages strong communal ties between fellow Muslims and this is one way of reinforcing such.

If it is impossible to get to a Mosque, then praying in a group at whatever location you are in at the call to prayer is the next best thing.

Before praying, Muslims must purify themselves with water (*'Wudu'*) – washing the hands, mouth, nostrils, arms, head and feet ... if water is not available, then sand or dust may be used instead.

Once they have performed the ritual purification a Muslim must then perform a set series of positions and prayers depending on the time of day (and day of the week) on a prayer mat, facing in the direction of the Ka'aba (Mecca).



Calligraphic 'seal' of Abu Bakr, the First Caliph

Zakat (Alms)

A strongly community based religion, Islam ***requires*** the wealthy to support the wider community – and allows for enforcement of the process, by force of arms if necessary (making it really a *tax*).

Depending on the locality and the determinations of locally accepted Islamic jurists and imams, the rate is 1/40th (2½%) for monetary wealth but varies from 2½% up to 20% for other forms (including agricultural produce, monetary metals, ores and minerals etc).

Zakat only applies to those who hold a certain minimum amount of property – but, as with the rate, the determination of this threshold varies from time to time and place to place. However, one constant is that, at least for non-agricultural goods, the tax only applies on property that has been held for ***at least a full year****.*

Zakat is to be distributed to the following groups – to Zakat collectors, the poor, the needy, to recent converts (or *possible* converts, or to *allies* of Islam), to free slaves who intend to convert, to debtors (through no fault of their own), those fighting for Islam (but not paid soldiers) and Travellers. It is not appropriate that it be given to immediate family.

Some authorities insist Zakat be distributed evenly to all those groups, but that the Zakat collectors be paid first. Others allow discretion – even allowing that it may all be paid to one group (presumably ***in addition to*** *the Zakat collectors!).*

In some areas, Zakat is collected by the state, in others it is collected by the local Imams ... Shia prefer to do the latter if it is an option.

Sawm (Fasting)

This is required of Muslims (who have reached puberty and who are healthy) during the month of Ramadan (the ninth month, of 29-30 days – this may start as early as March and as late as November because it is based on the Islamic *lunar* calendar) – it is not *just* not eating or drinking, it also includes sexual abstinence as well.

Some interpretations of the rules include the imbibing of medicines – though, if the person is sick enough, they would probably be excused ... the determination of this would vary from time to time and place to place.

However, the fast only applies between sunrise and sunset – most Mosques will have a special meal laid on for the community at the end of the day (traditionally starting with dates and water, followed by evening prayer, followed by the main meal, usually occasion for a family or community feast where possible).

Those in combat (or preparing for it) and those who are travelling (but for less than five days) are also exempt.

*All those unable to fast are expected to **either** make up the missed fast days before the **next** Ramadan or, if their inability is permanent (or long term), they should feed a needy or poor person for every day missed.*

Hajj (Pilgrimage)

Every Muslim (male and female) capable of doing so is expected to make a pilgrimage to Mecca during the month of Dhu al-Hijjah (the 12th month, between the 8th-13th) at least once – when there they will undertake and participate in rituals showing their commitment and submission to God.

*Only to those who are physically and financially able to undertake the trip **and** who can provide support for their family while they are away from home are required to commit to a Hajj. Those who have made the pilgrimage are accorded the honorific **hajj** (male) or **hajja** (female).*

The Sixth Pillar?

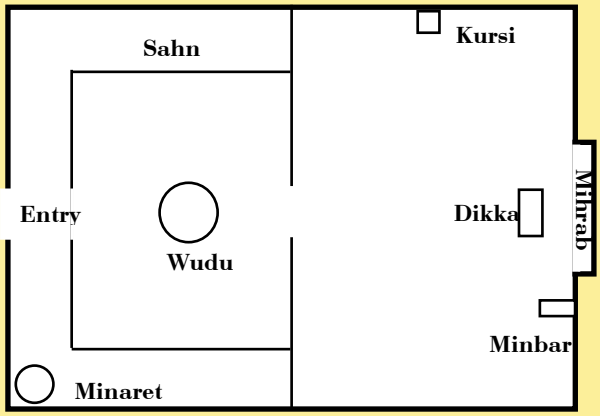
Most Muslims accept only *five Pillars*, as this is part of their regular teachings – but *some* believe that there is a sixth, though they then differ on what, exactly, this ***sixth*** 'pillar' might be.

Promote Good and Oppose Evil. Most Muslims believe this is a religious *duty*, only a few believe it to be a Sixth Pillar. Both groups can (and have, from time to time and place to place) used it as an excuse for repression of non-normative behaviour.

Jihad. Some islamic scholars believe that *armed struggle against **all unbelievers*** was a Sixth Pillar – and it could be (and often was) used as an excuse for a pre-emptive war.

By medieval times there were a host of restrictions and prohibitions about the conduct of Jihad that are reminiscent of the Christian idea of a 'just war.' Of course, as with those ideals, there was a great likelihood that the rules would be broken ... though all accepted they should be striven for.

Khums. Muslim armies were expected to pay 1/5th of any spoils from a Jihad to the state – even those who accepted it as a duty rarely (if ever) regarded it as a Sixth Pillar, but only as part of the requirements of conducting a *jihad*.



Mosque – more than just worship

A Mosque could vary in size as much as any other place of worship – from rooms in a private house (in the early days or in foreign places not controlled by Muslims) through to massive, palatial, structures that doubled as places of learning (and justice), social centers or as adjuncts to the tomb(s) of the ruler (or possibly as more than one).

Regardless of size, Mosques all have the following key features (see the diagram at the bottom of the page).

Dikka. A slightly raised platform where an Imam leads the faithful in prayer and where the Qu'uran is read to the congregation (however, see *Kursi*, qv).

Kursi. A desk or seat where the Qu'uran is placed and from where a reader will sit when reading the holy text to the congregation.

Minaret. A tall tower from which the *Muezzin* makes the call to prayer, five times a day. They vary from thick, squat, square (and possibly stepped) structures to thin, round ones. Not all Mosques have Minarets – especially those in more conservative areas.

Minbar. A pulpit (possibly with a chair at the top) from which the ruler, or an imam of the Mosque delivers sermons or messages to the gathered congregation.

Mihrab. A semicircular niche in the wall of a Mosque that indicates the *quibla* – the direction of the Ka'aba in Mecca (and the direction Muslims must face when praying). The whole wall is sometimes referred to as the *Quibla Wall*.

Sahn. A courtyard, surrounded by a *riwaq* (arcade) on all sides. Similar to a Christian *cloister*.

Wudu. Fountain or other source of flowing water for ritual purification.

***Note:** Women sit separately from men, often from a screened off area overlooking (often from a balcony reached by external stairs) the main prayer hall.*

Islam and the 'People of the Book'

The Qur'an refers to Jews, Christians and Sabians (a possibly Jewish sect of *Nabateans*) as 'people of the Book' – those who had received (and misunderstood) earlier revelations by God and who stubbornly refused to accept Mohammed as a Prophet and his revelations as the final word from God.

Contradictorily both accepting and, to a degree, admiring while also, to a degree, contemptuous.

Later practise granted *Zoroastrians*, *Samaritans*, *Mandeans* (Gnostics), who were definitely monotheistic to some degree; as well as *Jains*, *Buddhists* and even Hindus, who either weren't monotheists or their status is debatable, the status of *People of the Book* as well.

Dhimmi

Literally 'protected person' – a status granted to all *People of the Book* living in an Islamic state. Under this arrangement the various groups are allowed to run their own communities under their own (religious) laws for most things (capital crimes or cases involving disputes *between* religious groups excepted, for example) but otherwise (nominally, at least) have *most* of the rights that Muslim residents do

*They were even allowed to follow customs and practices that were prohibited for muslims – Christians could eat pork and consume wine and other alcoholic beverages, for example. Likewise, the various dhimmi communities were protected **against each other** – so the various competing (heretical) Christian Churches all had equal status under Islam ... for example, **Nestorians** would be protected against **Orthodox** discrimination and attacks.*

Apart from the *Jizya*, some of the rules that applied to individual dhimmis and their communities were, for example, that they make no public display of their religion (no visible religious symbols on any building or worn openly by individuals ... with the exception of any distinctive clothing or sign on buildings that might be *required* by the authorities) and building or repairing religious buildings required approval by the Muslim authorities.

*At least, that's how it **started out**. Note the note above about how Muslims were somewhat contemptuous over non-muslim refusal to recognise Islam as **the** religion and Muhammed as **the** prophet?*

*As time passed, the rules were applied more restrictively and other biases became accepted – especially under the later Caliphs after the **Rashidum** (from the 7th-13th centuries especially) ... the **Mamluks** were especially intolerant. These changes were cyclical and inconsistently enforced even from place to place even within a restrictive regime – and Islamic jurists continually reiterated the need to treat Dhimmis humanely.*

Some political rights and responsibilities were not allowed and they had to pay a special ***jizya** tax* – which was not onerous and *usually* the same amount that muslims were expected to give in ***zakat** (obligatory **alms**, a tax* by any other name – usually 2½% of total wealth above a minimum amount – 20 Gold Dinars or 200 silver Dirhams).

*Historically, in the first phases of Islamic expansion at least, the taxes levied on conquered populations was less – often **far** less – than that which had been levied by the previous rulers, and the Muslims were welcomed for that reason alone.*

Medieval Christian views of Islam

As you might expect, views of Islam changed over time – originally, Christians viewed it as a *Christological* heresy (i.e. a dispute over the nature of Christ) and believed that Mohammed was a false prophet.

However, this attitude was hardening by the 11th century and, by the 13th century at the latest, saw Muslims as *heathens* and believed that Mohammed was not *just* a false prophet, but was actively inspired by the Devil and some authorities even viewed him as the Antichrist.

*Some authorities even claim that Mohammed was, in fact, the False Prophet mentioned in the **Book of Revelation**.*

During this latter period, (supposedly) learned authorities began to actively manufacture and disseminate whole cloth propaganda designed to denigrate Muslim beliefs and Mohammed in particular ... and these stories had widespread currency.

*But what did **ordinary** Christians believe? It is always hard to tell as the sources tell us what the authorities **wanted** them to believe and reported instances where they behaved in ways that targeted Muslims ... there would certainly have been **some** bigotry and bias, but, even in Reconquista Christian Spain Muslims and Christians managed to get along on the level of the common man for many decades (even centuries, in some parts of the Iberian peninsula) before the authorities expelled them all (and the expulsion was for perceived political threats, religion was peripheral).*

Certainly, the Crusaders were confused by what they found in the Holy Lands – the vision of Muslims as heathenish barbarians that was a commonplace of the time were completely refuted by the reality of a sophisticated and vibrant civilisation ... even if it was one that was seen to be antithetical to Christianity. The Crusader Kingdoms also had to contend with the reality that many of their nominal subjects were Muslim and weren't likely to convert, and that their Muslim opponents could behave with great chivalry.

Marginalised or Extinct?

Christianity, Judaism and Islam were not the only major religious movements to exist in the Mediterranean world – but, by the 10th or 11th centuries they were the last ones left in any large numbers or obvious concentrations ... all the rest had been either converted (freely or forcibly), marginalised (and usually operating in secrecy, in fear for their lives) or had been (or were still in the process of being) actively exterminated.

Gnosticism

Gnostics base all their religious beliefs on *gnostikos* (literally 'knowledge', but, in this instance, with the specific undertone of 'secret' or 'sacred' ... or both) and, despite older academic beliefs, are now known to be entirely post-Christian in origin, and probably date no earlier than the 2nd century AD.

The basis for most Gnostic belief is that there are two equal (or, sometimes, *un*equal) divinities or divine forces in the world – light and darkness, good and evil.

They also believe there is a *lesser* god, the ***Demiurge*** (aka *Ahriman*, *Samael*, *Satan* – even *Yahweh* in some traditions) who actually created the physical world and everything in it and whom, if not actively evil, is corrupt ... hence, all physical creation is corrupt as well.

Within those broad key beliefs there were many Gnostic groups, some small and localised, others large and regional – many from before the 10th century (Nicolaism, Macionism, Valentianism, Sethianism, Mandaeism, Manichaeism) and some heresies that from the 10th and 14th centuries were accused of having Gnostic links or Gnostic beliefs.

Early Christians and Gnostics lived side by side with no real conflict. However, as formalised organisational structures were developed for the Church, those involved in those positions of authority increasingly found fault with the various Gnostic beliefs as they worked for greater ideological purity.

As a result, the various Gnostic groups were increasingly seen as either Pagans or, worse, Heretics and treated accordingly ... and actively persecuted and repressed once Christianity was adopted as the State Religion of the Roman Empire.

Mazdayasna (Zoroastrianism)

Largely replaced (and actively repressed) by the Muslim Arabs after the conquest of Sassanid Persia in AD 654, Zoroastrianism survived the onslaught in areas away from the main centers of Islamic rule (the national and provincial capitals), especially on the fringes of what had been the Sassanian Empire, and even spread into India.

Mazdayasna is a monotheistic religion, with one God, ***Ahura Mazda***, but he/she (some aspects are seen as masculine, others as feminine) is believed to have two aspects – one good (*Spenta Mainyu*), one evil (*Angra Mainyu* or *Ahriman*).

The main precepts involve actively performing good deeds (including always telling [or attempting to] the truth) and participating in life fully [no ascetics] as part of the struggle between good and evil. Worship is in *Fire Temples* or, in need, anywhere there is a fire (deemed to be any source of light) and involves fire and water in all ceremonies and as means of ritual purification.

*The three precepts from the Holy Book, the Avesta, are – **Humata, Hukhta, Hvarshta** (Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds).*

Islamic jurists have always had difficulty in reconciling Mazdaen beliefs with giving them the status of 'People of the Book' ... and this was only historically granted because they were (originally) the overwhelming majority in the conquered Sassanian lands.

In order to force conversion, numerous restrictive and discriminatory laws were gradually enacted and numbers were declining rapidly throughout the period (10th-14th centuries) and had massively declined since the Muslim conquest.

Paganism

By the 10th century, the old Graeco-Roman pagan belief system was long dead – *almost* entirely supplanted by Christianity (or Islam), though there were pagan elements co-opted into *both*, sometimes (*possibly*) knowingly, other times unconsciously.

The real area of pagan survival was in the Celtic, Germanic and Nordic areas of north and north-west Europe where strong pagan polities survived into and, in some case, through, the period ... *some* were converted (largely) peacefully (Anglo-Saxon England, Germany and the Scandinavian countries) while others were subject to crusades to do so forcibly *'by fire and sword'* (the Baltics, mainly, as part of the *Drang nach Osten*).

Beliefs varied – but were never as complex in their theology as those religions that replaced them. Most had a pantheon of god-like beings, each with an overall area of responsibility, as well as more localised supernatural or semi-supernatural entities that might be associated with a region or even with a single small location (*'Genius loci'* – 'spirit of the place).

REALITY CHECK

Is there a God? ***I*** have no idea – but ***each and every one of the religions***, *including their various sects and heresies*, ***mentioned herein believed that there was*** and, furthermore, encouraged (***enforced*** – or *tried* to) *outward* belief in *their* version on all those under their power and control ... either on pain of death or significant, severe and active discrimination.

Ultimately, ***none*** *of them had the slightest interest in 'playing nice' despite what some theoreticians might claim in abstruse and academic theological argument.*

A GENERAL NOTE . . .

I have *tried* to present information on the religions covered that is as unbiased and factual as possible and I have also tried to avoid making value judgements about them ... while not avoiding issues that might be seen to present them or their adherents in a particular light (good ***or*** bad) when that is warranted.

I'd like to think I haven't fallen for the more obvious biases and have avoided making value judgements (or, at least, ones that are only based on prejudice, conscious or unconscious) ... which probably means I've failed. Just, hopefully, in small ways, but who knows?

For what little it's worth, I'm an *agnostic* (i.e. don't believe there's any existing *proof* that there's a God ... I just don't accept things on faith alone, as believers seem to be expected to do) – and, to all the major religions, that would make me only slightly better than an *atheist* (one who doesn't, and *won't*, believe there's a God). And they generally didn't like the latter very much at all in the medieval period.

Or, to put it another way, there's a good chance it would be ***me*** *being burnt at that stake as there would be of any of the heresies or opposing major religions if I was dumb enough to express my opinion and belief in public! So perhaps I can get cut a little slack?*

WHAT DID *ORDINARY* PEOPLE BELIEVE?

Almost certainly ***not*** what the (self) authorised religious hierarchy ***said*** they *should* – most likely only parts of the 'accepted' religious dogma *at best.*

The written records we have were ***either*** written ***by*** the religious authorities to justify or expound their own beliefs, both to each other and (more importantly, in some ways) to (or for) the wealthier and most influential members of society ***or*** they were written by people from those classes (and who, therefore, had a strong tendency to follow the socially or politically accepted 'norms' (or at least to profess that they did so in anything that might become public).

There are few or no writings by (or *for*) '***ordinary***' non-ecclesiastical, non-noble types about what they believed or how they acted in a religious capacity – though there ***are*** often reports of what such people *did* in the way of religious behaviour, written by (or *for*) ecclesiastic or noble writers to *either* show the support of the general populace *for* accepted religious dogma *or* to show the depravity that gripped the commons when they did *not* follow accepted dogma (or did not obey their 'betters!').

In the former case the general scarcity makes it unwise to put too much stock in what they say or what they claim, while in the latter case(s) the motives for writing are so obviously suspect that it is even less wise to take their statements at face value.

Even supposed eyewitness reports or what passes for 'history' are potentially suspect – you often even cannot be certain that the actions they report happened in the way they are reported (or happened ***at all****) unless there are multiple independent (and demonstrably contemporary and reliable) sources confirming those actions.*

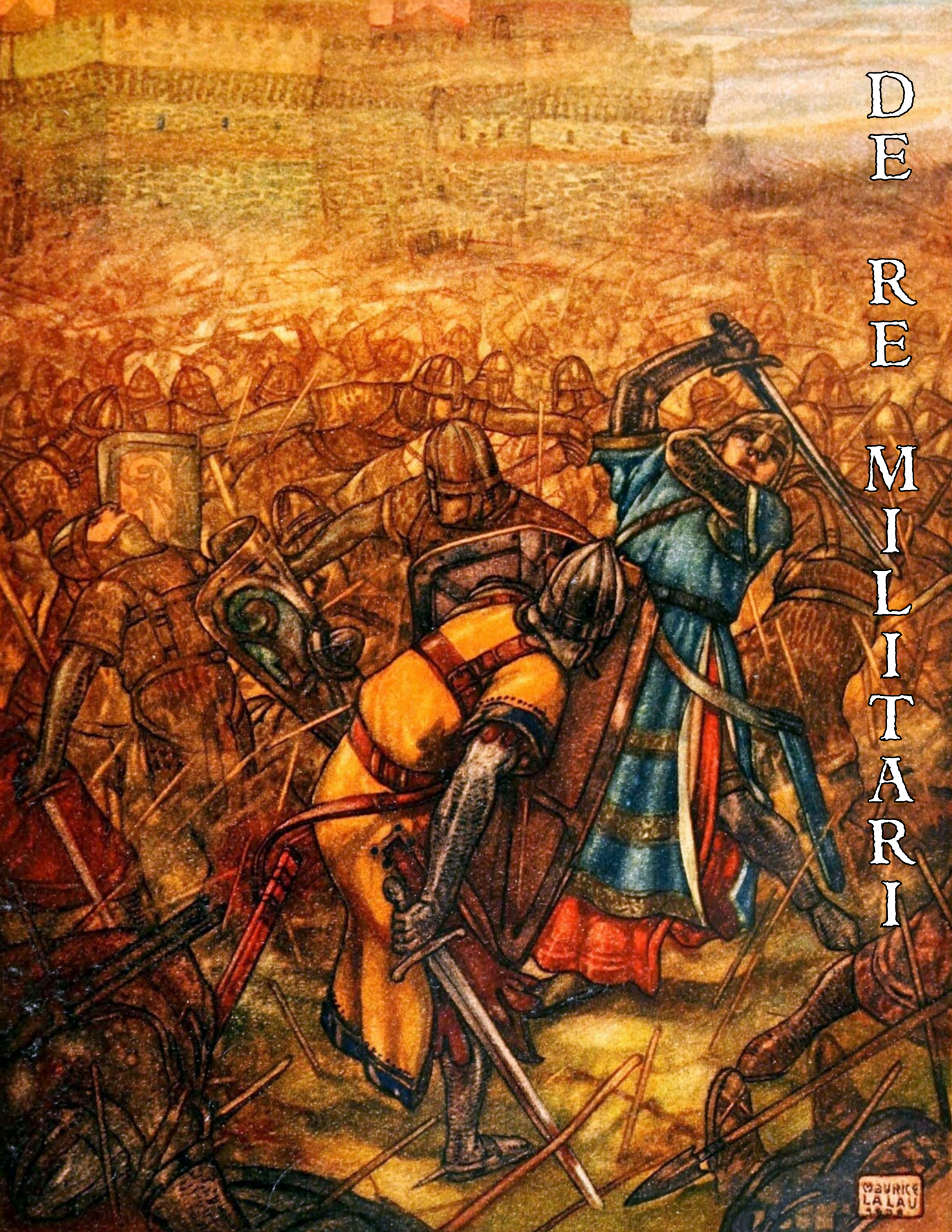
As for the reported/alleged ***motives*** *for the actions being reported – well, again, these records were written by members of a small literate elite to (or for)* ***other*** *members of that same elite, and so have to be taken with a grain of salt.*

About the only thing that it is reasonably safe to conclude is that bigotry and xenophobia are very much a part of the human condition *and always have been* ... but that *not everyone* is bigoted and/or xenophobic to the same degree, or in the same way, or act in such ways at all times and under all circumstances.

For every anti-semite who gladly sent Jews and others off to the Death Camps in WW2, or Muslims to Death or Rape Camps during the more recent breakup of Yugoslavia, or targetted Christians or Yazidis for death in areas that have come under the control of ISIS/ISIL there are other examples of ordinary people who did what they could to save the targets of such outrages.

You just can't tell who is likely to do which for the most part – piety, social class, wealth or education aren't good or certain indicators, that's all we can say.

Common people in the Middle Ages are unlikely to have been any different in the variety of responses they would have displayed.


DE RE MILITARI
MAURICE LALAU

De re militari

"On Military Matters" *– Publius Flavius Vegetius*

As noted elsewhere (***Kingdoms & Crowns: Lords & Vassals***) medieval European states were organised along feudal lines (even if not identical with the commonly understood Anglo-French version) – and land grants made to the (warrior) nobility had military service obligations attached, not only for themselves, but for their tenants as well.

During the 10th-14th centuries the early medieval (or late Dark Age) States and their fairly basic administrative and military systems continually developed, becoming more and more complex as time passed – though even at the end of the period they continued to rely on semi-feudal armies, though often with a core of paid troops (mercenaries – though not necessarily foreign ones).

Military Technology

As a whole, military technology didn't change all that much over the period – for the simple reason that *technology as a whole* didn't change all that much.

Iron and Steel

The main changes were to do with the development of better metallurgical technology bringing down the price of iron (and steel) which had a direct impact on the type of armour that was affordable which, in turn, led to changes in the types of weapons needed to deal with the improved armour.

Or, putting it another way – at the beginning of the 10th century, the best body armour available was Mail (*never, ever,* ***Chain Mail***) of varying lengths and coverage for the torso, and possibly the arms and legs, even for the wealthiest of the Nobility, supplemented by a (usually one piece) iron helmet of various designs.

Very *occasionally the Mail might be found in double thickness over some spots (mostly the neck and shoulders).*

Mail armour tends to work by causing anything other than a close to direct blow to slide or skitter across it rather than penetrating – though even non-penetrating blows can cause significant, even disabling, bruising and muscle damage and even break bones.



This means weapons tend to be relatively light and have a cutting edge – though those with a bludgeoning attack are also useful (if you can't afford anything better) ... heavier weapons, and any type of weapon that uses a lot of iron or steel (like Maces, Hand and a Half or Two Handed Swords, for example) either don't exist or are uncommon as they are simply uneconomic (they're overkill for the armour that's most commonly used).

Over the next four centuries, bits and bobs of iron plate armour became more common, though mainly for the very wealthy. These were usually Breastplates (sometimes *only* Breastplates with no Backplate) but 'plate' armour also occasionally included limited arm and leg protection that went *over* mail armour.

From the 12th-13th centuries the gradual harnessing of waterwheels to power triphammers for ironworking that made it less labour intensive to shape plate armour (though not to produce the iron in the first place) and it is only from the late 14th century that the major innovation of using a waterwheel to power the horizontal bellows for smelting ore begins to bring down the price of the iron and steel *dramatically*.

These two developments, especially the latter one, bring down the price of iron and steel so much that full plate armour starts to be economically viable and, indeed, less expensive than the labour intensive production of Mail.

All this not all that long before improved gunpowder weapons start to render even Plate armour obsolete.

The spread in the use of Plate armour meant that the lighter, sharper edged, weapons (or lighter bludgeoning ones) that were useful against Mail armour were increasingly marginal.

To ***penetrate*** *Plate you need something more like a wedge-ish shaped battering ram – and brute momentum more than the edge fuels penetration. Moreover, the battering element, even if it* ***didn't*** *penetrate, was likely to bruise flesh and break bones ... whereas the lighter, earlier, weapons wouldn't be able to do even that.*

Or something with a narrow, wedge or chisel shaped cross section would work – which gave rise to weapons such as the Warhammer and Military Pick which combined those features with weight and momentum.

Black Powder, Firearms and Cannon

The other big change was the introduction of Black Powder (Gunpowder) and the weapon systems to use it effectively.

The Mongols had used gunpowder weapons at the Battle of Mohi (in Hungary) in 1241, and there are disputed sources that may describe cannon being used in Seville in 1249 and crude guns may have been used in Iberian wars as early as the 1260's.

The first definitive example of a gun appears in 1326 (a *'Pot de fer'* [aka 'Fire Pot'] which probably fired an iron arrow rather than a ball or shrapnel) and gunpowder weapons developed to the point where they were 'common' (though by no means decisive!) on the battlefield by the middle of the 14th century.

Roger Bacon described 'black powder' in 1267, but the first definite recipe dates to 1280-1300.

All of these early european weapons were either incendiary projectors or small to medium (overwhelmingly man-portable) anti-personnel weapons ... heavy weapons recognisable as cannon only begin to appear in the very late 14th century when some, at least, began to be large and powerful enough to fire projectiles that made them useful as siege weapons.

Before the 10th Century

Military Organisation

The administrative systems of the medieval European states, even the wealthiest and longest established, were simply not up to organising (or *paying*) for a full time professional (and national) army – that was, after all, what the feudal system was all about.

Tenth century armies were, even so, not *just* barbarian war bands ... well, in *places* they weren't. Training and equipment were extremely variable, as was troop quality – even of the mounted soldiers (Knights, Sergeants and others) who nominally formed the core and service obligations were heavily circumscribed and there was considerable regional variation.

Al-Andalus (Islamic Iberia)

By the 9th century, the army of al-Andalus was largely Berber and Negro mercenaries from North Africa, supplemented by Christian 'Slav' Mercenaries (some of whom may actually have been Slavs, but it was mostly a catch-all term for 'European Christians).

They were paid for by taxing the old, untrustworthy (or at least *untrusted*) descendants of the original waves of invaders who had been granted land for military service.

The army was probably ~50,000 strong, but was parceled out all over the territories held rather than

True Technology

Some secondary sourcebooks, even quite recent ones, tend to perpetuate claims that are now known to be quite wrong (at least in specialist academic circles) and those relating to military technology are no less immune to such problems than any other area. Some of the most egregious examples include –

Horse Tack and other matters . . .

Despite claims that the invention of the high-pommel and cantle ***'Knight's' Saddle*** in the 11th century was a vital prerequisite for being able to make charges with a couched lance (shock cavalry) – the historical evidence is *definitively* contradictory.

*Even Roman and Persian Heavy Cavalry saddles, **without stirrups**, allowed such attacks – historical reconstructions have shown that the 'horns' depicted on them in art actually clamped down over the rider's thighs, keeping them firmly in place when attacking with a couched lance.*

Likewise, ***Stirrups*** (appearing in the 7th-8th centuries in Europe) didn't make it *all* that much easier for riders to stay on their horses – not in a military context.

*The Roman saddle described above did a fair to good job with **no** stirrups – but stirrups **did** make the job of **mounting** a horse much easier and quicker.*

*Claims that stirrups gave a rider greater stability when making a (sidewise) sword attack from horseback are more debatable – re-enactors are, at best, equivocal over such claims, but a consensus seems to be that the Roman saddle was **very slightly** less stable when used that way.*

Spurs, despite some recurrent claims, were neither a new invention (dating back to at least the 5th century BC), but did *not* make the control of a horse any easier.

*They certainly let the horse know the rider **wants** something – but good cavalrymen always claimed to be able to control a horse with their knees when holding a lance (or other weapon) in their hands (and holding the reins in their teeth, if they had an open faced helmet, or either tucked into their belt, tied to the pommel or otherwise secured somewhere within easy reach if they had a close faced helmet.)*

Horseshoes, at least, *nailed (cast) bronze (iron or steel from the late 11th century) ones*, can only be reliably dated to the 10th century AD and, unreliably, to the 5th or 6th centuries ... but strap on hoof protection were used for at least a millennium before that.

*That's not to say that these developments were **useless** – merely that they are often (usually!) over-egged where they do appear. They were, at best, **incremental** improvements, not major war (or battle) winning ones ... and these are just some of the better known clangers.*

concentrated, though large forces could be gathered for attack or defence as needed. The most important part of the army was the Caliph's Guard, which was around ~5000 strong, and about 40% cavalry and 60% Infantry, and mostly Christian mercenaries.

Organisation was informal at best, even amongst the Christian Guardsmen, and the only semi-formal units known are raiding units of 100 men stationed along the borderlands with Christian Spain.

Tactics. ***Cavalry*** were usually deployed in a phalanx 5 men deep with light Cavalry (if available) deployed at the front and on the flanks as skirmishers. They would make a massed charge on the attack – but it was well known by their opponents that if this could be withstood their morale was likely to be severely hurt and, with a little luck, they might even rout.

*However, opponents needed to be **very** careful with apparently routing cavalry – as (as was common for many Middle Eastern armies from ancient times) feigned flight was a common tactic.*

The intent was to sucker the other side into attacking, which tended to disorganise even the most professional troops, and hit them with concealed units in a counter-charge, preferably from hiding and from the flank.

Infantry were usually deployed in blocks of Spearmen 8-11 ranks deep – archers (if any) might be deployed on the flanks or in blocks interspersed with the Spearmen or, possibly, as skirmishers to the front of the Infantry line. Training levels and morale were generally unreliable and Infantry were generally of little use except defensively ... and not reliably even then.

The Muslim battle cry was, of course, ***Allahu Akbar!***

Anglo-Saxon England

Pre-conquest England was one of the wealthiest and best organised states in Europe, but its military system was different from the French-feudal norm.

All freemen aged from 15-60 years of age were obliged to serve in the ***Great Fyrd*** – but usually only for long enough to deal with enemy (Viking, more often than not) raids, typically only defending their immediate locality and for a day at a time (as needed). If there was a greater emergency they could be called on to serve for up to 15 days, but *not* outside their Shire.



More commonly the authorities called on the ***Select Fyrd***, which was organised so that every 5 Hides (or equivalent unit) of land (or property equivalent for townsmen) provided a warrior equipped with a Helmet, Mail Corselet who could be called to serve for 60 days at the expense of the landowners equipping him.

*The limited surviving records from the late pre-conquest period suggest that this would nominally be on the order of 40-50,000 men. Actual field organisation is uncertain, but was probably geographical – those from a Village, Town or Hundred mustering together, and all **those** from a Shire (under the Shire Reeve) at higher levels ... and Shire-level forces nominally operating under the King (or family member) in a larger army.*

Additionally, Noblemen were expected to be able to field their own retinues – see ***On Heriots & Reliefs (#133)*** for details of the *average* commitment expected from each noble rank.

These forces were organised under the commanding Nobleman, forming his personal household, and might also (at least nominally) form the core command element of the local Hundred-level Fyrd or Select Fyrd.

*Some of the greater Nobles also raised their own forces of **Huscarles** (see below) over and above the basic military obligations, and could often field several hundred of them as part of their personal force.*

The King maintained a household force of paid soldiers, ***Huscarles***, who formed the core of most Armies and who probably numbered ~3-4000 in 1066, though not all of them would have been available to fight against the Norman invaders as they were often used to garrison key towns around the Kingdom.

*Organisation of the Huscarles is uncertain, but some evidence suggests that they were fielded, at least nominally, in units of at least 75, possibly based on the (nominal) size of a Viking Longship crew (as they were originally **Viking** mercenaries).*

Tactics. Most Huscarles and some of the Select Fyrd had horses, but they seem to have fought as ***Mounted Infantry*** except for a few instances where, unsurprisingly, they performed poorly. If they did fight on horseback they threw Javelins rather than making a shock attack with a couched spear or lance. If in close combat on horseback they would fight with spear (if they had any left) or sword.

Infantry fought in the traditional (and historically famous) *Shield Wall* formation – basically a single

massive phalanx with the Select Fyrd and/or Huscarles (with their better armour) forming the front ranks.

Occasionally a single Shield Wall phalanx might be divided into separate phalanxes due to terrain or other factors, especially by the 10th and 11th centuries.

The front rank(s) were formed up with shields overlapping for maximum protection and would fought initially with spears. How deep the formation was is not known, but a minimum of 4-6 ranks seems likely.

Anglo-Saxon armies chanted ***Ut! Ut! Ut!*** (*Out! Out! Out!)* while banging weapons on shields – if they were advancing the shout would become continuous and grow in volume as they neared the enemy.

France & Germany (Carolingian Empire)

During this period the old (Frankish) Carolingian state was disintegrating into what became France, the Germanies and (northern) Italy.

France. By the 9th century or so *parts* of France (or those territories which will one day *become* France) are organised along feudal lines – the military forces are, therefore, based on feudal military obligations. However, *other* parts of France were more chaotic.

Roughly speaking, something very much like (if not yet identical to) later feudalism existed north of the Loire River while, to the south, while there were areas that were organised around castles of varying sizes, there was no real organisation at any level above that ... except, nominally (and roundly ignored by all except as an excuse for absolute independence), to the distant Royal government in Paris.

Unlike the Normans, however, mainstream French military organisation is, well, *disorganised*. The warbands of individual Nobles and Knights were the basic units, referred to as ***Milites*** or ***Armati***, and consisted of whatever heterogenous mix of forces the leader could (afford to) muster.

*Even north of the Loire, while the **Milites** (Knights) were **mostly** members of the minor aristocracy, there were still substantial numbers who **weren't.***

For example, Breton Heavy Cavalry were regarded as their equivalent even though they were semi-mercenary in organisation, depending on paid military service for survival. Likewise, some of the more powerful nobles had what were effectively 'hearth troops' of armoured cavalry (and, to a lesser extent, armoured Mounted Infantry or pure Infantry) who served for pay and were generally from a common rather than noble background.

*South of the Loire there was an entire group of **'milites'** who were, in fact, professional mercenaries and almost entirely of common origin – including substantial num-*

WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT IN TIME OF WAR

Sultans, military officers, and even the common soldiers, followed the fashions of the infidels; in time of war, especially, they wore a dress very similar to that of the Christians, their neighbours.

They used likewise the same weapons, and, like them, were clad in mail, over which they threw a short scarlet tunic, in the Christian fashion.

They fought on horseback with shield and spear, but knew not how to use either the mace or the bow of the Arabs.

Instead of which they adopted the crossbow of the Franks, and used it in sieges, or in marches, to defend the infantry from the attacks of the cavalry, for without that requisite they would certainly be defeated.

However, we are informed by Ibnul-khattib that under the ... Sultans who reigned at Granada ... Andalusian troops were again clad and armed in the real Arabic fashion.

Instead of the heavy steel helmet and thick breast-plate of their ancestors they wore a slender head-piece and a thin but well-tempered cuirass.

Instead of the huge spear with a broad end in the Christian fashion, they took the long and slender reed of the Arabs

... they substituted for the clumsy and ill-shaped Christian saddles the more military-looking and more convenient horse furniture of the inhabitants of Arabia.

***History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain**, Ahmed Ibn Mohammed Al-Maqqari*



A warrior in traditional Arab armour – Iron Helmet, Mail Hauberk with Leather (possibly Metal) lamellar reinforcements, Round Shield (plywood faced with painted leather and edged and bossed with metal), leather bracers on the forearm and leather gaiters on the lower legs.

He carries a Long Sword slung on his left side, hung from a Baldric rather than from a belt around the waist.

Image © Alagos, 2011

bers of infantry, including javelin armed footsoldiers who were widely regarded as the best mercenary infantry available both there and in northern France (and infantry dominated in the border marches with Iberia).

These warbands were then separated – the Knights being mustered into 'units' of 100 which, in turn, were combined into ***Legiones*** of 1000. The remainder of their warbands were evidently mustered separately and were probably 'organised' in similarly sized units.

None of these, neither the Knights nor the rest of their warbands, had any training in operating together and, at best, could be maneuvered (after a fashion) in a more or less disorganised mass and generally aimed at the enemy in attack, or mustered in a similar body to defend ... fortunately, they mostly ended up fighting armies that were similarly constituted.

Since units were made up by combining warbands (or elements of them), the actual numbers would rarely have been 100 or 1000 ... which really didn't matter as they were a big disorganised mob for the most part.

Ottonian Germany. The remnant Carolingian lands in the Germanies continued with some of the earlier organisational features with the beginnings of a feudal overlay. Some lands were now held in return for, or simply owed, military service to their overlord – who was not nearly always the King.

The largest contingent provided by a lay Lord was 40 ***Milites***, with the majority providing at least 10 ... Church contingents, however, were more reliable and could number as many as 90 (in fact, ¾ of the Kingdom's *Milites* were provided by Church lands).

Unarmoured cavalry continued to be used for raiding beyond the state's borders to the east, but for little else, and unarmoured infantry levies were rarely called out – and town Militia troops were only expected to defend their walls.



There were notable exceptions to this denigration of infantry forces – Pikemen from *Flanders* and *Brabant* were already starting to gain the reputation that made them widely regarded mercenaries in the following centuries, for example.

Tactics. Carolingian ***Cavalry*** tactics were similar to those used by the Normans, but generally less organised and less professionally managed.

Their ***Infantry*** tactics were similar to those of the Anglo-Saxons, but they were more likely to deploy their forces in several separate phalanxes rather than a single large one from the get go, not just in special circumstances because the terrain demanded such.

The *French* Battle Cry, since at least the 12th century, was ***Munjoie*** (later ***Montjoie***) which referred to the French Royal Standard, the *Oriflamme* but which is of uncertain meaning otherwise.

The *German* Battle Cry was probably the origin of the above – was, perhaps, something like ***Mund Gawi*** *((Hold the Line)* and corrupted in later French usage,

The Irish

As noted elsewhere, the Irish were a tribal society though none of the ~150 Tribal groups seem to have had *any* permanent forces – not even the ***Tuisech*** (Tribal leader) or ***Ri*** (Kings of multi-Tuath groupings). The Tuisech (or Ri) simply called on all adult males of the Tribe (or as many as deemed necessary to meet the current threat) and formed an ad hoc warband.

Each town or noble household was responsible for raising a ***Cet***, nominally of100 men – the average Tuath could raise around ***seven*** such. This could be broken up into independent armies (or, if fielded all together, *'Battles'*) called ***Trisha Cet*** (*Three Cet*), nominally of 300 men.

Warbands were mostly Light Infantry – even Nobles were only Mounted Infantry. Training levels varied widely – anything beyond basic individual weapon handling skills would have been minimal (though the constant internecine feuds that wracked the country would have meant some warriors would have gained practical experience in the school of hard knocks).

The various Viking Towns and Regions often provided mercenary troops to the various tribal confederations – mail armoured Infantry or Mounted Infantry.

Tactics. Irish Tuatha or Kingdoms being relatively small, 'battles' were often fought with 'armies' in the mid to low hundreds, mostly unarmoured infantry equipped with spears and shields.

It is possible that Celtic-style chariots may still have been in use by Nobles and Kings quite late. There

seems to have been little or no Cavalry and where warriors had access to horses they seem more likely to have acted as ***Mounted Infantry.***

By the 9th and 10th centuries at the latest, with greater political consolidation, armies grew bigger, now *very* occasionally numbering in the (several) thousands on either side.

Anything like a major battle was rare at any time, however, and most fighting involved spoiling raids – burning down ill-defended farmsteads or monasteries or simple cattle raiding.

Irish Battle Cries were normally the names of their tribal King, but evidently ***Feara! Feara!*** *('Take Care!'* Or *'Watch Out!'*) was also common.

Northern and Central Italy

The Lombards. The Lombards were actually a mish-mash of assorted barbarian tribes all of whom were a separate ruling class over a basically unfree native population through to the late 8th century when the area was conquered by the Franks and, slowly, the Franco-German system was overlain on top of the existing Lombard one.

The core of their fighting force were the personal household troops of the various nobles and the King, the ***Gasindi***, most of whom would have been mail armoured cavalry.

They were supplemented by a selective levy of the freemen comprising three classes – mail armoured cavalry, light cavalry and infantry – most armies tended to consist only of the Gasindi and the first two classes of the selective levy.

Organisation was either (nominally) decimal or by family, clan or tribal affiliation ... and in battle would have been of limited tactical relevance.

Frankish Italy. The Franks (from the late 8th and early 9th centuries) changed things, with military organisation (and power) being more and more concentrated in the large number of established urban centres in the peninsula. These were wealthy, organised and populous enough to be able to field reasonably well equipped civic militia (infantry) forces supplemented by cavalry raised from the largely urbanised noble classes.

Outside of the cities, rural areas were still under the control of the old Lombard *Gasindi* and organised in much the same ways as described above.

In some places, Castles were garrisoned by infantry and cavalry forces who were granted fiefs in the area, but in others the garrison was of paid mercenaries, usually of common origin.

Roman discipline & Roman Greatness

Victory in war does not depend entirely upon numbers or mere courage; only skill and discipline will insure it. We find that the Romans owed the conquest of the world to no other cause than continual military training, exact observance of discipline in their camps and unwearied cultivation of the other arts of war.

Without these, what chance would the inconsiderable numbers of the Roman armies have had against the multitudes of the Gauls?

Or with what success would their small size have been opposed to the prodigious stature of the Germans?

The Spaniards surpassed us not only in numbers, but in physical strength. We were always inferior to the Africans in wealth and unequal to them in deception and stratagem.

And the Greeks, indisputably, were far superior to us in skill in arts and all kinds of knowledge.

But to all these advantages the Romans opposed unusual care in the choice of their levies and in their military training.

They thoroughly understood the importance of hardening them by continual practice, and of training them to every maneuver that might happen in the line and in action.

Nor were they less strict in punishing idleness and sloth.

The courage of a soldier is heightened by knowledge of his profession and only wants an opportunity to execute what he is convinced he has been perfectly taught. A handful of men, inured to war, proceed to certain victory, while on the contrary numerous armies of raw and undisciplined troops are but multitudes of men dragged to slaughter.

– ***De Re Militari***, Vegetius

De Re Militari *was* ***the*** *most read and most influential Military Manual of the Middle Ages, and, indeed, for the entirety of the period of the 9th-14th centuries covered by this book ... and beyond.*

Today there are no less than 226 Latin Manuscripts dating to the period, and many more in the vernacular ... including English, French and even Hungarian. Many Nobles and Kings are known to have possessed copies in their libraries as well.

Even after the invention of gunpowder began to render the chapter of siege work and artillery obsolete it remained an influential work ...

Urban Italy. Italy was somewhat unusual in that its urban culture had survived more intact than most other parts of the western empire ... and all of those towns were, by this period, *walled*. Indeed, many *villages* were walled or, at the very least, situated on hilltops or other hard to get to places.

Urban militias (as noted above) were very significant and Civic rulership was usually by some form of oligarchic Council (based on wealth, not noble birth – and often *excluding* the latter) ... but in many towns an important (if not dominant) power was that of the Roman Catholic Church, and the local Bishop often had household troops that formed the core of the town's military while also providing the bulk of the literate men needed to run the town administration.

*In some places, at least, these Church retainers were called the **Primi Milites** or **Milites Majores**, while the urban forces were only the **Secundi Milites** (also called **Milites Minores**).*

Pre-Conquest Normans

They used the basic French feudal organisation, but with their own changes ... their level of organisation was much more professional than the usual French feudal mob, just for a start because the Dukes of Normandy brooked little opposition to their rule.

For organisational purposes, Knights were grouped in multiples of five, at the head of whatever retainers (mounted and foot) they might also be required to field as part of their feudal obligations.

However, in battle Knights were grouped in units of 25-40 (more typically the former than the latter) called a ***Conroi*** – and they tended to actually conduct formal training *in* those units both individually and, to some degree, in larger combinations.

A Norman commander could, therefore, actually *manoeuver* his Knights ***at that level*** which granted ***far*** greater tactical and operational flexibility than the typical Feudal Armies they faced ... and this greater flexibility and professionalis, was responsible for many (if not all) of their victories.



Tactics. The Normans relied on their ***Cavalry***, and expected their initial Charge to carry the day (though this was *not* with a couched lance, rather it was with spears or javelins). However, if it didn't succeed, they had had sufficient training and morale to either withdraw (possibly in a feigned flight ... especially against a less disciplined or less well trained foe) or settle in for the hard slog of hand to hand combat.

*Neither the design of the saddle nor the longer, straight leg, stirrup arrangements had been fully developed or completely adopted. Cavalry charged with Lances, but not **couched** (i.e. firmly tucked under the arm) ones – they used them more as long spears to attack targets on their off side (mostly) rather than those straight ahead.*

Also note that many Norman battles were won because the Knights were willing (and able) to fight on foot – usually placed in the front rank to protect the archers and crossbowmen who did most of the actual killing,.

Norman ***Infantry*** would mostly remain on the defensive in the field (though there are exceptions), though they were vital in siege operations, for which they were well trained in *support* roles ... even there dismounted Knights formed the assault forces.

It is possible the lack of information about Infantry in an active role is bias on part of the chroniclers who were, of course, writing for the Knightly class. Certainly there are battles where the Infantry (Sergeantry?) undertook direct assaults ... Hastings being the most obvious example.

The Norman Battle Cry was ***Dex Aie!*** *(Norman French* for *'God aid us!')*

The Rhomaioi (East Romans)

The Rhomaioi still held parts of Spain and Italy till quite late – and were still a major regional power in the NE Mediterranean (Greece and Anatolia). At this stage they were still an organised, state funded, military force rather than the semi-feudalised force of later periods – so training and the organisation of their field forces were much more professional than any of their opponents (which didn't mean they always won ... far from it, as they were far from their main territories and routinely outnumbered).

Cavalry ***Banda*** were organised into ***Dekarchia*** of ten horsemen commanded by a ***Dekarchos***, and five Dekarchia made an ***Allgahia*** (50 men). Two Allaghia were paired together for operational use, one commanded by a ***Kentarchos***, the other by a ***Hekatontarchos*** (who commanded the pair). Six Allaghia made a Banda of 300 Cavalry, which was commanded by the senior of the Hekatontarchs with the rank of ***Comes***.

Infantry were organised into ***Lochagiai*** of 16, commanded by a ***Lochagos*** and 4 Lochagia made an

De Re Militari: General Maxims

- What is beneficial to you is detrimental to the enemy and what is of service to him hurts you.
- The more troops have been [trained and] disciplined the [better they will perform] in the field.
- Men must be sufficiently tried before they are led against the enemy.
- It is much better to overcome the enemy by famine, surprise or terror than by [battle ... where fortune can be as important as valour].
- [It is best to keep your plans secret from the enemy until they are executed.]
- Opportunity in war is often more to be depended on than courage.
- Encourage [the enemy's soldiers to] surrender ... desertion [hurts more] than ... slaughter.
- It is better to have several bodies of reserves than to extend your front too much.
- A general is not easily overcome who can form a true judgment of his own and the enemy's forces.
- Valor is superior to numbers.
- The nature of the ground is often of more consequence than courage.
- Few men are born brave – many become so through care and force of discipline.
- An army is ... enervated by idleness.
- Troops are not to be led to battle unless confident of success.
- Novelty and surprise throw an enemy into consternation but common incidents have no effect.
- Rashly pursuing a flying enemy with disordered troops [may well] resign [any chance of] victory.
- An unsupplied army ... will be vanquished without striking a blow.
- To distress the enemy more by famine than the sword is a mark of consummate skill.
- When an enemy spy lurks ... order your soldiers to their tents ... he will instantly be apprehended.
- On finding the enemy has notice of your designs, you must immediately alter your plan of operations.
- Punishment, and fear thereof, are necessary to keep soldiers in order in quarters; but in the field they are more influenced by hope and rewards.
- Consult with many ... but communicate the plans to [be] executed to few ... of the most assured fidelity; or trust no one but yourself.
- Dispositions for action must be carefully concealed from the enemy, lest they should counteract them.
- Good officers never engage in general actions unless induced by opportunity or obliged by necessity.

The Seven Battle Plans

1. A general whose troops are superior in number and bravery should engage in the oblong square.
2. He who judges himself inferior should advance his right wing obliquely against the enemy's left. This is the second formation.
3. If your left wing is strongest, you must attack the enemy's right.
4. [If you] can depend on the discipline of [your] men ... attack ... both the enemy's wings at once.
5. [If you have good] light infantry ... forming them in ... front of your centre and charge both enemy wings at once.
6. [If you do not have the numbers and your troops are unreliable] ... if *obliged* to engage ... attack with your right and endeavor to break the enemy's left ... [with the rest of your] army ... formed in a line perpendicular to the front and extended to the rear like a javelin.
7. If your forces are few and weak in comparison to the enemy ... cover one of your flanks either with an eminence, a city, the sea, a river or some protection of that kind.
   - A general who trusts to his cavalry should choose the proper ground for them and employ them principally in the action.
   - He who depends on his infantry should choose a situation most proper for them and make most use of their service.

*Medieval rulers consulted **De Re Militari** and used it as a basis for much of their strategies and, in the case of the **Seven Battle Plans**, even their broad battle plans. How well they, and their armies, were able to implement these maxims and plans is another matter.*

Allaghion commanded by the senior *Lochagos.* Four Allaghia made up an Infantry ***Banda*** of 256 men. Infantry were *usually* ¾ Spearmen and ¼ Archers (i.e. 3 Spear-armed Allaghia and one Bow armed) ... but could be entirely light infantry skirmishers. Infantry Banda were, like the Cavalry, commanded by a ***Comes.***

Strengths were, as usual, nominal – both Cavalry and Infantry units were routinely understrength, commonly able to field only 200-250 soldiers.

Mercenaries could also be fielded, especially in the west where Regulars were always in short supply – but the famous Varangian Guard (Rus and Scandinavian Mercenaries) were entirely based in or around Constantinople or possibly as far west as Adrianople.

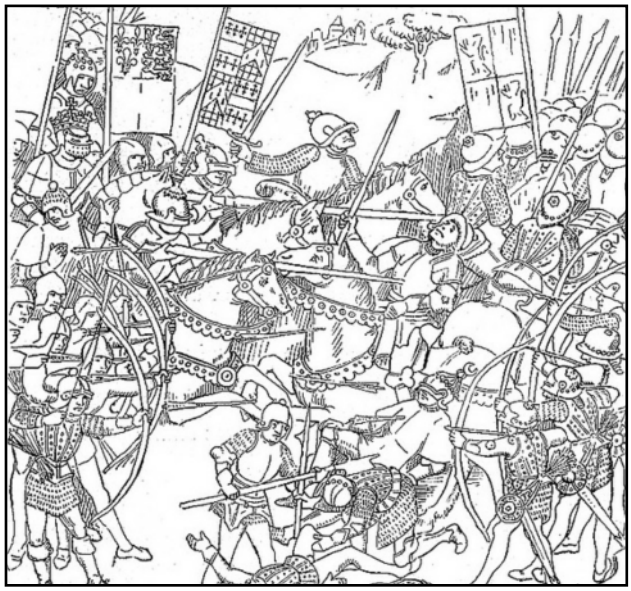
Tactics. Imperial relied on ***Cavalry*** in the *assault* and ***Infantry*** in the *defence* and troops served for extended periods so training and morale levels were relatively high ... though there could be wide variations because of poor or corrupt local or provincial leadership.

In battle, Imperial forces were arrayed in several lines, usually in some variation of the *Acies Duplex* or *Acies Triplex* ('checkerboard') deployment which enabled them to close up ranks to face a massed charge or to open them up to allow a countercharge in staged waves.

Cavalry units formed up in blocks 8-10 deep, sometimes in wedges of part or whole of a Banda and Infantry formed up with archers to the rear and with the front ranks equipped with heavy Darts.

Cavalry was deployed in front of or on either flank of the Infantry and light Infantry Skirmishers formed up in the front and on the flanks of the overall battle line.

Wherever possible the Imperials preferred to 'win' by trickery ... they were in for the long haul, for the survival of the State, and not for personal Glory ...



Officers would call ***Kyrie Eliesion*** *('Lord have mercy!')* in battle, to which the men would respond ***Deus Nobiscum*** *('God is with us!')* shouted three times.

The Rus

By the 9th century the Scandinavian Rus had largely been absorbed into the local Slavic population, though ethnic Scandinavian mercenaries were still employed.

The various Princes usually had an organised hearth troop, the ***Druzhina***, which was similar to the Scandinavian *Hirdmen* (see below) ... the members were oath-sworn and either paid a stipend (in money or kind) or given a land grant to support them. Typically these numbered no more than a few hundred men: most would have been mounted, but most were probably Mounted Infantry rather than Cavalry.

Small numbers of Steppe Nomad Cavalry (Light, usually Bow armed) were just beginning to appear as mercenaries in Rus service at the very end of the 9th century.

The general levy, the ***Polk***, was rarely called in full, the Princes preferring to muster only the town-based Militia as they were better equipped and organised.

Such a muster could be of Infantry or, on occasion (or partly), of Mounted Infantry ... though, in the latter case, the number that could be mustered was considerably lower than for Infantry proper.

Organisation, such as it was, was decimal – tens, hundreds and thousands, though this was purely for administrative purposes and, in the field, such 'units' would routinely have been understrength.

Scandinavia

The core of the army was the ***Hird***, the ***Hird-*** or ***Thing-men*** (paid retainers) of a Noble or King. By the 10th century, a King's Hird was usually 120 (a *'long hundred'*) who attended him at court (or wherever he travelled), but there were at least some stationed at key points around the Kingdom.

In wartime the Hird was supplemented by the ***Leidang***, a general levy freemen, who would nominally man ships ... depending on the Ship size this could be a unit of 100 (20 bench) or 125 men (25 bench).

It seems that, of any given levy, 25-30% were *Hirdmen* raised by Jarls and other regional (lesser) – the rest only being levied in major emergencies or for local defence and dismissed as soon as possible.

Service was, not necessarily at sea ... it would depend on the nature of the threat the levy was called to deal with.

Tactics. When fighting amongst themselves the Scandinavians preferred naval battles – though, in reality,

this simply meant they roped as many of their ships together, gunwale to gunwale, as possible, masts unstepped, to form more or less stable platforms on which they would then fight as infantry ... attempting to clear the enemy ships of the opposing force.

Some of the smaller ships would remain ungrouped in order to provide some tactical manoeuverability – landing flanking forces or reinforcements as needed.

If smaller numbers (or single ships) were involved, masts were almost invariably lowered (unless escape was possible) and a boarding attempt would be made, with the two crews then fighting it out until one was victorious. Ramming or maneuvering under oars were employed only as a means to coming alongside, not, as in the Mediterranean naval tradition, as the main form of combat.

When they *did* fight on land, they preferred the Germanic *Shield Wall* formation, but were quite capable of organising themselves into (theoretically) mutually supporting *separate* units in that formation. How close they stood together in such a formation is unclear – but it seems most likely (based on the work of modern re-enactors) that close order, shield overlapped ('locked') formations were used defensively and that a more open order with more room to swing weapons was the attack order.

Scandinavian armies had two common Battle Cries, ***Tyr!*** *(the God of War)* and ***'Óðinn á yðr alla'*** *("Odin owns you all!')*. They also had battle flags, at least some of which bore (or were cunningly contrived in the shape of) ***Ravens*** ... *Odin's* own symbol.

The Slavs

The West Slavs. The Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians were Tribal confederations and their military was organised along family, clan and tribal divisions.

Like the Rus, the Tribal leaders raised ***Druzhina*** Hearth-troops to form the core of any army fielded – unlike the Rus, these seem to have always been Cavalry rather than mounted infantry.

The South Slavs. The Serbs and Croats, amongst other Balkan tribes. Like the West Slavs, they were organised along family, clan and Tribal lines, but many were subjects of other, more powerful, tribal confederacies. Other than their subordinate status they were organised similarly to the West Slavs.

Christian Spain

Before the Reconquista. Each Town/Region was responsible for raising a ***Thiufa***, nominally of 1000 men and commanded by a ***Dux*** or ***Thiufades***, which included both (Visigothic) Cavalry and (Visigothic and Iberian) Infantry. Beneath the Thiufa were ***Centenae*** and ***Decaniae*** (nominally) of 100 and 10, respectively.

Why were Knights often useless?

While Knights were generally well trained on an *individual* level in weapon handling, riding and related skills, they were rarely well (or, more importantly, *consistently*) trained to operate ***together*** even in small units ... worse, they usually had ***no*** training or experience ***at all*** of working together in the larger units that would be deployed on the battlefield.

The tactics they employed reflected (or were a reflection *of*) these shortcomings ... assemblage into a large, often ill defined, mass which then charged (*sometimes* even at *just* the right moment) the enemy in a full on winner-take-all attack.

*Even **this** was difficult to achieve. Since the armies were made up of individual noble-led contingents and those nobles were often (insanely) self-aggrandising, proud and individualistic, getting them to follow anything but the most basic general guidelines (heaven forbid they should actually follow **orders**!) was an uphill struggle.*

And that's not even considering the problem of internal feuding and bickering between multiple competing noble factions.

If the charge succeeded (and they ***often*** did, even vs. professionals such as the Romans) all well and good ... but if the charge *failed* things tended to fall apart.

Units of Feudal Cavalry generally had little unit cohesion and one of three things would likely happen – the battle would devolve into a series of bloody ***individual*** combats, they would *recoil* and possibly *shatter*, or they would be subject to a (probably) devastating *counter-charge* by the enemy force.

You couldn't even be certain that a massed charge would occur – individual nobles would, quite commonly, decide to attack the moment they saw an 'honourable' target, or simply to beat some internal factional rival to the 'glory', defeating any plans for a co-ordinated or even a timed attack.

*Likewise, in some particularly faction ridden and/or poorly trained armies it would often prove impossible to organise the Knights **into** a mass ... their individual Knightly 'honour' meant it was demeaning for anyone else to be **in front of them**.*

So they would attack in a single long (generally ragged) line, squandering their main advantage ... that of a massed shock attack formation.

Even in a *successful* attack, they were so difficult to control and would often scatter in pursuit of 'honourable' targets (or loot). If the attack had not routed the *entirety* of the enemy then this could result in the *rest* of the battle going against their side as they had frittered away their advantage.

It is unlikely that the nominal strengths were ever met, or, indeed, ever even expected to be met – they were merely organisational terms for whatever force the Town, Region or Noble could manage to gather together.

The proportion of each that could be raised are uncertain, but Cavalry was *mostly* lightly armed skirmishers with relatively few heavily armed and armoured Cavalry the Visigoths were famous for ... an unknown proportion of the Infantry was, in fact, *Mounted* Infantry (probably the Visigothic element).

The King(s) and Nobles in each successor Kingdom fielded small units of ***Bucellari*** (Bodyguards), and it is likely that they were all Heavy or Medium Cavalry (the equivalent of later Feudal Knights and Sergeants).

The Early Reconquista. As the *Reconquista* got seriously under way, organisational needs began to change and become more complex. Reconquered land was granted to (military) nobles – some as ***Aprisiones*** (Fiefs), many (but by no means all) of which were granted to Noblemen in return for *offensive* military service obligations and others for which only *self-defense* obligations existed.

Most Nobles, even those with defensive obligations, served in offensively out of a sense of ***noblesse oblige****.*

Other land grants *(**Caballerias**)* were made to well off non-nobles called ***Caballeros Villanos*** who served as Medium Cavalry or Mounted Infantry according to the grant made, though these were *not*, like the *Aprisiones*, automatically heritable.

Likewise, slightly less well-to-do commoners could be given ***Peonias*** land grants for service as Mounted Infantry (riding Mules or Donkeys) – these grants were also not automatically heritable.

These three groups were liable for regular service in the ongoing series of raids, counter-raids and small scale battles that constituted most of the struggle to regain lands from the Muslims.



The general levy, the ***Exercitus***, was only rarely called up and *usually* consisted of one infantryman for every three adult males – the other two equipping them with arms, rations and other equipment ... though, in *extreme* emergencies, *all three* could be called up, but not expected to be fully equipped.

The 10th-13th Centuries

Military Organisation

The situation as it was *before* (or at the very *beginning)* of the 10th century is covered in the previous section – the following material attempts to deal with the changes that had occurred since the latter period and all those which occurred in the following centuries, broken down by Country or, where it makes more sense, by Region –

Post Conquest England

Norman organisation was always no-nonsense. After the Conquest between 4000 and 7000 Knight's Fees (including around 700-800 supplied by Church lands) were created (or existing ones confirmed). This figure remained unchanged, at least in theory, through to the second half of the 12th century.

Initially, service was for 60 days, as for the Fyrd, but by the 12th century this was reduced to the more standard the 40 days expected in most of mainland Europe.

On top of this, the new management continued to rely on the old Anglo-Saxon Fyrd, especially the ***Select Fyrd*** which, now, could be called up for overseas service – though the term disappears some time in the 11th century the service obligations remained (initially for 60 days, reducing to 40 days by the 12th century as for the Knights).

Service by the Select Fyrd outside the Shire where the levies were raised was always paid service, even under the Normans – unlike the Knights and others owing feudal duties, who were not paid until after 60/40 days.

English Kings always had a core of Mercenaries, Cavalry and Infantry, at their disposal – and the numbers on hand increased over time – at least 300 Cavalry (plus an unspecified number of Infantry) on hand in the early 12th century ... and this would be increased when on active campaign.

During the 13th century the English Kings hired large numbers of Mercenary Welsh Longbowmen – up to 9000 at a time for some continental campaigns.

Unit Organisation. Knights continued to be organised as they had in Normandy before the Conquest, with an emphasis on tactical organisation of ***Conrois*** of 20 or so ... English Knights were more likely to be trained at this level than the French, but the real advantage came from the employment of Mercenaries

and the fact that the Chief Tenants and major Nobles often fielded their own Household Knights when the levy was called rather than *just* calling on their vassals which gave them an experienced core to build their forces around.

Infantry were, as usual, organised decimally, and officered by Sergeants (possibly Mounted Sergeants) who were later given the rank (or title) of *Constable*.

Originally the main organisation was in units of 500, but by the 12th and 13th century this had been modified and organisation by units of 100 under a *Centenar* (certainly a Mounted Sergeant) became the norm. As has been the case throughout history, units were rarely, if ever, at full strength and could have as few as 50 men even at the beginning of a campaign.

Battle Cries tended to be the name of the King (or, the name of the Noble commanding) – but by the 1340's ***'St. George'*** or variations were becoming common.

France

France is ... a basket case. Yes, the birthplace of what most of us consider to *be* feudalism is an almost complete disaster ... because the Chief Tenants have (depending on your viewpoint) *either* completely subverted the intent of feudal organisation *or* taken it to its logical conclusion.

After the collapse of the Carolingian Empire and its replacement by the Capetians the Chief Tenants of the realm began to work the system to ensure that military service obligations are *not* due the King directly, but due to the Chief Tenants.

Even in the (small) remaining Royal Domain the King's direct vassals ignored their military service obligations more often than not ... and the whole country was wracked (not at all times nor in all places, but continuously in some places) by virtual anarchy as the nominal vassals of the King fought each other for power, territory or over perceived slights.

The Capetian Kings relied more on levies on Church lands, which were generally reliable, than they did on even the levies nominally owed them by their personal vassals in the Ile de France ... only bringing their civil vassals under control from the late 12th century.

The Royal Domain could provide no more than 500-700 Knights in the 11th and barely 800 by the beginning of the 13th century (though those owed by the Church would have been additional to these).

The Count of Champagne, on the other hand, could command 2300 Knights; the Count of Flanders, 1000; and the Duke of Normandy 1500!

The Chief Tenants basically ignored their feudal ob-

The Code of Chivalry

This is, as with so many things that 'everyone knows' *not* part of the *reality* of the medieval period ... the 'code' was, in fact, first set down in the late 19th century and, though it was *supposedly* garnered from the displayed behaviour as well as written courtly romances, there is ***no*** evidence *whatsoever* that it ever applied (or was accepted as required 'knightly' behaviour ... or even as a knightly 'ideal') *anywhere* in any consistent form.

The 'Ten Commandments' (Guatier, 1883)

Thou shalt believe all that the Church teaches and thou shalt observe all its directions.

- Defend the Church.
- Respect and defend the weak.
- Love your native country.
- Never retreat from the enemy.
- Wage perpetual war against the Infidel.
- Be loyal to God and your Liege (in that order).
- Be honest and upright.
- Be generous and support the poor with alms.
- Champion right and good vs. evil and injustice.

These 'rules' didn't exist in the real world – and were not universal even in courtly romances.

Displayed Behaviour

From time to time and place to place, however, there were certain types of behaviour and attitudes that were seen to be preferable in the noble classes – but they were never 'rules' and were as often honoured in the breach as in the observance.

- Be Loyal.
- Be merciful and show restraint
- Be hardy and resourceful
- Be contemptuous of wealth (from commerce)
- Defend the weak against the strong
- Uphold your own personal honour

The 'Peace of God'

This was first promulgated by the Synod of Charroux (989) which (*unenforceably*, of course, and generally with limited success overall) granted immunity to noncombatants ... specifically the Clergy and Peasants ... the (nominal) penalty for attacking or robbing them was Excommunication (though this could be avoided by paying a fine ... to the Church).

The first places this was proposed were those where French Royal authority had broken down and where the Chief Tenants and their vassals were fighting each other in almost a state of anarchy.

Women and Children, as well as Merchants and their goods, were soon specifically added, as were prohibitions against forcing entry into Churches or burning houses.

ligations supplying, literally, no more than 10-20 each when they were personally owed upwards of 1000, or even upwards of 2000!

Of course, they also supplied mounted Sergeants as well as Knights, typically 2-3 times as many ... still only a fraction of what would have been owed directly to them.

As a result of all these shenanigans the Kings began to rely more and more on Mercenaries to form the core of their armies ... and to conquer or bring to heel more and more lands in what we now call France.

By the 11th century they had a core force of 200 (Mercenary Knights and Crossbowmen), rising to over 3000 (Knights, Mounted Sergeants, Crossbowmen and Infantry Sergeants) by the beginning of the 13th century, paid for with the French version of scutage.

By the early 14th century, military service (or scutage) was owed not according to inherited social status, but according to the value of ones possessions ... so a Knight-equivalent was expected to be provided for each £500 of income.

Unlike England, Scutage in France was based on the actual cost of hiring an equivalent Mercenary. (Note: Most of these 'mercenaries' were, in fact, French nationals – they were simply serving for pay on a voluntary contractual basis rather than as part of any Feudal service obligation).

In theory the King could call the Arriere-Ban, the general levy, but the Chief Tenants, while supplying more than the derisory 20 or less they did normally, rarely provided more than 10%, if that, of the number of Knights (and other vassals) that were owed *them*.

Unit Organisation. This was also more of a mess in France than elsewhere. Knights from each Domain served under their immediate overlord, so there was no standard unit size, and they were grouped together under their overlord at the next level up and so on ...

*So, for example, all the Knights holding land from a Baron served under his banner, and all the Barons who held land from a Count served (along with **their** vassals) under the Count's banner ... who might then be grouped with several Counts under their Ducal overlord's banner.*



Ultimately, armies, such as they were, were organised into *'Battles'* ... the *Vanguard*, *Middle Guard* and *Rearguard*. These *might* be divided into Cavalry and Infantry elements ... or the Infantry might simply be left to their own devices and ignored by the Cavalry.

If a force was deployed in column, they were deployed in that order, if in line, the Vanguard was on the right and the Rearguard on the left.

*The infantry, as often as not, had to watch out that they weren't simply rode down by their own cavalry (eager to gain glory by coming to grips with the **enemy** cavalry and damn the peasants in the way!) as much as they had to watch the enemy cavalry on the attack.*

*No. Not all French armies performed as insanely – but a significant chunk **did**. Yes. The situation **did** improve, especially as more (professional) Mercenary infantry were employed ... but the Nobility never completely managed to reign themselves in during the entire period.*

There is limited evidence to suggest there may have been organisation on a decimal basis (groups of 10, 50 and 100 for example) but this may have been administrative rather than tactical in nature.

More experienced Knights (Normans and Mercenaries, certainly) were organised in ***Conrois*** of 20 or so who charged in close order in at least three lines.

Knights of the Feudal levy probably had limited training and even less experience in organising themselves in such formations and must have had little tactical flexibility if they attempted such.

French Battle Cries during this period were almost always ***'Montjoie! St. Denis!'*** or the name of the King (or, less commonly [unless a non-Royal army, of course!], the Noble commander)

Germany and the Holy Roman Empire

Feudalism was never particularly strong in Germany, and military organisation was, at best, a slightly feudalised overlay on the old tribally-based system ... though the names were modernised and the tribal areas became Counties, Duchies or even Princedoms.

In fact, the granting of feudal fiefs and the first recorded examples of someone being knighted didn't occur until the 12th century!

However, Frederick Barbarossa instituted changes to modernise the situation and by the end of the 12th century at least the forms of French-style feudalism was in place – but, despite repeated attempts to

enforce Imperial feudal supremacy by succeeding rulers, it was never quite made to stick.

The only feudal magnates that could be relied on to actually provide troops to the Emperor were those who held Church fiefs ... and, in Germany, Bishops and Archbishops holding land under feudal tenure were as much military men as they were priests (perhaps even more so!).

The major portion of Imperial armies were, therefore, paid Mercenaries (and the Emperor was perennially short of money) and, within their own provinces, City Militias (mostly, but not always or entirely, Infantry), as well as the *Ministeriales* who have been mentioned previously.

Tactics. German armies employed standard Anglo-French feudal tactical arrangements – though the higher proportion of Mercenary troops in many of them *theoretically* meant they were better trained and could utilise superior maneuvering on the battlefield (unfortunately, the fact that the Empire seemed to be perennially involved in localised or regional civil conflict paradoxically made this less certain – the Emperor could rarely afford to employ the best mercenaries or, indeed, pay them enough to keep them under control).

During the conflict between the Guelph and Ghibelline factions within the HRE (11-14th centuries) the Battle Cries of the two sides were ***'Hier Guelfe!'*** And ***'Hier Ghibelline!'***

HUNGARY

Hungary began to adopt a more feudal organisation on top of the older tribal system around the 11th century, replacing the older clan-based leaders with ***Ispans*** *('Counts')* who led the tribal cum feudal levy for their designated district during wartime, as well as being responsible for maintaining their own personal retinue of warriors.

Heavy armoured Knights were, however, in such short supply that the Kings hired large numbers of 'Saxon' mercenaries (this was a catch-all term for any non-Hungarian) who were gradually absorbed into or indirectly influenced the traditional Magyar nobility.

The Magyars were unusual in that they also had a considerable number of steppe-nomad mercenaries and even locally settled auxiliaries of steppe-nomad origin in their service – and these continued to be light cavalry or horse archers

Tactics. The Magyars adapted Heavy Cavalry to steppe nomad tactics – they could fight in standard close order mass and make fall-out cavalry charges with the steppe-cavalry as skirmishers or flank guards or, with the same force, they could use their Horse

THE KNIGHT

There with us was a knight, a worthy man
Who, from the very first time he began
To ride about, loved honor, chivalry,
The spirit of giving, truth and courtesy.

He was a valiant warrior for his lord;
No man had ridden farther with the sword
Through Christendom and lands of heathen creeds,
And always he was praised for worthy deeds.

He helped win Alexandria in the East,
And often sat at table's head to feast
With knights of all the nations when in Prussia.

In Lithuania as well as Russia
No other noble Christian fought so well.

When Algaciras in Granada fell,
When Ayas and Attalia were won,
This Knight was there. Hard riding he had done
At Benmarin. Along the Great Sea coast
He'd made his strikes with many a noble host.

His mortal battles numbered then fifteen,
And for our faith he'd fought at Tramissene
Three tournaments and always killed his foe.

This worthy Knight was ally, briefly so,
Of the lord of Palathia (in work
Performed against a fellow heathen Turk).

He found the highest favor in all eyes,
A valiant warrior who was also wise
And in deportment meek as any maid.

He never spoke unkindly, never played
The villain's part, but always did the right.
He truly was a perfect, gentle knight.

But now to tell of his array, he had
Good horses but he wasn't richly clad;
His fustian tunic was a rusty sight
Where he had worn his hauberk, for the Knight
Was just back from an expedition when
His pilgrimage he hastened to begin.

– The Canterbury Tales (1387-1400)
Geoffrey Chaucer

Though written right at the end of the period covered by this sourcebook, and towards the end of the 'High Middle Ages', Chaucer's description of the old Knight is indicative of the best of such characters.

Unlike the rest of the characters he describes in the Canterbury Tales, Chaucer's description of the Knight is sympathetic ... Chaucer was from an elite (Gentry, if not Noble) background and had fought in the 100 Year's War, and would have known such men.

Archers to soften up the enemy forces *before* charging home with their Knights.

One traditional Battle Cry was ***'Huj, Huj, Hajrá!'*** *('Faster! Faster! Faster!')* though ***'Kyrie eleis!'*** *('Lord have mercy!')* was also used from time to time as was, less formally, ***'Joushi!'*** *('I'll break your shins!').*

IRELAND

Organisationally, Ireland remained much as it had been before the 10th century – with a weak semi-feudal overlay mimicking the Anglo-Norman system ... really a system of Household troops who, to begin with, seem to have been only Infantry, possibly Mounted Infantry.

These were supplemented by foreign, mostly Scandinavian, mercenaries (some from the the Shetlands and Orkneys) – the ***Galloglaich***, who were armed and organised in the Scandinavian fashion in units nominally of 100 men, but almost always only of 60-80.

The use of mercenaries was especially common from the late 13th century.

Tactics. Native levies continued to be Light Infantry who preferred to fight from ambush (or at least from positions with a covered escape route), though the Household troops and Galloglaich were armoured and preferred to fight in close order in and open field.

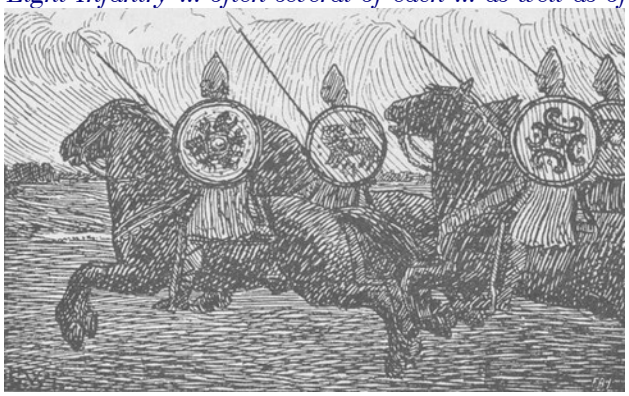
Most 'warfare' continued to be cattle raids and the like, from a single household through to an entire Tuath or even Kingdom.

THE ITALIAN PENINSULA

By the 12th century the Italian Cities had come to dominate the peninsula – civic Militia forming the backbone of their armies, supplemented by Household troops of wealthy nobles or merchant magnates.

The Militia was divided into 'Quarters', each usually responsible for raising a 'company' of Infantry and of Cavalry – and the actual number of 'Quarters' depended on the population and wealth of the City.

The 'Company' of a Quarter was, in fact, would often consist of separate companies of Spearmen, Archers and Light Infantry ... often several of each ... as well as of ***Knights of the Commune*** *(Cavalry) raised from all those citizens who were wealthy enough to own a horse and the requisite armour and weapons.*



Six Quarters were a fairly common number by the 12th century – though not all would be called up at the one time, and one of the Quarters was always left to garrison the City proper. Those Quarters on active duty were paid from city funds from at least this time.

A city's rural hinterlands were required to provide troops (the ***Contado***) – both infantry and cavalry. They were usually attached to one of the Quarters raised for whatever campaign was being undertaken.

With their greater mercantile activity, Italian Cities could afford to pay Mercenaries to supplement or even replace their Militias ... and this practise accelerated in the late 12th to early 13th centuries, eventually resulting in the ***Condotta***.

Tactics. Italian Infantry were better equipped and trained than most – though by no means professionals. Their cavalry was also better equipped and, while not significantly better *trained*, seem to have been ***less*** infected with crazy notions of 'honour' and 'glory'.

Note: *Less doesn't mean* ***never.***

Common Battle Cries included simply repeating the City's name, or the name of their Patron Saint ... or of the ruling noble house.

POLAND

Poland only becomes a Kingdom in 1018, uniting a number of (Western) Slav Tribes ... but its existence was almost entirely nominal. Because of unresolved inter- and intra-tribal conflicts it largely fell apart after 1079, splitting apart in a series of internecine wars that lasted for the next two centuries.

During its relatively short existence as a unified Kingdom, the Poles relied on Household troops, the *Druzhina*, for the bulk of their armies ... and these were hired by Nobles at all levels from the King down and were entirely cavalry.

It is estimated that the Royal Druzhina probably numbered 4-6000 men (and was scattered in garrisons rather than stationed all in the one place), with most Nobles having 300 or less.

The *Druzhina* were supplemented by a general levy of the populace raised on a Village or Tribal basis and who fought largely as Infantry organised in decimal based units, the standard being the *Rota* of 100.

Because of the difficulty of paying for the Druzhina during the civil wars, local Nobles (and the King) increasingly made land grants to notable warrior *of*

the Druzhina who were then obliged to raise a set amount of mounted and foot soldiers for their overlord on demand ... feudalism of a home-grown variety.

Tactics. The Poles owed more to Slavic traditions than feudal western European notions of 'chivalry', at least in this period, and 'benefited' from the continual internecine strife ... their cavalry and infantry were well experienced and, through experience, well trained for a start and, like the Hungarians, they preferred hit-and-run attacks, ambushes at choke points (especially river fords) and other tactics that avoided pitched battles.

Likewise, their mounted and foot troops co-ordinated their actions – infantry and infantry archers would be used as a base for cavalry attacks to be mounted from and, if a battle turned against the Poles, the Cavalry (or part of it) would usually form a rearguard to allow the rest of the army (*including the infantry*) to retreat.

If they were forced into a set-piece battle, they tended to adopt western style tactics, massed units of Heavy Cavalry (Knights) supported by Medium Cavalry (Sergeants) making massed charges, but supported by Infantry Archers to soften up the opposing forces.

Russia

Pre (Mongol) Conquest. The old *Druzhina* system started to morph and fall apart during this period and became semi-feudal in nature, with some of the more powerful *Druzhina* actually gaining land grants and, in turn, raising their own Hearth troops to serve under *their* banner when *they*, themselves, were called to serve *their* lord. These powerful Druzhina came to be called ***Boyars*** some time around the 12th century.

The other main *native* element remained the *Polk*, which was now mainly city-raised infantry, and was organised in 'battles' of 1000 called *Tisiach*, which were divided into *Sotnias* of 100. These units were entirely under the control of the City Council, and commanded by officers designated by that body – they had no obligation to respond to a Royal (or Princely, or Noble) request for troops and, likewise, had no particular obligation to follow the orders of such, or, indeed, to *remain* levied for an entire campaign (and could, and did, disband at the most militarily inconvenient times).

The rural peasantry retained some theoretical service obligations but were rarely called up because they were so poorly equipped and almost completely untrained (even compared to the low levels of training of the urban Polk).

Post (Mongol) Conquest. After the Mongol conquest of 1240 the *Druzhina* disappears and is replaced completely by Household troops – the ***Dvor***, which were divided into the *Slugi Volnye* ('Free Retinue'),

Costs of raising Troops (March 1322)

Thomas le Rous, Sheriff, arrived [in Leicester] ... with a commission to take all those between two ages [16-60] to aid the king against his enemies ... together with [money for] ... 15 days.

... the Mayor ... sent him ... bread (13d), wine (16d), and ale (8d) ... he agreed to [accept a contingent of only] 50 men [in return for 'gifts' of] 40s [from the Town], 20s from John Sotemay, the under-sheriff, and John de Sadington 6/8d [in the presence of witnesses].

The expenses of the 50 men.

Robert le Porter, Vintenar, received £5/2/8d for himself [3 additional cavalry and 16 infantry] for 14 days service; Walter the Taillour, Vintenar, for himself and his twenty men, £4/15/8d; Robert de Wilugby for himself and his nine fellows for the same period £2/8/10d [All for 14 days service for the 50 men agreed on]. Henry Merlin, Constable, received 7/-. as his wages for the same period.

Additional Expenses

Item: 6d [for Pennons].
Item: 41/2d for canvas and string for the bags to transport the money.
Item: £1 for the expenses of Robert de Stretton to supervise the transport of the money.
Item: 8/4d for 4 Gentlemen to accompany the first payment.
Item: 13/6d for 7 Gentlemen to accompany the second payment.
Item: 3/- for hiring three horses for those who lacked them.
Item: £2. to the Friars Preacher for persuading the King's Confessor to support the town.
Item: £5. to Geoffrey de Skeftington for ... his support in dealing with the king regarding the fine to be paid by the town.
Item: 1/6d for marking the King's arms on all four city gates.
Item: £200 as the fine paid to the king.

Total: £225/10/½d

Vintenar. *An officer in charge of a troop of 20 soldiers (themselves and 19 others). Paid 6d per day in this instance, about half the going rate.*

Mounted Soldiers. *Paid 5½d per day (probably 1½d to cover the hire of their horses).* ***Infantry.*** *Paid 4d per day – the going rate was 6d per day for Light Infantry*

Constable. *The officer in overall command of the 50 man troop (theoretically a Constable commanded a troop of 100 men but, as noted elsewhere, rarely had a full strength unit. Paid 6d per day., half the going rate.*

All being done on the cheap!

sometimes called the *Deti Boyarskie*, and the *Slugi pod Dvorskin* ('Steward's Men'), paid Household troops.

The Dvor were entirely Cavalry. Since the Mongols destroyed around half of the existing towns and cities, infantry was less easy to find, and this is one of the reasons the overall proportion of cavalry in Russian armies rose dramatically during the period.

Those areas of Russia that were not only conquered, but actively ***occupied*** *by the Mongols were, of course, organised on directly Mongol lines.*

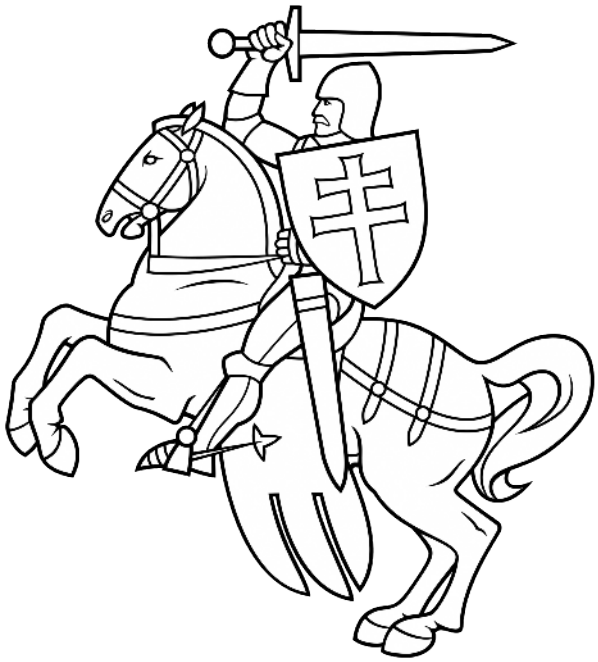
Tactics. This was a period of transition as the Russians increasingly faced steppe nomad armies – while infantry remained important, it was mostly used as garrisons and the majority of any field force was now cavalry.

The proportion of cavalry in Russian armies of the period was always more than 50%, with two thirds being about average ... but ranging to as much as 85% of the total force on some occasions. An increasingly significant portion of any cavalry component was *Light* Cavalry, disproportionately allied or mercenary steppe nomad *Horse Archers.*

In the field, Russian armies relied on field encampments made from circled waggons (which is where the infantry were important).

Steppe nomad tribes, some actually still nomadic, others becoming partly (and then completely) settled were often tapped to provide Light Cavalry which fought in the traditional steppe nomad style ... some as allied troops, others as mercenaries.

Initially, as the importance of Cavalry grew, the Rus used more or less typical western style massed cavalry attacks ... which they gradually realised *very* poorly against steppe nomad armies. Very quickly they adopted hit-and-run, ambush and skirmishing tactics, often employing feigned retreats at least as well as their opponents.



When they found themselves facing a set-piece battle they would typically deploy with Light Cavalry (Horse Archers) on the flanks and Heavy Cavalry in the center in a crescent formation, the flanks slightly forward of the center to allow an envelopment of all or part of the enemy force if the battle went well.

Infantry normally formed up as a reserve line behind the Cavalry often in a typical Scandinavian style 'shield wall' ... spearmen to the front, backed up by archers and javelin armed infantry. If the situation was fluid, however, the infantry would form squares for all round defence, with archers in the center.

SCANDINAVIA

By the beginning of the 11th century, the old *Hird* based system was slowly both expanding and dying – the Kings and great Nobles still depended on hired men, but they introduced divisions within that group based on social status and function.

In the 11th–12th centuries (earlier in Denmark, later in Sweden and Norway), those locals with large land holdings were granted the *title* of *Hird-men* but were not paid and had none of the military service obligations. By the late 12th century they were being referred to as ***Barons*** and the actual *military Hird-men* were raised to the title of ***Knight*** (which was deemed higher than that of a mere Baron in local usage). Very quickly Knightly status became hereditary and Knightly families gained exemption from taxes.

The select levy, the *Leidang*, continued – but a farm, group of farms or families with property valued at at least one *gold* Mark were now obliged to provide a soldier for up to 16 weeks service once every 3 years (on a rota basis) – *some* of whom had Mail Armour and/or were mounted. These men were nominally assigned to ships with varying crew sizes, though they would also be available for service on land.

The whole institution was, however, *slowly* being replaced by a money-levy to pay for professional soldiers, though it remained important.

Tactics. Traditional Scandinavian tactics continued to be used – armies formed Shield Walls with mail armoured spear and swordsmen at the front and (often lightly armoured) archers to the rear. Archery remained an important part of the Scandinavian military repertoire and could be extremely effective against Feudal Cavalry.

The number of Cavalry slowly increased, but was

always hugely outnumbered by the infantry, and normally formed up behind the Shield Wall to be used mainly as a reserve at decisive moments or in pursuit of a broken enemy force.

Scotland

In those areas of the Kingdom that had been reorganised along feudal lines, the old tribal levies were now referred to as the *Common Army*, initially organised under Royal officers called *Thanes*, later replaced by the newly created feudal Barons.

Service obligations for land assessed at less than the value of a Knight's Fee were, unusually, *not* for a Knight serving less than the customary 40 days, but for a Mounted Sergeant for a half Fee or a Foot Sergeant (usually and Archer) for a quarter Fee.

In the Highlands, the pre-10th century Tribal/Clan organisation prevailed as they were never feudalised.

Feudal decimal organisation applied to Infantry and, nominally, cavalry. Frequent border raids against (or by) the English meant Scottish Knights and Sergeants tended to be much better than normal at small unit tactics ... at least those from the Border regions.

Scutage started to be levied seriously from the 13th century and an increasing number of Mercenaries, often English Knights, were employed.

Tactics. These were now a mix of traditional infantry tactics from the earlier period mixed with Feudal Cavalry tactics, though infantry still dominated the battlefield in Scots armies in this period.

Christian Spain

During this period *parts* of Spain were increasingly organised along feudal lines ... but, except in Eastern Spain (especially Catalonia), it remained a relatively light overlay on older pre-Feudal traditions. Western Spain remained pre-10th century in its organisation and traditions of service.

However, Feudal service obligations were nowhere near consistent even in those areas that were most heavily feudalised – they could be for as little as 3 days or as long as 3 months (and were probably based on the size of the fief, called a *Prestimonia* or *Honores*).

Feudal organisation proved less than satisfactory, especially for the poorer Knights, the ***Caballeros***, who were generally poorly equipped and even less well trained than common for feudal troops.

Only wealthier nobles, the ***Ricoshombres*** and ***Hidalgos*** were able to provide properly armed and *mostly* trained feudal Heavy cavalry ... but rarely in the numbers they were (supposedly) required to provide, which was a perennial problem.

Chivalry?

Execution of English Prisoners

Sir Robert Knollys and his army, on their departure from the town of Noyon, set fire to Pont L'Evêque ... the Knights ... of Noyon were exceedingly angry ... and [after Sir Robert's main force had left] took fifty lances to Pont L'Evêque ... [where they attacked Sir Robert's garrison] ... the greater part of them slain or made prisoners ... they returned to Noyon with ... fifteen English prisoners, whom they beheaded.

The siege of Derval

Sir Robert Knollys ... returned to his castle of Derval ... determined to break the treaty ... entered into by his cousin and the Duke of Anjou ...

When [the day on which the surrender was to take place passed was passed] ... the besiegers wondered what the garrison were thinking of ...

[So they sent a] Herald to [say] ... "My lord send me here to enquire ... why you do not ransom your hostages by surrendering the castle according to the terms of the treaty." Sir Robert ... [replied] ... " .... Tell your masters that my cousin had no authority to enter into any ... treaty without my consent."

The Herald went back to his lords ... [who then had him inform] ... Sir Robert Knolles ... that if the castle was not surrendered, the hostages would be beheaded. Sir Robert replied, "By God ... I will not lose my castle for fear of the menaces of your Lords ... [If] the Duke ... puts my friends to death, I will retaliate ... I have here in prison several knights and squires of France ... and ... [I will not] ... show mercy."

When the Herald had delivered this answer, the Duke ... sent for the headsman and ordered the hostages ... to be brought forth and had them beheaded before the castle, so that those within might see ...

Sir Robert ... instantly ordered a table ... fixed [near] the windows of the castle and had ... four of his prisoners, three knights and a squire ... beheaded and flung down in the ditch, the heads on one side and the bodies on the other.

The siege was raised after this, and all the men at arms returned to France.

– ***Chronicles***, Jean Froissart (~1337 to ~1405)

Knights and Nobles were, if captured, worth a lucrative ransom – and were usually held under parole (i.e. their word of ***honour*** *that they would not escape) – even then, incidents such as the above could, and did, occur.*

Despite 'received wisdom' common soldiers, at least by the 100 Years War, were also routinely ransomed rather than simply killed..

The Towns provided Infantry, usually a fixed amount rather than a levy of all adult males, but were often only required to defend their own walls. They also provided an important cavalry element – some by urban *Caballeros* (better equipped than the rural equivalent) and ***Caballeros Villanos*** who were simply those wealthy enough to serve as cavalry, receiving tax exemptions in return.

Key fortresses were often held by cavalry and infantry provided by Spanish Military Orders – *especially* the ***Knights of St James of Compostella***, the ***Knights of San Julian de Pereyro*** *(later* ***Knights of Alcantara****)* and the ***Knights of Calatrava***.

Even Muslims in reconquered areas had military service obligations, though they were usually limited to service against foreign (usually French) incursions. Some Muslim mercenaries, usually Berber or other Light Cavalry were also employed.

Tactics. These remained similar to those employed during the earlier period – raiding forces (still the most common forces employed) were normally entirely of cavalry, but on those occasions when a main force was deployed in a campaign the army would usually have more infantry than cavalry.

Spanish 'Heavy' Cavalry tended to ride lighter horses and wear lighter armour than was coming to be the case elsewhere in western Europe.

This was partly because of the climate, but at least as much because of the need for speedy movement in the raids and counter-raids which constituted the most common sort of military activity ... but also because their Muslim opponents did not develop the same ultra-heavy Cavalry that was common in the rest of Europe.

Spanish Battle Cries varied – *Castile's* was ***'A Santiago y a Castile'*** while a good general one was ***Santiago!*** (calling on *St. John of Compostella*).



Late in the Reconquista the Battle Cry could also be a shouted ***Desperta Ferres!*** *(Medieval Catalan 'Awake iron!')* done while slamming the iron butts of their spears or lances on the ground.

Other Battle Cries could be ***'Aragó, Aragó!'*** (Aragon! Aragon!) for Aragonese soldiers, ***'Via Sus! Via Sus!'*** or even ***'Sant Jordi! Sant Jordi!'*** for Catalans.

And, always, ***Sanct' Maria!***

Mercenaries (Routiers)

Bands of independent Mercenary soldiers were particularly common, especially in England, France, the Holy Roman Empire and surrounding areas, in two main periods – the mid 12th to early 13th centuries and from the beginning of the Hundred Years War in 1337 to its end in the 15th century.

These are ***independent*** *companies – differing from the 'Mercenaries' often mentioned in the organisational descriptions which were composed of individuals hired for a specific campaign or period of time and which did not exist independently before and disbanded after. Or which had some sort of client status with an obligation to provide soldiers for pay (and/or other considerations) to their patron.*

12th-13th Century: During this period Mercenary Companies were *mostly* foot soldiers – Archers and Crossbowmen most commonly, Spear- and Javelin-men next – hired largely by national governments or, in such areas where these were weak, Tenants in Chief or Independent rulers to supplement their often less than reliable feudal forces.

14th Century: During this period Mercenary Companies were often only nominally employed by Kings and Nobles – the economic situation in the immediate aftermath of the Black Death left rulers without any excess cash.

In the case of England and France, locked in what became the ***Hundred Years War***, *'non-performing assets'* ... lands that could barely support themselves, let alone pay taxes to support the war effort.

In an attempt to wage war on the cheap units of what were *nominally* part of the national armies were allowed to force 'contributions' (*Patis* – 'ransom of the countryside') from the area they were based in ... which rapidly devolved into outright extortion.

Fortunes could be made from such exactions, and the units so involved became quite uninterested in actually fighting to support their nominal overlords if it meant foregoing their lucrative extortion racket.

During this second period, the Mercenaries were mainly Cavalry – very few Knights (though the overall commander and some of the senior officers *might* be such) but Mounted Sergeants and Men-at-arms, supplemented by Mounted Infantry or Mounted Archers or Crossbowmen

Some of the more (in)famous Companies were the (French) ***Bandes Blancs*** (*'White Coats'*), not to be confused with the (Italian) ***Compagnia Bianca*** (*also 'White Coats'*) sometimes called the ***Compagnia degli Inglesi*** (*'English Company'*), the ***Company of St George*** (one in the early 14th century, one of the same name. but otherwise unconnected, later that century).

See also ***The Free Companies***, below, in ***The 14th Century*** for two of the best known Mercenary units.

The Mongols

Technically speaking, the Mongols *aren't* European – but they *did* manage to attack and/or devastate large swathes of Muscovy and Eastern Europe during the period so they need to be included in basic detail.

Like most pre-modern armies, organisation was (at least nominally) *decimal*. The largest sized unit likely to be encountered is the ***Tuman*** of 10,000 (2-3 *Tumans* would normally comprise an invading army). Each *Tuman* contained 10 ***Minghans*** (1000 each) and each of those, in turn, comprised of 10 ***Jaguns*** (100 each) each of which was comprised of 10 ***Arbans*** (10 men).

Tumans and *Minghans* were mostly commanded by members of the Mongol nobility ... or, by the 14th century, often commanded by Mongol Princes.

Mongol Cavalry went to war with a string of horses, all of which were potential cavalry mounts ... the numbers seem to have varied from campaign to campaign (and, possibly, according to the ability of the terrain be campaigned over to support them), but a minimum of four horses per string seems to have been applicable, with 6-8 horse strings being more common and 12-16 occasionally found.

This gave their armies unprecedented mobility as the cavalry could, and did, simply jump from horse to horse as each one became tired from carrying a rider, allowing them to outmaneuver western armies with ease.

The Mongols were also quite unsentimental about their mounts – and were quite prepared to slaughter them for food if needed and the majority of them were mares who could be expected to provide milk which, mixed with small amounts of blood taken from the horse, could sustain a Mongol cavalryman for extended periods.

Auxiliaries drawn from conquered peoples or tribes were also used, often in large numbers (10,000 or more) but, unsurprisingly, were not entirely reliable.

Costs of Arms and Armour (July, 1322)

Two *Hauberks* ... £1/2/- each; one [additional *second hand Hauberk*] bought and cleaned, 12/6d; ... [one additional *second hand Hauberk*] cleaned and mended, 13/6d.

Two Bascinets, repaired and refurbished, 19/6d each.

One Brigandine, Bascinet, Gauntlets repaired, 12s.

One Brigandine, Bascinet, pair of Gauntlets, £1/5/-.

Eight Aketons and Bascinets, 15s each.

Three Aketons, Bascinets and Gauntlets, 7/6d each.

Total: £14/8/6d

Paid to the [twelve] men for their weapons, £1/16/- (3/- each). Paid to them for hackneys, £1/4/-. For cloth ... for their jackets, £2/7/6d. For shearing it, 1/- ... for cutting out [the pattern] and repairs, 6/6d ... for silk and sendal, 6d. For two and a half ells of fustian, 10d. For card and sendal for their pennons, and thread together with the cutting out [of the shape], 12¼d.

Total: £6/7s/4¼d.

Hauberk: *A coat of Mail armour, normally covering at least the upper arms and upper legs to just above the knees in this period for infantry.*

Brigandine: *A double layer of canvas between which metal plates (oblong, usually) are riveted ... these plates are* ***not*** *overlapping. A* ***Jack*** *was similar, but the plates were* ***sewn*** *in rather than riveted.*

Aketon: *This was padded or quilted armour – softer versions were worn under Plate, Mail and Brigandine to cushion blows and protect against broken bones as well as minimising bruising.*

Stiffer versions were often worn by Infantry who couldn't afford better.

Hackney: *A Riding Horse –* ***not*** *a Warhorse! Used by better off infantry to ride from place to place rather than walk, but they would dismount for battle.*

Knights also typically rode Hackneys between battle sites ... only getting armoured up and onto their Warhorses when battle was imminent.

Jackets: *It is uncertain what these were, perhaps some sort of uniform padded doublet? Some were new, some seem to have been repaired.*

Fustian: *Heavy fabric with linen warp and woollen weft (i.e. criss-cross).*

As a result, even though large numbers were present in a given force, they would be split into smaller groups and distributed amongst the army as a whole to minimise the chance of *effective* rebellion.

Even so, the Auxiliaries could outnumber the actual Mongols, sometimes by an order of magnitude. As long as the Mongols were winning, they were generally OK ... but if they faced a serious setback, all bets were off.

Some foreign Auxiliaries were Chinese or Arab Engineers and, by the early 13th century at the latest, consisted of several thousand (10,000 or more in some cases) who could build quantities of siege weapons.

Tactics. The Mongols employed standard Steppe Nomad tactics ... in their case they made heavy use of mounted archery (and were noted for their accuracy) coupled with feigned flight(s) which would turn into instant counter-attacks when the enemy was strung out and disorganised from (in the case of feudal style armies) their usual massed charge of Heavy Cavalry.

About 40% of any given Mongol unit consisted on armoured horsemen – some of whom, at least, might be on armoured horses. The remaining 60% were unarmoured Light Cavalry Horse Archers.

The Mongols used heavy recurve Composite Bows (they carried more than one, at least one heavier one for use on foot and, usually, two lighter ones for use on horseback ... 'lighter' being a relative term) that were powerful enough to punch through western-style Mail armour or even light (early) Plate which was part of Plate & Mail armour. Double-Mail was recommended as the minimum that would be effective against their archers.

*Outrageously by western standards, Mongol archers happily targeted **horses** – so the use of Horse Armour was also recommended if facing off against them.*

Mongol Armoured Cavalry were equipped with Lances, but also possessed Bows for use as needed.

The army as a whole would be drawn up so as to place the flank units slightly ahead of the centre with the intent being to use them to envelop a careless or defeated enemy so that they could be totally destroyed.



The Light Cavalry would be deployed as Skirmishers in an attempt to dominate and/or disrupt the enemy forces while the Armoured Cavalry would charge home with lances once this had been achieved.

If the Horse Archers were unsuccessful after a sustained archery assault they would feign flight in an attempt to draw out the enemy Cavalry in the hope they would be drawn into the incipient envelopment the Mongols always prepared.

When the enemy army was broken, any remnants that managed to flee were *always* pursued ruthlessly and mercilessly.

*The Mongols practised **total war**. No 'Peace of God' rubbish for them – if it took the complete destruction of a city or cities and the heaping of the decapitated heads of the captured residents into massive pyramids on site as a warning – well, it encouraged the **next** city to simply open its gates and surrender.*

Muslim Spain

Organisation remained much the same as for the earlier period through ... and, despite the military intervention by two successive North African based (and quite fanatical) Muslim sects (the Murabits, 1039-1147 and the Almohades, 1147-1240s), Muslim fortunes as a whole were on the decline and the last surviving Moslem state, Granada (founded 1235) only lasted to 1492 through careful politics.

The 14th Century

Military Organisation

While the military organisation of the states dealt with above as it was in the late 13th century continued for the most part, armies on the whole were becoming more and more *professionalised*.

The old idea of a national or regional *militia* of both Cavalry and Infantry that would only be called out in times of emergency – *the Feudal System as **was*** – was simply unable to provide the full time regularised military power required by the increasingly complex military operations undertaken by the increasingly more powerful and organised States.

Kings needed full time military forces who were *directly loyal to the Crown* (their paymaster) and, since they were paying for such, it became obvious that the better trained such troops were, the more likely they were to obey orders on Campaign and be successful on the battlefield – and the more likely they were to outperform the feudal levies (cavalry *and* infantry).

Since there was (with the possible exception of Eng-

land) no real concept of a 'nation state', any soldiers serving for pay were, in fact, Mercenaries.

They could just as easily be of the same nationality and religion as their employer as not ... and were just as likely as not to switch employment in search of a better financial deal with no regard to the nationality or religion of their current or potential employer.

Christian mercenaries served Muslim rulers – and Muslim Mercenaries served Christian rulers.

French Mercenaries happily served English, German and Italian rulers – even against their own (nominal) overlords and English, German and Italian mercenaries did exactly the same in reverse.

Nations with no Heavy Cavalry tradition happily hired foreigners from nations with such traditions – sometimes temporarily, sometimes (by luck or design) making service so attractive as to absorb them into their indigenous society.

The Free Companies

The increasing need for Mercenaries coupled with the perennial inability of Kings and Rulers to pay for their full time services led to the rise of what amounted to military businessmen who raised groups of soldiers to contract out to Kings and other rulers.

By the middle of the 14th century, these businessmen found that it paid to keep at least a cadre of experienced troops on their payroll even when they, themselves, ***weren't*** being paid for their services ... especially during and in the immediate aftermath of the Hundred Years War.

Two of the better known ***Free Companies*** (also called ***Grand Companies***, ***Routiers*** *or* ***Condottieri***) were –

The Catalan Grand Company. Founded by Roger de Flor in 1302 from Iberian soldiers left unemployed after a peace treaty between Aragon and France (the *Peace of Caltabelotta*) was signed.

Roger managed to organise a contract with what remained of the East Roman Empire and sailed for Constantinople in 1303 with 1500 Knights and 4000 Almogovar Infantry. They were deployed in Anatolia where they went completely out of control, becoming little better than an army of Brigands ... until 1305 when Roger was killed in the Balkans and his troops attacked.

The remnants of the Company (206 Cavalry, 1256 Infantry) ravaged Thrace and Macedonia until forced to retreat into Thessaly (1309), then took over the Duchy and, eventually, the Duchy of Neopatria (in Thessaly), which they and their descendants then ruled to 1390.



Mongol Armoured Cavalry

The White Company (aka 'The English Company'). Operated mainly in the Italian peninsula and was, at one stage, led by the famous English Knight, ***Sir John Hawkwood*** (1365-1390s).

In 1361 it consisted of 3500 cavalry and 2000 infantry (including a substantial number of English Longbowmen) with a professional administrative staff to manage logistics, hiring and contractual arrangements. By the end of its existence (c. 1388) it was down to under 300 men.

Not all of the Cavalry were Knights – a substantial portion were Sergeants or Men-at-Arms and, where the situation warranted it, they would fight quite effectively on foot as Heavy Infantry, supported by their Archers.

They hired out with one, then another, City State in series and they, and other ***Condottieri*** (*'Contractors'*) criss-crossed Italy for the next century or so, as much furthering their own interests as those of their nominal employers.

STRATAGEMATA

Stratagems – Sextus Julius Frontinus

The previous chapter dealt with the *battlefield* organisation and broad tactics of the various 'nationalities' of Europe during the 10th-14th centuries as well as, in a limited way, the technological underpinnings of the same. *This* chapter deals with more ***strategic*** matters – financing, supply & logistics and the construction, use (or besieging) of castles and other fortifications.

THE SINEWS OF WAR

"I maintain, therefore, that it is not gold, as is vulgarly supposed, that is the sinews of war, but good soldiers; or while gold by itself will not gain you good soldiers, good soldiers may readily get you gold."

Discourses on the first Ten Books of Livy, Book 2: Chapter 10, *Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527)*

Machiavelli, even though he's commenting on events almost a century after the period covered by this book (and by this chapter) *and* is mainly referring to the experience(s) of the fractured (and fractious) Italian City States *has* a point that's universally relevant ... but only *to* a point.

The rest of the chapter in from which this quote is drawn explains it better – as does his much maligned ***Il Principe*** *('The Prince')* which is more about the weaknesses and flaws of dictatorial rule than it is a 'How To' handbook for Dictators ... it can be seen as a resistance manual for *il popolo* (the people), as much as anything else, depending on how you wish to view it, of course.

His point is quite clear ... gold ***by itself*** is insufficient.



Yes, it *can* hire mercenaries, the scourge of Italian city-state politics for over a century by Machiavelli's time (as intimated in the previous chapter, ***De Re Militari***) ... but Mercenaries have no real interest in *fighting*. Certainly not if it looks at all risky.

Machiavelli's solution was that States needed to rely on *citizen-based militaries* ... ***Citizen Militias*** in other words. Though this had really come to mean a core of full-time soldiers raised by the State from amongst its own citizenry around which other, part time, citizen-based forces could be raised at need.

That is, a group of people who had something ***tangible*** *invested in winning other than a mere contractual arrangement to pay them money. Their homes, their families, their rights.*

This was not really news, though Machiavelli was the first political theorist to state the case so clearly.

It had been becoming more and more obvious that Feudal Levies were *completely* inadequate for fighting ***offensive*** campaigns ... and not much better at fighting ***defensive*** campaigns against a persistent and/or well financed enemy. Twenty, thirty or forty days of service simply wasn't enough – and paying for some or all of the levies to serve beyond the minimum (free) obligation was beyond the resources of even the wealthiest states.

Commuting military service obligations for cash, or ***Scutage*** *(lit. 'Shield Money')* was slightly better as it allowed a smaller number of better trained troops to be raised for a longer period – but even *that* was quite inadequate for the more and more extensive military adventures the various State players became involved in over the 10th-14th centuries.

Still, the major States *did* make some moves in that direction and started to raise forces of professional soldiers as the core of their military, though only in small numbers ... relying on short term mercenary contracts or short term callouts of select parts of the feudal levies to provide the numbers.

The Cost of Warfare

Fighting a war is *not* a cheap undertaking ... and if you *try* to do so, you chances of losing go up markedly. Winning might be expensive, but *losing* tends to be *even more expensive*. The other important factor to note is that armies and their adjuncts (infrastructure such as roads, bridges, fortifications etc.) can't be created overnight ... they can take years to plan and complete *and* they aren't cheap *either*.

One campaign for which we have relatively good information regarding costs is that run by Edward I against the Welsh – see the sidebar opposite for details.

The end of the Feudal Levy?

By the late 13th century the original feudal system of military service tied to land grants was collapsing. The evolving medieval states were becoming involved in longer wars and, especially where they were wars of conquest, the traditional 40 day levy services was completely inadequate ... and the existing financial sources were completely insufficient to pay for any extension beyond that.

Attempts were made to create the basis for extended military service requirements for a much smaller number of troops – *Scutage* (see ***Kingdoms & Crowns: Bullion & Budgets***), for a start, but there was also a trend to request that those owing Knight service club together to pay for one of their number to actually serve (*Servitum Debitum*).

*John I managed to convince his Chief Tenants that 9 Knights should pay to equip and pay 2/- per day for a 10th to serve as needed). One of the many 'novel' efforts that eventually caused the Baron's revolt and his being forced to sign the **Magna Carta Liberatum** in 1215.*

By the end of the 13th century, at least in England and France, unpaid feudal military service was effectively dead. Such service had never been as highly developed in other areas, but even in Iberia, Italy and the Germanies it was largely defunct as well.

But not (necessarily) Civic Levies . . .

Towns, on the other hand, continued to provide significant numbers of troops, both mounted and foot, during the period as part of their charter or tax obligations ... and, of course, as trade and commerce expanded, were well able to afford to pay for them to serve for the required 40 days and, sometimes at least, even beyond that.

More importantly, though, Towns had the financial resources that a sovereign could tap to *pay* for service by mercenaries (both native troops simply serving for pay rather than as levies *and* actual foreign soldiers).

The Flemish and Italian City-States, of course, had the

The Conquest & Pacification of Wales

Edward I fought two campaigns against the Welsh – one in ***1277***, costing ~£20000 and a second over two campaign seasons in ***1282-83*** which cost £98421.

*As detailed elsewhere (**Kingdoms & Crowns**), the regular income for the English Crown in this period was ~**£26,000** per year!*

Once Wales was annexed, he began a program of castle construction on various strategic sites to secure his new domain – and, in the years 1277-1304 spent £78267 on ten castles, including *Beaumaris*, *Caernarvon*, *Conway*, *Harlech* and *Rhuddlan*.

Beaumaris Castle was under construction from 1295 (originally intended to start in 1284, it was delayed by lack of money) and work ceased, the castle still incomplete, in 1330, at which time £15000 had been spent.

Caernarvon Castle was begun in 1283 and, when work was stopped in 1330, at least £20000 and possibly as much as £25000 had been spent.

Conway Castle was started in 1283 and completed in 1289 at a cost of ~£15000.

Harlech Castle took 8 years to build, from 1282-1289 and cost £8190.

Rhuddlan Castle was started in 1277 and completed in 1282 for a cost of £9613.

The figures given for the listed castles, especially Caernarvon and Harlech, extend beyond the 1282 cutoff for the Welsh Wars and so inflate the apparent figure.

There were obviously ongoing costs – maintenance, for a start, plus a full time *paid* garrison and supplies not only for them but for the estimated *wartime* garrison. A peacetime force would be ~30-40 men, rising to three times (or more) that total in wartime.

Assuming a Castellan, 3-4 Knights and the same number of Men-at-Arms, with the rest being Archers, the yearly wages of a peacetime garrison would be ~£300-400.

The above garrison required a Quarter of Wheat (8 bushels) per week for bread, twice that much Malted Barley for Ale (or the equivalent in Ale or Beer) plus an unknown quantity of dairy, poultry and meat. The Wheat and Barley alone cost ~£80-125 a year.

*Or £400-550 per year **in peacetime**. Not including maintenance and upkeep (both staff and materials – probably a full time Blacksmith and at least the part time services of a Mason, Carpenter and other trades plus common day labourers) as well as consumables (and Kitchen staff), and not including feed and fodder for the any horses and other pack or work animals.*

best of both worlds – they had large urban and rural populations *and* the financial wherewithal to pay a proportion of them to serve for extended periods.

***Florence** could raise a levy of 3000-5000 males of prime military age (of which 3000 would be relatively easily available for extended service) in the middle of the 13th century out of an military age population (15-70 years) of 25000. **Venice** had 30000 men of military age (20-60) available in the early 14th century.*

*These figures were from their **urban** population **alone** – and did not include military contributions from their rural surrounds. The **Florentine** 'contado' (rural lands) could provide another 8000 soldiers, 5000 men-at-arms and 3000 sappers or Light Infantry.*

***Bruges** had a military age 'class' of 7000 males out of a population of ~35000 in the mid 14th century.*

Service and Pay

Feudal Levies

Didn't need to be paid for their obligatory service. This was *nominally* 40 days for a Knight's Fee in the Anglo-French system ... elsewhere it could vary widely, but was usually in the region of 20-60 days for a similar amount of land.

*'Service' meant that the levy would come with the appropriate equipment (set out in documents such as the **Assize of Arms** elsewhere) and would either have rations for the entire period **or** have enough money to **buy** food and other sundries while on campaign.*

It was the unspoken obligation of the authority calling out the levy to arrange for merchants to follow the army and/or for local Towns to hold Markets where the soldiers could buy food at a fair price ... but, if they couldn't buy food, they'd simply forage (loot and steal – not a good thing if you're traversing your own lands, and guaranteed to get the peasants offside regardless).

Beyond the nominal period of service the situation is unclear, and probably varied widely anyway – if continued service was needed, then the overlord could offer to *pay* those who would *volunteer* to stay. They key being that such additional service *was* voluntary.

*It is unclear how often the Levies could be called out for such service. Was it for a maximum of 40 days per year? Or was it for 40 days per event? There isn't any clear and undisputed evidence – most likely it was 40 days, but subject to more than one call out **in the case of a foreign invasion or raid** (though probably for the absolute minimum amount of time needed).*

*Then, of course, there's the problem of exactly **where** the service was owed/could be demanded. By the late 12th or early 13th centuries in England the Shire Levies could only be called to provide free military service **within** their Shires ... anywhere outside and they had to be paid from the moment they crossed out of their home Shire. Similar limitations started to become applicable throughout the continent ... much earlier in France and about the same time or later in the Germanies.*

Within those parameters there are interesting quirks – the most obvious, as time went on and Fiefs *and their attached service obligations* were split again and again, was that an individual could end up owing only a fraction of a 40 day obligation ... or, more likely, *several* fractions, possibly to different overlords!

Also, military service obligations were increasingly attached to lands less than a Knight's Fee in size – service as a *Serjeant* (Mounted), for example, for 40 days was required from those with lands equal to *half* a Knight's Fee.

As noted elsewhere, this raised fewer and fewer troops for Kings and Princes as the period progressed – and was increasingly replaced by paid service, but this may have been from amongst those nominally obliged to serve as part of the levy!

Paid (or Select) Levies and Money Fiefs

With the decline in the number of *actual* feudal levies that were able (or prepared to) attend a summons, rulers looked for ways to ensure that at least ***some*** troops would turn out. In general, the authorities hit on three ways of doing just that –

Select Levies. In this variant, the overlord divided those owing feudal service into groups and required each group to band together to equip and support *one* of their number to answer a call-out. Alternately, the service requirement could be delegated to a (rural) Village who would then have to internally organise exactly who would serve if the call was made and how they would pay for them and their equipment.



In England, from the mid 13th century each Village (depending on population) was assessed to provide four, six or eight Infantry armed with Spears, Bows or Crossbows and Swords. Similar systems were in existence in the Royal Domains of France at around the same time.

In Sicily, Knights were grouped into units of eight and each such group was to provide the wherewithal to keep one of their number in the field for up to a year at a time (details are sketchy, but it seems likely that this form of service also applied to Serjeants and Infantry as well). In some situations they might also be asked to raise an additional sum of money to pay for a second Knight to serve for a like period of time.

This could be done both for service as a Knight or, somewhat more commonly, as a Serjeant but could also be used to raise superior infantry ... often archers or men-at-arms who, in some instances, were expected to be mounted (though only for transport).

Paid Levies. In some areas, those theoretically owing feudal service either owed it *only* ***within*** *their domain* and were supposed to be paid for service elsewhere in the Kingdom. In some instances this was actually a long standing part of their feudal agreement while in others it was simply trying it on ... Kings not usually having the military or financial wherewithal to do much about such recalcitrance.

All made worse by the unfortunate reality that, more often than not, all that secured these feudal services was either unwritten tradition or were inadequately documented changes of dubious status and arguable intent ***based*** *allegedly based on those verbal traditions.*

Even worse – those traditions varied, often considerably, from place to place and were not even in the remotest way standardised or consistent ... especially on the continent (and especially in what would eventually become France, though Spain, as the Reconquista took back more and more land from the Muslims, wasn't far behind in being a patchwork of duties and obligations).

In such cases, the ruler had little choice but to *pay* for any service provided – though this was often at a fixed rate that was far less than what they would have to pay for mercenary soldiers.

The English Shire Levies (Infantry and Cavalry) had the right to be paid for service outside of their Shire from the early to mid 13th century.

In France, levies from non-Royal domains (and from Towns in general) increasingly claimed the same rights at around about the same time.

In Italy, the City-States at least seem to have always paid their militia from the moment they were called out for service outside the city (and its hinterlands).

Pay rates around Europe

English Soldiers (Sterling, Per day)

AD 1165: Mounted Archers, Hobelars (Light Cavalry), Men-at-Arms, 1d; Knights, 6d .

AD 1215: Mounted Archers, Hobelars, Men-at-Arms, 2d; Knights, 1/-.

AD 1250: Mounted Archers, Hobelars, Men-at-Arms, 2d; Knights, 2/-.

AD 1350: Welsh Spearmen, 2d; English Archers, 3d; Welsh Vintenaries, 4d; Vintenaries (NCOs of 20 men), Mounted Archers, Hobelars, Men-at-Arms, 6d; Constables, Centenaries (Officers), Serjeants and Squires, 1/-; Knight, 2/-; Baron or Knight Banneret (Officer), 4/-; Earl, 6/8d; Duke, 13/4d.

English Allies (Sterling)

AD 1100. £500 per year to the Count of Flanders for the service of 1000 Knights.

French Soldiers (Per Day, £ Tournois)

AD 1202: Infantry, 10d; Knight, 7/6d.

AD 1295: Infantry, 12d; Knights, 10/- or 12/6d or 15/-.

France (Voluntary Service, 13th Century)

Infantry Levies *might* serve beyond 40 days and/or beyond their local area @ 8d/day for Infantry and 2/- per day for Serjeants (*Livres Tournois*)

France (Money Fiefs, 13th century, £ Tournois)

A Banneret was paid £30 per annum for 40 days service with 10 Knights – beyond 40 @ 7/6d per day.

For £300 another Banneret was to provide at least 60 Knights and Serjeants for service in the Border Marches with Anglo-Norman France and for additional pay beyond those areas.

Saint-Germain-des-Pres (France, 13th century)

The Abbey was to provide 150 Serjeants, four one Horse Carts and Pack Horses for 40 days – or, in lieu of the Serjeants and transport, £3 *Tournois* per Serjeant and his proportion of the transport.

A similar fee of ***3 Livres Tournois*** *was due for each Serjeant-service of 40 days foregone in other places.*

Italy (13th century, £ Tournois)

Perugia. Lt. Infantry, 2/-; Infantry (Spear), 2/6d; Infantry (Bow), 2/8d; Infantry (Crossbow), 3/-; Men at Arms, 5/-; Serjeant, 10/-; Knight, 15/- (per day rates).

Florence. £8 per month for (mercenary) Cavalry.

Kingdom of Sicily. Knights, £3; Squires/Serjeants, £1/10/-; Mounted Crossbowmen, 1/- (per month).

Money Fiefs. These started to appear in the late 13th century and became relatively common in the 14th century – in effect the holder of the 'fief' was paid directly from the overlord's income stream, in cash money, and, in return, they (or a select nominee) and any additional forces specified in the Fief agreement owed military service for a set period each year.

Additionally, specified payment schedules were attached for any additional service beyond the required minimum ... and the Fief holder was obligated to continue with such service as long as the payment was (at least theoretically) forthcoming.

Payment was theoretically on a yearly basis, but was normally paid in installments throughout the calendar year, often, but not always, on the Quarter Days which were traditional times for the payment of debts (as least in England).

Money-fiefs were generally granted to members of the gentry or nobility who already had landed estates, but who also had a proven track record in raising military forces for past service. There were, however, some cases where successful mercenary leaders from non-noble backgrounds had amassed enough of a military reputation (and, usually, money and/or lands) over years or decades of service were also granted money-fiefs (sometimes quite substantial ones).

Payments were sometimes from the general Crown (or Demesne) revenues but, more often, were from specific revenue streams that, theoretically, produced the required yearly income – customs dues for particular trade routes, bridge or port tolls, monopolies on specific trade goods in specific areas or which came into or went out of specific ports.

This could lead to problems if, for some external reason, the income stream took a hit and fell to a level unable to support the payment – sometimes this would balance out over the course of a year, but in some cases the hit might be long term and lead to legal disputes over non-payment. With the slow process of medieval law and justice such disputes could last for many years and, in some case, the income shortfall might never be resolved.



The advantage of Money-Fiefs for the granting authority was that it was based on something that *they* controlled ... if the vassal didn't fulfill their required service obligation then pay could be withheld or even stopped permanently and the revenue stream that was the basis of the grant remained at all times under the control of the granting lord, unlike land grants.

Household Troops

Royal and Noble Courts always had some armed men on staff as part of their normal establishment, though not in large numbers ... and these were supplemented by the courtiers who, being from the Knightly class, were routinely armed and could be relied on for active defense of their liege at need.

However, from at least the 13th century, Royal Courts began to keep some household troops on hand to form the core of any military force they might summon or hire.

Household Knights (England). By the late 13th century, English Household Knights in Royal service were paid a salary of £24 per year for Knight Banneret and £12 for a Knight – in addition, when on active service or attending the Court, they were paid 4/- and 2/- per day, respectively *and* were entitled to meals in the Royal Hall.

Payments was for more than just service by themselves – the salary paid would also have covered wages and upkeep for an (armed) Squire, Groom (also lightly armed) and at least three Men-at-Arms (the standard Knightly 'Lance' [unit] of the period). The Men-at-Arms would be mounted for travel but would fight on foot – the Squire would be mounted and armed as a Serjeant.

*Knights Banneret were expected to have one or more of their **own** Knights serving under them – it is very likely that the double payment for a Knight Banneret represented a contractual requirement that they appear with a second Knight when summoned. There is evidence that, during wartime, such Bannerets appeared on campaign with up to four additional Knights ... presumably these would have been paid the standard daily rate for their service as well as being fed from the Royal tables.*

Numbers varied from year to year, but during the late 13th and early 14th centuries those in Royal service seem to have numbered between 30-60 in relatively peaceful times to as many as 100-150 during periods when the Kingdom was at war. Actual attendance at Court varied with the time of year and needs of the moment – it could be as low as 10-30% of the total or as high as 80-90%.

Stipendiary Knights. Household Knights were almost invariably English and tended to be in the Royal service for extended periods of time ... terms of ten years or more being recorded. During periods of greater military need, if not actual war operations, Kings might also arrange to hire *Stipendiary Knights* at varying salaries based on how many Knights, Serjeants and Men-at-Arms they could bring with them in their retinues.

***Stipendiaries** were an intermediate status between Household Knights and mere Mercenaries – the former were from the Knightly/Noble class and the core of any forces they brought with them were also from the Knightly classes whereas Mercenaries, as often as not, might only have a Knight/Noble leader and provide the bulk of their forces from Serjeants, Men-at-Arms and other commoners.*

Records from the 13th century show that, at times, 300-400 Stipendiary Knights were in the employ of the English Crown. One Banneret was paid £140 per annum for service by himself and 24 other Knights.

Such arrangements were mostly made with Knights from nationalities that were friendly to the English Crown and tended to be only on a campaign year to campaign year basis rather than long term.

Mercenaries and Military Contractors

Mercenary Companies. Mercenaries *weren't* hired on individual contracts – if an individual or small group was wanted they would be hired as *stipendiaries* – they were hired as *groups*, usually of at least 80-100 men, often larger.

In the 13th-14th centuries the usual contract was for 2-3 months (the height of the campaign season, effectively) with an option for a further period of the same length rather than 6 + 6 months option that became more common in the 15th and later centuries.

Mercenaries hired during the Hundred Years War by both France and England also proved to be impossible to pay properly and, as noted in the earlier chapter on organisation, proved to be a real problem – but, for the most part, the number of mercenaries hired during the 13th and 14th centuries was much less than later, and the terms of service for shorter (and therefore more economically manageable) periods.

*The cost of hiring Mercenaries for extended periods was **the** main economic issue facing rulers in the 15th-17th centuries, and defaulting on part of contracted payments was common and the root cause of almost all of the bad behaviour of mercenary companies during that period.*

Payment was normally in two parts – an up front component *('Prestanza')* of one quarter to one half of the contracted amount (depending on the military

The cost of doing business – Logistics

Running a war cost a *lot*, as you've seen. Wages alone were a huge part of this ... but all is not as it seems. In a modern army, soldiers are paid, clothed, equipped and fed by the government. Not so in a medieval army, not even if the soldiers were mercenaries or paid under indenture or other contractual arrangements – soldiers were expected to provide their own arms and armour (and clothing) and pay for their own food out of their own pay and resources.

Food

The lord raising a military force was obliged to, at the bare minimum, arrange for merchants to be available to sell food (and other necessaries) to the soldiers – either at set muster points and at towns along the expected route of march, or, less commonly, by accompanying the force on the march (note the extreme cost of transporting food noted elsewhere).

That applied in friendly territory. In enemy territory armies simply looted their way across the countryside – though the better led ones tended to organise small foraging groups to do this so the main force would remain together and militarily effective. In poorly led armies the whole force might split apart in its attempts to feed itself – most armies were somewhere in between these extremes.

When provided by the commander, food was either handed out *in lieu* of wages, or was simply made available for sale ... and not at a loss, either.

The main part of any army's diet was always Bread – normally bought (or transported) as grain and hand-milled and baked on the move, usually supplemented by *Pottage* (beans, peas and other legumes mixed with oatmeal or similar). Meat might be available – especially if foraging in enemy territory, though dried or salted meat was transported in small quantities between major market or resupply points.

Wine was universally drunk (Ale didn't last long enough to be worthwhile transporting, and Beer was only starting to replace it during the period) for the simple reason that drinking local water was a surefire way of getting dysentery or other water-borne diseases (*not Cholera*, it wouldn't reach Europe for another 400 years).

Prise and Purveyance. Lords had the right to compulsorily purchase goods – and, occasionally, they would do so in order to supply their armies as they gathered or, very *very* rarely, in the field. Edward I used this system to support his efforts against the Scots and the Welsh as well as to support the castle building program in Wales ... but it was largely abandoned because of the corrupt and extortionate conduct of the Royal Agents gathering the goods.

... continued overleaf

Other supplies

While Feudal Levies and Mercenaries were expected to provide their own arms, armour and, where relevant, horses, the increasing complexity of warfare and the increasing duration of campaigns meant the authority raising an army was expected to provide for specifically military consumables ...

Archery Supplies. Archers were expected to front up for service with a *sheaf* of arrows, traditionally 24, their bow and some replacement bowstrings. The number of arrows was obviously insufficient for anything but the shortest of engagements so, increasingly, the Crown was expected to provide *free* replacements – even so, most archers scavenged a battlefield (if they *held* the field) for any arrows that remained usable ... or the arrowheads, at the very least.

Even the best Bows could break, especially on an extended campaign, and the Crown was increasingly expected to provide a *free* replacement weapon.

Horses. Potentially the single most expensive item fielded by most soldiers, the loss of a Horse on campaign was a major expense ... and, especially and increasingly for overseas or foreign service the Crown was expected to pay for a replacement when a horse was killed or otherwise rendered unserviceable.

The system became so developed that, on muster, Crown Agents would assess the value of all horses brought on service by the various soldiers for an agreed replacement value.

On extended campaigns, the Crown was also expected to replace Horseshoes ... a Horse would typically run through a pair of shoes in 4-6 weeks, depending on the type of terrain they have to traverse.

Engineering and Siege Supplies

Unless they were expected to need them, few medieval armies travelled with siege equipment – and, when they did, like the Romans and Greeks before them, they only transported the key components ... usually the metal bits and thick ropes and cables.

Wood was expected to be sourced on the spot – either from demolishing nearby structures or by felling trees in local woods or forests.

Engineering supplies were more commonly carried than siege equipment – mostly in the form of barrels of nails and other metalware, coils of rope and possible some lengths of chain, spades, mattocks, axes and other building, excavation and construction tools, though in limited quantities.

As with wood and siege engines, the bulk of any required engineering supplies were expected to be sourced on the spot as needed.

reputation of the Company and its Captain as well as the desperation of the hiring party) and the remainder in (theoretically) monthly payments thereafter.

During the 15th century, the practise of putting a Mercenary Company on a 'retainer' ('Aspetta') started to develop, which cut costs but had the side effect of only being enough for the Mercenary Captain to pay to retain the services of a core of officers and specialists rather than a whole 'company' ... and activating such a unit required additional time for it to be rounded out.

Pay varied *a lot*, but was typically a *minimum* of 2-3 times the normal pay for a soldier of similar status and equipment in non-mercenary service.

The Indenture System. The armies of the Hundred Years War, at least on the English side, were raised through the use of ***Indentures of Retainer*** – legal contracts with (wealthy, usually Noble) Captains who agreed to provide a set number of men at a specified assembly point for a specified period (a minimum of 40 days and a maximum of one year) for a specified schedule of payment.

There is some evidence suggesting the system had been in at least occasional use during the 12th-13th centuries.

The Captain raising the force was responsible for the first payment with the guarantee they would be repaid at the point of assembly or very soon thereafter.

Indenture contracts were written in two identical parts on a single sheet of paper or parchment and then cut in a ragged line to separate the two – this allowed confirmation that both parts were original by simply matching the ragged edges together in case of any dispute or doubt.

The forces raised were almost always mixed between mounted and foot, missile and melee equipment – Serjeants, Hobilars, Men-at-Arms, Mounted Archers, Foot Archers and Spearmen.

For example, the Earl of Kent was paid £4000 in 1384 to garrison Cherbourg. The Duke of Clarence raised ~1000 men (~25% Men-at-Arms, ~75% Mounted Archers) for £250 per week for the campaign of 1415.

In the same campaign year, Sir Roger Fienes was contracted to supply 10 Men-at-Arms and 30 Archers, 20 of whom were to be mounted. Daily payment rates were specified – 2/- for Sir Roger, 1/- for the Men-at-Arms and 6d for the Archers.

Similar arrangements existed in other medieval states – in Scotland they were ***Bonds of Manrent***, in France, ***Lettres de Retenue***.

Medieval Laws of War

There have always been some attempts to regulate aspects of warfare for as long as there have been organised states that undertake armed conflict. These were often based on local religious precepts and were not really enforceable (or even intended to be enforced) and, just as is the case today, they were not always followed the parties involved.

Christianity has always attempted to moderate the general nastiness of war, at first through the ideal of the ***Peace of God*** (from the late 10th century) and, later, in the works of St Augustine of Hippo which was later developed by St Thomas Aquinas into a formal theory of the ***Just War*** –

The Peace of God

In the chaos and general anarchy that followed the collapse of the Carolingian Empire the Synod of Charoux (989) declared those who could not defend themselves were immune to violence directed at them by warring parties, specifically mentioning the poor, the peasants, the clergy and their property (including crops, food and any farm animals), on pain of Excommunication ... unless compensation was paid.

Soon after, women (specifically virgins and widows) and children (even later, merchants and their goods) were added to the list of protected persons and it was forbidden for warring parties to force their way into Churches or to burn houses.

Though there were many public proclamations claiming that specific areas were subject to these sanctuary rules the movement as a whole was a failure and it gradually died out and was done by the late 11th or early 12th century (to be fair, this was at least partly because the growth of French Royal power stemmed most of the anarchy that had created the need for the movement in the first place).

Jus Bellum Iustum

As the Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire it had to confront the political reality that war was a part and parcel of any State's rights and responsibilities even though many (if not most) early Christians were pacifists.

St Augustine

While he continually affirmed his personal pacifism, he justified war (and violence) if ***not*** acting would result in a worse wrong or greater evil ***than*** acting.

*"They who have waged war in obedience to the divine command, or in conformity with His laws, have represented in their persons the public justice or the wisdom of government, and in this capacity have put to death wicked men; such persons have by no means violated the commandment, 'Thou shalt not kill'" (**The City of God**).*



Augustine also stated that individual Christians who were in a force or under the jurisdiction of a state that was engaged in an immoral war should follow orders but behave in as just a manner as possible.

Unfortunately, St Augustine never laid down any guidelines as to what constituted a 'just' war ... that was left to St Thomas Aquinas –

St Thomas Aquinas

Thomas Aquinas set forth philosophical 'laws' as to what might be considered a 'just war' – laying down rules that needed to be followed in making such a determination. These rules formed two parts – ***Jus a Bellum*** *('the right to go to war')* and ***Jus in Bello*** *('moral conduct in war').*

Jus ad Bellum. There are three conditions that must be met ... ***firstly***, the war must be waged by a properly constituted authority ('the State') which represents the common good; ***secondly,*** it may only be waged for a good and just purpose rather than for personal gain or to demonstrate national might *and* only as a last resort; and, ***thirdly***, the central intent of the war being proposed is the restoration of peace.

Medieval rulers generally made at least a pro forma attempt to claim these rules were being met – especially when they weren't (either at all, or not entirely). As you might expect, most medieval wars, on close examination, failed on the second count ... being fought, as often as not, for the personal gain or to demonstrate the power of the party instigating the war.

It is also assumed a party will consider the ***chance of success*** and not wage a futile war that cannot be won or which can only be won at disproportionate cost.

Jus in Bello. Once war has begun, combatants should adhere to three major rules – ***firstly***, fighting and combat should be engaged in in such a way as to *minimise* the effects on non-combatants and only in the pursuit of military necessity; ***secondly***, damage to civilian property must not be more than the *minimum* required by military necessity; and, ***thirdly***, weapons or tactics that are considered evil must not be used in the fighting.

Large Scale Logistics

William I, 1066 – The Hastings Campaign

While waiting to embark for England at the port of Dives, William's army consumed, ***per day*** –

Soldiers (~14,000): 28 tons of unmilled Wheat (for Bread) and 14000 gallons of fresh water.

Horses (~2-3000): 12-18 tons of Grain, 13-20 tons of Hay, 4-5 tons of straw and 20-30000 gallons of fresh water. The horses produced 65-100,000 pounds of manure *per day* that had to be disposed of.

Edward I, 1296-1298 – The Scottish Wars

Edward tried to conquer Scotland and, though he had some successes, largely failed in the long term – even though he had around 30,000 men under arms (most of whom were Mercenaries or under Indenture or similar arrangements).

Basic Rations: 1 Quarter (8 Bushels) of Wheat (for Bread and Pottage), 2 Quarters of Malted Barley (for Ale), 3½ Bushels of Beans or Peas, 2 Bacons, 6-7 Stockfish, 1/5th Barrel of Salt Herring, 2 Stones (28 lb) of Cheese ***per 20 men per week***. Any horses required ¼ Bushel of Oats per day.

Rations for an Army (30,000 men): The army as a whole required 4500-5000 Quarters of Grain per week (900-1000 tons). Their 5000 horses required 2000 Quarters of Grain per week (around 500 tons).

Rations for the Royal Household: The King's personal Household, including Household Knights and other troops, consumed –10 Quarters of Wheat and the same amount of Barley as well as a two Oxen, 25-30 Sheep, 6-7 of a Pig and 2-3 sides of Bacon *per day*. The Household's riding and pack horses required 15-18 Quarters of Oats per day.

Rations were gathered by ***Prise and Purveyance*** and sent to nearby Castles which then acted as Depots, sending out waggons with needed rations to wherever the Field Army was.

The prices paid was *well* below the market value so, even though the scheme was a success, it caused so much unrest amongst merchant and wealthy landowners (those with the most easily gathered supplies) it could not be repeated in the same way.

During the later stages of the Conquest of Wales the King tried to devolve the system onto the Sheriffs – but *they* simply plundered merchants *already* heading for the Welsh Marches under the (nominal) protection of the King to provide markets for the troops ... which rather defeated the purpose!

And, of course, the system was notably corrupt so it was never used on any significant scale again.

Reality vs Theory

As you probably expect, there was a *huge* difference between the theory of a 'Just War' and the reality – medieval rulers (and churchmen) were no less prone to hypocrisy, double standards, propaganda and outright lies about their *real* reasons for going to war than modern politicians.

Command, Control and Communication

The main problem with enforcing the rules, such as they were, was that of command and control coupled with lack of communication.

Simply put, there weren't a lot of officers and there wasn't much in the way of a formal chain of command to enforce legal behaviour to begin with – and this was made worse by the fact that even a benign commander (if such existed) couldn't control the behaviour of more troops than were nearby ... and maybe not even then.

Some commanders managed to enforce some of the rules for short periods of time – usually in sieges where the army was close together and more easily controlled. The reality was that this was uncommon – an army on the march through enemy territory had to at least partly spread out to forage for supplies and those foraging parties could (and did), quite literally get away with murder ... committing atrocities that their commanders would probably never hear of.

Foraging

As you've seen in the section on logistics, the problem of supplying medieval armies was difficult enough to do, almost always badly, when travelling through friendly areas ... the further an army travelled from its home base the more difficult things became.

Campaigning in enemy territory meant no friendly towns to provide market access and the merchants with the army had to *remain* with the army for protection ... so 'resupply convoys' as an idea were generally a non-starter.

The solution most medieval commanders adopted, by necessity, was to ***forage*** – which basically meant they sent out armed parties to loot and pillage the surrounding countryside ... to *take* food, animals, transport and pretty much anything of value that wasn't nailed down and kill anyone who stood in their way.

A substantial medieval army could cut a swathe of devastation up to 30 kilometers wide along its line of march in order to supply itself.

The locals would flee, possibly to a local castle or fortified manor (if there was room – and there was rarely *enough* room) or hide (forests, woods, or other wild places), taking with them as much of their food, animals and other possessions as they could carry and

hide the rest in the hope that the enemy foragers wouldn't find it and plunder it anyway.

This was obviously somewhat more successful in the case of small valuables (bullion – coins, plate and utensils) given the number of hoards that have been found over the years than in the case of grain and foodstuffs which, especially if buried, had certain specific storage requirements that the peasants in the foraging force would be well acquainted with ... and more able to ferret out the hidden foodstuffs as a result.

The reality of foraging was that it was a disaster of huge proportions for the locals ... the amount of grain and livestock stolen meant that it was not a matter of '***will*** people starve this winter' but of '***how many*** people will starve this winter.' It usually took several years for a region to recover from the devastation caused by enemy foraging.

Mercy, Ransom and Prisoners of war

There was no such thing as 'prisoners of war' before the 15th century, when the term first comes into use – but this *doesn't* mean that parties to a conflict in the Middle Ages had a 'take no prisoners' policy ... or, at least, not *consistently*.

As is still the case (even under the rules of the Hague and Geneva Conventions), chances of an enemy soldier being taken *alive* as a prisoner depend very much on the circumstances.

For example, a raiding party that has just pillaged and murdered its way across a swathe of the local countryside is unlikely to be shown any mercy by the local militia ... they'll likely slaughter them out of hand.

*Well, unless there's some possibility of making money out of them – selling them on to slavery, for example, though usually only at the beginning of the period or, later, in parts of the world where slavery continued to be used (**mostly** Muslim North Africa and the Middle East). Later in the period there'll be the likelihood of ransom being an option, read on ...*

On an active battlefield, taking prisoners is a risky proposition until *after* the potential captors have enough of an upper hand to be sure they can keep the potential prisoners under control without compromising their own security ... so, it's more likely prisoners will be taken by the side likely to hold the battlefield and from the point where it seems likely the battle has been won and the enemy destroyed or driven off.

Even so, there's then the problem of what to do with any potential prisoners ... they have to be worth the trouble and the risk (and cost) of keeping them has to outweighed by the *potential* for reward ... so if your force is in the middle of largely hostile territory, even victors might find the idea of hauling around prisoners who'll simply be useless mouths and who'll soak up guards who can be better used for foraging, or for fighting the *next* potential battle you'll be facing.



Again, the potential financial return for ransoming prisoners was an important factor.

Chivalry and Prisoners. As the whole concept of 'chivalry' developed it began to encompass a wide variety of battlefield behaviour – and, from the mid to late 14th century began to encompass some 'rules' for the taking and treatment of prisoners.

While the major writings were in French and reflected French theoretical practise, they did have *some* influence on other nationalities ... including the English, and especially during the Hundred Years War period.

The *obvious* change, one that counts almost as *'everyone knows'*, was that Knights and Nobles were subject to ransom (see below) if taken prisoner ... what is *less* well known is that this 'rule' was extended to Serjeants and mounted Men-at-Arms fighting as cavalry.

Moreover, something rarely mentioned at all, was that it could be extended even to footsoldiers under some circumstances.

The Limits of Chivalry. Chivalric ideals were nice – Medieval Rulers *weren't*. If it suited them, they would quite happily ignore the 'rules' ... so, for example, at Crecy (1346) Edward III ordered 'no quarter' so his soldiers (both mounted and foot) wouldn't be distracted by hunting for potential ransoms.

Likewise, some whole classes of opponents were deemed to be so ***barbaric*** as to be outside the rules – usually since they had the strange idea that there *were* no rules in defending their own lands. So, for example, in the Border Marches with Scotland, both sides took a 'no quarter' attitude ... and English atrocities in Wales came back to bite them when the Welsh, quite reasonably, returned the favour.

Likewise, the Teutonic Knights were quite happy to take

no prisoners when fighting in the Baltics (though they also happily enslaved their victims).

The other (obvious) category which did not attract the usual Chivalric rules was, of course, ***rebels*** – since, if they lost (of course), they were ***traitors***.

"Treason doth never prosper, what's the reason? For if it prosper, none dare call it Treason." John Harrington (1561-1612).

Of course, even then, their treatment *depended* – King John did not execute rebels from the failed *Baron's Revolt* and even the fines levied against them were moderate.

A century later, however, the Thomas of Lancaster's revolt against Edward II was much more brutally suppressed – the leaders were executed and rebels were declared outlaw and were hunted down and killed.

Peasant Revolts were another universal exception – they were suppressed with considerable violence and nothing in the way of mercy, at least for anyone identified as a leader. For example at least 1500 were executed as a result of the Peasant's Revolt in England.

*Peasant Revolts could be, and usually were, **nasty** to a greater or lesser degree. Peasants didn't have the least concept of Chivalry, or of the (supposed) inherent value and superiority of those of allegedly 'noble' birth and quite happily looted and destroyed their property and killed those who got in their way or who were especially hated ... and the nobles returned the favour.*

Ransoms. Ransoms had been being asked for and/or being paid for well before the 'high medieval' (or, if you prefer, 'high chivalric' period) ... at least as early as the mid 11th century (see the sidebar box below) but became more common, and the 'system' more organised as the period progressed, especially in the last half of the 14th century (due to the ongoing conflict that became the Hundred Years War) and beyond, into the 15th century (and outside of the period) – though calling it a 'system' is being overly generous.

*Despite what virtually all popular and many older histories contend, the system, such as it was, was **not** limited to the Nobles and Gentry (Knighthood).*

There were no hard and fast rules but ordinary soldiers such as Archers, Foot Men-at-Arms and Spearmen, *might* expect to pay the equivalent of a year's wages for their freedom – but went much higher than this as you went up the social scale.

*That said, even though more recent studies have shown that ransoming lower status prisoners was far more common than previously thought, it was still far **less** common for them to be taken prisoner in the first place.*

Knights and Nobles could be expected to pay at least 5-6 times their annual income ... though, really, there was no upper limit. At least *sometimes* the captor could agree to a schedule of payments spread over time ... possibly several years.

*Ransoms for the Nobility and Gentry were based on their ability to pay **estimated** on their apparent relative social class ... which could result in problems as it became more and more usual for common born, but successful, soldiers to be granted titles and rank without any lands granted to back their new status.*

Once a ransom was set the prisoner *might* be set free under parole to return home and arrange for the collection and payment of their ransom or they might be paroled and allowed to live with some restrictions in the captor's household ... though both instances were far more likely for nobles and gentry.

*Parole **theoretically** meant the parolee was forbidden to take up arms against their captor's side if they had been allowed to return home, promised not to escape if kept in the captor's household or, sometimes, prohibited from taking up arms for several years after payment ... and, for the nobility, it **theoretically** meant their lands were immune from war (i.e. being pillaged, plundered or devastated) so they could actually **pay** the ransom.*

*While the former agreements were usually adhered to, agreements to hold their lands immune were entirely dependent on **where** those lands were in relation to the theater of operations.*

*If they **weren't** in it, fine and good ... no problems (of course, that a parolee might well simply decide not to pay, as the consequences would be minimal – despite claims by writers on 'Chivalry' about 'dishonour'); on the other hand, if they were **part** of the area being fought over, all bets were off.*

Prisoners of War

But who can tell the number of English of all ranks, carried captive from their own land by violence of war and reduced to slavery, whom she restored to liberty by paying their ransom?

Spies were employed by her to go secretly through all the provinces of Scotland and ascertain what captives were oppressed with the most cruel bondage, and treated with the greatest inhumanity.

When she had privately ascertained where these prisoners were detained, and by whom ill-treated, commiserating them from the bottom of her heart, she took care to send them speedy help, she paid their ransom and set them at liberty forthwith.

Life of St Margaret, Queen of Scotland (1045-1093)

Sieges, Sack & Plunder

Early medieval armies had little or no capacity for undertaking formal sieges, partly because they lacked the equipment and experienced engineers but mainly because it was difficult to impossible to engage in a protracted siege with feudal levies who were only obliged to serve for a maximum of 40 days.

In order to minimise the time the defenders attempted to resist the universal practise was to sack the city when it was finally taken – often with a declaration that there would be no quarter given. However, in order to encourage the defenders to surrender, there were some basic rules that developed over the period.

Against a ***Town***, it was understood that the inhabitants would be expected to pay a *'subsidy'* or *'indemnity'* to the besieging force (basically ***extortion***) ... which might be in money or in goods (often food) or a mix of both. Payments were expected to be substantial but not ruinous – more than the defenders would like, but their lives would be guaranteed and they wouldn't lose *everything* as they would if the town was sacked.

Against a ***Castle*** or other fortification it was understood that the contents of the castle, such as they might be, would be handed over to the besieging force. Since Castles were often places where substantial quantities of food might be gathered in anticipation of a possible siege, securing these supplies could be very important for the besieging force.

Typically, the besieging force would demand a surrender as soon as they arrived and, usually, the defenders would reject the demand. Then the dance began – the besieging force would surround (blockade) the Town or Castle and make some basic preparations for a siege and then demand surrender a second time – depending on factors such as the strength of the defences and the disparity between the defending and attacking force, the commander of the besieged place *might* surrender at this point, but probably wouldn't.

So the besieger would start serious preparations – filling in the moat, bringing up pavises, assembling siege engines and field fortifications. They would usually, as this process was underway, attempt a direct assault against the Town or Castle using ladders to try and get their forces on and over the wall so they could open the gates.

If this direct assault failed, then serious preparations would continue and the assembled engines would be used to attempt to knock holes in the Town or Castle Wall, collapse Wall Towers, or breach Gates ... or all of the above ... and when the defences were substantially compromised, a 'final' assault would be sent in.

At each step along the way there would normally be attempts to get the defenders to surrender ... though,



understandably, on less and less favourable terms as the cost to the attackers in men, money and materiel and, more importantly, *time*, rose.

Surrender on (or before) Blockade. For ***Towns***, the subsidy demanded would be *less* ruinous and the Town Council would be allowed to retain some independence under the garrison commander left by the besieging force.

Depending on the circumstances, the garrison might *not* be forcibly quartered in the townspeople's residences and, if they were, would at least *theoretically*, not be forcibly rationed by them – if the Town had a separate Castle attached, or separate Barracks for a garrison (the former being somewhat likely, the latter being unusual), then they might not be forcibly quartered on the citizenry at all.

For *both* ***Towns*** *and* ***Castles*** the garrison would be allowed to leave, under arms and under truce, with their personal mounts and a reasonable amount of personal goods (probably not an entire waggon train).

Of course, defenders who surrendered at such a stage would *not* be well looked upon by the authorities to whom they owed allegiance – probably not even if there were compelling reasons for surrender. They would be expected to, *at the very least*, put up some token resistance and cause some minimal delay.

Surrender before Assault. When minimal preparations for the siege were complete, but at some time before any actual attempt to assault the walls, surrender would be on less favourable terms.

Towns would be forced to pay a much larger indemnity *and* would have any garrison forcibly quartered on their citizens *and at the expense of the citizens*. The Town Council would either be disbanded and the garrison commander would run the place under martial law *or*, possibly, the Council might be allowed to continue to run things under a tight rein.

The defending garrison would be allowed to leave,

under arms and under truce, with their personal mounts, and with a limited amount of personal possessions.

This was the minimal acceptable level of resistance for most authorities – but, even so, a commander who surrendered under such circumstances would *not* be well thought of and their career (and any influence at court) would be at an end or severely reduced. Their personal prestige would also be compromised.

After the (First) Assault(s). Things get worse. The assaulting force *will* have suffered more than minimal casualties – for towns, indemnities will become quite extortionate, the Town Council will probably be targetted for reprisals (confiscation of all their properties at a likely minimum) and the severe martial law will be applied.

The garrison will be forcibly quartered on the citizenry who will be expected to feed, clothe and pay for the privilege ... and don't bother complaining about theft, assault (even rape) to the authorities.

The defending garrison force will be allowed to leave, with personal arms, mounts and whatever clothing they stand up in ... whatever personal possessions they can conceal around their persons will probably be allowed to pass as well. Everything else is forfeit.

Before the Final Assault. When the walls are breached, but before the final assault – Towns will be subject to ruinous indemnities ... in effect, the besieging force will all but strip the town bare. At least they'll leave (most) of the citizens alive, though many (especially the wealthiest) will probably be reduced to beggary. The garrison will be quartered as above.

The defending garrison will be allowed to leave under truce with personal arms and the clothes they stand up in – but probably no transport. Everything else is forfeit.

Sack & Plunder. If the Town (or Castle) is taken by force, all bets are off ... since there *will* have been casualties, probably heavy casualties, amongst the attackers. Even if the attacker's commander(s) wanted to avoid a sack, the lack of anything resembling a robust and enforceable level of command and control meant that, at best, they might be able to minimise atrocities ... within their own sight, but probably at some danger to their person.

It was not unusual for the defenders of a Castle to be killed to a man – mainly because castle garrisons were usually so small. Town populations, however, despite exaggerated claims by contemporary chroniclers, were less harshly treated – many would be killed, but later, more reliable (but still relatively contemporary) accounts suggest that a 'usual' death rate would be about



5-10% of the populace, though it could run to as much as 15% on (relatively) rare occasions.

*The sack of Jerusalem (1099), which probably had a population of around 70-80,000, **supposedly** led to the slaughter of 70,000 (mostly civilian) inhabitants. However, we know that some of the defenders paid the Crusaders to be allowed to flee unmolested and, indeed, later chroniclers put the death toll at no more than 3000.*

Atrocities were undoubtedly committed – but most of the inhabitants, though brutalised, survived.

*The sack of Limoges (1370) was regarded as being one of the most devastating for **physical** destruction during the period, but casualties appear to have been 'only' around 300 civilians and 60 soldiers of the garrison ... out of a population probably around 1800-2000.*

The Siege & Sack of Jerusalem, 1099

Our men began to undermine the towers and walls. From every side stones were hurled ... arrows ... fell like hail. The servants of Allah bore this patiently, sustained by the premises of their faith ...

[As] the machines were drawn nearer to the walls they hurled not only stones and arrows but also burning wood and straw ... dipped in pitch, wax, and sulphur ... such missiles, burning as they shot upward, could not be resisted by swords or by high walls; it was not even possible for the defenders to find safety down behind the walls.

Thus the fight continued from the rising to the setting sun in such splendid fashion that it is difficult to believe anything more glorious was ever done ... Night brought fear to both sides.

The Saracens feared that we would take the city during the night or on the next day for the outer works were broken through and the ditch was filled so that it was possible to make an entrance through the wall ...

[W]e feared ... the Saracens would set fire to the machines ... and thus improve their situation. So on both sides it was a night of watchfulness, labor, and sleepless caution: on one side, most certain hope, on the other doubtful fear.

We gladly labored to capture the city for the glory of God, they less willingly strove to resist ... for the sake of the laws of Mohammed. It is hard to believe how great were the efforts made on both sides during the night.

... [A]t this very time when the city was practically captured ... the Saracens were still fighting on the other side ... as though the city should never be captured. But now that our men had possession of the walls and towers, wonderful sights were to be seen.

Some of our men (and this was more merciful) cut off the heads of their enemies; others shot them with arrows, so that they fell from the towers; others tortured them longer by casting them into the flames.

Piles of heads, hands, and feet were to be seen in the streets of the city. It was necessary to pick one's way over the bodies of men and horses.

But these were small matters compared to what happened at the Temple of Solomon ...

So let it suffice to say this much, at least, that in the Temple and porch of Solomon, men rode in blood up to their knees and bridle reins. Indeed, it was a just and splendid judgment of God that this place should be filled with the blood of the unbelievers, since it had suffered so long from their blasphemies. The city was filled with corpses and blood.

Some of the enemy took refuge in the Tower of David, and, petitioning Count Raymond for protection, surrendered the Tower into his hands.

– Raymond d'Aguiliers

When the tower had been put together and ... covered with hides it was moved nearer to the wall. Then knights, few in number, but brave, at the sound of the trumpet, took their places in the tower and began to shoot stones and arrows.

The Saracens defended themselves vigorously, and, with slings, very skillfully hurled back burning firebrands, which had been dipped in oil and fresh fat ...

On the following day ... the Rams ... made a hole through one part of the wall. The Saracens suspended two beams before the opening, supporting them by ropes, so that by piling stones behind them they would make an obstacle to the rams. However ... when the tower was moved nearer to the wall the ropes that supported the beams were cut [and] from these same beams the Franks constructed a bridge ... from the tower to the wall.

About this time one of the towers in the stone wall began to burn ... the flames and smoke soon became so bad that none of the defenders ... were able to remain near this place. At the noon hour on Friday, with trumpets sounding, amid great commotion and shouting *"God help us,"* the Franks entered the city ... the pagans ... were completely demoralized ... and they turned to flee ...

Count Raymond and his men, who were attacking the wall on the other side, did not yet know of all this, until they saw the Saracens leap from the wall in front of them. Forthwith, they joyfully rushed into the city to pursue and kill the nefarious enemies, as their comrades were already doing.

Some Saracens ... took refuge in the tower of David, others fled to the temples of the Lord and of Solomon. A great fight took place in the court and porch of the temples, where they were unable to escape from our gladiators.

Many fled to the roof of the temple of Solomon, and were shot with arrows, so that they fell to the ground dead. In this temple almost ten thousand were killed.

Indeed, if you had been there you would have seen our feet colored to our ankles with the blood of the slain ... None of them were left alive; neither women nor children were spared.

– Fulcher of Chartres

On Crusade

The Crusades were *originally* intended to free the Holy Land and Jerusalem from muslim control – or that's what the Catholic Church, in the person of Pope Urban II, *probably* intended. The whole thing was to be a ***Praela Sanctum***, *a 'Holy War'* (something quite different from a mere *Legitime Bella* or 'Just War'), and the forces committed would form a ***Militia Dei*** *('Army of God')* rather than a mundane *Militia Mundi*.

*His argument was that the whole thing would be, simultaneously, a just war **and** a holy war ... and, in any case, the muslims were adherents of a godless, probably satanically inspired, heresy and had conquered the Holy Lands by the basest treachery.*

However, right from the get go they spiraled out of control and morphed into, well, *something else* – depending on which source you choose to believe the *real* motives are claimed to be anything from pure greed to political maneuvering at the highest level, for control of trade routes ... or control of the Catholic (as opposed to the solely *Roman* Catholic) Church. Or *several* ... or others *entirely*.

In effect, the Crusaders were merely retaking what was rightfully Christian territories ... and, though it was never explicitly stated, but widely understood by the audience, the whole thing was a religiously justified chance for 'fortune and glory!"

*The early battle cry was **"Stand fast all together, trusting in Christ and the victory of the Holy Cross. Today, please God, you will all gain great riches"** which is quite indicative of what the Crusad**ers** believed.*

The Crusader Period

There were, depending on how you count and classify them, possibly ***nine*** Crusades to, nominally, free)or defend) the Holy Lands – but even that doesn't fully encompass the Crusaderist period.

Defenders of the Holy Sepulchre

The ***First Crusade*** was called by Pope Urban II in a sermon delivered at the Council of Clermont on 27 NOV 1095, *supposedly* (there is, to put it mildly, a *lot* of *heated* debate as to Urban's real reasons) responding to a request for military assistance by the East Roman Emperor, Alexius I Comnenus, who was fighting a Seljuk Turk (Muslim) invasion of Anatolia.



There followed a widespread, *nominally* centrally organised, campaign of preaching the message all around Western Europe spread over the 1095-96 – triggering the wholly unexpected, and equally wholly unwanted, *People's Crusade* early in the latter year, pre-empting the planned departure of the *official* force, scheduled for August.

The Pope and his advisors had made strict efforts to ensure that only military men would form the crusading army – no women, monks or commoners, and no priests except those authorised by the Papacy were to be allowed to participate.

Unfortunately, the carefully laid centralised plan for controlled preaching to the select military aristocracy and gentry was almost immediately hijacked by local charismatic, and entirely unauthorised, preachers such as Peter the Hermit, and a massive and uncontrolled (and uncontrollable) response by the masses.

*Basically an disorganised and barely coherent mob of possibly 100,000, **most** of whom were commoners (including women and children) with minimal military training (there were a **small** number of Knights, Serjeants and Men-at-Arms with the force), they barely managed to reach Anatolia, against the explicit advice of the Roman Emperor to 'wait for you noble leaders' (which was both insanely optimistic and completely uninformed), and were easily destroyed in detail by the Seljuk forces there.*

The 'official' Crusaders travelled in four separate groups to Constantinople, having departed in August as planned, probably consisting, all up, of 30-35000 soldiers (perhaps 5000 Cavalry, not all of whom would have been Knights) where they were transported over to Anatolia and began their peripatetic journey to the Holy Land.

They began by besieging and taking *Nicaea*, defeating a Turkish army at *Dorylaeum* (1097) and besieging and taking *Antioch* (1097-98) and arriving at *Jerusalem* on 7 JUN 1099, by which time the Crusader force had been reduced to around 12000 soldiers, of whom only around 1500 were cavalry ... the final assault began on 13 JUL and the city was finally taken by 15 JUL with considerable loss of civilian life.

The victors established a *Kingdom of Jerusalem* under Raymond of Toulouse (who was *Defender of the Holy Sepulchre*, not *King* – the latter title only adopted by his successors) and, on 12 AUG defeated a major Fatimid field army (perhaps as many as 50,000 men – at *least* 20-30,000) at *Ascalon* with their much reduced force of perhaps 9000 foot and 1200 cavalry.

At this point most of the crusaders returned home – leaving behind only a few hundred Knights and perhaps 2000 infantry.

Kings of the Latins of Jerusalem

The ***Second Crusade*** (1147-49) was triggered by the fall of the *County of Edessa*, one of the Crusader states that had been carved out of the Middle East by the First Crusade, to the Muslims ... and was defeated in detail by the Turks.

The ***Third Crusade*** (1189-92) was in response to the loss of most of Palestine and the Holy City to Saladin and was only partially successful ... recovering a thin coastal strip of the *Kingdom of Jerusalem*, the *County of Tripoli* and the *Principality of Antioch* but completely failing to retake Jerusalem.

The ***Fourth Crusade*** (1202-04) was *intended* to retake Jerusalem but ended up in a Crusaderist attack on Constantinople and the creation of a ***Latin Empire*** controlling parts of the East Roman state and facing off against the *Empire of Nicaea* and the *Despotate of Epirus*, Roman rump states.

The ***Fifth Crusade*** (1213-21) was directed at Jerusalem and the Nile Delta and failed to achieve any of its major aims, though it *did* manage to force the Muslims to moderate their treatment of Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land ... for a time.

The ***Sixth Crusade*** (1228-29) was mainly a diplomatic effort with relatively little fighting and managed to regain some control over Jerusalem and small areas of the Holy Land through to 1244.

The ***Seventh Crusade*** (1248-1254) was an all French affair – and an absolute disaster. The French were defeated by the Ayyubids and Louis IX captured, having to pay a ransom of 800,000 gold Bezants for his freedom.

The ***Eighth Crusade*** (1270) was another Louis IX led failure and the ***Ninth Crusade*** (1271-72) was a last gasp western attempt to shore up the remnants of the Crusader states led by Henry III (of England's) son, the future Edward I ... and had some successes, but could not stem the ultimate loss of the Crusader states.

Other Crusades

In addition, there were several other major periods of crusading in Europe –

- The ***'Northern'*** *Crusades* (1147-1240ish) to forcibly convert (and, oh so *not* coincidentally, *conquering*) the Wends (Mecklenberg, Lusatia and Prussia) *supposedly* for the glory of God ... and (again) not so coincidentally enrichment of the Order of Teutonic Knights and other participants.

- The bloody ***Albigensian*** *Crusade* (1209-1229) to suppress the *supposedly* heretical *Cathars* (qv) of southern France (and, again, *not* coincidentally, to enrich the mainly northern French crusaders).

Calling for a Crusade

Let this then be your war-cry in combat ... let this one cry be raised by all the soldiers of God: *It is the will of God! It is the will of God!*

And we do not command ... the old or feeble, or those unfit for bearing arms, undertake this journey; nor ought women to set out at all, without their husbands or brothers or legal guardians ... let the rich aid the needy; and according to their wealth, let them take with them experienced soldiers ... priests and clerks ... are not to go without the consent of their bishop ... also, it is not fitting that laymen should enter upon the pilgrimage without the blessing of their priests.

Whoever ... shall determine upon this holy pilgrimage ... shall wear the sign of the cross of the Lord on his forehead or on his breast. When ... having fulfilled his vow he wishes to return, let him place the cross on his back between his shoulders.

– Part of ***Urban's Speech at the Council of Clermont (1095)***, translated by August Krey (1921)

Urban, bishop, servant of the servants of God, to all the faithful, both princes and subjects, waiting in Flanders; greeting, apostolic grace, and blessing.

Your brotherhood, we believe, has long since learned from many accounts that a barbaric fury has deplorably afflicted an laid waste the churches of God in the regions of the Orient. More than this, blasphemous to say, it has even grasped in intolerabe servitude its churches and the Holy City of Christ, glorified be His passion and resurrection.

Grieving with pious concern at this calamity, we visited the regions of Gaul and devoted ourselves largely to urging the princes of the land and their subjects to free the churches of the East.

We solemnly enjoined upon them at the council of Auvergne (the accomplishment of) such an undertaking, as a preparation for the remission of all their sins. And we have constituted our most beloved son, Adhemar, Bishop of Puy, leader of this expedition and undertaking in our stead, so that those who, perchance, may wish to undertake this journey should comply with his commands, as if they were our own, and submit fully to his loosings or bindings, as far as shall seem to belong to such an office.

If, moreover, there are any of your people whom God has inspired to this vow, let them know that he (Adhemar) will set out with the aid of God on the day of the Assumption of the Blessed Mary (August), and that they can then attach themselves to his following.

– ***'Letter of Instruction to the Crusaders'***, Urban II (1095), translated by August Krey (1921)

- The ***Bosnian*** *Crusade* (1225-1234-*ish*) to suppress the allegedly *Catharist* Bosnian Church (but really to wrest control over it for Rome and, even more so, to advance Hungarian territorial ambitions).

- The ***Reconquista*** in Iberia, which was granted Crusader privileges.

There were also minor (or abortive) Crusades –

- Against the ***Ottomans*** in the Balkans, intermittently and very localised (mostly in the late 1300s)

- The ***Alexandrian*** *Crusade* (1365) which was really aimed at gaining commercial privileges and dominance for the Kingdom of Cyprus in the Eastern Mediterranean.

- The ***Barbary*** *Crusade* (1390) against the Barbary corsairs in North Africa.

After the end of the 14th century there were 'crusades' called against the Hussites from around 1415 through to the 1430s and repeated calls for Crusades against the continued Ottoman advances into Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean ... the as much to advance or protect Venetian commercial interests as a 'holy war' against the advancing Turk.

All *of these later 'Crusades', while nominally advancing the cause of the Christian faith (really the* ***Roman Catholic*** *version of it, of course), were much more naked power or land grabs or to advance commercial interests.*

Why Crusade?

The Pope and his advisors carefully planned (for some limited values of 'carefully') the basics of the ***First*** Crusade ... they organised *authorised and licensed* evangelists to travel around and preach to the religious reasons, gave Bishops carefully prepared arguments and sermons to preach to their communities and also made some plans for the assembly, supply and transport/movement of those who answered the call on their journey to the Holy Lands.


Crusaders vs the Turk, Battle of Nicopolis (1396)

Religious Motives

Those who heard these sermons seem very much to have been caught up in a *truly* religious fervour – the contemporary evidence is *quite* clear in supporting this claim even though more modern historians often tend to discount it and claim more mundane motives.

The later Crusades were, progressively, less and less 'pure' and more and more cynically using religious terminology and rhetoric to justify economic and political motives ... though those direct at the Holy Lands always retained an *element* of religiosity (the others were more obviously naked greed and political in their motivation).

Tangible Rewards

Absolution. The Church stated that all those who answered the call would be granted absolution for some or all of their Sins, depending on their degree of participation – and that, indeed, they would gain some degree of preferential treatment in the afterlife and on the Day of Judgement.

In fact, it was definitively stated by the Pope that anyone who died on their way to or from the Crusade or while fighting there would be admitted immediately into Heaven – and, as religious fervour died down considerably for later Crusades, this Divine favour was supposedly extended even to those who were merely travelling to or from meetings to hear the Crusade being ***preached!***

Under some circumstances those who merely ***supported*** *a Crusade (financially or in other material ways) without actually going* ***on*** *one were also granted the same Divine favour ... or so the Church allowed as was the case.*

In an intensely religious time and place this was an *extremely* powerful drawcard ... but it wasn't the only thing the Church offered those who answered the call.

Immunity from the Law & Taxation. The Church also claimed that Crusaders *and their estates* would be granted immunity from ***all*** legal actions *for any reason* for the *whole* period they were absent and also that they would ***not*** be subject to regular feudal dues, services ***or any taxation*** as well.

Yes, that meant they were protected from all claims against them personally, up to and including murder, and that any financial claims against their estate were also nullified for the duration.

As you can imagine, this came as something of a shock to the various state authorities, especially the unilateral remission of taxation ... and, of course, it didn't do the slightest bit of good in preventing the legal fraternity from arguing the toss for their clients in civil courts!

There was much argument over these provisions as the civil authorities struggled to cope with their rights versus

the moral authority of the Church – very quickly the unlimited duration was whittled away, typically limited to seven years for tax and civil cases, though the protection against criminal actions remained unlimited as long as the subject remained away from home and, therefore, at least nominally, 'on Crusade.'

*This still gave the Crusader and his family considerable economic advantages, and these were so attractive (amounting to a substantial reduction in interest payable on loans that were held in abeyance, for example) that they continued to form an important part of the reasons why those who went on **later** Crusades did so!*

Loot & Pillage. Feudal armies being what they were, they *expected* to have the right to loot and pillage their way through enemy territory ... and it is evident that the participants assumed that this would be the case even if on a Holy mission for God.

Fortuitously for the organisers of the 1st Crusade (though *much* less so for the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the Holy Land) it neatly coincided with a surge in economic activity throughout Western Europe and, especially, a resurgence of trade with (and through) the East ... a trade in luxuries such as silks, spices and other exotic items.

A trade that the gentry and nobility were well aware of ... a trade which offered great opportunities for extensive profits to be made by force of arms ... and which might continue to be profitable for the various Italian commercial interests which supported the whole effort.

Lands and Titles. Despite considerable planning, the Church authorities really ***didn't*** have a concrete plan for what would happen ***if*** *the Crusaders actually freed the Holy Land and took Jerusalem.*

It seems, at best, that they had a vague and unformed idea that the area would come under some vague sort of ecclesiastical government ... defended, no doubt, by some of the crusaders (or their successors) out of goodness of their hearts. There was no suggestion or expectation that the Crusaders would, as they did, set up their own feudal polities in the conquered lands.

Indeed, there is little or no evidence that what passed for the main leadership expected this outcome – certainly, when they passed through Constantinople they freely pledged fealty to the Alexius I Comnenus and promised they would pass over control of any conquered territories to the Roman authorities.

*Initially, **they did just that** when they took Nicaea and they only fell out with the Imperials after the prolonged siege of Antioch which they felt had been made harder because of insufficient support from the Romans).*

However, the Crusaders *did* manage to carve several,

A PLAN TO RETAKE THE HOLY LAND (1305)

The Pope should exhort people through preaching, *and the grant of indulgences*, to go on Crusade.

He should fix a date when his passage is to commence and name those who are to command, appointing a Legate as his representative, a Cardinal or Prelate assisted by a secular knight to advise him ...

[I]t would be good if the Pope assembled a great treasure which should be used to pay for necessary transport and equipment –

Twenty Five armed galleys plus ships provided by the King of Cyprus, the Templars and ourselves to prevent profiteers reaching Alexandria or Egypt and selling war materiel to the Muslims.

A larger flotilla should be put together to weaken the Saracens so the Crusade may more easily disembark. It would be expedient to organise fifty or sixty galleys for a year before the arrival which would raiding and ravaging the coastal regions forcing the Saracens to exhaust themselves and forcing civilians to flee and so allowing the Crusade to achieve as much as a force three times its size ...

Shortly before departure the Captains should recruit any necessary paid troops depending on the number of volunteers and make arrangements for food supplies and their transport] as many of the people who join the Crusade will probably be poorly and imprudently supplied without enough to travel for one or two months before starving.

To gather the treasure needed to fund the Crusade, the Pope should decree all churchmen must pay a Tenth of all their revenues and should tax all the Jews living in Christendom at least a Tenth of their goods and it would not be excessive to take a full half ...

– Fulk of Villaret, Grand Master of the Hospitallers
(abridged and simplified from the original)

This Hospitaller proposal for a Crusade to recover the all the lost Crusader states and the Holy City (Jerusalem) and really summarises the sorts of problems that some or all of the previous Crusades had faced.

*It's **not** that they didn't **understand** at least **some** of the problems, it's just that they mostly didn't really have the **means** to deal with all of them, either or effectively or, in some cases, at all.*

Most of the problems weren't solvable with the taxation and organisational tools or, indeed, the political realities at hand ... Fulk was both trying to be realistic and, simultaneously, was also being wildly optimistic, though one wonders whether he really understood this.

mostly short-lived, states out of the areas they conquered and some of their number were granted lands and titles within them ... and there was, for later crusades, always a small chance of some similar grant or seizure of lands to attract support.

Why did they (ultimately) Fail?

"The line between disorder and order lies in logistics..."
– Sun Tzu

Simply put – a *completely, totally and utterly inadequate* system of ***logistics and finance*** and an *effectively nonexistent* ***command structure***.

In fact, it is a wonder the Crusades were as successful as they were. The 1st Crusade succeeded as well as it did ***despite*** these shortcomings – almost entirely because the Muslim world was divided between competing warring factions, was generally indecisive, and the armies they mustered to face the Crusaders were often poorly led in the face of what they at first deemed to be a pathetically inadequate threat ... and, by the time they realised this was most definitely *not* the case it was too late to do much more.

Most Crusader successes were achieved more as a result of general or specific Muslim *disunity* than for any other reason ... and their failures occurred, and were generally made worse, if their opponents were well led and *united*.

If you've read previous sections in this Chapter about the organisation and logistics of medieval armies in general you already have some understanding of just how poor the logistics and financing tools available to Medieval rulers actually *were* – and how precarious their command and control 'systems' were to boot.

Command and Control

For the First Crusade and most of the others there were multiple nationalities involved and there was ***no*** *formal organisational structure and* ***no*** *actual command structure.*


Massacre of the Albigensians

The 'units' constituting Crusader armies ranged from single Knights and their personal household (if any) through to contingents of several hundred or even a couple of thousands (but rarely much more) ... *some* of whom may had feudal ties to an overlord *also* on campaign, *but most with no such ties.*

Think of the proverbial ***herding of cats*** for an idea of the difficulties involved – even the presence of Papal 'advisors' had absolutely no significant impact on the command and control situation.

Individuals and small (or even medium) forces would hive themselves off at any given time and *do their own thing* without the slightest thought of the overall strategic or tactical situation – and, *of course*, often at the most inconvenient possible moment (see ***The Siege of Antioch*** sidebar, page #247, for an example).

This issue was ***never, ever,*** *solved ... every single one of the Crusades suffered from elements of it, ameliorated only insofar as the key player(s) might have direct, personal, control a significant chunk of any force.*

Logistics & Finance

The Papal authorities ***did*** do *some* groundwork – they *had* organised for supplies to be made available and transport to be provided by commercial interests (the latter at preferential rates), but, as usual, the Crusaders *were expected to pay for their own keep* (food, fodder, necessities) and *their own transport*, if by ship.

It took roughly 35 days for the voyage from Marseilles to Syria during the summer of the First Crusade, rising to 60 days by September.

Venetian transports could carry 500-600 soldiers, on average, and the very largest ships could carry close to 1000! Those ships fitted out as Horse Transports could normally carry 20-40 horses, and the largest Cogs could carry 80.

Passengers were given a parchment 'ticket' to show where their accommodation space was and to confirm their right to draw rations while on board – the average 'no frills' passage cost was £1/5/-.

Later Crusades heading for the Middle East generally took at least a year merely to transport the troops and mounts required (Richard I's force heading for the ***3rd Crusade*** *consisted of 100 vessels each carrying 80 men and 40 horse and 14 larger vessels carrying 160 men and 80 horses) – and the* ***Seventh Crusade*** *(1248) began stockpiling supplies on Cyprus in* ***1246!***

As long as they were close to the coast and port facilities this actually worked well enough – but, as noted elsewhere, even a distance of a hundred klicks from the coast or so would cause great problems and much privation unless they could forage locally, and

this was problematic especially when they were stationary for extended periods, such as during a siege.

Then there was, even for later Crusades, the general underestimation of the ***cost*** of extended foreign travel by the vast majority of those who participated – there were no Banks or ATMs (surprise!) and the vast bulk of the Crusaders had to carry ***hard cash*** with them to pay their way.

There were both difficulties and advantages to the fact that the Eastern Mediterranean economy suffered from a shortage of silver and a (relative) excess of gold while the Western Mediterranean suffered from a shortage of gold and a (relative) excess of silver.

The Crusaders, of course, tended to carry silver (mostly as bullion rather than coinage) and could usually get a premium in any exchange ... but it wasn't nearly enough to outweigh their general poverty of resources.

Almost all of them ended up having to be carried by the few nobles who *did* have the resources, or depended on loot and plunder, or both, to survive.

The later Crusaders, at least the very wealthy amongst them, may have had some access to 'credit' held with the newly developing mercantile system and with 'bankers' who could arrange for supplies to be paid for from pre-arranged deposits or loans ... and the Hospitallers and Templars gathered enough wealth to go into the moneylending business as well (one of the reasons the latter were targetted as supposed Heretics).

The Crusader States *('Outremer')*

The success of the First Crusade led to the establishment of four Crusader-ruled states carved out of parts of the Levant that had been previously under Muslim rulership – the *Counties of Edessa and Tripoli*, the *Principality of Antoch* and the *Kingdom of Jerusalem*.

The Armenian ruled area of Cilicia (founded by Armenians fleeing the invading Turks c. 1080) was a strong supporter and ally of the early Crusaders (who, after all, were fighting the Turks) and was later recognised by Pope Celestine III as the ***Kingdom of Cilicia*** *around the time of the 3rd Crusade.*

The County of Edessa (1098-1150)

A separate foundation by Baldwin of Boulogne who took control of the city (arranging a convenient marriage with the daughter of the then ruler, who adopted him as his heir – possibly even voluntarily, but the sources are unclear) and extensive surrounding territories after the Siege of Antioch in 1098.

Though the territories were quite extensive (see the map of Outremer on page #226), it was sparsely populated, and the only 'major' population center was the city of Edessa (~10,000 people) itself.

Costs of a Crusade

First Crusade

Estimated cost to maintain a Knight was £7/4/- (18/- for noncombatants) for a year (estimated).

Richard 1 (3rd Crusade, 1189)

Richard's budget for his contingent was based on an assumed cost of 2d per day for ordinary soldiers and sailors and 4d per day for experienced sailors – in all, £5700 for ship hire and £8700 in wages, or a total of £14400!

The supplies he organised for this force included 60000 Horseshoes @ £50 (around 3 months supply for active campaigning – around 20-25 tons, including nails), 14000 (salted?) Pig carcasses @ £101/7/11, 300 Bacons @ 1/5 each, Beans @15/4/8 (1s per 'measure'), and a quantity of Rounds of Cheese @ £31/6/- (4/- to 4/6d each) (6 month's supply?).

Treaty of Venice (1201)

The Venetians agreed to provide shipping and logistic support for an army of 33,500 (4500 Knights, 9000 Squires and 20,000 Serjeants and 4500 Horses) for 4 Marks per Horse and 2 Marks per man, 85,000 Marks for a whole year.

It is uncertain how much of a profit margin might have been built into these costings by the Venetians – they ***were*** *getting 'free' help for the commercial interests on the part of the Crusaders, but Venetian merchants were no less venal and profit hungry than any of their ilk!*

Louis IX (1247-1257)

The cost for campaigning ran to £1,537,570 Tournois ... five times the *entire* Royal income for the period.

French Costings (1323)

For 26 Ships and 4800 crew carrying 3000 Crossbowmen = £300,000 Parisis (estimated Royal Income was £70-80,000 Parisis per annum, with a further £85-120,000 Parisis in Taxation and Loans).

Consumption Rates

Estimated consumption rates for the period (per day) were as follows –

- *1.3 kilos of food per person per day*
- *2.2 liters of water per noncombatant per day*
- *1.2 liters of wine per person per day*
- *8+ liters of water per combatant per day*
- *5 kilos grain, 5 kilos Hay and 32 liters water per horse per day*

Note that healthy horses produce ~25 kilos of manure and ~30 kilos of urine per day ... an important factor when transporting them by sea.

Someone *has to shovel all the manure and pump all the urine from the bilges!*

THE HOSPITALLERS

Title. Order of Knights of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem (*Ordo Fratrum Hospitalis Sancti Ioannis Hierosolymitani*)

History. Often simply referred to as the *Hospitallers* or the *Order (or Knights) of St John* was founded during the First Crusade by *Gerard Thom*, a lay Brother of the Benedictines who had been placed in charge of the *Hospital of St John* in Jerusalem in 1080 and whom, after the capture of the city by the Crusaders in 1099, formed a military brotherhood initially based there ... and this was recognised by the Pope in 1113.

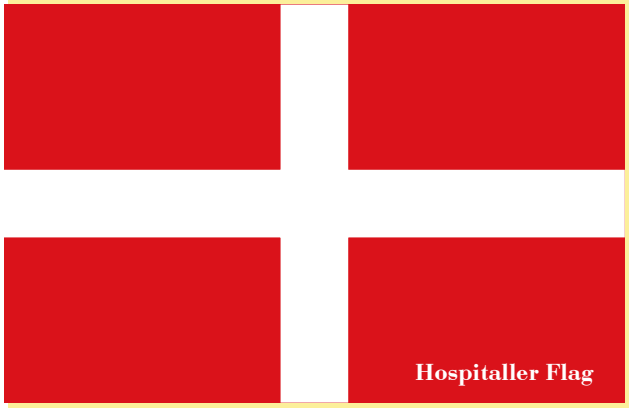
The *'Hospital'* was actually a ***Hostel*** providing accommodation and basic sustenance for the sick, poor and those on a pilgrimage, a continuation (with interruptions) of a service dating to before the Muslim conquest in a building near the ***Church of the Holy Sepulchre***.

*Modern excavations of the Hospital in Jerusalem have revealed a building which had around 2000 beds, separate Wards for each major ailment, a separate orphanage, a dining area and which, interestingly, accepted **everyone**, regardless of their faith or sect, even going as far as to source kosher food for Jews under their care (and, presumably, Halal food for Muslims)!*

Originally the Order simply maintained the Hostel but, from around 1118 the Order began to *also* provide armed protection for pilgrims travelling to and from holy sites in the region and, though it never entirely lost its original charitable function, gradually became more and more militarised, a process first *formally* recognised by the Order's monastic Rule in 1200.

The Order eventually built and garrisoned a large number of castles and other fortifications throughout Outremer, including the famous *Krak des Chevaliers*, and even spread its influence and presence further afield, setting up *Commanderies* and *Priories* in many parts of Western Europe.

When Jerusalem was lost (1187) they retained a military presence in the Kingdom of Jerusalem until that, too, was lost (1291), then, briefly, to the County of Tripoli until Acre was taken (1291).



Hospitaller Flag

The Hospitallers then retreated to the Kingdom of Cyprus but besieged Rhodes (which belonged to the Roman Empire), finally taking it in late 1310 and holding it beyond the end of the 14th century, becoming largely militarised and fighting Muslim pirates and raiders in the eastern Mediterranean.

*The Hospitallers outlasted the Knights Templar, who were attacked by Philip IV (1308) and disbanded under French pressure in 1312, and survive to the present day as the (Roman Catholic) **Sovereign Military Order of Malta** and several Protestant successors.*

The Rule of the Order (12th Century). The following regulations were created for the governance of the Order by the second Grand Master, Raymond du Puy.

- Brethren should remain chaste, obedient to their superiors and live without personal property
- Brethren should eat only bread and water and dress humbly
- Chaplains should conduct Holy Offices day and night and bring them to those under their care.
- Brethren must travel in groups of at least two or three and only under orders ... they must avoid contact with women as much as possible.
- Religious members of the Order should always seek Alms for the poor under their care and should extend that care as widely as possible.
- The Order must carefully manage property given to them to ensure moneys arising are used for the care of the sick, poor and protection of pilgrims.
- Brethren are may not wear brightly coloured cloth, furs or fustian. They should eat only two meals a day, no meat on Wednesdays or Saturdays or from Septuagesima until Easter, except those who are sick or feeble.
- Brethren who fall into fornication shall be beaten and flogged after Mass on Sunday before being expelled *unless* do penance in which case they are to be placed on probation for a whole year.
- Brethren should eat in silence, not drink after Compline and keep silence in their beds.
- Brothers who misbehave shall be admonished and corrected twice or three times, and if he does not mend his ways and passed to the Prior for further punishment. No brother should strike the Sergeants or Officers without being punished.
- Brethren found with private property should be led naked through the Priory, beaten severely

and do penance for 40 days, fasting Wednesdays and Fridays on bread and water.

- When the sick man shall come to us let him confess his sins then partake of the Holy Sacrament and, afterwards, let him be carried to bed and. each day before the Brethren eat, let him be fed according to the ability of the House.

- Brethren should bear on their breasts, cassocks and mantles the Cross and bear it on a Banner when going into battle.

As with other Monastic Orders, the Hospitallers probably never came close to adhering faithfully to all these rules and, as the Order became richer and more powerful, actively ignored and subverted them.

Wealth. At the height of their power and importance during the Middle Ages the Hospitallers controlled over ***13,000 Manors*** throughout Europe (compared to only *9000* held by the Templars).

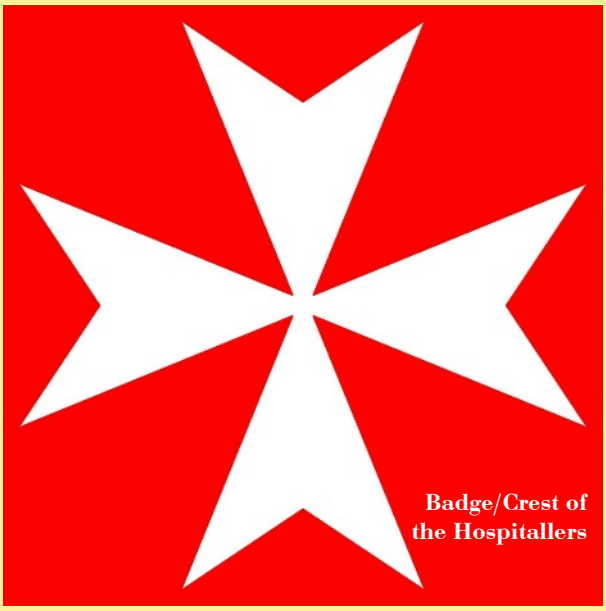
This gave the Order access to vast amounts of money (for the time and place) and, though much of it was earmarked for their own charitable and military purposes, it meant they were a source of credit and proto-banking facilities for many ... especially those who wished to travel to areas where the Order was well represented as they could off what amounted to Letters of Credit to draw on at their destination (especially useful for those going on the later Crusades!)

Since the Order was held in the highest regard it was also common for nobles, even Kings, to place their valuables with the Templars to ensure their security (and, of course, sometimes to act *as* security for any loans they might have taken out)

Membership. Members of the Order were divided into three groups, *Knights* and *Men-at-Arms*, who were both Lay Brothers and military in nature, and *Chaplains*, who had taken Holy Orders and looked after the charitable functions.

The *Knights* and *Men-at-Arms* were further divided into two groups – those who had taken a vow to serve only for a specified term (*Military Brothers*) and those who had taken a *perpetual* vow similar to that an ordinary Monk would have (*Infirmarians*).

Organisation. The Order was headed by a ***Grand Master*** or ***Grand Commander*** (appointed for life) who was assisted by a ***Grand Marshal*** (commanding the Military), an ***Admiral***, a ***Turcopolier*** (Cavalry commander), ***Grand Bailli*** (in charge of fortresses), a ***Grand Conservator*** (in charge of supplies and logistics) a ***Grand Hospitaller*** (commanding the Hostels and Infirmaries) a ***Treasurer*** and a ***Conventual Prior*** (the senior religious).



Badge/Crest of the Hospitallers

By the 13th century, divided into eight ***Langues*** *('Tongues'* – though more *regional* than linguistic*)* – in Aragon, Auvergne, Castile, England, France, the Holy Roman Empire, Italy and Provence, each of which was administered by a *Prior* (if there was more than one *Priory* in the Langue, by a *Grand Prior*).

When personnel from a *Langue* were serving outside its bounds they were commanded by a *Bailiff.*

Under each Priory there would be one or more *Commanderies* ruled, of course, by *Commanders* and, under them, a number of *Domus* ('House') which was often (but not always) a *Domus Infirmorium* (a Hostel and Infirmary).

Military brethren were commanded at the higher levels by the officers mentioned above – and, at a field level, *Captains* (a catch-all rank in the Middle Ages), their *Lieutenants* and *Gonfanoniers* (Standard Bearers – something like a modern Warrant Officer or Sergeant Major) and with *Serjeants* of various rankings on a more tactical level.

In general the *Knights-Brethren* were the Heavy Cavalry of the Order (and entitled to three horses) and the *Men-at-Arms* were the Medium or Light Cavalry (and only entitled to a single horse) and, of course, also served as Infantry.

There were relatively few Knights at any given time – it is estimated they never amounted to more than 5-10% of the total force that could be fielded.

Men-at-Arms could serve as Cavalry ***or*** *Infantry, but were also present only in limited numbers – the bulk of any Hospitaller force were* ***Turcopoles****, Christian or Christian****ised*** *locals who served as Light Cavalry Scouts, Skirmishers and Archers who operated to support the Knights and Men-at-Arms who formed the heavy striking power.*

Baldwin subsequently became King of Jerusalem (1100) and the county passed on to one of his cousins, Baldwin of Bourcq.

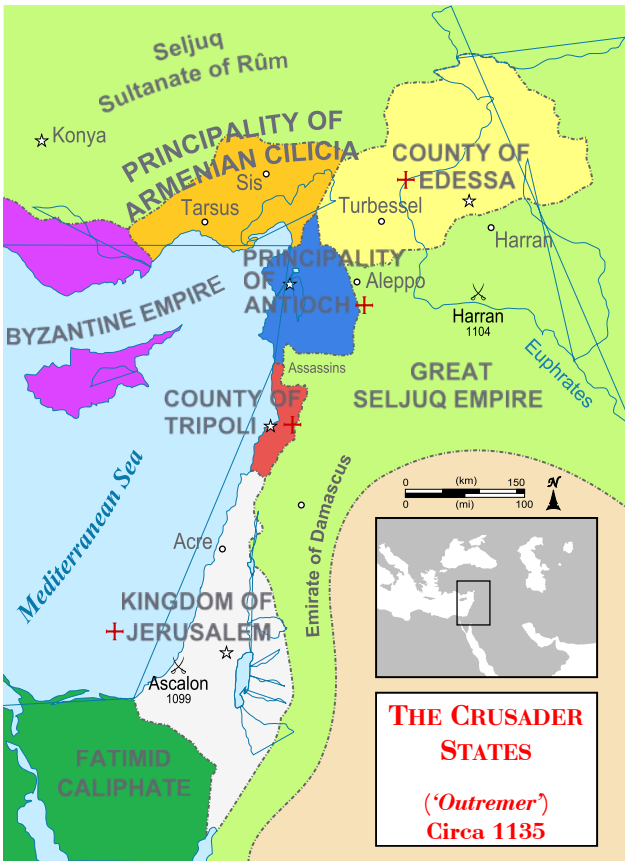
The capital, Edessa, was finally lost to the Muslims in 1144 along with all lands east of the Euphrates (about 2/3rds of the County), triggering the 2nd Crusade. The remainder of the County and its 'capital', the Fortress of Turbessel, was briefly sold to the East Romans but was taken by the Muslims within a year.

The County of Tripoli (1109-1289)

The territory around the port-city of Tripoli and the city itself was taken by the Crusaders in 1109 and declared to be a County. The first Count was *Bertrand of Toulouse* and was, nominally, a vassal state of the *Kingdom of Jerusalem*.

The County was a hotbed of factional politics for much of its existence, with the succession to the Countship and the possession of any lands within its borders being determined more by naked military might due to factional alliances than to mere inheritance right or legalities.

Despite this, the County managed to survive regular Muslim attacks as well as a major siege (1271) through careful diplomatic balancing between the competing Muslim states of the Middle East, finally falling to the Mamluk Sultan Qalawun of Egypt in 1289 because of a failure of their diplomatic balancing act (they chose to rely on an alliance with the Mongols – who didn't come through).



The Principality of Antioch (1098-1268)

The city was captured after a long siege in 1098, and the principal leader of the besieging force, Bohemond of Taranto, declared himself Prince, and made the declaration stick.

However, the area's small population (the City itself only had an estimated 20,000 people living within the walls) and precarious situation meant it spent most of its existence as a vassal of sorts to, firstly, the Romans, then to the Kingdom of Cilicia and, in its final decade, even more precariously, to the Mongol Ilkhanate of Persia before finally being conquered by the Egyptian Mamluks.

The Kingdom of Jerusalem (1099-1291)

Established within days of the taking of Jerusalem (15 JUL 99) with *Godfrey of Bouillon* as its first ruler, as *Protector of the Holy Sepulchre*. When he died within a year he was succeeded by *Baldwin I*, previously the *Count of Edessa*, who was the first to style himself *King of the Latins of Jerusalem*.

The Kingdom was able to hold its own, and even expand, in the face of muslim disunity, through to the 1140s when *Zengi* of Mosul began to advance into the Crusader states ... taking Edessa in 1144. The Second Crusade to 'save' Edessa failed, and the Kingdom began a long decline – worsened by intermittent civil strife and civil war between the various factions in the Latin/Catholic ruling elite.

The whole of the Kingdom except for the port city of Tyre fell to Saladin after he destroyed the Latin army at the Battle of Hattin (1187). The Third Crusade was meant to retake the Kingdom for the Christians, but, although Saladin was defeated by Richard I of England twice (Arsuf, 1191, and Jaffa, 1192), the Crusaders were only able to recover a small coastal strip and Jerusalem remained in Muslim hands with the city of Acre becoming its capital.

Despite further, abortive, attempts by 'Crusades' to recover Jerusalem, the rump Kingdom was in obvious long slow decline and, eventually, the final remnant, the city of Acre itself, fell to the besieging Muslims on 18 MAY 1291.

The Templars

Title. The Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon (*Pauperes commilitones Christi Templique Salomonici*)

History. Founded in 1119 by *Hugues de Payens*, and given local approval by the King and Patriarchs of Jerusalem in 1120, but not a recognised military Order by the Church until a Papal Bull of 1139.

The King of Jerusalem granted them a wing of the Royal Palace on the Temple Mount, the supposed site of the Temple of Solomon, in the Al-Aqsa Mosque (which the Latins referred to, wrongly, *as* the 'Temple of Solomon').

Initially very poor, the Order gained high level support within the European Church and was able to represent itself as a suitable recipient for charitable donations towards the defence of the Holy Lands.

They were extremely successful in their efforts to raise money and were able to parlay this into the creation of a well equipped force of heavily armoured Knights who frequently acted as a shock-attack force in the vanguard of Crusader and Jerusalemite armies, often with outstanding and decisive effect.

Despite this fearsome military reputation the majority of the Templar order were *not* combatants – they were civilian specialists, administrators (especially estate managers and accountants) and skilled craftsmen and professionals.

With the loss of Outremer, support for the Order began to decline and their wealth made them a target ... notably King Philip IV of France who was *deeply* in debt to them. He decided the best way of liquidating the debt was to *liquidate the creditors* ... ordering a coup de main Templars in France on 13 OCT 1307.

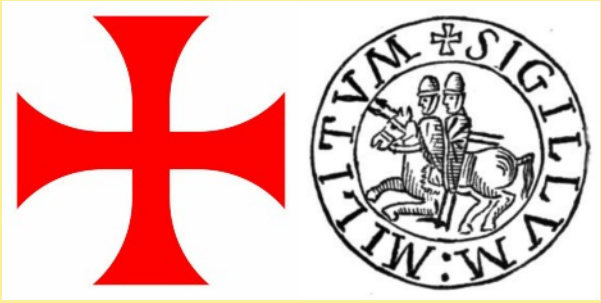
Torture was used to manufacture confession of all sorts of misdeeds and, allegedly, blasphemy and even devil worship and, eventually, dozens of the accused were burnt at the stake in Paris in 1310, without a chance to formally defend the obviously false charges.

All this despite Pope Clement repeatedly acknowledging in writing that they were innocent of all charges of heresy and that even those who had confessed (under torture) were absolved ... something acknowledged by the modern Catholic Church.

The culprit? A greedy, ruthless, King Philip IV who pressured the Pope with active and real threats against the Church lands and authority in France.

Financial Innovation. The Templar Order probably never numbered more than 20,000 members at its

Templar Cross (one variant, left) and Seal (right)



height, and probably no more than 10% were fully fledged Brother Knights. Their main strength was in the area of finance and banking.

A Knight or Noble who wished to campaign in the Holy Land (during a Crusade or not) could entrust the management of his estates to the Templars while he and his household were travelling ... for a fee. Likewise, they could place their liquid assets on deposit with a Templar Preceptory in Europe and receive what was, in effect, a Letter of Credit which was redeemable at Templar Preceptories along the route and in the Holy Land ... also for a fee.

Using the financial capital and liquid funds, their own and those under their management, the Templars engaged in large scale commerce – some part in the form of buying and managing landed estates, other parts in the form of underwriting trading ships and manufacturing. They were, at one stage, rich enough to buy the entire island of Cyprus from the Crusaders!

Organisation. This was regionally based – there were separate *Masters of the Order* for Anjou, Antioch, Aragon, Croatia, England, France, Hungary, Italy, Jerusalem, Poitu, Portugal and Tripoli all of whom were subject to the *Grand Master* who was assisted by *Visitors-General* who had the power to remove any member from Office, even up to regional Masters, in the case of misconduct.

Within the Order there were the *Knights-Brothers*, Squires (almost always contractors rather than Brothers), *Serjeants-Brothers* and *Chaplains.*

Knights had to come to the Order *as* Knights, as the Order did not have the power to confer Knighthood – they fought as Heavy Cavalry and were entitled to one or two Squires and 3-4 Horses and wore the famous white mantle with red cross.

Serjeants were entitled to only one Horse and usually fought as Light Cavalry and wore black and brown with a Templar Cross patch ... and, unlike other similar orders, key posts within the Order were specifically reserved for the Serjeants, *mostly* (but not always) administrative back in Europe and in the Holy Land.

Arma virumque cano

'Of Arms and the Man I Sing' – Publius Vergilius Maro (*Vergil*), ***Aenid***

This chapter examines the arms, armour and other military equipment (and the technologies underlying them) used by armies in the 10th-15th centuries – a period during which there were *both* incremental ***and*** revolutionary improvements over its inherited classical graeco-roman weapons (and other) technology.

The main emphasis is on the armour, weapons and other technologies of the 11th-14th centuries, in line with OM²'s coverage of other topics ... but overviews of the 10th and 15th centuries are given as well in order to give a more balanced understanding of where things started out at as well as where they were progressing.

The 10th Century

From the collapse of the Roman Empire in the West through to the late 9th and early 10th centuries the main problem facing armourers was the loss of the technological know-how to produce good quality *steel* (even good quality *iron* for that matter), though this was gradually changing at the end of the period.

Iron was *scarce* and steel was *rare* – and neither were produced in much quantity, not even as much as during the Empire at its height though, again, this was slowly changing. The result was that iron and steel were used as sparingly as possible – and even though weapons were regarded as more important (in many ways) to tools, the cost and general shortage of the raw materials influenced the types of weapons and armour that were produced.

Weapons

The most common weapons were unmodified farm tools, used only in desperation by the very poorest (***Axes, Spades & Shovels, Hoes, Sickles and Flails***) or simple weapons made from readily available natural materials (***Clubs and Cudgels***).



Straight-hafted Wood Axe

*Axes were woodsman's Axes, almost always single bladed, and with a straight handle and definitely **not** balanced for throwing. Spades were still almost entirely of wood construction, even the blade which would only have an iron rim at the digging edge.*

*Hoes are self explanatory – but the short-handled nature of Sickles (long handled Scythes weren't developed, or adopted, until after the Black Death) made them more of a desperation weapon than the rest. Flails were normally a (longish) handle to which several rods were (**not** chains) with metal loops, normally used to thresh (beat grains from ears of Wheat/Barley) the harvest.*

Clubs and Cudgels could be fashioned from readily available tree branches, suitably shaped ... and some might have iron studs or bands affixed to (theoretically) add to their damage capacity.

A step up from those were hunting weapons – ***Spears*** (including those light enough to be thrown) and ***Bows*** (usually short self-bows), possibly slings for the really desperate.

*Spears were probably the single most common weapon used by non-noble levies. They might have a short, usually leaf shaped, blade with a long cylindrical tang to go over the wooden haft **or** they might have a longer blade (called a **Framea**, originally a fighting spear, and generally well out of fashion by this period), possibly leaf shaped if very much more elongated, affixed to the haft by similar means.*

Combat weapons were usually the preserve of the well off – possibly wealthier peasants and townsmen and certainly Huscarles/Hearth Troops or proto-Knights and the nobility in general. The most prestigious, and most expensive, being the ***Sword*** (usually a variant of the late Roman ***Spatha***), though the ***Seax*** might still be found. Less commonly, ***Axes*** might be used – single headed throwing versions (like the ***Francisca***) or single or double headed versions on long or *very* long (two handed) hafts intended to be swung in close combat.

Some of the less poor peasants would be likely to have an heirloom Seax (or similar long, single edged, knife-sword) or Francisca (perhaps more than one of the latter).

Spears (including *throwing* versions) and ***Javelins*** were still used by the better off, still as their primary weapons – even mounted soldiers often used Spears (not really *Lances* at this early stage). ***Bows*** would also be used, though they might simply be better versions of the Short Self-bow used by hunters, possibly only with a heavier pull.

Armour

By far the most common protective item, owned by all but the very poorest, was a of ***Shield*** which were *never* ***ever*** made *wholly* of iron (or any other metal).The most common sort of shield up to the 10th century was round in shape, most commonly 30-36" in diameter, though Kite (triangularish) shields started to replace the older design late in the 10th century and were the dominant type by the early 11th.

Whatever the shape, shields were basically ***wooden*** *– typically a light variety that is not prone to splitting and which will tend to bind any blade biting into it (the wood was normally laminated in in more than one layer, and later types were made of several layers of laminate).*

Most shields were faced with leather or parchment and had some sort of edging, sometimes glued leather, but, increasingly, light metal – the leather facing was normally painted, often with some sort of design (which might be a personalised one, as ***Heraldry*** *is starting to get under way during the period). The centre of the shield is covered by a round, domed, metal* ***shield boss*** *which might be used offensively.*

Shields have a grip behind the Boss, where they are held by the hand, and a loop affixed near the outer edge which the upper arm is slipped through, meaning they are 'held' by two points.

The next most common type of armour was some sort of head protection – some sort of armoured ***Cap*** or ***Helmet***. There are very few surviving helmets from the period, but the two most common designs were rounded types almost like a skullcap or conical types ... both might have a nasal (a bar of metal extending down over the nose) but otherwise only covered the top of the head above the line of the ears.

The cheapest sort seem to have had criss-crossed iron strips (one front to back, one side to side) on top of a stiffened (and probably several layer thick) leather form in the quadrants between them.

Better ones would be of all iron construction – cheaper models of one or more parts welded and riveted together, usually front to back, though the conical models could have two criss-crossed iron strips (as the iron-leather composite one mentioned above) with metal quadrants welded to them on the inside.

The very best were of one piece construction – hammered into shape over a rounded wooden stake and much stronger as a result.

There is no real evidence for what might have been worn ***under*** *the helmet, but prior (and later) practise suggests that some sort of lightly padded cloth or leather cap or coif* ***could*** *either be worn or, possibly, glued or otherwise affixed to the inside of the helmet proper.*

Making a Sword – 6th-10th centuries

With the collapse of the Roman Empire in the west, its sophisticated metalworking (and mining) skills were largely lost and the migrating tribes had to rely on their own indigenous metalworking traditions for making weapons and armour.

The technology of the period could not smelt iron in billets large enough to form any sort of large item from a single one – so several smaller billets would be combined in a variety of ways.

For Swords three basic methods were used during the period – the two oldest methods were to *either* hammer the billets into sheets that were then hammered and forged into a single blade *or* to hammer them into thin rods that were then welded, forged and hammered into shape.

Better swordsmiths would form the core of a rod-welded sword from softer wrought iron billets and, as that was shaped, add better quality steeled strips for the cutting edges later in the process.

The ***best*** swords, however, were *pattern welded.* This involved hammering billets into strips or rods which were twisted together and forge welded to create the blade ... leaving visible patterns which were evidently regarded as highly aesthetically desirable.

The average sword of all types was 34-37" long and the long, parallel straight edged blade was 1¾" to slightly over 2" wide. Most had a *fuller* – a beveled groove running down the blade from just below the hilt to just above the tip which reduced the weight without compromising the blade's strength. They also lacked crossguards, instead retaining the 'ring guard' of the late Roman Spatha ... which was simply an oval shaped ring of material around the base of the hilt.

Combat Use

While these early post-Roman swords had points, they were designed mainly for *slashing* ... hence the long straight edges and that's how they were mainly used.

While a slashing blow might well skitter off scale, lamellar or mail the blow from the heavy blade was likely to damage the wearer by impact (bruising, breaking bones etc.) but such blows could also damage the fastenings that secured the scales, lamellae or the rings making up the mail armour, leaving weakened spots or even holes.

Only especially strong and lucky blows would tear holes outright. A more likely result would be cumulative damage resulting from many blows, possibly (usually) over several combats in the course of a single battle.

Still, there's a reason why some sort of padded or hard leather layer was worn under such armour.

Commoners would very possibly wear some sort of ***Leather Jerkin*** or ***Jacket***, but this was more 'normal' item of clothing than armour – made of standard, but thick, tanned leather rather than the ***Cuir Boilli*** *('Boiled Leather')* used later. Such clothing would offer only a little protection.

Body armour was much less common, and the preserve of the very wealthiest commoners, the gentry (Knights or equivalent) or the nobility and, of course, the retainers of the latter. By far the most common type in use in north-western Europe was ***Mail Armour***, but ***Lamellar*** and ***Scale Armour*** as well as ***Cuir Boilli*** was used, sometimes more commonly than *Mail*, in the Iberian peninsula, southern and eastern Europe.

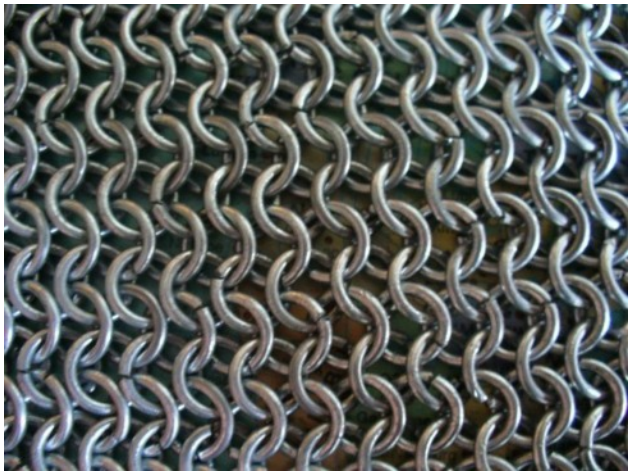
Coverage varied – the greater the coverage, the greater the cost (and weight!). The most common coverage for footmen was a ***Shirt***, from the neck to hips and to the middle of the upper arm.

*Lamellar doesn't go well (or at all, really) around joints, so a Lamellar shirt would have attached cuir boilli strips (**Pteruges** – 'feathers') or attached sections of Mail extending from the shoulder to provide minimal protection to the mid-upper arm.*

Alternately, less commonly, a lamellar curaiss (neck to waist, and shoulder to shoulder) would be worn over a cuir boilli shirt extending down to the elbow and, possibly, to the groin or even the knees).

Wealthier soldiers, especially those serving as cavalry, increasingly wore longer Hauberks of Mail which reached down to the knees and wrists ... those worn by horsemen had splits in front and back to allow them to sit astride their horses.

In those areas where the use of Lamellar or Scale was common some soldiers wore Mail *reinforced* with those types of armour – the extra protection usually for the chest and anterior (top) surface of the arms (and, rarely, legs).



European 4 in 1 Mail pattern (Butted links are purely a modern thing - they were *never* used in medieval times)

The 11th-14th Centuries

Better organised states created more settled conditions and encouraged the regrowth of trade and the rediscovery or development of better metalworking technologies ... so both iron and steel became less expensive over the course of these centuries, accelerating from the 13th century with the introduction of waterwheel mills designed to increase the efficiency and output of metalwork and smelting operations.

More, and cheaper, iron and steel led to considerable ongoing changes to both armour and weapon design during the period.

Weapons

Axes

War Axe. These remained a popular infantry weapon, especially for armoured Infantry, Men-at-Arms and dismounted Serjeants, throughout the period. The design was almost unchanged from earlier times – a 3lb (1.36) single bladed axe-head on a 4' (1.2 m) haft. They were (still) wielded two-handed and were still *sometimes* thrown as a line of attackers approached.

Bows & Crossbows & Slings

The English preferred Archers for combat while the continental armies, while they used Archers, preferred Crossbowmen. Why?

Partly because of historical accident – the English (like many Vikings) used a long self bow, which was quite powerful, for hunting and, secondarily, for war, while most of continental Europe used a short, less powerful, self bow ... so the English had an inherent advantage that needed to be balanced somehow.

The main reason, however, was that it took ***years*** to train a Bowman to any degree of accuracy, *any* sort of Bowman, while training someone to use a Crossbow effectively took mere months.

Construction. *It takes around a day to shape a Self bow, and around a week for it to dry. It takes around a week to craft a Composite Bow and **months** for the animal glue used to combine the components to dry.*

Arbalest. These are more powerful Crossbows with a steel bowstave and began to appear early in the 14th century ... but remain a specialist weapon for a minority of Crossbowmen because of the expense and the slow rate of fire.

They only became common in the mid 15th century and did not become popular till late in that century.

They are so powerful that to recock it was *very* slow, and required both a strong man and both hands (which is why there is usually a stirrup at the front of an Arbalest – so they can steady it with their foot).

*Mechanical **Windlasses** (attached to the firer's belt) or a **Cranequin** (an integral cog-and-toothed bar arrangement) did not appear until the 15th century.*

Maximum range was around 380-400 yards (350-365 meters). Rate of Fire was no more than one round per minute (and lucky to get that).

Arrows. Arrows were made from Birch, Ash or Oak and the shafts of those intended for use with a Longbow were from 27-37" (0.68-93.4 cm) long, probably averaging in at around 30" (76.2 cm).

They were notched at the base and wound around with thread just above the notch and behind the *fletching* so the bowstring could be placed firmly.

Arrows for a short Steppe-Nomad Composite Bow were 50-60 cm long (20-24") while those for the later Hungarian type were 22-28" long.

Arrowheads were of steel, and could either be ***Broadheads*** with two, three or four blades intended to cause massive tissue damage (usable for hunting *and* warfare) which were relatively short or ***Bodkin Points***, which were around 2" (5½ cm) long and 3/8" (1 cm) wide at the base, tapering to a sharp point.

Claims that Bodkin Point arrowheads were developed to better penetrate plate armour, but there is no contemporary evidence that supports such a claim and no hardened steel Bodkin Point arrowheads (what would have been needed to do this) have been found.

*Re-enactors have found that they will happily penetrate Mail armour and **may** be better at doing so than **Broadhead** arrows, though the current evidence is inconclusive.*

Some sources suggest that Bodkin Point arrowheads were a cheaper alternative to the expensive three- and four-bladed Broadhead arrows and were probably extensively used for peacetime military archery practise.

*Three and four bladed **Broadheads**, were **expensive** (slow to make and requiring some skill) and were only used for warfare – only the two-bladed versions of this design are likely to have been used for hunting.*

Fletchings were traditionally of *Goose Feathers* fixed with pitch and silk or other fine thread – normally three sets, one upright (and coloured, as it had to be instantly recognisable so it could be faces away from the bowstave) and the other two at a 30° angle.

Arrows come in two groups – ***Flight** arrows*, for ranged work and massed fire (usually with *Bodkin Points* or simple *Broadheads*), and ***Heavy Sheaf** arrows* for close range, armour-piercing, work (which could have either type of arrowhead, but most commonly would have three- or four-bladed *Broadheads*).


Lamellar Armour Breastplate

Lamellar and Scale Armour

Lamellar Armour. Lamellar armour is constructed from small, identical, metal plates (*lamellae*) punched with holes which allow them to be laced together (with rawhide thongs) – they were commonly laced so they overlapped right edge over the left edge of the one to the left and top of one over the bottom of the one above, tied down on each side, top and bottom.

Some modern reproductions reverse this, but there is no period evidence to suggest the design is correct ... but also no evidence to suggest that it would be less effective.

Closure seems most likely to have been on the left side, which would have been protected by the shield, and was probably a wrap-around design to allow it to be 'one size fits all', secured with a leather breast strap or straps (the archaeological evidence doesn't help, and the pictorial evidence is unhelpful).

While it would normally be worn with some sort of padded undergarment and, possibly, a rawhide or cuirboilli tunic, lamellar is, unlike *Scale Armour* (qv) ***not*** sewn to a base layer.

Scale Armour. Scale armour is very similar in basic design to *Lamellar* (qv), overlapping in the same way, but differ in that the scales are only secured along the top edge, sewn, probably with rawhide, to a cloth or leather undershirt.

*Lamellar and Scale **can** be constructed using materials other than iron (or even metal) for the metal plates or scales – both in the Mediterranean world in general as well as elsewhere in Eurasia. Leather, Bone and even wood could be used – but in the period in question in Europe, iron was the material of choice.*

Bolts. Shorter and heavier than arrows, Bolts had two fletchings (parchment or leather) at the end and were oval in cross-section with a square or diamond section iron tip and were 12-16" (30-45 cm) long. Bolts (or Quarrels) are normally carried in a (leather) case.

Bowstrings. These were made of *waxed* flax or linen and were only fitted when action was expected, both because they were susceptible to damp (and losing springiness) but also because keeping the stave under continual tension damaged *its* springiness. English Archers normally carried three Bowstrings.

Composite Bow. Composite Bows are made from a mixture of woods, each with different mechanical properties, plus horn on the belly of the bow and sinew soaked in animal glue on the back.

Composite Bows found on the peripheries of Western Europe (Hungary, the Steppes and parts of the Arab world) uses various types of Antelope, Goat or Sheep Horn (Horn from most breeds of cattle are unsuitable) and Sinew from the lower legs and back of Deer, Horses, Donkeys, Pigs, Sheep or Goats (Cow sinew is unsuitable).

Despite claims in older works, range and penetration for Composite Bows are marginally better than a Self Bow of the same draw weight – their main advantage is that they are *shorter*, which is of considerable importance for *mounted* archers.

When strung, a typical Hungarian Composite Bow was 1.2-1.4 meters long (47-55"). Steppe Nomad Bows were, on average, shorter than this, usually no more than 47-48" (1.2 meters).

English Longbowmen, especially mercenaries hired during the 14th century for the Hundred Years War, were often mounted – but they used their horses for ***mobility*** *only. Longbows were* ***far*** *too long to be used on horseback – and they weren't trained to fight that way in any case. They were really only Mounted Infantry.*



The glue used to construct Composite Bows is susceptible to damp weather, losing much of its strength if exposed (and requiring time – days to weeks to dry out, depending on the degree of exposure) – because of this they are normally carried (unstrung) in a waterproof leather Bow Case which also usually acts as a Quiver.

Crossbow. Easier to master, slower on the reload, than a Bow, Crossbows had been around since Graeco-Roman times (in Europe), mostly for hunting but *occasionally* for military use – and became popular with many *continental* armies during the 13th and 14th centuries.

The gun-like shape of the Crossbow coupled with its capacity to simply hold the bowstring without effort once cocked made aiming and training easier ... but the more complex, necessarily separate, recocking and reloading motions made it slower in its Rate of Fire.

Basically a bow-stave mounted transversely on the front of a stock *(Tiller)* with a groove for the Bolt and a grooved, rotating, nut to hold the bowstring, held (and then released) by a 'Z' shaped metal trigger mechanism.

Early Crossbows had a simple wooden bowstave but, by the early 14th century, these were replaced by more powerful composite staves of wood and horn which remained the standard through into the 15th century.

The maximum range for such composite bowstave Crossbow was between 300-350 yards (275-320 meters) but the *accurate* range for *aimed* fire was more like 60 yards (50-55 meters) or 200 yards (180-185 meters) for *massed* fire. Rate of Fire was no more than 4-6 rounds per minute.

Longbow. A *Self Bow* (i.e. made from a single piece of wood), Longbows are defined as Bows that are about the same height as the wielder, allowing for a long (and therefore powerful) draw. The basic design dates back to the *Palaeolithic* (*Oetzi* was found with one) and, since the *Bronze Age*, at least, they have preferentially been made from *Yew* ... though, English Longbows were in such demand during the Middle Ages that Wych Elm, Hazel and Ash were often substituted.

Bow length varied – from under 6' (1.82 m) to about 6'4"(1.9 m). There were notches at either end, sometimes reinforced with bone, for the bowstring to loop around and the center of the stave was wrapped with yarn for about a foot (30 cm) to improve the grip.

The *'pull'* of a Longbow (power to draw, or *nock*, it to the ear) varied, but was probably around 80 lb – and

the *maximum* range was probably around 300 yards (~275 meters). The *effective* range for massed fire by *Flight Arrows* was up to 200 yards (180-185 meters) and for *Heavy Sheaf Arrows* fired at individual targets it was around 80-100 yards (75-90 meters).

Rate of *aimed* fire was five arrows per minute for a skilled archer, or a dozen unaimed arrows (the latter probably as part of massed *area* fire).

*Bows were mandated weapons for the **Peasantry** for the obvious reason that the raw materials they were made of were dirt cheap and, even with processing costs, were affordable for a modestly well-off commoner. That's not to say that all Bows were equally cheap – obviously Yew staves, being in relatively short supply, would have been more expensive than the other, less desirable varieties.*

Quiver (or *Sheaf*). Quivers were *rare* – most Archers carried their arrows in a *Sheaf* tied (or otherwise affixed) to their belt. If a quiver *was* used in Europe it was for arrows *only*.

*Steppe Nomads, however, **did** use dual Bow & Arrow holding quivers (with a folding flap at the top to waterproof them), these were normally fixed to their saddles. Of course, these were for Compound Bows, often Compound **Recurve** Bows and were not all that much longer than the arrows they contained.*

A ***Sheaf*** of 12-24 arrows (a bunch of arrows tied together with either twine or a leather thong) was the basic requirement for archers if they were called up in the Feudal Levy (or for Mercenary Archers as part of their hiring fee). Presumably these 'free' arrows would mostly be Bodkin Points or simple, two-edged, Broadheads for reasons of cost.

*Additional arrows (presumably including a proportion of three- or four-bladed Broadheads) were carried in army stores. Archers could also gather arrows from the battlefield, assuming the other side had archers and they'd fired their weapons (but not **too** effectively).*

In preparation for combat they would fix these point down in the ground in front of them for ready use.

Short Bow. Similar in shape to the Longbow, these were shorter Self Bows, probably around 4' (1.2 m) and probably fired 24" (60-61 cm) arrows. Unlike Longbows, which were drawn to the ear, Shortbows were drawn to the Chest only, which means they would have had a much lesser draw weight – *maximum* range was probably on the order of 250 yards (228 m), *effective* range about 100 yards (90 meters) and *accurate* range for aimed fire about 40 yards (36 m).

Rate of Fire was probably similar to that of a Longbow – 5-6 arrows per minute for aimed fire and twice that many for area fire.

Arab Archery

The Apostle of God declared: *"The hand of man has not reached to an implement of war to which the bow and arrow are not superior"* and, later, *"Use ye the spear and the Arab bow, for with them was your prophet victorious and with their might have [allowed] ye [to] conquered the earth."*

[There are two basic types of Bow] ... the *Hand Bow* and the *Foot Bow* [Crossbow] ...

Hand Bows

Hijazi. There are several types – the *Qadib*, made of a single stave; the *Filq*, made of single stave split lengthwise; the *Sharij*, made of two staves split lengthwise and the *Mu'aqqabah,* which is backed (reinforced) with Goat's horn on the belly and sinew on the back.

Composite. The Masnu'ah or Murakkabah is made of four different materials – wood, horn, sinew, and glue. It has two siyahs (stiff tips), and a handle or grip (miqbad).

Persian or Turkish. These are made in the same way as the Hijazi composite bow but with the siyahs and arms being almost the same length with the central point in the middle or top third of the grip.

"To make a bow is the work of a year. The core is made of wood, most commonly in five parts, although some use more or less. These parts are the grip, the two limbs, and the siyahs. The parts are spliced together and glued with great care; when the bow is complete, one cannot see where one ends and the next begins.

This work is done in autumn, and then also the horn is sawed and fitted to the core. In the winter the horn is glued to the belly of the bow and bound there, and the glue is permitted to dry for some months.

*In spring the sinew is applied to the back of the bow. During the summer the bow is strung and shaped, and at the last painted." **Taybugha Al-Ashrafi Al-Baklamishi Al-Yunani**, c. 1385*

Foot Bows (Crossbows)

The Persian or Turkish Bow (see above) can be fitted to a stock with a foot loop, lock and trigger to make one type of Crossbow – and the peoples of Andalusia use a Crossbow of similar construction.

The Prophet declared it accursed ... either because they have a cross shape or because they were used by the Persians, who were pagan infidels. The truth is that such bows are are heavy, unwieldy and clumsy.

Book on the Excellence of the Bow and Arrow, circa AD 1500 (all except the section in blue italics)

Slings. These were still in limited use during the period, both standard (one handed) Slings and Staff (Two-handed) Slings, but only for specialised purposes (Sieges and Naval Warfare) rather than as a battlefield weapon – and even for those purposes they were on the way out by the early 14th, and virtually extinct by the end of that century.

The reason for their survival, as well as their decline, was their cheapness coupled with the long period of training needed to gain proficiency – the former meant that only the very poor tended to use them, and they were rarely suitable for any battlefield role because of their general lack of backup equipment and weaponry. The lengthy training meant that, as with the Longbow, alternative weapons, even if expensive, were cheaper in the long run.

The basic Sling could throw stone or lead bullets very cheaply, and the Staff Sling could throw larger and heavier items and so was especially effective for throwing incendiaries in various forms over castle or city walls.

The maximum range for around 270 yards (250m) and the effective and accurate ranges were similar to that of a standard Short Bow.

Daggers

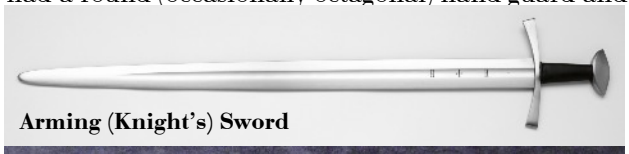
Baselard (14th Century on). This long dagger had a unique 'I' shaped hilt (with pronounced projections at the tang and the hilt making it look like a capital 'I') and were developed from the *Quillon Dagger (qv).*

Length-wise they were longer than the former and shorter than a sword ... and some of the longer versions could be used as such.

Misericorde (12th Century on). A long, narrow, knife supposedly intended to deliver a mercy blow to a dying soldier ... or, possibly, dispatching a badly wounded horse or mule.

It was ***not*** intended for combat use, though it *could* pierce Mail or, later, be thrust through the closed visor of a helmet, under the armpits or into any other unarmoured or lightly armoured part of the body.

Rondel Dagger (14th Century on). Rondel Daggers had a round (occasionally octagonal) hand-guard and pommel but the blade itself was flat (actually diamond shaped or a flattened, sharp sided, oval) and sharply tapering. Whole weapon length could be up to 20" (½ meter) and the blade at least 12" (30 cm).



Arming (Knight's) Sword



Rondel Dagger

They excelled as a stabbing weapon (either under- or over-arm), the long, thin, blade and sharp point being excellent for puncturing through or spreading mail links or being slipped through the eye-slits of a full face helmet but were often used as a short sword by Archers and other unarmoured infantry.

Quillon ('Knightly') Dagger (12th Century on). The very earliest depictions of a twin-edged dagger resemble miniature swords and were intended as secondary defence weapons

Swords

Swords are *expensive* – they contain a *lot* of quality metal, though *relative* cost comes down with the better metalworking technology mentioned elsewhere.

*Anyone who tells you that a sword, or any primarily **metal** weapon, somehow costs less than a weapon made primarily or completely from wood or other organic materials is living in a fantasy world. Often literally, as most Fantasy RPGs (try to) sell this load of old cobblers as if it is gospel true – but it wasn't. **Ever**.*

*The reason for this long-surviving load of rubbish is the fact that Bows and outrange most low level Magic spells and make Mages **targets** for low level archers coupled with the fact that it gives low level archers a considerable advantage over **melee** fighters ('Knights') of much higher level since they can pepper them with arrows for several rounds before the 'Knights' can get close enough to use their melee weapons ... assuming the Archers are stupid enough to allow them.*

*In other words, it is a **game balance** mechanism, and has not the slightest basis in **reality**.*

*So why didn't Archers (and Crossbowmen, and other Missile using troops) dominate on the battlefield? There are reasons, and good ones, but they are rooted in the reality of the **mass** battlefield, not individual combat. More on this later in this chapter.*

Method of Carriage. Swords were carried in ***Scabbards***, normally made from two thin strips of wood over which parchment, fabric or other flexible material was glued and sewn. The inside surfaces were usually of wool or fur, lightly oiled, to help keep the blade rust free *and* stop it binding on the draw.

There was usually a metal protector (*'Chape'*) fixed around the top opening and around the closed end of the scabbard to protect the softer materials.

Swords were affixed to a belt worn around the hips,

usually by leather thongs through to the 13th century, then by hooks and rings later, usually with the sword on the left side and a balancing dagger on the right.

Until the 14th century the scabbard either hung straight down from the belt or at a slight angle to the rear – during the 14th century angled hanging became the norm, and the angle back more acute, while the hooks and chains that attached to the belt rings were of differing lengths to ensure this

Arming Sword. An alternative name for the *Standard ('Knight's) Sword (qv)* and, later, for the *Hand-and-a-Half Sword (qv)* ... hinting at its purpose in 'arming' a member of the Gentry or Knightly class.

Estoc (Mid-Late 14th Century). These swords were developed, like the *Hand-and-a-Half* Swords (see below), as a response to the growing use of Plate Armour elements added to Mail armour. They were *thrusting* swords and to be *aimed* at chinks in an opponent's armour – typically their narrow blade had a flattened diamond or hexagonal cross section.

Contemporary pictorial representations show these swords being held at shoulder height, blade parallel to the ground, held forward like a mini-spear ... obviously ready to be thrust at relatively small, less heavily armoured or unarmoured, parts of an opponent's gear.

The earliest versions had sharpened edges – though using them to against plate armour would have been unwise! By the late 14th century *some* had no sharpened edges – and by the early 15th century this had become the dominant design.

Though this design became common, it never replaced the standard slashing sword (or Hand-and-a-Half sword) in popular use. The Estoc was carried as a secondary weapon, usually in a scabbard attached to the saddle or chained to the breastplate (if worn).

Falchion (13th-14th Century). This was probably a development of the *Seax* or other types of very long knives used by non-noble foot levies in earlier times, and was a common infantryman's weapon – especially for archers who would otherwise have no melee weapon to hand.

The Falchion was a single-bladed with cutting blade that typically curved upward more like a Machete blade rather than coming to a point like most other swords, concentrating the weight toward the tip to give the blow more force at that point.

Very few (less than a dozen) examples have survived, but they seem to have been around 35-38" (90-97 cm) long and had a thinner blade than the 'standard' sword – the current theory is that they were intended mainly for use against cloth or leather armour as worn



Medieval 'Fencing'

A good fencer should know his sword and know how to grip it properly ... grip it firmly with both hands between the crossguard and the pommel ... this is a more secure grip than simply gripping with one hand on the pommel [and one on the grip] ... you will strike hard and true ... with the pommel swinging and turning into the strike ... if you pull the pommel your strike will not be as strong.

When you fence you should be careful with your footwork ... you should use your reach as much as possible over moving so you can step forward or back as needed [in response to your opponent] ... be ready for a step backward or forward ... two shorter steps are better than one long one ... or a short leap with short steps [in some situations] ...

Always strike for openings against the upper body in preference to openings against the lower body ... attack over your opponent's sword hilt with quick, artful, strikes ... you should close with him from the right hand side rather than straight on.

The basic teaching is to go left, follow right, with your strikes – strong fencers alternate left and right.

Don't fence above your left if you are a right hander and if you are a left hander don't fence from the right, instead fence from the high left to low right.

Avoid attacking from front on, you should attack from an angle, coming from the side where you can reach your opponent more easily than from the front.

The Basic Attacks taught were the High attack (from above), the Middle attack (side to side), the Low attack (from below), a Stabbing attack and a Slicing attack.

The 'Master' Attacks taught were the *Zornhau ('Wrath')*, a diagonal attack from top to bottom; the *Krumphau ('Crooked')*, a vertical attack from side to side' *Zwerchhau ('Thwart')*, a high horizontal attack with the backhand edge of the sword from the right or the forehand edge from the left; *Schielhau ('Squinting')*, a blow aimed at the opponent's head, striking downwards.

Adapted from ***Hanko Döbringer's Fechtbuch on the Teachings of Johannes Liechtenauer*** circa 1389

by most lightly armed spearmen or archers though, as armies became more professional and the use of Mail armour spread downwards through the ranks, later Falchions (from the mid to late 14th century) developed thicker, heavier, blades to increase their effectiveness against flexible armour.

'Knight's' (Standard) Sword (10th-13th Century). ***The*** main type of sword during this period, though not *specifically* a 'Knight's' sword even though many (mostly later) sources refer to it as such and often claim (without much, if any, evidence) that its use was restricted to the Gentry or Nobility.

*As with most medieval 'laws', who was going to **enforce** this, there being no Police? In reality anyone who could afford to buy a sword **could** – or could steal or forage one (probably off a dead Knight on the battlefield).*

*Would they have the training to use it properly? If they were rich enough to buy one, you could expected a chance of having (or being able to purchase) a degree of training – if it was battlefield booty, then there was less chance of this (but 'less' is **not** the same as **'no'**).*

These swords were about 33-36" (83-92 cm) long, tapered very slightly from hilt to point, still with a full length 'fuller' and now had a crossguard (the tips of which were often bent downwards toward the blade) to provide better protection for the wielder's hand.

The tang might have a pommel, welded or screwed on, often a flat wheel shape by the end of the 13th century ... but earlier in the period it might simply be the end of the tang split and hammered over the grip.

This type of sword weighed around 3-4 lb (1.36-1.81 kilos) and, when swung stiff armed, could shear through an unarmoured limb or the neck.

Knight's ('Hand and a Half') Sword (14th Century). As a result of the adoption of plate armour elements to the basic mail Hauberk, a longer and heavier type of sword was adopted to have a better chance of defeating the improved defences.

Contemporary sources refer to them as 'Long' Swords or as 'Swords of War', the 'Hand and a Half' designation, though useful and descriptive, is a modern conceit.

This new type of sword was generally around 4' (121-122 cm) long and had a more pronounced taper from hilt to tip. They also had a longer tang/grip to allow them to be wielded with either one or, more commonly, two hands and mostly had a largish triangular pommel to balance the weight of the longer blade. Such a sword weighed in at 4½-5 lb (2-2¼ kilos).



Falchion



Lugged Spear

SPEARS

Spears were the most common weapon on the battlefield through most of history down to the dominance of firearms – for the simple (and obvious) reason that they used very little metal (which was expensive) and were therefore cheap and easy to make.

There were basically ***two*** types used during the 11th-14th centuries, *throwing* spears and *thrusting* spears.

*Yep. Almost all of the many, **many**, **many** Polearms of various sorts listed in almost all fantasy RPGs. Simply. Didn't. Exist. **Yet**.*

*They evolved **from** the weapons below, partly to suit better trained, more professional, infantry and partly to deal with better types of armour starting to become common at the **end** of the 14th century ... **or** to deal with (full) Plate Armour that doesn't really come into existence until the second quarter of the 15th century.*

Angon (Throwing or Thrusting). This had a *barbed* leaf-shaped spearhead evidently copying the purpose of the old Roman *Pilum*, lodging in shields and therefore fouling them and making them useless.

The shank of these spears (thrusting *and* throwing) were around 21" long – long enough to make them difficult to simply cut off when used to 'fence' with sword or axe wielders on the battlefield or by soldiers whose shield had been fouled by one.

Few or none have survived with hafts intact, so the overall length can only be estimated – mostly in the 7-9' (2.13-2.75 meters) range, but they could be as short as 5'3" (1.6 meters) and as long as 10' (~3 meters).

The best guess is that the shorter hafted weapons were used as javelins/pila and the longer hafted ones were used as fighting spears, either individually or as part of a Shield Wall or similar formation.

Throwing range for those versions intended for such use would probably have been around 12-15 meters (40-50') based on modern re-enactment experience.

Bill (Thrusting, *possibly* 14th Century on). Similar to a *Halberd (qv)* and supposedly based on the agricultural *bill hook*, this weapon had a curved blade off one side of the spearhead, often with a hook on the base of the side opposite.

Bills are firmly dated only to the 15th century, but it is possible less sophisticated versions (actual Bill-Hooks without any hook on the reverse side) may have been used earlier. During the 15th century a spike was added in place of the hook – enabling the full force of a swing to concentrate in it to (hopefully) penetrate plate armour.

Lengths are recorded for later versions (16th century onwards) with shorter models running to 1.5-1.8 meters (5-6') and longer ones to 8-9' (2.4-2.7 meters).

Cavalry Spear (Thrusting, to 11th Century). There was relatively little difference between early Cavalry spears and those used by the infantry as they were used in a similar way – mostly one handed, overhead, for thrusting; less common, two handed and, occasionally, couched under the arm for a charge.

Cavalry Spears were generally similar to the basic *Lugged* or *Winged Spear (qv)* design, but typically 8-10' (2.4-3 meters) long.

*The reason for the changeover to the **Lance** (**qv**) is hotly debated – claims that it was **entirely** (or mainly) due to the introduction of the Stirrup into Europe are no longer regarded as believable, especially as modern re-enactors have found them to provide little or no actual assistance for a charge with couched lance, though it **does** make post-charge melee combat from horseback more effective.*

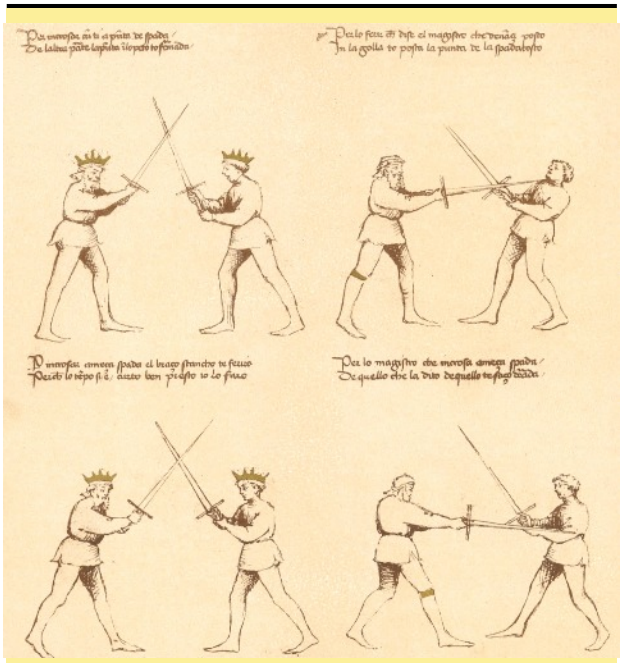
*So why the change? Most theorists now seem to accept that it was **not** an inevitable **result** of the introduction of feudalism and the weak central government this was meant to mitigate. As soon as central governments started to grow in power, the ability to raise and pay trained spear (or, later, polearm) armed infantry proved a better investment.*

*Also note that Spears of this type **continued** in use with non-Knightly cavalry, even Light Cavalry, throughout the period and beyond, never being replaced by Lances.*

Halberd (Thrusting, 14th century on). A development of the spear designed for use against cavalry, it has an axe blade on one side and a hook (for catching limbs, possibly for pulling mounted enemies off their steeds) and a spike projecting from the top.

The whole weapon, blade, shank and haft, was usually 1.5-1.8 meters (5-6') long.

Halberds began to replace Spears of all sorts in continental armies during the 14th century as did other types of Polearms from the 15th century.



Fiore dei Liberi (late 14th century)

Abraçare ('With Arms' – Unarmed Combat)

Unarmed Combat can be done for sport or in anger [in combat] ... when fighting for your life it must be practised with *'every guile and deceit and cruelty.'*

If your enemy is unarmoured ... '*attack the eyes, the nose, the soft under the chin and the flanks*' attempt to *'break the arms and the legs'*, to dislocate them, to throw them and to bind their arms so *'a man does not have ... defence and cannot move freely.'*

Survival trumps chivalry. Any stratagem is OK.

Daga Cuts (Dagger or Knife Fighting)

Downward Strikes. These can hurt the head and the body from the elbow to the top of the head but are less effective for attacks below the elbow.

Left Side Strikes. These can be aimed at anything from the elbows to the temple (head) but cannot be done from the defensive.

Right Side Strikes. These can also be aimed at anything from the elbow to the temple and are safer and surer than Left Side strikes.

Middle Strikes. These can strike towards the head to under the chest and can be covered with the left hand.

The MS covered defending against opponents armed with dagger or sword (or other weapons) if unarmed, the use of daggers and batons as subdual weapons and the use of swords, mainly against unarmoured foes ... it would work as well against the part-mail and part-plate armour only just becoming dominant at the end of the 14th century and still be relevant against most armour, which would still be mail.

Lance (Thrusting, *slowly* from 12th Century). This developed from the *Cavalry Spear (qv)* during the 12th century and only a recognisably 'modern' from by the mid 13th. Length increased to 12-14' (3.17-3.7 meters), a metal ring (the *Graper)* was added in front of the grip (to prevent the hands slipping along it on impact).

*The flared and extended **Vamplate** and associated thickened shaft in front of it that is the 'normal' depiction of a Medieval Lance did not begin to develop until the second quarter of the 15th century.*

Lugged/Winged Spear (Thrusting, to 13th Century). These had a lugs or wings at the base of the spearhead or at the base of the long shank whose purpose is uncertain – *either* that to prevent too deep penetration (therefore becoming difficult to pull out) *or* were intended to aid in spear-fencing on the battlefield.

Again, few have survived, but overall length would probably have been in the 6-8' (1.8-2 meter) range.

*By the 13th century the Lugged/Winged Spear had just begun to develop along two different lines for use on the battlefield – one eventually transformed into the **Spetum** (aka **Corseque**) and the other became the **Partisan** (qv).*

The basic design, however, continued in civilian hunting use well beyond the period – Boar Spears, for example.

Partisan (Thrusting, 13th Century on). A development of the *Lugged* or *Winged Spear (qv)* with a more pronounced, but still relatively small set of (often curved) 'wings' that were now sharpened on both sides as part of its combat repertoire – otherwise of similar length and basic design.

Spetum (Thrusting, 13th Century on). A development of the *Lugged* or *Winged Spear (qv)* with a pair of curved or straight angled blades projecting from the base of the shank and which are around half the length of the actual blade – otherwise of similar length and basic design to its ancestor.

Only the top side of these angled blades were sharpened which allowed them to be so long compared to the *Partisan's (qv)* wings as this made them stronger.



Body Armour

There were some changes in the types of body armour available during the period, but the main changes were in the relative availability of the different types on the battlefield.

*Even at the end of the 14th century, many Knights and mounted Men-at-Arms were still wearing Mail armour often with only Aketons and/or Gambesons as additional protection. Some more might also wear a Jack of Plates or Brigandine over their Mail – relatively few were able to afford the full, but still **partial**, plate armour which has been described above.*

***Full Plate** armour doesn't come into existence until the mid 15th century and was never as common as movies and historical novels would have use believe. Most heavily armoured soldiers, foot and cavalry, wore Brigandines over Mail with some additional bits and bobs of Plate simply because full plate was **incredibly** expensive.*

Important Note: We're looking specifically at a period of four hundred years ... so the terms *often* changed, and the meaning of the terms *equally often* changed making identification and description of what each armour 'type' was somewhat difficult.

Worse, many of the types of armour described below, or the names used to describe them, continued to be used *well* after the end of the 14th century ... and, of course, the *actual* meanings, or *exactly* what sort of construction, method of use or materials *often changed considerably* as well.

*The descriptions below have been developed from a variety of sources in an attempt to be as accurate as possible ... but the sources don't always **agree**, or aren't always **definite** as to dates. They're a **best estimate** and may not agree with sources you consult, which **doesn't** mean your source is correct ... or incorrect. You pays your money and you takes your chances.*

Aketon

Continuously developed and modified through the period, the Aketon was a padded, quilted garment of thick, rough, linen that was normally worn *under* other armour.

The stuffing in the Aketon could be scraps of wool, cloth or even horsehair.

If worn under Mail or Mail & Plate Armour it extended to protect the areas covered by them (that is, potentially neck to mid thigh and the arms down to the wrist); if worn as armour by itself it would generally extend to the knees or just below, but would usually have a split at front and back to allow freedom of movement.

By the 14th century at least some are shown in MSS to

be fastened by buttoning or lacing up the front, but earlier depictions do not show what form of fastening might have been used.

Also see ***Coat of Plates*** *(qv)* and ***Gambeson*** *(qv)* for other developments on the original design.

Brigandine

These are a development of the earlier *Coat of Plates (qv)* and, like them, covers only the chest and back – it is constructed from many more, and smaller, plates (typically scores, sometimes as many as a hundred – rather like a simplified form of *Lamellar (qv)* – which made it much more flexible than the earlier *Coat of Plates)* riveted between two layers of material. It first appeared in Eastern Europe, developed from Mongol armour in the 13th century, and slowly spread into Western Europe by the 14th century as it proved its effectiveness.

The rivets (or nails) used to fix the metal plates were often polished, even covered with copper, or even silver or gold on expensive sets, and arranged in patterns (typically triangular groups of three) on the outside face. By the 14th century at least it was in the form of a sleeveless Doublet and was buttoned or laced up the front.

Coat of Plates

Additional torso armour worn over a Mail Hauberk, the *Coat of Plates* was simply a series of overlapping metal plates riveted inside a canvas or leather vest. It differs from the *Brigandine (qv)* in that it is intended as *supplementary* rather than *stand alone* armour *and* in that it is constructed of relatively few large, thick, plates (making it quite inflexible).

Gambeson ('Padded Jack')

The Gambeson was very similar in design and construction to the *Aketon* (qv) the difference being that it was normally worn *over* armour and first *definitely* appear in late 11th and early 12th century sources and remained popular long past the end of the 14th century.

Gambesons were worn *under* armour were much like *Aketons (qv)*. In fact, there doesn't seem to be much difference between them – the naming conventions may simply be confusing one with the other.

Those worn *over* armour, however, were much, *much*, heavier *and* had a higher collar. They were often faced with leather or heavy canvas and at least 18 (possibly as many as 30) layers of linen or wool.

*Layered textile armour such as the Gambeson can stop even heavy arrows or crossbow bolts – and even resist sword blows with some effectiveness. It is also **cheap** ... though it **is** stifling to wear for a chunk of the typical spring-summer-autumn campaign season (especially in North Africa or the Holy Lands ... and, yes, common soldiers **did** wear this sort of armour on the Crusades!)*



Mail Armour

Never ***ever*** *Chain Mail*. Mail is constructed from small metal rings, usually alternating rows of butted *and riveted* rings and solid (punched) rings in a pattern such that each ring was linked to four others ... until the 14th century when they went entirely to riveted rings and changed from round to wedge shaped rivets.

Both types of rings were made from wrought iron – the use of steel had to wait until better (steel geared) mechanisms for drawing wire were developed, which only occurred in the mid to late 15th century.

Wire was made by hammering one end an iron billet to a rough point and then drawing it through a series of holes of gradually smaller size punched in an iron plate until the required gauge was achieved (Steel wire could not be drawn through an iron plate).

*This was done by grasping the pointy end of the billet with a pair of pincers and **pulling**. The length extruded depended on the length of the Smith's arm ... until the 14th century when the introduction of waterwheel powered swings allowed a much longer draw.*

European mail was ***never*** *ever* made from *butted* (i.e. non-solid, non-riveted) links (modern reproduction items are, often, for reasons of cost). Butted mail is particularly vulnerable to splitting open if hit squarely by a thrusting attack of any sort. So, no, ***no such thing*** as *Butted Mail*, not in real life.

Helmets

The design of Helmets also changed from the 11th-14th centuries ... the earliest were continuations of the older types from the 10th century.

Chronologically (more or less) – ***Cervelliere*** *(late 12th century, a simple metal skullcap covering the top of the head, worn by infantry [possibly with a mail coif, if particularly well equipped] or under another helmet),* ***Bascinet*** *(early 13th century, a development of the Cervelliere ... backward pointing top, extended down to cover head and neck, with a visor), (****Great Helm*** *(early 13th century, flat topped, semi-cylindrical, no visor, limited visibility),* ***Hounskull*** *(mid 14th century, similar to Bascinet, but with moveable visor ... limited visibility on par with the Great Helm with visor down).*

Helmets were always either provided with internal padding or were worn with some sort of padded undergarment.

Early in the period through to mid 14th century they were worn with a full mail *Coif* (covering the head, neck and upper shoulders, separate from the Hauberk) ... often with a *Cervelliere.*

The later full face helmets might have a mail *Aventail* (mail attached to the Helmet and dropping down to cover the neck and shoulders) instead of a Coif and, from the early 14th century these might be detachable.

Jack ('Jack of Plates')

Almost identical to the *Brigandine (qv)* except the overlapping metal plates were *sewn* between layers of heavy cloth which made it considerably cheaper.

Like the Brigandine, it was normally found in the shape of a doublet (i.e. only covering the torso down to just below the waist) and also continued to be used well beyond the end of the 14th century.

Later in the period the metal plates used in both the Jack and the Brigandine were increasingly recycled from damaged or obsolete pieces of Plate armour.

Lamellar

This continued to be used, especially in Russia (where it was the dominant form of body armour, even for the nobility), Eastern Europe and the Holy Lands, virtually unchanged from earlier forms.



Brigandine

Mail

The basic technology (except as noted in the sidebar opposite) but there *were* changes – full length Hauberks became more common (standard, even), typically with full length sleeves (some even with mail mittens at the end, later metal plates attached to thick leather) down to the mid thigh, and mail leggings (*Cuisses* – attached to a belt under the Hauberk) became common for horsemen (sometimes with mail bootees, but more often with something more like a *Sabaton (qv)* covering the feet).

The transition between Mail Hauberks and Leggings and Plate and Mail armour was slow and somewhat difficult to define – at what point, exactly, does the addition of the odd piece of plate at vulnerable points on the Mail become more than 'just' Mail?

As an intermediate measure before the development of the Coat of Plates and Brigandine, some Knights started wearing doubled mail over their upper chest – but the real developments are in the addition of over or undersuits to supplement the Mail (*Aketons*, *Gambesons* and *Coats of Plates*).

Partial Plate

As noted above in *Mail (qv)*, the transition between Mail and Partial (then, later, in the 15th century, Full) Plate armour was *slow* and *gradual.*

The first step was the addition of ***Poleyns*** (early 13th century) which were initially a flat cup fitted over the kneecap but, by the mid 13th century, extensions to protect the outside front of the knee joint and the upper shins had been added. These were strapped on at the knee and, later at the knee and mid calf.

In the last quarter of the 13th century ***Cuisses*** were added to protect the thigh. These were initially made from heavy padded material (like an *Aketon* or *Gambeson*) but, very quickly, vertical strips of metal were riveted inside (like a Brigandine). By the middle of the 14th century these composite *Cuisses* started to be *slowly* replaced by full plate thigh guards – and completely replaced the older style (at least in newly made armour) by the last part of that century.

By the early 14th century ***Greaves*** were added for additional protection for the lower leg and were quickly combined with the *Poleyn* as a one piece, and ***Sabatons*** of small plates riveted to heavy fabric or leather appeared to protect the feet.

A saucer shaped cup to protect the elbow, the ***Couter***, started to appear in the last half of the 13th century and had become almost universal by the beginning of the 14th century – and, by the second quarter of that century curved plates protecting the upper arm (the ***Rerebrace***) and forearm (the ***Vambrace***) had been added to it.

Circular ***Besagues*** were often fitted to the front of the shoulders and the outside of the elbow for added protection at around the time the *Vambrace* and *Rerebrace* were added.

The extended bag mittens on a Mail Hauberk were gradually replaced by ***Gauntlets*** of leather with metal plates riveted to them from the late 13th century, and this was gradually replaced by a single piece of metal from above the wrist joint to the knuckles by the mid 14th century.

Chest protection was usually in the form of an *Aketon* and/or a *Gambeson (qv)* over the Mail Hauberk through to the middle of the 14th century with something like a ***Breastplate*** only appearing around the same time formed from three jointed, upward overlapping plates ... and this slowly developed into a single piece item through to the end of the century.

Shields

The long Norman *Kite Shield* was gradually replaced by a shorter version, the ***Heater*** *Shield* by the early part of the 13th century, which was only around 36-38" (95 cm) long and used mainly by the Cavalry. This was made of wood about ¾" thick and covered with parchment or thin leather on both sides, slightly curved, and with attached neck and arm straps as well as a pad for the fist.

Archers and lightly armed Infantry, if they carried a shield at all, tended to carry a small round shield called a ***Buckler***, about 12" (30 cm) across which was held at arms length and used for parrying. It was normally hung from the belt, especially by Archers, and only taken up in hand when an enemy was approaching close enough for actual melee combat.

Heavier Infantry carried a round or oval shield similar to those carried in the earlier period.

Crossbowmen especially (but occasionally Archers) would sometimes be sheltered by ***Pavises*** which were large, light, rectangular shields of more than man height and constructed from parchment or leather covered wickerwork ... these were most used in siege situations to allow them to get closer to the defended walls and towers while remaining covered. The *Pavise* was not carried or held by the Crossbowman or Archer but by a special *Paviser*.



How a Man Schall be Armyd at his ese

He shall have no shirt upon him except for a Doublet of fustian lined with satin, cut full of holes. The Doublet must be strongly built; the points must be set at the break in the arm in the front and back. To lace the gussets of Mail must be sewn onto the doublet also at the break in the arm and at the underarm.

The arming points must be made of fine twine like that with which men make strings for Crossbows. These points must have tips for lacing. And they must be waxed with leather-workers's cord, such that they will neither stretch nor break.

He should wear a pair of hose made of worsted cloth. Around the knees should be wrapped bulwarks of thin blankets to reduce the chafing by the leg harness.

He should wear a pair of thick shoes, provided with points sewn on the heel and in the middle of the sole to a space of three fingers.

First you must set the Sabatons and tie them to the shoe with small points that will not break. And then the Greaves and Cuisses over the breeches of Mail.

Then place the Taces upon his hips. And then the Breast and Backplates, the Vambraces and Rerebraces and then the Gauntlets.

Hang the Dagger on his right side, his Short Sword upon his left side in a round ring that it may be lightly drawn. And then put his Cote upon his back.

The Bascinet follows, laced to the cuirass in front and back that it sits just so. And then his long sword in his hand, a small pennant bearing the figure of Saint George or Our Lady in his left hand.

Now he is ready to take to the field. (Late 15th century)

Castle & Keep

What would the Middle Ages (and Fantasy RPGs) be without some castles scattered all over the place? Like the Knight mounted on his brewery horse Destrier wearing chromed full plate armour they're iconic ... and the picture most people have of them in their minds is as realistic as that of the Knight mentioned.

Not very. Indeed, not much at all ...

For a start, most Castles ***aren't***, and *never were*, ***actual*** Castles ...

What *is* a Castle?

The most generally accepted definition of what exactly constitutes a Castle is *'a private fortified residence belonging to a Lord or Noble.'*

The thing is that many 'castles' were, in fact, never *residences* ... which makes them ***forts*** or ***fortresses***. Some *were* residences (*Palaces* and *Manor Houses*, for example), but weren't really *fortified*. And fortified Towns and Cities aren't the same at all.

Of course, to confuse the issue, all of the above used identical architectural and construction techniques. So, for example, City, Fortress and Castle walls all had ***machicolations*** *and most of them had* ***towers*** *and* ***fortified gateways*** *... and many other basic features.*

They were also a mostly medieval European and Middle Eastern development, at least to begin with, and the first examples start to appear specifically in western Europe (mainly France and Germany) the aftermath of the collapse of the Carolingian Empire in the 9th-10th century.

Castle Development

The very earliest castle type were purely earth and timber constructions and either took advantage of or enhanced natural terrain features or, less commonly, incorporated remnants of earlier fortifications such as Celtic Hill Forts and Roman Forts or fortified Towns.



Very simple early Keep

They were generally *very* simple, and lacked almost all of the features that were later to become common to castle design.

Early Castles (9th-10th centuries)

Ringwork Castles

These were probably the earliest castle design and were simply a ditch and bank topped by a wooden Palisade (*probably* with no internal walkway) with a gate ... there seem to have been no towers on the very earliest examples.

Inside the area enclosed by the palisade would be the Lord's dwelling, Stables, Storehouses, a Well, housing for some of the more important servants and for important castle services (such as a Smithy and a Carpenter's workshop) ... which would all have been of wood at this stage. None of the internal structures were fortified at the very earliest stages.

They might be situated on level land but, if at all possible, were more likely to be sited to take advantage of a natural rise in the ground or even a small hillock – in effect, they were *Motte & Bailey Castles (qv)* but without the Motte.

In some places they were probably developments, or redevelopments, of earlier ***Ringforts*** *(especially common in Ireland and Britain), many (perhaps most) of which date back to the Iron Age.*

A Ringfort differs from a Ringwork Castle in that they were fortified farming settlements serving communities of commoners and coming in various sizes and were not ***purely*** *noble or lordly residences.*

For later developmental phases, see the section below on *Motte & Bailey Castles.*

Motte & Bailey Castles

Motte & Bailey Castles are simply *Ringwork Castles* which have an artificially raised mound *('Motte')* on which a *Keep* is built. The evidence suggests that they are slightly later chronologically as the earliest *Ringwork Castles* do not have Keeps.

The very earliest versions of the basic design are otherwise identical to the *Ringwork Castles* – a simple Palisade (again, probably without a wall-walk), no towers, a gate and an internal protected area (the *Bailey*) with the Lord's Hall and other buildings.

The Motte might be to one side, partly separated, from the Bailey or it might be in the centre but the Keep raised on it (of wood, like everything else in the

structure) is *not* intended to be a residence ... it is purely a defensive structure of last resort.

Developments & Improvements. The need for better defences was recognised fairly quickly and one of the first improvements was to erect some sort of tower (still wooden) either over or on either side of the gateway and, possibly (though certain evidence is lacking) building wall-walks on the inside of at least parts of the Palisade.

The second level of improvement was to build a more substantial Keep which, though still not intended to be the Lord's residence, was capable of housing many more of the Castle's occupants in emergencies ... in some cases additional wooden towers might also be erected at key points along the palisade.

Modern estimates suggest that a small Motte would take as little as 1000 man days to erect and a large one perhaps as many as 24000 ... depending on how the work was scheduled, this would mean such a castle could be completed, including the palisade and internal buildings in as little as four and probably no more than nine months ... and most of the work could be done by unskilled corvee labour.

Toward the very end of the 10th century *some* of the more important castles were partly or fully rebuilt in stone, and this became the most common construction material in later centuries.

Standard Castles (11th-14th centuries)

Rebuilt Ringwork and Motte & Bailey Castles

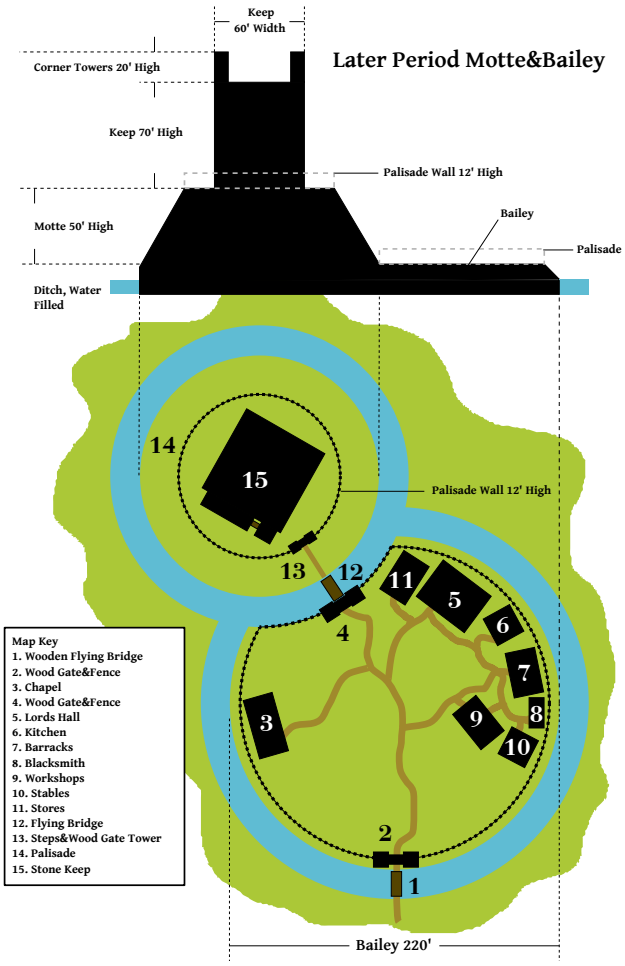
The 11th-12th centuries saw many of the earlier types of Castles being abandoned ... but many were also rebuilt in stone.

Initially the Keep and the Gatehouse (Tower) were most likely to be stone built, but, over time, the curtain walls for the Bailey and the Keep and at least some of the internal buildings were as well.

Additionally to the basic rebuilding, more towers were added and the Keep expanded (which might need the Motte to be expanded as well) to allow living quarters to be incorporated. Important members of the household (typically of Knightly status) might be given quarters in some of the Towers and the Lord and his family might relocate to the Keep.

Where an older site was re-used, the stability of the Motte under the increased weight of a stone-built keep required it to be expanded or strengthened (or both) ... and, at least sometimes, this would be done by digging down and including deep stone footings.

Alternately, it could be done by building stone walls around the small, old, Motte, and then expanding it, covering them over, but providing extra support. Both



*these arrangements supported a heavy-construction, all-stone, thick walled (avg. 14' [4¼m] thick, 50' [15¼m] high), Keep, possibly with corner towers, the **Tower Keep** (typically on a 50 x 60' [15¼ x 18¼m] base).*

*Finally, on some sites, the 'Keep' was reconstructed with a stone external wall (a **'Shell Keep'**) with the internal buildings still of wood.*

Equally possibly, the Lord might simply build a newer, stone, Manor House or Great Hall in the Bailey and continue to live therein, reserving the Keep for emergencies.

Concentric Castles

These stared to appear in the late 12th century in the Holy Lands, as a Crusader response to the more sophisticated war-making capabilities of their Muslim opponents. They only start to be built in Europe during the 13th century

The earliest example is *Belvoir Castle* which has two separate sets of curtain walls, one completely enclosed inside the other, and a separate stand-alone Keep (usually a *Tower Keep* rather than a *Shell Keep*, given that these castles were built by those who could afford the best) inside the second set – the outer walls are overlooked by the inner curtain, and can be covered with fire from there, and the inner curtain can be, likewise, covered with fire from the central Keep.

Belvoir Castle (1168)

A ***Concentric*** *Castle* built by the Knights Hospitaller on a plateau above the Jordan River valley near what was an important river crossing during medieval times. The Castle was held by the Hospitallers until 1189 when it surrendered to the Muslims after an eighteen month siege – the Muslims held it until 1241 (though it was abandoned from 1219) when it was returned to the Franks who then held it until 1263.

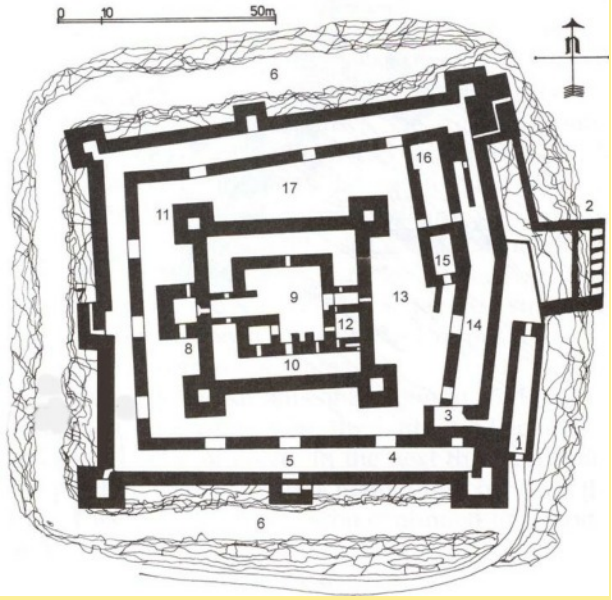
Map Key

(1) Main (Eastern) Gate.
(2) Outer Eastern Tower.
(3) Inner Eastern Gate.
(4) Storage and Stables.
(5) Postern.
(6) Moat.
(7) Postern.
(8) Inner Western Gate. Access to the Inner Bailey.
(9) Inner Bailey.
(10) Refectory.
(11) Inner Corner Tower.
(12) Kitchen.
(13) Outer Bailey.
(14) Storage and Stables.
(15) Cistern.
(16) Baths.
(17) Inner Bailey.

Belvoir is approached by a track leading along the south side, curving around under the SE corner tower and crossing over the eastern end of the dry moat.

The Eastern 'gates' are, in fact, a tunnel-like construct with a dog leg . They would have had with murder holes and other openings to allow the defenders to attack anyone who penetrated the outer gate from under cover.

To get from the East to the West Gate required traversing the Inner Bailey ... under plunging fire from the inner Curtain Walls.



Note *that 'concentric' in this sense simply means 'one layer inside another' rather than 'circular' ... most such Castles were either square or rectangular.*

Concentric Castles were *very* expensive and only the richest (or most profligate) of Monarchs ... or wealthy crusaderist Military Orders, could hope to finance their construction. It was also common for older Motte & Bailey or Ringwork Castles to be extensively reconstructed *into* a concentric design (for example, the *Tower of London*, upgraded extensively in the 13th century), often in a piecemeal fashion over an extended period of time.

For example, Beaumaris Castle (one of Edward I's Welsh Castles mentioned elsewhere) recorded a summer workforce of 3500 in 1295 and, in 1296, an official report indicates that there were 400 Masons, 2000 'less skilled' workers, 200 Quarrymen, 30 Smiths & Carpenters, 100 Carts, 60 Waggons and 30 Boats involved in the construction work. The cost when complete? £14,400.

On top of the workforce, add in the Garrison protecting them (1295 season, 5-6 months) – Naval Patrol between Snaidon and Anglesey (including 95 Sailors, 20 Crossbowmen), £151/2/6; Constable of the Castle and Mounted Men-at-Arms (22), £129/0/8; 100 Foot Archers, £194/4/-; 20 Crossbowmen, £52/12/4; Master Amourer (repairing and maintaining Crossbows), £5/15/6; Master Engineers, £6/4/3. Total = £387/17/9d.

Quadrangular Castles

Quadrangular Castles are a 14th century development and a move away from the mainly defensive, military-oriented, structures of earlier periods to one with a mainly residential one with extensive defences.

In such a castle, the *entirety* of the internal structures are integral with the external walls, not separate, so there can be no Keep, and there is often (but not always, see *Bodiam Castle* in the Sidebar, opposite) no separate gatehouse.

The main concession to its military nature are that this type of castle normally has two or more angle (or corner) towers ... though their internal space forms part of the living and related areas of the castle in conjunction with the internal range of areas.

Shell & Tower Keeps

Shell & Tower Keeps are normally *part* of another type of Castle but, in some places, might be stand-alone, or *almost* stand-alone, fortifications.

Shell Keeps are typically built on top of (or, sometimes, *into*) a Motte – *usually* (but not always) part of a *Motte & Bailey* Castle or, less often, as a replacement for a wooden Keep in a *Ringwork* Castle. The normal layout was to replace the wooden Palisade/Keep on top of the chosen Motte with a circular stone curtain

wall and then build the required structures so they backed onto the inside of the wall ... *usually* leaving an open, central, courtyard.

If built as a stand-alone fortification, the entirety of the inside of the curtain wall might be roofed over and provided with internal flooring and, on occasion, the whole structure might have a lower curtain wall and simple gate, but no wall or gate towers, surrounding it.

A ***Tower Keep*** was more substantial, with thick stone walls and, sometimes, watchtowers on one or more corners. The interior was taken up with accommodation and the entry and basement (at least) divided into two by an internal stone wall with a single, thick, door as fallback if the outer door was breached.

*Like the **Shell Keep**, Tower Keeps could (though more rarely) be built as a stand-alone structure (however, see **Tower Castle,** below) and, if so, occasionally might have a lower curtain wall with a simple gate and now wall or gate towers surrounding it.*

Tower Castle, Fortified Tower & Tower House

A simpler variant of the *Tower Keep* common in the 11th and 12th centuries, especially for lesser lords and wealthier Knights. *Tower Castles* and *Fortified Towers* are smaller, though still substantial, than a Keep ... more like a large stand-alone wall tower.

They are either built on level ground or, more commonly in some parts of Europe, on hilltops or crags overlooking transport choke points and often have some sort of curtain wall either completely surrounding them on level ground or, on hilltops or crags, only on those sides that are easily approachable.

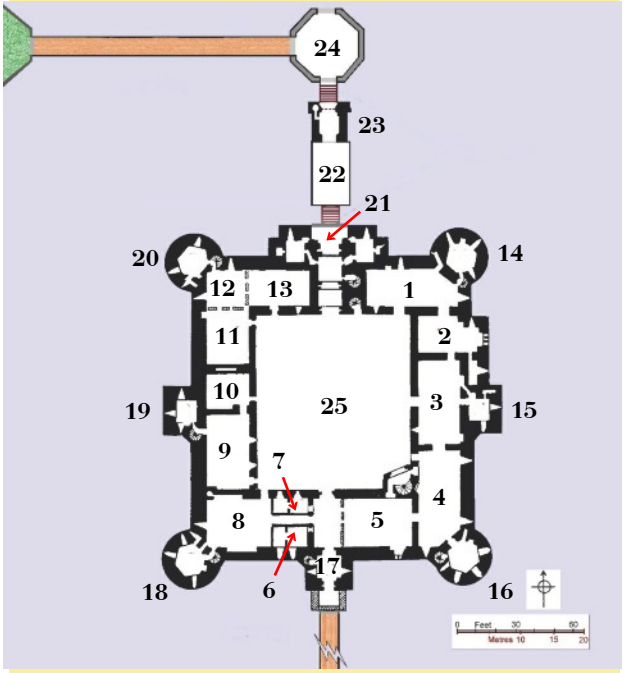
In some places, space permitting, they might later be expanded into a *Ringwork* or *Motte & Bailey* Castle.

***Tower Houses**, on the other hand, are generally lower than Tower Castles & Fortified Towers and are rarely found on purely military or difficult to access sites as their main function was as a residence with some degree of protection being secondary.*

They were particularly popular in parts of the Iberian peninsula from the 7th-8th centuries but can be found throughout Europe (in Ireland and Scotland, however, they mostly date to no earlier than the 15th century, and so are outside the period covered by this book).

*The ground and first floors were normally the residence part and the floors above that were the defensive part – depending on the time and place the house portion might simply **be** the lower levels of the tower, but in other places the Tower might be placed only at one end of the house and accessed by a single reinforced internal door from the lord's quarters **and** a door in the tower (usually on the 1st floor level) leading to stairs down on the outside.*

Bodiam Castle (1385+)



This is a ***Quadrangular*** design built very late in the 14th century on a new site, with an extensive moat (almost a small lake) surrounding it.

Map Key

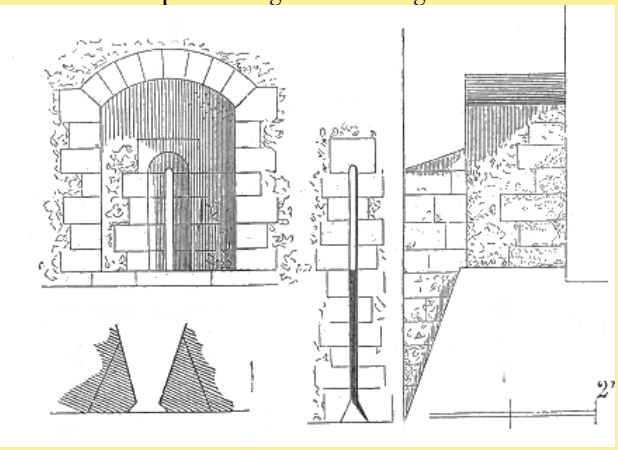
1) Household Apartments.
2) Chapel.
3) Chamber (Apartments).
4) Great Chamber (Lord's Apartments).
5) Lord's Hall.
6) Buttery.
7) Pantry.
8) Kitchen.
9) Retainer's Hall (Quarters over).
10) Retainer's Kitchen.
11) Anteroom.
12) Service Room.
13) Stables.
14) NE Tower.
15) E Tower.
16) SE Tower.
17) Postern Tower.
18) SW Tower (Well in basement).
19) W Tower.
20) NW Tower & Cells.
21) Gatehouse (Guardrooms, left and right)
22) Inner Causeway (Drawbridge).
23) Outer Barbican (Drawbridge).
24) Outer Causeway.
25) Inner Courtyard.

Most of the rooms had two storeys (the Kitchen, however, was 2 storeys tall but had no upper floor), the Towers, 3 storeys, and many had a basement for additional storage. There were barracks in the floors above the Gatehouse for the Guards and the staff had quarters in (and above) the Retainer's Hall.

Parts of a Castle

Arrowslit

A thin vertical opening in the wall of a fortification with a 'V' shaped embrasure behind appearing from the 12th century. The Archer (or Crossbowman) stands in the embrasure to get a wide angle view *of* the outside while presenting a small target *to* the outside.



Bailey

The area inside the *curtain walls*. In *Concentric Castles* (or any Castle with more than one internal fortified section) this might be further divided into the *Outer* and *Inner* (perhaps even *Middle*) Baileys.

Barbican

A fortified gateway, originally a single or double tower over the gate or outside end of a drawbridge. By the 14th century it might be a fortified, castle-like, structure projecting from the line of the Castle's walls.

Bartizan

A small turret overhanging the main wall, often at the corner of a curtain wall with no tower. Large enough for a handful of men *at most* with only the one level. Gives sentries a view of the wall, ditch and approaches while under cover, they often have *arrowslits (qv)*.

Battlement

A wall-walk and a parapet (low wall, chest to head height) with rectangular gaps (***crenels***) between the solid uprights (***merlons***) behind which defenders might shelter between taking shots at any attackers below.

Corner Tower

A *Tower (qv)* at the corner of a curtain wall, usually larger than other towers. Some or all of the internal floors might be converted into quarters for important court officials or officers of the garrison. See also *Flanking Tower (qv)* as Wall Towers might not project far enough from the wall to provide flanking fire.

Curtain Wall

The walls around a fortification, usually with *Battlements (qv)* and connecting any *Wall-* and *Corner Towers*. Walls were *not* solid stone – they had stone *facings* and the space between the two was filled with rubble and puddled clay or similar materials).

Drawbridge

A lifting, swinging, or otherwise moveable (or removeable) wooden bridge over an external or internal *Moat (qv)*. Raised/lowered by a windlass arrangement (or counterweight for larger, heavier, bridges) from inside the *Barbican (qv)*.

Flanking Tower

A tower projecting from the curtain wall and able provide flanking fire *along* the walls. In some places this *might* be a *Corner Tower (qv)*, in others it might be a tower along any stretch of straight curtain wall.

Gate Tower

See *Barbican (qv)*.

Glacis (or Talus)

An outwards sloping stone surface along the outside of Towers and Walls to strengthen the wall or tower, protect against undermining, make raising ladders in *escalade* more difficult and provide a surface off which rocks and other solid missiles dropped by the defenders would ricochet into any attackers below.

Hoarding

A wooden structure projecting from the top of a wall or tower over the *Glacis (qv)* or *Moat (qv)* to provide better flanking fire and protection for the dropping of missiles on attackers at the base of the wall. These were *usually* erected only when a siege was expected.

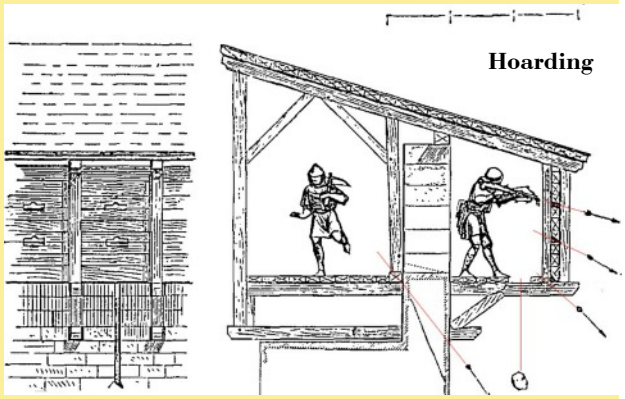
Keep

A large tower built as a refuge *inside* the *Bailey (qv)* of a castle *usually* also part of the Lord's residence. From the 12th century it might incorporate *Bartizans (qv)* and *Corner* and/or *Flanking Towers (qv)*.

In the mid to late 14th century a some were built (or *re*built) as veritable separate castles *within* a castle by Kings or the wealthiest nobility.

Machicolation

A *protected* projection beyond the *Battlements (qv)* with an opening in the floor (or no floor at all) through which the defenders can drop missiles or incendiaries on the attackers below without exposing themselves to enemy fire.



Moat
A broad, deep, ditch surrounding a castle intended to prevent attackers from (easily) bringing up siege machines (even simple ladders). to the walls – and to slow down attackers on foot. See also *Neck Ditch (qv).*

Water filled Moats made undermining much more difficult ... and later castles often had extensive water filled defences (see the *Bodiam Castle* sidebar).

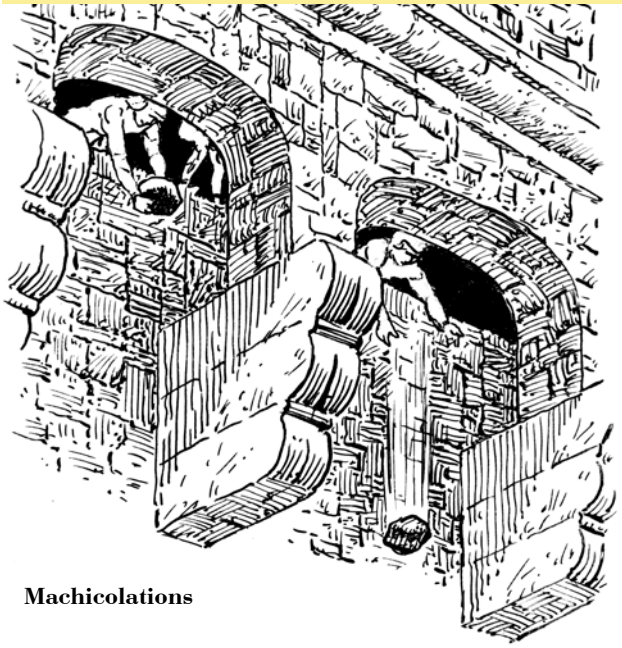
*Unlike the more professional classical (graeco-roman) or late medieval and early modern defensive ditches and moats, most moats were flat bottomed and often had sheer or gently sloping sides, though the **Glacis** of the defending walls and towers (if any) could change this.*

Murder Hole
A hole in the ceiling, usually of a gate- or passageway, allowing defenders above to drop, throw or shoot missiles and incendiaries onto anyone below. These were especially common in passageways between the outer and inner gates of a *Barbican (qv)* or Gate Tower.

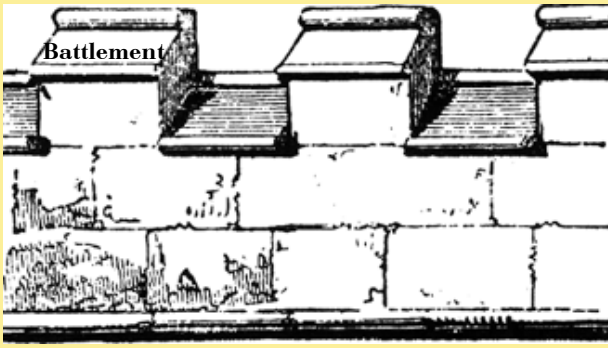
Neck Ditch
A ditch dug in a hill or plateau to separate a Castle (or part of a Castle) from the rest of the area, usually on only one side but occasionally on more (if it *encircles* the Castle it is a *Moat (qv)* ... probably a *dry* one).

Portcullis
A heavy iron and wood lattice dropped from above a passage and anchored either side in wall grooves forming an 'airlock' style arrangement to trap attackers.

Usually found on the main entrance, most commonly in pairs, one on the inside and one on the outside of a short tunnel which would normally have *Murder Holes (qv)* in the roof and *Arrow Slits (qv)* in the walls.



Machicolations



Postern
A gate or doorway, usually sheltered or concealed (or both), acting as a semi-secret means of access. It may also be used as a *Sally Port* to allow the defenders to stage surprise attacks against any besieging force.

The external door was often protected by a grille that could be raised/lowered or opened from the inside and prevented easy access for battering rams or similar mechanical breaching devices – there was also normally a dog-leg passage, often with *Murder Holes (qv)* in the roof, to *another* heavy door to proved additional protection.

*Note that **major** Sallies (i.e. those by the mounted Men-at-Arms and Knights of the garrison) were usually made through the Main Gate, assuming the drawbridge was still functional ... sallies through the Postern were obviously confined to foot-soldiers and were usually intended to damage or destroy siege equipment.*

Wall Tower
The earliest type was ***Rectangular***, both in wood and in stone, but was easy to collapse by mining across a corner ... usually collapsing the two affected sides. Even so, they remained the most common design because they offered the most internal space.

More resistant to mining are ***Round Towers***, but their disadvantage is that they have less internal space – so, in some fortifications, ***Horseshoe Towers*** were used. These have a round outer face while the section behind it is rectangular, giving a mix of the advantages of both types.

In some situations, often because of the nature of the terrain on which the castle was built, military architects would build ***Polygonal (Irregular) Towers*** with multiple straight sides or a mix of straight and rounded sides.

*All these types of Towers could be strengthened, as well as made more resistant to mining, by the use of a stone **Glacis** (**qv**) along their outer face.*

Ward. An alternative name for the *Bailey (qv)* the area inside a set of *Curtain Walls (qv).* There may be an inner and outer Ward in concentric castles.

Other Fortifications

Non-Castle fortifications fall into three categories – ***Permanent Fortifications*** *(non-residential 'Castles', in effect)*, ***Fortified Settlements*** and ***Fortified Towns***.

Permanent Fortifications

These are often 'permanent' only in the sense they were *intended to last more than one campaign season* – in most cases they would have been cheaply constructed (often of wood, even after stone construction becomes the norm for *residential* Castles) and expected to last for several years, and, in some cases, there might be the expectation they would be rebuilt in stone or even as Castles proper at a later date.

The nature of military operations being what they are, intentions are not always fulfilled – and these structures might be abandoned much sooner than expected.

A particularly successful (or disastrous) campaign might, for example, see some rendered useless (or irrelevant) after a single season or less.

Most common are simple ***Watchtowers*** (either *Tower Castles* or *Fortified Towers (qv)*) which might have a wooden palisade around them with a simple gate and which would often have some sort of signal fire.

Slightly more common would be ***Bridge Gates*** (a *Barbican* or *Gate Tower (qv)* on a Bridge, cf *London Bridge*), usually confined to major bridges at Cities on one side of a major river.

*Generally speaking, if a Bridge was important enough to have **Bridge Gates** it was of stone construction ... though not all stone bridges were gated. If the Bridge led into a Town or City there would almost certainly be a Toll charged for the use of the Bridge as well.*

You might also find ***Toll Towers*** (esp. along the Rhine and similar rivers or at chokepoints such as mountain passes) which were placed to control traffic and extort tolls from them ... usually in the form of *Fortified Towers* or *Tower Castles (qv)*.

You might also find the *very* occasional ***Shell or Tower Keeps (qv)*** at point deemed of short to medium term strategic value ... which they might be reconstructed as *Ringwork Castles (qv)* in the long term if the strategic situation supports such.



Large Fortified Farmstead

Fortified Settlements

The more unsettled the area, the more likely it is that the locals will band together for protection ... this could *either* be because of a complete or partial failure of what passes for national, regional or local government to enforce a modicum of law and order *or it could be* because the area is a borderland between two antagonistic (if not actively warring) feudal states.

This is somewhat more common in areas of relatively low population density which often means that the local lords, such as they may be, cannot (or aren't interested in) allocating the resources for a network of Castles or other Fortifications needed for security *and* there are no Towns.

The most common sort are either single or multi-family ***Walled Farmsteads*** – normally consisting of a wooden palisade on the mounded earth from an encircling ditch and with a simple gate surrounding and protecting the farm's buildings and livestock from casual raiding. More prosperous farmsteads (or simply those consisting of several families) might have a watchtower or a gate tower, also of wood.

In some places the Farmsteads might be built inside older, Iron Age (pre-Roman), earthwork forts and run a wood palisade around part or all of the site. In some cases the site might be big enough to shelter not only the families in residence but also have space for their related neighbours.

Over time, more prosperous families might build the main farm building in mortared stone with reinforced doors and narrow windows, though not strong or sophisticated enough to be called a *Manor House* and the compound might be encircled with a drystone wall reinforced with wood.

In other areas you might encounter ***Ring Forts***, which are earth and wood, or earth and drystone, fortifications, usually just a palisade or wall with a protected entranceway, which is not normally inhabited or garrisoned, but which is a communal defensive shelter for the locality.

*Ring Forts are generally **extremely** ancient – almost invariably pre-Roman – though they may have had their defences slighted in the past, and possibly improved in more recent times.*

*They also vary **very** considerably in size ... which might not be directly linked to current (**medieval**) population ... they might be bigger than needed or, equally, more cramped than was necessary (though, in the latter case, some effort to expand their defended area was likely).*

In some wealthier/longer settled areas you may find ***Walled Villages*** – settlements wealthy enough to erect communal defences, initially of wood and, possibly, later, of stone – becoming like miniature Towns.

Such walled villages will often have towers, wall-walks, battlements and gates, but they will not be as tall, thick, or strongly constructed as those of a Castle or Fortified Town or City.

Fortified Towns and Cities

By the 10th century most Towns were well defended, and the defences were mostly stone-built, at least in Western Europe ... in Central and Eastern Europe wood remained dominant, though even there stone or brick construction was making inroads.

The nature of urban defences varied – they could be conversions or additions to Roman era fortifications (or even complete rebuilds) in some places. In others they could be new construction for settlements that had not existed during the Roman period, had not been important enough to warrant being walled then or had not been in areas deemed to be under sufficient threat to need them.

The toolkit for urban fortifications was basically the same as for castle building – all the same features were used and they were constructed with identical materials and methods. The main difference would have been that the construction would have been *paid for* – towns, generally speaking, did not have call upon corvee labour working under feudal arrangements.

The amount of money determined how strong, and how elaborate, the defences were going to be – though it was common that, as a Town grew in economic power and population size, the defences would be improved and expanded.

Most Towns had but a single wall, with wall and gate Towers, and an external ditch or moat (mostly dry) – but some had multiple external walls for some or all of the external circuit and, furthermore, might be divided into sectors internally where older walls had been superseded by a larger external circuit (though, most commonly, these older walls were demolished to make more available internal space *or* were rendered less effective by building houses and other structures right up against ... or very close to ... them).

Many Towns also had something like a Keep or Citadel – the former owned by the overlord whose charter the Town held, the latter (at least nominally) controlled by the civic authorities.

*While technically **Castles**, such Keeps often did not remain noble or royal dwellings for long – and their owners usually transferred their primary town residences to more comfortable palaces within the town proper.*

Building a Stone Tower (11th century)

A stone tower, 17½ x 10 meters square and 16 meters high with walls ~1½ meters thick (faced with stone internally and externally, with a rubble fill) will require (all figures are approximate) –

Materials Required

- 144,000 cut and faced 10x10x15 cm ashlar blocks (216 m^3, 520 tonnes)
- 1740 tonnes (700 m^3) limestone rubble fill
- Central Pillar (supporting internal floors and walls, m^3 (170 tonnes) rough cut limestone
- Foundation, 70m^3 (170 tons) rough cut limestone.
- Mortar (300 m^3) – made from 50 tons Lime (burnt from 160 tons Limestone with 286 tons of wood fuel), 360 tons Sand.
- A minimum of 72 Oak Beams (30 m^3, 22 tons) for the internal structure plus a further 350 m^2 (12.6 tons) of Oak planks for the floor.
- 3400 10 cm Nails (50 kg)

Material Gathering

- 120000 MHr for all the stone components and the Mortar to hold them together, 4800 MHr for the wood fuel for the Lime kilns.
- Lime Kilns, 1000 MHr to construct, 14000 MHr to burn the Lime. 450 MHr to dig the required Sand.
- Woodcutting, 550 MHr. Shaping the major wooden Beams, 70 MHr, shaping the Floor planks, 1450 MHr. 170 MHr for the Nails.
- Cost to transport all Materials, 11500-28800 MHr (all materials all within 1.6 km/some materials 10 km or more away).

Approximate Total = 154000-171300 Man Hours

Labour Costs

- Digging and laying foundations, erecting stone shell, 3600 MHr. Mixing Mortar, 300 MHr. Erecting central Pillar, 270 MHr.
- Wooden Internals, 350 MHr.
- Masons, 127000 MHr. Smiths, 16000 MHr. Common Labourers, 635000 MHr.

The average workforce for such a Tower, constructed over a two year period, was 450 workers. Actual Wage costs are difficult to estimate as many of the workers for most of the year would have been unpaid corvee working out their Feudal dues.

Note that approximately one third to one half of the man hours expended by the Masons and Smiths would have been involved with sharpening, repairing or otherwise re-working tools and equipment (their own and those used by the rest of the workforce) – the larger figure for the 11th century, gradually dropping to the lesser figure over the 13th and 14th centuries, with the main part of the decrease being due to the improved metalworking techniques that only start to become widespread in the 15th century.

SIEGE!

Any time or place where you have fortifications you will also have people who will want to *neutralise* them – which is a polite way of saying *surprise*, *escalade*, *invest*, *besiege*, *occupy* and (possibly) *destroy* though, under some circumstances and on some occasions, merely *bypassing* them *might* be acceptable.

BYPASSING

CASTLES

Since these were generally placed where they could interfere with *established*, usually natural, lines of communication ... and even medieval armies with their primitive logistics needed to ensure that they had secured these.

Which means they generally *cannot* (or cannot *easily*) be bypassed unless, in some cases, they can be successfully ***invested*** (see below) ... but that involves hiving off soldiers from your main force and cannot be done for ***every*** fortification.

OTHER FORTIFICATIONS

Permanent Fortifications, if manned, can normally be no more easily bypassed than *Castles* and for the same reason ... they are normally placed along transport routes or at choke points that cannot be easily avoided.

Like Castles, they may be *invested*, but with the same real drawbacks.

Fortified Settlements are another matter entirely. Some few *may* be on main transport routes but the vast majority *won't* be ... they won't even be on *secondary* routes, and maybe not even on *tertiary* ones.

If they *are* on a transport route *and* a major portion of an invading force has decided to use it then the residents are smart enough to know they cannot possibly resist and that their minimal defences are completely inadequate against such. *If* they get enough warning.



If they *do* some lead time, they'll do exactly what peasants in all times and places have always done in the face of large bands of marauders ... they will run and/or hide.

If there is a nearby *Ring Fort*, then *that* will probably be their destination ... or they'll hide in a nearby wooded area, or nearby hills or mountains, and they'll take their livestock with them as well as much of their crops and moveable property as they cannot hide (usually by burial).

They'll only stand and fight if they are surprised or if they have no better option.

Walled Villages are slightly more likely to stand and fight ... though, again, this depends on the size of any force expected to pass by/through. They *might* allow local farmers to enter with their livestock in the hopes of boosting their manpower ... or they might not.

They may also, as Towns and Cities can, try and offer the marauders/foragers/invaders a bribe to *go away* ... which may be food or valuables (or both)

FORTIFIED TOWNS AND CITIES

These are likely to resist in the first instance ... likely 'encouraged' by any garrison in an associated or incorporated castle belonging to whomever granted their charter. If they're independent, then they will probably *still* resist in the first instance, if only to minimise possible later repercussions from whomever actually *wins*.

If the attackers can in any way be negotiated with then any defenders will almost certainly try to do just that at some point in any siege ... and may make several attempts over an extended siege. Money, goods, food – anything and everything tied to an agreement that will minimise the (almost certainly) *required* enemy garrison and that of its presence, and its duration beyond the end of the current campaign.

There's a good chance they will have *some* success – as attackers are quite happy to make examples of those urban areas who don't negotiate a surrender and are then taken by other means.

SURPRISE

Obviously the easiest way to take a Castle or other Fortification is to do it before the defender(s) are even aware there's a threat. The next best alternative is to take it before they can *react* to any threat.

Easier said than done, of course.

Mostly such attacks will involve a *surprise* move against the facility, almost always by night but possibly through concealing terrain during the day.

If the attacking force has been massing their army, calling out the feudal levies or hiring mercenaries and stationing them near the border, even the most clueless of defenders will increase the peacetime garrisons of their castles and ramp up watchfulness ... so, even if the enemy force manages to slip in undetected, part of their surprise chances are already compromised.

This will be difficult to achieve *anywhere*, but will become progressively harder the further the fortification is from the border between the attacker's territories and the defender's.

There being no such thing as 'special forces' in the modern sense and, equally, no such thing as night vision equipment, night attacks are ... problematic ... but still a potentially good choice because a surprised fortification will have a tiny garrison and that means a tiny on-duty night watch (and the night watch will suffer equal problems with night vision).

If such attacks ***are*** undertaken they are likely to be staged against the main gate before it is closed for the night (or after it first opens in the morning) or over the walls and ***then*** taking the gate from the inside and opening it ... also usually at night for the reasons indicated above.

*It is possible that a surprise attack might be made with attackers having ladders to attempt an **escalade** (see below) and done straight from concealment or from the march ... both of which are unusual enough to warrant at least a **lesser** degree of surprise.*

Escalade *or* Invest

The second step in any decision tree on how to handle Castles and other Fortified places is whether to stage an immediate (or almost immediate) and very likely costly ***escalade*** or to forego that and ***invest*** the site for a more long term solution with a much lower likelihood of high casualties.

Escalade

An *escalade* is a direct, straightforward, attempt to simply storm over the walls of the fortification with minimal preparation ... only *ladders* ... It is usually done for one of two reasons – ***speed*** or ***lack of equipment.***

If the attackers need to take the fortification *quickly*, and setting up the necessary facilities and engines needed to ***invest*** or ***besiege*** it are time consuming under the best of circumstances, then an *attack from march* (if they have ladders in their baggage train) or after minimal preparation (if they need to construct them from locally gathered materials, is the way to go.

The Siege of Antioch, 1097-98

Antioch has been besieged ... since [October 21st] ... seeking to enclose the city ... [we] besieged the eastern gate ... built [and garrisoned] a fort there.

[But, due to lack of supplies] ... hardly seven hundred horses could be found in our army [and] from lack of food or through excessive cold, almost all were dying.

The Turks [were] supplied ... in abundance [and sortied] ... daily ... [and also occupied] a castle ... eight miles away ... killing many of our men ... [we] went out against them ... put them to flight and killed many ...

The [Governor] of Antioch called the [Governor of] Damascus to his aid ... [but] he was ... routed by [the Crusaders]. The [Governor] of Antioch [then] sent to the [Governor] of Aleppo ... [but when he arrived] ... 700 knights and a few foot soldiers ... defeated [the] 12000 Turks ... put them to flight and killed many.

Our men regained not a few horses from that battle, and returned rejoicing with victory. Growing stronger and stronger ... our men took counsel with renewed courage ... [besieged] the western gate which cut off access to the sea, wood, and fodder.

Bohemund and ... [part of the army] ... went to the coast to fetch [reinforcements] ... those who ... remained ... went out incautiously one day ... [and] were ingloriously repulsed and put to flight [by the Turks].

Bohemund [expected to rejoin the garrison, but it was delayed] ... [his force was] beaten and put to flight ... a thousand of our men fell ... [but the army rallied and defeated] ... the Turks ... [killing] almost fourteen hundred of the enemy.

... [O]ur men began to ... strengthen ... [the fortress] with a double moat ... strong wall ... [and] two towers ... [garrisoning it with] ... machine men and bowmen ... the[y] ... kept watch ... the rest, including the princes ... [continued] building the wall.

... the Turks pretended ... they would surrender the city ... [but] ... like the faithless people ... they were set a trap ... in which ... [a number were killed].

A few days [later we found that] ... [the Muslim Army ... was advancing to destroy us] ... [but] on June 3rd ... [three citizens of Antioch ... betrayed it to us]. We ... devastated the city ... killed all the pagans in it except some who were holding out [in the Citadel].

The Muslim army then besieged the Crusaders from the 7th to 28th June when they sallied out and defeated them at which point the defenders of the Citadel surrendered.

– August Krey, ***The 1st Crusade, Accounts of Eye-witnesses and Participants***, 1921

In fact, the longer the attacker dithers over whether to *invest*, *besiege* or *escalade*, the more prepared a defender will be and the more likely the escalade will fail or result in heavy casualties for the attacking force.

The decision is ultimately one of balancing need with capability and deciding if the equation results in too high a level of risk.

Advantages. An ever diminishing level of surprise and minimal preparation. The possibility that the garrison is inadequate. The potential ability to attempt simultaneous attacks from several different points, theoretically overwhelming the defending forces.

Disadvantages. Risky. Can you be sure the garrison is going to be surprised and/or overwhelmed? Potential for many casualties.

INVEST

This is the first formal step in setting up an actual ***siege*** – and involves *blockading* the fortification. At least to some degree.

The most basic level is to simply camp your force outside the fortification ... possibly in several separate camps, depending on the actual size *of* the place to be besieged. This is more a signal of *intent* than an actual, effective, blockade ... especially against large fortified places such as Towns and Cities.

*Fortifications generally had more than one entrance, and some of those were concealed (**Posterns**) and generally difficult to keep under observation.*

It was common, at least during the early stages of investment for the defenders and their allies to be able to pass through the nominal blockade, possibly even with key supplies ... usually at night.

If the area being invested was large enough and the investing force inadequate this situation might continue even at later stages of the process, though with more difficulty ... depending on how much control of the surrounding countryside the investing force had.



An attempt to negotiate a surrender or other arrangement with the defenders would normally be made at this stage ... and usually rejected, unless the investing force was particularly large.

At this point the investing force would do one of two things – either build defended, mutually supporting, camps more closely around the perimeter (if the fortification was especially large) or construct an encircling palisade and ditch. In both cases the intent was to put in place a more effective blockade in preparation for the next step(s) ...

Where the attacker has to decide whether to begin an actual ***siege***, with the intent of breaching the defences and taking the fortification by main force, or whether to continue the blockade and *starve* the defenders into surrender.

Blockade & Starvation was the simplest choice, especially if the attackers didn't have (and couldn't easily acquire) siege equipment. The downside was that it could take a *long* time, depending on the size of the defending garrison (and civilian population, if any) – potentially many months, even a year or more.

Siege was a more complex choice, and required a greater commitment of scarce, expensive, resources (artificers, engineers and siege equipment) ... and this is covered in greater detail in the following sections.

Worse, given medieval notions of field hygiene (nonexistent by modern standards) there was always a real, and increasing, chance the attacking force would be hit by outbreaks of disease ... potentially so serious that they would be forced to lift the blockade or siege.

BESIEGE

This was a complex, expensive, and time consuming process – though often *less* time consuming than *investment & blockade* – involving a number of steps.

Firstly, ***site preparation*** – moat(s) and other earthworks surrounding the fortification had to be slighted (pulled down) or filled in to make access easier for the eventual infantry assault and level enough for *wheeled* siege equipment such as *Belfries (Siege Towers)*, *Rams & Picks* and *Pavises* to be brought closer and closer to the walls.

This had to be done under enemy observation and fire – and had to be protected, either by Pavises or similar mobile shields or digging trenches and erecting protective palisades to zig-zag towards the areas that needed preparation. Or simply sending in assaulting parties under fire and wearing the inevitable casualties.

Simultaneously the actual ***Siege Equipment*** had to be *constructed on site*. Medieval armies *didn't* travel with fully functional siege equipment. If they had a siege

train (uncommon, to say the least) they would have the key items for such in their baggage ... the metal bits, most commonly. If they had *no* siege train (much more common) they would either have to bring in the key items or manufacture them on site.

The rest of the materiel required to construct the siege equipment was normally sourced locally to avoid transport costs and related difficulties – wood mainly (and hides or leather to a lesser extent). This could be problematic, as the Crusader armies found in the Holy Land, if there was no nearby source of large and robust timber.

*Gunpowder weapons were somewhat of an exception – but only appear in effective form in the 14th century, mostly in the second half. They had to be transported with the army to a degree, but, often, were only brought in from somewhere else once a formal siege was begun – and the gun**powder** was usually mixed on site from its basic components (see the section on gunpowder and gunpowder weapons for more information).*

The first equipment to be constructed were engines which could *attack and damage* the fortification's defences and interior – stone and missile throwers to do so at range and picks, rams and drills to do it right up close. In particularly tricky situations the attacker might dig tunnels to undermine the walls or towers.

Then the attackers *might* construct wheeled towers (*Belfries*) to allow them to *approach the walls* with the assault force under cover, drop a drawbridge and charge across onto the walls of the castle or town.

*Since the path of approach of such an engine was blindingly obvious, more than one was often deployed to attack different sectors of the walls to force the defenders to spread out their forces ... **in conjunction** with a general assault by infantry forces using simple siege ladders to further stretch the defender's manpower.*

Once the walls/defences have been breached, but before an assault goes in, the attackers will normally offer the defenders *another* chance to surrender, on lesser terms than at the beginning of the siege. If the assault fails, or fails to take the *whole* of the fortification, another offer is usually made ... again, at even less favourable terms.

Once inside the defences, attacking troops were only minimally controllable – especially if significant casualties had been suffered in the assault(s). However, stories of them wading through rivers of blood up to their calves (such as at the sack of Jerusalem) are a huge exaggeration ...

*See **'Medieval Laws of War'**, pp. 211-216 for greater detail on the topic of prisoners, ransom, sieges and sacking of cities.*

The Siege of Oudenarde (1379)

After the men of Ghent took Bruges almost all the cities of Flanders surrendered, save Oudenarde.

Philip von Artaveld [the Ghent commander] ... laid a tax throughout Flanders of four Groats on every Hearth [Household] ... paid weekly [by] both rich and poor ... whether they [could afford it] or not.

It was said there were ... 100,000 men at this siege. The Flemings drove into the river Scheld large stakes so no vessels could come ... Every Saturday [the besiegers held a] ... market to which were brought ... all sorts of [foods and other goods] ... there were taverns ... where ... foreign wines were sold cheap.

When Sir Daniel de Haluyn entered Oudenarde he laid in ... stores and provisions ... divided among the garrison ... according to a fixed ration ... horses were sent away and ... houses near the walls pulled down and covered with earth, to guard against the cannon, of which the enemy had abundance.

The women and children who remained [many were sent away) were lodged in the Churches and Monasteries. No dog was left in town, but all were killed and thrown into the river.

The garrison made many ... sallies ... doing great execution to the army ... bringing back with them provisions from the enemy ... and even prisoners.

Thus they remained the whole summer. It was the intention of Philip ... to continue until they ... starve[d] them out, for it would cost them too many men were they to attempt to [storm it].

They ... placed ... a prodigiously great engine, twenty feet wide and forty long ... to cast heavy stones and beams of timber into the Town ... they ... also [had] a bombard ... fifty feet in length ... [shooting] stones of immense weight ... [which could be] be heard five leagues off in the day [and] ten at night. The report ... was so loud ... it seemed as if all the devils in Hell had broken loose... likewise another engine ... cast large bars of hot copper.

[The garrison] ... defended themselves against these attacks and made sallies three or four times a week in which they gained more honour than disgrace and also more profit than loss.

– Froissart, ***Chronicles**, Book II, Chapter 101*

The Siege of Oudenarde (1379) was part of a rebellion against the Count of Flanders by Ghent Burghers who wanted more privileges ... and less oversight. The rebellion dragged on until the Peace of Tournai (1385) with amnesty granted to the rebels and Ghent's privileges confirmed (amongst other things).

An important note on Treachery

One thing not often emphasised, or even mentioned, on sieges (not *just* medieval ones) is fortifications were taken by ***treachery*** as often as not.

This could be part of the advance arrangements *before* any attack was launched against an enemy or it could be done *during* the investment and siege operations.

It was impossible to prevent *some* access to the invested or besieged place and this allowed for those of suitably *negotiable* morals and less than perfect loyalty to the defender's cause to negotiate with the attacker ... assuming the attacker was a force with which one *could* reliably negotiate (not always a given – especially if differences in religious belief were involved or if the defending side had been a party to treachery *against* the attacker at some [recent] point).

A garrison commander always had to try and ensure that posterns, even towers or wall sections, were manned by troops he could trust *implicitly*. A *smart* commander would also try and rotate troops such that they wouldn't have ongoing access to specific site.

*Allowing an assault force in through a treacherously controlled gate was the gold standard – from there they would attempt to take one or more of the **main** gates and let a much larger force in. Secondary means would be over a treacherously manned wall section or tower and, again, thence aiming to take a main gate.*

*The Postern, wall or tower section might not even be manned by those planning treachery – they might simply gather their own suborned or allied forces and assault them, preferably by surprise, from the inside and **then** allow in the enemy assault force.*

Occupy or Destroy?

Once you've taken (and sacked?!?) the castle or town, what next? Do you occupy it with a portion of your own force and make use of it for your own purposes? Or do you raze it to the ground?

There's no particular, or easy, answer to this question as it depends on the needs of the attacker's leadership and the strategic situation. One important thing needs to be considered *whatever* the choice ...

How much damage was inflicted? If the fortification was surrendered before any (or much) actual siege damage was inflicted, then the decision to occupy will be much easier ... or to destroy, much harder.

If it was taken after the walls were breached, then the costs and time needed for repairs need to be factored in to whatever decision is made.

Especially since, in many cases, there will have been more than one breach made in the walls and further damage is likely to have been inflicted in a number of places around the defensive circuit even if not breached.

This becomes even more important if the place was taken by assault *after* the walls were breached ... as this means there will be significant damage to the internal structures as well, and *that* will have to be repaired *as well as* the walls.

*Considering that Castles (and fortifications in general) can take **years** to complete this is a significant issue – and one of several reasons why attackers will attempt to take such a place by storm.*



The Siege of Jerusalem, 1099 – the final assault

Siege engines & Techniques

Ballista

A complicated, scalable, torsion powered siege engine based on Roman designs and still *occasionally* used in the medieval period.

*Field deployable models (**Carroballistae**) were mounted on small carts and could throw a missile up to 460 meters, though the accurate range was much less, probably only one third that. These **may** have survived in the East, though they were probably replaced by the **Springald** (qv) – but seem to have disappeared completely in the West with the collapse of Imperial authority there.*

Larger, siege rated, models continued in intermittent use during the early medieval period because if their relative complexity (the simpler *Onager (qv)* was preferred), but, with the development of the *Trebuchet (qv)* they fell completely out of favour and disappeared from the battlefield.

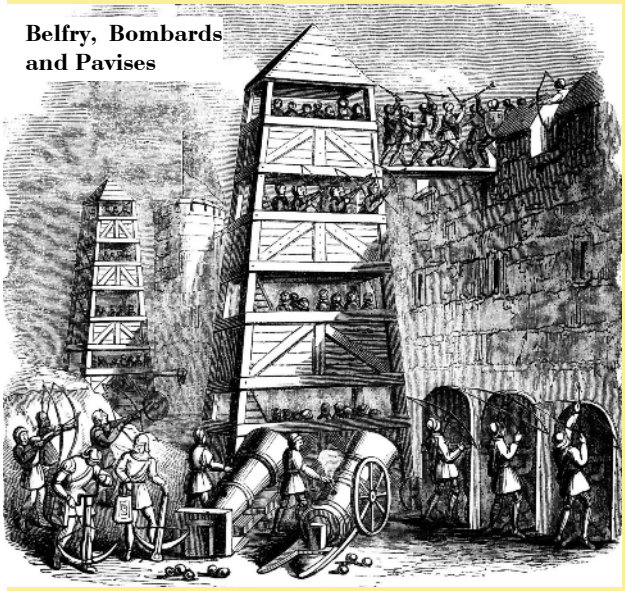
*These larger models had a maximum range of up to 1100 meters (again, the **accurate** range was **likely** much shorter – probably around 300-400 meters) and could throw stones or bolts up to 80 kilos (the very largest – though models with a 26 kilo capacity were more common).*

*Siege Ballistae were carried **disassembled** – often only metal components and ropes were transported, any wooden elements needed would be sourced locally.*

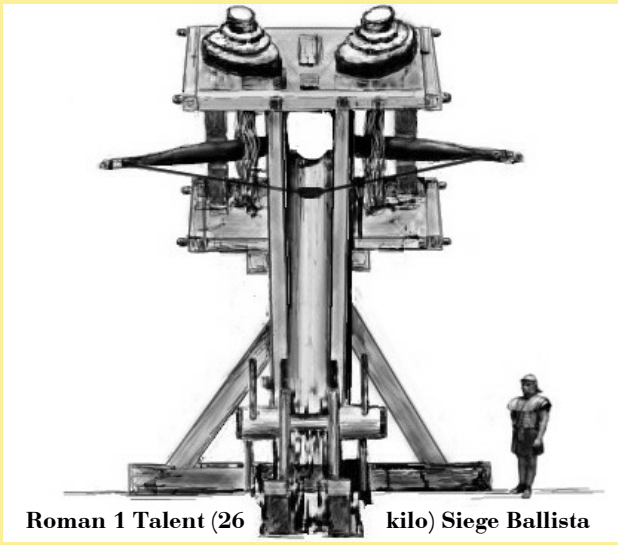
Belfry (Siege Tower)

More properly a *Siege Tower*, though more commonly a *Belfry* in the middle ages – at its simplest, a tower on wheels with the level approximating the height of the wall having a drawbridge to drop down when the structure is close enough, allowing an assaulting force to move directly onto the battlements and wall walk.

The front and sides are usually protected – typically with timbers of varying thickness (depending on the attackers' resources) most commonly covered with green (uncured) hides to render the structure flame resistant so the engineers moving it forward as well as the assault force (either following or inside) are protected from normal missile fire and incendiaries.



Belfry, Bombards and Pavises



Roman 1 Talent (26 kilo) Siege Ballista

Particularly elaborate versions might have internal floors on several levels with arrow slits for archers or crossbowmen to fire from and, if the defenders are known to have powerful missile engines (such as *Ballistae* or *Springalds [qv]* especially), those facings deemed particular vulnerable might be reinforced with thick baulks of timber or even iron plates.

*The ground leading up to the walls where the Belfry was to be deployed had to be carefully leveled, and possibly reinforced (usually with log corduroy, less likely with gravel) and any moat (or moats) had to be filled in with something more substantial than the simple wooden fascines that were all that were needed for infantry assaults. This took time and required the use of **Pavises** (qv) or **Sows** (qv) to protect the workers.*

Escalade

Build a *lot* of ladders with local materials (unless you've planned the attack in advance and have already made up ones in you baggage train), distribute them amongst the soldiers you have chosen for the assault and have them charge the walls.

The defenders will do several things – they'll fire missiles at the attackers as they approach (the attackers may have *Pavises (qv)* for some protection), they'll try and push the ladders away from the walls (either by hand or with poles with a u-shaped end) and they'll drop all sorts of objects down on those climbing the ladders or milling around their base – rocks mostly, but possibly incendiaries.

Use of incendiaries by the defenders presupposes they have enough warning to prepare them – the most common were pitch soaked rags or other materials set

alight. Boiling water and heated sand required too much time to be readily usable – and, more importantly, far too much fuel, which was almost certainly in short supply in a besieged castle or town.

*As for boiling or burning Oil – only in Hollywood movies. For a start, there isn't any really flammable oil available – you're looking at animal fat, lard, basically, which is **food**, and more important as such. In some parts of Europe (Iberia) you may have a supply of Olive Oil but, again, it is mainly a **food** source and isn't particularly flammable, despite what generations of D&D rules imply.*

***Tar** is another issue – medieval references rarely refer to the modern conception of a thick petrochemical residue (**Coal Tar**). What they refer to is made from the dry distillation of wood, especially Birch, which produces charcoal and both **tar** (liquid**ish**) and **pitch** (solid**ish**) – and, while useful for waterproofing things such as buckets and barrels or caulking of boats and ships, there is generally not a lot on hand in most castles (Port towns might have some) ... and making it during a siege means burning fuel better used for more important things.*

Rocks are, therefore, the most likely missiles to be dropped on the attackers on and at the base of the ladders.

This was a particularly risky form of attack, only used in two circumstances – when a considerable level of surprise was *thought* to have been achieved by the attacker and when the attacker was *desperate* (usually because they were pressed for time).

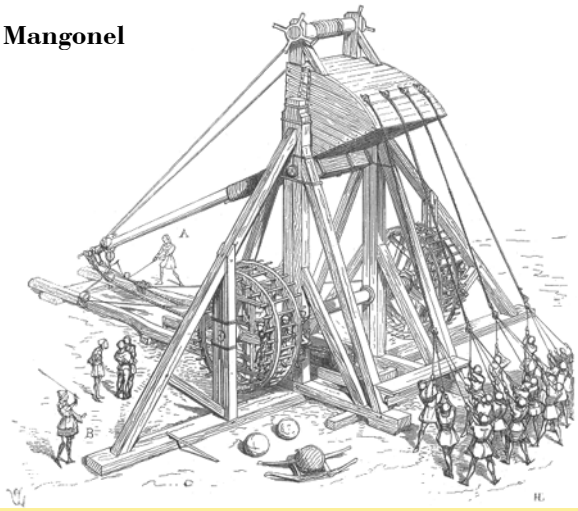
*A common variant was to attempt such an attack **by night**, which increased the level of surprise.*

The purpose of an *escalade* was to get enough men on the walls to allow *some* of them to take one or more of the gates into the fortification and open them up so that the main force of the attacking army could then enter without ado.

If successful, it was a cheap and quick way of taking a fortification – failures were generally quite exceptionally bloody for the attackers.



Mangonel



*Defences against such attacks were – **Moats**, either dry or wet, which had to be filled in before the attackers could get close to the wall and/or raise their ladders against it; **Machicolations** protected the defenders who were dropping heavy items on or firing/throwing missiles at the attackers below and a **Talus** (an outward sloping projection at the base of a tower or wall) made it more difficult for the scaling ladders to be placed so they could reach the top of the wall.*

MANGONEL

The Mangonel was a siege engine which utilised a large counterweight at one end of its throwing arm rather than the *torsion* or *tension* of earlier siege engines such as the *Onager (qv)* or *Springald (qv)* but still had a mechanical stop at the top of the throwing arm's arc of movement which reduced overall accuracy in a similar way, though to a much lesser extent.

The trajectory of missiles thrown by these engines was much flatter than that of the *Trebuchet (qv)* which meant they were deployed with the specific intent of throwing missiles *against* the walls of the besieged fortification to batter them down.

Despite many post-medieval depictions of such engines, the projectiles were ***not*** held in an open cup at the end of the throwing arm, but in a *sling* which was set to release at the top of the arc – a much more accurate trajectory (with the caveat noted above).

They were set by means of windlasses and pulleys or similar arrangements but *may* have also required a substantial crew (usually around 20 men) to pull down on ropes attached to the counterweight bucket at the moment of release. Unlike the *Trebuchet (qv)* these men only *assisted* in the release.'

Note that the general vagueness of contemporary descriptions of these engines make it impossible to say with certainty that some may not have been entirely man rather than counterweight powered.

Mining (see also 'Sapping')

A slow, but sure, means of breaching walls or tumbling towers was to undermine them – but this could only be undertaken when the target structure was *not* built on rock and was *not* surrounded by a wet *Moat (qv)*. The attacker simply arranged to tunnel *under* a length of wall or tower and, when masonry or stonework was encountered, would prop it up with strong baulks of timber and undermine it completely.

When the excavation was deemed large enough the attackers fire to the wooden beams supporting the stonework above, usually with pitch soaked faggots – and they would eventually collapse under the weight of the structure above *hopefully* bringing it down.

*Mining operations had to be **concealed** – usually behind a rise in the ground or done under cover of darkness as, if detected, the defenders could sink a countermine to meet the attacker's tunnel, allowing them to attack the miners to prevent their work. Where such underground battles occurred they were notably ferocious.*

The only other reasonable way in which you could attempt to detect a mine was to place bowls of water on the ground at key points around your defences ... mining operations inevitable created enough in the way of otherwise subtle vibrations to cause ripples in the water.

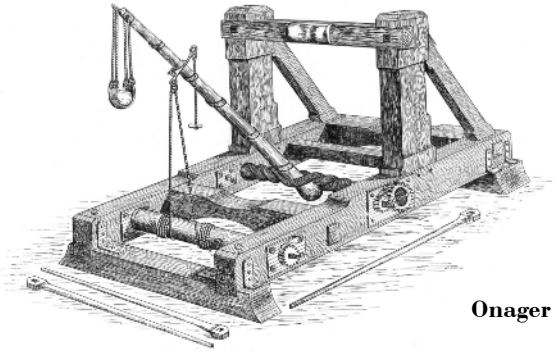
Onager

A classical era design, the *Onager ('Wild Ass'* from the 'kick' as the throwing arm hit the cross-bar) was a *torsion* engine (i.e. using twisted fibre, usually rope).

As with the Mangonel (qv) this abrupt stopping of the throwing arm caused considerable inaccuracy – since Onagers were generally smaller (and lighter) than the former, this 'kick' often shifted the actual alignment of the weapon by main force – further reducing accuracy.

Like the Mangonel, despite depictions in many books, stones or other items fired by it were slung from slings at the end of the throwing arm, ***not*** from permanently affixed bowls or cups.

*Medieval sources often use the term **Mangonel** (**qv**) in ways which suggest it might actually be being used to describe an Onager ...*



Onager



Ram (& Pick

Pavises

These shields came in two sizes, one small enough to be used in normal melee combat or to be slung on the back of a soldier for additional protection when climbing ladders during an *esacalade (qv)* and the other larger enough for at least one man (sometimes several) to be completely concealed behind.

The larger versions would usually have a spike or spikes along the bottom edge to allow them to be thrust into the ground so the bearer could use them for cover while freeing up both their hands for other actions – typically archers or crossbowmen who would cover behind them while reloading.

*Some **really** large versions might be mounted on a wheeled undercarriage and be moved towards the walls like a wheelbarrow while protecting all those behind.*

Both versions were different from standard shields in that they had a wide central ridge running from top to bottom instead of a Shield Boss.

Ram or Drill

While these were long baulks of timber, often whole tree-trunks. Early on in the period these might simply be deployed 'as is' with a team of soldiers carrying them at a charge against a gate or, less commonly, against a section of wall.

*This was risky as the only protection was whatever armour the soldiers were wearing ... the need to retreat and then run up **again** for each ram attempt explains why attacks were usually aimed at gates which were not as well protected as they were in later periods.*

As siege methods became more sophisticated, the heads were equipped *either* with a blunt iron ***ram*** (sometimes in the shape of a Ram's head) *or* a sharp, pointed ***pick***, installed inside a *Sow (qv)*, suspended by rope or chain from the internal framework.

This arrangement both provided protection for the crew of the Ram, which might be as many as sixty men,

and *the swinging action of the suspended timber meant that, once the Sow was wheeled into place, it didn't have to be moved again as the weapon was swung against the face of the wall or tower repeatedly.*

Rams *were intended to crack up the facing stones of a curtain wall or tower as these were* ***not*** *solid stone (or, in some places, brick) and the interior was mostly rubble fill stabilised with clay or something similar ... so knocking a large enough hole in the outer face would destabilise the whole section, eventually either collapsing it or creating a big enough breach to stage an assault through.*

Picks *were aimed at prying apart the gaps between the facing stones, and generally required better quality iron, but otherwise operated as above.*

Sapping (see also 'Mining') aka 'Military Artificers'

Sappers were those specialists who were involved in what combat engineers would do in a siege today. They organised *Mining (qv)* operations, the construction for any field fortifications (i.e. *earthworks*) and any other non-engine related siege works (constructing gabions, fascines etc.).

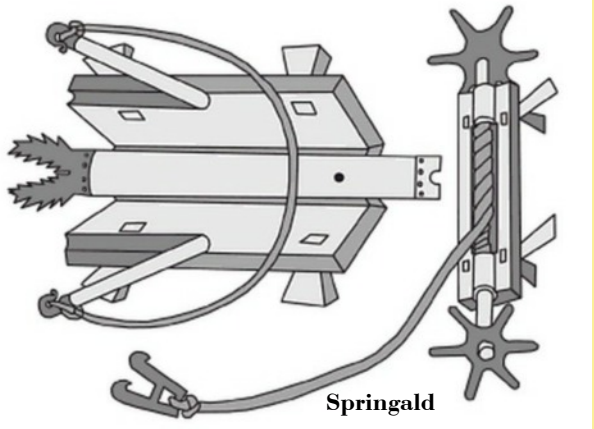
Sapper *comes from the Old French word for a* ***spade*** *– their tool of trade.*

Fascines *are large bundles of brushwood tied together and dumped into moats or other depressions or into/onto swampy or boggy terrain to provide firmer footing for ackers and for wheeled siege engines to traverse.* ***Gabions*** *are wicker baskets which are filled with earth or small stones on site to provide quick-construction walls for siege engines or to wall in fortified camps for besieging soldiers.*

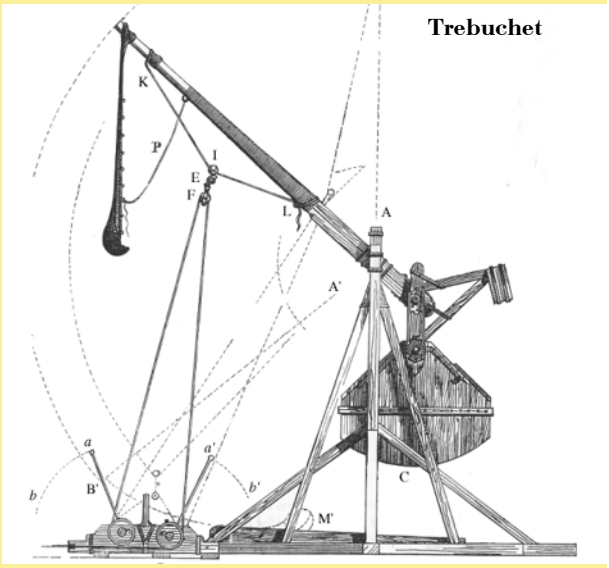
Note: The zig-zag sapping technique to prevent enfilading fire down a trench by the defenders is a development of the gunpowder era ... and doesn't appear until the 17th century. Before then there wasn't any great need.

Sow (aka Cat, Penthouse, Rat or Tortoise)

This is a wheeled framework supporting a heavy roof structure often covered with green (uncured) hides to provide protection against dropped missiles and incendiaries Early versions might be open sided, but later on the sides were also protected, if less strongly – only the front and rear would be open. They allowed an assaulting force (or a Ram/Pick) to be moved right up to a fortification and yet remain under full cover.



Springald



Trebuchet

Springald

A simplified torsion powered mechanical siege engine, possibly based on the more complex (Roman) Ballista with inward rather than outward swinging arms, the Springald was mainly used as a Bolt thrower, but could be adapted to throw stones and the East Romans occasionally used it to throw Greek Fire incendiaries.

The first recorded appearance is in East Roman use in the 11th century, only appearing in the West from the late 12th or early 13th century.

Tests on a 2.43 m replica have shown it capable of hurling a 2.4 kg Bolt 55 m or a 1½ kg Bolt 77 m.

Trebuchet

The ultimate development of pre-gunpowder siege engines, the trebuchet was basically a hinged lever arm operated either by a team of soldiers pulling down or a counterweight dropping on the short end.

It appeared around the 12th century and could throw stones up to 100 kilos up to 300 meters in a ballistic arc, which meant it could easily throw them over fortification walls.

Unlike the Ballista, Onager and Mangonel, there was no stop-bar to hinder the free swinging arm, making the weapon's release and aim much more accurate, allowing it to hit close to the same spot over and over.

Like the other weapons, though often depicted with a bowl or cup, the missiles were thrown from a sling.

Gunpowder Weapons

The Chinese had a head start with black powder and weapons using it – they had something *like* gunpowder as early as the 10th century and were using it as an incendiary mix for fire arrows by the late 11th century, for bombs by the early 12th century and in *'fire spears'* (or *'fire lances'*) which were *either* incendiary projectors *or*, possibly, crude cannon (like the 'Pot de fer' of medieval Europe), some of which were later developed to fire multiple small shot like a giant shotgun, and had hand-held forms available by the end of the 13th century.

This new technology reached the Middle East sometime in the mid to late 13th century, almost certainly derived from Chinese sources (possibly as a result of the Mongol incursions into the Muslim world) rather than an independent invention. Its use in cannon-like weapons cannot be certainly dated before the early 14th century, however, and its use in weaponry was slow to catch on as it threatened the dominance of the predominantly cavalry based military nobility and gentry of the muslim world.

The first mention of something *like* black powder in Europe is in works by the English Monk, Roger Bacon, c. 1267, which describe its use in something akin to firecrackers. The earliest actual *gunpowder* recipes, however, can only be dated to c. 1300.

However, by 1313 there is evidence that *some* sort of gunpowder weapons were in use by the city of Ghent and, by 1324, they were used in the siege of Metz. By 1326 Florentine military were ordering brass *Pots de fer* and iron balls to be fired from them for defensive purposes.

Early European Gunpowder Weaponry

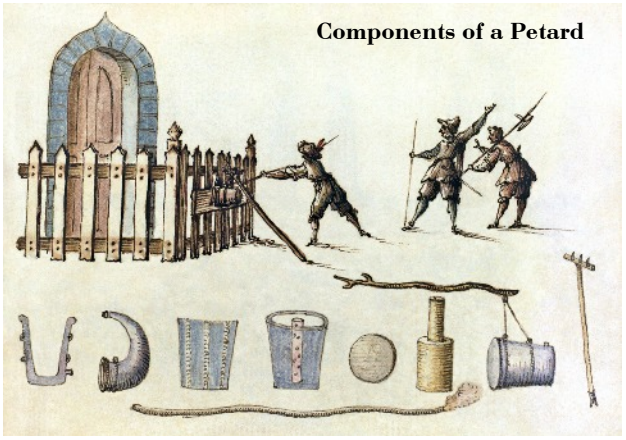
The early uses for black powder were fourfold – as an incendiary, as an explosive charge, in anti-personnel and siege 'cannon.'

Incendiaries

As in China, some black powder formulations were used in firecrackers or as incendiaries – probably as both hand-hurled projectiles and as larger ones thrown by siege weapons. Their use in any but siege operations does not seem to have been common, if it occurred at all, because of the difficulty in manufacturing and transporting the powder (see below).



A Pot de Fer



Components of a Petard

Explosive Charges

A more common use, though only for siege work, was as an explosive charge, typically a ***Petard*** – a metal or ceramic container containing a quantity of black powder normally fastened to a wooden board with hooks to enable it to be affixed to a castle or town gate. The charge would be set off by lighting a slow fuze and the explosion would, hopefully, blow the gate apart (or at least blow a hole in it!)

It is not certain when the first use of this type of weapon occurred – the earliest definite mention does not occur until the 15th century, but there are hints that similar usage may have occurred during the 14th century. The 'modern' term itself dates only to the 16th century, to confuse things even further.

Placing such a charge was, of course, quite a dangerous undertaking – usually undertaken as part of an *escalade (qv)* with the party of soldiers carrying the Petard running up to the gate and emplacing the charge manually.

The fuze had to be carefully measured – early slow fuzes were ... *unreliably* ... slow, and one could easily misjudge the timing, ending up *'hoist by one's own petard'* if it was *too* short. If it was too *long*, the defenders might have enough time to dislodge it.

A typical petard contained 2-3 kg of black powder.

Anti-personnel Weapons

The earliest 'cannon' called 'fire pots' (*Pots de Fer*) or 'vases' (*Vasi*) and were roughly vase shaped constructs normally of wrought iron and with a narrow bore which fired either a small(ish) ball or an arrow.

Modern reconstructions based on the illustrations in medieval manuscripts have produced a weapon 90 cm long, 40 cm wide at the bulbous end, weighing in at 410 kg. It could fire an arrow/bolt (wood with bronze flights, 1.35 meters in length) only 180 meters on a small charge - larger charges simply blew the bolts to pieces.

Some authorities claim the weapon would have fired an ***iron*** *arrow, which* ***could*** *have had a much longer range*

on the larger charge, but there is no firm archaeological evidence for such missiles.

Smaller versions also existed – a French weapon of 1338 is recorded to have weighed in at only 20 kilos and could fire 48 projectiles (of uncertain type) on 1¼ kilos of black powder.

Hand cannon appear in manuscript illustrations and production records as early as the second quarter of the 14th century but surviving examples date only to the 1380's-1390's (*'Bâton à feu'* or *Fire Sticks*). These were normally mounted on a wooden pole and fired with this resting under the arm.

Surviving examples weigh ~1-2 kilos, with barrels around a 1/3rd meter long with a bore of ~2 cm. It is uncertain what sort of missiles they fired – stone is a possibility and there is some evidence that suggests lead balls may have been purposely cast for them.

Modern reconstructions using 30-50g of powder made according to historic recipes (see below) fired balls around 600 meters, but accurate range was only around 25 meters for individual (as opposed to group) targets.

Siege Weapons ('Bombards')

Again, written records in medieval chronicles are unclear as to the exact nature of heavier gunpowder weapons used in sieges (both offensively *and* defensively) but the best guess of modern experts is that these ***Bombards*** were squat, short barrelled and mortar-*like* in appearance (if not in actual use).

The Bombard in the photo overleaf was made for close in defense during the siege of Rhodes. It weighed in at around 3325 kilos and could fire 260 kilo granite balls 100-200 meters. Note the ***trunnions****, which only appear on Bombards and Cannon from the mid 15th century.*

Smaller, but otherwise similar, weapons were in use at least as early as the late 14th century and started to appear in the field in the first quarter of the 15th. The one in the photo at the top right weighed 200 kilos and fired a 6 kilo ball, probably around 100-200 meters.



***Bâton à feu* in use**



Early 15th century Bombard

Most commonly used in sieges, deployment in such usage was *either* with the weapon fastened onto a thick plank or baulk of wood which would be elevated on a mound of earth, giving a flattish trajectory to a target *or* on a triangular frame at a fixed*ish* angle to allow balls to be lobbed *over* the walls.

If time and local conditions allowed, it was possible, but rare, for such weapons to be used in field battles – either in similar (fixed) positions and mounts as for siege works or, in the case of those affixed to wooden baulks or planks, the whole thing still mounted on the heavy waggon used to transport the weapon (a risky proposition as these were *not* designed to withstand the stresses of being an impromptu gun carriage).

Construction

The early *Pots de Fer* were cast from Bronze but the later *Bombards* were usually too large for this and were constructed from welded wrought iron.

The core of a Bombard was of wood around which wrought iron bars were fixed and hammer welded, though the base might be a single piece. When the tube was formed, red hot wrought iron hoops were fitted at regular intervals over the barrel and, when partly cool, hammer welded in place.

Finally, the wooden core was burnt out and the cannon was ready for proofing (testing with a larger than normal charge of gunpowder to see if the barrel would withstand the pressure of an explosion ... light blue touchpaper and retire ***fast****).*

Cast *iron does not appear in Europe until the 15th century – and one of its earliest appearances was in cannon-making ... unfortunately, the quality of this early cast iron was uneven and cannon made from it would explode without warning (usually blowing a chunk of the barrel out rather than a complete destructive explosion) whereas bar welded wrought iron would tend to blow out a single bar, and usually only on one side of a length between the reinforcing rings.*

The alternative of cast bronze was ***expensive*** *and casting* ***large****, long, single pieces (rather than, for example, the compact* ***Pots de Fer****) was also beyond the technical capacity of most foundries until well into the 15th century.*

GUNPOWDER (AKA *BLACK POWDER*)

Gunpowder is a *low explosive*, a mixture of Sulphur, Saltpeter and Charcoal finely ground and mixed together. The Sulphur and Charcoal are the 'fuel' and the Saltpeter is the oxidiser.

***Low** Explosives **burn**, relatively slowly, at **subsonic** speeds ... **High** Explosives, **detonate** and produce a **supersonic** wave front.*

*The variable, often low quality, materials used to make early Bombards and Hand Cannon could handle the forces produced by gunpowder ... **just**. If (in a time travel campaign, for example), you tried to use modern smokeless powder in them ... well, the results **would** be 'explosive', and not in a good way.*

FORM, FORMULA AND MANUFACTURE

Form. Unlike more modern formulations, ***all*** medieval powder through to the late 15th century was ***serpentine*** (aka ***meal***) powder, *a loose powdery mix of the three ingredients ... corned* powder only slowly started to replace it and the process continued through to as late as the ***17th*** century.

*One of the (many) problems with Meal powder is that it will naturally separate into its components (Saltpeter dropped to the bottom, charcoal rose [or remained at] the top) when stored, even faster when transported, and the degraded mix then has to be **re**-mixed to be usable.*

***Corned** powder was a **late** 15th century development – the ingredients were wetted down and worked into a dough-like consistency and rolled into rough balls.*

*This was evidently done to reduce the chance of explosions while mixing the material but it was found that the balls so formed **didn't** separate into the constituent parts, making it perfect for transportation – though the balls had to be ground down into smaller **corns** before they could be used.*

*Corned powder produces 3x to 10x **more** explosive force than Serpentine by weight when using the optimum mix.*

Gunpowder Mixes in Europe, 1267-1400	
Origin	**Saltpeter/Sulphur/Charcoal**
Roger Bacon (1267)	41.2/29.4/29.4
Newark (1350)	66.6/11.2/22.2
Rothenburg (1377-80)	66.6/16.7/16.7
Montauban (1400)	71/12.9/16.1
As noted in the main text, the accepted optimum for explosive gunpowder is 75/10/15. Powder with 50% or less Saltpeter is best used as an incendiary mix, with a secondary minor explosive capability most suited for use in firecrackers or similar.	



Late 15th century *Bombard*

Formula. The optimum mix for *explosive* gunpowder is 75% Saltpeter, 15% Charcoal and 10% Sulphur – *pyrotechnic* (fireworks) and *incendiary* (burning) mixes differ considerably (and obviously have reduced explosive power as a result).

As you can see from the table below, early gunpowder mixes were ... *suboptimal* ... for explosive force. In fact, the optimal mix was not developed until 1487 and did not become dominant over others until the mid 16th century.

Powder used for blasting can vary between 40/30/30 and 65/15/20 while that used for pyrotechnics is usually 60/25/15 to 62/23/15 in more recent times.

Manufacture. Because of the separation problem most powder was mixed *as needed* by the artillerists, especially in the field or in sieges where the guns had been transported over considerable distances. Fixed guns used for the defence of fortifications might have a quantity of pre-mixed powder but, as it would separate even when stored stationary, would also mix most of it as and when needed.

*One of the reasons gunners and artillerists wore **red** (and often still do as part of artillery branch insignia) was to **stand out** ... to warn everyone in the vicinity that these guys were handling **really** dangerous materials!*

Manufacture had to be done with non-sparking materials (limestone, bronze or lead being most common) and the grinding and mixing the constituents supposedly took 24 hours to achieve the best quality.

Saltpeter was sourced from under dung-heaps or in privies or nearby cellars where it crystallised into crude lumps that then had to be roughly purified.

*Saltpeter was generally the bottleneck in gunpowder production and, very early on, European monarchs gave royal commissions to 'Saltpetermen' to go **anywhere**, even private houses, and dig up **anything** in to recover saltpeter crystals ... without **any compensation***

for any damage caused ... making them, quite understandably, widely hated.

Early methods of refining Saltpter left calcium carbonate as an impurity which, being hygroscopic, meant powder stored for any length of time would become damp merely from ambient moisture and would have to be dried and then remixed (or, if corned, reground) ... which was a somewhat risky proposition.

By the early 14th century, manufacturers had discovered ways to remove most of the calcium using wood ash (potassium carbonate) to precipitate it out and then oxblood, alum or slices of turnip to clarify it.

Charcoal from Linden (Basswood) or Willow trees (both softish hardwoods) was preferred – originally produced by traditional charcoal burning in heaped earth ovens but, towards the end of the 14th or early in the 15th century, preferably from heating in closed iron pots which produced a lower moisture charcoal.

Sulphur was sourced from evaporation of water from some hot springs or mined, especially from the slopes of Sicilian volcanoes and from deposits on the island of Melos (in the Aegean).

Gunpowder production is known to have been undertaken at the Tower of London by 1346 and by later in the 14th century, at several other Royal castles, such as Portchester ... an effective use of relatively redundant real estate.

*In mainland Europe, the major (exporting) areas for the production of gunpowder were the Germanies (including Belgium and the Netherlands) and the Italian peninsula, though most areas had **some** production capacity even if they were majority importers.*

*In the eastern Mediterranean world, most **islamic** gunpowder production was centered on Anatolia, but small mills could be found in most places.*

Operations: Loading and Firing

Loading gunpowder weapons, Bombards especially, required some degree of skill – packing in the Serpentine powder reduced access to oxygen and meant that it would either burn too slowly or incompletely and, at the very best, reduce the range the missile would be thrown and the force achieved.



Firing a Bombard

A skilled artilleryman needed to carefully ladle the powder down the muzzle to ensure optimum combustion would be achieved – giving maximum range and force.

Disadvantages and shortcomings

Though a massive technological advance, gunpowder did have important shortcomings –

- **Separation.** As noted above, *Serpentine* powder will separate into its constituents *even if not moved.* If it is transported any distance, this separation is accelerated.

- **Hygroscopic.** The Calcium impurities in early gunpowder *and* the Saltpeter are *hygroscopic* to one degree or another and pull moisture out of the ambient atmosphere. Damp powder will either lose power and create more smoke when it burns or won't explode *at all.*

  Worse, the *byproducts* of gunpowder are *also* hygroscopic ... and rich in compounds that are *corrosive.* This means they must be carefully cleaned *inside and out* after use ... something not fully understood even by the end of the 14th century.

- **Smoke.** Burning gunpowder produce a *lot* of smoke – especially the pyrotechnic mixes which makes the location of the weapon stand out *and* can interfere with aiming.

  While the low rate of fire of Handguns and Bombards and the general immobility once emplaced of the latter meant this was not something that artillerists could do much about, it *was* an issue that needs to be understood.

- **Rate of Fire.** For the average Bombard you could expect to fire around 40 rounds per day during a siege, operating night and day, or probably close to two rounds per hour.

- **Cost.** Gunpowder ***wasn't*** cheap – 1lb (Tournois) cost 10/- Tournois in 1370-80, dropping to 5/- Tournois by 1410-1420 (and to 1/6 to 2/- by the end of the 15th century). A medium sized Bombard might require 30-40 pounds of powder *per shot.*

Reality Check

As you can see from having read all the preceding material (you *have*, haven't you), the reality of military matters in the medieval period bears little resemblance to that presented in film and (most) fiction ... heck, even in a good chunk of *non*-fiction. As for the representation of military and combat related matters in most (if not all) Role Playing Games ... calling it *'mostly abysmal'* is not too strong an assessment.

Armies

The idea of the invincible serried ranks of Knights wearing full plate armour that seems to populate the minds of Hollywood directors and authors of Historical (or Fantasy) fiction is based on a thorough and complete lack of anything as basic as a clue about *real* medieval armies.

In the period covered, the 10th-14th centuries, what military forces medieval rulers could field were overwhelmingly *militia* rather than professional, full time, soldiers. Their equipment, and any training in its use, was so hugely variable that it is fortunate their normal opponents were in pretty much *exactly the same boat.*

Command and control was close to non-existent beyond the purely tactical level and 'armies' consisted of 'units' which had never trained or manoeuvered together, unit organisation was rudimentary and based on locality and local loyalty rather than actual military common sense, supply and logistics reliant on the individual soldier's initiative and private (usually unorganised) initiatives ... and that shiny, full plate, armour only appears during the 15th century (i.e. *after* the period covered).

Yes, there were exceptions from time to time and place to place, and exceptions tended to win battles and conquer territory ... but, *much* more often than not, victories were achieved by simply being *less* useless or simply *luckier* than the opposition.

Mercenaries. Remember Machiavelli's dictum, *"... for while gold by itself will not gain you good soldiers, good soldiers may readily get you gold."*

On the other hand, hiring Mercenaries was *seemingly* cheaper than maintaining a standing army ... even a small one. As long as any war was *extremely* short. A single campaign season, preferably less. Any more than that and the expense was ruinous.

Worse, mercenaries weren't necessarily any better trained than your feudal levies ... they may even not be any more experienced, or, indeed, have greater morale. ***And*** they're a bloody untrustworthy lot.



Armour

Was more expensive, in relative *and* absolute terms, than most people (especially RPG game designers) seem to grasp and any form of metal armour took a *long* time to manufacture ... something also not widely understood.

Mail armour (*never*, ***ever*** *'Chainmail'* in a period context) was the dominant form for the well-to-do and the nobility during the entirety of the period ... and was only being ***supplemented*** with bits and bobs of plate armour towards the end of the period.

Full Plate Armour is a thing that appears, slowly, during the 15th century and is rapidly made obsolete by the increasing dominance of gunpowder weapons on the battlefield. Not to mention the fact that it was so ludicrously expensive that very few people could actually *afford* it.

Especially since, unlike Mail Armour, it had to be fitted closely to an individual user and was not easily interchangeable (Mail, on the other hand, anyone could use any set with either no, or minimal, reworking ... especially when you consider it was worn over a thickish padded undergarment).

*Mail could be passed down from one generation to the next with little or no cost involved – it could even be enhanced by the addition of **pieces** of plate, or worn under some of the later composite armours (Brigandines, Coats of Plates, Gambesons and Jacks) ... and continued to dominate battlefields throughout the entire period.*

Even as Full Plate began to appear, it became more and more common for the majority of well-to-do soldiers to wear ***cheaper***, more easily constructed, composite armours such as *Brigandines*, *Coats of Plates*, *Gambesons* and *Jacks*. Very few soldiers would have appeared on a battlefield in Full Plate.

Foot soldiers (Infantry) pretty much never wore Full

Plate was too heavy – though Cavalry wearing it might find be unhorsed or otherwise need to fight on foot in which put them at a disadvantage because the weight would exhaust them and slow down their responses.

Even allowing all the above, even commoners usually had *something* in the way of armour, even if it was only a crude metal skullcap and a leather jerkin.

Wearing Armour. *Wearing armour is uncomfortable and exhausting. All those great illustrations of fantasy types sitting down in taverns or walking around town wearing armour are just that,* ***fantasy****. You only wore armour when you* ***had*** *to ... even when travelling. Being* ***armed*** *was usually enough to keep any ruffians at bay.*

Women and Armour. *Women rarely participated in combat, except as victims, and so rarely wore armour ... but there* ***were*** *occasional exceptions.*

However (sorry) there were no ***chainmail bikinis*** *and, no, no* ***plate curaisses with breastforms*** *... looks great in fantasy art, but simply never existed in real life.*

Armour was ***expensive*** *– making armour* ***specifically*** *for a woman just didn't happen. Women wore whatever was available – Mail is pretty much 'one size fits all shapes', as are composite armours worn with the necessary padded undergarments.*

Even bits of Plate armour – though not full suits, which had to be individually fitted – could be worn without any special changes.



Weapons

The obsession that many (most? all?) roleplaying games have with multitudes of slightly different variations on a basic weapon type – ***polearms, do you hear, that means YOU*** – is not supported by the reality of the period.

Yes, weapons changed in form and function, quite slowly for the most part, over the 10th-14th centuries, but there were relatively few different variations on a theme available at any given time.

Even worse, many of the additional weapons provided in most RPGs only came into existence *because* of the development of Full Plate armour (i.e. in the mid to late 15th century or later) and the need to penetrate it (any Polearm not mentioned, *Military Picks* and *Hammers*, for example) or because of the obsolescence of Plate Armour with the rise of gunpowder weapons and the lack of need to penetrate anything except clothing (*Rapiers*, *Epees* and similar light fencing weapons).

Weapon Specialisation. Knights and mounted Serjeants as well as Nobles and Gentry in general, routinely trained to use Swords and Lances as their primary weapons.

Commoners routinely trained to use either Spears or Bows (or, rarely, some other type of missile weapon) as their primary weapon. Secondary weapons would have been Knives of one sort or another.

Men-at-Arms (mainly Serjeants, mounted or dismounted) might train to use Swords, Lances *and*, once they were introduced, a Crossbow, but that was relatively late and relatively rare.

See where this is going? Medieval soldiers trained *either* as Swordsmen *or* as Spearmen *or* as Archers (or Crossbowmen) ***first and foremost.***

Commoners would rarely have the money to buy a Sword or, if they looted one off a battlefield, the time and money to pay for training in its use.

Spearmen were generally poorer than Bowmen and training with a Bow took many years, so they couldn't just convert if they somehow came into some money.

Not a lot of cross-training, weapons wise. Not ***none***, of course, just ... *uncommon.*

Realistically this means characters (NPCs *and* PCs) should be forced to specialise ... and pay extra, or progress more slowly (or, most likely, *both*) to improve their skills with non-specialised weapons.


ARS MECHANICA
MAURICE LALAU 1908

Ars Mechanica

Medieval people weren't in the least bit stupid.

They *didn't* have a lot of the technologies we take for granted for a whole variety of reasons – more often than not simply because they didn't have required (but only obvious to *us*) precursor technologies or, about equally as often, because the *cost* of implementing them was prohibitive until *other* technologies made some key element redundant or much cheaper than it was for them.

The first sections of this chapter will deal with some of the key, but not always obvious, technologies that were severe constraints for medieval society and economics.

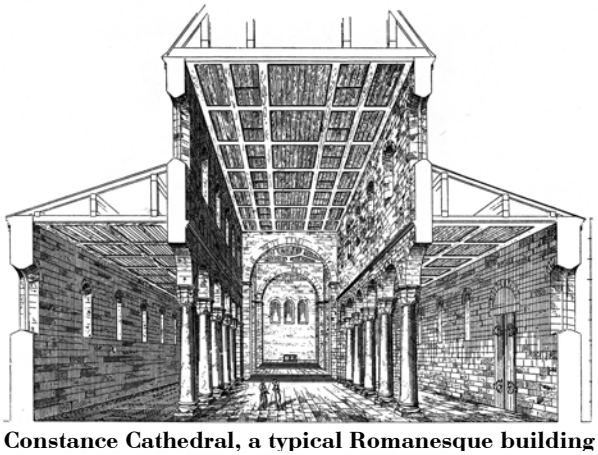
The Seven Mechanical Arts

These *Artes Mechanicae* were regarded as an inferior reflection of the prestigious *Artes Liberales* – suitable only for 'common' folk, a division hearking back to the classical period and the general elite attitude to 'servile' pursuits ('*gentlemen*' did not ***work*** for a living, they only *lived on the income* earned from rents from farming and related pursuits ... money earned off the backs of the *servile* classes).

These were rather arbitrarily divided (based on late classical tradition) as follows –

- **Agricultura** (see ***Res Rustica***, pg #54))
- **Architectura** (building trades)
- **Coquinaria** (cooking)
- **Mercaturia** (commerce)
- **Metallaria** (metalworking)
- **Militia** (see ***De Re Militari***, pg. #181)
- **Vestiaria** (Cloth trades)

However, by the 12th century this classification changed and *Agricultura*, *Coquinaria* and *Mercaturia* were replaced with ***Medicine, Navigation*** and ***Theater*** and ***Geometry*** was included as well.



Constance Cathedral, a typical Romanesque building

Elite *attitudes* towards the Mechanical Arts were also changing, and they were being redefined as those arts that 'promoted the improvement of humanity' ... though, *of course*, true ***gentlemen*** would not dirty their hands by actually *participating* in such pursuits (unless they were well and truly *eccentric* ...).

Architectura

This section deals primarily with civil and religious architecture (though some details of the latter are covered in ***De Civitate Dei***) and general building techniques – Castles and Fortifications are more specifically dealt with in ***De Re Militari***.

Stone & Brick Buildings

Though these were always a minority of buildings constructed during the medieval period, they were some of the most important – built by and for the wealthy (or at least well-to-do).

Romanesque Architecture

With the collapse of the Western Empire many construction techniques in common use at its height were lost and the successor states had to redevelop many of the architectural and building techniques.

Period buildings often use sheer mass and brute force rather than finesse – massively thick walls pierced by few, small, windows and doors; thick (almost squat looking) pillars, double barrel vaults and rounded, semi-circular arches all combined in what is almost always a symmetrical plan.

Gothic Architecture

This style starts to (slowly) replace the *Romanesque* style from the 12th century, initially in France and called *Opus Francigenum ('French Work')* at the time ('*Gothic*' wasn't adopted as a descriptive term until the late Renaissance).

The key features of this new style are a lighter, more airy, look characterised by *pointed* Arches, *ribbed* Vaults and *Flying Buttresses* amongst the most notable new features. There was also a greater use of carved and ornamented architectural features from statues to murals to stained glass windows ... and the interiors of these new buildings were generally designed to make a much greater use of natural light.

The new style was also more widely used by new stone *civic* buildings erected by the increasingly important (and independent) commercial towns and cities as a sign of their growing wealth and power.

Features of Romanesque Architecture

Arcades. A row of arches supported on columns, used mostly to create large internal open spaces and often supporting roof beams. In large buildings there might be several levels of Arcade, with middle levels opening onto the space below.

Arches. These are *almost* universally semi-circular – but there are some instances where sharply pointed (straight, rather than curved sided, in some places) arches have been used, so there was obviously no particular *technical* reason for the preference.

Buttresses. These are uncommon – or not *obvious*, as the massive walls typically used obviated their need. Where they *do* occur they are normally square and are built *into* the wall, barely projecting beyond.

Columns. These are usually of masonry (sometimes only a shell, filled with rubble, if the column was particularly large) and either square or rectangular, though those at the intersection of arches in vaulting and elsewhere are more likely to be cruciform.

It was common for builders to re-use salvaged Roman era columns which were normally circular, and it was often the case that, if many such columns were used, they would be of mis-matched styles. They are normally used to support Arches (qv).

Domes. These are normally found at the intersection of a Church's Transept and Nave or in Basilicas and are usually octagonal.

Roofs. The substructures are almost always wooden – simple *trusses*, *tie beams* or *king posts*. These may be open, with the beams on view and appropriately decorated, or roofed off with wooden ceilings.

The actual *roof* was normally of slates (in England, Devon and Cornwall exported slates for tiling from the 12th century) or, less commonly (mostly in SW England



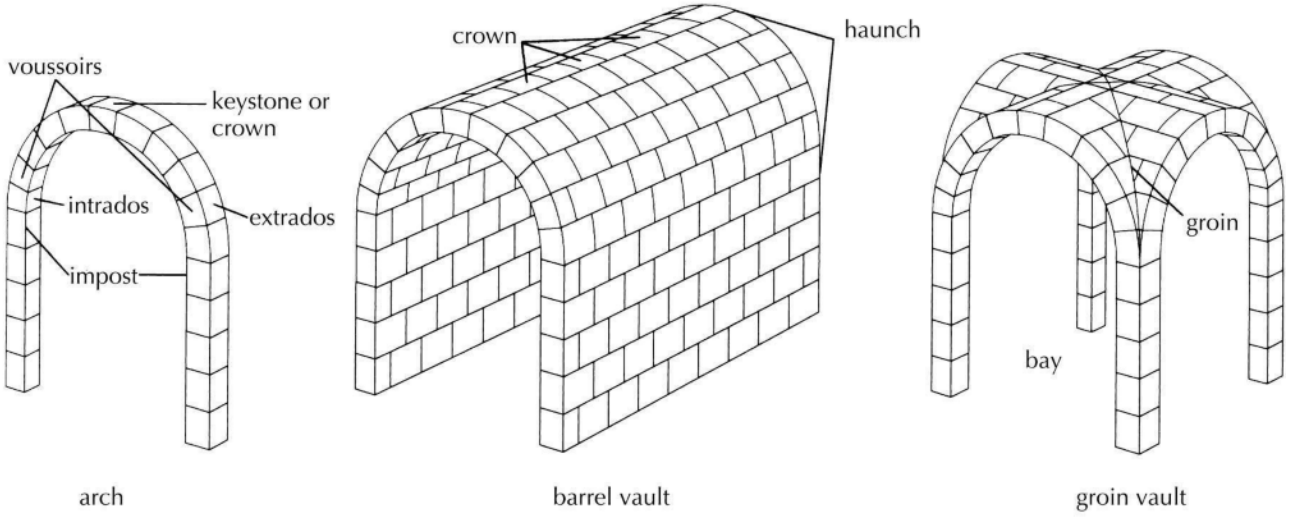
Arcade and Double Barreled Vaulting

until the 14th century), of ceramic tile ... wooden shingles might be used in some cases, but rarely in stone built buildings.

Vaults. Initially the most common form was the simple *Barrel Vault*, which could only be used with thick walls which had few and small (windows only) or *no* openings.

These were gradually replaced by the more complex *Double Barrel (Groin) Vault* which were almost always square in plan – developing into the *Ribbed Vault* (where the ribs are the structural members, not the whole of the vault surface) and which then developed into the *Pointed Arch Vault* which transitions into the Gothic style.

Walls. Usually double-shelled, with the internal space between the inner and outer walls filled with rubble. The wall surfaces usually consist of small, irregularly shaped, stones in a thick bed of lime mortar ... unless using shaped stone scavenged from older, Roman, buildings and other structures.



Features of Gothic Architecture

Arches. Gothic structures used *pointed* Arches of various sorts pretty much *everywhere* – doorways, windows, arcades, galleries, even as decorative accents (*blind* arches) on otherwise solid walls.

The higher point of these arches allows a much higher roof or upper floor level than rounded (Romanesque) arches and makes it possible to have a larger, more open, space beneath.

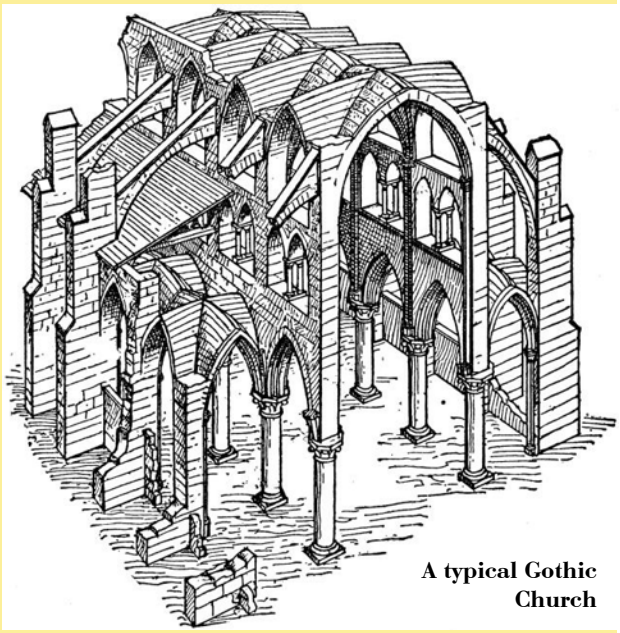
Decoration. The interior of a Gothic Church and, to a lesser extent, Civic or private Buildings, was increasingly richly decorated with statuary, carved capitals on columns, mosaics, murals, stained glass windows and other elements. These might be in stone *and* wood – and wooden elements, even ceiling structures, were increasingly *painted* rather than left bare.

Note, however, that ***some*** *Gothic Churches remained quite severe and (relatively) lacking in decoration.*

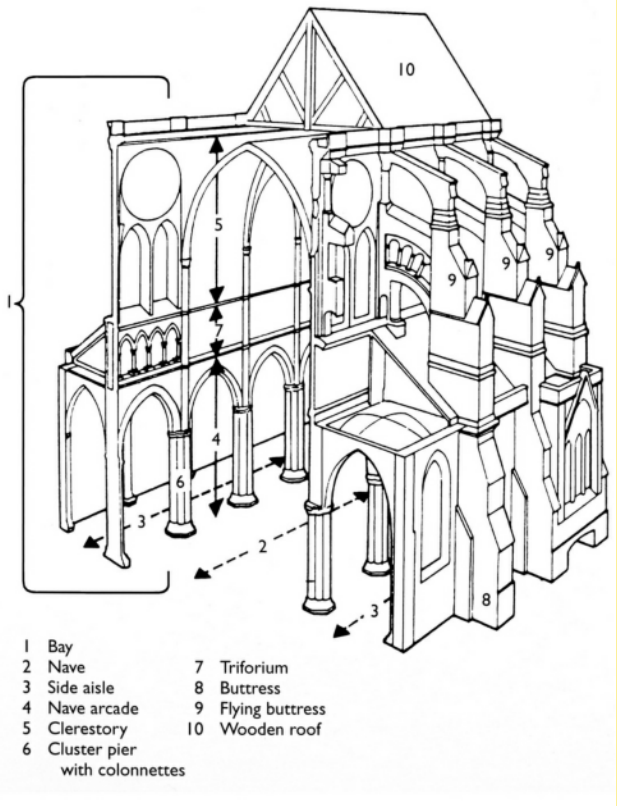
Flying Buttress. One of the key developments of the Gothic style, this is a massive stone buttress *not* adjacent or part of to the wall it provides lateral support to, but connected by an arch to the upper levels of the building.

This allows the whole structure to be much higher and the walls to be thinner and pierced with many windows as they are no longer load bearing.

Height. Gothic architecture, especially Churches, was constructed with a greater height to width ratio than the more squat *Romanesque* style – 2:1 or greater in most English churches. This is often accentuated by the use of additional towers and/or spires.



A typical Gothic Church



1 Bay
2 Nave
3 Side aisle
4 Nave arcade
5 Clerestory
6 Cluster pier with colonnettes
7 Triforium
8 Buttress
9 Flying buttress
10 Wooden roof

Roofs. These still tend to be divided between those that use slates and those that use pottery tiles supported by a wooden understructure.

Rose Windows. These are circular windows divided into segments quite elaborate with stonework tracery and filled with elaborate stained glass. In some places, simple *Wheel* windows which have only simple segments with minimal or no tracery might also be found.

Vaults. The *Groined* vault develops into the *Ribbed* Vault where the structural support is provided by masonry along the joins of the interconnecting vaults and the infill between becomes largely decorative rather than structural.

Walls. These are *much* thinner (no longer *double shelled*) than the massive walls needed for *Romanesque* buildings because of the use of *Flying Buttresses* to take and redirect lateral forces – meaning that the walls are no longer load bearing, but merely infill between the arches and buttresses that are.

Windows. These were *arched* as all wall piercings were in the period – they became increasingly elaborate through the period, typically with stone tracery at the top and, often, with tall arched framed within a larger overall frame which would then have one or more smaller *Rose Windows (qv)* at the top.

Windows gradually began to dominate the walls of Gothic structures, taking up more and more or the wall space as the period progressed, bringing natural light into the interiors of the buildings.

Vernacular Stone Buildings

The architectural styles used by the common people, or even the gentry and lesser (poorer) nobility tended to not follow the current fashion and had their own, simpler, practical and easy (and cheap) to construct and largely regional styles commonly referred to as *Vernacular* architecture.

The basic plan was built around a long hall which might be mainly of stone with wood roofing or, more commonly, with a wood framework with stone walls built in and around that, reminiscent of *Wattle and Daub* or *Half Timbered* buildings, but with stone infill.

Homes belonging to the average sort of peasant would usually have only a single storey, though there might be a half-storey, usually at one end, where the parents would have their own semi-private quarters reached by a ladder or very simple wooden stairs.

Internal divisions would normally be wattle and daub or wood rather than stone and there would be few, generally small, windows and doors. Most such homes were divided between the living areas for the owning family and stables for their livestock – separated either by a low fence or by an internal wall.

*Stone built homes were not **necessarily** an indication of any great wealth on the part of the owner. In areas where there was a shortage of wood (either because there was no suitable wood nearby or because it was too expensive to access ... or, often, for both those reasons combined) for construction, stone was often a cheaper alternative.*

In areas where the fields were naturally rocky and full of stone, simple drystone structure (not just walls between fields) would often be constructed as a way to use the 'produce' of clearing the fields of stones to make ploughing easier ... or, if something more elaborate (and permanent) was desired it was usually easy enough to 'mortar' the stones with a mix of clay, dung and straw (or even real lime mortar).



In other areas, large boulders were often incorporated into dry- or mortared stone structures for economy.

Better off peasantry were more likely to have a second storey or half storey and their houses *might* be purely for human habitation – barns being detached structures. Otherwise they are be similar to the above.

Gentry and poorer Nobles would routinely have at least part of the structure with two full storeys, most commonly for the private rooms for the family, with a Hall (often two storeys, but with no, or only part, of an upper floor over and exposed ceiling beams) and Kitchen/Storage rooms, usually at the opposite end of the building the the family areas.

Internal walls might be of stone in parts (usually the division between the Hall and family rooms) but were more commonly wood. External windows were more common than in peasant homes and possibly larger, depending on the then current architectural fashion.

These gentry/noble homes *might* or might *not* be fortified or semi-fortified Manor Houses or the interior buildings in a castle.

Drystone Buildings

This form of stone construction uses no mortar – the stones are held together by gravity and friction. Even though it is more commonly associated with fences or terracing, especially in regions with rocky fields and a lack of (easily) available timber, it was also used widely for buildings and other structures in those sorts of places as well ... in some parts of Europe it was the main form of vernacular stone construction.

In some places roughly (and locally) quarried stone may be used instead of fieldstone.

Normally drystone walls are built from two layers of carefully chosen stones, preferably as flat as possible (though more rounded stones may be used, with the addition of smaller stones to fill in and stabilise the rounded end areas), laid down in long courses and bound together by through stones running between the two facings every so far along the length.

The stones may be roughly shaped on the spot to produce a more flattened shape on one or more sides – and larger stones running across the tops of the two courses are used as 'capitals' to further bond the two otherwise separate facings together. To further improve stability, the walls gradually narrow together as the courses get higher and higher.

The space between the two courses is filled with smaller stones and pebbles when used in boundary walls and terracing but when used for inhabited structures the filling will be earth, sand or even clay to provide a more snug, draught free, wall.

Treadmills

These were used in a variety of applications during the period and were *mostly* in the form shown in the illustration above, a vertical wheel inside which one or more people simply 'climbed' continuously.

One use was the one shown, as a primitive crane or pulley and windlass system – and these could be quite large and require several men to operate. They were commonly seen on large building sites such as Castles and Cathedrals, but were also used, occasionally, at the dockside to help unload large ships.

Another common use was to operate Flour Mills, turning the grindstones, in locations where there were no suitable streams to power a water mill and either before windmills were available or, again, in a location which was unsuitable for them.

*Remember, transportation costs were **high**, so Mills had to be close to where the grain was grown – so in some cases treadmill powered mills made economic sense.*

*In large households, **dog** powered treadmills were often used to run rotisserie spits to turn meat being roasted over an open fireplace.*

Treadmill Cranes. Used extensively by the Romans the Treadmill Crane disappeared when the Empire collapsed and only reappeared, and only on the continent, in the early 13th century on the continent, especially in ports and harbours ... however it did not appear in use in England until the mid 14th century.

The most common model had a treadmill wheel wide enough for two people to work it side-by-side, but some designed for particularly large loads had a treadmill wheel on either side of the crane structure.

Slewing or rotating versions were available from the mid 14th century.



Treadmill (Human) powered Medieval Crane

*In some areas during the medieval period even **Bridges** were built using drystone – including **arches** – and were capable of carrying horses and wheeled carts in addition to the more normal foot traffic. The stone used in such structures was more thoroughly shaped to be flattened on all surfaces ... and may have been quarried nearby rather than made with fieldstone.*

Brick Buildings

Brick only makes its (re)appearance as a major construction material in western Europe during the 12th century appearing first in a small number of late *Romanesque* buildings but becoming more common with the introduction of the *Gothic* style, and, in the latter case, is often referred to as *Brick Gothic*.

*There are some brick buildings that pre-date this style – always in areas that had previously been part of the Western Empire ... but they were built with **Roman** bricks scavenged from derelict buildings and other structures and **not** with new brick.*

Roman brick sizes varied, but the most common size found in NW Europe was 8x8x3" and triangular and even round bricks were used in some places.

Brick Gothic buildings are entirely a NE European development, appearing in Belgium, Holland, Germany, the Baltic States, Sweden and Finland.

The style was adopted because many of these areas had major population centers that were too far from sources of good quality stone for construction and/or well away from major navigable rivers that would make the transport of suitable stone from distant sources viable economically. In the eastern areas the ready availability of fuel (charcoal) for firing of bricks was also an important economic factor.

*Even so, Brick construction was **never** an option for the common folk ... and possibly not even for the less gentry. **Far** too expensive.*

Brick Gothic did not take off elsewhere as the economics of firing and transporting bricks was too expensive compared to the use of stone.

Standard Bricks. *German* and *northern European* made bricks were typically ~28-30 x ~14-15 x ~9-10 cm and were normally unglazed red brick ... though glazed (normally black) bricks were used in some places. Brickmakers could, and did, make other shaped pieces for architectural and other general decorative purposes.

Bricks in *England* were used sparingly, usually for elite structures and only for special purposes in those, but generally adhered to late Roman sizes when reintroduced *except* that they quickly increased their thickness to at least 4½-5".

Wooden Buildings

Wooden construction was more widely used than stone, even by the wealthy, right throughout the period – because it cost far, *far* less. Even residences of the gentry and most nobles, or those inside some sort of fortification (Manor House or Castle) were most likely completely constructed of wood.

Basic Housing Forms

There are wide variations between the different parts of Europe and the British Isles, and often equally wide variations even within broad regions ... though there is broad continuity in styles with changes occurring slowly, over time, during the medieval period.

Aisled Frame

These are a more complex form of the basic *Box Frame* structure – they consist of two or more Aisles supported by internal pillars, as in Church construction. These Aisles are not always of equal size and the roof segment over outer aisles may be canted at a different (lower) angle than the main roof structure or even entirely separate.

Aisled frame structures can be much wider than the simple *Box Frame* as the timbers supporting the roof and upper floor are supported by the spaced pillars.

Box frame

These are simple square(ish) or rectangular structures with upright corner posts and, depending on size, some upright wall posts but, unlike the *Pit House*, the internal floor is at local ground level.

They tend to be *mostly* single or double rooms and are *mostly* linear (i.e. as long or longer than they are wide) because of the cost (or lack of availability) of the long cross-timbers to support a wide roof – larger buildings are *mostly* be *Aisled* or *Cruck* Framed or *Half-Timbered*.

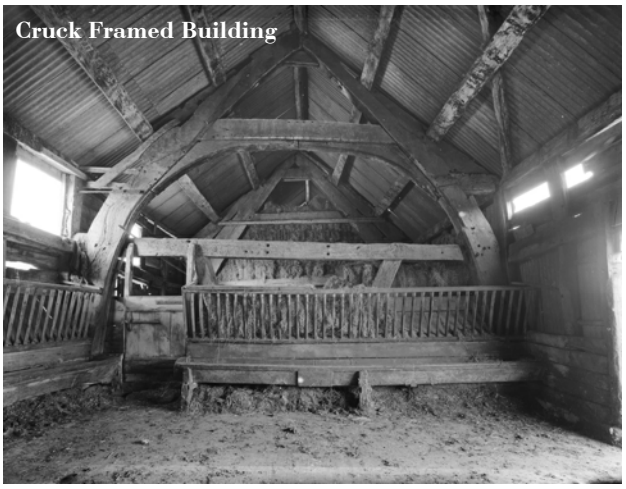
*Depending on the local availability of wood, the walls may **either** be wattle and daub **or** wood planks.*

*Regardless, there are no intervening **structural** timbers between the uprights as which, if present, would make them **half timbered**.*

Cruck Frame

A very old style, using curved cross-timbers rising from the foundations and (mostly) meeting at the ridge of the roof (and possibly extending beyond) – there are many variations on the basic style and the crucks themselves may not rise from the foundation but from the mid or upper floor of a structure, originating from large corner or side beams.

The space between each set of Crucks is called a *Bay* and Cruck framed houses *mostly* consist of at least two, and usually at least three, Bays.



Cruck Framed Building

Half Timbered Framing

Similar to *Box Framing*, but the upright timbers are further divided and supported by diagonal and horizontal *structural* timbers between them. The space in between these major timbers is called a *panel* and may be filled in with a wattle and daub, stone or even brick wall which, however, can be much lighter than normal as it is *not* structural.

This can be a particularly confusing 'style' to identify as it is all too common for Aisle and Cruck framed structures to have external walls that are half timbered, either as part of their original plan or as a later addition or reconstruction.

Log Cabins

These were very common in the more heavily wooded parts of Europe, especially in Scandinavia, the Baltics, Poland and Russia and were mostly based on round rather than square hewn logs with increasingly sophisticated jointing and with gaps between the logs chinked with sod, clay or similar materials.

The logs were normally laid straight on the ground, which would have been leveled first, but there is often some evidence to suggest that there was a raised wooden floor internally and, in some cases, there may also have been a sunken area under the internal floor similar in purpose to a *Pit House*.

Internally, the cabin *might* consist of a single large room, or might be divided by plank or wattle and daub walls ... or even have full log walls in some cases.

In some instances additional rooms might be built onto the basic rectangular frame – either at the time the structure was first erected or later, and in both instances usually for special purposes (storage, animal pens etc.).

*In Scandinavia at least, Log Cabins were considered **moveable** (rather than **landed**, or fixed) property as, when needed, the occupiers could (and, historically, did) simply disassemble them and drag the logs to a new site to be reassembled there.*

Building Materials

It is important to remember that medieval buildings were essentially built with *hand tools* and usually with very little or no power sources other than *human* (or, occasionally, animal) muscle.

Building materials had to be quarried, fired or hewn using laborious and time consuming methods and costs were higher because of this. Far higher than the material costs, which were high enough.

Brick

Almost as heavy as stone and usually even more costly to produce because it firing the kilns required as much or more charcoal or wood as a large furnace. For this reason it was rarely used unless stone was unavailable locally – and only for patrician or civic buildings because of the increased expense.

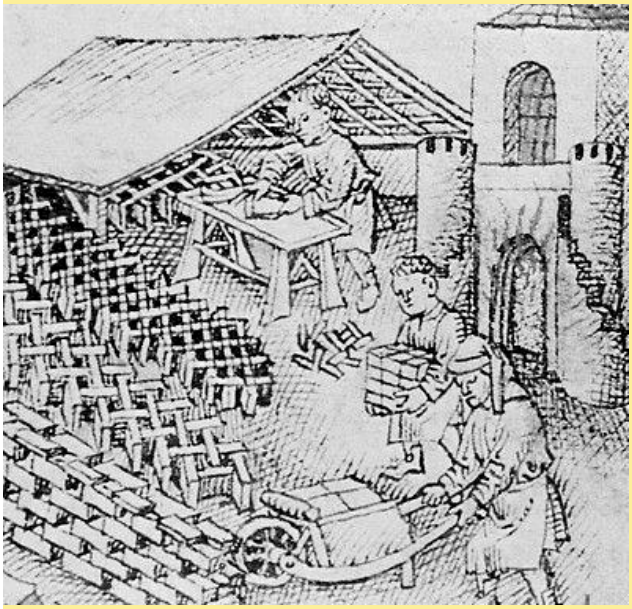
Unlike stone, which was normally quarried as close to the building site as possible, bricks were normally fired elsewhere and transported to the building site which, in turn, could increase costs considerably unless sea or water transport was available.

While Bricks were normally fired to a standard size, it was also common for them to be ordered in special, often complex, shapes to form specific architectural elements which, in a stone building, would be of carved stone.

Glass

What were windows in most medieval buildings filled with? Mostly? *Nothing*.

There would be shutters, usually hand fitted and *not* hinged (see *Metalwork*, below) for keeping the weather out in spaces intended for human (and even animal) habitation ... and, for security, some might have bars or lattices of wood or, if *really* high security, iron.





Glass? Close to nonexistent *in windows* (heck, *for any purpose*) from the collapse of the Empire in the west to around the late 7th century.

Production ramped up from the 10th century when the use of potash from wood ash was discovered, replacing the soda-glass recipes of the mediterranean world ... this type of glass was called *Forest Glass.*

Window glass was made by blowing a quantity of glass into a long cylinder and then cutting it open and flattening it out and then cutting it into small diamond or square shaped pieces from at least the 11th century, initially in Germany.

Stained Glass, glass coloured either by adding impurities to the glass mix ***or*** *painting glazes on directly and then fusing them to the glass in a kiln, was rarely used before the 12th century ... and was used as often in elite civic as in religious architecture.*

French glassmakers perfected the *Crown Glass* method in the early 14th century which involved blowing a sphere and then spinning it till it flattened out into a disk 1.5-1.8 meters across which was then cut into square or diamond shaped pieces.

The pieces nearer the center were (obviously) thicker than those at the edges ... the thicker the glass, the poorer it was optically and, therefore, the cheaper it was to purchase.

In both instances the glass pieces were pieced together with lead edging in a latticework pattern ... though, with the *very* large windows made by the change to non-structural walls in Gothic architecture, iron frames had to be use to hold smaller areas of pieced together lead-framed stained glass panels.

Metalwork

As noted in several other places, iron (and steel) was expensive enough such that it was not commonly used in most construction unless it was unavoidable.

Woodwork was mostly held together with hand-fitted mortice and tenon work, either secured by gravity and friction or by wooden dowels hammered into holes drilled with an auger.

***Nails** were* used, but as sparingly as possible, even in buildings intended for elite use and, of course, they were all hand made ... usually on the spot, if at a remote site, though in a town or city they might be ordered from a blacksmith (and in a *really* large city there might be smiths who would specialise in producing various types of nail).

Hinges for doors and windows were of wrought iron (mostly simple *strap* hinges rather than the floridly complex patterned designs used in elite structures ... or the parts *on show*, anyway) but were, as with nails, used sparingly by poorer folk who would use thick leather straps nailed to the door and jamb, thick rope or flexible wicker ties or simply wedging it into place from the inside but otherwise leaving the doorway open ... if they had wooden doors at all (they might simply hang a curtain across the doorway).

As noted above, as windows grew larger, the lead-pieced panels that made them up had to be held together by iron window framing.

Mortar

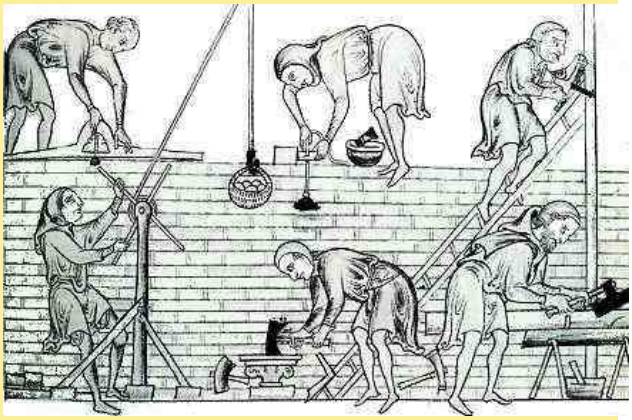
Brick and Stone buildings needed something to hold the structural elements together – for most major structures this meant the use of *mortar*.

During the medieval period, the only mortar available was ***lime** mortar*, the secret of *hydraulic mortar* (known to the Greeks and Romans) having been lost at some point during the collapse of the Western Empire.

And no-one knows why. There aren't even any good theories ... cement continued to be used in the Eastern Empire, but doesn't seem to have had any impact on the western European experience.

Lime Mortar sets at varying speeds according to the exact mix and the quality of the lime used and is *not*





water resistant which means that, over extended periods of time, the mortar will decay or dissolve and the structure will need repointing.

Hydraulic Lime Mortar (Cement) uses a mix of volcanic ash, ground terracotta or other materials and will set underwater and is water resistant and will not decay/dissolve slowly as does lime mortar in exposed areas. It was not rediscovered until the late 18th century.

Stone

Stone is *heavy* and, given that there were no really good roads and that what passed for land transport was marginal at best, stone had to be quarried as close to the construction site as possible – unless it could be transported there cheaply, which meant by sea or river.

Quarrying stone was *time consuming* and *back-breaking* – there were no explosives and no shortcuts. Iron tools had to be used, and required constant re-sharpening onsite and, even so, wore out relatively quickly ... when steel became somewhat cheaper in the late 14th century this changed *a little*.

*Breaking up stone to make gravel was even **more** time consuming (and hence expensive), which is one of the major reasons why repairs to the old Roman roads, where they still existed, was so rarely done ... either at all, or with decent materials (it's also a reason why concrete was not widely used).*

Most commonly holes were simply filled in with whatever stone was available – from a single large stone of roughly the right size to fill a hole down to clutches of smaller, irregular, stones or even cobbles ... a very rough and ready solution making for very rough and ready rides!

This is one reason why in early medieval buildings irregular stonework is common even on the outer facing of rubble fill walls and is held in place with *thick* layers of mortar. The development of the *Gothic* style meant most walls could now be single layer and this meant somewhat less cost so that shaped stone could be used more commonly.

Tile

These only begin to (re)appear on any scale *as roofing material* in England from the 11th century, having disappeared in NW Europe with the collapse of the Western Empire in the same way and for the same reasons fired Brick did ... and they remained a marginally used roofing material until at least the 13th century, around the same time brick production began again in England (floor tiles were reintroduced at around the same time).

Where they were used as roofing material they were flat rather than with curved and flanged ends in the Roman style from the beginning in England, though the older style remained in use on the continent until around the 13th century. They were normally unglazed red terracotta.

Floor (and wall) tiles were usually glazed with copper or lead based materials which, depending on the metal content, gave a yellow, green, brown or black finish (plain or in patterns of varying degrees of complexity and artistic representation).

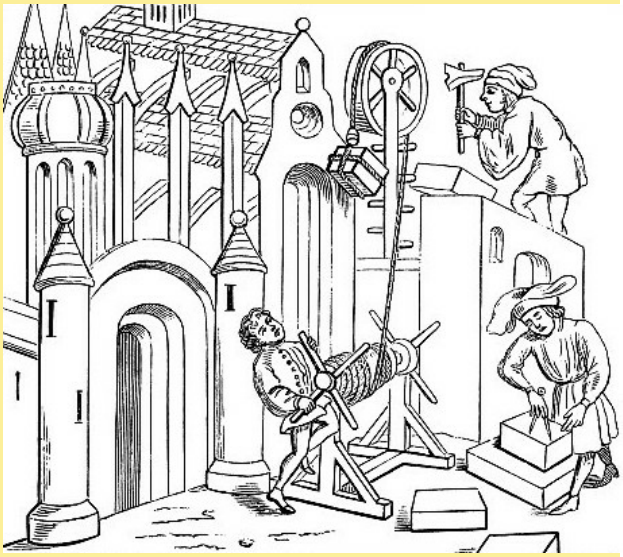
Some manufacturers produced *encaustic* tiles which mixed layers of different coloured clays to give a colour effect that was more wear resistant, as the pattterns could be up to ¼" deep.

Wood

This was either felled onsite to as close to as possible – something which became more and more difficult as the period progressed and the huge demands for fuel and construction materials denuded vast tracks of the remaining forest primeval.

Wood was used even in stone and brick buildings – floors, especially upper ones, and roof-frames were most always wood, for example.





Medieval carpenters did not *normally* use green wood (certainly not for major structural members in buildings intended for use by the elite!), despite many modern claims to the contrary – certainly *not* for structures expected to have a long useful life.

Trees were *either* ring-barked *in situ* and left to stand and air dry for ~30 days *or* felled during winter and left to dry until summer.

Once felled you need to see the product as a tree that has to be turned into something usable. For structural materials this meant, preferably, simply working the entire trunk (or suitable lengths) into a support beam or column, roughly squaring it off and smoothing it with an *adze*.

Planks could be cut from a tree by hand (no sawmills) with a crosscut saw, sawing a log placed over a pit or on a crossbeam angled into the air. Planks so produced tended to be somewhat irregular in thickness and often had to be smoothed down to consistency when used in flooring by careful *adze* (or, possibly, *plane*) work.

*Wood **Planes** were known of, but seem to have been quite uncommon, and some authorities have suggested they may simply have been adze blades attached to a flat piece of wood rather than a long handle.*

Construction was largely of the cut and fit variety – the carpenter would make each piece separately and cut the parts to suit that particular set of elements – there was no thought of interchangeability.

Where wooden elements were not constructed in situ, or where a number were made at the same time by different workmen, the parts for each separate set had to be carefully marked so that the correct elements would be brought together for assembly – none of this 'mass production' nonsense!

Pit House

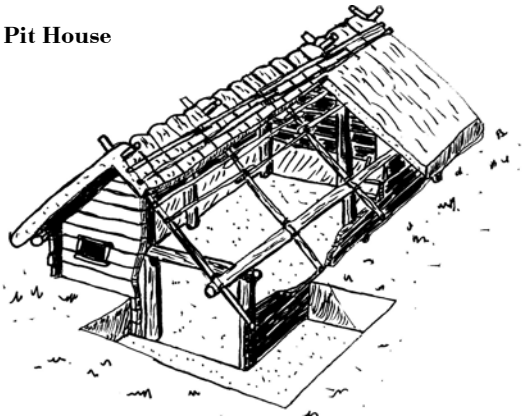
These are simple *Box Frame* structures partly dug into the ground with either only a low or no wall above the local ground level and a simple pitched roof on top with few or no windows and, usually, a single door opening onto a single room and may be circular or rectangular in shape.

*Some archaeologists believe that pit houses with partial walls above the local ground level actually had wood floors **at** ground level and that the area below the floor was used for storage ... and reconstructions built and used by modern re-enactors seem to support this.*

Unlike many other housing styles, these seem not to have been divided between stalls for animals and human occupied areas – it seems most likely that any animals owned by the occupants were kept in an external fenced enclosure probably connected with or surrounding the house structure.

These structures are common in northern and north western Europe through to the 12th century and may be found even later on the socially or economically primitive margins of those areas.

Pit House



Building Components

Or, what they didn't have or couldn't do

What were medieval buildings like *inside*? It obviously varies according to the type of construction and the wealth of the owner but there are some things that can be broadly applied to most –

Corridors

Medieval houses and other structures did ***not*** routinely have corridors connecting rooms or other areas on or above ground level. Rooms normally opened onto *other* rooms.

Dungeons and the Underworld

*Underground areas **might** be different, depending on what the purpose of any open areas were and whether they would require a lot of (expensive) excavation and/or compromise the structural integrity of the building.*

In general, however, corridors connecting strings of rooms are no more likely to exist underground than they are above ground ... the most likely semi-exception would be a long corridor (perhaps including a staircase) between one room and another.

A Partial Exception

There were some exceptions – in those elite homes which had a *Great Hall* there was often a 'screen' between the Hall and the service areas (Pantry, Buttery, Kitchen etc.) and, behind the 'screen' there was a corridor of sorts running from one side of the Hall to the other ... but that's often about it.

Design Implications

*This has obvious design implications – especially for anyone who wants to create a realistic medieval floor-plan for role-playing purposes. It is best to consult as many examples as possible from those available on the Internet ... and to be careful to **not** be 'taken in' by later additions or remodeling which can (and often does) completely change the internal arrangements of older structures that have remained in constant use over a long period of time.*

Privacy

This design factor also has important implications for something we moderns take for granted – *privacy*. With rooms opening on rooms it was routinely the case that servants (and others) would *have* to move through areas which, today, we would regard as either completely or semi-private.

Flooring

Peasant houses *might* have dirt floors – but it isn't certain how common that might have been as wooden flooring doesn't generally leave clear traces in the archaeological record.

*It is now strongly suspected, based on modern reconstructions and re-enactment, that at least **some** Pit Houses had wooden floors over the excavation, which was used for storage.*

Elite houses generally had wood or, occasionally, stone (usually *only* on the ground floor) floors at the beginning of the period and, as ceramics such as brick and tile became more common later on, they might use these as additional flooring materials.

Brick and tile would generally be limited to use in structures belonging to the wealthiest of the elite – though it is certainly possible that even gentry might have small areas of flooring with tile or brick accents.

Floor Coverings

It seems unlikely that even peasant homes had bare floors, no matter what the floor was made of ... though the archaeological record and limited written source material available doesn't make it possible to say with any degree of certainty.

Modern reconstructions and use by re-enactors *strongly* suggest most floors in *living* areas were covered with ***bundles*** of rushes in both peasant and elite houses (*not* loosely strewn reeds or straw as movies and older/poorly researched fiction would have us believe) – at least at the beginning of the period.

*Evidently rush flooring is both comfortable to sleep on (as servants would commonly have had to do in elite households), acts as insulation **and** tends to help with keeping the household clean (surprisingly). Any food scraps or other material would work its way into the bundles and be consumed by natural processes. Rushes would be replaced once a year.*

Rush flooring for living areas continues in widespread use well beyond the end of the period.

*There is **no** evidence woven rush mats were used (or, at least, not used **widely**), despite what some secondary sources claim – they seem to be reading too much that almost certainly **isn't there** into what little information we actually have. Of course, if you desperately want to have rush matting in some households, especially elite ones, go for it, even though there's no evidence for it.*

Rooms and other areas with a *solely* ceremonial or public purpose would probably *not* have rush flooring – especially if the floors were decorated with tile or brick or even with carved stone or even carefully polished wood.

Nope. *No **carpets** (nope, no **rugs**, either).* Tapestries were too expensive, and were hung on walls as decoration – and possibly as practical insulation against draughts.

HEATING

Heating was from open fireplaces or, more accurately, open *hearths* or *fire-pits*, until the *very* late 12th century when the first *fire-hoods* and *chimneys* started to *slowly* appear in elite dwellings in northern Europe.

Open hearths remained the main source of heating until the 16th or even 17th centuries.



Generally speaking, heating medieval dwellings was problematic – windows were often open holes in the walls with nothing (much) normally *in* them ... and, when they *did* have a 'pane' of some sort, it most certainly *wasn't* double glazed!

Yes, wooden shutters could be fitted, but that meant you had to choose between light or warmth ... during winter most people chose warmth, of course.

Prior to the invention and/or their widespread use, the eaves at the end of many peasant houses were left open, or only filled in with loosely woven wicker panels, to allow the smoke from the hearth to escape – which, of course, meant that they were areas where the *heat* could escape and draughts from the (cold) outside could blow right in.

In elite buildings, heating small, private, rooms was possible, usually with *Braziers* until the invention of chimneys, but heating the large, often open to the roof, *public* spaces was ... *difficult*. Impossible, really.

Then, of course, something most people don't even consider, there's the *cost of **fuel*** ... for the poor, there was a limited amount they could gather from the Lord's woodlands (never even near enough), and that might be at a cost defined in their tenancy agreement anyway. Any more than that and they would have to pay ... and they probably didn't have a lot of spare cash for such things.

For the elite, fuel costs were both less of and more of a problem ... *less* because they obviously had more money, and may have even owned woodlands that could be harvested for fuel for their own use; *more* because their homes were large enough, and had large enough spaces that needed to be heated, that the amount of fuel needed would be *much* greater, even proportional to income, than for a common household.

HEARTHS

The Hearth was either a lined or unlined pit *in* the floor or a lined structure *on* the floor surrounded by a low wall with an open fire burning inside. The lining material was normally stone or clay, or a mix, until the introduction of brick and tile when you might find those materials being used in elite homes.

Hearths were often in the middle of a room, though in a separate kitchen it might be at one end or on a side, and smoke escaped by percolating through a thatched roof, under the eaves of a slate or tile roof or through the open triangular spaces under the roof (of whatever construction) at either end of longhouse, hall or other basically linear aligned structure.

The area above the hearth was always left open to the underside of the roof even if the rest of the room had a

lined ceiling or upper floor or arcade to allow the smoke to billow up rather than being confined to where the main activities were taking place.

We know that the end spaces under the roof were left open, at least in the early part of the period, because of a charming little passage in Bede's ***Ecclesiastical History*** *where he likens a man's life to the flight of a small bird from the cold and dark, through the space at the end of a hall into the light and warmth inside and, eventually, out the other end into the dark and cold.*

Chimneys and Fireplaces

When chimneys were introduced, structural strength normally required all the fireplaces using the one chimney stack be aligned one above the other on each floor from ground to roof, connecting to chimneys at the upper rear of the hearth.

Of course, if the fireplaces each have their ***own*** *chimney stack they can be place* ***anywhere*** *... but this option will* ***cost*** *and may reduce design flexibility.*

A fireplace ***might*** be enclosed at the rear and either side or, in early examples, might be open on all sides except the rear and a hood placed over the hearth to gather the smoke ... or you might even find a central hearth retrofitted with a fire hood directly above.

In peasant homes, early chimneys were made of wood and mud, clay or plaster ... only as they became more common did stone (usually fieldstone to begin with) or, even later, brick, come to be used.

Portable Heating

This continued the ancient practise of using portable *Braziers* – metal or pottery containers, usually bowl or pot shaped, burning charcoal fuel for concentrated heat rather than wood.

This could be dangerously problematic in enclosed spaces – and would have been more so ***if*** *'enclosed spaces' in even elite structures weren't so darned* ***draughty****, as burning charcoal generates a fair bit of carbon monoxide and can asphyxiate people if the area isn't properly ventilated.*

Fuel

The most commonly used fuel was, by far, wood – charcoal was used only in braziers or, possibly, for cooking fires or ovens.

And chopping down or gathering all that wood was a ***major*** *undertaking that had to be done continuously, regardless of season, for cooking if not heating purposes.*

In some places *sea coal* might be used, but it was not popular because it often had a high sulphur content and was even smellier than wood when burnt in a chimneyless hearth. *Mined* coal might, rarely, be used



as well if there were easily accessible surface outcroppings nearby.

Sea Coal was simply coal broken off from cliff outcroppings along sea coasts and had been occasionally used as a fuel, mainly for the poor, since ancient times. It was never particularly popular for the reason noted – and also because it was useless for industrial purposes, as noted elsewhere.

Furniture

See ***Rooms***, below for more detail on what did exist, how available it was, and where it might be found.

No such Furniture

Some types of furniture simply did ***not*** *exist in the period between the 10th and 14th centuries ...*

*(****Backed****)* ***Chairs*** *– Well, for people other than Kings, Great Nobles and Bishops (or above) ...* ***thrones*** *for them.* ***Ordinary*** *people sat on* ***Stools*** *or* ***Trestle Benches.***

Chests of Drawers *– which are a later development of plain Chests.*

They do not start to appear (as a transitional arrangement with a single drawer at the bottom of an otherwise 'normal' chest) until some time during the 16th century and modern-style Chests of Drawers aren't firmly dated until the 17th century.

Cupboards *– that is, upright, boxy, cabinets with internal shelving on which expensive plates and other tableware would be displayed, whether open or with doors of some sort, some of which might have drawers in the lower part.*

Actual Cupboards start to appear around the same time as Chests of Drawers (i.e. the 16th century),

What ***did*** *exist* ***instead*** *of Cupboards were shelves*

*(**Boards**) on which expensive tableware was displayed.*

***Sideboards/Side Tables** – cabinets with a flat top for serving dishes and space underneath for storage, often of table linen. They only appear in the 18th century.*

***Wardrobe** – a 'hanging cupboard' for clothes doesn't appear in its modern form until the 17th century but probably existed in transitional forms at least from the 15th or 16th centuries.*

*'Wardrobes' in medieval parlance were **either** separate rooms (large or small closets) in which the clothes of a King or Great Noble would be stored, and where they would probably be helped to dress by their servants (and attended by lesser nobles or gentry for whom such close personal access was a great and powerful privilege).*

Lighting

Artificial lighting was *expensive*. Natural light was *difficult to achieve*.

Artificial Lighting

Surprisingly, the main source of light in most medieval buildings was the *hearth* or *fireplace* and whatever it was burning ... so fires were often kept burning even on a hot night for illumination.

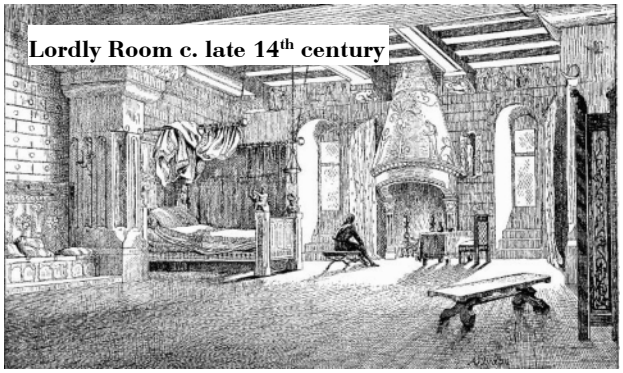
Other than that, there were three other sources of artificial light – *Beeswax*, *Oil* and *Tallow*.

Beeswax and Tallow were used to make *candles* and *Tallow* was also used to make *rushlights*.

*These are dealt with in more detail in the **Annotated Price List** and the chapter on **Daily Life.** For the moment know that Beeswax candles were the most expensive (used in Churches and by the Elite), Tallow Candles (used by better off Commoners or Servants in elite homes) next most expensive and Rushlights the cheapest (used by the Peasantry).*

Oil was also used in lamps – *olive* oil. In NW Europe this was rare, as it had to be imported from southern Europe and the eastern Mediterranean.

*Tallow **could** be burnt in lamps, but it was barely (if at all) better than in candle or rushlight form, and, for the most part, Lamps were most often used in a religious or elite context and the expense of olive oil as fuel was not regarded as an important factor in the same way that Beeswax was used in that context.*



Lordly Room c. late 14th century

Natural Light

Not a lot of windows, *even in elite buildings*, especially in the Romanesque period or in those primarily intended to be part of a fortification or castle. Often there would be only one room with a substantial window, the *Solar*, which was part of the family quarters and only found in elite owned dwellings (and not in all of them) and which would be sited to gain as much of the day's sun as possible. It might be the only room in the structure with a glass or other translucent window material in the window.

*As glass become somewhat more common and somewhat less expensive it was common for some windows to be made larger – again, usually only in the Solar (or done to **create** a Solar).*

Likewise, as the Gothic style became more dominant and windows could become larger the homes of the greater nobility and the extremely rich would have larger, glass filled, windows in some main public and family rooms.

*Stretched and oiled **parchment** was sometimes used as a window pane – it had the virtue of letting **some** light in, but was translucent, not transparent.*

*As noted elsewhere, windows would often be fitted with wooden **shutters** (manually placed, more often than not, rather than hinged) and these might be the only window filler there was in many rooms even in elite households.*

Roofs

Before the (re)introduction of fired clay tiles *all* medieval buildings had roofs of one of three materials – *wood (Shingles)*, *Slates* or *Thatch*.

Wood Shingles

Split *by hand* from any suitable local tree, they were then smoothed with an adze or wood plane before being ready for roofing use when they had to be individually affixed to the roof frame ... commonly by using an auger (drill) and wooden doweling unless one had the money to spend on hand-made iron nails.

As a result, Wood Shingle roofs were only found on buildings belonging to the relatively wealthy.

Slates

The most durable of the early medieval roofing choices – and the most expensive. Slates had to be hand-split from quarried slates and, unless the quarry was near to the site of the building to be roofed, they had to then be transported there. Being stone, slates were *heavy* – and this meant expensive transport costs.

Once onsite they had to be attached to the roof frame with iron nails ... which, of course, increased the expense considerably.

The main advantage was that Slates last virtually forever, though the roofing nails used to attach them may need periodic replacement.

Because of the expense, Slate roofs were only used on elite structures or where their fireproof nature was important ... so, for example, on some castle buildings and large, important, churches (Minsters, Cathedrals etc.) as well as for elite dwellings of a non-castle nature.

Thatch

This was the almost universal roofing material for common folk and their dwellings throughout the entirety of the period and well beyond (into the 19th century, in fact).

Thatch roofs are made with bundles of straw (or other dried plant material) which are attached to the roof timbers and, progressively, each other as several layers are gradually built up to provide a water-shedding outer surface.

A well built thatch roof can last 50 years or more before it needs any maintenance – and, historically, this often meant simply resurfacing the still existing material ... and some thatch roofs are known to have base layers that are in excess of 500 years old.

*Despite what many people think, it is actually **extremely** difficult to set thatch alight ... the tight packing and the fact that the middle layers tend to hold some moisture makes it, at best, slow burning and mostly self-extinguishing vs random embers from fireplaces and braziers ... only if someone deliberately takes a torch to it (or fires a **heck** of a lot of fire arrows at it) is it likely to catch alight.*

Tile

As mentioned elsewhere, Tile doesn't reappear as a roofing material in western Europe till the 13th century and didn't become relatively common until the 14th century. They are fitted in the same way as slates, though, being generally lighter, they don't require as robust a roof frame to be nailed to.

Another advantage was that they could be fired locally from any source of clay, which could significantly cut down on transport costs.

The only drawback is that they tend to deteriorate over time and require replacement every 15-20 years.

Rooms

The vast majority of rooms in any dwelling were multi-purpose, much more so than is the case today – and were surprisingly sparsely furnished, *if they were furnished at all.*



Elite Households

As noted in previous chapters, ***noble*** households were peripatetic in nature – they travelled to where the food was, not the other way around. This meant, at each of their manors, the room(s) they and their *personal* (as opposed to *local*) staff would be left largely or completely *bare* when they were not in residence ... the furniture and furnishings *travelled with them.*

As the medieval states settled down and became somewhat more stable, the more powerful (and richer) nobles gradually limited the number of stops on their regular travels, so some furniture was left in place for their use in those locations ... but a great deal of their personal possessions and furniture still went with them.

The households of the ***urban elite***, however, were a different matter – *they* were in the one location, and so could, and did, accumulate furniture and furnishings according to their station ... but rooms in their homes *still* tended to be sparsely furnished by modern standards.

*Remember, furniture was hand-made and **expensive** – and major pieces were handed down from one generation to the next until they wore out or went completely out of fashion ... or were replaced by more up-to-date (and probably more expensive) pieces.*

Such households would have *proper* (to modern eyes) *Beds* (and bedding) as well as much simpler sleeping arrangements for the servants who travelled with them ranging from *Truckle Beds* to *Paliasses* (or even simple blankets and crude pillows).

There would also be proper *Chairs* (possibly folding ones) of various designs for the family as well as some more formal *Tables* (large ones for dining, smaller ones for private use), there might be some *Trestle Tables* and *Benches* for the servants and less important members of the household, though a lot of those would be stored at the various Manors along the way.

Stools would be part of the panoply of an itinerant household, though most would be stored along the way.

Most stools had three legs – but longer versions (more like benches) had four, two at each end.

There might be something like a *Wardrobe* (upright chests, really) *very* late in the period for *hanging* clothing that needed to be ready at hand (or which needed airing).

Most other items would be carried in *Chests* of various sizes and designs.

Cupboards** (as we know them) **didn't exist**, and neither did **Chests of Drawers** ... more on furniture (these and other items) in **Daily Life** and the **Annotated Price List.

Peasant and Common Households

These had few furnishings and what there *were* were often made by a family member ... or, at less commonly, a local craftsman (often a part-time one outside of the Towns).

While they were generally carefully made, they were only ever intended to be workmanlike, not works of art ... *practical* rather than decorative and were often intended to serve more than one purpose.

Bedding was often a *paliasse* lain, commonly, straight on the floor but in some houses there might be a raised stone/rubble platform on which bedding was lain at night, in *really* poor households the occupants might sleep straight on the bundles of rushes that served as floor covering.

In wealthier households there might be a simple wood-frame and rope bed or truckle bed. For more details, see the section on ***Sleeping***, below.

Typically there would be a crude *table*, possibly boards between stones ... or a raised stone ledge (probably the one used for the bedding at night).



Seating, if it wasn't simply on the ground, would typically be on *Stools*. Whatever possessions the family had that were of any value might be stored in a wooden *Chest* or just a crude wooden *Box*, the latter with or without a lid.

The better off the family was the more furniture it would possess (obviously).

Beware of Fakes

*According to experts, almost all **supposedly** 'medieval' furniture on display in second and third tier (i.e. regional and local rather than national) museums are actually later reproductions ... and while they probably weren't **deliberately** passed off as originals, there was, in the vast majority of cases, no provenance provided with them except oral claims that they were 'old.'*

Even a large chunk of the allegedly medieval furniture on display in first tier (i.e. national) museums is of dubious provenance ... but key pieces, at least, can be traced to medieval times (or testing has shown they do).

*What this means in practical terms is that **unless** a type of furniture is illustrated in **period** material (usually illuminated manuscripts) then you cannot assume it is not an anachronism.*

*This creates its own problems as most such illustrations only display furniture associated with Royalty, great Nobles and other members of the elite, rarely items that belonged to 'ordinary people' ... and when they do display 'commoners' and their households one has to be at least a little suspicious that they may be presenting an idealised version rather than the actual day to day reality, given that their **audience** was the elite.*

Sleeping

Sleeping arrangements varied widely according to the wealth and general circumstances of the household and its occupants.

Elite Households

The wealthy slept on actual *Beds*, usually in separate *Bedrooms*, and these could be of several different types – depending on wealth and circumstances.

The most ornate and luxurious type was the ***Standing Bed*** which would have fabric hangings above and on the sides and was high enough to have room underneath for a ***Truckle (or Trundle) Bed***.

*This was not **yet** a full 'Four Poster' bed – they didn't begin to appear until the mid to late 15th century. The Truckle Bed would be used for one's personal servant(s) who would, of course, sleep in the same room so as to be on immediate hand as needed.*

Less ornate and imposing were the ***Couch Bed***, which was similar to the *Standing Bed*, but which had no

curtains or other hangings, and the ***Trussing Bed*** which was designed specifically to be knocked down and transported ... and probably used in the field when on campaign.

The bed frame was most commonly of wooden slats, though for portable beds it might be a net of ropes. On top of the frame there would be *several* mattresses – the most expensive beds would typically have *three*, two canvas covered *Ticks* (bags) filled with wool or fabric scraps with a *Featherbed* on top covered by fine linen sheets, pillows and/or bolsters with elaborately decorated pillow or bolster cases, one or more woollen blankets and all covered by and equally decorated a *Coverture* (quilt or coverlet).

Less expensive beds would only have two mattresses, one straw filled tick and one filled with wool or fabric scraps ... and might not have sheets and possibly have only a plain *coverture*.

Personal servants would sleep on *Truckle Beds* which rolled away under their master's (mistresses) bed during the day and which would typically have only one mattress – probably filled with straw. They might sleep in the same room as their master/mistress or, possibly, move the bed to an adjacent room.

Other servants *might* have *Truckle Beds* stored under other furniture but, most commonly, were provided with simple canvas *Ticks* or *Paliasses* filled with straw which were stored away in chests (or elsewhere out of the way) during the day.

At night they would be brought out and placed on the rush covering on the floor which would act as an under-mattress.

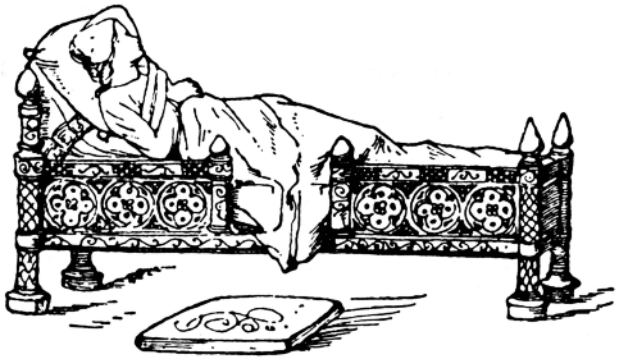
Very junior servants might not even have a paliasse and sleep directly on the bundles of rushes that constituted the normal floor covering in the living areas of most medieval houses.

*Apart from the personal servants of family members or guests who slept in the same room as their master or mistress (or close by), there was generally no such thing as **Servant's Quarters** ... servants slept where they worked or in the Great Hall.*

Common and Peasant Households

Better off commoners might have a separate sleeping area, perhaps a half-storey or simply a curtained off recess in the main room of their house, or they might simply sleep in the main room with the entire family.

If they a had separate sleeping area they probably had a simple wooden bed, probably with rope netting as the base rather than wooden slats, and probably only one mattress – filled with wool scraps if they were *very* well off, otherwise filled with straw.



They would be very unlikely to have any bed covering other than blankets and, possibly, a heavy canvas counterpane. Pillows or bolsters would be straw filled.

In most peasant households, people slept on paliasses or ticks filled with straw, usually directly on the ruch-bundle covered floor, but possibly on a raised platform off the floor and had only blankets and probably used bundled clothes as a pillow.

In the very poorest households people would have slept directly on the rush covered floor.

*A **Tick** is simply a linen or canvas bag filled with straw or wool/fabric scraps and sewn roughly shut so they could have the bedding material replaced once or twice a year, they were intended for use on actual beds.*

*A **Paliasse** is similar, but of heavy canvas or hempen cloth and filled with straw – they are typically intended to be placed directly on the floor or on the simplest of bed frames. Like the Tick, the filling material is expected to be replaced once or twice a year.*

BEDSTRAW NOT 'STRAW'

*Sleeping on a paliasse or tick filled with actual **straw** would be **very** uncomfortable and scratchy ... what was actually used was **Lady's Bedstraw** or **Goosegrass** (or similar), which is much softer and not scratchy at all. It grew (and still grows) all over Europe, North Africa, the Middle East and in the temperate parts of Asia and was gathered seasonally, dried and used as a mattress filler.*

Ticks and Paliasses that were filled with Bedstraw had to be aired regularly to prevent the moisture from those sleeping on them from causing the straw to go stale and mouldy and become unpleasant.

Walls

Interior walls in most dwellings were either left as bare stone or half-timbering or possibly covered with ***Stucco*** (lime mortar in a slightly different mix than that used for holding bricks or stone together).

From the mid 13th century ***Gypsum Plaster*** was used and you start to see specialist (Guild) plasterers creating moulded decorations, usually *in situ*, which became increasingly ornate and elaborate as the period progresses.

Stucco and Plaster walls could be left bare, pained in a single plain colour or as a two colour scheme (lower wall, upper wall) or even have a mural or fresco painted on it.

*Better quality Frescoes used the ancient graeco-roman **wet** painting technique whereby pigment was applied to damp plaster and was therefore absorbed into it ... such a surface could easily survive being chipped or scratched as the colour penetrated deeply into the plaster. Cheaper frescoes were done on dry plaster and, if chipped or scratched, would reveal the white plaster beneath.*

In some rooms, especially from the 13th century, there might be ***Wainscoting*** – decorative wooden panelling along the middle and lower part of an internal wall.

*This was not always firmly attached to the wall behind, and might actually be on a separate frame several inches out which, at least **theoretically**, meant it could be moved as needed, even transported with the elite household, though this would have been unusual except in the wealthiest of establishments.*

In very wealthy households ***Tapestries*** might be hung on the walls ... usually on frames or supports holding them an inch or so away from the actual wall.

*No. **Not** on the floor. Too expensive.*

WASTE

Nothing like flush toilets, but more than just choosing a convenient bush (though that *was* an alternative, and common enough) ... and no toilet paper ...

Unless you're in China, where it existed from the 7th century and was produced in some considerable quantity buy the 14th ... elsewhere? Read on!



No garbage or waste collection, either. No composting of waste. Often few or no laws or rules about the disposal of waste/garbage and, as with all other medieval law enforcement ... *no-one to enforce the rules anyway*.

PRIVIES, TOILETS AND OTHER NECESSARIES . . .

Elite Households. These *might* actually have something *like* a modern toilet ... probably in a small cubicle off one (or more) of the main rooms, or possibly in a separate building outside. All you'd find would be a seat (possibly more than one) with a hole and cover *over* a cesspit (or *leading* to a cesspit or some other means of disposing of the waste)

*Normally called **Privies** in England, a **Garderobe** was still an Anglo-French term for a small room, normally used for hanging clothes at this period ... it didn't come to equate with **privy** until the 15th century or even later – and **not** on the continent, where it still means 'cloakroom' or something similar if still in use.*

*Despite much jocular references, though there **were** privies that hung over castle moats, they were by no means the standard ... for the simple reason that most moats were **dry**, and even the **wet** ones were not always circulating (i.e. connected to a river or stream).*

*Cess Pits were the preferred 'solution' and they were emptied more or less regularly and the waste dumped ... **elsewhere** ...*

*This wasn't for any particular connection between waste and disease (**that** idea was several centuries in the future) but more because of the unpleasant smells. The waste was simply dumped somewhere else – as often as not, in a nearby river or stream ... so don't drink the water downstream.*

*Even that's not entirely fair – there is evidence that there was usually a designated (or customarily used) watercourse (or other spot) **downstream** which was **supposed** to be used for dumping waste, and that most people probably used it.*

These would be used during the daylight hours – but, at night, something closer to hand was needed given the lack of easily available light sources coupled with the fact that there were a *lot* of people potentially sleeping on the floor, even in otherwise supposedly 'private' quarters, so enter the unglamorous necessity of the ***Chamber Pot*** or ***Close Stool***.

*A **Chamber Pot** was simply a ceramic bowl with a wide mouth and a close fitting lid and, usually, some sort of handles on either side.*

*A **Close Stool** (sometimes called a **'Necessary'** or **'Nec-***

essary Stool' *) was simply a wooden cabinet with a lid that folded back to reveal a wooden seat with a hole in it ... concealing the Chamber Pot underneath.*

Common Households. Most households probably had an outside privy and cesspit arrangement for daytime use and chamber pots for use at night.

In urban areas there *might* be some multi-seat privies in more or less public places which would be emptied whenever the smell became too intolerable or the overflow too pronounced to ignore.

Again, while claims that pedestrians walking down city streets had to watch out for the contents of Chamber Pots being dumped from upper windows ... or thrown through ground level doors or windows ... without the obligatory warning have an element of truth, most people would have emptied their chamber pots in the nearest cesspit or, in some places, in a convenient blind alley or on waste ground ... or in convenient streams or stream beds.

Walking the streets would be about wading through ***actual*** *muck and garbage, but you'd probably be safe enough from dodging the contents of someone's chamber pot being dumped from overhead! Most of the time.*

Away from Home & Travelling. As hinted above, most towns and cities had at least *some* public latrines. Other than that, Ale-Houses, Taverns and Inns could be used ... by patrons, anyway. If caught short, you could always find an out-of-the way spot and do the dirty there ... it's not like the streets weren't filthy with muck and garbage of all sorts anyway.

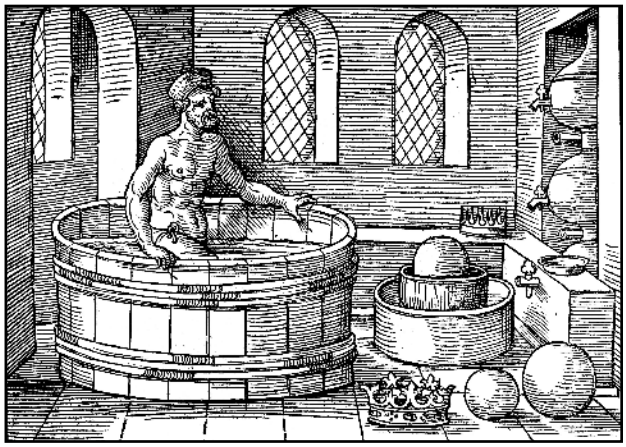
While travelling (or while peasants were working in the fields) the 'find a bush' rule worked for the most part, though it might not be *actually* 'find a bush' ... simply using the side of the road was probably as common, especially as properly maintained highways were supposed to not have trees or bushes within a considerably distance of the 'right of way.'

In the fields, peasants would probably have done their business in the ditches between the individual strips in those areas using the Open Field (or Three Field) system or in the hedges or windrows that divided smaller, traditional, fields in other areas.

In Europe, unlike East Asia, the idea of ***composting*** *human waste to make it usable as fertiliser was not developed or thought of until several centuries later.*

WATER

There was no such thing as running water in any medieval european buildings* ... water was drawn from wells or cisterns (which were normally outside) by hand and then carried, either in buckets, jugs or ewers, to where it was needed for cooking, hygiene or other purposes.



** With the possible exception of some of the elite* ***muslim*** *buildings in Al-Andalus ... as long as they were* ***held*** *by the muslims.*

In some places water ***might*** be drawn from a local river, stream, pond or lake ... but this was quite rare. Even in locations nearby to such, wells were usually dug and used.

WELLS

Medieval wells were generally *lined* – for *civic* wells in towns and cities, or in elite households, this would be with stone (later brick) often with a raised lip around, possibly with a roof over and, usually, with a cross-bar over which ropes to raise and lower water buckets would be placed (*no* pulleys, despite Hollywood representations). In some places there might be a full stone superstructure, usually at least partly open, over ... a sign of civic pride or wealth.

In fortifications built in locations where wells could not be dug or where water was in short supply, medieval builders were quite capable of directing rainwater from roofs and other surfaces not likely to be contaminated (by manure from the stables etc.) into underground cisterns for later use.

In more humble circumstances the lining would often be with wood ... and there are instances where old barrels were used as well linings ... and, while there would probably be a stone lip around the well, the chance of any significant superstructure were quite small (again, despite what Hollywood would suggest).

Nope. ***No pumps.*** *Not invented ... yet. Suction pumps commonly seen in western or other period movies are a modern invention ... the fact they're obviously made of (or with) cast iron parts should be the clue.*

BATHING

Contrary to received wisdom, medieval people liked to keep clean – they just didn't necessarily do it in the same way that most people do today.

Private Bathing. Possible only in elite households – normally in a large wooden tub filled with water hand

carried to it by servants. If possible, the tub would be placed in front of a fire in one of the private rooms of the building and a linen sheet placed over the inside to allow noble bodies to avoid getting wood splinters!

The 'private room' was usually the user's private chamber (bedroom) – it was uncommon, and a generally very late, development to have a separate/single purpose 'bath room.'

Public Bathing. Normally only in towns – most had public bath-houses, despite Church opposition (they were often also 'Stews' [brothels]), used large wooden tubs for common bathing and emptied the water *completely* only a few times a day (the cost of a bath would decline as the water got cooler).

It is not certain that there were separate facilities (or times) for men and women, hence the Church opposition and the view that they were little better than brothels.

In a very few places Roman baths which made use of natural hot springs remained in use ... though the original buildings were generally long gone or ruinous.

Personal Hygiene. This is dealt with in the ***Daily Life*** chapter – suffice it to say that the common view that medieval people, even the poor, were universally filthy by modern standards is ... wrong.

Windows

Or, to be more accurate, what goes *in* the windows – mostly, as noted elsewhere, ***not*** *glass* ... of any sort.

Glass

Well, yes, elite buildings (private dwellings of the rich and powerful, important civic and religious buildings) *did* have at least *some* windows of glass – but probably not all of them.

*Roman glass was made with **natron** (from Egypt) which became largely unavailable in western Europe between the 3rd-9th centuries ... replacing this wood ash only made glass ('**Forest Glass**') production possible from the 10th century onward, initially in the heavily wooded areas of Germany*



Crown (left) and Diamond Pane (right) Windows

There's no such thing as sheet glass, so windows are pieced together from bits cut to size and held in place by lead strips ... they're easy enough to bust through if push comes to shove.

*Inconsistent temperatures in the glassmaking process meant that glass pieces had a high risk of **shattering** – which increased the overall expense (yes, the broken glass could be recycled – but the **fuel** cost was the kicker) and was one of the reasons why windows were pieced together from smaller bits.*

They're also *not* optically clear, not even the most expensive ones, and the cheaper glass might be as thick (or thicker) than the bottom of a glass bottle and be not much good for anything other than letting light in. Even the expensive, thin, bits aren't always clear of imperfections ... bubbles, irregular thickness etc.

They are almost never (if ever) designed to be opened.

Horn

Yes, made from animal horn(s) – soaked in water for several months then slit down the side and flattened into sheets, scraped and smoothed, and then assembled into a window in much the same way as pieces of glass were.

They were *not* transparent – you might be able to see shadows (if something was close up) but they were only *translucent* and let through a soft yellowish light (and kept out the weather). Like glass windows, they were almost certainly never designed to be opened.

They were between Glass and Oiled Parchment in cost (and *much* less expensive than glass) and, therefore, relatively common.

Oiled Parchment

No. ***Not*** some form of paper – the *original* ***parchment***. Tanned and specially stretched and scraped smooth ***animal*** skin. Sheets (or pieces) were stretched over wooden frames and were around as translucent as Horn, but much more ephemeral.

It is possible that the frames they were a part of may have been made to be removable but in most cases they would have been 'permanent' installations.

Wooden Shutters

The most common option – manually placed in an otherwise unfilled window during winter or inclement weather ... rather defeating the purpose of the window being there in the first place (i.e. letting in the light).

Coquinaria

Cooking in the Middle Ages was a skilled, labour intensive and time consuming process using fairly basic methods and (by modern standards) a very different mix of ingredients in ways that often seem strange to modern eyes ...

The Medieval Kitchen

Something like a modern Kitchen only really exists in wealthier households (including large scale Church run establishments such as Monasteries, Hospitals and Infirmaries) ... though the scale of the operation varies a lot according to size and general wealth.

Poorer households *don't* have kitchens as such – they do their cooking over the fireplace, indoors, if better off, or over an open fire, either indoors or outdoors (depending on the weather) if not.

In towns, cities (as mentioned elsewhere) even moderately well off households would take meals or foods (such as breads and pies) they had prepared themselves at home to the nearest Baker to be cooked in his oven ... fuel was sufficiently expensive for this to make economic sense.

*In rural areas, at least in Villages, there would usually be a Baker, or a villager who **did** a lot of baking, who would also rent space and time in his oven as well. As in the cities, this would mostly be for breads and pies and similar sorts of meals.*

Kitchens – Equipment, Layout & Staff

Assuming a household *had* a purpose built Kitchen (really only from the 11th-12th centuries), the following arrangements were either universal or, at least, very common –

Buttery

Not for dairy products! This was where the *Butts* of *Wine* or *Ale* were stored (and, strangely, *Candles*), all under the control of the *Butler* (who was responsible for purchasing the wines and other drinks as well as the Candles).

*The Butler was also increasingly likely to be responsible for the secure storage of expensive (silver, gold and probably the better quality glass) tableware and, as the period progressed, there might be a separate **Butler's Pantry** off (or adjacent to) the Buttery where these items would be stored under lock and key (often the Butler or his assistant would sleep there for extra security).*

*The **Butler** was an important official – in an upper level elite household the office was normally ranked as a **Serjeanty** in status and might come with (or be hereditary to) feudal tenure. In lesser elite households it would only be of **Yeoman** (Free man) status.*



Fireplace

In a separate(d) Kitchen, which started to appear before Chimneys did, the fireplace was still in the centre of the room through to the 12th century and only slowly moved to the side(s), usually around the same time Chimneys started to appear and gradually morphed into brick or stone sided hearths, often raised off the floor and at thigh level.

***Stoves** do not come into existence until the 18th century. **All** cooking is done in an oven or over an open fire.*

In the interim, the Kitchen proper was often a two storey open-roof-beam space (i.e. with no upper floor) to allow the inevitable smoke to percolate upwards and leave the working space relatively smoke free.

Cooking was most often done ***either*** in cauldrons held over the fire (or its embers) on chains suspended from rods or tripods or sitting directly on stands either at the *edge* of the fire or *in* its embers ***or*** it was done on spits of various sizes (which could be large enough to roast a whole Ox carcass!) over the fire.

Less often, smaller or more delicate items)sauces and the like) might be cooked on skillets or pans held in the fire or sat on tripods.

***Fuel Requirements.** Lots and lots of wood or charcoal. **Lots**. A major banquet for several hundred people catered for over two days is recorded to have required **~1000 cartloads** of dry firewood.*

*Coal **might** be used as a partial substitute in areas where there were surface outcroppings or where sea coal could be gathered but you had to be careful as the sulphur content could taint the taste of the food being cooked.*

Larder

This was where fish, meat and, strangely, jams, were stored under the supervision of a ***Larderer*** and was designed to be a (somewhat) cool room – usually with stone benches on which meat could be stored and hooks on which preserved meats (such as bacon) could be hung.

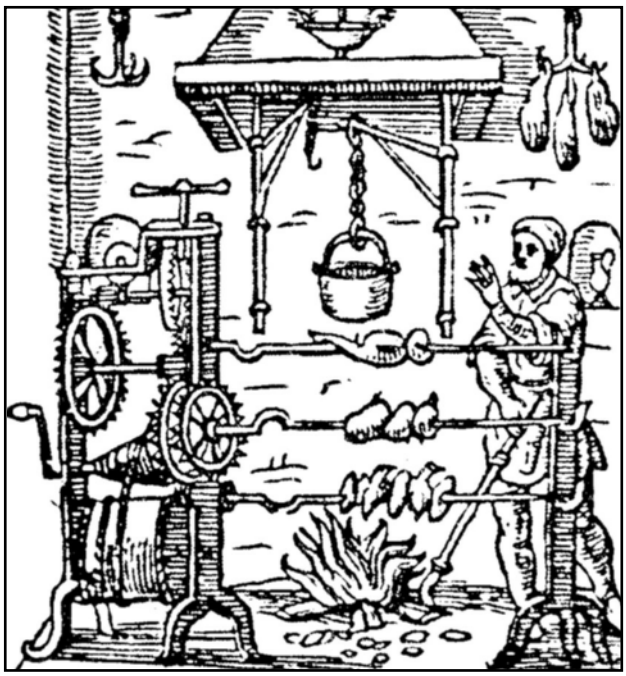
No refrigeration, remember. Larders were either windowless or had small windows under the eaves or at the top of the internal walls. They were generally low ceilinged, though above ground, to maintain maximum natural coolness even in the summer months.

*Generally speaking, meat and fish were **not** stored for any extended period unless it was somehow preserved (smoked, sun-dried, salted etc.) ... it was consumed as soon as possible after it was killed or caught, usually within 24 hours (less in summer in a hot climate such as that of southern Europe or the Holy Lands, possibly longer in winter in northern Europe).*

There would also be space for barrels or trays of salt fish and salt meat to be stored.

***Refrigeration.** In **some** areas of Europe near mountains which had snow and ice (in the winter, at least) and where there were suitable natural caves, the locals (mainly the peasantry) evidently did some small scale ice-cooled storage of perishables (especially cheeses and the like) but **organised** Ice-houses with winter cut ice brought in from frozen lakes and the like do not really start to appear until the 17th century.*

That said, wealthy nobles are known to have had ice packed in straw and canvas brought down from nearby mountains to cool their drinks during summer – more as a sign of conspicuous consumption than as a serious attempt at refrigeration or food preservation.



Location

In elite homes a *separate* Kitchen was routinely *not* part of the living quarters, though it was usually adjacent to it ... often connected by a lateral covered walkway between the two. Such kitchens were usually constructed mostly of wood (except, as noted, the *Larder*, which would be at least *partly* of stone) and there is some (limited, see below) truth to the claim that the separation between the living areas and the kitchen was to reduce the chance of fire in the latter spreading to the former.

With the introduction of Fire Hoods and then Chimneys, the risk of fires occurring and also of their spreading went down considerably and later kitchens were often attached at one end, or to one side, of the main house or other structure.

*It is also a good idea (as with so many 'everyone knows' claims about the Middle Ages) to take such claims with a sackful of salt ... (elite) houses this separation arrangement were **supposedly** protecting **also** had integral fireplaces and therefore had at least as great a chance of catching fire from them as the Kitchen itself, whether it was attached or detached, did.*

Kitchens inside Castles *might* be *separate*, wooden, structures *or* might be stone-built *and* part of the main dwelling area(s) depending on how sophisticated the fortification was and how large a peacetime garrison it was expected to accommodate.

Ovens

Elite and Urban Ovens were stone or, later, brick and, despite modern ***mis***-depictions, the space shown underneath the oven door was ***not*** for the fire that would heat the oven.

*The fire was set **inside** the oven and, when the stone or brick was sufficiently heated, the door (usually wood) would be opened and the ashes **quickly** raked out and shoveled into the under-oven space so that as little time (and heat) would be lost as the bread or other foodstuffs were then quickly placed inside.*

The normal procedure was to bake the bread first (which would be relatively quick) and then, while the oven was still warm, bake the meals that the locals had brought along to be cooked in the remaining heat.

Rural Ovens, especially those in individual farmsteads or small hamlets, were more likely to be of clay, but were otherwise similar in operation to their more durable city or elite cousins.

Commercial Ovens were normally fired only once or twice a day, early in the morning and in the early to mid-afternoon to minimise the amount of fuel used. Private ovens, being in upper class or elite homes, were fired as needed as the cost of fuel was less of a concern.

Pantry

This is where *bread* (Latin *panem*) and its constituents (flour etc.) was stored or prepared (though it was baked elsewhere, of course) and was presided over by the ***Pantler***.

*Grain would **not** normally be stored here – it would be stored in a **Granary**, which would be **elsewhere**, usually nearby in a country estate or fortification. In towns elite households would normally buy their flour from a local miller or would bring it in from one of their nearby estates (if they had such) where it would have been stored as grain until needed.*

Flour generally lasts for 4-6 months if stored properly. Grains will last for at least a year, and possibly as many as 30 years, if stored properly (kept at in a well ventilated, dry, moderate temperature environment) ... but normally it was regarded as second (or lesser) quality after 2-5 years and sold off, if possible.

*Of course, only **very** wealthy individuals would be able to store any quantity of wheat grain for that period of time ... or even for the shorter period.*

Staff

An elite kitchen had many staff, depending on the size of the household it served ... ranging from only a dozen or so for a well-to-do member of the local gentry through scored for a mid-level noble and up to several hundreds for a major royal court.

Some of these would be specialists of one degree of skill or another, either in the preparation of specific types of foods or in the processing of specific types of ingredients, but the majority were, at best, semi-skilled or unskilled grunt labour ... wait staff who carried the prepared food to the tables, scullions who cleaned and scrubbed the kitchen and cooking utensils and even carters who collected and woodsmen who chopped the the required firewood to fuel the whole operation.

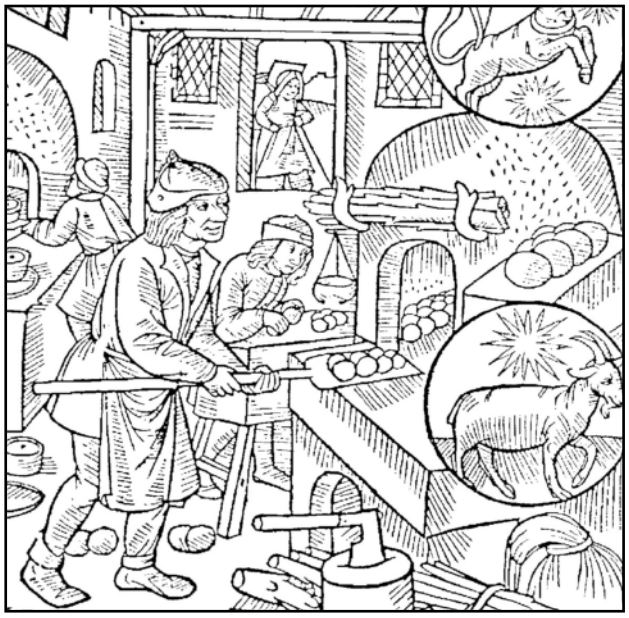
Even more impressive is the fact that most, if not all, of these staff had to move around with their Lord as he moved from manor to estate to castle to palace.

Utensils

Most of the utensils used in kitchens of elite households would be quite familiar to modern day cooks – but there would also be many items *not* present.

Cauldrons, Kettles (***not*** the whistling sort) and Pots (and Pot & Cauldron Hooks) of varying sizes. Bowls, both wood and ceramic. Frying Pans and Waffle Irons. Grills and Griddles. Spits. Baking Pans. Bellows of various sizes.

Pots, Frying and Baking Pans were of Brass, Copper or Iron (but not Cast Iron in this period). Cauldrons were of Brass or hand-forged Iron. Grills and Griddles were



normally of hand forged iron – though Griddles made of slabs of stone or brick basins filled with sand alongside a fireplace were also common.

Knives and Cleavers of various sizes, shapes and purposes. Spoons and Ladles, also in various sizes and shapes, both metal and wood. Graters. Mortar & Pestle. Rolling Pins. Sieves, both metal and cloth, Colanders. Skewers and Roasting Forks. Tongs.

Knives, Cleavers and Roasting Forks were normally of hand forged iron or steel. Other items might be hand forged iron, brass, copper or wood. Mortars and Pestles would be stone and/or ceramic.

Water

There was no such thing as running water (except as noted bellow). It *all* had to be brought in from a nearby well or other source.

Though there is no firm evidence one way or another, it seems very likely that there would have been wooden water barrels (refilled as needed) strategically placed within the kitchen for ease of use.

There *were* open stone basins or (equally open) small cisterns in some kitchens as the period progressed which would have served a similar purpose, though it isn't certain what the purpose of the basins were.

*Piped water was a very late development, it **might** be found in elite households **very** late in the 14th century, but is mostly a 15th century or later development.*

Cooking Methods

Baking

As noted above, except in elite (or large, normally Church run) households, this was mostly a specialist occupation – you took whatever you wanted *baked* down to the nearest Baker's establishment who would sell space in his oven to you for a nominal fee.

Pottage

This is what most common people ate when (if) they are a hot meal – but the term covers a multitude of recipes probably ranging from thick soups to stews in nature and consistency.

The ingredients were basically whatever was on hand (and, of course, that meant whatever was *cheap* ... either to buy, or which could be spared from whatever produce the family had to sell to pay rent and tithes).

Recipes, rather than lists of ingredients and vague to nonexistent statements of methods and processes of preparation, simply don't exist (even for *elite* foods) until the mid-to-late 15th century *at the earliest* ... so bear this in mind.

Basic Ingredients

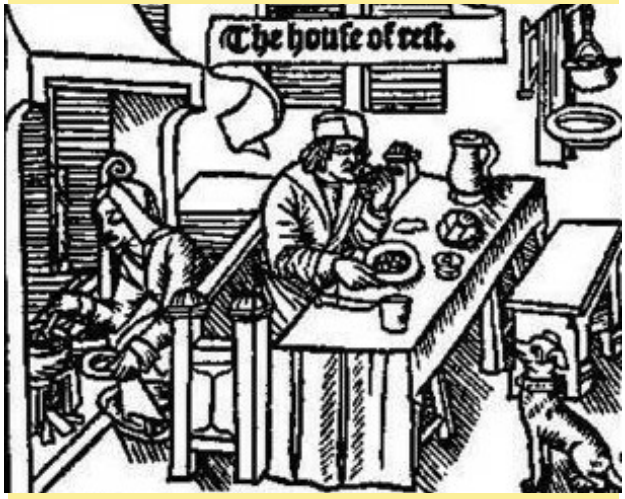
The basis of *all* Pottages were ***vegetables*** (both diced or chopped *and* boiled for stock), possibly some meat stock, some sort of fat or oil, herbs and some salt ... for a *very* basic Pottage, that was *it* ... mixed and cooked in a regularly tended pot or cauldron.

Vegetables. The mix would vary regionally and seasonally as well as, probably to a lesser extent, due to personal tastes. Beans, Cabbage, Carrots, Chickpeas, Leek, Lentils, Mushrooms, Onion, Split Peas, Turnips were amongst the most common.

Meat. The better off might be able to include some meat – usually chopped finely, with Beef or Pork the most common, followed by Mutton and Lamb.

Game (and freshwater fish) of various sorts would be risky for ordinary people to use as it would have been poached. Saltwater fish, on the other hand, would be a possible addition close to the sea.

Options. Locally gathered herbs and some salt would be used by most people, and it might be thickened with flour or oats (making a sort of porridge in the latter case). The better off would be able to include more expensive spices.



In elite or very large households (or in places where large households were expected to travel on their yearly or seasonal circuit) there would likely be one (possibly more, in *very* large establishments) oven which would be used to bake bread, pies and pastries for the whole household.

For small items requiring stand-alone handling (i.e. for the High Table) you could place them into a deep pan and cover it over with a clay shell then place them at the edge of the fire, or even in the coals and cover it with hot ashes to bake.

This method was also occasionally used to bake fish or meat – rather like the modern use of aluminium foil – where is was not being roasted or boiled.

***Pies** would normally be baked with the filling inside – but novelty pies would have the crust baked separately and the filling (e.g. live songbirds) placed inside just before the 'dish' was served.*

Boiling (and Stewing)

This was the most common cooking method used, especially for the poor, as it was the (relatively) most efficient use of (relatively) expensive fuel *and* also retained more of the juices and fats that would otherwise have been lost in roasting.

Cauldrons varied widely in size, partly based on the wealth of the household and partly on its size.

Small cauldrons would often be used for only one dish (usually a stew or pottage or similar) while larger ones could have a number of separate items stacked inside in layers on wooden slats or in linen bags.

Frying

Frying pans (and Griddles) were known from ancient times and were the second most common cooking utensil, even in relatively poor households, as they could be placed in the coals of a cook-fire even after the main meal had been largely cooked in a cauldron or roasted on a spit – and a variety of foods could be prepared in it, most often meat.

Roasting

Used for meat – and, therefore, uncommon in poorer households where meat, especially in the large quantities that needed to be roasted, was rarely eaten.

Smaller items (game birds or rabbits, for example) might be whole roasted on a skewer or roasting fork, and even larger animals could be cut into smaller bits and treated in the same way ... though they wouldn't normally be eaten *off* the skewer.

Larger quantities, up to whole oxen, required much heavier spits, either man- or animal-powered with a crank or hamster-wheel arrangement.

*In **very** wealthy households **very** late in the period you **might** find 'automatic' spit mechanisms using a fan-wheel in the chimney running a chain down to the spit.*

Foodstuffs & Recipes

The vast bulk of food consumed by the vast bulk of the populace of all medieval era cultures was cereal grains of one type or another, supplemented by vegetables and with a small amount of meat and fish.

This was actually a fairly radical shift from classical era cultures – especially because of expanding populations in areas which had hitherto been sparsely settled at best. Agriculture became more and more intensive and the acreage applied to animal husbandry fell significantly.

It is estimated cereal grains comprised ~ 1/3rd of the food consumed during the classical period but that this gradually increased to ~2/3rds by the 12th century.

Cereal Grains

The most common grain consumed all over Europe and the Mediterranean world was ***Corn*** ... which confuses a lot of people who immediately associate it with 'Indian Corn' or ***Maize***.

Remember, no Maize in Europe until after the discovery of the Americas and the Columbian Exchange began – and, even after that, it was only introduced in to Europe in the 16th century (by the Portuguese).

Initially it was regarded there as good only for animal fodder and it took some time for it to be accepted for widespread human consumption ... but never displaced the native cereal grains as a staple.

'Corn' (or its cognates) is a *very* old word which meant *'the most common cereal grain grown locally'* – so, depending on locality, it could mean Wheat, Barley, Millet, Oats, Buckwheat or *any other cereal crop*.

*Indeed, this is **still** the current meaning in Europe and the UK – only the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand tend to use corn = maize, and it is a relatively recent (well post WW2) development in the latter two countries.*

Cereal Crops

While *wheat* (or one variety or another) was grown all over Europe and throughout the Mediterranean world it was less common the further north one went as the increasingly shorter growing seasons could not reliably support it.

In fact, it was common for farmers to sow ***Maslin*** (a mix of Barley and Wheat) in their fields as random climate variations from one year to the next would, except at the very worst, only favour one or the other enough to balance out overall production.



Rice was known – introduced into al Andalus in the 8th century (somewhat later in Sicily) by the Moors and in the Po river valley in northern Italy in the 15th century. Outside of these areas it was an expensive, rare, luxury import.

. . . And give us our Daily Bread (or not)

Bread was a relatively less common part of the diet of common people before the 14th century. Most of their cereal based food consumption was in the form of ***Gruels*** or ***Porridges*** *(or **Pottages**)* which were less fuel intensive to prepare.

***Gruel** is basically a watery porridge made of any type of cereal boiled in water or milk ... for the common folk this would routinely be water rather than milk, which was more expensive. It may be drunk or eaten.*

Porridge** can also consist of any cereal grain which is ground, crushed or chopped and boiled in water or milk often with some additional ingredients such as vegetables or even a little meat of fish when available. It is much thicker than gruel and would normally be eaten with a spoon. In northern Europe it was most commonly made from **Barley.

Bread doesn't start to dominate the diets of the poor until the 15th century.

Wheat Bread. Despite being widely grown, it was really a luxury food ... peasants would sell their wheat crops to pay their rents, taxes and tithes rather than keep it for their own consumption.

It was most commonly used as a *wholemeal* flour. Finely sifted (sometimes bleached) *white* flour and the bread made from it was an expensive upper class food.

Other Breads. Most breads were made from Barley or Rye, with Buckwheat, Millet and Oat based breads being less common (but still widely available in those areas where they were the main 'Corn' grown.

They were less prestigious than wheat breads and cheaper – and could also vary in the quality of the flour and its chaff/bran content.

Medieval Meat Pies

Chicken Pie (13th Century)

One should make a shell of dough, and put into it a hen, cut into pieces; and add bacon, diced the size of peas, pepper, cumin, and egg yolks well beaten with saffron. Then bake it in an oven.

Beef Pie (14th Century)

One should take a dough and should spread it thin and take a boiled meat and chopped fatty bacon and apples and pepper and eggs therein and bake that and give out and do not damage.

Pork and Fruit Tartee (14th Century)

Cut and pound boiled Pork in a mortar adding Eggs, Currants, Sugar, powdered Ginger, powdered Douce (sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, cardamon), and small Birds (Sparrows?) with white grease. Take Prunes, Saffron and Salt and place in a pie shell. Bake it well and serve.

Pork Doucettes (15th century)

Take Pork, chop it finely, mix it with Eggs and beat them together with a little Milk. Add Honey and Pepper and bake the mix in a pie shell.

Beef Pie (15th century)

To make a beef pie, cut lean beef into small pieces. Overall, it will account for one third and two thirds of meat fat. Add chopped chicken and mix it well. Prepare a crust of flour: burn the flour with hot water. Add the meat and close the crust.

You can also prepare using fish, if you have oily fish. If not, then add butter to the fish, cut into larger pieces then the beef.

Meat Pies (17th century)

Pyes of Mutton or Beif must be fyne mynced and seasoned wyth pepper and salte, and a lyttle saffron to coloure it, suet or marrow a good quantite, a lyttle vyneger, prumes, greate raysins, and dates.

Take the fattest of the broathe of powdred beyfe, and yf you wyll have paest royall, take butter and yolkes of egges, and to tempre the flowre to make the paeste.



Pies and Pastries

There was no differential skill base between a general *Baker* and a *Pastrycook* until the mid 15th century at the earliest ... and there wasn't much in the way of *pastries* to cook, anyway.

Pies, however, were quite common – at least on the tables of the wealthy and the well-to-do where there are surviving records from the period.

It is less certain whether ordinary folk ate pies as there are no surviving period sources ... most of the 'evidence' touted in books referring to the medieval diet actually dates to no earlier than the mid to late 15th century.

Great Pies. These were visual, almost artistic or even quasi-architectural, creations for the elite table, intended to serve multiple diners ... and, though no recipes survive, attempts to model them in recent times suggest strongly that they had thick, hard, pastry shells and display components.

It also seems very likely that they were part baked till hard ***before*** being filled in order to ensure structural integrity and avoid over-cooking the actual filling.

While the resultant crust would have been quite hard, the fact that it would have been soaked with the juices *from* the filling would have softened it somewhat – so, while it is *extremely* unlikely that the elite consumers would have eaten it, it would easily have made an edible 'leftover' the *almoner* could (and would!) have given to the poor.

Common Pies & Pasties. Are intended for a more work-a-day consumer and, being smaller, almost certainly *didn't* require the hard-baked shell of the *Great Pies* for the elite table ... and it is very likely they and their fillings were both baked together *and* intended to be consumed together.

***Pasties** were simply a different form of pie, probably similar to the modern type in that they were made from a single piece of pastry folded over a filling rather than as a separate pie and pie-crust. In a sense they were simply a pie designed to be eaten in the hand ... though they were also eaten by the elite, even royalty.*

They are referred to in medieval sources dating back to as early as the first decade of the 13th century and are probably far older.

Pie Fillings. Medieval Pies could be filled with Beef, Pork, Lamp or Mutton, Game (Venison, Boar etc.), Poultry (including game Birds), Fish ... often, but not always, mixed with vegetables. Fruit ('mince') pies were also popular and could be filled with any fresh or preserved fruit on hand, often with honey or even sugar as a sweetener (see also *Tarts*, below).

*Pasties were no more or less likely to be of meat or of meat and vegetables than pies ... the 'traditional' Cornish Pastie (Beef, **Potatoes**, Turnips, Onion) obviously didn't exist (the **potato** is a dead giveaway!).*

Meat (and Fish/Poultry) fillings were generally boiled or broiled first, and only then cut into bite size chunks or ground into a paste before being mixed with any other ingredients and only *then* being put in the pie-crust (aka *Cofyn* or *Coffin*).

*Minced meat was **not** used in the period. References to 'minced' pies (often 'fruit mince') in period sources merely refers to **finely chopped** material – not 'mince' in the modern sense.*

Common fillings, even for 'meat' pies, include – currants or raisins, locally available (probably chopped) nuts (*no peanuts!*), dates, figs – with eggs (and possibly a little flour) for binding and possibly some wine (at least in an elite household).

Tarts. These could be found at both elite and common tables – though not at those of the very poor. They are basically open-faced (or part open-faced) pies with an edible pie crust and a filling of fruits or berries ... either all of one type or a mix.

Being open-faced, they were intended to be cooked in deep pans over the embers, or at the edge, of the cook fire and could be prepared quite quickly.

Cakes & Biscuits. Yes, there were cakes and biscuits in medieval times – and not just at elite tables.

The most common sort in the British isles were ***Oat Cakes*** (really biscuits) which were simple to make on a metal plate, griddle, or even on a flat rock alongside an open fire (and were very popular with travellers, or soldiers on campaign, for that reason) – just some oats, a little butter (or lard) and possibly some eggs mixed together with some herbs or spices (chopped nuts, fruit and occasionally some honey might also be added, if available and/or affordable).

Cheese cakes were also popular, and were similar to a modern day *Waffle*, though, again, they were simple to cook on a metal plate or griddle.

Sweet** Cakes* were also eaten – ***Gingerbread was popular, and made with ginger, cloves, pepper and some honey and eaten on special feast days by all except the desperately poor (though most people would probably only have enough for a few bite sized pieces for each family member).

Honey bread – bread of as fine a quality of flour as the maker could afford (wheat flour preferably) plus some honey and, possibly, some chopped nuts, also popular for feast days, was about as common.



Fruit

This was popular, if somewhat expensive, and eaten widely *in season* – and some fruits were storable for long enough to make them available over at least late Autumn and mid to late Winter.

Medieval varieties were usually smaller and had less flesh than modern ones – but, in some cases at least, may have been sweeter (or, at least, stronger tasting). Some modern varieties were not available at all until outside of the period.

While there were fruit orchards, and grafting of fruit trees to stronger rootstock was well known and widely practised, most common people had only a few ungrafted trees or relied on gathering fruit from wild trees ... which had even smaller and woodier fruits.

South and Mediterranean Europe

The most common *cultivated* fruits in these regions were Bitter Oranges (from the late 9th to early 10th centuries), Citrons (ancestral citrus fruits, since pre-classical times), Figs, Grapes, Lemons, Olives, Pomegranates and Quinces. Less common, but still widely available, were Apricots, Peaches and Nectarines.

Sweet Oranges were not known until the late 15th century. Dates were an expensive import for elite tables.

Northern Europe

The most common *cultivated* fruits in these regions were Apples, Peaches, Pears and Plums.

Grapes were grown as far north as Germany, though the growing season was barely long enough for them to ripen in all years, and Bitter Oranges and Lemons were grown in France and southern England, especially before the Little Ice Age.

Mediterranean fruits were generally an expensive import for elite consumption – as were Dates (from the Middle East and North Africa).

Wild Fruits and Berries

These were exceedingly seasonal and, for the most part, defied cultivation ... or, at least, *easy* cultivation during the period. They included Blackberries, Blackcurrants, Cherries, Gooseberries, Raspberries, Redcurrants and Strawberries.

As medieval as Apple Pie

Apples have been regarded as an appropriate food with which to finish a meal ever since ancient Greek times ... assuming you could afford them (or grew them) and assuming there were any still left if out of season. As a result, mention of apple Pies date back to medieval times, though the earliest recipe (in English, at least) only dates back to the 14th century.

For to make Tartys in Applis (14th century)

Take gode Applys and gode Spycis and Figys and Reysons and Perys and wan they are well ybrayed coloured with Safron wel and yt in a cofyn (pie crust) and yt forth to bake wel.

Note the lack of detailed instructions – as indicated elsewhere, nothing resembling a modern cookery book existed until the late 15th century (and even they leave a lot to be desired, in modern terms ... see the 16th century recipe for Apple Pie, below).

The ingredients are quite simple and straightforward – apples, pears, raisins, figs, unspecified spices and some saffron for colouring. No honey, though it could have been added by individual cooks, and certainly no (expensive, imported) sugar.

To make Pies of Grene Apples (16th century)

Take your apples and pare them cleane and core them as ye will a Quince [seasoning them with Cinnamon, Ginger and Sugar].

Make your coffyne (pie crust) after this maner – take a little faire water and halfe a disshe of butter and a little safron and set all this upon a chafyng disshe till it be hote, [next add your] floure [and mix well] till it be hote [then, finally add and mix] the white of two egges.

Then put [the seasoned apples] into your coffyn and laie halfe a disshe of butter above them and close your coffyn and so bake them.

A *much* different dish to the medieval one above, with something at least *vaguely* resembling instructions, using more specific spices and much more expensive ingredients, such as sugar (which was less expensive than formerly).



Consumption and Presentation

Fruit could be, and most often was, consumed fresh – but it was also used as a sweetener in many dishes as a *much* cheaper alternative to Honey (and *vastly* cheaper than Sugar!) ... often in main course dishes which would seem strange to modern sensibilities (see the ***Medieval Meat Pies*** sidebar on a previous page).

Pies, Tarts & Stews. They could also be used as the major ingredients for what passed for desserts – Pies and Tarts being two of the most common forms (see ***As Medieval as Apple Pie*** sidebar, opposite) with Stewed (various) Fruits in wine also being popular.

Preserved. For those with means, ***Candied*** *(**Honeyed**, actually)* ***Fruit*** was popular, if expensive ... and was the direct lineal ancestor to modern *Glacé Fruits*, appearing from at least as early as the 14th century.

Fruits could also be preserved by storing them in ***Wine*** or ***Pickled*** (yes, *pickled*) in *Vinegar* or even by ***salting*** them.

Dried Fruits *(usually sun dried)* were also popular – Raisins and various sorts of Currants being the most obvious, but sun-dried Apples and Pears were also popular, especially for use in out-of-season cooking.

Fermented and Unfermented Drinks. Finally, and most obviously, drinks made from fruit juice ... *fermented*, in the form of *Cider* (Apples, Pomegranates), *Perry* (Pears), *Wine* (Grapes, Rose Hips, Blackcurrants) or *Vinegar* (normally Grapes, but sometimes from other fruits, especially Apples) and *unfermented* juices (mostly citrus or apple).

*Some Wines and Ciders were **occasionally** flavoured with a variety of fruit juices ... oranges, limes and cherries being the most commonly used.*

Vegetables (Inc. Herbs & Spices)

There is an ongoing debate as to how large a portion of the diet of elites in the Middle Ages consisted of vegetable – recipes for dishes where vegetables were the main, rather than supplementary, ingredients are rare in period cookbooks (such as they were), but it is not certain whether this is whether they were held in some disregard as a mainly lower class food or whether vegetable dishes were so common as to not be worth recording (as everyone knew what they were and how to prepare them).

Common Vegetables

The following types of vegetables were commonly consumed in Europe and the Mediterranean world – though not all types in all regions ... many were, in fact, extremely regional, either because of climatic or other requirements or due to local gastro-fashion.

Artichokes (mainly in southern Europe), Beans (main-

ly *Fava* (*aka Broad)* Beans, not *'Common'* or *'String' Beans* which is from the New World), Beets, Calabash (European Gourd), Celery, Chard, Chickpeas, Cabbages (many varieties), Carrots (*Red* or the less tasty, woody, *Yellow* variety ... Orange carrots don't appear until the 17th century), Cucumbers, Eggplant, Garlic, Leeks, Lettuce, Melons (including *White* Watermelons ... *not* Red, Round Melons), Onions, Parsnips, Shallots, Spinach, Thistle Artichokes, Turnips and Peas.

Herbs and Spices

Spices and Herbs indigenous to Europe and the Mediterranean world *included* – Coriander, Cumin, Dill, Fennel, Laurel, Lovage, Mint, Mustard, Myrtle, Oregano, Rue, Saffron, Savory, Silphium (*Asafoetida? Giant Fennel?*), Sugar.

As with vegetables, the consumption and availability of these (and many other indigenous to Europe) Herbs and Spices was often regional, and often for the same reasons – climatic or gastro-fashion.

***Sugar** was cultivated from Sugar Cane (Sugar Beets were only used from 1799) in the Middle East, Spain and Sicily from at least the 12th century and was an expensive import to other parts of Europe – in the form of **Sugar Loaves** (cone shaped).*

The larger the loaf the lower the grade of sugar (with increasing, but still small, amounts of leftover molasses) – small loaves were usually 7-8 cm tall, 7-8 cm at the base and 1.4-1.8 kilos and consisted of the purest, whitest, sugar; larger loaves could weigh up to 14-16 kilos and be 36 cm at the base and up to 91 cm tall.

Sugar was broken off these loaves to be used as needed. Granulated or powdered sugar couldn't be bought – though it could be made in the kitchen by grinding up chunks of hard sugar from a sugar loaf.

Imported Spices included – Cardamon, Cassia, Cinnamon, Cloves (from the 9th-10th century), Ginger, Nutmeg (from the 12th century), Pepper, Turmeric – all of these *either* came along the Silk Road by land from East and SE Asia *or* they came by sea from India through the Red Sea and thence through Egypt and on to Europe.

Herbs, Spices and Rotten Meat. Despite recurrent claims in many books, even academically inclined ones where the author should either have known better or didn't do their homework with up-to-date research, people in medieval times did ***not*** make heavy use of herbs and spices to disguise the taste of meat that had started to go/had gone bad.

If you think about it even for a moment, disguising the taste, even if you cook it, is not going to ensure you won't then die of food poisoning! Doesn't stand up under much in the way of scrutiny.



It was simply the case that the then current *fashion* in cooking was for the heavy use of herbs and spices in cooking – and even the most expensive spices were much more widely used than has generally been understood in the past.

Recent research has shown that even in provincial and rural settings, and even in common households, herbs and spices, even expensive ones, were used commonly, if not widely ... usually for special feasts or celebrations. Elite households simply used a lot more and did so *either* almost all the time *or* all the time.

Meat (Inc. Fish & Poultry)

Meat, Fish, Poultry formed a minor part of the diet for most peasants and common folk (which is ***not*** the same as *no part at all* – most people would have had *some* meat, poultry or fish in their diet *occasionally*) ... only the better off and elite consumed a lot.

*And **what** they consumed was quite different from what are popular cuts today – medieval consumers ate pretty much **everything**. Internal organs (not **just** the Kidneys or Liver, they also ate the Brain, Lungs, Intestines [Tripe] and Womb ... and used other bits [Intestines, Stomach, Bladder] as sausage casings), Snouts, Ears, Tails, Tongue ... Trotters and Knuckles.*

*The really inedible bits had other, industrial, uses – bone and horn were the medieval equivalents of plastic in the variety of uses they could be put to; hides, of course, for leather and parchment; hair/bristles for brushes (and wool for clothing and furnishings); sinew for Bowstrings ... almost everything **could** be (though wasn't **always**) used.*

Meat

The most common meat consumed during the Middle Ages was ... ***Pork/Ham/Bacon** (Pig derived).*

Pigs were basically left to look after themselves, foraging in any local woodlands (not *Forests*, of course!) or amongst human waste and refuse (especially in Towns and Cities) – they were low maintenance and, therefore, their meat was *cheap*.

Vegetable Dishes

Cabbage Soup (c. 1390)

Take cabbages and quarter them (probably better to chop more finely in practise) and cook them in good broth with minced onions and the white of leeks sliced and carved small and do thereto saffron and salt and force with sweet powder.

Herb Salad (13th century, English)

Take Parsley, Sage, Garlic, Chives, Onions, Leeks, Borage, Mint, Scallion, Fennel and Nasturtium, Rue, Rosemary and Purslane, rinse and wash clean. Chop them small and mingle (toss) them well with raw (Olive) oil, then lay on Vinegar and Salt and serve.

Lentil Stew (13th century)

Wash the Lentils and boil them in a pan with fresh water, (Olive) oil, Pepper, Cilantro and chopped Onion. When done add Salt, a little Saffron and Vinegar. Add three Eggs and heat a few minutes. When the Lentils begin to thicken slowly add good lard or virgin (Olive) oil so they soak it up and until sufficiently cooked, then remove them from the fire and sprinkle with Pepper.

Herbed Beans & Pork (15th century, Italian)

Take Broad Beans, peel them with hot water, then set them to boil in good stock. When cooked add a little finely chopped Parsley, Mint finely chopped and boil them with some good Salted Pork.

Chickpea Broth (15th century)

To make eight platefuls: take a pound and a half of Chickpeas, wash them in hot water, drain, then put in the pot. Add half an ounce of Flour, a little good (Olive) oil, a little Salt, about twenty crushed Peppercorns and a little ground Cinnamon, then thoroughly mix together. Add three measures of water, a little Sage, Rosemary, and Parsley. Boil until it is reduced to the quantity of eight platefuls. When nearly cooked pour in a little oil.

Herb Salad (15th century, Italian)

Take Lettuce, Bugloss, Mint, Catmint, Fennel, Parsley, Sisymbrium, Origano, Chervil, Circerbita (Teraxicon), Plantain, Morella and other fragrant greens, wash well, press and put in a large dish. Sprinkle them with Salt and blend (toss?) with (Olive) oil, then pour Vinegar over and allow to stand before serving.



Mutton and ***Lamb*** was common in (or near) areas where sheep were raised for wool and, to a lesser extent, for milk ... but it less common than Pork.

Beef? Cattle were seen mainly as work animals (usually Oxen, but occasionally Cows) or as milk producers and were too valuable to slaughter for those reasons alone ... they were also more labour (and land) intensive to raise, making them relatively *much* more expensive.

The most common reason for slaughtering cattle was that they were too old to do useful work or to produce a useful amount of milk ... making any meat from such definitely low quality, for the poor(ish) and not for elite consumption.

*One exception was **Veal** – especially as the end of Autumn approached and the farmer had to make decisions as to how many animals he could feed over winter. Obviously some of the calves were going to be surplus to requirements ...*

Goats were widely raised for a variety of purposes – hair, hides, bone and horn as well as milk – but were not popular as meat for human consumption in northern Europe, at least not in the Towns. In the countryside and in Mediterranean Europe they were mainly part of non-elite meat consumption.

Horsemeat. *Contrary to expectations, this was **not** widely consumed ... except in dire emergency, such as during sieges. It had been strongly discouraged for human consumption (and actually banned by Pope Gregory III in the 8th century) – but this was never part of canon law as low levels of consumption of horse meat continued in rural areas even though it effectively ceased in Towns ... it seems to have been more a cultural inclination.*

For Jews, of course, the Horse does not have cloven hooves and does not chew its cud, and so is not Kosher and cannot be eaten. For Muslims, its consumption is discouraged, but not completely forbidden.

The modern European (mainly French) use of horsemeat only occurs from the late 18th century – in the aftermath of the French Revolution.

Game. While not quite as bad as East Asia, where anything that didn't run, crawl, slither, fly or swim away fast enough was fair game as a food source, medieval Europeans ate a lot of animals that would raise an eyebrow today – Badger, Hedgehogs and Porcupines amongst others.

Rabbits and ***Hares*** were also popular as was, mainly for the elite, ***Wild Boar*** ... and, of course, ***Venison*** *(from Deer)* was pretty much reserved for the elite, at least in England, because of the *Forest Laws.*

Poultry

The most common poultry consumed was ***Chicken***, mostly by the well-to-do as it was *relatively* expensive. Peasants kept Chickens, but for their eggs ... and would only slaughter them when they had stopped laying (or if they were excess Roosters, of course!).

Medieval Hens lay, on average, a single egg every 2-3 days rather than the egg a day of modern birds ... though the selective breeding that created these larger, more productive, breeds started around the 9th-10th centuries and was well under way by the 12th century.

***Capons** – castrated males – were regarded as a delicacy and so expensive that only the moderately wealthy could afford to eat them.*

The next most popular poultry was ***Duck*** and, though it was *sometimes* raised domestically, it mostly seems to have been hunted in the wild. ***Goose*** was also popular, though mostly reserved for special celebrations – it was traditional to serve it at *Michaelmas* and *Whitsun* in England, at the *Feast of St. Martin* in Germany and throughout Europe for *Christmas* .

Pigeons, Doves, Swans and ***Turtledoves*** were also commonly raised, mainly by the upper classes.

***Swans** and **Peacocks** were not particularly tasty, but were seen to be a status symbol ... and they were normally skinned, roasted, and then re-covered with their preserved plumage for serving at the high table.*

Game Birds. ***Partridge, Pheasant*** and ***Quail*** were often hunted with Falcons, though nets and blunt arrows were sometimes used if a large quantity was needed. Game and forest laws meant that they were easily accessible only to the elite.

Pigeons, Doves and ***Turtledoves*** were also hunted in the wild but, being more common, were more easily accessible on common lands and therefore more readily available as game for common tables.

Large water birds such as ***Cranes, Herons*** and ***Swans*** were also hunted with Falcons by the well-to-do.

Most other birds, even very small ones, were also hunted from time to time – often seasonally if they were migratory.

Fish and Seafood

Populations on or close to the coasts ate much the same varieties of fish and shellfish that we do today – and large inland rivers and lakes could supply a much larger quantity of freshwater fish and shellfish than they can today and, indeed, some estates had artificial fish-ponds (or sections of river protected by Weirs) where they raised some of the more prestigious types of freshwater fish for their own use or for sale.



Some 'fish' were consumed that have fallen out of fashion today – ***Porpoise*** and ***Whale***, though these were definitely lower class foods, only available as cheap, preserved (salted) imports from northern Europe and generally regarded as marginally edible.

*According to medieval 'scientific' belief, the **Barnacle Goose** was hatched **from** Barnacles or Barnacle Trees – which made it a **fish** ... so it could safely be consumed during Lent and on other Fast days until Pope Innocent III banned them at the 4th Lateran Council (1215)!*

Jews, even though they subscribed to the Barnacle Tree theory as well, regarded them as Kosher.

John Dory, Salmon, Skate, Sole, Trout and ***Turbot*** were particularly popular with the elite while ***Perch, Pike*** and ***Tench*** were mostly eaten by the poor.

Eels were popular up until the middle of the 14th century – they fell out of fashion after the Black Plague as it was thought they were a source of that outbreak (they weren't, obviously to ***us***).

Preserved Fish. Sales of preserved fish were at least as large, if not larger, than of fresh fish – and more accessible to those who lived some distance from the coasts or rivers.

Salting and ***Drying*** were used in about equal proportions but neither became common for widespread trade until the 12th century when salted ***Mackerel*** and ***Herring*** became widespread staples.

*During the medieval period, Herring at least was salted **whole** (i.e. including the guts) in layers on beds of salt laid down in trays. You removed the entrails when you wanted to use the fish.*

***Stockfish** (usually **Cod**)* was *dried*, usually by a mix of *cold wind/sun*, in northern Europe, or just *sun* in southern Europe and around the Mediterranean and was at least as widely traded as *Mackerel* and *Herring*.

Smoked and ***Pickled*** fish were available, but in much smaller quantities and often only regionally or for very localised consumption.

Seafood Recipes

Conger (eel) in Sauce (14th century)

Take the Congur and scald hym, smyte hym in pecys, seeth hym. Take Persel, Mynt, Peletur, Rosmarye, & a litul Sawge, Brede and Salt, powdour Fort, and a litel Garlec, Clowes a lite; take and grynd it wel. Drawe it up with Viyneger through a cloth. Cast the fyssh in a vessel and do the sewe onoward, & serve it forth ...

Salmon (14th century)

Fresh Salmon should be smoked (alternatively, salted or dried) leaving the backbone in for roasting. Cut it into slices and boiled in water with wine and salt during cooking. Serve with yellow pepper or with cameline sauce and in pastry if you like, sprinkled with spices (If the salmon is salted, let it be eaten with wine and sliced scallions).

Salmon Pastries (14th century)

Take a Salmon, scrape off the scales and cut it into pieces. Make a dough (possibly freshly made, not sourdough) the size of the fish and add Parsley, Sage, ground Ginger, Pepper, Anise and Salt. Cover the Salmon with the dough, stamping it in a form if you can, and bake.

Boiled Fish (15th century)

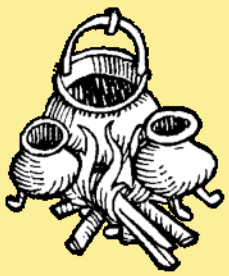
Boil it or, when less than four or five pounds, fry it in good (Olive) oil or roast it on the grill, remembering that it need not be scaled and cleaned. Prepare a marinade of vinegar, (Olive) oil and plenty of salt; and using a sprig of Bay Leaves or Rosemary brush the fish often with this marinade, turning it over on the grill until it is well done.

Turbot in Ginger Sauce (15th century)

Take a Turbut, cut off the fynnes, broche him and roste him. Whan half y-rosted [add] Salt, Vineagar, Wyne, pouder of Gynger and a litull Canell. Hold a dissh underneth, fore spilling of the licour – whan it is rosted ynow, hete the same sauce over the fire [and cover the] fissh and serve it forth.

Grilled Swordfish (16th century)

Cut the Swordfish as if you were going to roast it, and remove everything that is inside; and set it to roast on the grill, greasing it with (Olive) oil, little by little. Make a light sauce of Orange juice, Pepper, (Olive) oil, salt and a little water – put all this in a small pot and when the fish is ready, put it on a plate; and cast on the said sauce with Parsley, Mint and Marjoram.



Dairy

Fresh ***Milk*** (Cow, Sheep or Goat) was not commonly drunk, except for the sick, the very young or the elderly ... it was more commonly used as an ingredient in *cooking* a wide variety of *other* dishes, but even for that it had to be used very soon after it was milked to avoid going off.

It was much more commonly preserved as ***Cheese***, which was easier to preserve and widely eaten by rich and poor alike ... either directly, *as* Cheese or as an ingredient in a recipe.

Most of the modern varieties of soft and hard cheeses consumed today existed during the medieval period, though they tended to be *much* more regional in their distribution due to transportation costs.

However, the following cheese varieties were ***not*** *available – Gloucester and Gouda (1697), Parmesan (1579), Camembert (1791).*

Butter was also known, but only really common in northern Europe where more cattle were raised and where the temperatures meant it would last longer. Most butter produced during the medieval period was *very* heavily salted to increase its shelf life.

Olive Oil and Lard were used instead of Butter for cooking/most other purposes outside of Northern Europe.

Yoghurt, though known to the Greeks, and common in the diets of many Eastern European, Middle Eastern and Steppe Nomad peoples, seems to have been completely unknown in western and Mediterranean Europe during the Middle Ages.

With the probable exception of Greece and those parts of the Balkans that had been recently(ish) part of the Late East Roman Empire.

Food Service & Etiquette

The way in which (and by whom) food was served and the manner in which it was meant to be eaten, at least in a social setting, varied somewhat according to the social status of the host and their guests but was, as you are probably expecting, *nothing* like what Hollywood movies (bad or otherwise) can often present it as being ... and even historical and fantasy stories can be way off the mark as well.

Peasant & Common Households

Cooking was usually done in the same room the family lived in and, depending on their wealth, may have been done in a single pot.

'Service' would, in those cases, have been as simple as eating out of a common bowl or, more likely, on a

Trencher ... usually of bread early in the period, but transforming into a slab of wood later on ... *if* the family even has a table on which to place them, which very poor families may not (in which case they probably ate directly from a single plate on the floor, and possibly sat on the floor as well).

Unlike well-to-do and elite households, the family would have eaten the Trenchers as part of the meal if they were, indeed, made of thick slices of bread.

Some re-enactors believe that ***wooden*** *Trenchers or Bowls may always have been used by common folk since they were easily made from local materials and rarely survive in the archaeological record.*

Horn, leather wood or ceramic cups would be used for drinking from – probably shared between two or more family members (and any guests).

Food was largely eaten with the fingers, probably speared and/or cut up/off one's own knife or with a wooden or bone spoon.

Very poor families might have to share spoons (or even a *single* spoon) between them, and children would probably have to have their food cut up for them by their parents.

Well-to-do Households

Things start to scale up – more pots, cauldrons and other things to cook in normally go hand in hand with more bowls, plates, platters and other things to serve them on or in ... and at least *a* (or, maybe, *some*) servant(s) to do the cooking and serve the food to the family and any guests.

Individual diners are still provided with a Trencher on which to place food taken from the serving dishes (usually one for every four guests) – but it is no longer expected to be eaten, or not eaten *by the guests* or *family members*, anyway.

Bread Trenchers could be the preserve of the kitchen and household staff who would, as in Elite households, normally eat in the Kitchen, if it was separate or after the family and guests had eaten.

Cups would mostly be wooden, horn or ceramic and would be shared, typically one cup for every two guests.

The food will be served on at least one table, possibly more, depending on wealth and how many were expected to eat at meal times (family and guests) – though it is unlikely the main table would be on a raised platform as it would have been in an Elite or Noble household.

In a particularly well-to-do household any additional tables (i.e. those in addition to the one where the



family and any particularly favoured guests might eat) would be for guests of lesser importance and, possibly, any employees of greater rank than mere household and serving staff.

The main table will probably be a permanent arrangement, but additional tables will almost certainly be trestle-based or some other form of storable furniture.

Seating around the secondary tables would mostly be on trestle benches or possibly stools, with chairs being reserved (if present at all) for the head of the household and, possibly, his wife and a favoured family member or members at the head of the main (or only) table.

Table Settings

The wealthier the household, the more elaborate (and expensive) the table settings. At the higher end of the social and economic scale it is very likely that there will be a tablecloth on at least the main table for the family, for example, and the main guests will likely be provided with a napkin.

Food will be served on plates or platters, some of wood or ceramic, but, again increasingly at the wealthier end, some of metal (brass, bronze or, most commonly, pewter) and a very few prestige items at the main table (a Salt Cellar, for example) might be of silver ... or plated with silver.

While each guest will be expected to have their own knife, and this will be the main eating utensil, if any soup or similarly liquid food is served the table setting will include spoons, most commonly of wood, bone or horn ... though, again, at the main table the family and important guests may have metal ones and, rarely, silver.

To protect the tablecloth(s), if any, it is increasingly likely that wooden Trenchers will be placed before each diner and the bread Trenchers placed on top. Ewers of water and finger bowls will be available, either one for each group of four diners or, at the wealthier end of the scale, a ewer for each group of four and an individual finger bowl.

URBANITAS: A HANDBOOK OF MANNERS (C. 1460)

When you come before a lord take off your hat or hood and fall on your right knee twice. Keep your cap off till you're told to put it on, hold up your chin, look in the lord's face as long as you speak to him [or he speaks to you], keep hand and foot still so you don't trip anyone, don't spit or snot, break wind quietly ... behave wisely.

When you go into the hall, don't press up to too high a table [amongst those of higher rank].

See that your hands are clean and your knife sharp for cutting up your bread and meat. Let worthier men help themselves before you eat, don't grab the best bits. Keep your hands from dirtying the tablecloth and don't wipe your nose on it or dip too deep in your cup [i.e. don't drink too much and get drunk].

Have no meat in your mouth when you drink from the common cup and don't speak with food in your mouth and when your neighbour is drinking, stop talking.

Scorn and reprove no man whether he drinks wine [is rich] or ale [is poor] so that you will not be judged [to have poor manners]. Behave with modesty and show good manners as it reflects on your parents – wherever you go, in Hall or Chamber, good manners make the man. Reverence your betters, but treat those you don't know [but who aren't obviously your social superiors] all the same way.

Keep your hands from what would bring you to grief among the ladies. Look, don't talk and don't laugh loud or raucously [and behave with gentility]. Don't repeat what you hear, words [gossip] can as easily make as mar you.

If you follow a worthier man, let your right shoulder follow his back, and don't speak till he has done. Be austere in speech and don't stop any man's tale.

Loosely adapted from a medieval text in ***'The Babees Book'***, edited by F J Furnival, 1868

Note that the behaviour suggested here is ***far*** less restrictive than that suggested for ***women*** in ***The Chaperone's Advice*** ... though many modern sources conflate the two, almost certainly wrongly.



ELITE HOUSEHOLDS

These are generally *huge* in scale, serving scores of people every meal at the very least and, more often than not, a hundred or more ... not including any servants ... and operate in obviously different ways even compared to well=to-do households.

They will have multiple tables, but the main one (which may be quite large) will normally be set at one end of the Great Hall on an at least slightly raised platform (the ***High Table***) and this is where the head of the household, his immediate family and the highest status or most important guests will be seated along the side furthest away (and therefore looking down over) the rest of the diners (and allowing unobstructed access for servers ... and unobstructed views of exactly what delicacies are being served to those *at* the High Table).

The remaining tables, usually trestle tables only assembled for meal times, are placed on either side of the Hall along the walls and at right angles to the High Table ... and seating is usually along trestle benches along both sides. Seating at these tables is by social status, with those of higher status sitting closer to the High Table and those of lower status sitting furthest away.

The central area (the horseshoe between the High Table at the top and the two rows of lesser tables) is normally left open (though very early in the period the Hall fireplace may still be centrally located) and is there for server access and, more importantly, for any entertainment (Jugglers, Fools, Troubadours etc.) provided ... though, in some particularly wealthy households there might be an upper level balcony overlooking the hall for the use of musicians.

TABLE SETTINGS

Most, if not all, Tables will be covered with a Tablecloth and most, if not all, guests provided with a Napkin ... wooden Trenchers will almost certainly be provided to place under the thick sliced bread Trenchers to protect the Tablecloth.

Other than that, the main differences between Elite and merely well-to-do households will be that the former will have more tables and that more of the table settings and serving dishes, bowls, ewers and jugs will be of higher class materials ... metal (silver or silver-gilt, perhaps even gold, at least for the High Table), high prestige glass or glazed (as opposed to merely fired) ceramic. There'll also be more servants, of course.

It is also likely that, at the tables towards the top end of the Hall, serving dishes will be at a 1:2 rather than 1:4 ratio ... and at the High Table it is even possible that each guest will have individual services for at least *some* dishes.

Etiquette at Mealtimes

The most important part of mealtime etiquette was to *wash one's hands.*

Those seated at the High Table (if there is one) will have individual Ewers/Bowls of water and a towel brought to them where they are seated by servants. Other guests would mostly be expected to wash their hands in basins of water provided near one (or all) of the entrances.

Each guest would be provided with a towel or napkin appropriate to their status which traditionally should be draped over the left shoulder or wrist and used to wipe one's mouth (*never* wipe your mouth on your sleeve or, worse, on the tablecloth) ... especially before taking a drink from the common cup (shared between two or four guests).

Small bowls of water were often provided, especially at the High Table, for each diner (or group of diners elsewhere) and diners would clean their fingers in them between courses, wiping them dry on the napkin provided – it was bad manners to wipe greasy or food stained fingers ***directly*** *onto the napkin.*

It was important to keep the tablecloth (if there was one) as clean as possible as well ... a sign of good breeding.

When the host and his family arrived, all those guests not at the High Table were expected to rise and wait until he was seated before sitting again. At that point, someone would say a prayer and bless the meal and the assemblage ... this would usually be a household chaplain in elite establishments but might simply be the head of the household in other circumstances.

If a high(er) ranking cleric was present at the High Table they ***might*** *be asked to perform this office (or they might request they be allowed to do so) instead of the Chaplain.*

Once these offices were done, the food would start to be served ... conversations at the table should be open, do not lean over and whisper in your neighbour's ear.

Every guest was expected to have their own knife for eating purposes. Spoons would be provided for eating soup or other semi-liquid foods – and it was bad manners to leave them in a serving dish (and bad manners to *not* use them and, instead, slurp the soup [or whatever] directly from your bowl).

Forks ***as personal eating utensils*** *appeared in the East Roman Empire first, possibly as early as the 4th century AD, but spread slowly ... throughout the Middle East by the 10th century from whence it made its way to Europe, firstly to Italy (by the 11th century), but only becoming common there by the 14th century.*

They spread slowly from Italy ... first to Iberia (probably



Portugal, then Spain) by the 15th and Southern France by the 16th centuries, but did not reach England until the 17th century and only becoming widely used in the rest of Europe during the 18th century.

Early forks were two tined, though three tined forks ***slowly*** *became the norm in Italy where they were handier for eating Pasta. Four tined forks are an German invention of the 19th century.*

Knives were used to cut up food (or cut meat off the joint) from the common plate and then, using the point to stab into it, move it to one's Trencher where it should be cut into smaller, bite sized pieces (and don't stuff you mouth full with them!) ... all the while *never* resting one's elbows on the table.

If condiments were required (salt, for example) one used the tip of the knife to transfer them from the container to the food – you ***never*** *dipped the food directly into the condiment container and* ***never*** *used your fingers either.*

The diner picked up these smaller pieces (*never* blow on your food) and raised them to the mouth (and don't open your mouth *too wide – or* while you eat) ... the knife was *never* used.

It was, however, acceptable practise to take fruits, (small, individual serve) Tarts and other specifically individual serve sized morsels and pick them up with one's fingers.

*Diners were expected to avoid getting gravy, sauces or food grease on their fingers above the knuckles – and to use the finger bowls (****don't*** *spit in them) and napkins provided to clean their fingers off regularly.*

Never belch or spit (whether to one side or over the table) and don't pick your nose or your ears.

It was regarded as bad manners to make many different selections and place them all on one's Trencher – only one type of food should be consumed at a time.

In polite company, bread(s) should be *cut*, not broken – and, of course, the (bread) Trencher shouldn't be eaten (it would either be part of the servant's meal

The Chaperone's Advice (13th century)

She should behave her when at table
In manner fit and convenable;
But should, ere yet she takes her place,
Fore all the household show her face,
To let those present understand
That she much business hath in hand.
Hither and thither should she flit
And be the last of all to sit,
Making the company await
While scanneth she each dish and plate;
And when at last down sitteth she,
On each and all her eye should be.

Before the guests should she divide
The bread and see each one supplied.
Then let her know the heart to win
Of some one guest by putting in
His platter dainty morsels, or
A wing or leg of fowl before
Him sets she, with choicest slice,
Of pork or beef will she entice
His appetite, or savory fish,
If of the day that be the dish.
No stint she makes, if he permits,
To ply his taste with choicest bits.

Tis well she take especial care
That in the sauce her fingers ne'er
She dip beyond the joint, nor soil
Her lips with garlick, sops, or oil,
Nor heap up gobbets and the charge
Her mouth with pieces overlarge,
And only with the finger point
Should touch the bit she'd fain anoint
With sauce white, yellow, brown or green,
And lift it towards her mouth between
Finger and thumb with care and skill,
That she no sauce or morsel spill
About her breast-cloth.

Then her cup
She should so gracefully lift up
Towards her mouth that not a gout
By any chance doth fall about
Her vesture, or for glutton rude,
By such unseemly habitude,
Might she be deemed.

Nor should she set
Drink neatly and moderately
Lips to her cup while food is yet
Within her mouth.
And first should she
Her upper lip wipe delicately,
Lest, having drunk, a grease-formed groat
Were seen upon the wine to float.
She should not take one long-breathed draught,
Whether from cup or goblet quaffed,
But gently taste with sipping soft
Now and again, but not too oft,
Though thirst impels, at large should drink,
Lest those around perchance should think
Or say, if she the cup should clutch
With eager haste: She drinks too much;
Therefore should she the tempting tide
Resist, nor grip the goblet's side
Like some of that fat matron crew,
So gluttonous and boorish, who
Pour wine adown their cavernous throats
Enough to fill a horseman's boots,
Till lastly are their gullets full,
And all their senses drowned and dull.
She should avoid all such excess
As leadeth on to drunkenness,
For drunken folk no secrets keep,
And if a woman drinketh deep
She leaves herself without defence,
And jangles much with little sense.
To any man she falls a prey
When thus her wits she casts away.

She should not at the table close
Her eyes in sleep, nor even doze,
For many a strange untoward thing
Hath happed to dames thus slumbering
Such places are not made for sleep,
Tis wiser far good watch to keep,
For often folk mishaps have known
Thus sleeping: many have tumbled down
Supine, or prone, or on the side,
And grievous hurt sustained, or died:
She should, who feels disposed to wink,
Of Palinurus' ending think,
Who governed well Aeneas' helm
Until he fell within the realm
Of Morpheus, then straight toppled he
From off the ship, and in the sea
Was drowned before his comrades' eyes,
Who mourned his watery obsequies.

– ***The Romance of the Rose*** *(13th century)*, translated by F S Ellis, 1900

The ***Roman de la Rose*** was written in two parts, by different writers c. 1230 by *Guillame de Loris* and c. 1275 by *Jean de Meun* (roughly 20:80) and is one of the major treatises on the art of *Courtly Love* (i.e. elite etiquette) and one of the most copied (and ***read***) literary works in France (and areas influenced by French ideals) for the next two centuries.

Much of the ideals relating to female behaviour and sexuality are greatly at odds with Church teachings, yet, strangely, it was never condemned ***by*** the Church.

Note that the standards of behaviour expected of women is ***far*** more restrictive than that expected of men (see ***Urbanitas: A Handbook of Manners***) for some idea of just how much.

after the guests had finished or would be distributed to the poor by the household's Almoner).

When drinking from a common cup (as most would have had to) it was good manners to wipe one's mouth with one's napkin first *and* to grasp the cup with both hands to drink and *never* drink with a full mouth.

*NO! You never **ever** throw food scraps/bones over your shoulder and/or onto the floor (place them on the trencher)... did I mention elsewhere that Hollywood has a lot to answer for?*

***Note:** The rules detailed above are culled from period sources, most of which date to the mid to late 14th century – exactly how applicable some or all of them are for earlier periods is uncertain, excepting that if you've **seen it in a movie** or **read it in a novel** it's **almost** certainly wrong.*

*They also apply to Elite households – how many of them, if any, applied in middle ranking or peasant households is really anyone's guess ... though the existing period etiquette guides are evidently aimed at a mix of the very young **and** those who have somehow managed to gain access to some level of social respectability, which implies that not all of the rules presented would be familiarly used by them.*

Mealtimes

For the vast majority of people there were only two *main* meals a day – ***lunch*** (*dinner*) in the middle of the day and ***dinner*** (*supper*) in the evening (after dark, usually). Lunch was normally the main meal and Dinner was generally much lighter *for most people.*

*Do I really need to get into the whole Lunch/Dinner and Dinner/Supper argument? Technically Dinner is the main meal of the day, whenever eaten, which was what we moderns (at least here in Australia and in much of the English speaking world, though this wasn't always the case within [my] living memory ... barely) would normally call Lunch **today**. Supper has, as a result, gone out of fashion as a name for the main evening meal – though it is still used **very** occasionally.*

Two ***main*** meals. However, there were often shorter, light meal, breaks ... usually for *Breakfast* (which was often leftovers from the evening meal of the day before or something simple like a hunk of Bread and some Cheese, perhaps with some Small [non-alcoholic] Beer).

*At the beginning of the period this was universal, but it fairly quickly became a matter of social status – wealthy people kept to the two main meals to show **they** didn't have to work and, therefore, had time in the middle of the **work** day to have a 'long lunch.'*

This remained the pattern for the entirety of the period from the 10th through to the 14th century.



Private & Public dining

Theoretically, at least at the beginning of the period, everyone in the household ate at more or less the same time ... though, obviously, those actually cooking and serving the food ate after their jobs were done (so, usually, at the end of the meal) and it was regarded as a sign of egotistical self-regard and self-centeredness to go off an eat by oneself in one's own chambers (unless, of course, you were an invalid and unable to eat with the rest of the household).

As the period progressed, this attitude started to change and, by the end of the 14th century it was not completely unheard of for the head of an elite household to dine semi-privately with a select body of fellows rather than the whole household ... and being invited to dine with them in such a setting was regarded as a sign of great favour.

*This change also allowed the more discrete service of costly delicacies **only** to the private dining room and more common, cheaper, foods to those who were now confined to eating in the Great Hall.*

Even within the Great Hall there was a division in what foods were served based on where one sat – which was, of course, based on one's social status. For employees and servants there was often even an almost contractual statement of what foods they could expect to be served at meals and even which meals they were entitled to be fed at on the household's dime.

Women, Delicacy & Dining. The demands of courtesy, as applied to elite women, were so restrictive that it was very difficult for them to eat *at a public function* in the required gentile fashion – so they either ate very little *at* such a meal, and ate their *actual* meal later, in private or did not attend at all.

There was a continuing (though much lower level) male prejudice against female company in/at such public occasions dating back to the classical (Graeco-Roman) period ... so women often did not attend public meals in the Great Hall, but ate privately, perhaps with female friends or guests.

In any case, it was relatively uncommon for women to be invited (or taken by husbands/fathers) to such events until the late 15th or early 16th centuries.

*Medieval 'courtly love' novels written by **post**-medieval novelists notwithstanding.*

This 'rule' really only applied to major feasts and banquets where there would be a large number of guests – for meals that were basically family or household only affairs there were generally no such restrictions.

This changed slowly, and remained common throughout most of the 15th century.

Utensils and Serving

As noted in ***Etiquette***, above, every Diner was expected to bring their own knife with them for eating. Spoons were provided for dishes that required them and forks were cooking utensils for the most part.

Roasts of Meat, Poultry or Fish were usually carved into large joints before being brought to the table, but a carving knife and fork ***might*** be provided for each group of four diners to allow them to carve off chunks for themselves (which they would then pick up by spearing them with the point of their own knives).

At the High Table a whole roast might be served to the Lord, direct, who would often either make the first cut or, if a senior servant carved up the roast, the Lord would carve off bits for his closest family and most honoured guests himself.

Serving was done directly from the cooking area – and when separate Kitchens became the norm, they were close enough to the Great Hall (and any private dining rooms) that the food would still *normally* be hot when served ... at least the food served to the High Table and those closest to it as they would normally be served first.

Special servants would be on hand to replenish the Jugs or Carafes of Wine (or Beer, or whatever drinks were being served) during the meal and there would normally be several courses, perhaps a dozen or more (with different flavours and textures to provide a 'feast for the palate', from which each diner would be expected to eat only a relatively small amount (rather like modern Yum Cha/Dim Sum).



Mercaturia

There wasn't a lot of long distance trade in the Middle Ages *compared to modern times* ... but it *did* happen, and *did* cover long distances ... and was *expensive* and *slow* to carry on.

The majority of trade was local or, to a lesser extent, regional ... most trade goods travelled no more than a score of miles *if by land*, usually less, unless they were of high value and low bulk.

If they travelled by *water*, either on *navigable rivers* (assuming they were fortuitously placed) or by *sea*, then they could travel much further between places connected by river and/or sea ... but once they reached port, the score or so miles of land transport kicked in again.

Spices and Silks from East and South Asia took around 200 travel days to traverse the northern Silk Road through the margins of the steppes, assuming it wasn't closed by the Mongols (or other Steppe Nomad states) ... around a year's travel time all up, allowing for rest days and other unavoidable delays.

*The sea route, through the Red Sea or, to a lesser extent, the Persian Gulf, was somewhat quicker, but subject to the whims of the Muslim states that controlled the land portion in the Middle East ... one of the reasons why the Portuguese (largely under **Henry the Navigator** [1394-1460]) eventually circumnavigated Africa ... to create a direct, non-Muslim controlled, sea route to the Indies.*

*Is it any wonder spices (and silk) were **literally** worth more than their weight in gold?*

Land Transport

For a more detailed examination of some of the issues relating to Land Transport, see ***Highways, Roads & Bridges***, pp. #66-72 in the ***Highways & Byways*** section of Chapter #1, ***City & Country***.

***Some** of the information from that section is recapitulated below for convenience.*

Porters

As is the case in the (modern day) developing world, there was considerable use of human Porters, male and female, in the Middle Ages ... obviously within Towns and Cities, but also over short to medium distances in the countryside.

*Male **Porters*** could carry ~42 kg (sustained) or ~65 kg (for short distances); *females* could carry 30 kg.

*Itinerant **Peddlers** usually carrying their goods on their backs usually worked a regular circuit through areas not well served even by the abysmal road network that*

existed and which were too far from existing market towns to easily attend ... carrying small manufactured items which would not have been worthwhile for the locals to make the effort to go and buy in isolation.

Pack Animals

With the poor state of most roads, even supposedly well maintained Royal roads, wheeled transport was not always possible and the use of Pack animals was dominant through to the 16th century.

Many modern sources cite a carrying capacity of 20% of body weight for Donkeys, Horses and Mules, which is based on a US Army studies in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, more recent (post 2000) studies suggest 30% is more accurate.

*The existing evidence strongly suggests that Medieval practise was more in line with the latter (pack animals were **valuable**, so you got the maximum work you could from them, but **not** to the point where they would be rendered unusable through overwork).*

Pack Horses could carry an *average* load of ~170kg for around 30-40 klicks, ***Ponies*** (which were more common for commercial use) could carry ~110 kg for a similar distance; ***Mules*** could manage ~150 kg for 50-60 klicks and ***Donkeys*** ~150 kg.

***Pack Horses** and **Ponies** can carry the rated loads for ~50 klicks, but only for a day or so at a time before risking permanent injury, and need at least a day's rest between such efforts. Even at the lower limit, they need a day's rest every 3-4 days.*

***Mules**, on the other hand, can manage the 50-60 klicks day in, day out, 6-7 days a week. They are constitutionally **much** stronger than horses. Donkeys are similar in nature to Mules.*

A typical Pack Train would number 12-20 animals – but could number up to 40 on occasion and the lead animal(s) would *sometimes* have a bell to warn other travellers of their approach, especially on narrow mountain paths or tracks.

Loads were either carried in bags or sacks tied (see the illustration opposite) roped on either side of the animal for bulk items like wool or grain or in panniers for smaller or individual items.

Panniers were preferred where possible as even the best secured bags or sacks slowly worked themselves loose with their ties with the motion of the animal's movement, necessitating regular stops (every couple of hours or so) to rebalance and retie them securely.

*Every effort was made to ensure that the **weight** of the load on either side of the pack animal was as nearly balanced as possible.*



Non-Traditional Pack Animals

Camels. Dromedaries (one humped camels native to the Middle East and Horn of Africa, but found in North Africa in this period) carry up to 50% of its body weight of 300-500 kilos for up to 25 klicks a day, or half that for twice the distance.

Reindeer. Can carry 20-25% of their body weight as Pack Animals and 50% in a Drag Sled (Travois). A male Reindeer masses 160-180 kilos and females mass 80-120 kilos.

Wheeled Transport

Assuming somewhat reasonable roads ... not a common thing in the 10th century, and not all that much better by the 14th ... wheeled transport was an option, especially for large and bulky items.

Waggons (and ***Carts***) could carry a load 14-22 miles (22-35 klicks) a day in flat terrain over in dry weather – assuming a horse drawn vehicle, if drawn by oxen that goes down to a normal maximum of only 10 miles (16 klicks) per day.

Medieval Draught Horses were quite small, at only 13-14 Hands and probably weighed around 400 kilos (compared to modern breeds which are usually 16-19 Hands and weigh around 700 kilos).

*The weight they could pull varied according to the terrain – **up to three times** their body weight on flat terrain on good roads (rare) or, more commonly, **up to twice** their body weight on flat terrain with poor roads. **Halve** this (or more) in hills or mountains.*

Oxen can pull up to twice the weight Horses can, but the downside is that they can only manage around 1½-2 mph, and need at least an hour's rest in the middle of the day and an hour or more to graze in a standard eight hour travel day. As a result, Ox Carts are less common after the 12th century and almost completely replaced during the 13th century.

Horse Transport by Sea

From time to time it was necessary, either to move breeding stock or for military purposes, to transport horses (and other large livestock) by sea – which obviously required special arrangements ...

The post-Roman Mediterranean

The Romans had specialised ships for horse transport and the tradition was continued after the collapse of the Empire in the west ... and they began to re-appear in numbers from the 10th century as the oar & sail powered ***Tarida*** and the sail powered ***Usciere***.

Tarida. These were basically *Great (Cargo) Galleys* with side doors allowing them to be loaded/unloaded from a beach. The 10th century versions could carry 20-30 horses but they grew in size and carrying capacity over time and by the 13th century the largest could carry 50 horses. They were still in use in the mid 13th century but were being replaced by the ...

Usciere. These were two decked sailing vessels which could carry up to 100 horses loaded through hard patches in the hull. One built in the mid 13th century for Louis IX was 25.76 m long and had a beam of 6.1 meters with two decks and two masts.

Northern Europe

Here the Roman tradition was largely unknown or lost, and early horse transport was done in quickly converted *Knarrs* which records indicate could only carry 8-20 horses, depending on size (of both vessel and horse) while the later *Cog* could, again depending on size, carry 30 or more.

How were they carried?

Specialist transports had separate stalls, either with wickerwork or wooden sides, usually for 2-3 horses. Individual horses were supported by ropes and canvas belly slings to minimise the chance of them damaging themselves or being damaged.

Sources are uncertain, but on at least some of these transports it was possible for a fully equipped knight to mount his horse on board and ride it off ... ready to fight!

A Medieval Cog



Land Transport Costs

The cost of transporting goods for a day's travel cost the following percentages of the cargo's value, assuming average bulk and average value.

- 1½% for *light* loads (Bales of Wool)
- 15% for *medium heavy* loads (Grain)
- 100% ***or more*** for *heavy* loads (Stone).
- Double the above or more for Pack animals and/or Porters.

For high value, low bulk, items, the costs would be much lower ... possibly close to negligible for *really* high value items such as, say, silks or spices.

Water Transport

For a more detailed examination of some of the issues relating to Land Transport, see ***Ports, Sea & River Travel*** pp. #72-73 in the ***Highways & Byways*** section of Chapter #1, ***City & Country***.

Some of the information from that section is recapitulated below for convenience.

Seagoing Ships

Cogs (12th century on)

These first appeared in the area around what is now the Netherlands quite early, but their heyday and classic form dates to the 12th century when they start to replace the *Knarr* (a process largely complete by the early 13th century).

Cogs had a flat bottom, making them easier and safer to ground in tidal harbours (and to unload when beached), high sides, giving them an advantage against boarders, and the hull form allowed them to carry more cargo.

*Vessels **called** Cogs appear as early as the 9th century, but are much smaller and purely coast-hugging craft with steering oars. The 'classic' version described here is a development of the basic idea.*

*Grounding a Cog was the design intent of the later medium to large versions. The pre-12th century ones, and the smaller versions, could probably have been dragged up on a beach in the same way as Knarrs ... the others were simply **far** too heavy.*

The classic versions were clinker built and had a single mast with a square sail and a sternpost rudder rather than steering oars. The earliest of these were only part-decked at the rear and, possibly, the bow, with the midsection not decked – but by the 13th century full decked versions had started to appear and come to dominate by the middle of that century.

Either version might have raised 'castles' at bow and stern (or just the stern) to fit them out for military use,

or simply for more deck space, and this became increasingly common with the full decked versions in the later 13th century.

By the late 14th century some have enclosed deck-house-like structures (probably for crew and passenger accommodation as much as extra covered storage space) at the stern and, possibly, the bow, and the steering wheel was moved to the top of the former, giving a greater height advantage.

Later versions could be up to 35 meters in length and displace 600 tons, but more commonly they were between 15-25 meters with a 5-8 meter beam and drew 3-5 meters at full load ... smaller Cogs could carry 60-80 tons and the mid-sized ones 100-150 tons.

Average sailing speed was 5-7 knots, with a maximum of 9-13 knots with a strong following wind. Crew size ranged from a dozen or so for the smaller vessels to double or triple that for the larger ones.

Dhows (6th century BC or AD on)

The Dhow is famous to most as an Arab sailing craft – but it almost certainly originated in India and the best Dhows used in the Indian Ocean, Persian Gulf and Red Sea were actually *built* in India, which had copious supplies of excellent quality wood ... something the Arabian Peninsula lacked.

*Early Dhows had their hull planks **roped** (or 'sewn' in the vernacular of the time) together **possibly** because the main Indian construction sites were very far from suitable iron sources! This construction method only started to change (and change dramatically) during the 16th century, at least in the Indian Ocean ... it probably happened **much** earlier in the Mediterranean where there was earlier and larger scale contact with nailed hull European styles of vessel.*

In fact, the term *Dhow* is *generic* and was (and is) used to describe sailing vessels with one or more masts carrying lateen sails which have long thin hulls.

They are typically used as cargo haulers and have a crew of between 12 and 30, depending on size. The most common types ranged from 20-30 or 40-60 tons, but could be as large as 100 tons.

Very similar craft were used by the Arabs and Muslim states in general in the Eastern Mediterranean. Note that the medieval versions were double-ended rather than possessing the square sterns and often elaborate great cabin of post-medieval or more recent versions which are commonly used to illustrate the type.

Sambuk. A large two masted Dhow intended for blue-water trading in the Indian Ocean. Average length is 30 meters and weight is ~275 tons. Crew is 30-40, depending on size.


A Cargo Galley

Galleys (5th century on)

A lineal descendant of the classical Triremes (and other, similar, larger and smaller primarily *oared* vessels) normally found only in the Mediterranean.

Cargo ('Great') Galleys. These were a similar line of development to that which resulted in the *War Galley* and were, again, a western Mediterranean design intended for cargo and passenger transport ... the very largest of them appearing in the late 13th century.

They could be up to 46 meters long and had a complement of 150-180 rowers as well as another 20-30 sailors and could haul anywhere from 140-250 tons.

Smaller Cargo Galleys would normally have only one mast while the larger ones would have two masts ... and the most massive might have three, though the second and third masts were progressively smaller (all with lateen rigged sails).

Speed under oars would have been similar to that of a War Galley for cruising, but the greater mass of the vessel would have limited maximum speed ... either only a couple of extra knots for the same period of time or almost as fast but for a much lesser period of time than for War Galleys. Speed under Sail would have been comparable to that of a standard War Galley.

Dromons. These were a late East Roman naval vessel and, by the 10th century, had twin banks of oars on either side of the hull, one on the tween deck the other on the upper deck.

They probably had 50 oars a side (i.e. two banks of 25 rowers) and were around 30-35 meters long with a 7:1 or 8:1 length:beam ratio. Raised fighting platforms were added at the Bow and, occasionally, midships, either side of the mainmast by the 11th century.

*No! The oarsmen were **not** slaves. They were naval personnel and were lightly armed and expected to assist*

SHIPBUILDING TECHNOLOGY

During the 10th-14th centuries there were basically two different shipbuilding traditions in Europe – ***Clinker*** *(aka Lapstrake)* in northern Europe and ***Carvel*** in Southern Europe and the Mediterranean.

CLINKER BUILT

As can be seen in the illustration below, this method of construction involves overlapping the edges of the hull timbers top to bottom while they remain butted together side to side (in a row called a *strake*).

CARVEL BUILT

This was the classical era tradition and involved butting all edges of the planking together with mortice and tenon joints.

BUT . . . BUT . . . WHICH WAS BETTER?

Clinker built hulls could be constructed quicker and were easier to repair, but required that the overlapping joints be caulked (stuffed with pine tar and something fibrous) regularly.

Carvel built hills were slower to build and harder to repair but required less, and less frequent, caulking.On a pure cost and time basis, Clinker built hulls were cheaper than Carvel ones. But, wait ...

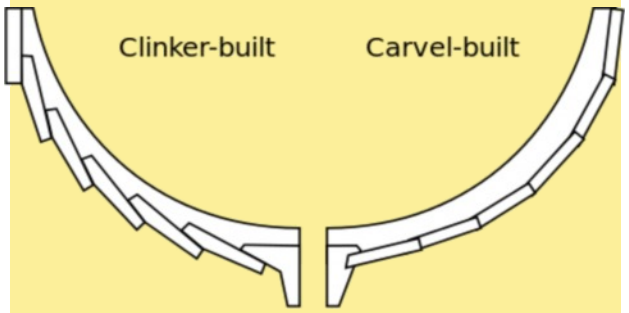
Carvel hulls are stronger, can carry more sail – but are heavier (they need more internal framing) and have less internal capacity ... or, in other words, they carry less (and less bulky) cargo for a given unloaded displacement as compared to Clinker built ships.

However, there is an upper limit on the size of Clinker built vessels because of their light internal framing.

INTERNAL FRAMING

In both cases, the internal framing was mostly added *after* the hull was complete – as it was under construction there was just light framing enough to hold the hull shape. After completion the ribs were steamed into the required shape and emplaced as required.

Eventually both methods were replaced by ***Skeleton Framing*** *where the frame ('Skeleton') was built first and then nailing the hull planks to it in carvel style, but without the mortice and tenon joints. This started to replace both the above styles in the late 14th century.*



the ship's marine complement (probably around 20 men) and sailors (probably also around 20 men) in boarding actions (either undertaking or repelling them).

They also had a single mast with a Lateen sail arrangement and an above waterline spur (to ride over an enemy ship's oars, breaking them and injuring or killing any oarsmen using them) instead of an underwater ram (to pierce an enemy ship's hull.

War Galleys. These were originally developed in the western Mediterranean and were both similar to and different from the *Dromon*, of which they were lineal descendants/developments.

The main differences were that the length:beam ratio increased to 8:1 and that they were not fully decked, having only a central walkway from bow to stern and the rowers sat, two to a bench (three from the mid 13th century) rather than on separate upper and lower levels, on either side and they retained steering oars instead of sternpost rudders well into the 15th century.

The 'standard' war galley was ~40 meters long with a 3.67 meter beam (4.45 meters between the outriggers) and drew 2.08 meters with a deadweight of ~80 tons.

They typically had 25-26 oars on either side, giving a rowing crew of 100-104 until the 13th century when it increased to 150-156 (and ***they*** *weren't slaves either). There were probably an additional 30-50 sailors and a like number of marines rounding out the complement.*

Expected speed under oars was 2-3 knots, with short bursts (no more than 30 minutes) of up to 7 knots in a combat situation. With the wind abeam, a maximum sailing speed of 10-12 knots was possible.

Ottoman (Turkish) Galleys *were* ***slower*** *under sail than western designs (and* ***they*** *didn't use slaves in this period, either – just a different design philosophy).*

They were not designed to carry cargo beyond limited rations and personal effects for the crew, but could probably have managed 6-8 tons if well distributed.

There was also a pronounced outrigger from the hull side provide more support and (theoretically) better leverage for the oars and the single mast (two from the mid 13th century) was equipped with a lateen sail.

HULKS (AKA HOLKS, 10TH CENTURY ON)

These were flat bottomed, clinker built and round hulled with a 3:1 length:beam ratio and differed from the Cog structurally in the fact they didn't have stern or bow posts ... variants or developments of the basic hull form, probably mixed with some construction characteristics of the Cog, continued in use well into the 16th century though they were being replaced by the Caravel from the 15th century.

The Hulk was primarily a canal or river barge in the early years, with some limited capacity to be used in shallow coastal waters (especially in the Low Countries, where it was a mainstay commercial carrier in such roles) but developed into a seagoing vessel by the 14th century.

Viking Longships (9th-13th centuries)

Though there were earlier, less type standard, versions, the 'classic' Longship design doesn't appear until the 9th century and remained common through to the 13th century ... but was built only (or largely) in Scandinavia or in those parts of northern England or Northern Europe settled by Scandinavian colonists.

The Longship was lightly built (early versions at least had the clinker built hull *tied* to the strakes) and flexible and had a shallow draft of ~1 meter allowing it to navigate considerable distances upriver and beach pretty much anywhere.

The hulls were so light they were easy to portage (carry or drag) around rapids or cross country to allow deep inland travel (as was common in Russia) ... and it was common for crews to use the upturned hull of a beached boat as shelter for camping.

They were double ended and, at least in theory, the steering oar could be relocated to either end as needed though there was a nominal bow (with figurehead, often a dragon) and stern.

There was no deck, the crew sat on benches laid on the hull and, on smaller vessels, usually slept in the open *(which must have been pretty awful in stormy weather)* – and there was limited space for cargo (or loot).

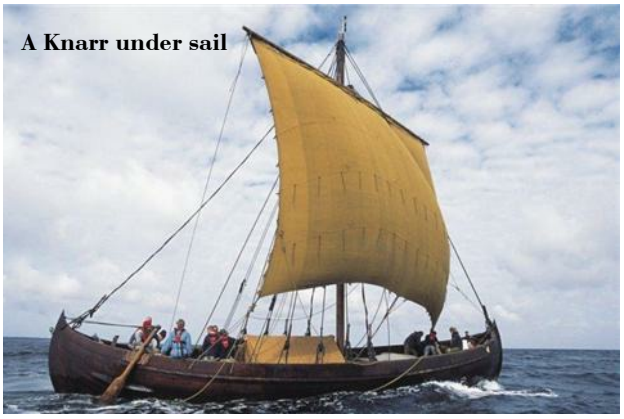
The larger Longships are occasionally depicted with tents erected amidships – but whether these were for the crew or for the nobles or royals who were the usual owners of such vessels is not clear.

Cargo capacity, other than the crew and their personal possessions, was probably about half that, or less, than a Knarr of similar size could carry ... probably 5-6 tons for a Karvi and 10-12 tons for a larger longship.

Early versions seem to have been entirely oar powered, but a single stepped mast with a rectangular sail was soon added. Speed under oars was nominally 5-10 knots (9-18 kph) and, under optimum sailing conditions, 15 knots could be achieved (28 kph).

There were several types of Longship, mainly differentiated by size –

Karvi. A general purpose vessel used as more for fishing and trade rather than war, a Karvi had 6-16 rowing benches (for 12-32 rowers) with a hull:width ratio of 4.5:1.



A Knarr under sail

Snekkja. The smallest (and most common) purpose-built war or raiding vessel, a Snekkja had to have at least 20 rowing benches with a length:width ratio of 7:1 and normally a draught of ½ meter.

Skeld. A warship with at least 30 rowing benches, otherwise similar to the *Snekkja*.

Drekar *or* Drakkar. Probably a very late development of the *Skeld* and differing mainly in that they were intended as Royal or Fleet flagships and so had ornately carved figureheads and were constructed with great care and the most expensive materials.

Knarrs (9th-13th centuries)

These were purpose built cargo and trading vessels with a length:width ratio of around 3:1 but otherwise of similar light, clinker-built, construction to that used in the Longships (see above) with a single mast and square sail with a small number of oars for close in maneuvering when entering a port or in confined spaces ... in an estuary, or up a river or canal.

Unlike the Longship, Knarrs had a rounded stern and often (but not always) had a half deck at bow and stern (though there was only enough space underneath for ballast).

The main cargo was carried in the central section of the vessel ... on long voyages a tent might be erected, usually amidships, for shelter from the elements.

The few remains that have been found suggest the most common type was 16 meters (54') long and had a beam of 5 meters (15') and could probably have carried a cargo of around 24 tons.

Sea Transport Costs

Hard and fast figures are hard to source and the few that are available are, at best, ambiguous – but, in general, the cost of transporting ***cargoes*** by sea seems to fall in the following basic range ...

- 0.15% of item cost per day of travel for high value, low bulk items
- 2½% of item cost per day of travel for bulk cargoes (i.e. medium to low value, high bulk).

Medieval Navigation

While not *quite* 'by guess and by God', maritime navigation, at least in western Europe, during the early medieval period was pretty basic –

- No maritime Charts, and few maps of any sort.
- No magnetic Compass
- No means of determining Latitude
- No means of determining Longitude

Compasses. These are first recorded in Europe in the late 12th century and the Middle East in the early 13th century, *possibly* an independent invention *or* imported from China where they had been in use since the 11th century. The main advantage of a Compass was that it allowed determination of sailing direction in overcast conditions, one of the reasons why classical era shipping in the Mediterranean largely ceased in winter, when clear skies were less common.

The compass allowed the sailing season to run for 9-10 months and made it possible, for example, for merchants to make two round trips to the Eastern Mediterranean per year instead of only one – a huge economic boost.

Latitude. This could be roughly determined by taking a sun sighting at mid-day (or Polaris at night) and measuring the angle from vertical ... but there was no accurate way of doing this *at sea* until the development of the *Quadrant* in the mid 15th century.

*On land an **Astrolabe** could be used, but it was unreliable at sea until the development of the **Mariner's Astrolabe** in the 16th century (which wasn't actually an Astrolabe).*

*In the muslim world, Latitude could be determined using a **Kamal** (a wooden or bone rectangle, roughly 5x2½ cm, with a knotted rope) which allowed rough angle measurements equal to approximately 1½°) and taking a star sighting, usually of Polaris ... but it was only useful where Polaris was close to the horizon, in the lower latitudes, and was not used in Western Europe as a result.*

Longitude. This could be done, with some difficulty, on land, through multiple observations of various astronomical phenomena over extended periods of time ... it was effectively impossible to do before the invention of the ***Method of Lunar Distances*** in the mid 18th century (the *Marine Chronometer* was developed around the same time but did not fully replace the Lunar method until almost a century later).



A Medieval Portolan Map

With no accurate way of determining Longitude, navigation not running along a line of Latitude was always by dead reckoning and fraught with considerable room for dangerous error the longer the journey continued out of sight of land.

*The **Method of Lunar Distances** not only involved complex mathematics not yet developed in the Middle Ages, but also required the use of a **Sextant**, which was not invented until the early 18th century.*

Portolans & Peripluses. Before the development of the Compass, mariners relied on accumulated experience of particular routes ... but for someone unfamiliar with a route there were usually written instructions available. These had existed in the Classical world as *Peripluses*, but they had fallen out of use in the west after the collapse of the Western Empire ... but resurfaced as ***Portolans*** *('Port Books')* in the 12th-13th centuries and relied on detailed compass bearings unlike the earlier *Peripluses*.

*They were trade secrets (both valuable and carefully guarded) and few have survived – they were almost certainly passed on only through professional contacts, Master to Apprentice or within an existing Guild structure. Since they offered detailed descriptions of things not easily (if at all) shown on a Chart, they remained in use even after the appearance of **Portolan Charts** (and still remain around as **Sailing Directions** issued by various governmental authorities in the modern day).*

Portolan Charts. These only became possible with the arrival of the Compass and formalised written sailing directions in combination with compass bearings into a detailed sailing map and appear towards the end of the 13th century. These charts minimised the need for accurate Latitude and Longitude determination *in known waters*.

However, they didn't allow for the curvature of the earth and were only of use in enclosed sea areas such as the Mediterranean, Black and Red Seas.

Tacking vs Wearing. The rigging of medieval ships was not robust enough to allow them to *tack* (zig-zag into the wind), instead they had to *wear*, which involved turning the vessel around to change direction and turn back into the wind on a different tack, losing ground in doing so ... and making sailing close to the wind much slower and much more difficult than it became when better rigged vessels were introduced during the 14th-15th centuries.

Other cargoes might fall somewhere in between those two extremes.

For example, transporting cargo to (or from) the Holy Land to southern France or Venice took around 30-35 days, so, for bulk items, that would mean 75-87½% tacked on to the price.

*For silks or spices, however, you'd only be looking at tacking **only** 4½-5¼% onto what was almost certainly an already outrageous price ...*

Another example was the shipping of grain from the Baltic areas to the Low Countries which took around 40 days ... effectively doubling the price.

Passenger rates, like most things, depended on the social status and bargaining power of the individual or individuals wanting passage ... but basic passage (*including food*) for Crusaders travelling from Southern France or Venice to the Holy Lands, a trip of 30-35 days, the cost was roughly 1/- a day.

This was a price negotiated with the Venetians by the Papacy, and included food and below decks accommodation (probably just enough space to sling a hammock or doss down on a bedroll with a certain amount of personal possessions (any large items, a warhorse, for example, or bulky household/camping gear for use on campaign would have been charged for at cargo rates).

*Cabins of varying size would have cost more, **if** available at all (note – most ship types simply didn't **have** cabins).*

***Horses** (see the **Horse Transport by Sea** Sidebar) would have been charged at the 2½% bulky cargo rate.*

Commercial Practice

Banking

In the early Middle Ages, as trade grew in importance, there was an increasing need for *finance* and for *credit*, especially as there was not enough actual bullion coinage to support the existing level of economic activity.

The problem was that both Christianity and Islam placed restrictions on Usury (the loaning of money for interest) that made it difficult, if not impossible, for Christians or Muslims to lend money or perform any financial functions that smacked of doing so ...

Of course, these restrictions did not apply to the third major Abrahamic religion, Judaism, and, coupled with prejudicial restrictions on land ownership and what trades Jews were allowed to pursue in both Christian and Muslim states, this led to Jews adapting existing financial practices (especially the *Hawalla* system) for banking ... or, perhaps more accurately, moneylending.



Moneylenders and Pawnshops

These were often strictly limited as to the effective interest rate they could charge ... usually 1d, 2d or 4d per £1 per week (an effective *simple* interest rate of 21.7, 43.3 or 86.7% per annum) ... the lower rates were offered by government or church run (or subisdised) Pawnshops (mainly an Italian development, but occasionally appearing elsewhere), while the medium rate was offered by commercial (private) Pawnbrokers and the middle or top rate by outright Moneylenders (depending on the security offered and the estimated risk involved in the loan).

*Pawnbrokers, of course, had an item held in security and could not really lose out totally ... Moneylenders may have had theoretical security but, especially if Jews (or **anyone** foolish enough to loan to a sovereign Prince), might find it difficult (or even impossible) to take possession of the item/property offered as security in case of default ... consider the various expulsions of the Jews around Europe during the Middle Ages and the way in which the Templars were looted by the French.*

The Hawalla System

This dates back to at least the 8th century as a means of financing long distance trade by allowing for the transference of debt (money, in effect) without an actual physical transfer of bullion or goods – which acted originally as a means of security, allowing traders to avoid the risk of having to carry large sums of money with them.

*In other words, it is **not** banking ... money is not loaned, only transferred. Also note that it was peculiar to the Middle East, Far East and Asia in general ... it did **not** appear in Christian Europe (cross cultural and cross-religious difficulties in forging an honour based relationship between parties in the two regions were simply too great ... especially in the era of the Crusades, which is when it would have been most useful.*

*European/Christian nations ultimately developed the **Bills of Exchange** system instead (see below).*

Simply put, a trader would seek out a Hawalla agent and hand over an agreed amount of cash money (or its equivalent) and, in return, would be given some means of identifying the transaction to another agent

somewhere else who, on presentation of the identifier, would pay out an agreed on sum.

In return, the two agents took a *commission* and agreed to settle the debt between them at a nominated future time ... more often than not this would be done by transferring debts from one Hawalla to another with minimal actual movement of bullion or goods, all done on an honour system with little or no recourse to whatever legal systems might apply.

Hawalla transfers have been, historically, remarkably safe – the agents involved were only accepted into the system on the recommendation of a web of business contacts and family members and there are few examples of any agent rorting the system or defaulting (mostly the wider family would make good any losses resulting from such as a matter of honour).

Commissions were allowable under Islamic law and not specifically prohibited by Christian belief, though the adaptation of the method as a way of financing trade was much slower to catch on in Christian states of medieval Europe than it was in the Islamic world.

*Of course when the idea of 'banking' caught on, Christians developed it in ways (see **Bills of Exchange**, below) the Muslims did not, creating a complex system of financial instruments that gave them a (slowly) increasing advantage in trade and business activity that ultimately lasted through to the early 20th century when the Muslim world finally developed their own version of 'non-interest interest' that is very similar to the medieval idea of the **Contractum Trinius** (see below).*

The typical commission charged (split between the two agents=) was on the order of 1-5%, usually 1-2%.

Commodity Trade

The earliest form of finance was the advancing of money to farmers against the security of the crops they would grow ... initially against crops *actually* planted, but soon against the potential crop *to be planted*. This morphed into guarantees based on the *shipment* of grain between locations.



In both cases, profit was made by discounting the amount of money advanced against the estimated income from the crop or cargo, typically this amounted to an effective interest rate of ~12% per annum (more for shorter periods) against the security of crops, but could be as much as 30% for less secure ventures, such as trade.

Older sources often give a blanket 'medieval interest was 30%' (or some other extreme figure), but recent close examination of older as well as more recently available data shows that there were two very different streams of interest ... and that interest against agricultural produce was much lower (since it was relatively much less risky) than interest against more speculative matters (trade).

Eventually this developed into a semi-formal system (and later a formal system) of *Bills of Exchange* (see below for details).

Banks

The first Bank ever established was the ***Bank of Venice***, established in 1157 under a state guarantee to assist in the financing of the Crusade called by Pope Urban with an initial capital of 5 million Ducats ... and money deposited with ('loaned to') the Bank attracted an interest rate of 4% per annum.

*The **Templars** operated a similar system, taking deposits and providing financial instruments that allowed withdrawal of moneys at any of their castles or commanderies anywhere in Europe or the Holy Land ... and the profits from such were one of the reasons for their attack and destruction by the French authorities.*

In the next century, and certainly by the mid 13th century, a number of merchant banks were created in Northern Italy ... initially by the Lombards, then a number of Florentine families (the Acciaiuoli, Bardi, Mozzi, Peruzzi and, at the end of the 14th century, the Medici) ... and these Banks quickly set up branch offices in key cities throughout the Medieval west.

*It was possible to deposit money at one branch and withdraw it at another ... either by the issuing of **Bills of Exchange** (see below) or **Promissory Notes**.*

These Banks operated not by charging interest per se, but (as one example) by demanding 'insurance' payments against the possibility of default or delayed payment (*Contractum Trinius*) which gave the *effect* of a loan for interest without breaking Canon Law.

*The **Contractum Trinius** was a three step process that separated a Loan transaction into three parts (an **Investment** by the lender, a **Sale of Profit** by the borrower and an **Insurance** contract by the agent) so none of them, separately, involved the charging interest ... though the Church was **very** unhappy with the idea, they never figured out how to stop it.*

Annuities

By the late 12th or early 13th centuries, some major trading cities, especially on the Continent, began selling ***Annuities*** based on the rental income from municipal properties or tax farming operations ... these were, in effect, an early form of Municipal Bond.

The interest rate on such instruments was around 10% (simple interest) per annum through the 13th century, on average, but dropped to around 5% per annum in the 14th century.

Some Church run institutions – mainly Monasteries (and the Templars) offered similar instruments for sale.

Bills of Exchange

These appeared in Europe during the 12th century, in Iberia, probably based on Middle Eastern (Muslim) practices but did not become full-featured until widely adopted and promoted by the great Trade Fairs and, especially, the northern Italian Merchant Banks, from the 13th century onwards.

Bills of Exchange were *not* ***initially*** negotiable instruments (though they later developed those characteristics and, *eventually* (outside of the period covered, well after then end of the 14th century), developed into Cheques) more like modern *Letters of Credit.*

They were, originally, informal letters from a Merchant ordering his agent (or banker) in another place to make a specified payment on his behalf to a merchant in that place at a later date while being *loaned* a specified amount at the point of origin.

The usual commission was around 12½% per annum (though the Bills were usually drawn for lesser periods) for trade between two settled regions – but could be much higher if the risk was greater (typically up to 15-17½% or more).

At some point, the agents (Bankers) realised that the system could be used to effect a transfer of money without any loan being involved ... rather like the *Hawalla* system, described above (and *possibly* inspired by it, though the commission rate was obviously *much* higher).

They charged around the same commission for this as for the loan/credit based version described above – about 12½% per annum.

Commenda & Compagnia Contracts

These were investment vehicles for, respectively, seaborne and land trading ventures ... investors pooled capital and, in return, gained a share in any profits from the venture.

Typically the investors divided ¾ of the total profit between them, in proportion to their share of the overall investment while the agent carrying out the trading venture retained ¼ ... of course, if there was a *loss*, any capital remaining would be returned to the investors proportionally.

The ***Commenda*** (sometimes called a *Collegianta*) was the maritime instrument and the agent was, most often, the ship's owner (who was rarely the Ship's *Master* by this period) ... and was normally taken out with regard to a single voyage.

The ***Compagnia*** (sometimes called a *Societas Terrae*) was the land based instrument, but returned only 50% of any profits. Again, this was often for a single trade year, but the *Societas Terrae* variant was usually for 2-3 years.

Commenda Contracts attracted a higher return than the Compagnia agreements because maritime trade was ***much*** *more risky than land trade.*

Double Entry Book-keeping

The earliest surviving example of this system of financial record keeping dates to the very end of the 13th century (1299-1300, Florence) and it was in use by the Genoese Republic for their state finances by 1340 and probably by the Medici Bank some time during the 14th century ... but, though in widespread use in parts of southern and northern Europe by the 15th century, it did not come to be the dominant system of accounting until later.

The advantage of Double Entry records is that they make it easier to work out the current financial state of a company or trading concern and easier to detect any fraud involved in the account keeping operations.

Maritime Law

As the volume of trade increased throughout the period, especially long distance trade by sea, there was an increasing need for laws to deal with some of the complexities involved – and those laws had to have at least a degree of international acceptance.

One of the first codes adopted, the *Rules of Oleron*, is summarised on the next two pages, and covers complex matters such as the rights, duties and responsibilities of Masters, Crew, Owners and Shippers; the financial burdens of loss of cargo due to storm or damage; the rights of salvage and more.

These rules and others developed from them were hugely influential and became the basis for maritime law in most northern European nations.

Southern European states had rules and laws that were similar, but closer to the original classical era rules still in use in the Eastern Mediterranean by both the East Romans and the Arabs as they had closer contact with them than the northerners did.

The Rules of Oleron (~1266)

Article I. The Master of a vessel may not sell it without the permission of the owner(s). He may pawn or pledge part of the tackle or other fittings to purchase victuals or other provisions.

Article II. The Ship's Master should take the advice of the owners as to what level of risk he should take in operating the vessel if they are present. If there is more than one opinion amongst the owners, he should follow the advice of the majority by shares held. If he does not follow this advice, he is liable for any damages to the vessel.

Article III. If a vessel is wrecked, the Master may pledge part of any surviving cargo or salvage to pay for the repatriation of those crewmembers who worked to save the vessel (i.e. rather than just abandoning ship).

Article IV. If a vessel is wrecked or rendered unfit to proceed the owners of any cargo may recover their goods on payment of shipping cost of the proportion of the voyage completed plus a share (by value of the overall cargo) of any salvage costs.

Article V. The crew may not leave a vessel, laden or unladen, without the Master's permission if at sea (see Article III). However, if in port and there is sufficient crew remaining on board for security they do not need his consent but must ensure they are back on board in time for scheduled sailing.

Article VI. Any crew who have gone ashore without the Master's permission are injured through their own actions (fighting etc.), the Master is not liable to look after them. If they were ashore on Ship's business, however, he is responsible for their care.

Article VII. If one of the crew becomes sick during a voyage, the Master may set him ashore but must provide for his food, lodging and care at a level equivalent to what would have been provided aboard. If he recovers, even if the vessel has sailed, the crew member is to be paid his full wages – if he dies, his widow or heirs are to receive them.

Articles VIII-IX. If a vessel is caught in a severe storm that threatens her survival the Master may choose to throw part of the cargo overboard in an attempt to lighten her enough to allow her to survive. The owners of the jettisoned cargo are entitled to compensation from the sale of the cargo which survived on a proportional basis – and if the courts are satisfied the Master had no choice in order to save the ship, he may claim for any damage done to the ship by the storm in a like proportion.

Article X. Any damage done to cargo being loaded or unloaded from a ship due to faulty *ship's* equipment or practice must be paid for by the Master or Owners. Damage resulting from chance is not so covered.

Article XI. Any damage done to a cargo in transit due to faulty ship's equipment, fittings or practice must be paid for by the Master or Owners. Damage resulting from chance is not so covered.

Article XII. The Master may apply fines to his crew for fighting ... but may also be subject to fines for similar behaviour. Fighting by a crew member is subject to a 4d fine, by the Master, an 8d fine. An assault on the Master by a crewmember is subject to a 5/- fine or the loss of a hand.

Article XIII. A Master must discipline or fine a crewmember three times before he can discharge him ... if he discharges him without cause he is entitled to his full pay and allowances.

Article XIV. If a vessel at anchor is struck by another under sail *by accident*, each vessel is liable for half of the total damage inflicted by the collision. Otherwise the Master/Owners of the vessel under sail is liable for the damages.

Article XV. If a vessel anchors too close to an already anchored vessel and is warned off, but does not take heed, they are responsible for any damage that may result from a collision or any other wise.

Article XVI. When a vessel is unloaded and ready to take on more cargo the Master should follow the instructions of the owner(s) as to what proportion of the vessel's capacity should be held for the Owner's cargo and what proportion made available for general cargo – and if the remaining space cannot be filled, the Master is not responsible.

Article XVII. Breton crew are fed one meal a day from the galley as they have beverage going and coming. Norman crew are fed two meals a day because they have only water. When the ship arrives in a wine country the the Master shall procure them wine to drink.

Article XVIII-XIX. If a vessel is unable to find a cargo and the crew operate partly on shares, the Master may withhold part of their wages until they reach their home port to ensure they remain aboard.

Article XX. When in port, any Crew who go ashore with the Master's permission are entitled to take half a day's ship's rations (but no drink) with them.

Article XXI. If a merchant delays sailing by failing to load cargo in a timely manner he is responsible to pay the Master for the cost involved (including the wages or shares due the crew).

THE RULES OF OLERON (CONTINUED)

Article XXII. If a ship is becalmed in harbour and all the ship's money has been spent, the Master may sell enough of the cargo aboard to provide necessities. The Master is still entitled to the shipping cost for such cargo when he arrives.

Article XXIII-XXIV. If a Harbour (or other) Pilot cause damage to a ship under his command through negligence he is liable for all damage caused and, if he cannot pay, may be beheaded by the Master or Crew.

Article XXV. False Pilots and Wreckers who deliberately work to wreck a ship and seize its cargo shall be executed and their bodies hung on Gibbets plainly seen from the sea.

Article XXVI. If a Noble is involved, he may be seized and all his goods sold to recompense those who suffered damage or loss due to his actions of connivance. He should be burnt at a stake on a pyre made of his castle or manor house.

Article XXVII. The crew should be paid extra if they haul the vessel onto the beach or dry ground for loading or unloading.

Article XXVIII. If fishing vessels agree to co-operatively fish and share the catch and one vessel is lost the survivors (or their families) are entitled to a half share of the catch and of the value of the nets and other fishing equipment of the surviving vessel.

Article XXIX. Shipwrecked crew and passengers should be assisted by the lord of the country where they are wrecked in recovering their goods and in reaching their ultimate destination, though they may claim salvage on any cargo saved. Anyone who behaves against this law should be punished as for Article XVI *(and good luck with that!)*

Article XXX. In the case of a shipwreck where there are no survivors, the Lord of the place should salve any goods possible and keep them for a year for the owners to make a claim on, less any salvage costs. If they are not claimed within a year, the Lord may dispose of them as if they were his own property.

Article XXXI. Anyone who assaults, steals from or kills shipwreck survivors should be half drowned and then stoned to death.

Article XXXII-XXXIII. Any goods or equipment thrown overboard deliberately in order to save a vessel from being wrecked become the property of the first person to gain possession of them – unless the objects be locked chests or books or any item it seems likely they will try to recover, in which case some attempt should be made to act as described in Article XXX.

Articles XXXIV-XXXVI, XLIII. Anything found in the sea, in the sand on the seashore, in or after a flood or in a river which has not ever belonged to any other man belongs to the first person to find. If it is another's (***identifiable?***) property, it should be restored to the owner and, in any case, remains their property.

Article XXXVII-XLII. Great Fishes (Whales?) found on the shores should be treated according to the local laws and customs regarding ownership and disposal of their carcasses and other parts *(usually some or all of it belonged to the local ruler or he may choose to sell it, with first refusal going to whomever found it).*

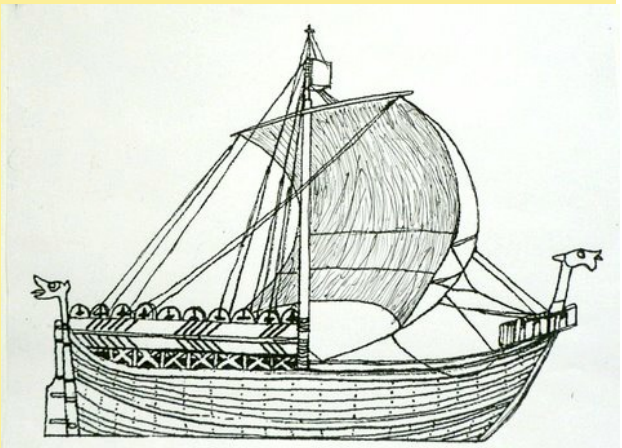
Article XLIV. Great Fish taken at sea by fishermen or other vessels remain the property of the owner or crew.

Article XLV. If a vessel is forced to cut her cables and loose her anchor in foul weather they remain the property of the vessel's owner and must be returned to them less any salvage fees (if applicable).

Article XLVI-XLVII. The actual wreck of any shipwreck remains the property of the owners, as described in Articles XXIX-XXX *unless* the wreck was a pirate or corsair, in which case it is the property of those who first find it.

*These rules were proclaimed by Eleanor of Aquitaine after her return from the 2nd Crusade and were based on the ancient **Lex Rhodia** which had been adopted as maritime law and formally written down as part of the Codex Justinianus of the Later Roman Empire and were the first formal statement of maritime law in NW Europe ... she had presumably become familiar with this when she was in the Holy Land.*

*They were adopted and adapted by the English as part of their setting up the **High Court of the Admiralty** (possibly under Edward I, definitely by 1360) and the **Laws of Visby** in the Baltic (adopted and adapted some time in the first half of the 14th century).*



Metallaria

As with all of the other Mechanical Arts, the major limitations faced by those in the metallurgical trades were basically threefold –

- **Technological limitations.** Matters relating to the difficulties involved with mining, smelting and working the materials.
- **Transport limitations.** Matters relating to the high cost of transport for large quantities of bulky, weighty, ore or metal.
- **Productivity limitations.** Matters relating to the largely craft-based, hand-tool using, cottage level production methods used.

Some of these issues have been hinted at or otherwise dealt with in previous chapters, but are developed more fully here.

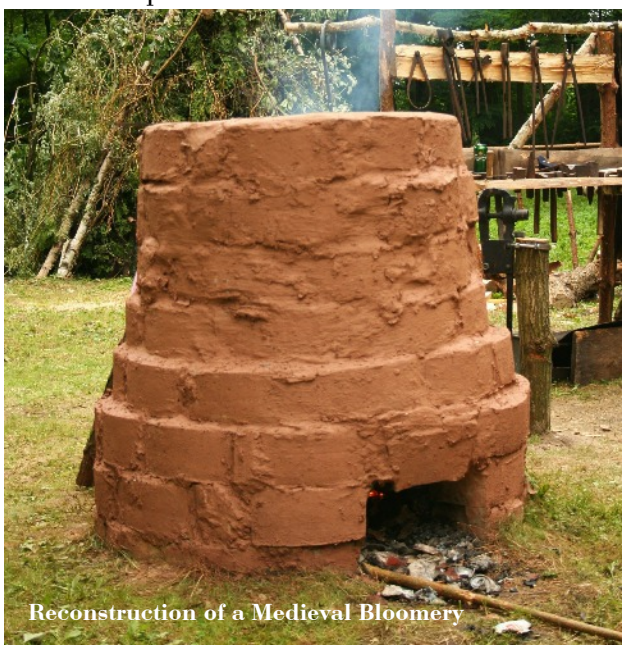
Ferrous Metals

Gold is for the mistress – silver for the maid –
Copper for the craftsman cunning at his trade.
"Good!" said the Baron, sitting in his hall,
"But Iron – Cold Iron – is master of them all."
– Rudyard Kipling, ***Cold Iron***, 1910

The two most important, if not most widespread, metals/alloys used in the medieval period were, was hinted at by the Kipling quote above, Iron and and its alloy, Steel ...

Cold Iron

Only in the 16th and 17th centuries with the adoption of ***coal*** as an industrial fuel and increased mechanisation of industrial processes did iron and steel start to become ubiquitous.



Reconstruction of a Medieval Bloomery

*The Iron Age began c. 1500-1200 BC (probably in Anatolia with the Hittites), but this only meant iron became **available**, **not** that it came into widespread use.*

Production Problems

Large scale iron production required the development of new technologies to be exploited efficiently and economically, technologies that simply didn't exist when it was first figured out how to smelt it.

This development took a *long* time and, as it turned out, depended on a massive supply of cheap fuel ... but, by the time some real progress was being made, supplies of cheap wood and charcoal were rapidly being exhausted.

*To give an idea of just how rare iron was, the entire Roman Empire in the 1st century AD probably produced no more than **20,000 tons** of iron a year!*

*Early European blast furnaces could only used **intermittently** because of the huge amounts of fuel required and the problems (and costs) of transporting it on site. It is estimated that average production was only 150-200 tons per year (**about two tons per firing per day** – the furnaces sitting idle most of the time).*

*By 1800 worldwide production of iron and steel was **barely a million tons**, only exceeding **two million tons** around 1840. Its weight and the lack of cheap transport also limited its spread, a problem not overcome till the late 18th/early 19th century with the increasing spread of steam powered ships and locomotives.*

*In the 1970s, as a comparison, Europe alone produced **720 million tons** of iron and steel!*

Unsuitable at any Price

One of the reasons for the late dominance of iron and steel was that early smelting methods were marginal, based on a slightly modified pottery kiln which could not achieve particularly high temperatures internally.

Melting iron requires a temperature in excess of 1537°C, much higher than that achieved in any pottery kiln.

What you get at lower temperatures are threads or droplets of pure iron mixed in with slag at the bottom of the furnace, a mass called a *Bloom*. This has to be heated and beaten repeatedly to work the iron free, producing *Wrought Iron*.

Unfortunately, Wrought Iron is *softer* than the Bronze it was competing with, even when cold worked. It also didn't hold an edge well and oxidised by rusting all the way through on exposure to the slightest moisture (bronze oxidises with an *airtight* patina which prevents more than surface corrosion).

Some improvements were gained in the reheating of

the finished ingot, as even an addition of 0.1% carbon "steels" it, and *steeled* iron is far harder than Bronze. However, this was only a thin layer of steeled iron over a wrought iron core, rather than true steel.

Steel

The Hittites seem to have discovered, by accident, how to turn iron into *Steel* (with 0.2-1% or more carbon), by working it in a bed of charcoal and not letting it cool down until finished.

Steel is far harder than Bronze and held an edge far better. The Hittites also discovered that cold working steel made it even harder (though brittle).

The Romans made the next important technical contribution, they found out how to temper steel, only slightly reducing its hardness while making it far less brittle than untempered metal.

The west only developed a means of producing liquid iron, cast iron (2% or more carbon), quite late. This was because the bellows used in western furnaces were of the vertical accordion type which could only deliver a draught of air on the downstroke.

The earliest models were also physically limited in size as it has to conform to the height of the (normally single) user pushing the bellows up *and* down.

It was only when vertical bellows were linked to a waterwheel that the forced draughts of air needed to liquefy the metal could be generated, beginning in the very late 14th century, but mostly in the 15th century, though not becoming universal till the 18th century.

Early Blast Furnaces (improved Catalan Forges) started to appear at the end of the 15th century, but required so much fuel for the large quantities of ore they could process that they could only be operated intermittently.

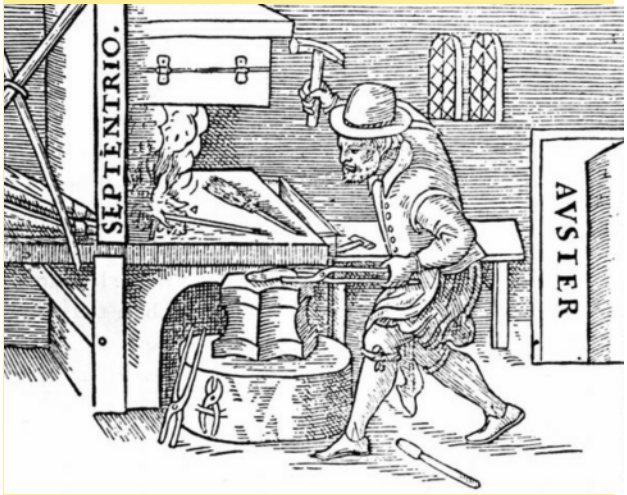
Wootz Works

In India a third method of making steel was developed – sealing pieces of wrought iron, wood and other plant matter in a small crucible and heating it until it melted.

This distributed carbon evenly through these crucible smelted ingots, creating a material consistency superior to anything European blacksmiths working with wrought iron could then (and for a long time after), though it only produced tiny quantities.

Wootz (Indian) steel was known of, and much desired, in the Mediterranean world from at least the 3rd century BC when Alexander the Great gladly received 100 talents (about 570 pounds, or 258.5 kilos) as tribute.

It was (possibly independently) discovered in the Middle East in the 10th century AD (as 'Damascus' Steel, and widely exported, almost entirely as finished weapons,



Bog Iron ...

One of the common sources of iron in northern european countries in pre-modern times was bog iron. It can be found in deposits along meandering sections of stream beds but is more commonly found at the bottom of lakes and in bogs ... assuming the required anaerobic bacteria are present in the water.

Bog Iron was the major source of Iron in Viking Scandinavia through to the Middle Ages – and also in Russia right through to the 16th century.

The iron is concentrated partly by the fact that bogs are acidic and partly because two of the common anaerobic bacteria found in such bogs concentrate the iron as part of their life cycle.

These bacteria leave an oily, iridescent, film on the surface of the water to show the presence of the concentrated nodules and or 'sedimentary' layers they create.

Where nodules have formed they are around the size of a pea and can easily be harvested by simply cutting and folding back the peat turves.

In some conditions (especially in lakes rather than bogs) the iron rich material would precipitate out and form thin, but slowly growing, layers at the bottom, and these could be harvested by using long handled rakes from boats or, where a stream had changed course, could be dug out of the streambed where it formed layers of powdery red 'earth' (*rauthi*).

The best part is that this is a renewable resource if you are mining a bog or a still running stream! The processes continue as long as the bog is there – and the "harvesting" of the ore can take place about every generation (20-25 years).

Of course, a given bog probably won't produce more than around 40-60 kilos of iron – and the fact that they were an important source of iron shows just how little iron was actually produced in pre-modern times.

SMELTING IRON

This was done in a *Bloomery* – a pit with some sort of flue or chimney. It was normally lined with clay or stone with one or more pipes (*Tuyeres*) individually pumped by *Bellows* to force air through the ore and fuel. There is an opening at the bottom of the furnace to allow the final product, the *Bloom*, to be removed.

It is filled with *charcoal* and crushed, partly processed, *iron ore* in a 50:50 mix, but with half of the charcoal above and the other half below the ore.

Temperatures achieved aren't high enough to melt iron, but the CO_2 reduced the compounds in the ore to metallic iron which percolates to the bottom of the furnace, mixed with *slag* (a mix of silicon and impurities) in a porous mass, a *Bloom*.

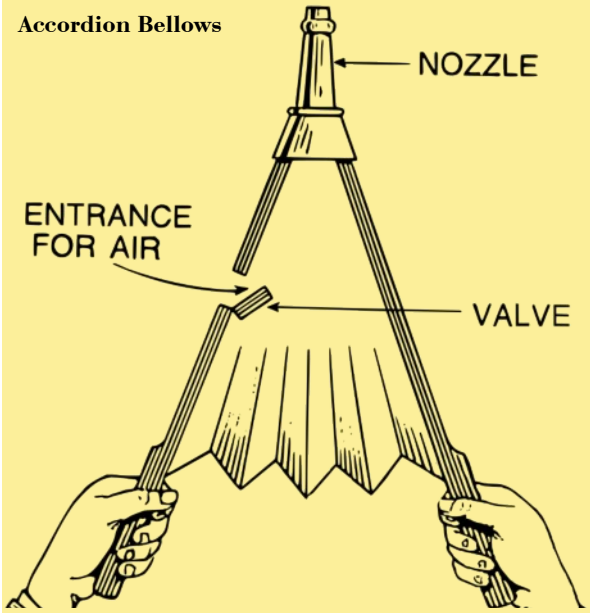
The *Bloom* is removed and processed by hand hammering and reheating, working the iron into a billet. The result is *Wrought Iron* which needed to be carburised and pattern welded up to *fifteen times* to make steel for a sword blade.

Medieval Bloomeries. Early on, capacity was ~1 kilo per firing, but rose to ~15 kilos by the late 14th century. Waterwheel powered bellows allowed them to increase that to ~300 kilos during the 15th century until slowly replaced by early Blast Furnaces in the 1490s.

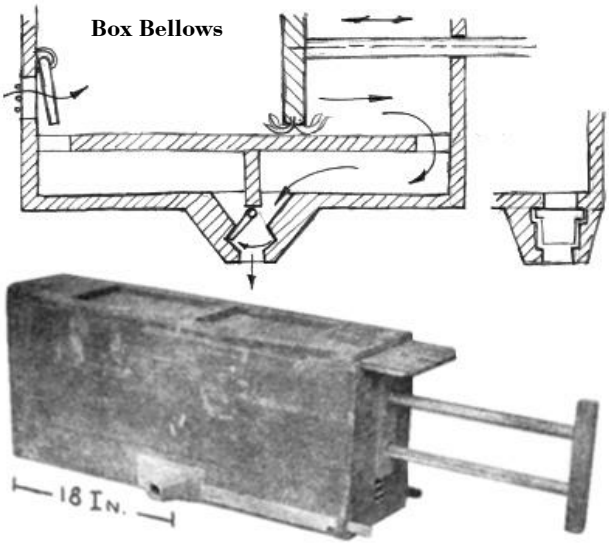
A Bloom typically weighed a *third to a half* of the weight of the ore smelted, depending on the quality. The amount of *iron* in a Bloom *also* varied according quality – typically 30-40% of the weight of the Bloom or 12-20% of the original weight of the ore.

It takes ~4 hours to smelt 30 kilos of ore into ~15 kilos of Bloom including ~3 kilos of iron in your typical small Medieval Bloomery using ~30 kilos of Charcoal.

Accordion Bellows



Box Bellows



However, the process damaged the Bloomery and it would have to be repaired, so only one, perhaps two, firings per day could be done.

Hammer Forging and Welding the iron out of such a Bloom takes a *lot* of time (probably the best part of a day's labour) and around as much Charcoal fuel as the original smelting did.

THE ASIAN ADVANTAGE

The reason European Bloomery Forges were unable to create a high enough temperature to melt the iron was because they simply couldn't get sufficient airflow (and oxygen) through the forge. This was because they used the quite inefficient *Accordion Bellows* (see diagram below) which could pump air *only one way*, on the *downstroke* yet required the power (muscle or other) on *both* strokes.

Worse, this type of Bellows could only be scaled up so far before it became unwieldy for manual operation – and even after waterwheel power was used to pump them, there was an upper limit on the size, though the additional power meant the airflow of waterwheel powered accordion bellows could get the temperatures high enough to melt iron ... but this only became common from the mid 15th century.

In China and most of Asia, on the other hand, iron workers used the *Box Bellows* (see diagram above), which worked on ***both** strokes* and which could *also* be scaled up easily. This meant even small, portable, bellows used by itinerant blacksmiths could generate enough airflow to melt iron relatively easily – and tended to use significantly less charcoal fuel.

Chinese smelting works are known to have been capable of smelting up to 400 tons of cast iron in a single firing ... they also worked out that heating the brittle cast iron in air for several days reduced the amount of carbon and turned it into *malleable* iron.

Steel Production

All steel available to Europeans in the 10th-14th centuries was made by the *Wootz*, or *Crucible*, process – and almost all (if not all) of it seems to have been imported either from the Middle East or India.

Most European 'steel' was only ***steeled*** *iron* – much more laborious to produce. Worse, the process was not entirely reliable *and* couldn't easily be scaled up as the crucible process could be as it was so labour intensive.

Steeled Iron

Once the slag had been worked out of the *Bloom*, you a billet of *Wrought Iron*, low carbon content and is relatively soft – good enough for most everyday items, even tools, but not for quality weapons or for those items that (would) need to be hard-wearing *and* precise.

The process of working the Bloom into a billet, and a billet into whatever finished item was desired could, especially for tools, produce and item with a hard (steeled) outer shell, but which remained soft, possibly even springy (depending on the skill, luck or intent of the smith making it), internally.

To form *Wrought Iron* into *steeled iron* you forge weld small billets together in a process that involved hot welding, hand hammering, and folding, into a larger one ... and this worked carbon from the charcoal fuel more evenly through the final bar. This was a labour intensive process and to ensure a good quality product a *minimum* of five levels of folding was required ... the best quality steeled billets were, however, folded *up to* ***fifteen*** *times.*

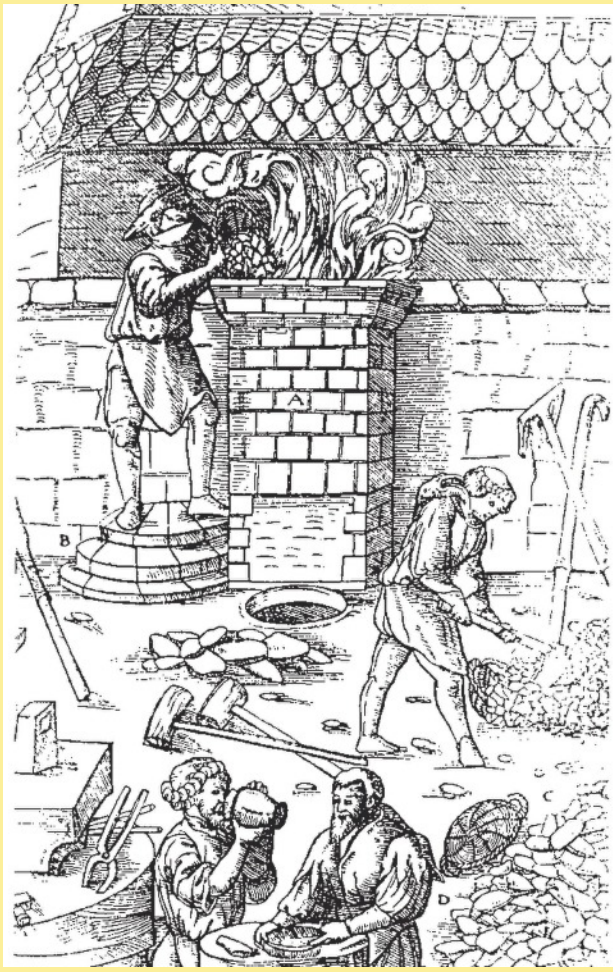
All this was *handwork* until right towards the end of the 12th century when waterwheel powered ***triphammers*** started to (*slowly*) appear and (*even more slowly*) spread – still being uncommon by the mid 13th century and, in fact, only becoming widespread by the mid-to-late 15th century.

Triphammers had been in use since Graeco-Roman times ... but only in ***ore-crushers*** *and similar, they never seem to have been used for metalworking.*

Crucible Steel

A far more fuel efficient and far less labour intensive method of producing high quality steel was the *Crucible* steel process – developed in either (possibly both) India or Central Asia (the archaeology is currently in some degree of dispute) by at least 500 BC and was fully imported from those places in cakes (*Wootz* steel) or from Damascus and other places in the Middle East (*Damascus* steel) where the process had spread in the intervening centuries.

The process involved taking several small billets of *Wrought Iron* and sealing it into a clay crucible with



charcoal fuel and assorted organic (plant) matter and then heating it in the fiery depths of a furnace.

The closed crucible encourages the creation of an an atmosphere that actually reduces the melting point of iron to below the temperature that was achievable by medieval Bloomery furnaces – and the iron melts and absorbs some of the carbon from the charcoal and organic matter ... producing steel.

The process typically took around four hours to melt the iron inside the crucible and about as much fuel as it would to run the furnace if it had been used to process a full load of iron ore.

If the process works as expected, under the supervision of a skilled forge master, the whole resultant cake will be steel all the way through. If it is less successful, only the surface layers will be steel and the central mass will remain as iron.

The main drawback of this is the size of the crucibles and the number that could be fitted into the available Bloomery furnaces ... typically they held only around a half a kilo and an average 30 kilo capacity

Bloomery furnaces could probably take only a half a dozen such crucibles at a time.

How to make a Sword

Firstly, you need some metal – good quality steel. The armourer is unlikely to smelt ore himself, he will buy bar metal from a specialist smelter or blacksmith – depending on the local situation and his personal preferences he might buy bar steel or he might buy wrought iron and process it into steel himself (or, more likely, have his apprentices do it under his general supervision).

Once you have the metal needed, the armourer will work their way through the following steps ...

- **Drawing Out the Sword.** The bar metal is repeatedly heated and hand hammered into a rough sword shape – a lengthy process that is done on small sections of the blank, usually around 6" 9-10 cm) at a time. At the end of the process the metal is very brittle and needs to be *annealed.*

- **Annealing.** The sword blank is heated and allowed to cool *very slowly* ... it might even be wrapped in insulation. The process can take up to 24 hours, depending on size/mass. This makes the blank malleable enough to be easily ground and worked.

- **Grinding & Engraving.** At this stage the blade's edges and point will be ground out and any engraving or etching of the blade will be done (etching is rarely done on a combat weapon, or not to any great degree, as it *slightly* weakens the blade at the point where it has been etched). Once this has done the blade needs to be *hardened.*

- **Hardening.** The blade is heated to a very high temperature and quickly quenched by thrusting it into a tank of water ... cooling it very quickly and evenly. Quenching makes the blade hard but brittle, so it needs further treatment ...

- **Tempering.** The blade needs to be heated and quenched again and again ... but at a *much* lower temperature ... this makes the metal strong, hard *and* flexible. Able to withstand the stress of combat and yet also able to retain a good edge.

- **Completion.** At this point the blade will be handed over to other specialists for further work. Firstly, a *grinder* or *polisher* will work on the blade to remove or minimise the working and tool marks and highlight any engraving or etching (and add precious metal to the engraved grooves). Then a specialist Pommel maker will fit a hand grip and tang (cross-guard) to the blade and a specialist Scabbard maker will make a scabbard to fit.

How long does all this take? *How long is a piece of string?* An average sword would take anywhere from 2-3 days to a week. A presentation/ceremonial sword could take many weeks, or even months.

*throughout the period covered by this book – but also generating a considerable amount of fake **pseudo**-damascened items) but the process was lost or abandoned there sometime around the 17th century.*

*It was then independently rediscovered in the UK, at Sheffield, in the 18th century and the method proved to be easily scalable and capable of producing the large amount of steel required by the nascent industrial expansion that was to become what we refer to today as the **Industrial Revolution**.*

Non-Ferrous Metals

The Stone Age ended around 5000 BC with the discovery of Copper which, in turn, around 4500 BC it was discovered that adding a quantity of Tin to Copper produced a much stronger metal, Bronze ... which was only replaced by Iron because of disruptions to the supply of Tin around the end of the second millennium BC (possibly connected to the *völkerwanderung* of the *Sea Peoples.*

Copper was known to Stone Age peoples for the simple reason that it is one of the few metals which can occur in a metallic form in nature ... there is evidence that native copper metal was used by humans as early as 9000 BC

*The discovery of how to **smelt** copper from copper **ore**, on the other hand, was probably accidental. It is possible to reduce it from copper ores in a pottery kiln (which predate the Chalcolithic [Copper] Age) – or even, with lucky circumstance, in a particularly hot campfire.*

It was then evidently easy enough to modify the technology of pottery kilns to routinely generate the temperatures needed to smelt the ores of non-ferrous metals and actually render them into a molten state which could be cast into items directly or into ingots for direct processing or later casting.

The use of other non-ferrous metals seems to mostly post-date the discovery of copper smelting – though it is hard to be entirely certain as the relative ease with |

which they can be melted down, compared to Iron, has meant a high degree of re-use over the millennia.

*For example, there is only **one** surviving (complete) Roman era bronze still on public display in Rome ... the statue of Marcus Aurelius (which has actually been moved from the Piazza del Campidoglio to the Capitoline Museum and replaced with a replica) ... the rest were melted down, often for the production of bronze coins.*

Gold and Silver, of course, rarely survived for long unchanged in form except when genuinely lost or hidden in some forgotten hoard during times of trouble.

Copper, Tin, Bronze and Brass

Copper was used both *as* copper but, more commonly, in *Bronze* (usually with *Tin*) and *Brass* (usually with *Zinc*), which were used for a variety of purposes, including, but not limited to

- **Jewellery** or decorative purposes (rings, ear-rings, necklaces etc. – either in whole or as sub-components, for wire binding on some *expensive* sword and dagger grips and much, much, more)
- **Tableware** (including Plates, Bowls, Jugs etc. as well as some cutlery)
- **Monuments & Architecture** (Tombs, Statues, Door Coverings, Gates and Grills)
- **Bells** (mostly Church bells, of course)
- **Cannon**, from the very *very* late 14th century
- **Enamelware**, as it was used as the base for almost all decorative enamel-work (gold and silver was occasionally used).

*Copper, Bronze and Brass were almost never used for coinage during the Middle Ages ... or not **directly**. They might be used to alloy with silver or gold to reduce the precious metal content (**debasement**) – and this was all too common in many places, as mentioned in previously.*

Brass

The classical and medieval Mediterranean world did not know how to extract metallic Zinc from the readily available ores – they mixed Copper and *Calamine* (Zinc Ore) in a furnace to produce Brass objects.

Metallic Zinc was first imported into Europe from India in the 1600s, even though the Indians had known how to refine it since the c. 1300 AD. It was not refined from ores until 1668.

Early Brass alloys have a Zinc content of 5-15%; Roman alloys increased this to 20-28%. Medieval Brass varied wildly – in traditional Brass producing areas it tended to keep to the late Roman proportions but elsewhere the proportions of Zinc and non-copper metals added to the mix could vary wildly, with the Zinc proportion often being as low as 5%.

Some archaeologists believe that non-traditional Brass producers often simply used whatever non-ferrous metals they had on hand in the form of scrap as 'filler' for the more difficult to obtain Brass.

Brass production was done in open crucibles which were 1/6th filled with powdered Calamine and Charcoal and the remaining space filled with Copper and Charcoal. The mix was melted, stirred, filled again, cast, and melted again with more Calamine.

Crucibles used varied in size, but those used to produce Brass for Church Bells and other large items could be 60 cm high and could produce 20 kilos of metal after 10-12 hours of smelting.



ouring Bronze into Casting Moulds

Bronze

An alloy of Copper and, usually, *Tin* – but sometimes other metals are either included to the mix or replace the Tin entirely. Modern Tin Bronzes are typically 88% Copper and 12% Tin.

Tin Bronzes appear ~4500 BC but only widely in European archaeological sites from the late 4th millennium BC. Because there are few good sources of Tin in the eastern Mediterranean, where the main contemporary civilisation clusters were, it had to be imported from considerable distances and, around 1200 BC, supplies were seriously disrupted and iron was, perforce, developed as a substitute which, eventually, proved to be superior for many uses.

***Note:** Many items from classical and medieval times that have been labelled as 'Bronze' are **Brass** (an alloy of Copper and Zinc) ... and there seems to have been little understanding of the difference (except in intended use) until well past the end of the medieval period.*

Copper

Copper was rarely used *as* Copper as it was simply too soft, even if hot or cold worked. Where it *was* used it was as a decorative rather than structural element – copper beads on bangles, ear-rings or necklaces often as the base for *gilding* with gold or silver leaf or the base for enamel work, for example, or as wire for inlays on other metals.

Copper was rarely, if ever, used for coinage (except as a debasing element in nominally silver or gold coins) *except in the Eastern Mediterranean*. Both the East Romans and Bulgarian empires minted low denomination copper coins.

Tin

A vital component of Bronze and Pewter and as a component of *Solder* for joining metals, Tin was rarely used as a stand-alone metal in the medieval period.

Material Sources

Copper. Apart from the re-use of already existing items, medieval copper was sourced from mines in Cyprus or, in western Europe, Sweden (the *Falun*

Casting Call

Non-Ferrous metals could be melted at the temperatures achievable in the kilns available in medieval Europe which made it easy to *cast* them into a variety of finished or semi-finished items.

Types of Casting

There were two basic types of casting used – *Open* and *Closed Mould.*

Open Mould. This involves the use of a simple, single piece mould which renders detail only on the one side and was used for simple, utilitarian, castings.

Closed Mould. This involves the use of a two piece mould (fastened tightly together) which renders detail on both sides of the finished piece and was used for castings requiring more detail or of some artistic value.

Mould Materials and Processes

The moulds themselves could be either single or multiple use, depending on the materials used and the way they were used.

Single-Use Moulds. These could be made of stone, pottery or sand (really a sand/clay mix) and were either designed to be broken open to release the product or were relatively fragile. This process was most commonly used for single- or special-order items.

Multiple Use Moulds. Again, of stone, pottery or sand/clay, but designed so they could easily release the product and relatively robust, lasting for 10+ uses. This process was used for large scale production of everyday items.

Lost Wax Casting

A special form of *closed mould* casting where a model of was constructed in wax or some similar material and then a mould was constructed around it. When finished, the mould was heated, the wax ran out or burnt off leaving a hollow inside in its exact shape ... and metal could then be poured in.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Sand/Clay moulds could not reproduce exact detail or complex shapes but could handle extremely large mould sizes.

Stone and Pottery moulds could reproduce more detail but, again, not complex shapes and only moderate sized moulds.

Lost Wax casting could reproduce faithfully any details and complex shapes and could be scaled for small to large sizes.

Bell Casting. Because of high transport costs, Bell Casters would often set up a temporary workshop onsite and cast in situ.

mine, which operated from at least the 10th century AD, possibly), Norway and from the Harz mountains of Germany.

Tin (for Bronze). Europe had very few *native* sources of Tin in ancient and medieval times – the majour sources were in *Brittany* (France), *Cornwall* and *Devon* (England), the *Erzgebirge* (on the modern Czech-German border), the *Iberian Peninsula.*

There were minor sources in Tuscany (Italy) and the Balkans – but these were of purely local significance.

*Tin prospectors in England had the right to go **almost** anywhere in their searching, with the exception of Gardens, Orchards, Churchyards or the King's Highway and were allowed to cut Peat, Wood and even divert rivers and streams in their mining activities ... which were subject to their own special Courts.*

Zinc (for Brass). *Calamine* (more properly either *Zinc Carbonate* or *Zinc Silicate*) was commonly found in *lead* and *copper* deposits ... see the information on *Zinc*, above for details.

Gold, Silver & Lead

Gold and Silver were obviously important as monetary metals and Lead was important as a component of some types of *Pewter* and *Bronze* as well as Solder (with Tin), in pottery glazes and in paints, for plumbing (as pipes or tank liners), as weights, to make coffins (especially for the nobility) and as flashing (weatherproofing joints between disparate building materials) in architecture as well as for cheap cast decorations or tokens (cheap pilgrimage tokens were often cast from Bronze during the medieval period).

Material Sources

Gold. The main source of *mined* (as opposed to *alluvial*) Gold *in Europe* was from Bohemia, Transylvania and the Carpathian Mountains in Central Europe and the Harz Mountains, France, Italy and England in Western Europe.

However, around half of the new gold used in Europe during the period was imported overland from the Mali Empire in Africa!

There was a relative abundance of gold and shortage of silver in the Eastern Mediterranean while, in the Western Mediterranean and NW Europe there was a converse shortage of gold and relative abundance of silver.

Lead. This was usually found with *Silver* ... see below.

Silver. Usually found in conjunction with *Lead.* The main sources were Britain, the Rammelsberg (Harz Mountains), near Freiberg (the *Silberberg*), the Black Forest, Bohemia (esp. *Kutna Hora*) and, to a lesser extent, Hungary, the eastern Alps and Sardinia.

Mining

Another problem were the limits imposed by mining technology. With no explosives to break up ore bearing rock, miners had to use hand tools, tools made of wood and bone, then of copper and bronze, and finally of iron and steel, which could only cut through about 20 cm of hard rock per day.

The easiest method was to find ore bodies either in soft rock, which could be easily removed with hand tools, or in a highly fractured rock matrix which could then be further fractured by building fires at the tunnel face.

A fire left burning overnight would heat and crack about 30 cm into the rock face. Though miners threw water on the heated rock face, this was not to assist in fracturing, it was to cool it down so that they could start work!

Because of these difficulties shafts were rarely more than 1-1½ meters high and a meter wide, and often so shallow miners had to dig while they lay on their sides. Access to the galleries was down circular shafts ~1-2 meters wide and up to 200 meters deep.

These methods meant many ore bodies had to be ignored as the rock matrix made them uneconomical to mine ... all too often the richest bodies of ore.

Pumping Iron

A less obvious problem, but one with more far reaching and long term effects, was the lack of any effective and cheap pumping technology. This meant once an ore body dipped much below the local water table and could no longer be drained by gravity, the mine could not be drained easily ... and would, therefore, normally be abandoned.

The ancients gradually developed a whole series of pumping techniques using waterwheels, archimedean screws (found in several large Roman era mines) or treadmills, but, even so, they could not economically lift water more than 20-30 meters using massive amounts of (cheap) slave labour to do so.

This further limited the sites that could be mined and, as near surface deposits were exhausted over the millennia, made the problem of finding an adequate supply of metals a significant one.

This problem could not be overcome until a reliable high power density source was available to power the pumps – which required the development of improved metal working techniques and more plentiful fuel supplies to the problem.

*The solution? The **Atmospheric Engine of Thomas Newcomen** in the 18th century AD. Just a **bit** after the end of the 14th century which terminates the period covered by OM²!*



Bell Foundry

A Revolution in Metallurgy

"Necessity is the mother of invention ..."

– Plato, "The Republic"

*By the end of the Renaissance (**way** past the end of the 14th century, but bear with me), Europe was facing supply crisis. Economically workable mines were being exhausted and it was increasingly difficult to find the fuel to process the metal that **was** being mined.*

*With hindsight **we** know components for a solution were available. Nothing is ever as simple as it seems, except with 20:20 hindsight!*

To smelt the ore needed required increasing amounts of fuel, but the fuel of choice was charcoal, but the forests which had provided this were mostly gone.

*In England, for example, laws against burning trees for charcoal **unless they were coppiced** were being passed by the 16th century to preserve large trees for use in [naval] shipbuilding.*

*A replacement fuel was badly needed, but the "obvious" choice (which was, of course, **not** obvious at the time), **coal**, couldn't be mined in quantity because economically recoverable (i.e. **shallow**) deposits were being exhausted as well!*

To access the remaining, deeper, deposits, and increase the availability of metals, some sort of economical pumping mechanism had to be discovered.

An Obvious Solution

The obvious solution was a powered machine, but the existing power sources of wind, water or human and/or animal muscle were inadequate. The answer was, of course, the steam engine. But that required quantities of cheap fuel (coal) and cheap, strong, metal (iron).

*What was the problem it was meant to solve again? **Lack of fuel? Lack of metal?***

Looks like a circular problem, you couldn't solve any one part because you'd have to solve all the others first! So maybe hindsight is missing some of the problems?

Charcoal Production

To produce charcoal you need to burn wood in a low oxygen atmosphere. In ancient and medieval times this was done by creating a roughly conical or hemispherical pile of wooden billets with a central hole and covering them with an airtight material such as layers of turf or clay (or a mix of both) called (in England) a *Clamp*.

The wood inside the Clamp is lit from the central hole at the top and the fire burns the material outwards and upwards over a period of time, usually around five days. During the burn, the Clamp must be carefully tended to ensure by someone experienced with the process (a *Collier*, a professional Charcoal Burner) that any gaps or cracks in the outer, airtight, surface are quickly filled or patched.

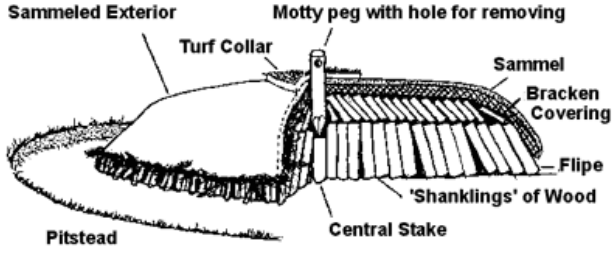
The processing was generally done on-site in the forest where the wood was cut and, because of the need for constant watching, the Colliers usually lived onsite as well.

Medieval processing methods typically produced an amount of Charcoal equal to 50-60% by volume (20-25% by weight) of the wood inputs ... though. by the 17th century, improvements in the techniques could routinely get this up to 90% by volume (45% by weight).

In England the wood for Charcoal burning was normally gathered from managed woodlands (i.e. where *coppicing* was practised) but, as demand for fuel caused by growing demands of industry (mainly for expanding metallurgical processing) and home use was slowly outstripping the finite quantity these areas could produce, as noted elsewhere in the body text.

On the Continent the mountainous areas of western and central Europe (the Alps, the Pyrenees, the Harz and Mountains etc.) were extensive enough such that there were still quantities available throughout the period, though they had to be transported over longer and longer distances at increasing cost.

Even so, coppicing was widely practised in areas further away from the mountainous areas – all over France and Germany, in fact, as well as in other areas of western Europe, though mainly for home use or, in the Middle Ages, for small scale local production of necessities.



Charcoal Burner's 'Clamp'

The Coal problem

Why was coal not being considered as a solution for a cheap industrial fuel? There were several reasons: some, to do with mining, mentioned above, but there others.

Most coal has a significant sulphur content and, if used in ironworking, this makes the iron it is used to smelt brittle and useless. Worse, coal is much softer than charcoal, and tends to collapse into a slumped, cloggy, mass at the bottom of the furnace, choking and requiring expensive work to be removed.

The solution was another "obvious" one, use coke (coal processed like charcoal) – but it took around a century from its first large scale use (in the Beer industry, for drying hops) to adoption by Abraham Darby of the UK as a fuel for the smelting of iron (1707-9).

Exactly why no-one before him had put the ideas together is unclear – except in noting, as always, that 20:20 hindsight is a wonderful thing.

Power for the People

Until quite recently mankind has only had three basic (and limited) sources of power available: *muscle* (from humans or animals), *kinetic* (from wind and water) and (theoretically) *heat* (from wood, charcoal or coal).

In practice, during the ancient and medieval periods, only the first two provided direct and actual mechanical work, heat energy was only used passively.

Muscle Power

Human beings *aren't* a very useful energy source. Depending on a variety of factors they can't provide a *sustained* output (as opposed to short bursts) of more than 0.03-0.04 HP (0.023-0.029 Kw).

Horses, on the the hand, can provide a *sustained* output of between 0.3 and 0.55 HP (0.224-0.41 Kw).

The advantage of human vs animal power (and also vs wind and water) in that it is versatile and self directing.

Humans tend to remain the prime energy source as long as their cost is less than that of alternatives So, until very recently, the bulk of civilisation's "power output" has been provided by human "engines."

This gave them an advantage over animal power, as the low productivity of pre-modern agriculture meant there was a limited food surplus available for the feeding of working animals.

Horsepower problems

*Although horses do around 5-7 times the **work** of a man they also **eat** 5-7 times as much – so their isn't an obvious economic advantage in using them. In fact, it wasn't really possible to increase the 'horse' power available*

*until improvements in farming technology (part **dependent** on increased use of animals! Catch 22!) and the surpluses it created led to a consistent and sustained drop in the cost of feed grain,*

Horses were a luxury that few could afford for unproductive tasks (mounts in warfare or for personal transport, for example), and not many more could afford even for productive tasks. It is only after technology allowed more economical use of horses that they become common as work animals, replacing oxen.

*So, think **ox drawn** ploughs and waggons for the most part for **way** longer than most people assume.*

*For example, even at the beginning of the French Revolution, estimates are that there were ~3 million oxen vs 1.7 million horses in France and only ~1.5 million of the latter were used in agriculture ... and this proportion seems to have been reasonably universal for Europe at that time ... and that was **with** the improved agricultural outputs achieved in the intervening almost four centuries. **Still** two oxen for each horse.*

WIND/WATER MILLS

Even though both wind driven mills and water driven mills had been known of in Europe and the Middle East (and in Asia) for a long time (from classical Greek times for the water wheel), the real revolution in their spread and use did not occur until the 11th century and was limited (initially) to Europe.

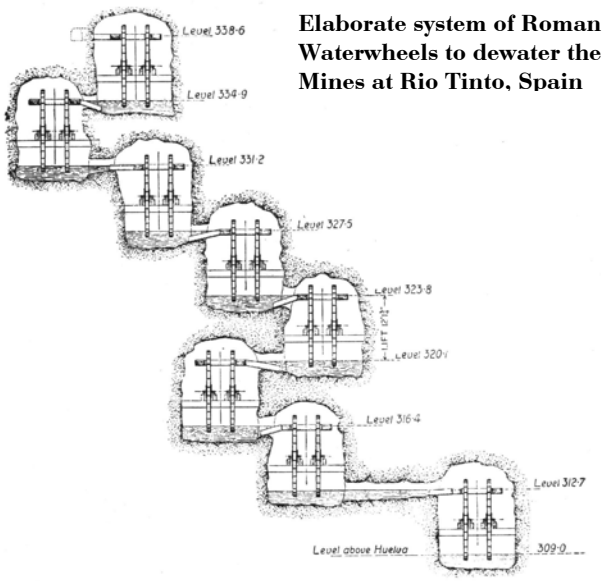
WATER MILLS

The big advance was partly in converting the very earliest horizontal water wheels into vertical wheels, achieved in the Mediterranean world by Roman times at least, but mostly because the wheel was then harnessed to gears that turned the attached device (initially a grinding stone for grain) five times faster than the wheel itself.

The use of water wheels to do something other than simply grind grain, however, was the major development where medieval Europeans advanced over the Romans was in how they converted grain mills to a variety of other uses – industrial uses.

Once this leap had been made waterwheels were soon adapted to provide power for a variety of direct industrial use (such as for driving trip hammers, aiding ironworkers; or powering pulp mills) or indirect infrastructure use (driving pumps to de-water mines, or to pump water from rivers to supply a town).

From very early on in the Middle Ages (according to the Domesday Book of 1086) there was around one water mill per 400 people in England, but on the very eve of the industrial revolution, at the end of the 17th century, the ratio was around 1 mill (wind or water) per 30 people throughout Europe.



Elaborate system of Roman Waterwheels to dewater the Mines at Rio Tinto, Spain

WINDMILLS APPEAR

Windmills were a much later invention, originating in muslim Iran probably in the 7th century (certainly by the 9th century) but these early mills were powered by horizontal sails. Some time during the 12th century, in southern Europe, this design developed into a vertical sail, greatly increasing the power they could generate.

The new design was supported by a single post, and the whole unit had to be rotated when the wind shifted, by hand.

Despite these drawbacks, the design spread rapidly, if erratically, though faster in in northern than southern regions (which explains Don Quixote's perplexity with his encounter!).

While Windmills were more expensive (and more maintenance intensive) to run than watermills they were important for several reasons. The obvious one being that they could be built even in locations where there was insufficient running water for a water mill. They certainly replaced the man- or animal-powered treadmills that had been used in such areas before the introduction of windmills ... rapidly.

In the early 15th century the post mill was replaced by the more efficient tower mill where only the cap at the top of the mill rotated to catch the wind. Because it could be built into a permanent structure on fixed foundations it could be built much higher, to catch the wind better (and, of course, with larger diameter sails) and generate more power than the older design.

The cap *still* had to be turned manually if the wind changed – but since it was much smaller than the post mill structure, it was proportionally easier to move.

*It was not until 1745 when the **Fantail** was invented – a small windmill at the rear of the cap to turn gears to turn the vanes into the wind when it shifted, automatically.*

This transforming invention did not spread outside Europe except with european settlers and colonists.

Like the water mills, windmills were used to run millstones and grind grain when they first appeared, and were later used to power other machinery, especially pumps in the Netherlands (to drain the polders).

They were not as widely used in industrial applications because, unlike water wheels, they could not be placed close (because of the diameter of the sails) to power large scale machinery and, because they were often sited in places where access was difficult (hilltops, for example).

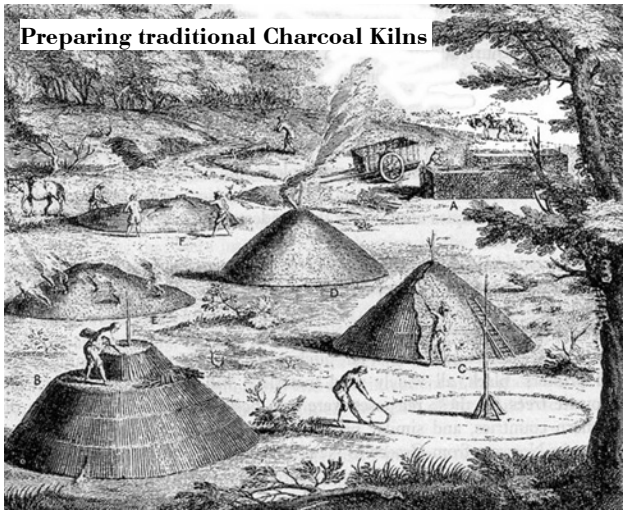
Wood as fuel

Until the 18th century, the primary source of fuel for fires and forges throughout the world was *wood*, or its derivative, *charcoal*.

Wood was also a vital structural material – from housing (even in stone or brick structures) through transport (carts and ships were almost entirely wood). Where metal was used, it was kept to a minimum. The so-called "Iron Age" was, more accurately, an age where iron was available, ***not*** *where it was ubiquitous.*

The vast forests that covered much of pre-modern Europe were an important advantage over most other Eurasian societies (which either had few or no forests, or which had exhausted them in their first steps towards civilisation); they provided fuel for cooking and heating as well as industry and also provided materials for housing, shipbuilding, machinery, and other vital technologies.

Pre-classical Greece, before the cultivation of the olive tree (which was both a result of and an accelerant of deforestation fuelled erosion of the thin rocky soils common there) became a staple of local agriculture, was a land of forests, not of barren hillsides; the flag of Lebanon sports a giant Cedar tree because, in classical times, its landscape was dominated by forests of such giants and was not the treeless terrain of modern times.



Preparing traditional Charcoal Kilns

Charcoal was always the preferred fuel over raw wood, it was lighter, burned hotter, was more or less odour free (though care had to be taken not to use it in a sealed space, as a charcoal fire could kill with the carbon monoxide it produced)

It was also more mechanically durable (its hardness made it more suitable for use in smelting metals, not collapsing into the soggy mass of bloom and cinders that a coal fuel furnace did.

Limits to the Infinite

Other ancient civilisations were hampered either by an almost total lack of available wood (such as virtually treeless Egypt, though they *did* use charcoal as a fuel for cooking and industry and were hampered by their shortage), or by a lack of suitable woods, or both.

However, even the bounty Europe began with was not limitless, and even the vast forests of northern Europe were being exhausted by the late medieval period.

By the 16th century the Baltic states were being tapped as the last ***european*** *reserve of the large trees important for ship construction (keels and masts were preferably made from a single log, which meant an old tree).*

Transporting the Fuel

The bulky nature of the material meant that wood as fuel was ideally located close at hand to the industries (or population centers) that needed it.

The cost of transporting wood by land more than around 30 klicks was generally prohibitive. Sea or by river transport was a different matter – huge "floats" (log rafts up to 250 feet long) were found on navigable rivers in Poland (supplying western Europe) by the 14th century, and France by the 16th century, and are *not* an American invention.

Fuelling the Furnaces

The situation was becoming critical, and vital industries were being crippled – blast furnaces often had to be left idle for as much as nine weeks in ten (and commonly three weeks in four) because of difficulties in moving the quantities of fuel needed. It could take months, even years, for the supply chain required to provide the needed fuel to be set up even after a furnace was constructed.

The fuel requirements were immense – a single blast furnace of average size required the clear felling of around ***2000 hectares*** *of forest. Eventually, the demands were simply insupportable, and an alternative fuel to wood simply had to be found.*

Coal

Coal was known in ancient times, but was not mined and was definitely not used in any industrial projects. Where it *was* available it was because there were

surface outcrops (often cliff faces on the coastline where the coal knocked off and washed up onto local beaches by wave action was referred to as "sea coal").

It was only adopted as an industrial fuel quite late, in a *limited* way from the 11th–12th centuries, but on a major scale only from the 17th–18th centuries. There were many reasons for this late adoption, mainly to do with cost and convenience –

Forests were more geographically widespread than coal deposits and so more easily accessed and were much more likely to be near to a navigable stream or river for transport by virtue of this distribution.

In fact, even when the other limitations of coal had been more or less solved, it was the *cost of transport* that meant that coal was more expensive than the increasingly scarce alternatives of wood and charcoal.

And, of course, mining was expensive compared to forestry. So it was only when the great primeval forests of Europe were being exhausted, and there was a vital need for a replacement fuel for wood and charcoal, that coal began to be used.

Only once it began to be used more commonly were developments made that enabled it to be used in more and more industrial processes, replacing charcoal and wood for most purposes.

In Europe those areas that were conveniently co-located with coal deposits were those that tended to be the engines of the rapidly developing industrial revolution of the 16th–17th centuries.

Tyne valley (from northern England) coal was shipped in vast quantities to London and the rest of the UK and as far as Malta as early as the 16th century!

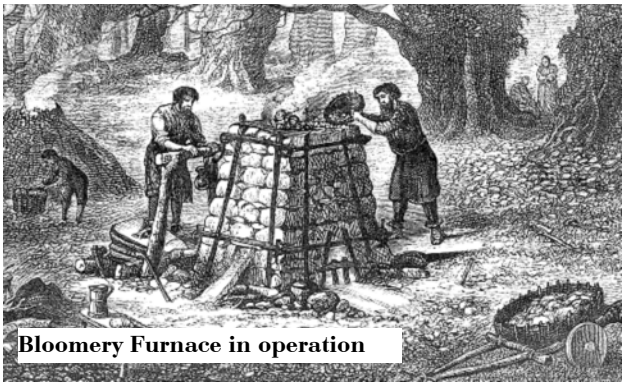
Coke adds life ...

It was not until the impurities could be removed from coal and a harder form produced as ***coke*** *that coal really took off as an industrial fuel, and this did not occur until the early 17th century when coked coal was first used in the Brewing industry.*

Despite this development, it was not used widely, if at all, in the iron industry until the last quarter of the 18th century, an all too typical example of social inertia preventing the adoption of a (in retrospect of course!) far superior alternative.

With the adoption of a fuel that was available in (comparatively) inexhaustible quantities, coal and coke, western Europe was poised to make the leap into a true mechanical and industrial revolution the like of which had not been experienced anywhere previously.

Even so, the creation of the necessary and yet interconnected infrastructure =was a slow process, only being completed, in Europe at least, in the early 20th century and only truly reaching the take-off point with the development of the first new power source ever, the steam engine, at around the same time (being a pre-requisite for and a product of cheap coal) as coal was adopted as a common industrial fuel.



Bloomery Furnace in operation

Power Status

Immediately prior to the invention of the steam engine (i.e. in the late 17th century) Europe had a population of ~145 million with yearly power output supplied by ~40 million animals (about 10 million hp or ~7.5 Mw). Burning wood in its various forms generated ~4-5 million hp (3-3.75 Mw), Waterwheels generated ~1.5-3 million hp (1.125-2.5 Mw), 50 million workers generated around ~900,000 hp (675 Kw), Windmills ~0.375-0.75 million hp (280-560 Kw) and sails generated around ~235,000 hp (about 175 Kw).

This would have been broadly representative, on a per capita basis, of the levels of power, by category, available during the 10th-14th centuries, the period covered by this sourcebook.

Vestiaria

Clothes maketh the man (or woman!) ... especially in medieval times when it was usually very easy to tell the wealth and/or social class of someone by simply looking at the clothes they wore.

In fact, one of the reasons behind occasional attempts to introduce sumptuary laws relating the clothing (amongst other things) was to try and ensure that this was the case ... that what you saw was what, in fact, you got, and not some con-man (or woman) dressed up as something they most definitely weren't.

The thing is, clothes were *expensive*. The main sources of fiber from which thread was spun tended to, directly or indirectly, compete for farmland with crops needed to directly support human life ... so producing it was a constant balancing act between the two competing needs.

Once you had the fiber, it had to be spun into thread, by hand, and then, also by hand, woven into cloth.

The final step was to take the cloth and, again by hand, sew it into clothing.

The following sections look at the various aspects of the cloth and clothing trade as they existed in the period from the 9th-10th through to the 14th centuries.

MATERIALS

SOURCES OF FIBRE

There were four main sources of fibre for clothing available in medieval Europe –

COTTON

Introduced from India via the Middle East to the Iberian peninsula and Sicily by the Arabs in the 9th century and, when the Normans conquered Sicily, they introduced it to Italy ... it remained a mysterious import from far off lands right into the 14th century.

*It was also **expensive** ... the cotton boll is full of the seed and this had to be picked out by hand (the **Cotton Gin** was only invented in 1793) quite laboriously.*

Most cotton was spun into thread and woven into cloth close to where it was produced, and the majority of cotton cloth imported into Europe eventually came from the Arab world ... and the trade in cotton was *one* of the driving forces behind the general expansion in trade that occurred in the 13the-14th centuries.

LINEN

Linen fibre comes from the Flax plant by a moderately complex process – even so, it was *much* cheaper to produce thread from compared to cotton ... and remained cheaper even at the weaving stage despite its lack of stretch which made it more prone to breaking threads, slowing the weaving process.

Flax plants also grow in a wider climatic spread than cotton does, meaning it could usually be grown locally.

Linen is also weaker than cotton and wool when wet, which means that it wears more quickly than either of those when washed by the standard harsh medieval scrubbing methods using harsh lye based soaps.



NETTLES

Nettle stalks could be processed in the same way as Flax and produced a coarser, but still usable, fibre for weaving into cloth. Because nettles are basically a weed and grew anywhere as much as due to the coarseness of the fiber produced, nettlecloth was far cheaper than linen.

SILK

Silkworms were, supposedly, smuggled out of China to Constantinople in the mid 6th century, though production there was limited and most of it was reserved for the Imperial family ... and leftovers were then used as diplomatic gifts or, less commonly, sold on the open market. This meant that most silk found in the classical Roman world still came from China.

Silk production started in Italy during the 11th century in Calabria, which became famous for its varieties of silk fabrics and finished products ... and gradually spread northwards to Lucca by the 12th century and, later, to Genoa, Florence and Venice as well as westwards to the Iberian peninsula, possibly as early as the mid to late 14th century (and certainly by the 15th century).

WOOL

This was mainly from sheep, but could, occasionally, be from goat – the quantity available was relatively low (and the price quite high) partly because medieval sheep (and goat) breeds were much smaller and grew much smaller fleeces than modern breeds *and* due to the difficulty (and expense) of keeping the large flocks needed over winter (fodder for animals often competed with crops for human consumption).

*Medieval flocks (sheep **and** goat) were **not** selectively bred to remove black or brown sheep from their numbers as modern graziers do – in fact, long historical tradition in a period when dyestuffs were expensive (and hard to 'fix'), was to use these naturally coloured wools to weave check or tartan patterned cloths.*

The culling of coloured sheep from flocks largely occurred as a result of the Industrial Revolution which mechanised the production of cloth and demanded standardisation of colour for production purposes.

OTHER CLOTHING RELATED MATERIALS

BONE OR HORN

These materials were largely used for decoration (the most common use) or as fasteners ... mostly as a loop and toggle arrangement (Buttons were *decoration*).

*The first use of buttons with button**holes** for fastening items of clothing appear in 13th century Germany.*

LEATHER

Just as is the case today, a wide variety of clothing and footwear items were made of various grades of leather – and both ***suede*** (originally for women's gloves, init-

ially exported from Scandinavia) and ***nubuck*** leathers make their first appearance.

Suede *is made from the underside of an animal skin, which is soft but not particularly durable – and was often used for Gloves, especially Women's gloves.*

Nubuck *is similar to suede, but produced from the outer part of an animal's skin, making it much tougher and more resistant to wear – it is normally coloured or dyed.*

Note that the name 'Nubuck' is ***way*** *post medieval and whether this type of leather was actually produced during the period is uncertain ... if it was, it was called something else, obviously.*

Wood

Wood was also used for some items of clothing – buttons (for decoration, as noted for *Bone*, above) or toggles and either as the soles of cheap shoes or as a complete shoe replacement or supplement (*patten*).

Most medieval 'wooden' shoes had wooden soles and leather uppers, and in cold climates (Russia and Eastern Europe, for example) they might be the base for felt or leather ***overboots*** *which would be lined with fur, wool or stuffed with dried grass as an insulator.*

In some circumstances (often in urban environments where streets were paved, but often filthy) people would wear wooden ***pattens*** *strapped over their regular shoes when they went outdoors.*

The all-wood Dutch 'clog' (Klomp) was a limited regional variant of the general wooden shoe concept.

Cloth Production

Spinning

Fibre has to be turned into thread ... *spinning*. This is done using a ***Spindle***, which is basically a piece of dowel with a weighted base. A hank of fibre is taken in the hand (or twisted around a ***distaff***, though this fixes the spinner in place) and a twist is pulled out, wound around the spindle and fixed to the weighted bottom. The spindle is then dropped and spun simultaneously and that action draws out a length of twisted thread from the hank of fibre.

The size of the Spindle varied according to the type of fibre being spun – larger ones for standard thread from standard fibre such as wool down to tiny ones for super fine thread from cotton or silk.

This is, of course, quite a time consuming process, but the *spinster* could go about much of their daily routine (certainly walking and talking) while spinning – unless they were using a distaff, which fixed them in place. Even so, the amount of thread produced was quite small relative to the amount of work involved.


Spinster at work

Even though the Spinning Wheel had been invented in India by at least 1000 AD (and possibly as early as 500 BC), it arrived in the Islamic world in the 11^{h} century but did not appear in Western Europe until the end of the 13th century.

This was not the classic treadle powered spinning wheel, but a hand turned ***Great Wheel*** *(~1½ meters), which had to be turned by a standing spinster ... but it sped up thread production markedly. However, this technology could not spin the strong, consistent, thread needed for the* ***warp*** *(longitudinal) thread for a loom, and so spinning by the old method remained important as well.*

The Treadle Wheel did not appear until the early 16th century but still had the same drawback as the Great Wheel with producing strong, consistent, thread ... this problem wasn't solved until the early 18th century.

Until the 13th century, almost all thread was produced in home workshops by families using their own wool, linen or nettle fibre in rural areas – or, less commonly, in town workshops using purchased fibre. During the 13th century this was increasingly replaced by the *Putting Out* system.

Every family had a need for thread, even if they did not actually weave cloth for themselves, and young unmarried women in rural areas were often occupied in spinning thread to either create or pay for the linen and other household cloths they would need when they married ... hence the term ***Spinster*** *becoming cognate with 'unmarried woman.*

Silk thread wasn't ***spun****, it was* ***unwound*** *from the cocoon of the Silk Moth ... which used a different mechanism entirely.*

Skeins of Thread

These typically contained 32-40 yards (~29-37) meters of thread, if cotton, linen, nettlecloth or wool but could be longer or shorter. Silk skeins were, in general shorter than other skeins because of the cost.

Weaving

Until the 13th century almost all weaving was done at the Weaver's home – sometimes in a town (where it was usually a full-time profession, often with an organising *Guild*), but as often in rural areas where it was a part-time pursuit, usually done for only half a day at a time when the weaver wasn't needed to work the fields or do other farming related work.

During the 13th century, however, this older system was replaced by the *Putting Out* system (see below).

There were two sorts of ***Looms*** used to weave cloth during the Middle Ages – the older *Vertical Loom* (sometimes called the *Warp-weighted Loom*), which dates back to antiquity, and the new(er) *Horizontal Loom* which appeared in the early 13th century and quickly replaced the earlier type *in Towns and Cities.*

*In both varieties there are multiple rows (either vertical or horizontal) of threads that form the **warp** of the cloth which, at some point, are held half apart by a spreader which can be moved up and down to form a tent through which a **shuttle** bearing the **weft** thread can be passed. Each time this is done, the spreader is moved down to tighten the weft together and create a new tent for the shuttle to be passed through on the way back ... repeat over and over until a sufficient length has been woven.*

The *Horizontal Loom* was, to begin with, simply a *Vertical Loom* laid out on a horizontal frame but, at some point in the late 13th or early 14th century, raising and lowering the heddles to allow the shuttle to pass through alternating *weft* threads and form the *warp* was mechanised with a foot operated treadle mechanism, which sped up the weaving processm greatly improving productivity.

Bolts of Cloth

Length. Usually varying between 34-41 yards (~31-37 meters), but some expensively dyed cloths would be shorter, often 23-28 yards (~21-27 meters).

Width. The width of a Bolt of cloth was, to a degree, a product of the width of the weaver's arms – especially with the upright loom, less so (but still significant) for the vertical loom ... and, in general, this meant the width was most commonly *around* a ***yard*** (~0.9 meters).



Wider bolts *could* be woven, but required two workers to operate the loom in such a case ... widths up to ~45 inches (~1.14 meters) were *relatively* common, and, in England, ***Broadcloth*** was increasingly common @ ~8'3" (~2.5 meters) wide.

Much wider bolts could be managed, but only as a special order, and usually for tapestries.

Time. The limited surviving sources make it difficult to estimate how much a medieval Weaver could weave in a day – though it is known that the Vertical Loom increased output, and adding a Treadle to it increased it even more.

An experienced weaver, working full time, could produce around 18 yards (~16.5 meters) of cloth a day, assuming a standard 1 yard (~0.9 meters) width, or about 6 yards (~5½ meters) of Broadcloth, using a *treadle powered Horizontal Loom* full time ... but this would be heavily dependent on the quality and type of cloth being woven.

Vertical Looms were less efficient, with perhaps half to 2/3rds that output, and the non-treadle powered Horizontal Loom was somewhere in between.

A Rural weaver, mostly working only half a day at a time and less experienced, would be capable of a lesser rate still, perhaps 2/3rds to ¾ the output of an Urban weaver ... and was much less likely to have a Horizontal Loom until very late in the period.

The New Textiles

*During late 13th or early 14th century the type of woollen cloth produced in Europe changed significantly. Prior to this it was **much** thicker, more like a modern light blanket weave, heavier and used more wool thread to produce ... afterwards, the new textiles were more like modern cloth, lighter, often with a higher thread count, but still using less thread.*

Types of Cloth

Damask. A patterned silk cloth, common in the East, but uncommon outside of Islamic Spain from the 9th century until revived *in the west* by the French in the mid-14th century. Most were of a single colour with weaving producing a duller pattern on a shiny background but *some* used different colours for the warp and weft threads.

Some time at the end of the 14th century or in the early 15th century weavers began to produce Damasks from Linen and even from Cotton.

Fustian. Originally a cloth made with a weft of cotton

and a warp of linen, and quite finely woven, it was applied to a much coarser cotton/linen blend in the 12th century and, by the early 14th century was applied to a woollen cloth.

Samite. A heavy silk twill usually with gold or silver thread forming patterns. Imported from the Eastern Empire via Italy until production was established there in the 12th-13th centuries.

Satin. A silk cloth with a shiny front and dull back made by weaving in a 4:1 warp over weft (or vice versa), it only begins to appear in Europe in the 12th century as an expensive import from China.

Serge. A form of ***silk*** cloth during the 10th-14th period, usually imported from (or gifted by) the East Roman Empire. At some time in the 15th century it came to mean a type of ***worsted*** *cloth* produced in France or the Low Countries, often from English wool.

Tabby. A plain weave fabric, tough and light, with a simple criss-cross one under-one over pattern of warp and weft.

Twill. A fabric with a diagonal parallel ribs created by passing the weft over, then under, two or more warp threads. Usually made from *worsted* thread.

Velvet. A luxurious and extremely expensive form of woven silk – two thicknesses are woven at once and separated by a knife to create a pile and woven onto different rolls.

Worsted. This appears in the 12th century and uses long staple wool spun so all the fibres are parallel which makes for a stronger, lighter, yarn and, in turn, a stronger and lighter cloth.

*Worsted **Cloth** is made from Worsted **Thread**, but Worsted Thread is **also** used to make Serge and Twill.*

Knitting

Modern style *two-needle knitting* can only be firmly dated in Europe to the 15th century (Tournai), though there are examples found in Egypt that date back to the end of the 10th century.

Early *seemingly* knitted goods that have occasionally be found are actually examples of *nailbinding* which involved the use of a single needle and piecing together smaller panels to make a larger whole

Nailbinding dates back to very ancient times and was the means by which the few surviving 'knitted' items from the Roman Empire were made (most found in Egypt or the Middle East, but some in Western Europe). It is very difficult to differentiate between nailbinding and knitted garments in an archaeological context without an extremely close examination by a textile expert.



Dyeing

Dyeing could be done before being spun, or to thread, especially if it were intended for use in embroidery or tapestry work (or similar) or, more commonly, to finished bolts of cloth.

The process is identical – the fiber/thread/cloth is placed in a container which contains hot water and the dyestuff and a mordant (a fixative).

Unfortunately the mordants, and, indeed, many dyes, are (to put it mildly!) 'strong smelling' and it was usual for Dyers to be forced to locate their workshops outside the town walls or in specified locations within.

*Wool and Silk take colours easily with the use of **alum** as a mordant, cotton is more difficult to dye, requiring a combination of **tannin** (from Oak Galls) as well as alum in a complex three step process.*

Common Colours. *Red* and *Blue* (and shades thereof) were the most common dyestuffs in England – Red from ***Madder*** and ***Blue*** from Woad.

Of the two, Blue was cheaper as Woad leaves could be picked several times a season. Other colours available were *Violet* (from lichen), *Green* and *Brown*.

These colours were quite dull or muddy compared to the more expensive, often imported, dyes mentioned below.

Rich Colours. Other colours available were ***Tyrian Purple*** (from shellfish, and which can range from a blue to a reddish purple and which strengthens rather than fades with age) ***Kermes*** (*red*), made from crushed insects in the Mediterranean, *Yellow* (from ***Dyer's Rocket***, only moderately expensive) and *Crimson-Purple* from crushed ***Brazilwood*** from the East Indies.

'Scarlet' could actually be grey, dark grey, dark blue or even black! Cost as much as a skilled Mason could make in 3 years for 22 yards.

Indigo, produced in India and East Asia, was a rare import and gave a stronger *blue* than Woad. ***Saffron*** was grown in the Eastern Mediterranean and gave a rich *yellow* colour, but it fades quickly to a creamy pale yellowish white ... and was very expensive.

Quality Control. While Guild rules tried to provide a baseline of quality for Dyers, they were mostly interested in limiting competition and setting prices ... so it was not uncommon for cheaper cloth to have been insufficiently colour fixed because not enough mordant had been used and not be colour-fast.

Also, even more so than today, it was necessary to wash new clothes to remove the excess dye – even if the Dyer had done a wash after the initial dyeing, which was not always the case

Putting Out ('Domestic') System

This began to appear during the 13th century and involved a Cloth merchant buying the finished thread from rural spinners or, more commonly, buying the raw fibre and providing it to urban spinners who would then spin it into thread at piece-work rates.

The finished thread would then be sent on to contracted weavers who then wove it into cloth – also at piecework rates.

To begin with, this was still at least partly under the control of the urban Weavers' Guilds, who controlled wages, at least to a degree ... but, gradually, greedy Merchants sent their business to rural weavers who would work for much less, as they were not governed by the town Guilds.

Eventually this led to the emasculation of the Weaver's Guilds or their suborning by the wealthy merchants running the Putting Out system, a process that wasn't complete until the mid to late 15th century.

*In the meantime, there could be considerable civic unrest between the journeymen weavers and the increasingly rich Guildmasters ... guess which side the authorities supported (because they **were** the authorities!).*



Garments & Footwear

The most important thing to understand about the Garment and Footwear trades in the medieval period are that there was *little or no 'ready made' or 'off the shelf'* clothing or footwear, *almost* everything was ***made to order*** ... with a partial exception.

*There **was** a market for second hand clothes – so you **could** buy slightly worn or soiled 'pre-loved' clothes.*

In general you *either* had your clothes and footwear made 'in house', so to speak, by members of your family or your household (very possibly from material woven, cured or otherwise made in house as well) *or* you went along to a cloth (or leather, or whatever) trader, bought the requisite type and amount of material, and then took it along to a Tailor, Cobbler or other specialist manufacturer to have it made into the garment, footwear or other item you required.

*As a rule the maker of the finished product rarely, if ever, held much, if any, of stock of the material(s) they worked with **on hand**. They **might** have a small stock of sample materials for a potential customer to examine, but that was rare – the customer generally bought at least the core materials **themselves** and paid the manufacturer to make whatever they required.*

Tailoring & Leatherworking

Every single item of clothing was cut and sewn *by hand*. There was *no* mechanisation of *any* sort. Making even basic clothing was *time consuming* and, because of Guild rules, *expensive* ... which is why many people had their clothing (or most of it) made by members of their family or household.

Construction Elements

Belt & Buckle. Buckles were *mostly* decorative additions to belts until the 14th century when the leather belt/buckle combination start to replace the *Girdle* and then slowly become fashionable for general male wear (*Girdles* remain the female equivalent).

***Sword Belts**, however, used **entirely** in a military context, appear much earlier – around the 11th century.*

Early Buckles might be of the modern frame-prong-bar style but could be a single or double ring through which the end of the belt was passed, then tucked over the other end and passed through the resulting loop.

Boots. These were, like *shoes*, largely of one piece construction and had no separate sole. The main difference is that they extend above the ankle, but rarely higher than mid- or low calf.

Broaches and Cloak-Pins. These were usually metal and were used to hold the neck of a cloak together or, possibly, to pin it to the clothing worn beneath it at the shoulder or, less commonly, at the throat.

Buttons & Buttonholes (Closure & Decoration). Until the 13th century, these were entirely decorative and sewn directly to the cloth base, often as part of a wider pattern.

Buttons and *button**holes*** (probably inspired by/a development of *eyelets*) appear in Germany first and spread throughout Europe as part of a trend towards form fitting garments in the 13th and 14th centuries.

Eyelets (Closure). These were holes pierced through cloth with an *awl*, never cut, and then sewn around the edge into a roughly round hole through which lacing could be run to allow an opening in the garment to be partly or fully closed.

Girdle. A *fabric* (woven or plaited and, for the wealthy, possibly embroidered) band used by both men and women, but in different ways.

For men, this was fastened around the waist and served to shape the tunic a little as well as hold their purse (as there were no *pockets*) or their sword.

A belt-substitute with no buckle and not made of leather, in effect.

For women it was often worn under the breasts but could be worn at the waist as well, but slightly lower than for men, riding on the hips.

*Girdles were simply **tied** together or, perhaps, run through a **loop and eyelet** arrangement.*

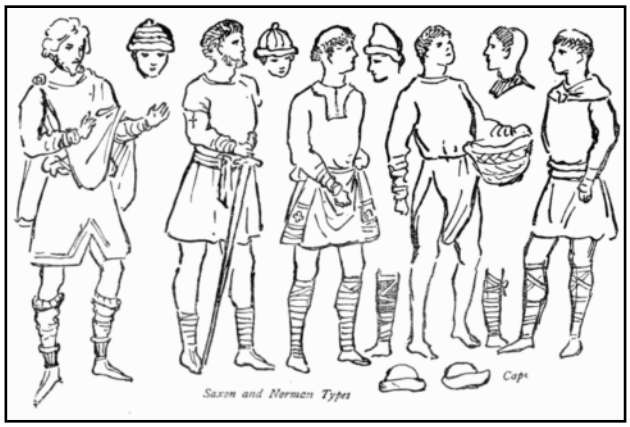
Lacing. This was usually a fabric cord run through *Eyelets* to allow an opening in a garment to be closed. Depending on where they were placed, it could be plain or coloured – and the lacing could be arranged to allow the opening to remain partly open to allow for the display of part of the undergarment beneath.

Pins. These were usually of bone, rarely of metal, and were quite large – they were used to pin together two parts of a garment, either as a closure for part of an opening or to hold it together.

Pockets. These simply *do not exist in the modern sense* ... what a medieval person would call a *'pocket'* is what we would call a *Purse* or *Pouch* and was attached to a *Girdle* or *Belt* and *not* a part of the clothing.

*'Pockets' were always made from cloth of some sort – if it was of leather it was a **Purse** or **Pouch**.*

*From the 13th century there **might** be slits (reinforced*



*with stitching) cut into an over-tunic or doublet to allow the wearer to access a 'pocket' hanging from a belt or girdle otherwise concealed and inaccessible **beneath** it.*

Pouches & Purses. These were hung from *belts* or *girdles* and served the same purpose as modern day pockets – unlike *medieval 'pockets'*, however, they were normally made of leather.

*In the Middle Ages you don't have pick**pockets**, since modern style pockets don't exist, you have **cut**purses – who, quite literally, cut your purse from your Belt or Girdle in a stealthy fashion.*

Sewing. This was done *by hand*, of course, and in such a way as to minimise the amount of cloth 'lost' in seams for reason of economy (cloth was *expensive)* ... especially as clothing fashion became more close fitting from during the 13th-14th centuries.

Finer stitching was used where it would be directly visible – but even in places where it would not be, seams were closely sewn.

Shoes. Throughout the period shoes are of single piece construction, with no separate sole, and the left and right feet *are* differentiated insofar as they are mirror images. They are different from *Boots* only in that they do not extend above the ankle.

The medieval shoe fits the foot more like a glove and it does not fully cushion/separate it from the ground.

This means that it may not need to be fastened to secure it, since it is tight fitting – but, in some cases, strips of leather were sewn (or left a part of) the opening on the upper side to allow them to be tied and form an even closer fit, especially from the late 12th century.

*Shoes with raised **heels** and separate **soles** do not come into use until the 17th century and differentiation of the left/right foot for such only became standard, slowly, from around 1800.*

Ties (Closure). These were strips or cords of cloth sewn to reinforced tabs along the edge of an opening in a garment and were used to tie the opening closed.

Toggle & Loop (Closure). A common closure for cloaks and similar loose fitting garments, it consisted of a fabric or cord loop on one side of an opening and a wood or bone rod fastened by a cord wrapped around a groove in the middle (or piercing it in the middle) which can be passed through the loop (as used on a modern *Duffle* or *Pea Coat*).

This type of closure was usually used where the closure overlaps the two sides of the garment.

Construction/Sewing time

There are some surviving accounts (literally, from *Account Books*) that indicate how long it took to sew a small variety of clothing items –

- **Hose (pair).** ~½ a day.
- **Tunic.** 1-6 days, depending on complexity & lining
- **Cloak.** 3-6 days, depending on whether lined or not
- **Super/Over Tunic.** 3+ weeks, depending on complexity and lining.

*The difference between the time(s) required for a **Tunic**, worn **under** a Super Tunic, implies it was largely undecorated ... so the time to sew the **Over Tunic**, and the variation involved, implies varying degrees of decoration (embroidery, decorative buttons, lace [which would be bought from a Lacemaker and added by the Tailor or Seamstress).*

Styles & Fashion

Despite what many modern sources seem, on first glance, to imply, there *were* continually evolving styles and fashions during the period ... they *did **not** remain static for **four hundred years**.*

That said, the *pace* of change is hard to gauge because of the dearth of pictorial and artistic representation (and, as noted in several other places, all such material is potentially suspect *anyway*) and the almost total lack of physically surviving items.

It was certainly slower, partly because cloth was relatively much more expensive and so people (even the wealthy) generally owned a lot fewer clothes than would be common today *and* tended to wear them (or pass them on/down) a lot longer but also partly because it wasn't a consumer driven society in the same way ours is (people weren't necessarily *ascetic*, but even the wealthy tended to be (or *purported* to be) more frugal than is common today.



More coverage of *styles* is given in ***Daily Life***, but a basic outline follows –

Overview

Tenth Century. *Men* generally wore a knee length tunic of wool or linen over a linen shirt and undergarments the better off might wear a waistcoat over the tunic, fur for the very wealthy and linen for those less so. The sides and neck of the tunic were open and it was fastened at the waist with a belt.

Trousers were worn under the tunic and, since they mostly ended just below the knee, were often barely visible. Stockings were made of leather, ran from knee to ankle and covered with cloth or leather gaiters running from the trousers down to the shoes, which were of black leather.

*It is not certain whether, or how often, socks were worn – if at all – nor of what they might have been made of, but, in later periods, they were of linen or wool. It is probable that, if they **weren't** worn, then **foot cloths** (a square of cloth or, possibly, sheepskin or similar, wrapped over the feet before putting on the shoes) **might** be worn in lieu, especially in cold weather*

A square, knee length, hooded cloak, might be worn over this, fastened with a brooch or pin to the breast or shoulder.

Female clothing was similar, but, instead of trousers, they either wore a single long tunic/dress *or* wore a shorter over-dress and a *second* under-dress or shift which usually extended down to the ankles.

Eleventh Century. Clothing styles remained similar to those of the 10th century, but *fashionable* male tunics became shorter and stockings now had feet attached to make them more like long socks. Cloth *coifs* became fashionable, for males, looking rather like flattened round caps. Shoes extended upward to the ankle into short boots, again, for the fashionable.

Twelfth Century. Towards the end of the century the Tunic becomes more close fitting and could return to a longer length, at least for the under tunic. Sleeves and stockings also tend to become more form fitting and gaiters disappear – they are now attached to a girdle worn around the waist.

Waistcoats are replaced by early *doublets*, made of quilted linen, and worn under the tunic, while the *coif* goes out of fashion and most men go around with heads uncovered until very late in the period when it reappears as a closely fitted item tied under the chin.

Female clothing styles remained similar, a long under-tunic or chemise and, again, possibly a shorter over-tunic, but these were now more closely fitted, in the same way that men's clothing was.

Thirteenth Century. Men continued to wear a tunic, but in the various common designs, the front opening was removed and, often, the sides slit to the waist so the sleeves of the shirt worn underneath was visible. Some styles were loose fitting, some close fitted, and could be short or long.

Often a cowl and quarter cloak (just covering the shoulders and upper chest) might be worn over the tunic or, occasionally, the cowl might be an integral part of the tunic.

Stockings sometimes went to mid thigh and, if they did, were shaped to fit the leg closely (and a well shaped leg was seen as a sign of masculine 'beauty') – some still had an attached sock, some just had a stirrup to go under the sole (and *might* have been worn with separate socks) and some ended at the ankle (in which case they were usually criss-crossed with bindings to hold them in place – and *might* have been worn with socks as well).

Shoes remain similar to those of previous centuries, but buckle fasteners now appear on some instead of leather ties. Boots were also similar, still only extending to mod calf but now sometimes with a short turnover at the top.

Women's clothing remained very similar to previous periods in basic form, but it was more common for a single sleeveless long surcoat/dress to be worn over an under-tunic (and so *seem* to be a single dress).

The Fourteenth Century. Clothing continues to become more and more form-fitting for men and women – at least for the well-to-do.

For men, the tunic of previous centuries was gradually replaced by the ***Cote-hardie*** which was tight fitting, buttoned down the front for the well-to-do (or was pulled over the head for those less well off – buttons were *still* an expensive fashion statement) to the waist and then flared into a full skirt-like arrangement that was, however, open at the front. The sleeves were elongated and tapered and hung in flaps.

Underneath the Cote-hardie men wore a padded *Doublet*, usually over a shirt, buttoned or laced down the front and tight fitting and reaching down to just above the knees until the middle of the century when it gradually shortened to mid-thigh.

Stockings lengthened even more and were now long enough to be tied to the Doublet, which would be hidden under the Cote-hardie.



Hooded cowls continued to be popular, but the pointy end lengthened considerably.,

Women continued to wear an under-tunic and some form of over-tunic, though the style of the latter changed considerably ... either with more decorative work or aping male cote-hardies to a degree.

Dyes & Colours

*As mentioned elsewhere, there **were** a variety of coloured dyes available during the Middle Ages – and medieval dyers knew about mordants to fix them to the cloth, though they weren't always as successful in applying them as they could (or should) have been.*

Some of the dyes were readily available and relatively cheap ... and pictorial evidence from the period show lots of colour being worn by a wide variety of people.

So what colours were most common?

*Not what you'd expect, for sure. The most common colours, based on actual **archaeological** finds rather than pictorial evidence are ... **white**, **off white** and **undyed** (which, in the vase of sheep, as mentioned elsewhere, could be white, brown or black).*

*Now, yes, not a lot of medieval fabric has survived – but **some** has ... and if the use of coloured fabric was as widespread as the pictorial depictions on the pages of illuminated manuscripts or on tapestries or other pieces of art show, then a heck of a lot of those finds would be coloured as well.*

*Yet relatively few **are** ... not **none**, sure, but a lot less than you'd expect since most of these finds are random chance finds rather than family heirlooms.*

There are a number of theories as to why this is the case – but the one that makes the most sense to me as a historian (though, granted, I'm not a specialist medievalist) is the usual one – you've got to consider the audience for whom those manuscripts and artworks were created.

The extremely well-to-do through to the super wealthy for the most part.

Then consider how tiny a percentage of the medieval population those groups actually were.

So you can assume that most people wore mostly undyed cloth most of the time ... with coloured highlights more frequently added as they become wealthier. Only the elite wore mostly coloured cloth ... and even then, at least some of the items of clothing they wore and which are shown as being of coloured cloth most likely ***weren't****.*

Underwear, Sleepwear & Nakedness

This is a complex matter, not in the least because of the paucity (graphic and written), suspect reliability and very likely the misinterpretation of the sources.

Underwear. ***Men*** *certainly* ***did*** *wear underwear ... it is common to see then wearing only their underclothes in graphical material, usually of commoners working in the fields or their normal craft duties (showing how morally lax they were compared to 'the better sort' who created or were the audience for such depictions).*

What sort of underwear ***did*** *they wear? Under their under tunic they commonly wore a shirt and some form of underpants ... something like a loincloth tied around the waist and either close or somewhat loose fitting, at least through to the 13th century when* ***Braies****, trouser or shorts-sized fitted underwear starts to become common, either knotted around the waist or fastened with eyelets or ties.*

But what about ***women?*** *Many sources will tell you they wore* ***nothing at all*** *under their under-tunic or chemise ... and they are never as anything but fully clothed (except in the specific cases noted in* ***Nakedness****, below), even commoner women working alongside men in their underwear.*

But does this mean they wore ***nothing****? Or is it simply a matter of societal prudery?*

And there ***are*** *actually rare examples of women wearing underpants in a few medieval illustrations.*

Until fairly recently there wasn't really a lot of evidence to support ***either*** *contention ... but recent archaeological finds have turned up both possible female underpants* ***and*** *several examples of something resembling a bra!*

Four examples, with actual breast cups, were found under a 15th century reconstruction ay Lengberg Castle in Austria in 2008 ... and it is reasonably unlikely they were a new one off development.



There is even some documentary suggestion of the fashion – ***'Some women ... insert two bags in their dresses, adjusted to the breasts, fitting tight, and they put them [the breasts] into them [the bags] every morning and fasten them when possible with a matching band'*** *written by Henri de Mondeville (Royal Physician to Philip the Fair and Louis X of France) in 1312-20 and other sources dating to the 15th century.*

Of course, this ***doesn't*** *mean* ***all*** *women wore such 'Breast Bags' ... but it is certainly a counter to the 'they wore no underclothes at all' crowd.*

However, there is no way to be sure that all women wore some sort of drawers either ... but, on balance, it seems very likely they ***did****. Negative evidence, (i.e. the complete lack of any evidence to show one way or the other) which is all there is to support the '****no knickers'*** *argument is hardly convincing.*

Sleepwear. *People shown sleeping naked together are almost always shown in one of two implied contexts ... the marriage bed on their wedding night or when they are pretty explicitly having sex. In the majority of other instances they are shown wearing* ***some*** *sort of sleepwear ... though it's often difficult to tell.*

But ***what****? There is, at present, no way of being sure, but the most likely answer would be ...* ***in their underwear****. Men in their* ***shirts*** *and* ***loincloths*** *or* ***braies****, women in their chemise or slip and underpants.*

It is not a stretch to assume that the wealthy would even have had a special combination of ***something*** *to wear to bed at night ... it's just that there's no evidence one way or another of what that might have been.*

Nakedness. *When a medieval source refers to someone being* ***'naked'*** *it* ***almost always*** *means, as far as can be determined,* ***'wearing only one's underwear'*** *rather than* ***'completely unclothed.'***

So, when you read about, for example, a peasant ***'working naked in the field'*** *a typical illustration of such is of a peasant* ***wearing a loincloth or braies*** *(drawers).*

*Likewise, when you read about couples '****sleeping naked in bed****' you need to carefully consider that more than half of illustrations showing sleeping people (couples and singles) show them in* ***some sort of clothing****.*

Many of the illustrations that show couples ***actually*** *naked are, more often than not, showing the 'wedding night' when there had to be witnesses to say that the couple had consummated the marriage ... a rather special, one off, case ... or pretty specifically having sex.*

Cleaning & Maintenance

Clothes inevitably get dirty and need to be cleaned. Though some older sources (or those uncritically based on them) claim that it was difficult or impossible to wash clothes in medieval times this is, at best, misleading, and, mostly, completely wrong.

Also common are claims that 'the peasantry' wore rags patched so often that they were more patch than clothing – which is also misleading or outright wrong.

The sections following look at some aspects of the cleaning and maintenance of medieval clothing and footwear in a little more detail ...

Washing & Laundry

The materials commonly used for clothing worn during the 10th-14th centuries *were*, despite some claims in older or less well researched sources, able to be washed ... though the washing process *was* more labour intensive, and harder work, than it is today as, of course, *there were no washing machines to do it*, it was all done manually. But it *was* done ... and done *routinely* ... by people from every social class, though *who* did the washing and *how* it was done differed.

*The major reason for this 'issue' is that **later medieval** and **renaissance** fabrics **were** much more difficult, even impossible, to wash without damaging them – either because the dyes weren't as colour-fast as they needed to be or, more commonly, because the materials were actually **damaged** by the washing processes as they then existed (often in ways akin to **felting** ... matting the cloth and ruining its finish and appearance).*

*These materials were simply **not available** before the late 15th century ... and not common until the 16th century ... and are, therefore, not an issue for the 10th-14th centuries covered in OM².*

The washing process . . .

Depending on how wealthy you were and/or where you lived, there were two basic ways of washing clothes.

River ('Active') Washing (aka *Possing*). Despite the generic term, this wasn't always done, or not *entirely*, in an actual *river* – it might as easily be done in a wooden tub filled with (usually cold) water at home (especially during winter, if the local river, stream or pond was frozen) or might be done on the banks of a local pond or lake.

It is, of course, still widely used in poorer parts of the world even today.

While difficult stains might be treated, to a degree, before taking the clothes down to the river (or wherever), the main process of 'washing' involved beating and scrubbing the clothes at the washing point ... at



its simplest, using flat, riverside, rocks for pounding, but, also commonly, using a washing *board* or washing *bat* (which might be wide enough to do double duty as a washing *board* as well) to pound the clothing (*corrugated* washboards, however, are a much *much* later invention of the 19th century).

The washerwomen (and it was *always* women, at least in those instances shown in surviving graphic art from the period) might also stamp on the clothing with their feet or simply slap it repeatedly against something.

*Bachelors living alone (which was relatively uncommon) **might** do their own laundry, if **very** poor, or, perhaps more likely, pay one of the local women a small amount to do their laundry along with their own.*

This was the most common method for poorer people in the countryside, but even better off rural households might rely on it as well ... though the servants would do the work, not the mistress of the household (though she might supervise the results).

Even in the country, the middling well off might use washing tubs as noted for Towns, below.

In the Towns, depending on size and geography, there *might* be a stream or section of river reserved, more by tradition than anything else, for such laundry usage but pollution and riverfront industry or commercial activity usually precluded such and forced a move to using impromptu washing tubs or, possibly, the stone surrounds of any civic wells or water troughs.

Bucking ('Passive' Washing). This was for cleaning ordinary quality white, off-white or undyed cloth and involved a length soaking in a tub full of water mixed with lye made from wood ash and urine ... typically

the soaking took at least a day and the heating and re-heating taking at least another (for a large household the process could take 3-4 days) ... then the wash had to be dried, and that could take another day or two, depending on the weather (especially since thicker cloth was often used back in the day than is common today – and wool cloths were, of course, slower to dry than linen).

A shorter cleansing period could be achieved by heating and re-heating the mixture used – but the relative cost (and scarcity) of fuel meant that this was really only something for the wealthier households.

Because it was so time consuming even the wealthiest of households didn't Buck frequently ... perhaps once a month. Less well-to-do households might only do it once every two months, or even only once a season.

Smelly Clothing. *In all but the very poorest households there would be a real attempt to have enough cloth and clothing (or, for the poor, perhaps just* ***under****clothes) to allow a family to stretch their wash-days as far apart as possible ... and in well-to-do and noble households great pride would be taken in having enough cloth and clothing to last between the wash days.*

Where possible and/or needed, people would brush dirt off cloth and clothing or spot clean and ***'air wash'*** *where possible ... simply taking the clothing off and spreading it somewhere handy to allow smells to naturally dissipate.*

So people were probably nowhere near as smelly as you might expect.

Laundering. For finer quality and/or richly dyed cloth, a lye based *soap* was used and washing was done either by specialist washerwomen or household staff ... and, since fine cloth was usually the preserve of the *very* wealthy, might be done once a fortnight (two weeks).



Ironing Board & Smoothing Glass

Ironing

It is not entirely certain how cloth or clothing that needed to be given a smooth (or pleated) appearance was done. ***Smoothing Boards*** are known to have existed, as are ***Smoothing Stones*** (aka ***Slickstones***), but the process of their use is obscure.

Likewise ***Stretching Frames*** have been found in some places (or recorded in some sources) and seem to have been used with larger pieces of cloth – bed sheets, table cloths etc.

Again, however, it is not certain whether they were used with wet or dry cloth.

Similarly, ***Calendars*** (rollers of some sort, possibly like an old-fashioned *Mangle*) are known to have existed as are ***Linen presses*** which were screw presses.

Fortunately, the complex pleated and starched costuming elements of later medieval costuming don't start to appear until the 15th century and later ... around the same time the first crude 'irons' appear (initially simple flat pieces of metal heated directly in a fire and grasped with a pot-holder, thick glove or crude handle.

Repairs & Ownership

Mending clothes and footwear was a routine part of household duties ... and the poorer the household was the more levels of repair they would apply before they deemed the item unsuitable for *their* further use.

Wealthy and well-to-do households would eventually sell their no longer fashionable or too *obviously* worn clothes to second-hand clothes dealers for repair and resale to those less well off.

The evidence (usually Wills with attached lists of household goods – clothing was worth enough to make it worth listing) is somewhat scarce, especially for less well off households, but there are enough to make it clear that even the moderately poor rural dwellers owned more than one set of clothes ... or, at least, enough separate items of clothing to ***effectively constitute*** *more than one set.*

Those Church or Monastic institutions set up to help the indigent, infirm or to house and educate orphans often left records and these are clear in that they allowed ***at least*** *one complete set of outer clothes and at least a couple of sets of underclothes per year, with additional layers for winter clothing, for example. These would have been cheap, plain, but robust and very likely lasted more than a year so, at any given time, a long term inmate would have more than one set of clothes.*

The moderately poor might also be able to sell off older, worn, clothes – but the *very* poor would likely wear whatever they owned till it became unrepairable.

Reality Check

The preceding chapter provides a *lot* of information – which may be a little too much to take in all at once. Certain key facts should be explicit *and* implicit ...

- **The productivity of Labour was *extremely* low.**
- **Everything was made/produced *by Hand.***
- **(Almost) everything was made with *Hand Tools.***
- **Everything was made by *Handcraft.***
- **There was no such thing as *Mass Production.***
- **Even *large scale Production* was extremely rare.**
- **Capital Goods and Consumer Durables *weren't.***
- **The speed/cost of transport limited Trade.**
- **Limited trade reduced market size/penetration.**
- **Small markets made scale efficiencies difficult.**
- **Medieval People Weren't Stupid.**
- **20:20 Hindsight is a wonderful thing.**
- **Lack of Capital was the key limit to progress.**

Production & Productivity

If I haven't emphasised it enough in the various discrete sections of the preceding chapter, consider it emphasised here ... the productivity of labour in the medieval world was ***extremely*** low. It doesn't matter what sector you're looking at – agriculture, transport or what is laughingly referred to as 'industry', the output per capita is *abysmal*.

*Compared to the modern equivalents it's not even a bad joke ... it is **disastrously** awful.*

Why was it thus?

Handcraft production

Pretty much everything was made by *individual workers* working *as* individuals with *hand tools* in small amounts in small scale workplaces.

Craft Level production

Workshops generally consisted of a single Master with one or two Journeymen and several Apprentices at various levels of training ... though the women of the household normally worked at the trade was well, though they were rarely counted in the 'workforce.'

It was a rare workshop that had a workforce of greater than a half dozen, and more than a dozen, perhaps a dozen and a half, was almost unheard of ... except in rare instances, usually subsidised or organised by the Crown or a great Noble.

Hand Tools

Almost all tools used by almost all of the various crafts were simple rather than complex and performed one operation (or, at most, a couple of related operations). Even power-assist for tools really only provides an *assist* – the main tool(s) usually remain simple, hand-controlled, items. *Not* 'power tools.'

Power-Assist

For the most part, *there isn't any until at least the mid to late 14th century.*

Power assist, in the form of waterwheel power for for metalworking triphammers (for example), only starts to come in *slowly* from that period and really only becomes common in the 15th Century, but is still mainly limited to metalwork applications.

*The idea of using machines that aren't operated by muscle really **doesn't** catch on quickly even so ... slow and steady through the 16th and into the 17th century.*

Mass & Large Scale production

There was little or no specialisation within a given workshop – the Journeymen and Master would create a single item from beginning to end, perhaps with some of the simpler components produced by an Apprentice as a part of their training.

*Some components might be bought from specialists in that sort of production (so a **Shipwright** would purchase **Nails** from a **Blacksmith**, for example or a **Tailor** would buy **Buttons** from a **Button Maker**).*

The start-stop nature involved in this sort of production is just about the most inefficient method you can use – but for some items, there might be ways of producing relatively large amounts (with the emphasis on *relatively*).

For example, a *Blacksmith* producing ***nails*** would hand hammer and shape ***each individual nail***, one at a time (well, he might heat a batch and then hammer them one at a time while hot, rotating them back into the forge) ... and it *might* be the case, in a *very* large town, that a Smith *might* specialise in doing just that, but it was rare.

Durability

The durability of capital goods and what we would call 'consumer durables' today was generally very low – certainly only a fraction of what we would expect from similar items made today with modern materials and techniques.

The limited palette of materials and the relatively *very* high cost of some of them meant that tools and 'durable' items were usually made with a view to relative cheapness rather than longevity ... but quality

control at all stages of the creation process (from gathering and preparing the raw materials through to production and finishing) was relatively low as well – so even the relatively *much* more expensive materials were not all that durable.

A modern car is typically covered for at least 5 years under a modern manufacturer's warranty ... and will probably last much, *much* longer. Decades. *Many* decades.

A medieval waggon, especially those used over any distance, on the other hand, would be lucky to last one or two years even with expensive ongoing repairs ... and the *wheels* on it would rarely last a year, often not even six months.

Heck, considering the abysmal state of even the Royal Roads they might not last a single extended journey!

Travel & Trade

Travel was *slow*, it was *expensive* and it was often *dangerous* – all of which made the cost of transporting raw materials *and* finished goods *very* expensive.

*For example, in the shipping trade the biggest cost for most medium to long distance voyages was often **not** the cost of the (usually smallish) ships, but the crew's wages!*

This limited trade possibilities and limited the *scale* of production as well – even for areas which were renowned for their skill in making particular goods ...

Damascus blades of good steel, for example, remained super-expensive luxuries while most knights had to make do with local knock-offs of indifferently steeled iron.

Even if the producers in Damascus scaled up production the cost/difficulty of transporting their goods would have limited their market penetration over any sort of distance.



Stupidity vs. Hindsight

Medieval people weren't stupid ... if you examine the problems they faced, and the solutions that were eventually applied to solve them, you *might* think differently. But only if you don't examine them *closely* and *in context*.

In pretty much every case you care to look at the reason the 'solutions' weren't applied was *either* because some precondition in another seemingly unrelated technology *didn't yet exist* ***or*** because the *cost* of the 'solution' was prohibitive at the level of technology that *did* exist.

Or it could be that the 'solution', *to be useful*, had to be applied on a scale that was prohibitively expensive for the market(s) available.

And, of course, there's that perennial favourite – *'it wasn't obvious that it **would** work'*, and there were severe consequences for failure for people living as close to the margins as most medievals did.

*And handcraft level production meant that this was the case for almost everything. It took a **long** time for European societies to build up the capital reserves to allow the construction of these sorts of 'solutions' **on spec.***

Finally, yes, there's the *'they simply didn't think of it because, unlike us, they weren't operating with 20:20 hindsight.'*

*There were a lot of technological back alleys and dead ends along the way ... and it was almost always the case that it wasn't obvious how successful any given new idea or new technology would be **in practise**.*


ARS SCHOLASTICA
MAURICE LALAU 1909

ARS SCHOLASTICA

Medieval people weren't in the least bit stupid.

They *hadn't* discovered, developed or refined a lot of the knowledge(s) we take for granted – often simply because they didn't have required (but only obvious to *us*) precursor knowledge(s) or, about equally as often, because the knowledge(s) they *did* have was/were ... *flawed* (which is, all too often, putting it kindly).

*To study the Seven Liberal Arts took about as long as it does today to do a Bachelor's degree in the **modern** Liberal Arts (and other areas of study no longer regarded as part of them **now**, but which were **then**) ... and they weren't skimping on the work that had to be done to gain those degrees, either. It's just that, as we **now** know, a **lot** of what they studied was complete and utter rubbish ...*

*Of course, some of the material that was presented to us as absolute, authentic, rock solid **fact** when I was doing **my** Bachelor's degree and Postgraduate studies in the 70's is, **now**, regarded as rubbish and/or wildly wrong (some commented upon in this present book).*

The more things change ...

The first sections of this chapter will deal with some of the key, but not always obvious, knowledges which had an important impact on medieval society.

MEDIEVAL SCHOOLING

PRIMARY EDUCATION

For those who needed, and who could afford, a degree of advanced education – *literacy*, basically – initial schooling was usually done either informally in the home or, occasionally, by the local (or family) priest and usually didn't begin until the child was around 7, or even 8, years of age, though a wealthy (or merely ambitious) family might, instead, send their child directly to a *Grammar School*.



The first measure of business was to learn how to *read* – only when this was satisfactorily underway was the teaching of *writing* begun, and, even then, most of their instruction in that would be done later, in *Grammar School*.

Prior to that their education would have mostly been in practical matters – manners and etiquette.

READING

Learning to read began with learning to recognise the letters of the alphabet. Once this was achieved, students were moved through recognition of syllables, words and phrases ... *all in Latin and from Latin texts*, typically learning the instructional text (whatever it may have been) by heart (and rote).

*The most commonly used text in the early Medieval period was a **Psalter** (the Book of Psalms, often with additional religiously significant material) ... mainly because this was the most common book or manuscript to be found in private hands until **Books of Hours** were increasingly popularised from the 12th century onward.*

*Interestingly, there was not necessarily any attempt to teach students to **understand** what they were reading – learning **Latin** was a separate area of study! Indeed, there is considerable evidence to show that even many of the instructors had limited latin comprehension and had to use **glosses** (word lists) in whatever the local vernacular was in order to be able to understand their teaching texts!*

For most students, learning to read ***aloud*** was probably the limit of their education ...

Only those being schooled in religious institutions or who intended to attend a *Grammar School* would proceed much beyond this – usually a basic introduction to Latin and Latin grammar, often from select parts of the Bible or some of the simpler (more clearly written) Latin classics.

GRAMMAR SCHOOLS

Though the term *'Grammar School'* doesn't actually appear until the 14th century, schools providing basic education had existed since the 6th century ... mostly at *Cathedrals* or *Monasteries*, though, occasionally, Kings or Nobles would have similar teaching institutions attached to their Court(s).

Medieval Reading

The teaching of reading and writing was ***not*** done simultaneously during the period between the 10th–14th centuries (or, indeed, for much longer than that).

Reading was taught *first* – moreover, students were taught to read *orally* (out loud – though, if alone, or in public and not wanting to disturb those around them, a reader might do so *sotto voce*), usually physically following the text with their finger.

Today such a reading style would be (is!) regarded as the sign of a poorly skilled, early stage, learner ... but it was the common style for the period.

Scriptio Continua

St. Augustine, in his ***'Confessions'***, for example, notes that Bishop Ambrose of Milan (d. 397) ... *'His eyes traveled across the pages and his heart searched out the meaning, but his voice and tongue stayed still.'*

*Why was **reading aloud** so (and there is much other evidence supporting its widespread use) commonplace?*

Recent research indicates it was almost certainly because of the way early medieval manuscripts were written – in a style called *Scriptio Continua* (lit. 'continuous script').

Even written Latin did develop word separation until the 7th century – when something like a dot (•) or diamond mark (⬩) started to be used.

For reasons that are unclear, in the post-classical west the practise of including word separation, differential case (upper and lower) letters and diacritical marks went out of use and all texts were written like this ...

NEQVEPORROQVISQVAMESTQVIDOLOREMIPSVMQVIA
DOLORSITAMETCONSECTETVRADIPISCIVELIT

Neque porro quisquam est qui dolorem ipsum quia dolor sit amet consectetur adipisci velit...

'Nobody likes pain for its own sake, or looks for it and wants to have it, just because it is pain ...' ***Cicero***

*Sounding out the text was an eas(ier) way of figuring out what the heck the actual words **in** the text **were** ... since there is also no punctuation or fixed spelling*

This style remained the norm through to the 8th-9th centuries when spaces between words (and, eventually, differentiated upper and lower case letters and additional punctuation marks) *start* to reappear in Anglo-Saxon texts in England and Ireland ... but this did not *start* to become the dominant style until the late 13th century, and the process was still underway during the early to mid 14th century.

To successfully read *scriptio continua* requires engaging a different part of the brain than reading 'normal' writing ... and, while it isn't ***impossible*** to read it silently, it does take some concentration and a level of skill at reading that was not common in even the most literate medievals.

Punctuation issues . . .

There was, of course, nothing like modern punctuation in *scriptio continua* – in fact, the earliest punctuation was the dot/diamond between words in late classical latin and, then, the blank space between words that 'ended' *scriptio continua.*

Therefore, it is only from the later 13th century that other forms of punctuation begin to appear – heck, even (for poetry, mainly) having separate(d) lines of text rather than simply filling the parchment (*expensive*, remember) edge to edge was not a given ... often only the last line of a verse or stanza would end where it ended and a new line be started for a new verse/stanza.

Apostrophe. A mark showing some letters are missing, exactly like the modern usage.

Hyphen. Used to indicate words split between lines, appears only in the late 13th century.

Punctus. The 'full stop' developed to indicate a pause at the end of a sentence doesn't appear until the 13th-14th century and is written mid-line (•).

Punctus Versus. Eventually developing into the *semicolon*, it looked like a small '7' (or comma) over a standard *Punctus.*

Punctus Interrogativus. A squiggle above a *Punctus* (?) and uncommon until the 17th century (as questions were easily recognised by their syntax).

Underlining. Used to indicate quotations, direct speech, parenthetical material and proper names.

Virgula Suspensiva. A slash (/) indicating a short pause – could be doubled or tripled. It develops into the *comma* in the early 16th century.

*Other punctuation, including Exclamation Marks (17th century) and Quotation Marks (18th century) are generally **much** later, often not appearing (or not appearing commonly) until the invention of printing and the explosion in availability of textual material.*

As you can see, these marks were *often* intended to make it easier for the reader to figure out exactly how to read the text *aloud* – where the pauses were (and how long they should be) and what sort of intonation or inflection should be used

Coursework

The main purpose of such schools was to teach *Latin* Grammar – reading *first* (if not already known), then writing, with a smattering of other subjects that would be part of the *Seven Liberal Arts* ... usually including *some* Theology, Law (mostly Roman or Church, not necessarily Secular), Liturgy (verse and *music*, especially *song*) and some basic Arithmetic and Natural Science (*'Physics'*, as it was called) depending on the skills and knowledge of their teacher(s), especially in the later years when they had mastered reading and writing.

*Writing was taught, **not** by the regular Grammar teachers, or, if it was, only in the smallest institutions, but by **Scriveners** who were often itinerant, doing a circuit of several schools and, in between, offering their services as Public Notaries (not just witnessing legal and other documents, but often writing them in the first place, and even reading them to their less than literate customers).*

Entry. Students could begin their studies as young as 7-8 years of age, but this was relatively unusual, and most started attendance around the age of 9-10.

Graduation. This was usually around age 13-14, at which point those who could afford (and had the desire) to could progress to University studies.

In modern terms, they were the equivalent of Senior Primary and Lower Secondary (or Elementary and Middle Schools in US parlance).

Facilities

While Cathedral and Monastic Schools often had special areas set aside for their schools, these were not always purpose built. The main qualification was that the space was not needed for anything else and was well lit with natural light.

There might only be a chair, possibly a lectern, for the teacher, students sitting on the floor or, possibly, bench seats for them – though probably no individual desks.

***Blackboards** didn't exist (and don't until the 18th century) and the teacher probably had the only copy of the text being studied/taught – students wrote on wax tablets with a stylus, much as they had in classical Romano-Greek times, as parchment was expensive while the wax surface could be smoothed over with the flat end of the stylus and re-used repeatedly.*



***Slates** are mentioned as early as the 14th century, but don't seem to have become common until the 17th century (or later) when improvements in roads and other means of transport started to bring down the cost of transporting the raw slate all over, rather than merely nearby to where it was mined).*

Staffing. This could vary widely (and wildly) – it might be a single Monk or Cleric who could be spared from other duties, or there might be several who might specialise in a particular subject area, or simply allow larger numbers of students to be handled.

Language of Instruction. Since the purpose of a Grammar School was to teach *Latin* grammar, as much of the instruction given as was possible for the stage of learning a student had achieved was in Latin, regardless of the vernacular (local) language.

By their last year of study, if not sooner, those who had any intention of heading off to University were expected to be fluent in Latin as all the classes there would be conducted entirely in that language.

Class Sizes. These were not standardised – a single teacher might teach anywhere from a dozen or so through to around 100, though the average seems to have been somewhere in between, usually 40-60.

Monastic schools tended to have smaller cohorts than Cathedral Schools – and the size of the Town or City where a Cathedral was sited had a direct influence on the size of the cohort of students it could handle, as would the presence (or support of or endowment by) prominent nobles or even of the royal family.

Discipline. If one is to believe the period illustrations and other evidence, corporal punishment seems to have been widely used ... but it is uncertain how stringently it may have been applied or how widespread its use was.

*Certainly the medieval period was one where treatment that we would regard as excessively brutal **today** seems to have been common, even normative ... but some of the material seems to be quite over the top (the teacher with the Club on the previous page, for example).*

However, Apprentices were known to riot – records from the City of London indicate measures taken to control or prevent such behavior date back to the first quarter of the 14th century at the very least – there is no reason to believe Grammar School students were less likely to get out of hand, especially considering the large class sizes.

Medieval Writing

With no printing press, writing was doubly important for the keeping records and the recording and transmission of information and knowledge. There were two broad categories of handwritten scripts used – *Book Hand* (used, naturally, for writing books and other formal documents) and *Document Hand* (used for writing letters and informal documents).

Pen & Ink

Ink. There were two types of ink in use. One was a *carbon* based type made from *lamp-black* or *charcoal* mixed with gum as an adhesive; the other was *oak-gall* based made by mixing tannic acid and ferrous sulphate with gum as a thickener.

Carbon-based inks dominated from classical times but were slowly replaced by Oak-gall inks, a process that seems to have been complete by the 12th century, probably due to the loss of access to papyrus based 'paper' as carbon based inks rub off parchment too easily, whereas gall-based inks soak right into it.

The basic colour of Carbon and Oak-gall inks was ***black***, but ***red*** could be made by *either* grinding up *mercuric sulphide* and mixing it with egg whites and gum *or* by soaking *Brazilwood* chips in vinegar and adding gum ... and red was the main secondary colour used in Manuscripts and other documents.

Blue and Green inks were rare, and Gold or Silver 'inks' (really colloidal suspensions in the ink-base) were ***extremely*** *rare.*

Pens. These were made from the flight feathers of a large bird, usually a Goose ... but any large bird's feathers will do. As noted elsewhere, most of the feathers were removed (ALL them on the leading edge) and the end slit and squared to a chisel point (not the sharp point used in modern recreations).

Quill pens had to be dipped into an inkwell to replenish them frequently, every several letters, and they had to be held at right angles to the paper to achieve the best writing results ... so most writing was done on sloped tables to make writing less stressful on the arm.

Erasing Mistakes. If the scribe was quick to notice a mistake, they could scrape off the ink before it fully penetrated the parchment using the same small knife they used to sharpen their quills ...

If, however, they only noticed it later, when the ink had dried *and* penetrated they had to use a piece of *pumice stone* to literally rub away the mistake by rubbing away the stained material (fortunately parchment or vellum was both strong enough and thick enough to take such handling).

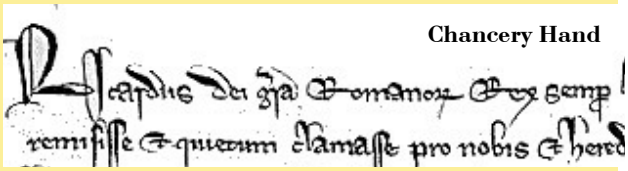
Book-Hand

This was a calligraphic hand 'designed' to make each letter or ligature (such as ***æ***) clear and easy to read. It is characterised by separate rather than cursive (joined) lettering. Through to the mid 12th century this was commonly *Carolingian* (on the Continent) or *Insular* (in the British Isles) *Minuscule*, but this developed into *Blackletter*, which replaced it.



Document Hand (Cursive)

This was an everyday hand 'designed' to make it easy and quick to write and is characterised by the fact that all the letters of a single word are joined together. They are often referred to as *Chancery* or *Court Hand(s)* and were, at least somewhat, based on the forms most common in the state bureaucracies (such as they were) in the various parts of Europe.



Paper or Parchment?

Before the 13th century, all books and other documents in western Europe *had* to be written on *parchment* (specially prepared animal skin) as papyrus imports from the Middle East (mainly Egypt) had long ceased with the collapse of the Western Empire and the later loss of those lands to the Muslims.

Sometime in the 13th century, however, the secret of making *paper* arrived in the Middle East and was quickly transmitted to the west – the first waterwheel powered paper mills appeared by the last quarter of the century in Spain.

Initially, paper was not well regarded as a writing material – it obviously wasn't as durable as parchment and many people believed it would not be as long lasting, either (there were, even then, examples of parchment scrolls that had survived several hundred years and which were still in excellent condition), and its main advantage was that it was relatively much cheaper.

As a result, it was often used for first drafts of important documents (which would then be finalised on parchment) or as working drafts for expensive illuminated manuscripts but, increasingly, for cheap chapbooks for students or poorer laypeople and clerics as well as for private letters which were not deemed important enough to be written on as long lasting a medium as parchment.

Hours. Most schools operated from around dawn to around dusk, just like real life, averaging around 13 hours a day, but there would usually be a two hour mid-day break for meals.

Girl's Education. Girls were not *normally* allowed to attend Grammar Schools during the period (there seem to have been occasional exceptions, late in the 14th century) and they were *certainly* not allowed to attend Monastery Schools and, probably, not Cathedral Schools except in exceptional circumstances.

Well-to-do families generally paid for a tutor, or several families might club together to hire one or, if the mother was literate, she could teach her own girl children.

The other possibility, usually for the *very* well off, was to send daughters to a *Nunnery*, where they could receive an advanced education similar to that available in a *Monastery* or *Cathedral School* with the addition of more 'feminine' pursuits such as courtesy, music & singing, dancing and poetry.

Universities

The *Artes Liberales* (aka *The Seven Liberal Arts*) were the basic course in Universities (which *start* to appear in the late 11th, but only become widespread during the 13th century) and their precursors, the *Cathedral* and *Monastic Schools* of the early medieval period.

By the mid to late 13th century almost half of the highest offices in the Catholic Church were held by graduates from various Universities. The rest would mostly have studied at famous Monastic or Cathedral Schools.

The Seven Liberal Arts

These consisted of the initial, *preparatory*, studies of the ***Trivium*** (the 'humanities', loosely speaking) –

- Grammar
- Logic
- Rhetoric

... followed by the more important studies of the ***Quadrivium*** (the 'sciences', *very* loosely speaking) –



- Arithmetic
- Astrology
- Geometry
- Music

*Most of the seven don't qualify as separate subjects at University (or even High School) any more ... or as subjects worthy of widespread study at **any** level of schooling (Astrology, obviously [though it **has** morphed into Astronomy], but most, if not all, of Rhetoric as well).*

*Others have been subsumed into other subjects (Arithmetic & Geometry into Mathematic, Grammar [**Latin** Grammar] into Language Arts) or have become marginalised (Logic [**not** the same as Mathematical or Computational Logic], for the most part and Music, which is most certainly no longer seen as a 'science').*

Course of Studies

Initially, all three areas of the *Trivium* were regarded (and taught) as being equally important, but during the period covered by this sourcebook greater and greater emphasis came to be placed on the study and practise of ***Logic*** over the other two.

In any case, the three areas of the *Trivium* were seen as foundational studies, the basis on which the *much* more important part of the degree, the *Quadrivium* were built.

Lectures. Lectures were, of course, in Latin and, as far as can be ascertained, consisted of the lecturer reading from a text, asking questions (or having the students ask questions) after each section, then providing the 'correct' answers accompanied by explanatory and expanded material to support this.

The lecturer likely had the only copy of the text in the lecture room, students had to listen carefully and, if wealthy enough, take notes on either parchment or, later, possibly on paper.

*Lecturers also seem to have conducted what amount to **tutorials** outside their regular lecturing, possibly paid for by well off students wanting more personalised instruction or, also possibly, simply with those students who had attracted their interest through intellectual curiosity, general brilliance or other personal qualities.*

Study. Because few of the students would have had access to the book(s) being studied, they had to rely on rote memorisation (which seems to have been the common format presented by the lecturers) or writing (or purchasing) glosses (in this sense, summaries of the line of argument and definitions of the key terms).

Additional Studies. Though not formally part of the *Seven Liberal Arts*, the study of Aristotelian philosophy – ***Physics*** (which has little or no connection to what *we* regard as Physics today), ***Metaphysics*** and

University of Paris Charter (1231)

Gregory, the Bishop ... [*Pope Gregory X*], to his beloved sons, all the Masters and Students of Paris,- greetings and Apostolic benediction.

Paris, the mother of the sciences ... a City of Letters, shines forth illustrious ...

We have diligently investigated the questions referred to us ... [and] ... have decided that these should be set at rest ... by precautionary measures ...

Each [Faculty] *Chancellor* ... in the presence of the Bishop [or his representative] ... [and] two Masters of the students ... shall swear ... he will not receive as Professors ... any but suitable men ... and ... will reject all who are unworthy.

Before Licensing [appointing] anyone [i.e. giving them the right to teach at the University], during three months ... from the time when the license is requested [he] shall make ... inquiries ... concerning the life, knowledge, capacity, purpose, prospects and other qualities needful in such persons; and after the[se] inquiries ... he shall grant or deny the license to the candidate as seems fitting and expedient.

*Later the right to lecture was extended **automatically** to anyone who had a Masters Degree from any University which had also been granted a Papal Charter, and taken out of the hands of the Chancellor.*

We grant to you the right of making Constitutions and Ordinances regulating the manner and time of lecture, the costume to be worn, the burial of the dead; who are to lecture and on what and at what hours; concerning the prices of the lodging; punishment for those who violate [these rules].

*That is, the University, through the Chancellor, Faculty Heads and Masters were granted what amounted to **self government** for themselves and the student body.*

If the assessment of the lodgings is taken from you ... or an injury or outrageous damage, such as death or the mutilation is inflicted on one of you you may suspend your lectures after fifteen days without resolution until you have received full satisfaction.

If any one of you is unlawfully imprisoned, unless the injury ceases on remonstrance from you, you may suspend your lectures immediately.

We command the Bishop of Paris shall [enforce the benefit of clergy on behalf of the students – neither the Mayor of the City nor the Chancellor of the University may hold or imprison anyone, only the Bishop].

We also forbid holding a student for a debt ... and ... neither the Bishop nor his official nor the Chancellor shall exact a pecuniary penalty for removing an excommunication or any other censure of any kind.

Nor shall the Chancellor demand from the licensed Masters ... an oath, or obedience, or any pledge nor shall he receive any emolument or promise for granting a license.

The vacation in summer is not to exceed one month, and the Bachelors, if they wish, can continue their lectures in vacation time.

We prohibit ... the students from carrying weapons in the city and the university from protecting those who disturb peace and study.

Those who call themselves students but do not frequent the schools, or acknowledge any master, are in no way to enjoy the liberties of the students.

How to determine this? There was no formal, central, list of enrolled students to check – and, given the benefits of claiming 'student' status, it is obvious that some people tried to use the lack of clear records as a way to gain financial benefit or legal immunity.

Moreover, we order that the Masters in Arts shall always read one lecture on Priscian, and one book after the other in regular courses.

Those books on natural philosophy which for a certain reason were prohibited in a provincial council, are not to be used at Paris until they have been examined and purged of all suspicion of error.

The Masters and students in Theology shall strive to exercise themselves laudably in the branch which they profess; they shall not show themselves philosophers but strive to become God's learned.

[The Masters and Students] shall not speak in the language of the people, confounding the sacred language with the profane.

*And there were informers called **Wolves** who could fine students for breaching this rule, even outside of class! Speak in Latin **only**!*

In the schools they shall dispute only on such questions as can be determined by the Theological books and the writings of the holy fathers.

It is not lawful for any whatever to infringe this deed of our provision, constitution, concession, prohibition and inhibition or to act contrary to it ...

Given at the Lateran, on the Ides of April [April 13], in the fifth year of our Pontificate.

Moral Philosophy – started to be included in the general curriculum very soon after the establishment of the first formal Universities (a process largely complete by the end of the 14th century, if not sooner).

*Aristotelian **Physics** is a form of **philosophy of science** rather than science per se and is **useless** (indeed, widely **counterproductive**) as a form of scientific understanding or assessment ... yet was accepted as the underpinning of 'science' for close to two millennia, and only comprehensively debunked during the Renaissance by such luminaries as Copernicus, Galileo and Brahe ...*

*Even then, 'physics' remained a part of the curriculum of many universities, even prestigious ones, **well** into the 17th century when people like Newton finally nailed it.*

Examinations. During this period most 'exams' were, in fact, done in the same way a modern doctoral (PhD) candidate defends their thesis or in the way Lawyers and Architects *used* to acquire professional qualifications by being quizzed for several hours by acknowledged Masters (i.e. a panel of Masters/Doctors of the relevant faculty) ... written exams were a later development outside of the period covered.

It is possible that, in some cases, the student might also have been asked to provide and defend a written dissertation on a specific topic ... though this was usually a secondary component of the 'examination.'

During their period of study, a student would certainly have been required to provide a written defence or essay on an aspect of the material(s) being studied and, though this would not have been 'marked', their success in doing so would be known to the examining panel.

The examination process could be quite fraught – one continental University prohibited candidates from bringing knives or other weapons into the exam!

Some student riots are known to have been triggered by disputes over the conduct and results of examinations!

Degrees. Completion of a course in the Liberal Arts typically required six years of successful study and resulted in the award of a ***Master of Arts*** degree ... those who could not afford (or did not wish) to complete the six years were granted a ***Bachelor of Arts*** degree after 3-4 years, depending on the university.



***Serious** students were at a University to get a **Masters** degree – a **Bachelor's Degree** was a second class qualification rather than an intermediate step, though this started to change from the 15th century onwards.*

Only about 1/3rd of students managed to complete a full 6 year Masters Degree.

Specialist (Medical) Universities. To start, there *weren't* any and, later, 'regular' universities offered specialist postgrad degrees, but there *were* a number of universities recognised as either specialist ***Medical*** institutions or which had specialist ***Medical*** colleges.

*The first such was the **University of Salerno** which was the premier school for medical teaching in Europe during the 10th-13th centuries, but rapidly declined thereafter and ceased to exist during the 14th century.*

*Other important Medical Universities or Faculties of the period were those of **Paris (1150), Bologna (1158), Oxford (1167), Montpellier (1181)** and **Padua (1222).***

Some of these institutions offered stand-alone instruction, an all-in-one 'Medical' degree combining Liberal Arts with Medical studies ... around 10 years all up, roughly a 60:40 Liberal Arts/Medical split.

Others offered a postgraduate degree, usually a further five or six years of study, for those who had already achieved a *Master of Arts* degree.

Postgraduate Studies. Apart from Medicine, ***Law*** *(both **Civil** [**Roman**] and **Ecclesiastical**])* and ***Theology*** were offered as postgraduate areas of study. They typically required another 6-12 years of study and offered a ***Bachelor's*** Degree about half to two thirds of the way through (but, again, as a second rate non-achievement) and a ***Master's*** Degree at the end ... and the latter was sometime referred to as a ***Doctorate*** *(**PhD** in modern parlance – though the term doesn't exist until the 16th century) depending on the University and course as early as the mid 12th century.*

FACILITIES

The earliest Universities had *no* permanent facilities – they weren't a *place*, they were a 'corporation' or 'guild' of students or instructors. Classes were taught wherever there was space – often in Churches, but also in private homes or even in Taverns.

However, as the idea of the 'university' became more established in a local area, the *universitas* was usually soon able to at least rent semi-permanent facilities and, if successful, eventually build their own.

Staffing. Initially 'staffing' consisted of a group of loosely affiliated 'Masters' who independently attracted students to whatever subject they taught, in effect being paid for *by* the students they attracted ... and, to a degree, this remained the case through to the 14th century in at least some (mostly those in Italy).

However, increasingly, in most there was some centralised authority (especially in France and England) – either teachers were appointed (and paid) by the Church or by the State.

***The** qualification for appointment (or hiring) as an instructor was the holding of a **Master's Degree** – and, for postgraduate studies in Law, Medicine or Theology, a **second** such degree in that particular specialist area.*

Within the University, the staff were organised into *Faculties **if*** more than just the seven *Liberal Arts* were taught ... since every Master with such a qualification was, nominally, capable of teaching every aspect of the *Trivium* and *Quadrivium*, though, of course, most tended to specialise in particular areas.

If the University offered postgraduate studies in Law, Medicine or Theology, there would be separate faculties for each of those areas.

There was, as nowadays, competition between various university establishments all over Europe to secure the services of the most prestigious teachers – made easier by the simple fact that all teaching and instruction was done in Latin, regardless of the local language.

Language of Instruction. Classes were conducted *entirely* in ***Latin*** during the period, as Latin was regarded as the international language of diplomacy and scholarship ... and most of the texts studied were in Latin in any case.

*Some Universities fined students for **not** speaking Latin within the designated University precincts – using Proctors to root out such (mis)behaviour.*

Class Sizes. These were generally *much* smaller than those found in *Grammar Schools*, but they could vary considerably ... major *lectures* were often packed, with as many as 50-60 (occasionally more) students but probably averaged around half this.

There were also held with smaller groups, usually no more than a dozen, and often half that or less.

Student Body. There are no hard and fast figures available for any universities, but estimates suggest that it could be anywhere from 2-300 through to around 3000, with some authorities suggesting that the University of Paris (probably the largest university in western Europe during the period) *may* have had as ~8000 at the end of the 14th century.



*In England, Oxford and Cambridge Universities, **combined**, had around 2000 students towards the end of the 14th century – most of them at Oxford.*

Discipline. Discipline? *Discipline? **What*** discipline? Seriously, this was an ongoing issue – students at regularly licensed/recognised Universities were granted the *'benefit of clergy'* and it was effectively impossible for the civil authorities to punish them ...

*As described elsewhere 'benefit of clergy' meant that the possessor could only be tried in and punished by an **ecclesiastic** court ... and they were loathe to hear any cases involving matters that were criminal under local law, and unlikely to want to pursue cases that were criminal under Civil (**Roman**) Law.*

*With one exception – if a student (or faculty member) was accused (and convicted) of **heresy** the church authorities **might** then pursue matters (however, see the section on Heresy in the section on the **Catholic Church** in **De Civitate Dei** for the loopholes).*

Students started their undergraduate studies at 14-15 years of age, and the universities were generally well away from their homes and families ... and there was little or no supervision *of* the students.

Would it come as a surprise, then, to discover that University students had a (generally well deserved) reputation for drinking to excess, gambling, fighting and frequenting prostitutes? Or that such behaviour quite frequently got out of hand?

***The Shrove Tuesday Riot (Paris, 1229).** At the end of the carnival a dispute between a Tavern owner and*

some students over the nonpayment of the bill led to the latter being beaten up and thrown out. The next day they returned with friends, all armed with clubs, and beat up the proprietor and tore down his establishment – the fighting spread into surrounding streets and destroyed or damaged a number of other shops.

*The Royal Guard stepped in a killed some random students (who **may** have been innocent) so the entire University went on strike ... classes closed and all the students went to other Universities or returned home ...*

*After **two years** of severe economic strain caused by the lost business, a settlement was negotiated that put the University under Papal protection (see the **Charter** on the previous page) and gave the staff and students immunity from all local laws.*

***The St. Scholastica Day Riot (Oxford, 1355).** A dispute between two drunken students and a Taverner, initially involving rude words and a thrown mug, led to a riot between the townsmen (armed with Bows and shouting **'Havac! Havoc! Smyt fast, give gode knocks!'**) and the university's students (~200 of them) that lasted **two days** and resulted in the death of ~30 locals and 63 students.*

*The authorities **eventually** found the University was in the right (or, at least, they found they needed the University's **work** more than they cared about the local's grievances) and issued a Charter confirming its privileges.*

Violence between 'town and gown' was perennial ... and could lead to more deaths and much greater destruction of property than in these examples.

*Traditionally, Cambridge University was supposedly founded by staff and students from **Oxford** fleeing from one of those perennial outbreaks of violence!*

Hours. Classes nominally began at *Prime* (6 am) and most students attended three classes a day, each usually two hours – *probably* spaced at the canonical hours ... at two from 9 am, noon or 3 pm.

9 pm would be after dark and lighting was, as noted elsewhere, expensive and not particularly effective.

Girl's Education. Universities were, like Monastery and Cathedral Schools, either set up under the auspices *of* or were granted a Charter *by* the Church *or* drew most (if not all) of their initial teaching staff from the ranks of the Clergy ... and one of the main purposes promoted by the Church authorities was the transmission of religious and theological knowledge (even at the *Master of Arts* degree level).

In fact number of universities either expected scholars to take Minor Orders or specifically granted them when a student had achieved the Bachelor's level.

This meant it was ***completely** impossible* for women to attend University (at least *as* women) – since they were prohibited from becoming Priests or taking Minor Orders (apart from becoming a Nun, of course, which didn't count in medieval minds).

*Of course, the behavioural reputation of University **students** (mentioned above) was such that no respectable family, or, indeed, any respectable woman, would consider attending such dens of iniquity!*

***Note:** While they couldn't attend **University**, women from a wealthy family or belonging to a wealthy Nunnery could receive a similar education through the use of private tutors ... it was just extremely rare.*

The Seven Liberal Arts

As noted elsewhere, the core curriculum of Medieval Universities was the *Seven Liberal Arts*, taught in two parts – the (introductory) *Trivium* followed by the (advanced) *Quadrivium*.

Each of these, and the components that make up their study, are dealt with in the section(s) below.

The Trivium

This consists of the study of *Grammar*, *Rhetoric* and *Logic* ... none of which (with the possible exception of *Rhetoric*) is anything like what you'd expect.

*Yes, it's where triv**ial** comes from, originally, by the usual long and torturous route – feel free to check it out!*



Grammar

Though, technically speaking, this covers the study of (***Latin***) Grammar, the structural rules that make a language work, to the Medieval learning community it was much more. It was about ***writing*** – both prose and poetry, including such things as metre and rhythm – as much as knowing the structural rules.

Unlike (most) modern grammar curricula, medieval grammar teachers didn't simply teach sterile and largely pointless parsing of passages ... they actively taught the art of writing using the structural rules. This was particularly important as a foundation for the study and use of *Rhetoric*.

Logic (Dialectic)

This was the art of rational thought and enquiry – something not particularly well defined during the period, and most universities had varying;y different understandings of exactly what it involved or how it was to be taught ... indeed, in larger universities there might very likely be different Masters belonging to two (or more) factions on this issue.

While, *theoretically*, it was about distilling knowledge into the basic, incontrovertible, factual underpinnings it was, in fact, more commonly used as a means to win debates by constructing *seemingly* solid arguments supporting one's own position while *technically* demolishing the opposition's argument(s), regardless of their factual validity ... especially when coupled with *Rhetoric*.

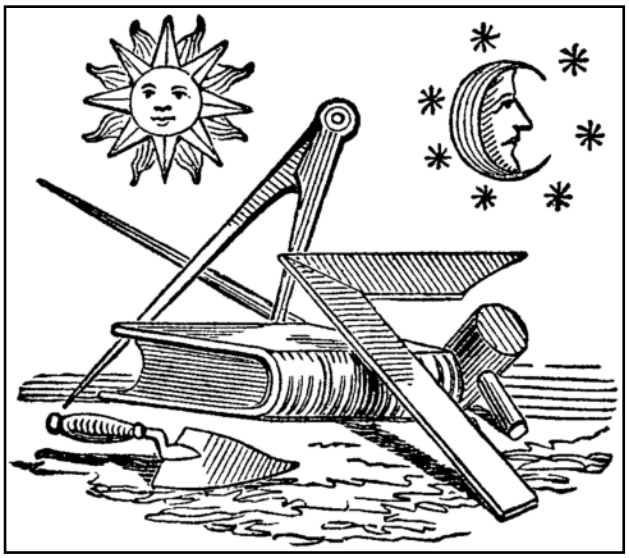
Another flaw, to modern minds, was that it relied on often rigidly set patterns of mental inquiry based on Aristotelian concepts rather than actual experimentation or examination of the reality of a particular situation and, furthermore, was used almost exclusively for the conduct of *philosophical* rather than arithmetical or computational enquiries and formed the basis, along with *Grammar*, for the art of *Rhetoric*.

*Pretty much useless in any **practical** sense – while perfectly acceptable for philosophical matters (which were, then, as they are now, mostly irrelevant to most people ... apologies to any philosophers out there) – see **Usage & Abusage: Scholasticism,** below.*

Rhetoric

This was not simply the 'art' of speechifying, it was the teaching of a comprehensive linguistic toolkit for the presentation of information and structuring of arguments in both written and oral (speech, poetry and song) forms.

It formally consisted of *Ars Dictaminis* (the art of writing formal letters), *Ars Praedicandi* (the art of saying things, especially the art of writing [religious] sermons) and a ***subset*** of *Ars Grammatica* on the use of grammatical tricks to enhance the two main forms.



It was used in conjunction, especially, with *Logic*, to win arguments more than to instruct ... and to win by fair means or foul, regardless of the objective reality of any particular situation under discussion.

The subject was traditionally divided into five broad topic areas – *arrangement*, *delivery*, *invention*, *style* and *memory* and, possibly, into categories based on the *intent* of the speech/text (i.e. legal, theological, scientific or whatever).

Usage & Abusage: Scholasticism

*As with any academic pursuit, elements constituting the Trivium could be trivialised or abused ... but weren't **inherently** useless. Sadly, for most of the medieval period they **were** trivialised as part of the **Scholastic** movement which dominated European universities and academic thought throughout the period.*

***Scholasticism** became a means of (or resulted from a need to) defending **dogma** (officially approved 'truths' which cannot be questioned), especially Roman Catholic dogma ... and permeated the entire structure of academic thought and teaching from the foundation of the first true universities in the 11th century through to the late 15th century.*

Unfortunately, the assumption of a dogmatic (inherently unquestionable) basis for religious argument spread to become the underpinning of all the other fields of study in medieval universities (not surprising, considering their main religiously approved purpose), rendering the whole system fatally flawed if not entirely useless until it was relegated to non-scientific usage during the Renaissance.

The Quadrivium

These were the advanced, 'scientific', elements of the *Liberal Arts* ... though *not* in the modern sense of 'scientific' nor, for the most part, areas of study that would commonly be accepted as 'sciences' in recent times (even if it would seem so from the names given them) – *Arithmetic*, *Geometry*, *Astrology* and *Music*.

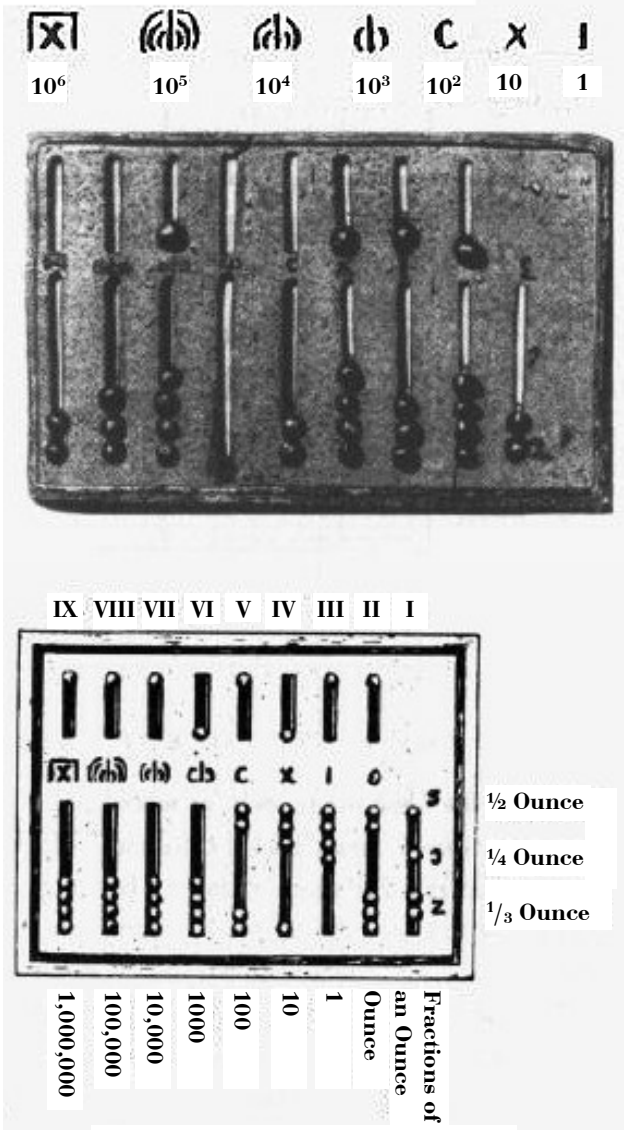
ROMAN & MEDIEVAL CALCULATIONS

Until the late 10th century, Hindu/Arabic numerals (developed before AD 700 in India, arrived in the Islamic world in the early 9th century) seem to have been unknown in Europe before the late 10th century, and do not start to be *popularised* until the late 12th and only become *dominant* after the invention of printing, by the mid-to-late 16th century.

Therefore, for most calculations during the 10th-14th centuries (the period covered by this book), medieval europeans used *Roman Numerals* ... which, according to some sources, made complex calculations exceedingly difficult if not virtually impossible. Like so many such claims, this is not *entirely* true ...

Medieval professionals who needed to continued to use the *Roman Abacus*, both in the simplified ***Hand Abacus*** version (shown below) and a larger ***Reckoning Board*** using loose counters for larger, more complex, calculations with some speed and ease.

The Roman (and Medieval) Hand Abacus



Note: 'Ounce' = 1/12th of ***anything***

ARITHMETIC

For the most part, university studies of arithmetic were only interested in the *computus* ('calculation') ***if*** *it led to philosophical ends.* They were ***not*** interested in *practical* applications (or, at least, not interested in *teaching* them to their *students*) ... unless they were the accidental results of philosophical musings.

This continued the Graeco-Roman division of what ***we*** *call 'mathematics' into (loosely)* ***'arithmetic'*** *= number theory and* ***'logistic'*** *= arithmetic. This did not completely stop interest in 'mathematics', but tended to limit it to musings between like minded individuals rather than as a directly taught university level course of instruction.'*

*A third possibility for consideration existed – the use of numbers for mystical or religious (****numerological****) purposes, and this was seen as at least as serious a pursuit as the other two elements to some.*

Specific areas of study within the overall topic included (but were not limited to) the *Theory of Discrete Quantities*, *The Number*, *Ratios* (i.e. relationships *between* numbers) and *The Proportion or Mean* (the relationships between *three* numbers).

As noted in the sidebar on the next page, until the early 13th century almost all 'arithmetic' was done using Roman Numerals ... and 'arabic' numerals only slowly caught on from that point, which made many mathematical computations quite difficult even if the the instructors in medieval universities had been interested.

Medieval Roman Numerals. 'Classic' Roman numerals were modified during the medieval period – *lower case* letters were for the first time (i.e. iii instead of III for 3) and, occasionally, a lower case **'j'** was sometuimes substituted for the terminal 'i' in a series of such (e.g. 'ii**j**' for iii, 3).

Alternate forms were also introduced – such as **'A'** for V (5 – or sometimes 500, just to confuse things), **'B'** for CCC (300), **'E'** for CCL (250), **'F'** for XL (40), **'G'** for CD (400 – also see *'P'*), **'H'** for II (2 – or sometimes 200), **'N'** for XC (90), **'O'** for XI (11), **'P'** for CD (400 – also see *'G'*), **'Q'** for D (500), **'R'** for LXXX (80), **'S'** for LXX (70 – or sometimes for 7), **'T'** for CLX (160), **'Y'** for CL (150) and **'Z'** for MM *or* VII (2000 or 7).

Mathematical Symbology. Few of the symbols we take for granted in writing down mathematical operations existed at the beginning of the period ... the '+' (***addition***) symbol only appears in the mid 14th century, probably as an abbreviation for the Latin ***et*** *('and')* and the '–' (***subtraction***) symbol can only be dated to the middle of the 15th century.

The 'x' (***multiplication***) symbol dates no earlier than the early 17th century (though some earlier mathematical works show multiplication by using what would

seem to be an *exponent* – 2^3 meaning 2 x 3 ... true exponents ['powers'] only appear in the 17th century) as does the '÷' (***division***) symbol.

Fractions (e.g. ¼, ½, ¾) in numeric form with a horizontal bar rather than as written words appear in the 13th century – but the fraction was written to the left of (or above) the bar (e.g. $^2/_1$ represented ½).

The diagonal bar was only introduced after the invention of printing as the horizontal bar required complex mechanical steps to achieve.

*In effect, all mathematical operations had to be written down in (Latin, usually) **words** – and done using Roman Numerals ... not an easy way of doing things!*

Algebra. The earliest fully fledged system for the solving linear and quadratic equations was described by *al-Khwarizmi* in the 9th century – all done with ***no*** modern mathematical or algebraic symbols, ***no*** negative numbers and ***no*** use of zero!

None of this really reached European scholars until the translation of various scientific works from Arabic into Latin which began in the 12th century ... and the first original contribution was Fibonacci's method for solving cubic equations in the 13th century.

Calculus. *Though there were **some** moves towards what was a **limited** form of calculus for a **limited** set of problems in the Islamic world in the early 11th century and these concepts were **somewhat** further developed in India in the 14th century, recognizably modern calculus was only developed in Europe in the 17th century.*

Geometry

In the Liberal Arts, ***Geometry*** was seen to be a more advanced study of *Arithmetic*, mostly based on ancient Greek texts (usually via *Boethius'* 6th century translation of many of them into Latin) though, increasingly from the 12th and 13th centuries, via translations from Arabic translations from the Greek ... especially of the works of Aristotle and Euclid.

*Quadrivium level Geometry involved measuring (directly, or indirectly by calculation) the height/depth of objects, the measuring of the area of a flat surface and circumferences (especially of the Earth) ... and was, in some ways, more akin to what we would call surveying (though its study at University level was most definitely **not** intended to be used for such practical purposes!)*

The *Euclidian* method of axiom–deduction–theorem was, of course, perfectly suited to the entirely intellectual approach to knowledge as there is no practical analysis on which to base the conclusions (as there is in ***analytic*** *(aka **co-ordinate**) geometry* ... which, in any case, only appears in the 17th century with Descartes and Fermat).



While the geometry taught in universities was almost entirely theoretical and no practical applications were usually taught, this doesn't mean that practical geometry was unknown in the wider world ...

Architecture. Medieval Architecture *did* use a fair bit of 'rule of thumb' (and beyond) geometry ... more so as building techniques and technology improved during the period (see ***Architectura*** in the previous chapter, ***Ars Mechanica***, for an idea of what medieval Architects could achieve).

Surveying. This was limited by the loss of Roman-era practical experience and knowledge and the lack of suitable tools to allow it to be done accurately.

The 'surveying' that ***was*** done relied on knowledge of existing landmarks (fixed or otherwise) and, occasionally, physically pacing the distance between them at ***rough*** angles determined by taking bearings on *other* landmarks ... the use of ***triangulation*** was not known until introduced (by the Arabs) into Iberia in the 11th century, but did not really begin to spread beyond there until the late 13th century.

*The Domesday Book, detailing (for tax purposes) the extent of most lands in England and parts of Wales as they were in 1086 is **entirely** a verbal description with no maps or co-ordinates given.*

Similar works (of lesser coverage) from elsewhere during the medieval period are, likewise, lacking in detailed maps or co-ordinates ... and these issues inevitably led to disputes when landmarks were lost or changed.

Astrology (or Astronomy?)

Even university educated thinkers (and teachers) were conflicted as to whether Astrology was *different* from, or a *part* of, Astronomy (or vice versa, for that matter) ... for every medieval academic who argued they were different there was at least another one who argued they were the same.

Worse, even those who argued that they *were* different often argued that astronomical observations allowed

one sufficiently versed in them to foretell the future ... which, to modern ways of thinking, is completely contradictory.

Then you get ***theological*** (!) arguments about whether the study and application of celestial knowledge (however defined) could be validly used to predict the future! Was it ***sorcery*** or ***witchcraft*** ... both theologically suspect, if not outright prohibited? Or was it an abrogation of humanity's God given ***free will***?

*The issue wasn't entirely (well, **mostly**) resolved until the 17th century – though even luminaries such as Isaac Newton continued to believe divine intervention was an inherent and necessary part of celestial mechanics.*

In most campuses, studies were divided into three parts – celestial physics, mathematical astronomy and astrology (and the first two areas *don't* mean what they would *seem* to mean in modern terms). The important elements of which included Euclidian Geometry, Plane and Spherical Geometry and early *pre*-algebra forms of algebra.

Astrology. This was so closely linked with what we call Astronomy as to make the dividing line hard to discern – as intimated in the opening paragraph(s) of this section.

Even after the growing access to Greek and Arabic astronomical knowledge from the late 12th century, Astrology continued to be seen as a serious scientific pursuit – giving an understanding of both the natural and the occult and involving much in the way of (pseudo)scientific calculation and the making of connections that simply didn't exist.

Astrological calculations, which could be quite complex mathematically, were used to determine the optimum timing for all sorts of important life ventures –



and medievals took horoscope predictions much more seriously than today.

Likewise, horoscopes could, it was believed, have a direct effect on medical conditions, diseases and the body's workings in general ... and were heavily consulted by many patients and physicians.

Basic Astronomy. This involved learning the names and, at least theoretically, locations of all the known fixed stars; the compass directions and how to determine them (night and day), and the use of existing astronomical tables (for determining the location of the main heavenly bodies, the time of sunrise, sunset at different times of the year, telling time in general, determining the date of Easter and other important astronomically linked events).

*Despite what 'everyone knows', learned medievals knew that the earth was round, and one of the skills provided by astronomical mathematics was a way of determining its circumference. The limited evidence available as to what 'ordinary' people believed also strongly supports an assumption that the majority of **also** understood this ... modern 'everyone knows' claims are wildly overstated and, as with many things, repeated by recent books whose authors have not bothered to check the provenance of the 'facts' from earlier, now discredited or discarded sources.*

***Note:** While one **could** use the knowledge gained from a study of **Basic Astronomy** to work out one's latitude, it was **not** the same as Navigation (see **Ars Mechanica**) – the latter was entirely practical, while Astronomy was mainly theoretical.*

Cosmology. Medieval (European) astronomers (and wider society) believed the Earth was stationary at the centre of the universe and the sun, moon and stars revolved around it in separate spheres ... there was no attempt to support this by scientific observation (medieval Astronomy, like other medieval 'sciences', not being interested in observation or experiment in the way we would expect today), as this was 'received wisdom' from the works of Aristotle and Ptolemy.

Even knowledge of these ancient Greek philosopher-scientists was limited and poorly understood due to the lack of knowledge of Greek (language) and lack of access to the original Greek manuscripts (all that were available were Latin glosses or summaries which rarely, if ever, explained how the Greeks had determined various astronomical data and fact) between the fall of the Western Empire and the 12th-13th centuries when trade and cultural contacts with the East Roman and Muslim worlds brought the originals back to the attention of the intellectual elite.

For example, through to the 12th century knowledge of the causes of lunar eclipses was completely lost – west-

ern thinkers believing, for example, that they were caused by random 'storms' in the various celestial spheres between the earth and moon, even though the Greeks had known the real cause ... that the Earth was passing between the Sun and the Moon.

The accepted cosmology had the Earth at the centre of the universe, surrounded by the separate spheres of Water, Air and Fire, then those of the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn followed by the sphere containing the Fixed stars and, the very outermost sphere ... Heaven (and the abode of God).

Each Sphere was a separate 'heavy' substance that was in physical contact with those (if any) above and below it on its margins, and rotated against such borders in order to create the (apparent) motion of the celestial objects within it.

*Where practical observation or intellectual theorising resulting from Scholastic Philosophising **did** conflict with these views, the attitude of the Church authorities was to condemn any claims that conflicted with the 'received wisdom' of Aristotle and Ptolemy **or** which limited the power of God or any core element of Christian belief in any way (as did certain claims made **by** Aristotle and Ptolemy ... if re-interpreted in unapproved ways), especially as transmitted through the Latin glosses and summaries. Since Universities operated very much under the auspices of the Church, such condemnations had serious implications for anyone who to flouted them ...*

*As access to the original Greek (and later Islamic) astronomical works expanded, many of those strictures **slowly** went by the board. Still, Copernicus (1473-1543), Brahe (1546-1601) and Galileo (1564-1642) managed to get themselves into considerable unpleasantness with Church authorities directly or indirectly because they questioned the geocentric model of the universe.*

Music

Academic studies of music had little or nothing to do with the actual day-to-day activities and practices of musicians – it was *not* a 'practical' subject in most senses of the word.

It was seen in a more *mathematical* sense – and the components of harmonics and rhythm were connected directly with concepts of (and teaching) *time*, *cosmology* and *proportions*.

According to the then accepted understanding, there were three types of music.

- ***Musica Mundana** (aka **Musica Universalis**) – the 'music of the spheres' made by the rotation of the various celestial spheres against each other.*

- ***Musica Humana**, the harmonies produced by (and holding together) the human body (the 'music' of*



Musica

these first two forms was deemed inaudible to humans ... but their effects were deemed to be measurable).

- ***Musica Instrumenta**, music created by humans (theoretically in imitation of the first two forms) using song and physical instruments.*

The 'music' studied as part of the Quadrivium was of the first two sorts – heavily cosmological and mathematical – and directly descended from Pythagorean (classical Greek) semi-mystical cosmological ideas (he believed that all the heavenly bodies emitted their own specific and identifiable harmonic).

Musical Notation. Anything like the modern musical notation system *simply did not exist* at the beginning of the period and, though there were developments moving in the direction of a notational system, the best they could manage was to make the learning of new musical pieces less time consuming and to reduce, but not eliminate, the need for *direct oral transmission* from a teacher to a student.

The then existing notation could indicate rising and falling tones, useful for plainsong and chants, but not rhythm or polyphony ... these were only starting to be dealt with during the 14th century.

By the beginning of the 14th century, this situation was beginning to change, and newly developed notational ideas were beginning to resemble the modern system ... but only *beginning* ... and only gradually spread and developed into fully modern forms after the invention of printing and, even then, was only fully adopted during the 17th century.

Philosophy & Science

To the medieval mind, these were really the same thing ... both were *literary works* intended to help human beings *understand* the world better, though in different ways, *neither* of them was meant to *objectively describe* the world – a comprehensively different world view to the one most moderns accept.

This means that few, if any, medieval 'scientific' texts qualify *as* 'scientific' ... and, indeed, many of the ideas on which they are based are drawn from classical texts which are *also* often not in the least 'scientific.'

Indeed, to the medieval mind, 'magic' was at least as valid a 'science' as anything else ... and the traditional philosophical *dialectic* (the establishment of truth through rational and logical argument and discussion between two opposing views, s*upported by existing philosophical works*) was the method of determining 'scientific' truth, *not* experimentation.

*Dialectic was, theoretically, **not** the same as 'debate' – it was a joint effort to decide what the 'truth' was, **not** a competition to prove one side 'right' and the other side 'wrong.' **Theoretically** it was dispassionate.*

Of course, since human beings were involved, the ideal was not always (or even often) met and dialectic could be just as personality driven and emotionally involved as the most bitter debate.

The Divisions of Science

According to influential works, Science consisted of two broad divisions – ***Biblical*** *(or Divine) Philosophy* and ***Human*** *Philosophy*.

Science. This was not a term used to describe an area of study until the 18th or 19th centuries – it described a *subset* of such, a collection of related knowledge(s) and was, therefore, not deemed important enough for differentiation in and of itself.

Medieval 'philosophers' could happily purse wide areas of unrelated scientific knowledge – and regularly did so. They saw no need to specialise, so it was perfectly acceptable to combine studies of aspects of Biology, Alchemy, Physics, Astronomy, Mathematics and many other fields that are deemed to be separate areas of study in the modern world.



Biblical Philosophy

This involved the study of the Bible (and related religious material) as well as works of *Natural Philosophy* (mostly classical in origin) to understand the nature of the world and all that was in it. It encompassed *Natural Science* and *Mathematics* and their subfields amongst other more obviously 'biblical' and philosophical matters such as *Metaphysics* (the study of the nature of reality) ... generally through the lens of *Scholasticism*.

This was partly a matter of textual study and comparison and partly a matter of textual criticism ... within rigidly defined parameters dependent on the accepted religious dogma of the time and place (and the locally dominant religion or sect thereof) ... which could, and did, lead to all sorts of contradictions as there were significant contradictions between biblical and non-biblical source materials that had to be reconciled ... and never were, not entirely.

*'Science,' in this limited sense, **could**, in fact, be heretical – though the Church struggled with this idea. On the one hand, the authorities, from time to time, attempted to crack down on nominally heretical (or at least contradictory of dogma) ideas ... but, on the other hand, there were ongoing arguments as to how much impact dogma should have on the interpretation of the physical world.*

This situation see-sawed from (attempted, but usually failed) repression through to acquiescence and all the stages in between and, even though the Church was (at least nominally) a monolithic authority, the reality was that attitudes towards the science vs dogma positions varied dramatically from place to place – so it was possible to move from areas of attempted intellectual repression to those which were more intellectually open.

*Part of the reason for this ongoing split personality was that those in positions of power within the Church had largely undergone the same sort of 'Liberal Arts' education that the 'philosopher-scientists' had and were, therefore, amenable to the same intellectual developments that slowly changed secular views on 'science' that might **seem** to contravene dogma ... especially as it became more accepted that there was very little direct support in Biblical sources for many aspects of dogma.*

Mathematics. Including Arithmetic, Music and Geometry ... important for their use in understanding the cosmology of the 'universe' and, in a more 'practical' sense, in calculating appropriate times for religious celebrations, amongst other things.

Metaphysics. The study of (and attempt to describe and understand) the nature of reality – extending into

philosophical matters of *'why'* past the basics of what we would call 'science' and the medievals called *Natural Philosophy*.

Natural Philosophy. The study of the natural world through the lens of *philosophy* – always *theoretical* and never, *ever*, practical (or, at least, if its study *does* produce practical results, they are entirely *incidental*).

It was ***not*** a specialised field of study within the overall study of 'Human Science' until the late 16th century.

Scholasticism. ***The*** method of philosophical (and 'scientific') enquiry during the late 11th through to the early 1th century (and which continued to be important through to the early 18th century) it was a melding of Catholic theology with aspects of Aristotelian philosophy – which had important, and largely irreconcilable, areas of difference.

It is a method of *dialectic* – resolving philosophical and scientific issues through discussion and comparison of existing source material – entirely in the form of 'thought experiments.'

Human Philosophy

This involved the study of philosophy and philosophical texts to achieve an understanding of nature and the way in which the world worked ... by the same means as for *Biblical Science*, that is, textual study and comparison combined with textual criticism ... though through a different, *less* religious, lens.

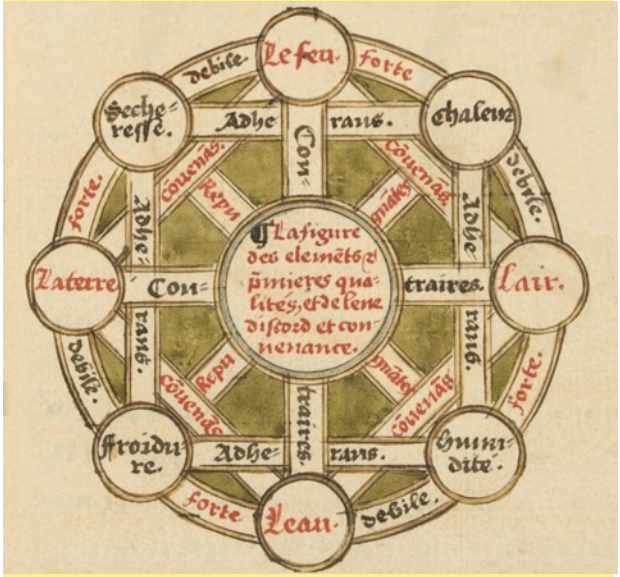
The main areas covered by this aspect of Philosophy were *Ethics*, *Economics* (though not called that), *Grammar*, *Logic*, *Mechanics*, *Politics* and *Rhetoric*.

While almost all work was in the form of *dialectic* or *thought experiments* based on philosophical-logical principles of *Scholasticism* (see above), there seem to have been a ***very*** few experimental scientists in the modern sense of the word ... especially in the realms of *Alchemy* and *Medicine*.

Most *real* scientific advancement, however, came from practitioners of the various ***Ars Mechanica***.

Economics. The modern term didn't exist – Medieval philosophers were interested in ***morality*** ... especially the concept of the ***Just Price*** (i.e. things should be priced at just enough to support the producer and their family plus the costs of production rather than 'all the market will bear') and an examination of the different aspects of ***Bullion*** and ***Money***.

Mechanics. Wasn't important as it dealt with *practical* matters – mostly those things covered in ***Ars Mechanica***. A Philosopher dabbling in these areas would have been doing so mostly for purely incidental reasons ... or, possibly, mere curiosity.



The Sum of All Things

The basis of much, if not all, scientific understanding of the world in ancient and medieval was a flawed concept of what made up the physical world –

The five elements

According to classical belief, the cosmos was composed of the five elements – ***Aether*** (sometimes called *Quintessence*), ***Air***, ***Earth***, ***Fire*** and ***Water***.

The four qualities

Again, classical belief was that all things could be described as having one (or a combination) of four *qualities* – ***Cold***, ***Dry***, ***Hot*** and ***Wet***.

The Five Platonic Solids

Plato believed the Elements were made up of the five polyhedrons known since ancient times – the ***Tetrahedron*** *(4)*, ***Cube*** *(6)*, ***Octahedron*** *(8)*, ***Dodecahedron*** *(12)* and the ***Icosahedron*** *(20 sides)*.

Elements, Qualities & Solids Combined

Air was *Hot* and *Wet* and made up of *Octahedrons*; ***Earth*** was *Cold* and *Dry* and made up of *Cubes*; ***Fire*** was *Hot* and *Dry* and made up of *Tetrahedrons*; and ***Water*** was *Cold* and *Dry* and made up of *Icosahedrons*.

Aether was was the element that filled the celestial spheres that made up the space above the Earth and was, unlike the other elements, incorruptible and unchangeable.

The Alchemical Elements

Medieval Alchemy recognised ***six*** elements – the classical *Air*, *Earth*, *Fire* and *Water* plus two additional, 'philosophical' elements, ***Sulphur*** and ***Mercury*** and a third 'principle', that of ***Salt*** which was an irreducible byproduct of the combustible properties of *Sulphur* and the metallic properties of *Mercury*.

Hermes Trismegistus & The Hermetica

The supposed basis for much of medieval alchemical knowledge, both in the islamic and european spheres, were works *attributed to* (not always correctly) to ***Thrice Greatest Hermes*** – a syncretic amalgam of the old Graeco-Roman God(s) *Hermes/Mercury* and the Egyptian *Thoth* (from whom the ritual epithet *"The Great! The Great! The Great!"* originated).

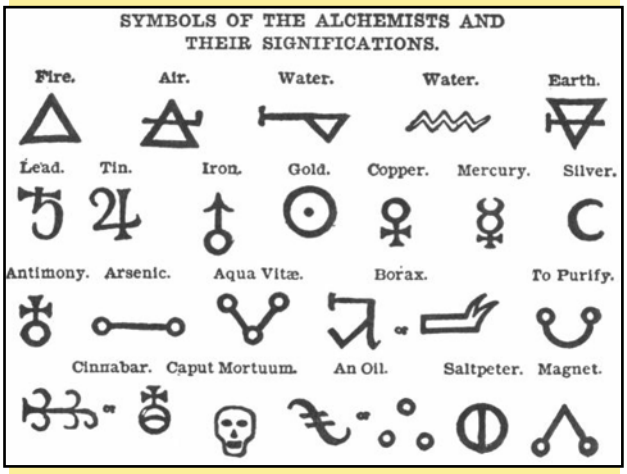
The works attributed to him were a mess of religious writings (and ramblings), aka *'hermetic'* (i.e. ***secret***) knowledge and medical writings (*pseudo*-medical as often as not).

Largely lost *in the west* with the collapse of the Western Empire, this knowledge survived in the East in Greek (largely inaccessible to the Latin speaking west) and Arabic, and it was from thence that portions were *re*-transmitted through Iberia and back into Latin ... though much remained 'lost' until the flood of Greek scholars (and texts) came west after the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453.

The Hermetic Corpus

The body of works loosely attributed to Hermes was extensive, consisting of many thousands, perhaps more than *ten* thousand, of varying length, and was broadly divided into three areas when it began to reappear in the west from the 12th century –

- **Alchemy.** 'State of the Art' knowledge of the classical 'academic' and folk traditions of medicine and 'chemistry', with much pseudo-scientific dross, dating to as late as the 5th century AD ***plus*** additional work by Islamic Scholars inspired by/developed from them.
- **Astrology.** Again, 'state of the art' knowledge from the late classical world plus additional work by Islamic scholars.
- **Magic.** Traditional cultic and esoteric rituals based on *gnosis* ('secret knowledge' aka *hermetica*) with supposedly magical effects ... often connected with Alchemy and/or Astronomy.



Practical 'Science'

Two areas of medieval knowledge that are at least somewhat recognisable to moderns as *science* (if the considered loosely enough) are ***Alchemy*** and ***Medicine*** and these areas are dealt with below –

Alchemy

Medieval *European* Alchemy was based on traditions of mystical (supposedly secret) knowledge developed by the priests of Alexandria (in Egypt) during the Hellenistic period ... but had much older foundations probably dating back to much earlier, certainly pre-classical, times.

Despite 'common knowledge' claims that Alchemy was mostly (or even entirely) about 'magical' studies and beliefs of no real use, these early Alchemists were remarkably practical and involved in the development of useful chemical skills such as *dyeing* ... but, increasingly, mystical graeco-romano-eastern nonsense came to overlay these more practical skills.

*See **Hermes Trismegistus & The Hermetica** Sidebar, opposite, for some additional information.*

After the collapse of the Western Empire, the remaining practitioners in the Eastern Empire became more and more mystical and less and less useful or even intelligible and the older traditions were taken up in the Muslim world, where something like the modern scientific tradition of experimenting along logical lines became the norm ... though mystical elements still remained a significant part of alchemical study.

*Muslim alchemists were not **free** of pseudo-scientific mumbo-jumbo in their writings and theorising as much of their original knowledge came from the same Hermetic corpus ... they were simply **less** prone to it and more likely to experiment than their fellows in the East Roman Empire and medieval western Europe.*

It was this *islamic* tradition that was (re)introduced into the medieval west in the mid 12th century, mainly through muslim and reconquista Iberia, and early practise was entirely based on translated arabic texts.

It was not until the 13th century that serious new developments began to be made by local researchers – and some began to use the idea of *practical experimentation* to define theories rather than the Aristotelian and Scholastic tradition of purely *thought experiments*.

During the 13th century there was a growing willingness to separate the largely intellectual and mystical side of alchemy from a practical, experimentally based, elements ... and the latter began the slow development into what would eventually become modern(ish) *Chemistry* in the 16th and 17th centuries.

WHAT ALCHEMISTS *THOUGHT* THEY COULD DO . . .

Alchemists generally believed that their studies would (and *could*) eventually lead to the discovery of ways to do (or create) the following things (more or less in order of difficulty to achieve) –

- **Transmutation.** The transformation of 'base' metals (often, but *not* always, Lead) into 'noble' metals (usually Gold) using a ***Philosopher's Stone.***

- **The Elixir Vitae.** The *Elixir Vitae* (Arabic *al Iksir* any miraculous medical substance and Latin *Vitae* = 'life' ... sometimes called the *Water of Life* or *Aqua Vitae* in the Christian tradition per John 4:14) was a supposed elixir of longevity, if not immortality, and, by extension, was also a cure for all mortal disease.

- **The Panacea.** These were, at their simplest, a complete cure for any (specific) disease or, at a more complex level, a cure for *any* mortal disease (and, therefore, a step along the road to achieving the creation of the *Elixir Vitae*).

- **The Alkahest.** A universal solvent. This would, of course, be impossible – so alchemists theorised that it would only dissolve items into their constituent elements (*alchemical* elements) and could, therefore, be held in a container made of Earth.

Not all alchemists believed in these mystical pursuits – for example, those from the Arab world seem to have accepted that it was impossible to truly change the basic nature of the various elements as early as the late 10th century, and, therefore, gave up any belief in the *Philosopher's Stone* – and even in the west many were more interested in practical pursuits (sometimes to fund their mystical ones) than in pure mysticism.

Even the authorities soon came to be suspicious of the wilder claims of those Alchemists who claimed to be able to transmute Lead into Gold (probably having seen to many being duped by out and out charlatans) and Pope John XXII banned such 'false promises' in 1317 ... and it was either banned or strictly licensed and controlled in England and other places on the mainland of Europe from the early 15th century.

WHAT ALCHEMISTS ACTUALLY *COULD* DO . . .

Stripping aside all the mystical gobbledygook and mumbo-jumbo and looking at what *practical* alchemy was capable of reveals the following achievements –

- **Acids.** Alchemists were able to produce some Mineral acids – *Hydrochloric (Muriatic) Acid* from at least the 13th century in Europe, earlier in Islamic areas, *Nitric Acid (Aqua Fortis)* from around the same time (both were part of the recipe for *Aqua Regia*, see below) and *Sulphuric (Oil of Vitriol) Acid* from Graeco-Roman times.



They were also able to recognise and refine the organic compounds of *Acetic* (known since Graeco-Roman times, from Vinegar, used for making pigments such as *White Lead* and *Verdigris*), *Citric* and *Tartaric Acid* (both from the 8th century in Arabia, 13th century in Europe from Lemons, Grapes etc).

- **Aqua Regia.** Developed in the 8th century Arabia (along with the discovery of *Nitric Acid*), though evidently unknown in Europe until the 13th, and capable of dissolving Gold (and, eventually, Platinum – though the latter wouldn't be discovered until *Platinum* was recognised in the mid 16th century) ... thought by some to be a precursor to development of a *Philosopher's Stone*.

  Aqua Regia could be used to separate Silver and Gold, and this led to the discovery of ***Silver Nitrate*** *at the same time.*

- **Arsenic.** Though arsenical *compounds* had been known of and used widely in many applications (especially metallurgy), probably since prehistoric times, *Arsenic* was only isolated in the 3rd-4th centuries, but this knowledge was only rediscovered in the 13th century.

  *It was mainly used in compounds – for example, in the tanning (to remove the hair) and as a red pigment (****Realgar****) or as a yellow pigment (****Orpiment****).*

- **Distillation.** Alchemists developed the *Alembic*, a crude distillation device, as early as the 2nd century and used it widely in all sorts of processes to purify materials to a *very* high level until, in the 12th century in Italy, it was used to distill ***alcohol*** (to a maximum of 40% by volume, a relatively low level) ... and the process spread quickly.

  *Whiskey (****probably*** *12th century, Ireland) from grain and Brandy (also* ***probably*** *12th century, Germany) from grapes soon appear though neither became a major source of alcoholic beverages until the 15th century ... originally for use as a* ***medicinal*** *or as the basis for* ***medicinals*** *and especially important in the development of medieval medicine.*

Impractical Alchemy

Even though the earliest revival of alchemy, from classical and islamic sources, was mostly practical, the growth in general learning, especially theological and astrological learning, led to the rapid creation of an esoteric and mystical branch of the study which had no practical application whatsoever (though the practitioners of this area believed it brought them closet to God and/or understanding the way God had ordered the Universe and, therefore, gave them insights into doing all those things mentioned in '***What Alchemists thought they could do'***, overleaf).

Astrology. All alchemists believed there were links between Astrology and Alchemical practise ... horoscopes helped determine, for instance, the best time(s) to undertake various aspects of the 'Great Work' (i.e. the steps in the creation of the *Philosopher's Stone*) and even of the 'lesser' works (everything else, even practical alchemy).

Likewise, certain metals and compounds allegedly had astrological links which would allow them to overcome inadequacies in the timing of works or even boost the efficacy of those undertaken at astrologically significant times.

Mysticism & Theology. In a similar manner to the way in which Astrology was incorporated into some Christian theology (and vice versa), Mysticism and said Christian theological beliefs and elements of belief came to have a significant impact with *im*practical Alchemy (and even, to a lesser extent, on the practical side of things as well) ... and it was common for elements of Christian ritual practise or timing to become an important part of the practise of the mystical side of alchemy.



- **Dyes & Mordants.** Alchemists were important in the refining of natural dyes and in the development and refining of natural and synthetic mordants (dye fixatives).

- **Elements.** Apart from the *Aristotelian* elements, Alchemists were aware of the existence and could identify and refine the following *actual* elements – Antimony, Copper, Gold, Lead, Mercury, Silver, Sulphur and Tin.

- **Glassware.** Though most Alchemists eventually resorted to the use of specialist Glassblowers, the rebirth of Alchemy in the 12th-13th centuries was predicated by the rediscovery of sophisticated glass making procedures and *early* Alchemists learnt how to make glass and blow their own basic glassware from it.

- **Medicinals.** Since *one* of the esoteric aims of alchemy was to extend life (*Panaceas* and *Elixirs*), alchemists naturally tried to create materials that would have a medicinal effect – and *distilled alcohol* was ***one*** of the byproducts of this research.

  In fact, distillation became an increasingly important medical technology as it allowed unprecedented levels of purification and concentration of herbal and natural remedies.

- **Pigments.** As noted above separately, Alchemists were an important potential source of pigments used in (mainly) painting (artistic and house), colouring leather and (to a lesser extent) textiles and cosmetics ... and could create a wider palette than the materials specifically mentioned.

- **Potash.** Used as a bleach, in glass production (as mentioned in *Ars Mechanica*) and in the manufacture of soap produced by processing the ash of burnt vegetation, and known of since at least late classical times.

Non-Alchemists and Alchemy

*Not all people using alchemetical knowledge or processes were **actual** Alchemists – they may only have been artisans (Dyers and Leatherworkers, for example) practicing one element or process that had originally been developed by 'true' alchemists.*

Others may have been professionals of one sort or another – it was common for some Surgeons and Physicians, mainly before the mid to late 12th century (after which Apothecaries began to appear as a specialised form of practical Alchemist, often by some form of government decree or licensing through a Guild arrangement) ... or limited form of medical practitioner, depending, on your point of view) to prepare some of their own medicinal materials, and some, at least, used alchemical processing to mix or purify them.

Medicine

There were, broadly speaking, three levels of medical knowledge and practise in the medieval world – *Folk* medicine, *Surgery* and *Academic Medicine*.

It is important to note that, as with so many other things that *'everyone knows'* about aspects of life in the Middle Ages, a large chunk of modern claims about medicine and medical matters are wildly wrong, taken out of context and hugely misleading or unsupported by any (or any *consistent*) evidence.

Medieval medicine ***wasn't*** great. It had *severe* practical and theoretical problems and limitations and was *wildly* wrong in many of its assumptions ... but they still managed to get a raft of things more or less correct, even if they often did so for reasons that (based on modern knowledge) were wrong.

Folk Medicine

Folk Medicine was based on traditional knowledge and (largely) natural remedies, some of which were widely known and usable by anyone and others which were passed down in a more limited way, sometimes within particular families or, possibly, through a limited form of semi-formal 'apprenticeship.'

Herbalism

The bulk of folk-medical practices in the period involved the preparation and use of a variety of largely traditional herbal remedies for a variety of ailments. *Some* were based on magical assumptions and were often, but not always, useless (except, possibly, as a placebo) while *others* were based on traditional concoctions that were actually efficacious, though usually no-one had any notion *why*.

The major problems with herbal remedies throughout this (and earlier) period was that it was impossible to identify the active ingredient or compound (though it was usually known which part of the source had the highest concentration of ... whatever) and this made it difficult to impossible to refine the source material ***at all*** *let alone to a* ***consistent*** *strength.*

In addition to orally transmitted folk knowledge of Herbs and their properties there was also a continuing tradition of transmission by writing in manuscript form, and *Herbals* (books and manuscripts identifying a wide variety of herbs [aka *all* ***useful*** plants]), often illustrated, describing their uses and the way in which they should be prepared were extremely popular with all levels of literate society.

Most large households and, in the countryside, Monastic foundations, had a herbal garden and someone knowledgeable about growing, harvesting, storing and preparing herbal remedies ... even peasant households usually had somewhere where they could



grow a small selection of local medicinal herbs (or knew where they could be gathered in the wild).

Having fresh ingredients on hand was a necessity – as with all natural products, the herbs and other components used in medieval remedies eventually went off, even if some attempt was made to preserve them by drying or other methods. Most remedies would be made as needed, and consumed quickly, though some needed to be made in advance, but also had a limited shelf life.

Typically you could expect dried herbs to be good for around six months, fresh materials for 3-6 months, and other natural items for lesser periods depending on their nature and means of preparation.

Midwifery

An important element of this aspect of medical knowledge, and a common means of it being transmitted, was through local midwives by practical experience in an informal system (often simply an agreement amongst *accepted* 'wise women' that so-and-so was knowledgeable) though there was no such thing as a Guild system for them during the period.

As a general rule, Physicians preferred not to deal with 'women's problems' or pregnancies as it was considered demeaning to their professional standing (even for the tiny number of women who managed to qualify, or be recognised, as Physicians) ... and, in any case, their 'knowledge' of such matters was based on written material that was often dangerously wrong or misleading).

Indeed, ***any*** *direct physical examination of women by Physicians was unusual even for maladies which were not deemed 'beneath' their attention.*

Given the general lack of anything like formal training, midwives seem to have been remarkably effective in their basic practices ... and, by the early to mid 13th centuries some, at least, were regarded as skilled and reliable enough to attend to Noble or Royal Courts and the women present and were able to attract considerable rewards for their services.

There are even records of some attaining formal taxpayer status in some civic records and even being paid for their services ***by*** *the Town for the indigent (or for abandoned babies, a not uncommon occurrence) or as a general service to the citizens as a whole.*

Herbal Remedies

Bronchitis and Pneumonia . . .

Take finely ground ***Anise, Caraway seed, Fennel root, Gourd seed, Jujubes, Melon seed, Parsley, Raisins, Violets*** *and* ***Wild Celery*** and mix with wine, then boil until it forms a syrup.

Strain the mix and thoroughly mix with sugar or honey, then steep over a fire, adding the beaten whites of four ***eggs*** ... skim until clear. Strain a second time and it is ready for storage or use.

Coughs . . .

For sticky coughs including phlegm, mix a syrup (i.e. mix the ingredients in wine and boil until thickish) containing finely ground ***Anise, Fennel root, Horehound, Radish*** and ***Wild celery.***

General Tonic . . .

Take ***Hollyhock*** *and* ***Lily*** *roots* and steep them in water. Crush them with fresh ***Grease*** *and* ***Butter, Fenugreek, Linseed*** *and* ***Snails***. Mix with equal parts of ***Vinegar*** in which ***Barley*** has been soaked, and ***Water*** in which ***Pomegranate*** or ***Rose hips*** have been soaked. Administer as a gargle.

Gout . . .

Pluck, clean and salt a whole ***Owl***, put it in a new pot with a tightly secured lid and place it in an oven until the whole mix is burnt. Take the remnants and mix it thoroughly with ***Boar's Grease*** and use apply the ointment to the affected joint(s).

Infected ('Soft') Spleen . . .

Start the treatment on the first day with ***Oximel*** (a mix of two parts ***Vinegar*** and one part ***Honey***), followed on the second day by ***Iera Pigra Galleni*** (a decoction of ***Aloe, Camel Hay, Cassia Bark, Cinnamon, Rose Hips, Saffron, Violets*** *and* ***Wormwood***) and on the third with a bath of hot herbs such as ***Horehound, Mint, Oregano, Rosemary*** and ***Thyme.***

On the fourth day ***bleed*** the patient under the ankle on the outside of the left foot and cover the chest with hot linen plasters made with ***Celandine*** *and* ***Nettles***.

Lower Back Pain . . .

Mix a spoonful of ***Ox bile*** with two spoonfuls of ***Water Pepper***, four spoonfuls of the patient's ***Urine***, enough ***Suet*** to fill a walnut and a half a walnut full of broken and bruised ***Cumin***.

Boil the mixture together until they are of a gruel-like consistency and then paint it on the hip in front of the hottest fire the patient may bear for a quarter of an hour before binding it up in a hot, padded, cloth. Do this at least once during the day and once before retiring in the evening. The patient should take bed rest of 2-3 days for this treatment to work.

Quinsy (Severely infected Tonsils) . . .

Make a gargle of ***Aloe, Dill, Honeysuckle leaves, Poppy seed, sap from the Hazelnut tree, Water*** *in which* ***Mulberry bark*** *has been steeped.* Administer after the patient has been thoroughly purged and has had his blood let.

Sore (aching) Eyes . . .

Soak ***Betony, Chamomile, Fennel, Hock, Sage, Thyme, Wild Celery*** *and* ***Wormwood*** in a mix of half ***Wine*** and half ***Water.***

Boil the mix and have the patient stand over the steaming bowl with a cloth over it and his head. After this has been done, take a linen cloth and dip it into the mix and wipe down the eyes with it.

Stinking of the Mouth (Bad Breath) . . .

Only to be used if there is no rotten flesh (i.e. Tonsilitis, Quinsy or some other infection) ... soak ***Birch bark*** *or* ***Mint*** in ***Wine*** and use the mix to wash the mouth out.

Rub the gums with a rough linen cloth until they bleed, then chew a mix of ***Marjoram, Mint*** and ***Parsley*** and rub them into the gums.

Stye . . .

Mix and pound equal quantities of ***Onion*** and ***Garlic*** together, then mix with equal quantities of ***Ox bile*** and ***Wine***.

Store the completed mix in a brass bowl for nine full days and strain the final mixture through a cloth. Apply to the stye with a feather before retiring.

Useful Herbs

Chamomile – a cure-all . . .

The dried, pounded, ***Chamomile*** plant could be used in much the same way as Willow Bark and was used as a mild pain reliever and relaxing agent ...

It was also used in the treatment of colds (and other chest infections), colic (and digestive upsets in general) and allergies and could be used as a salve (mixed with grease or fat) and mild antiseptic for treating burns, ulcers or any sort of open wound.

Willow Bark . . . aka Aspirin . . .

An ancient folk remedy, take the dried bark from the branches of two or three year old Willow trees (Black or White willows are best), pound into a powder and mix with hot water. Drink for pain or inflammation.

Probably the most medically useful of all the concoctions described here, Willow Bark tea was limited only by the difficulty of getting consistent strengths/doses. Overdosing could cause stomach cramps and bleeding.

There were relatively few treatises written *during the period* on 'women's problems' and most which ***did*** exist were *either* mystical nonsense from whatever cultural tradition the author hailed from (or was aware of) *or* they were based on classical-era material and suffered the same flaws that all such material were subject to.

Witchcraft & Midwives

Despite frequent claims or implications that Midwives were prone to be accused of witchcraft and/or other unnatural or demonic practices and associations this cannot be supported – for a start, the witch mania in Europe doesn't start until the last decades of the ***16th century*** *and, even then, in the extensive written records kept, there are few cases that involve such allegations.*

There is, evidently, exactly ***one*** *recorded case of a Midwife being accused and convicted of Witchcraft, late in the 13th century, and that seems to have been a direct (and unusual) case of anti-semitism rather than witchcraft per se.*

Surgeons & Surgery

Medieval surgery was, at a practical, emergency or battlefield level, fairly sophisticated ... inheriting much in the way of practical experience from both barbarian and, in some places, also from classical graeco-roman traditions.

Surgeons could set bones, clean and sew (or cauterise) wounds, extract teeth (and arrows), amputate limbs, lance boils and drain abscesses (and hemorrhoids) and do many other minor (and some major) procedures – though their limited understanding of the causes of infection (and even more limited means to treat such) and lack of heavy duty painkillers made the treatment of *serious* surgical conditions ... problematic.

Despite much 'everyone knows' misinformation, ancient and medieval healers had a fair understanding that dirt and filth in wounds (or on the person of the treating surgeon or physician) was ... ***bad****.*

The problem was that they didn't understand ***why*** *... and only really worried about* ***visible*** *dirt/filth.*

This meant that if an infection gained a serious hold, there was little they could do ... there were some natural antiseptics, but, even after the invention of distilled alcohol), they couldn't fight off the ***really*** *serious ones*

(This is why any wound penetrating the chest or abdomen had a high mortality – especially if the stomach, intestines, bowels or bladder were punctured. It's also why appendicitis and bleeding ulcers and similar conditions were so serious. They weren't ***automatic*** *death sentences, but were so close to being so that there was little comfort in the minimal difference to those who were*



affected or their friends and family).

At best surgeons and physicians could ***mostly*** *only support the patient's body in its attempts to fight off the infection ... not always successfully.*

Despite claims in some sources, there was ***no*** formal division between *theoretical* medicine, as practised by *academically* (University) *qualified* ***Physicians*** and *practical* medicine, mainly surgery, practised by *traditionally apprenticed* ***Barber-Surgeons***.

That is to say, there was, *mostly*, nothing preventing Physicians from performing Surgery ... and. though Surgeons were, most definitely, regarded as having inferior qualifications and status to Physicians there was nothing to prevent them from acting as such.

Physician, (Barber) Surgeon . . . or both . . .

In some jurisdictions, Physicians had to undertake additional training and undergo additional examinations before they were allowed to carry out surgical procedures – and those who did not have such qualifications would typically align themselves with the local Barber-Surgeon and refer surgical cases to *them* rather than their more qualified colleagues, evidently to ensure a more lucrative fee-splitting arrangement.

This was common outside of Italy, especially in those areas where there were no specialist medical Colleges (stand-alone or faculties within existing Universities) ... and where the surgically qualified Physicians often treated their less qualified colleagues with a degree of contempt ... effectively encouraging them to work with Barber Surgeons instead.

In Italy, however, after the founding of the Salerno Medical School, Physicians were *always* surgically trained – though Barber-Surgeons *did* exist, but in a subordinate and legally inferior role, and in much smaller numbers than elsewhere.

The situation in England is less clear, the ***Barber's Company*** *(Guild)*, founded in the early 14th century, was the first *formal* body covering surgeons, but increasing specialisation led to the creation of *Fellow-*

Death by Surgery

Shock & Awe(some) Pain . . .

Medieval medicine did know of some herbs which could manage pain – but most of them only provided low-level relief (*Willow Bark*, for example = Aspirin). There were some *potentially* more powerful, but they were also hard to manage and like as not lethal – *Henbane*, *Hemlock* and, possibly, *Opium*.

***Henbane** causes (amongst other things) an unquiet, restless, deep sleep ... even in small doses. The slightest overdose could result in coma, breathing difficulties and death, usually from the latter.*

***Hemlock** is even more lethal than Henbane, killing by paralysis, but, in tiny doses, can dull pain.*

***Opium** was probably used, but, in medieval Europe this was **usually** from **wild** rather than Opium Poppies, and the pain relief was much reduced ... **laudanum** wasn't available until the late 15th century (though it **was** known of and used in the Arab world)*

A typical anaesthetic/painkiller was a mix of the above three herbs along with several others in, hopefully for the patient, just the right proportions – and it was not uncommon for even a 'correct' (non-lethal) dose to leave the patient in a coma-like sleep for two or even three days.

Severe pain, especially that from serious wounds, injuries or major surgery can cause surgical shock, and this can, even if treated with *modern* medicines, result in death ... as can blood loss, so the surgeon had to keep *that* to a minimum as well.

Since painkillers were so risky Medieval surgery had to be done *quickly*. Operations of any sort were rarely longer than two or three minutes, and an experienced surgeon could remove a kidney stone or amputate a limb in under a minute, often in half that time.

None of this *prevented* Surgical Shock, it only *reduced* the chances of it occurring. The shortness of surgical procedures was also important because, hopefully, it would also minimise blood loss, another (then) untreatable form of shock.



Removing a Kidney Stone

To determine if there is a stone in the bladder ... have a strong person sit on a bench, his feet on a stool; the patient on his lap, legs bound to his neck ... or steadied on the shoulders of the assistants.

The physician inserts two fingers of his right hand into the anus, pressing with his left fist over the patient's pubes. With his fingers engaging the bladder from above ... work over it ... [detection of] a hard, firm, pellet ... is a [sign of a kidney] stone ...

If you want to extract the stone, precede it with light diet and fasting for two days beforehand.

On the third day, ... locate the stone, bring it to the neck of the bladder; there, at the entrance, with two fingers above the anus incise lengthwise with an instrument and extract the stone.

Wound Closure & Protection

Wounds, whether from fighting, workplace or household mishaps, or surgery all needed to be protected or closed ... perhaps both. The basic means of doing so in the medieval period were limited ...

Bandages. Minor wounds were neither *cauterised* nor closed with *sutures*, merely bound with bandages or, if really small, left open ... the preferred cloth for bandages was ***linen***, but anything on hand could be (and was) used in a pinch.

***Tetanus.** Puncture wounds (especially) in an rural environment or in urban areas without any real refuse collection or removal services are potentially infected by **Tetanus** (aka **Lockjaw**) which is, paradoxically, less likely to occur if the wound is left open to the air rather than tightly bound (it is anaerobic) ... and resistant even to modern antiseptic and sterilisation procedures (**nothing** available in the medieval canons of medicine could do anything significant).*

The disease was recognised in ancient times, as was its proximate cause (the puncture wound, not the surrounding filth in the environment) ... and it was widely feared because of the severity of the symptoms (spasms so severe they could break bones, amongst others), a death rate of ~25%, and an extended recovery time of at least three months.

Cauterisation. This was done with a flat bladed *Cautery Iron* or any handy blade heated to a dull red glow and was used on amputations and larger wounds or to stop or slow uncontrolled bleeding.

The main utility of the procedure was in its speed ... and because knowledge of the technique of tying off bleeding arteries with a *ligature* (a form of *suture*) was lost, at least in western Europe, during the collapse

of the western Empire and was not ***re***discovered in Europe until the 16th century and, even then, took a considerable time to become the dominant form of bleeding control.

The Islamic world used cautery widely from the get go, and continued to do so for many procedures, though they also adopted ligatures around about the same time they were adopted in Western Europe.

The ***dis***utility of using cauterisation is that, ***by itself***, it actually creates a better environment for infection to gain a hold ... so most wounds were ***also*** treated with herbal concoctions (typically mixed with vinegar, wine or, after the discovery of distillation, alcohol) or natural products such as Honey in an attempt to reduce the chance of infection.

*Some of these concoctions had **some** germicidal properties, though, as always, achieving the required purity and dosage for effectiveness was a problem ... though there would be a hard to define balance between the size of the cautery and the chance of survival.*

Hemorrhoids

*There were two common surgical treatments for severe Hemorrhoids ... the most common one was to use a **cautery iron** to burn them out. The alternative, sometime used, was to gouge them out with the fingernails. Needless to say, both procedures were done without anaesthesia.*

From at least the 13th century some physicians, especially those with islamic or jewish connections, were, instead, recommending non-surgical treatment using herbal/salt infused bathing of the area in warm water and changes in diet and exercise.

Sutures. Sewing up the wound was done using bone or metal needles (often not much different from those used in normal sewing) and natural materials.

Permanent sutures, those that had to be removed once the wound had mostly healed, were typically made from flax or hemp fibers or, sometimes, silk (it was expensive and not always available in the early medieval period) and used for wounds that would remain accessible (i.e. mostly external ones).

Dissolving sutures, had been discovered in the 2nd or 3rd century BC and their use seems to have continued right through the Dark Ages and into the Medieval period without interruption were harvested from sheep's intestines (*'Catgut'*).

They were used mainly for internal locations for obvious reasons and tended to retain their full strength for a a week or more and will be dissolved or absorbed in ~3 months.



Surgical Outcomes

There is little or no *usable* documentary evidence for the mortality rates of medieval surgical procedures so estimates are based on archaeological evidence – excavations of Church cemeteries. Based on such evidence, a surgical mortality rate of ***40-60%*** has been suggested.

However, even on the most cursory consideration one can see that this is basically *useless* ... and probably completely misleading.

The most obvious issue is that the estimate is based on examination of surviving ***bones*** ... but these *only* show evidence of procedures which leave evidence ***on*** the bones. Amputations, trepanning (cutting holes in the skull for a variety of reasons, some medical, some magical), the setting of compound (and other) fractures ... more than likely on people who had suffered severe traumatic injury and for whom surgical intervention was a perilous last resort.

Examining skeletal remains does ***not*** provide evidence of procedures only involving the soft tissues – which are likely to be the most common. For example, neither operations for Kidney Stones nor for Hemorrhoids will leave any trace.

The next assumption that most historians make is to base death rates on pre-antiseptic survival rates in large urban hospitals from the 17th and 18th centuries ... places for which we have solid records. These imply a surgical death of 40-50% as well.

They are, unfortunately, also misleading and *worse than useless* ... because the surgeons and hospitals examined operated in ways which were ***wildly*** different from medieval surgeons and hospitals.

One of the key reasons for the high mortality rate in those hospitals was that they were teaching institutions as much as anything else ... and surgeons would routinely deal with surgical patients having come from having performed dissections on corpses or having carried out autopsies ... wearing the same clothes and with only visually cleaned (and non-

disposable) instruments. This made *them* the active *source* of the post-operative infections that killed most of their patients!

Even in rural areas, the increasing practical and legal requirements for the performing of ***autopsies*** *led to similar problems.*

Medieval surgeons undertook dissections – there were legal and religious issues that made them extremely rare. The Church (and Church influenced civil law) objected as it would *supposedly* make the resurrection of the dead on Judgement Day impossible? difficult?

Autopsies were, likewise, frowned upon and there was normally no legal requirement that they be undertaken ... except in the rarest and most unusual of circumstances.

They regarded dissections, even of executed criminals (which the civil authorities *sometimes* allowed) to be somewhat *sacreligious*. As a result, the person and instruments of a medieval surgeon were far less likely to be as routinely contaminated as those of later eras.

Then, of course, there are the differences between medieval and later Hospitals ... the former were normally set up as an Act of Grace, run and paid for by religious authorities (even if paid for by private or civic donors they were usually run by religious orders) and, though in no way perfect, had a different operational imperative to later Hospitals which were usually a grudgingly provided as a sop to the poor with minimal care, for profit operations (in the worst *laissez faire* sense) for those somewhat better off and/or, as noted above, as places of teaching.

Dissections and autopsies would have been close to unheard of at a medieval *hospital* (and not much more so at a medieval *university*), so the one of the main proximate sources of the infections that killed so many people in later ones ... *simply wasn't there*.

What were the *actual* mortality rates for medieval surgeons? The short answer is that no-one really knows – but it would have certainly varied *a lot*. The more serious and/or invasive and/or complex the procedure, the higher the likely death rate ... but 40-50%, even as an overall average, is unlikely for most.



CAESARIAN SECTIONS

This was used only ***in extremis****, when prolonged and unsuccessful labour (or other complications) were at the point where the mother was unlikely to survive ... since the procedure as used in medieval Europe was almost certain to result in the mother's death, either directly from the actual operation (see illustration on the previous page(or from complications which would routinely mean unsurvivable septicaemia.*

It wasn't an ***automatic*** *death sentence, and it is known that* ***some*** *women survived ... especially those treated by surgeons with training based on Islamic or Jewish knowledge, but the death rate was well in excess of 95%.*

Roman Catholic belief has always been that if the choice is between letting both mother and baby die or saving the baby at the expense of the mother's life, then the latter choice is preferable. Saving the mother at the expense of the baby's life is seen as the moral equivalent of abortion (murder, in effect). Medieval civil law followed Church teaching on these issues.

ABORTION

This was regarded as ***socially*** *unacceptable and* ***immoral****, but was not actually* ***illegal*** *... and wouldn't become routinely* ***criminal*** *until the late 17th century.*

Even then, unless accusations of witchcraft were involved (usually directed at participating midwives), it was not regarded as ***murder*** *and punishments were relatively mild.*

There were a large number of herbal abortifacients known in classical and medieval Pharmacopeia and Herbals but, as with all medieval 'drugs' getting the correct strength and sufficient purity was extremely difficult ... and since they always had unfortunate to lethal side effects, neither Physicians nor Surgeons were comfortable using them.

In any case, Physicians and Surgeons had mixed views about abortions, but the majority believed that it was acceptable in the first trimester, as the fetus was not regarded as human at this stage (even by church luminaries, such as St Augustine) ... mainly since it was not easy to detect a fetal heartbeat until towards the end of that period until the late 11th century.

Medieval Jewish law tended to put the mother's life as a priority regarding both Caesarians and Abortion, but, of course, that was moot given that civil and church law in Europe did not.

Medieval Islamic law allowed abortions before the end of the fourth month after conception and prioritised the mother's survival over that of the child after that as the fetus was only a 'potential' life ... and accepted that the attending physician was best placed to decide.

ship of Surgeons in their ranks in the mid-14th century, though this was still subordinate to the Guild.

Training was, as on the continent, by apprenticeship and there was a *practical* division between these Barber-Surgeons and university trained Physicians, though there is no definitive indication as to whether the latter were prohibited from undertaking surgical procedures.

Physicians & Medical Theory

As noted above, the 'everyone knows' belief that there was some magical division between Physicians and Surgeons ... isn't (entirely) true, see ***Surgeons & Surgery***, above for details. The difference between the two, insofar as a practitioner might only perform one of them, was that a Physician was trained in the *theoretical* and related *diagnostic* underpinnings of what passed for medical and anatomical knowledge.

Most of the theory forming the basis of a Physician's training was from Graeco-Roman works, often retransmitted through islamic sources after having been effectively lost to the west in and after the collapse of the Western Empire. Some of this theory was quite correct, more was wrong to a greater or lesser degree ... not *always* lethally, but usually unhelpfully so.

The Humoural Theory

The basis of classical and medieval European medical theory was the theory of *Humours.* According to this, all medical conditions were the result of an imbalance of the four humoural fluids that were a part of every human's constitution ...

These were ***Black Bile*** *(aka* ***Melancholic****, Dry & Cold, origin: Gall Bladder),* ***Blood*** *(aka* ***Sanguine****, Moist & Warm, origin: Liver),* ***Phlegm*** *(aka* ***Phlegmatic****, Cold & Moist, origin: Brain and Lungs),* ***Yellow Bile*** *(aka* ***Choleric****, Warm & Dry, origin: Spleen),*

"The Human body contains blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile. These are the things that make up its constitution and cause its pains and health. Health is primarily that state in which these constituent substances are in the correct proportion to each other, both in strength and quantity, and are well mixed. Pain occurs when one of the substances presents either a deficiency or an excess, or is separated in the body and not mixed with others." Hippocrates, ***On the Nature of Man.***

Attempts to classify medical conditions and disease were done on the basis that they were caused by an excess of one or more of these humours, and attempts to treat those which were not able to be remedied by surgery were done using herbs, drugs, changes in diet and minor surgical procedures (such as *Bleeding*) which would rebalance them.

Since the theory was completely useless, the resultant



attempts to classify and treat the conditions these non-existent imbalances caused were usually a waste of time and effort, though they could, occasionally and purely by accident, have some positive effect. Fortunately, Physicians were *mostly* practical enough to eschew treatments that might seem to meet the theoretical requirements but which had *blindingly* obvious, *directly connected*, negative outcomes.

But only if ***blindingly*** *obvious – bleeding (to balance the* ***Sanguine*** *Humours) of patients, for example, continued in widespread use through to the late 19th century (and by some 'alternative' practitioners even now, in the 21st century) even though some (very,* ***very*** *few) physicians were starting to understand that it was counterproductive even in the 14th century.*

It remained common practise in European ***and*** *Islamic medicine throughout the period.*

Diagnosis

Diagnosing diseases was difficult for the simple reason that there were so few ways of examining the workings of the body and determining how, or even if, they were awry –

Chest (and Abdominal) Sounds. The *Stethoscope* wasn't invented until 1816, so physicians had to follow Hippocrates' advice from the 4th century BC ... shake the patient's shoulders gently and then place your ear directly against the chest. This did not provide a particularly clear sound and was close to useless for discerning differences between various chest and heart complaints ... and was of even less use in listening at the abdomen or for a fetal heartbeat.

Blood Pressure. The *Sphygmomanometer* wasn't invented until 1881 (and measuring *diastolic* vs *systolic* pressure wasn't figured out until 1905!), so medieval physicians had ***no*** way of measuring it *at all.*

There is *limited* evidence that *some* Islamic physicians may have recognised some of the ***other*** *symptoms* of High blood pressure, but even that is disputed, and with no way of measuring either relative or absolute BP they couldn't do more than suggest lifestyle changes of limited value (dieting, avoiding anger etc.)

Pulse. While medieval physicians were perfectly able to find a place where the heart's pumping of arterial blood could be felt, there wasn't anything they could use to gain an absolute heart rate (the few mechanical clocks that existed were lucky to have *minute* hands rather than merely hour hands, and were huge!).

The first accurate method of measuring absolute heart rate wasn't invented until the 17th century, using a pendulum-like arrangements.

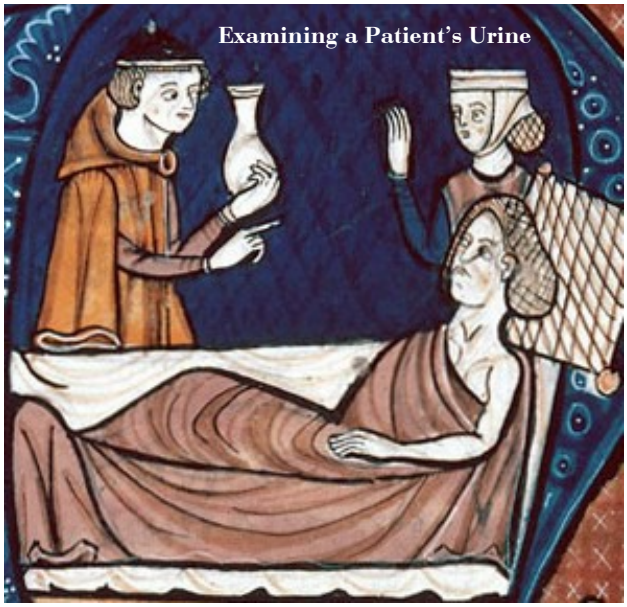
Temperature. While relatively inaccurate water or alcohol based thermometers were invented in the 17th century, the first accurate, mercury based, ones date only from 1714 and a scale to go with it only from 1724!

Medieval physicians could tell if someone had a degree of fever or chills, but that was about it. They had no way of accurately measuring temperature.

Given what they *couldn't* really use for accurate diagnosis, what *could* medieval physicians do?

Inspection of Bodily Fluids & Products. Inspection of *Urine* was the most common diagnostic tool and many patients would either bring a sample with them if they were visiting a physician or have one ready if the physician was visiting them.

By the late 13th or early 14th centuries most Physicians would have had access to a diagram showing what the various combinations of colour, smell and ***taste*** *of a patient's urine might indicate about their overall health and any underlying medical condition.*



Examining a Patient's Urine

Inspection of *Blood* or *Stools* (faeces) might also be done, but were less common.

Feeling the Pulse. Even though they could not measure an absolute heart rate, they *could*, and routinely *did*, measure the pulse for a *relative* rate and for any irregularities.

Feeling the Temperature. Again, even though they could not measure absolute temperatures, they could determine the presence of fever/chills. 'Slightly' elevated temperatures were hard to impossible to pin down due to the natural variation from the human 'average' (98.6°F or 37°C).

Visual Examination. Skin colour, chest congestion, eye colour, local variations of these and other things that could easily be seen on a visual examination were also a part of a thorough physical – though this degree of thoroughness would only be used to narrow down a diagnosis that was otherwise uncertain.

Combining all these methods would allow a Physician to recognise many diseases and other conditions – though it was often difficult to impossible to differentiate between those that had similar symptoms with no way of determining what was going on internally.

Was it Bowel Cancer, Worms or Hemorrhoids causing the rectal bleeding?

Was that persistent cough the result of Bronchitis? Or Pneumonia? Or Lung Cancer?

Was blood in the urine merely a mild UTI (Urinary Tract Infection) or sign of more serious Kidney problems? An enlarged (possibly even cancerous) Prostate? Anaemia? Or merely too strenuous exercise?

Treatment

After the Physician had diagnosed the problem they then suggested a treatment – which was normally a set series of steps, graduating in seriousness.

Diet. The first step in almost all treatment regimes was a special diet, consisting of food and drink which would help rebalance the patient's humours and might also involve general or specific lifestyle changes.

For example, for ***'Lovesickness'*** *a patient, recommending the patient have sex was a recognised curative treatment. A diet for those suffering from* ***Gout*** *recommended foregoing undiluted wine, eating less (and eating less rich food), avoiding afternoon naps for exercise. An anti-****Plague*** *diet avoided dairy, fish and meat and substituted bread, fruit and vegetables.*

Drugs. If diet alone did not do the trick, or if the Physician's diagnosis suggested that it would not be sufficient in and of itself, the next step was to pre-

scribe herbal and other concoctions to assist the body in rebalancing itself.

Insomnia *could be cured by imbibing a mixture of Nettles, Egg White, Mandrake root, Datura and Saffron.* ***Coughs*** *were calmed by a mix of Lungwort, Horehound, Pennyroyal, Oregano and Honey. Intestinal* ***Parasites*** *could be treated with a tincture of Tormentil (also the source of a red colouring for dyestuffs).*

Apart from sex, ***Lovesickness*** *could be treated by inhaling steam from a decoction of Lilly, Violet or Hellebore.*

Surgery. This was, for Physicians dealing with non-acute diseases rather than life-threatening injury anyway, usually a last resort ... and is covered above.

A *fourth* treatment, universal in nature and not requiring any consultation with a Physician (who might recommend it anyway) was ...

Prayer. Divine Grace was, theologically speaking, a valid 'treatment' option and, of course, approved by the Church authorities. A variation of this would be for the patient to go on a *Pilgrimage* to any of a large number of shrines to Saints who were 'known' to have a particular 'interest' in either their *specific* condition or in healing in general.

Ultimately, medieval Physicians (even more so than Surgeons) could often only tell you what condition you were suffering from and recommend some mostly ineffective (possibly even harmful) 'remedies' which relied mainly on the body's natural healing ... and, if and when they failed, you'd be comforted (!) by the knowledge that you knew what you were either going to continue to suffer from or were dying of. Or not.

Female Practitioners

Apart from, obviously, ***Midwives****, records (as incomplete and limited as they are) suggest that a* ***minimum*** *of 1-2% of medical practitioners during the period were female, and probably more.*

Since they could not attend University, they had to be trained by apprenticeship – and, therefore, were not as prestigious as Physicians. This meant they were much less likely to attract wealthy clients (and, therefore, much less likely to leave written evidence in the form of tax records) – but, perhaps, more likely to be the first line of resort for the poor who were seeking medical attention.

In addition, there was a general reluctance, if not outright prohibition, preventing Physicians (all males, remember) from physically touching or otherwise examining female patients ... they were limited to questioning, examining the urine etc. and external visual examination of those body parts normally revealed by everyday clothing ... which meant that females were often treated by ***other*** *females.*



A Medieval Apothecary

Jewish Practitioners

Obviously Jews could not attend Universities either, and therefore, like women, had to learn through an apprenticeship process ... but they often had greater access to (or were ***reputed*** *to) advanced Islamic medical texts and knowledge and were, therefore, often sought out by those who wanted top flight medical treatment.*

Obviously this competition could anger local ***christian*** *Physicians and could lead to subtle or not so subtle anti-semitic efforts directed at marginalising or destroying their medical practise.*

Reality Check

The preceding chapter provides a *lot* of information – which may be a little too much to take in all at once. Certain key facts should be explicit *and* implicit ...

- **Medieval People Weren't Stupid.**
- **20:20 Hindsight is a wonderful thing.**
- **Received Wisdom was a powerful force.**
- **Reality *eventually* trumps unfounded belief.**
- **Higher Education hasn't changed *all* that much.**
- **It takes as long to learn soft as hard disciplines.**

The Shoulders of Giants

"Bernard of Chartres used to compare us to puny dwarfs perched on the shoulders of giants. He pointed out that we see more and farther than our predecessors, not because we have keener vision or greater height, but because we are lifted up and borne aloft on their gigantic stature." John of Salisbury, ***Metalogicon*** *(1159)*

*Nope. Newton **wasn't** even **close** to the first to make this observation.*

The chaotic collapse of the Roman Empire in the West and the warring of the successor states led to the destruction of the economy that supported the large cities which had existed there and the literate society they had, in turn, nurtured and supported.

Though the Church did an admirable job of preserving some of the literary and scientific works of the classical graeco-roman world, much was lost – some of it permanently, but some only in the West.

As the successors consolidated and began a long slow recovery some of the more canny rulers saw the need for the preservation and promotion of literacy and other knowledge for their own ends ... to strengthen their administration and promote economic growth.

Eventually, much of the 'lost' knowledge began to seep back into the West through the Arab world, some in Arabic translation, some in the original Greek (or Greek translations of Latin works) ... and some *new* knowledge discovered by Arab philosophers based on classical knowledge mixed with that gleaned through contacts in East Asia and elsewhere.

Despite the historical bad mouthing of labeling the millennium between the collapse of the Western Empire (late 5th century) through to the beginning of the Renaissance (late 15th century) the 'Medieval' ('transitional') period or, even later, calling the earlier part from the 5th to 9th centuries the 'Dark' Ages, the truth was quite different.

As you have seen, many of the 'everyone knows' things about what people knew or believed, how they behaved, and what they could achieve, are complete rubbish despite being repeated even in recent works.

Equally, the period was one in which there were a number of new discoveries which would, later, become the bases for what would become the Renaissance and, eventually, the Modern World.

On the Shoulders of Giants, indeed.

Maybe *we're* the Pygmies?

Much knowledge taught in Universities or by Apprenticeship ***was*** complete rubbish ... but it was complete rubbish *backed up by a comprehensive, rigorously logical, widely accepted world view.*

Yes, especially for scientific matters, the logic was flawed and useless ... or could, and did, lead to practical dead ends. But it was widely accepted ... by educated men as well as the Church authorities.

It's easy to point back and make fun of it now – but you and I can do that only because of those 'giants' (many of them born and working between the 10th and 14th centuries) laid the foundation of what now allows us to see the flaws ... or allowed for the creation of the technologies that allowed us to even detect that there ***were*** flaws in the first place.

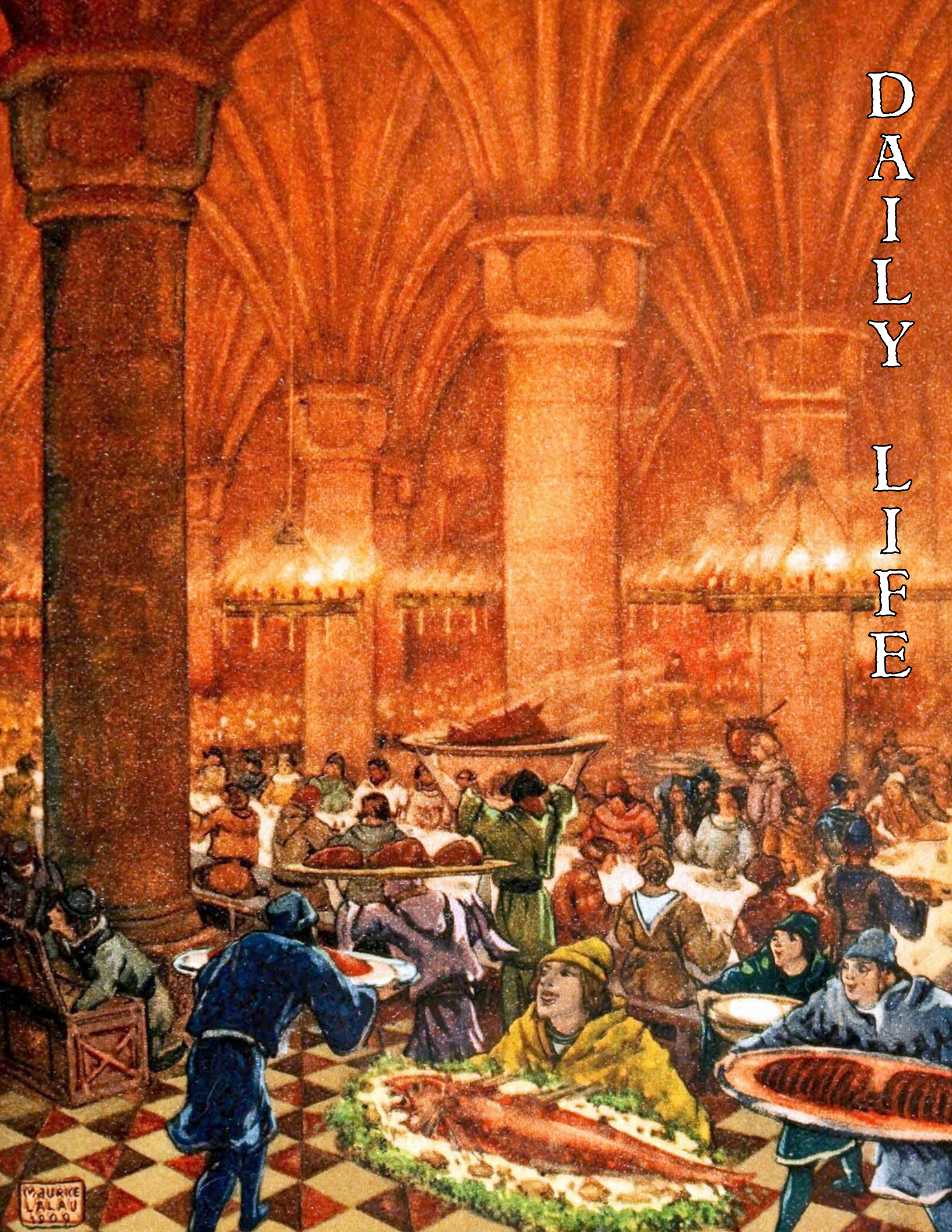
Conservatism vs Change

Before the founding of the first Universities, it was difficult to impossible to have a critical discussion of the knowledge available – too few copies of key works, too slow communication, too few educated people.

The creation of Universities made such conversations possible – but also, at least initially, created powerful conservative institutional forces that wished to defend the status quo (does this sound just like *modern* Faculty politics?). It was possible to overcome such conservatism ... but it took time. And the slow communication and lack of access to copies of the key works and new research was a major drag.

Higher Education

The large body of knowledge, even if largely erroneous, that had to be absorbed by a student before they could hope to pass the required tests to gain a Bachelor's or Master's Degree ... or a follow on MD degree, was pretty much the same in the amount of time required to do so as it requires today.


DAILY LIFE
MAURICE LALAU 1909

Daily Life

This chapter deals with those aspects of day-to-day life which have not already been covered in previous sections of OM^2 ...

So, for example, if you want to know what medieval people ate, how they prepared their food and what sort of structures they lived in you'll find that in the ***Ars Mechanica*** chapter.

If you need information about what subjects were taught in schools or through apprenticeships, how students and apprentices were taught and the qualifications they might gain, that's in ***Ars Scholastica***.

What were the cities, towns and villages like? See ***Town & Country***.

What laws applied and how were they enforced? That's in ***Kingdom & Crown*** along with how governments worked (or didn't) and how the monetary and taxation system was structured.

Religious belief? Church structures? ***De Civitate Dei*** covers it. For Christianity (both sorts, Roman and Orthodox), Islam and Judaism – even Heretics!

Armies? Soldiers? Weapons and Armour? See ***De Re Militari.***

So, a lot of what follows is really a miscellany. Some of it may be related to the above areas, but not strongly enough to be covered therein, or it might simply not fall into any of the above categories.

People

Attitudes & Behaviour

What were the attitudes of people in the Middle Ages to – well, a whole variety of things? How did they behave in a variety of circumstances?

Some of the previous chapters have provided hints as to both – some of which agree with the usual coffee-table book line most people are familiar with, but some which markedly *disagree* with ... or heavily *qualify* 'received wisdom.'



There are many excellent reasons for this ... and they apply as much to the information provided in this section, and it is highly recommended that you read the sidebars (***A Matter of Sources*** onwards) on the next several pages to get up to speed with the relevant issues and understand the limitations of the evidence and, therefore, the inherent limitations to ***any*** statement about *what medieval people believed* and *how and why they behaved the way they did.*

Note: *Unless specifically noted otherwise, the information provided below applies to medieval people* ***in general****. Where it is markedly different between class or gender or religion based groups this will be noted.*

How important was Class?

This is a complex issue – and the answer changes considerably over time during the period.

As with all cultures at all times, people like to know where they stand in relationship to others in their community and society – and, ultimately, this has based on economic factors since written records began and the beginning of civilisation.

The further back from the development of literacy you go, preliterate cultures ***seem*** *get less and less class divided ... it seems to be almost a prerequisite of civilisation to develop a class divided society.*

1066 and all That. Anglo-Saxon society was quite different from continental Norman-French society – there were still ***slaves***, though it was a dying institution (it seems to have been recognised that it was inherently economically inefficient rather than because of any developing belief in equality) and there were ***ceorls*** (i.e. ranging from non-landowners who worked another's land in return for a share of the crops, *sharecroppers* in more modern parlance, through to those who could not completely support themselves from their own land and supplemented this by sharecropping or providing labour services), who could be of varying degrees of wealth and who graded upwards into the status of ***freeholders*** who owned their own land but owed some duty to the local *thegn* or *ealdorman.*

Thegns had originally been noble or royal retainers, but had developed into a *largely* economically (land) based class of well-to-do freeholders of high, but not 'noble' status – though a separate class of ***King's***

A Matter of Sources

Throughout the book (so far) I have mostly skirted around any attempt to state *authoritatively* as to what medieval people *in general* thought, what their attitudes were and how they behaved ... for some excellent reasons.

*Sure, you'll find the occasional aspect of medieval life (such as religion or the law) where I've made statements which are **seemingly** more definitive ... but, even there, 'seeming' can be deceptive.*

Why? Many texts make assertions as to what medieval people believed and how they behaved with what seems to be a degree of certainty ... so why don't ***I*** in this book? The answer is multi-faceted –

Part of the problem relates to the source material available from the period. If you've studied History at all you are probably aware of the difference between *Primary* and *Secondary* sources ... the former are/were created by people who lived at the time being studied while the latter *aren't.*

In order to discern what people of the past *thought* and how they *behaved* (and *why* they thought and behaved in those ways) you need to have access to *primary sources.*

Which leads us to a number of problems ...

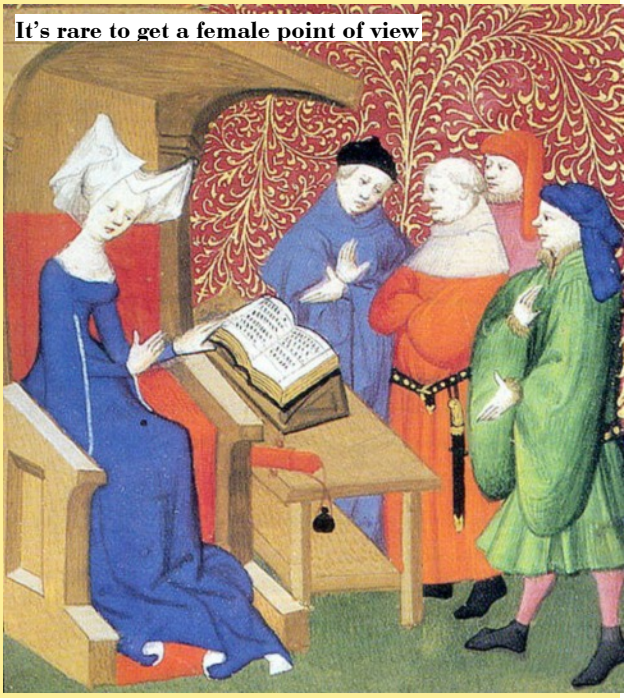
A dearth of Written Sources

At the beginning of the period, in the 10th century, we are still in what are often (somewhat misleadingly) called the *Dark Ages.* While there *were* literate people the numbers were so few that the amount of written material that was created was *tiny* ... and even less of what was created has survived. It is simply difficult to say *anything* with *certainty* about the 7th-10th centuries because of this.

*It's **somewhat** easier to figure out the broad outline of the events of the period, and archaeological sources can be extremely helpful there, but **artifacts** (items made or modified by people), help only a **very** little in determining attitudes or behaviour. Without comprehensive written sources they are oh so easy to **mis**interpret or be uninterpretable for those purposes.*

The availability of written sources slowly and gradually improves, but in a limited way – by the end of the period (1400) it's still around 50 years before the invention of the Printing Press and, though there *are* more literate people, the amount of material generated is still *extremely* low.

Everything is written out longhand, even books, and the cost is *huge* ... so much so that even the local Priest almost certainly doesn't have a full copy of the Bible



It's rare to get a female point of view

(mostly he will have a selection of some of the books of the New Testament and, probably, a selection of key services for the liturgical year in written form).

*Even toward the end of the period, a monastic library, for a **very** rich monastery, might have several hundred books ... mostly because they were copied out 'at cost' by the monks themselves. A wealthy noble might have dozens of books, but, even amongst the literate, most people probably had no more than one or two ... almost always religious literature (either directly or indirectly), and mostly only selections rather than complete works (depending on how you define 'complete').*

But the number of *books*, complete works or not, is dwarfed by *other* written material ... *overwhelmingly* financial or legal documents with a (small) smattering of letters (personal or otherwise).

Bias & Prejudice, apprehended and otherwise

Just because it's written down in a book doesn't make it unbiased. Likewise, personal letters, financial and court documents can all display bias.

In this sense there are two sorts of bias that are being addressed – the personal or societal bias(es) of the author(s) of the source material (or of the audience/s they think they are writing for) and the inherent nature of the source(s) themselves.

Personal Bias. This is often, but by no means always, easy to pick up on – usually because it is *significantly* different, if only in degree, to the attitudes of the wider society of the time.

Personal attacks that seem unsupported (or unsupportable) based on known facts are often signs of

personal bias, especially if they go far beyond what we know of the attitude of wider society at that time ... but one can express bias against groups or individuals by marginalising them or simply not mentioning them or their achievements.

Societal Bias. Also fairly easy to pick up *most* of the time – at least where it is different from unconsciously accepted *modern* biases.

Often societal biases are simply *less* vehement forms of the same biases expressed by some of the individuals in that society whose writings have survived. Rarely, of course, it is possible they may be *more* vehemently held than those expressed by individuals.

*For example, St. Bede, writing in the 7th century in his **Ecclesiastical History of the English People** was, even for later times, very well educated. And incredibly biased against the Britons (the peoples the Romans called the Celts, and not yet called the Welsh) – they can do no right, nothing they do is useful at all ... and if, by chance, it happens to be right or useful it is inherently tainted by the fact that the Britons did it!*

*They were, he stated, **'piteous'**, their country **'wretched'** and they, themselves, were **'enervated by cowardice'** in the face of their abandonment by Rome.*

*Even when the situation had stabilised, through no effort of their own (of course!) they continued to act out of **'cruelty, hatred of truth and love of falsehood'** ... even their clerics **'[giving] themselves up to drunkenness, enmity, quarrels, strife, envy and other such sins'** and were **'corrupted with the foul taint [of the Pelagian Heresy].'***

*Even their great hero, Ambrosius Aurelianus, is a hero because he is of **Roman** descent, and **not** a Briton!*

*He goes on in a similar vein again and again. And again and again, and again, and again. He **really** doesn't like the Britons and doesn't care who knows it ... or the facts.*

*Unsurprisingly, Bede was a **Northumbrian** (one of the Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms) and almost certainly from a noble **Anglo-Saxon** family.*



Creator/Audience. Very few people could read and write – so your sources are written *by* those who can *for* those who can. That means the *creators* are mostly well-to-do or better or, if not, they are writing for/to an *audience* of the well-to-do or better.

*Estimates (based on **wild arsed guessing** as much as anything else) are that somewhere around 5-6% of the populace were literate by the beginning of the 14th century, almost certainly more men than women.*

*Not **quite** the 'one percenters', or, at least, not until you realise that most of that 5-6% would have been monks, priests or clerks and not the nobility of any rank ... so, yes, probably exactly the same as the **'one percenters.'***

So, even those creators who do not really 'belong' to the elite audience they are writing for have to conform to the biases and prejudices of that audience if they wish to be successful ... *either* by gaining patrons to support the lifestyle to which they wish to become accustomed *or* by gaining (or maintaining) a wider audience and social approval.

This doesn't mean, of course, that they personally adhere to or accept those biases or prejudices, merely that they see pretending to do so a way to secure advancement or approval (or both).

***Jean Froissart** (1337-1405) was from Hainault and entered the service of Philippa of Hainult when she became the wife of Edward III of England in 1361-2 and, after her death in 1369, sought and received the patronage of other nobles while engaged in his writing.*

*In the **Chronicles** (covering the years 1326-1400), he (grudgingly) acknowledges the changes the Black Death wrought on the battlefield, the increased use of peasants, he presents them as **'pillagers and irregulars'** who **'killed ... without mercy ... counts, barons, knights or squires'** while presenting the nobility in a more chivalric light (even though the historic reality is very likely the reverse ... the commoners saw ransoms as easy money, while the nobility could be downright ruthless in killing their [potential] noble prisoners when it suited them).*

*Likewise, he presented the **Jacquerie** (French peasant uprising) as one directed towards destroying the nobility and gentry of France and as a leaderless, directionless, anarchic mob.*

*These are **'strange and terrible happenings,'** those involved are **'evil men'** ... and **'never did men commit such vile deeds'** (including the alleged spit-roasting of knights and forcing their families to eat them!) indeed, they are deemed **more barbarous than the Saracens**!*

*Well, probably Saracen **nobles** ...*

Common Biases. Some of the common biases likely to be found in written material during the period –

- ***Class Based.*** Nothing new here. As has been hinted in a number of places herein visual and written depictions/descriptions of the 'lower classes' was inherently negative and meant to show their moral and personal degeneracy.

  For example, stories of peasants resorting to cannibalism during times of famine, or depictions of them engaging in immoral behaviour or 'naked' [i.e. in their underwear] when at work in the fields ... or simply read the accounts of their alleged behaviour during national, regional or local peasant uprisings).

  This was consistent with Classical-era (graeco-roman) attitudes towards 'gentle' and 'servile' pursuits – the idea that *gentlemen* did not *work* for a living, but owned land or property and lived off the management of its fruits while 'the rest' worked for wages.

  There were degrees of self-delusion in these classifications – so *'middle management'* (the literate class that ran things for the 'gentlemen', directly or indirectly) were considered less servile than those who did the actual craft or manual work. It was also increasingly the case that *wealth* was seen as an *almost* insulator against servile pursuits or origin ... as long as one behaved according to accepted 'gentlemanly' norms.

  *This growing need to appear to be 'well bred' was a key reason for the increasing number of manuscripts on **manners** that have come down from the latter half of the five centuries covered by this book.*

  In effect, 'Gentle is as [those who can afford to be] Gentle does.'

- ***Sex Based.*** Nothing new here, either. Women were seen as inherently inferior *and* stupid as well as cunning and manipulative temptresses who were almost direct agents of the devil (though, grudgingly, some authorities allowed as how that was because they were so stupid and easily, indeed, willingly, manipulated themselves) ...

  'Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast.' *(The White Queen to Alice, 'Alice through the Looking Glass').*

  *At the mild end, this misogyny was inherent in Christian theology ... but there were clerical and monkish types who took it to extremes ... and some of the Christian heresies emphasised the evil nature of the flesh and, by extension, anything that encouraged its continuance (i.e. women as childbearers were a constant temptation towards 'evil' ... and it wasn't bug jumo to regard **women** as inherently evil).*


Female Scribes? Also Rare!

  Islam was slightly less inherently ridiculously and over the top with their attitudes towards women ... but Arab cultural norms were very dismissive of women, and Islam gradually fell (back) into as misogynistic attitudinal space as Christianity.

  Judaism was more progressive in some areas, especially education, but still tended to regard women with a variable degree of prejudice and bias, though less so (sometimes much) less so than Christians did – though in those places where working class Jews existed they tended to reflect the biases and prejudices of their neighbours.

- ***Religious.*** As noted elsewhere, the Roman Catholic Church tended to believe that the whole of Islam was a gigantic satanic cult ... or, at least, significant elements of the Church and Lay believers did.

  *This was **somewhat** modified after greater direct contact stemming from the Crusades and the reality of day to day contact with Muslims in the Holy Lands and Middle East.*

  Muslims, though nominally tolerant of 'people of the book', were anything but ... condescending of their ignorance in not accepting Mohammed at the very least through to actively persecutional.

  Jews generally kept their opinions to themselves, and very carefully so ... they were in too dangerous a position to let any prejudice that may have existed to become public.

  Christians and Muslims were generally even more biased against those they regarded as *heretics* or

apostates ... believing that (and acting as if) their very existence was a threat to the religious community and all of creation, as they had to be in league with the devil ... perhaps unwittingly (if one were generous), but possibly knowingly (if one were particularly biased).

- ***Regional & Racial.*** As far as can be told, there doesn't seem to have been as much *race-based* bias and discrimination in the Middle Ages as there is today ... you were as likely to be enslaved as a caucasian as you were as an african or arab, slavery was an equal opportunity employer. Your religion or sex was much more likely to be the source of any bias.

  In any case, there simply wasn't a large scale movement and intermixing of obviously different races going on. Most Northern Europeans could (and would) easily go their whole lives without seeing an african, or arab or asian.

  Regional bias was more common, mainly because most medieval 'nation states' were anything but – there was no real concept of 'shared nationhood' and the inhabitants more commonly had very localised loyalties. So, for example, few people in France saw their primary loyalty to *France*, or themselves as *Frenchmen*, they were, say, *Gascons*, or *Occitans* or *Bretons* ... and usually had mild to moderate prejudices against 'the other' from *other* regions of 'France.'

Survival Bias

One key problem with the sources we rely on for information about the medieval period is the type of source that has most commonly survived and the very likely (*certain*, in fact) inherent bias they present ... a bias that is not often (if ever) overtly considered by historians using those sources, especially if they are using them to determine what 'ordinary' day to day life was like.

Very little in the way of personal documents (letters, diaries and such) has survived – and what has is universally from (or about) the literate (upper) classes. This has already been noted as a problem ... as it is an obviously limiting point of view.



But there are other issues with the surviving sources that are as, if not more, important ... the nature of those which (and were most likely to) have survived. *Administrative Records*, *Accounting and Financial Records*, *Court Proceedings* and *Legal Documents* which give a skewed view of 'daily life.'

The most obvious issue is that they present a very limited focus ... they tend to deal with the upper classes and their interactions with the commons, not with 'everyday life' for a start, but they also tend to deal with the unusual, the *special*.

Court records, for example, might include *Wills*, which often include lists of possessions to be divided amongst any heirs ... which presuppose someone wealthy enough to have enough possessions to *need* to have a Will and, of course, to pay for one to be drawn up. Not your usual serf or day labourer, in other words.

Also, Court records might deal with *criminal* cases – which, since they are a significant chunk of the surviving records from the period, might very likely be giving us a skewed view of how violent the Middle Ages actually were.

Take a random sample of surviving court documents from the Prohibition period in a typical large US city or from a contemporary city's Drug Courts, for example, and consider how skewed a view of 'everyday life' and the commonality of violence (or Drug use) in everyday experience you would get if they were the bulk of surviving material you had to consult.

*Or take the local Tax Code – and consider how much (or, usually, how **little**) of it applies to ordinary people living ordinary lives as opposed to the wealthy and the dishonest.*

Temporal Bias

Another issue with using sources from the period is the common assumption that 'daily life' changes very little over (in this case) the 400 years covered. It is assumed that documents relating to Village life and organisation from, say, the Domesday Book (1086) are relevant to the Village life and organisation in 1400.

*That's like claiming you can accurately describe modern day society and mores using documents relating to social organisation and behaviour from the 1600s! Which is **obviously** ridiculous ... yet historians **tend** to do just that for pre-modern periods.*

Social, political and cultural change *could be* slow in the medieval period ... but it could also be *rapid* (as in the aftermath of the Black Death). But it most certainly ***did*** *happen.*

Thegns with higher, intermediate, almost noble, status continued to exist.

The line between a well-to-do Freeholder and a Thegn seems to have been *consensual* as much as formal.

At the top of pre-conquest society were the *Ealdormen*, the great nobles (though their 'greatness' – the amount of land they held and the power they could wield varied from case to case) who were often related to the King's family ... and, of course, the King and his immediate family.

So, how did the common people see the relationships between the classes?

Most people would have been intimately familiar with their village neighbours, and those with more land seem to have been respected for that as much as for any status ... and it seems to have been easy to move from sharecropper to freeholder to thegn ***if*** you were able to amass the wealth (primarily land).

The ***big*** social jump was to the status of *King's Thegn*, which, late in the pre-conquest period, was coming to be referred to as a *comes* ('count') in written documents – though successful warriors or administrators seem to have been able to gain such status through their own efforts as much as it was hereditary.

Above the King's Thegn were the *Ealdormen (Eorls)*, who were *largely* hereditary – but it *was* possible to achieve such status through acquisition of wealth (usually in the form of land) and of enough land or property rights to have subordinate Thegns and one's own band of household Thegns (warriors).

"... and if a ceorl (low status freeman) throve, so that he had fully five hides [1 Hide = ~120 acres or ~49 hectares ... so, a minimum of 600 acres or almost 300 hectares] of land, church [chapel] and kitchen, bellhouse and burh-gate [i.e. walled, usually with a fortified gate] seat [if he had more than one 'estate'), and special duty in the king's hall, then was he thenceforth of thegn-right worthy.

... and if a merchant throve, so that he fared thrice over the wide sea by his own means, then was he thenceforth of thegn-right worthy."

(The same document also notes that it is possible for wealthy Thanes to be made Eorls)

***Geþyncðu** ('Dignities'), 1002-1023.*

Progression between these statuses wasn't easy, but it *was* possible – and *didn't* (necessarily) require formal state (or Royal) approval. If you and your family had acquired the land (and its associated wealth and power) to be seen to be of the appropriate status, then you were usually deemed to *be* of that status.



Right through to the level of *Thegn*, then, common people would have seen them as a wealthy neighbour and would have looked to them for leadership and assistance *because* they were wealthy – but they would also see that it was possible to achieve such status *for themselves* through luck/hard work. In other words, they were not seen as somehow inherently than the common folk.

King's Thegns and Ealdormen were also status groups that a 'commoner' *could* achieve ... if rarely. Though at this level there was a significant degree of status consciousness being absorbed or imported from continental, mainly French, society and many (most) hereditary Ealdormen were beginning to arrogate to themselves the same sort of 'blood right' status, though it was by no means universally accepted.

Common folk would have seen those of this rank, in general, as more worthy ... more often than not because they were both remote from most, living on grand estates or attending the business of government at important settlements and towns or even in the large, important, cities and because they were obviously wealthy and powerful, dressed in fine clothing, riding fine horses and accompanied by a large retinue including their own armed retainers. They were *obviously* superior ...

Norman-French Society, 11th-12th centuries. The successful invasion and conquest of England by the Normans radically transformed local societal and social norms.

Whereas Anglo-Saxon society had retained a significant degree of social mobility based on the acquisition of wealth through one's own efforts and hearkening back to its Germanic-Tribal roots, Norman-French society, though of similar origin, had been reshaped by continental (late Roman) notions of inherently 'gentle' birth based on hereditary ownership of land.

Owning land was, in Norman-French society *mostly* ***not*** enough to gain status beyond a very limited level ... status was, in a significant sense, divorced from land ownership. You had status through ***descent***, and ***not*** through land ownership ... though not possessing *enough* land would erode hereditary status over time.

Hereward the Wake

Certainly historical, though probably heavily overlain with later non-historical additions, Hereward (~1035-72) led some local resistance to the Norman invaders in the area around the Isle of Ely and in parts of Cambridgeshire, Lincolnshire and Norfolk covered by the Fens.

His parentage and place of birth are uncertain, even in the original sources, though it was almost certainly somewhere in the areas he later ranged as a rebel. He seems to have been a troublemaker even in his youth and even seems to have been exiled from England and served as a mercenary for the Counts of Flanders.

He evidently only returned to England when he heard that his brother had been killed and his family's lands seized by the Normans.

'Three days ago [Normans] seized his [Hereward's brother's] inheritance with the consent of the King [i.e. William I] ... killing him while he was protecting his mother from their rapacity. Because he had killed two of the attackers they cut off his head and placed it on a pike over the gatehouse where it still stands.'

*Hereward called for his servant to bring his Mail armour and weapons. He went to the estate that evening and took down his brother's head and then proceeded into the Hall where he struck down the Normans therein who were engaging in drunken revelries ... killing their leader and fourteen of his followers ... and he set **their** heads on spikes over the main gate.*

*Frightened Normans, hearing this news the next day, fled the area and many of the locals flocked to his home and he was able to raise a force of 49 men [probably of the Select Fyrd] ...' paraphrased from the **Gesta Herewardi** (c. 1250, but from earlier, lost, written Anglo-Saxon sources supplemented by oral testimony of those who had known him).*

His exploits against the Normans are somewhat suspect, as he allied himself with Danish invaders in 1069-70 before joining up with Morcar, the deposed Earl of Northumbria.

Eventually the main rebel force was besieged, betrayed and defeated, Morcar was captured, though Hereward escaped and remained at large with at least some part of his force in the Fens ... at which point the sources diverge. Some say he made peace with William and lived the rest of his life *at* peace while others say he *attempted* to make peace but was killed by Norman Knights before he could (or during the period of negotiation) ...

Modern historians have also suggested that he simply went back into exile either on the Continent or north into Scotland.

The problem of inheritances for families which had multiple sons was a significant issue. Normally, one son inherited all the landed property – and the others had to make their own way. A growing tradition was for one to enter the religious life and for others to go into service (usually military, but increasingly administrative as time went on) with a higher ranking noble or the crown.

Slavery disappeared completely after 1066 (though probably *not* overnight) and ***ceorls*** were largely transformed into *serfs* of one degree or another, depending on how much land they had a right to work. *Freemen* were also lumbered with servile duties in a way and to a degree that had not applied before the conquest and the class of *Thegn* largely disappeared, their lands often seized by the new Norman overlords, and were, as a whole, submerged into the freemen.

*Some of the wealthier Thegns managed, by luck or judgement, to maintain their lands, or **some** of their lands – some retained **almost** Knightly status or, in some case, managed to retain higher noble status ... as **Barons**.*

Likewise, most Ealdormen lost their lands and very few Anglo-Saxon Counties survived in their original hands – in the Domesday Book (1086) only four large Anglo-Saxon noble landholders remained.

The Norman gentry and nobility were a foreign occupying class and acted as such – though there must have been limits (some have been hinted at in the various sections of the ***Kingdom & Crown*** Chapter).

Still, the underpinnings of Norman-French society was the notion that noble birth/land ownership were directly linked and that members of that class were inherently better than the 'commons' ... and, along with that went the notion that the commoners were inferior in pretty much any and every way.

The old Roman *patrician-servile* dichotomy.

Commoners would have been well aware of the consequences of facing off against their new masters – and that their new masters really would not hesitate in taking down anyone or anything that smacked of resistance (and, by extension, disrespect), and that the legal and socio-political system(s) had been heavily restructured to ensure Norman-French dominance.

Or, in other words, that they were very much the inferiors and were expected to behave as such.

The King stopped at nothing to hunt his enemies ... this made a real change. Terror works ... at least in the short term. William didn't hesitate to devastate and slaughter in order to impose his regime.

"To his shame, William made no effort to control his fury, punishing the innocent with the guilty. He ordered

*that crops and herds, tools and food be burned to ashes. More than 100,000 people perished of starvation [**probably** exaggerated].*

*I have often praised William in this book, but I can say nothing good about this brutal slaughter. God will punish him." **Orderic Vitalis**, chronicle of the **Harrying of the North** (1069-70), written c. 1120-1130.*

*Whatever the actual casualties, 60% of all landholdings were still listed as **wasteland** in the Domesday Book (1086) and it was noted that only 25% of the pre-1096 population remained – though modern historians are dubious that William would have been able to achieve such devastation **even if he had wanted to** with the forces he probably had available.*

Still, the lesson was, quite obviously ... don't try and take on the new ruling class!

On the other hand, there were persistent (for a time) guerilla campaigns against the Normans such as those of ***Hereward the Wake*** (the *Isle of Ely* and local fens) and ***Ealdric the Wild*** (the West Midlands) and, later, a class of ***'robinhoods'*** (lawbreakers/outlaws) mentioned in mid 13th century documents from all over England (but almost certainly existing from some time in the 12th century as well).

Ultimately, the commons really had little choice but to conform to the social requirements of the conquerors – at least in their public face(s) ...

But the terror-based domination imposed by the Normans could not be sustained forever – especially as the conquerors proved to be badly disunited and quickly found they needed commoners (in the form of the Fyrd/Feudal Levy) to support their military needs ... so the early terror tactics were quickly modified or done away with and gone by the mid-12th century.

Anglo-Norman Society, 12th-14th Centuries. Mutual assimilation between Norman and Anglo-Saxon was inevitable – and the early militarised, terror based, enforcement of social 'norms' by the former could not be sustained ... it simply wasn't possible.

The direct connection between land ownership and military service *by the landowner* fairly quickly broke down as accelerated social and economic development took hold throughout the medieval west. Not only that, but the 'occupiers' were gradually becoming 'anglicised' through residence (coupled with the gradual loss of their French possessions in any case) and started to see themselves as 'natives' (of a sort) as opposed to 'occupiers.'

Additionally, Noble Landowners were, increasingly, no longer (*necessarily*) expected to be personally present on any military campaign involving the feudal



French Nobles vs the Jacquerie

levy – they were becoming more and more *managers.* More and more of their managerial role was involved with *civil government* – and, often, they *organised* the feudal levies needed to go off and fight but did not *necessarily* personally accompany them, though someone from their family usually would.

This gradual demilitarisation of the gentry and the nobles meant that it became possible for those not of 'gentle' birth to gain such status via service in the expanding administrative bureaucracies *as well as* through military service – or through gaining wealth, though generally only when the bulk of this (or whatever was regarded as being 'sufficient' by the authorities) was in the form of land.

Changes in the legal system based on centralising the more significant cases under Royal Authority and making it a consistent (or *more* consistent) system of legal argument rather than main force and terror also meant the relationship between the commons and the Gentry and Nobility changed as well.

The latter were still the nominal masters, but the Commons were now more protected – and, theoretically *and* (to some extent) practically, more protected against the former and even able to enforce *their* rights through the legal system. To a slowly increasing degree.

That, coupled with the changing economic and social factors of the post-conquest period, meant it was now possible for Commoners to advance themselves socially in relationship to the new Norman-French social system in ways that were much the same as those which had been possible to achieve under the late Anglo-Saxon system.

Still, the ruling class *could* go too far, and the Commons *could* respond in extreme ways. There was always that divide (see ***The Peasants are Revolting!***).

THE 'PEASANTS' ARE REVOLTING!

Relationships between the commons on the one hand and the landed Gentry and Nobility on the other were rarely uncomplicated. However, the reality of the situation was that isolated, small scale, uprisings were not viable and, generally speaking, quite rare.

If they did occur, they were simply too easy for the local gentry to crush ... and crush them they would, as any such uprising was a direct threat to their own position(s), regardless of what their relations with their own (common) tenants was like. Still, they *did* happen.

FLANDERS, 1323-1328, 1337-82

This began as a series of scattered riots triggered by the Count's excessive tax demands, his pro-French policies and a series of poor harvests. The Aristocracy unwisely backed him and this led to the riots spreading and solidified under the command of *Nicolaas Zannekin*, a rich farmer who led the rebel forces in the capture of several towns *and* of the Count and were able to execute some of his enforcers.

The French King intervened, had the Church declare all the rebels to be excommunicate, and forcibly negotiated a peace (1326), This eventually failed and the rebels rose up again (1328), forcing the Count to flee.

Fighting culminated in the *Battle of Cassel* (1328) and Zennekin was killed. In the aftermath, lands belonging to the rebels were seized, and towns heavily fined and their rights and privileges restricted or revoked.

The Count proved no more competent the second time and, when the 100 Year's War broke out, backed France even though his country's economy relied on English wool. Another revolt broke out under *Jacob van Artevelde*, a rich Burgher from Ghent ... and rebel forces were able to force the Count to flee again, never to return and negotiated recognition from England

The death of Philip van Artevelde, 1382



Van Artevelde served as *Captain General* of Ghent until 1345 when he was killed in a riot over his supposed embezzlement, the excommunication of Flanders by the Pope and his general dictatorial rule.

Even so, his son, *Philip*, was chosen as Captain General (1381) in the final campaigns against the French before their victory over the Flemish communes at the Battle of Roosebeeke (1382).

*Arguably the 1337-82 revolt wasn't so much a Peasant Revolt as an **urban** revolt led by the Burghers of the main towns and cities, supported by the Gentry ... but it had the widespread support of the Commons.*

ESTONIA, 1343-45

This was a revolt by the indigenes against the Teutonic Order and the imposed German-Danish nobility and was triggered by excessive taxation, attempts to restrict the historical rights of the locals and the repressive religiosity imposed by the Order.

It began on the night of April 23 in the province of Harria and was aimed at killing all the 'Germans,' solidified by an oath to renounce Christianity. It was hugely successful and spread rapidly ... perhaps as many as 2000 'Germans' were killed in the first days of the uprising and their Manor Houses, Monasteries and Churches were burnt down.

The leader of the Livonian Order tricked the Estonian commanders to meet to negotiate and then murdered them when they would not surrender. They then pursued the rebel forces, defeating them in a series of viciously fought battles where the Estonians often successfully used boggy terrain to neutralise the German's cavalry. Even so, the revolt was largely crushed, at least on the mainland, by the end of May.

On the 24th July, 1344, the natives of Saaremaa and Muhumaa islands *also* revolted, killing all Germans and renouncing Christianity ... taking the main castle of the Order after a short siege (the defenders were promised safe passage, but were massacred).

The rebels then held unopposed until winter froze the sea. The Order crossed over and ravaged the countryside ... but were not strong enough to remain, returning in Winter 1345, burning and looting, but were, again, not strong enough to win a complete victory. In the end, a peace was negotiated and *some* of the grievances of the locals dealt with favourably.

THE JACQUERIE (FRANCE), 1356-1358

The ineffectiveness of the Estates General after the loss of the Battle of Poitiers and capture of the King, the Dauphin plus ongoing maladministration was the underlying cause though the proximate trigger was increased *corvee* to repair war damage to *noble*

estates and that the peasantry defend *noble's* castles ... while the nobility was failing to protect *the peasantry* against the mercenary bands ravaging the countryside.

The uprisings began in St Leu, a village on the Oise river, but there seems to have been no *overall* organisation as in Flanders or Estonia (see above) though a small number of Gentry and petty nobles were known to have led some of the bands (though any who survived later claimed they had been coerced).

The largest 'force' was led by *Jacques Bonhomme ('Jack Goodfellow*, the nom-de-guerre of one *Guillaume Cale*, a wealthy peasant – the nickname was later applied to all peasant rebels, usually shortened to ***Jacques***) and probably fielded around 5000 men, mostly infantry.

The King of Navarre was commissioned to lead a Royal Army against Bonhomme's force and, when he arrived at the rebel base, sent for Bonhomme to negotiate under safe passage – which he had no intention of honouring. Bonhomme was seized and, his army now leaderless, the peasant force was crushed.

Bonhomme was tortured and beheaded and at least ***twenty thousand*** peasants were slaughtered in a rampage of unrestrained violence in the weeks thereafter.

The rebellion had spread throughout the Oise valley and savaged 150 noble estates though it ultimately caused no more than a few hundred noble deaths. At its height it was said that burning noble estates could be seen from all sides of the walls of the City of Paris.

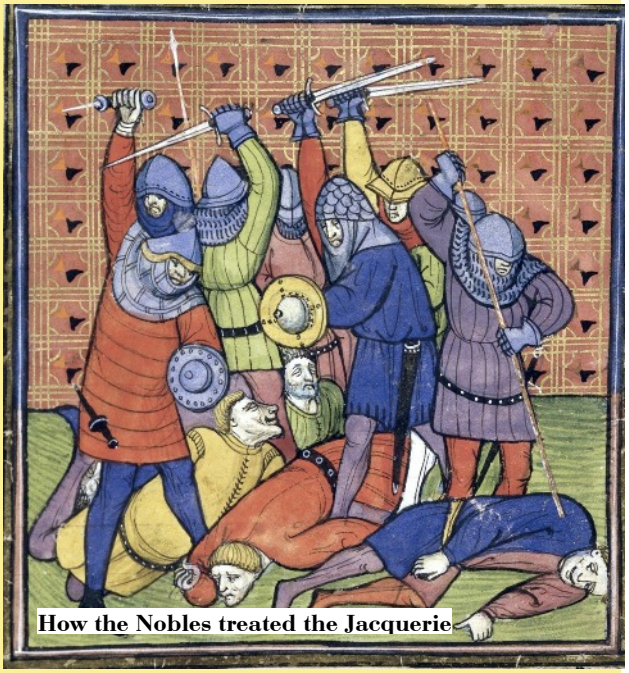
England, 1381

Even though England was more militarily successful during the Hundred Years War with France during the 14th century, armies (as noted elsewhere) were *very* expensive to field and the Crown tried to levy all sorts of new taxes, hitting the peasantry particularly hard (as they had the least, or least *obvious*, ability to resist politically).

Rebellion broke out in late May, 1381, in Essex, as a result of attempts to collect unpaid Poll Tax – and, led by *John Wrawe*, rapidly spread there and into neighbouring Kent by early June, a rising that soon came under the command of *Wat Tyler*.

The Kentish rebels seized Canterbury (10th June), executing any real or suspected Royal Officials. They and the Essex, Norfolk and Sussex rebels, began a march on London and reached *Blackheath*, south of the city by the 12th where the King's representatives tried to get the rebels to return home.

John Ball, a well known rebellious priest, gave a famous sermon including the now infamous lines *'When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then a gentleman?'* and promoted the rebel slogan of *'With King Richard and the true [loyal] commons of England!'*



How the Nobles treated the Jacquerie

The King had few troops on hand, and could do little when the rebels swept into London, tearing down the Prisons and some Noble estates. They even took the Tower by luck, executing several hated nobles, including Archbishop Sudbury, the Chancellor, parading their heads on pikes.

The King met with Tyler and the rebels on the 15th and, according to loyalist accounts, killed him when he threatened the King ... the leaderless rebels found the London Militia (frightened by the anarchy of the occupation) were backing the King, and so dispersed.

Even though rebels were still fighting and organising in other parts of England, the death of Wat Tyler revitalised the royal administration who used the London Militia and local forces to defeat them and the revolt was largely suppressed by July.

The nobility were badly frightened but, unlike the continent, did *not* stage massacres, executed only a few key leaders and pursued only a few of the rest through the civil courts. They also rapidly drew down on military expenditures and imposed no new taxes.

*As you can see, the Peasants **may** be revolting – but the nobility are lying, treacherous, two faced bastards.*

*Except for the Estonian revolt, where even German **women and children** were slaughtered rebels were **usually** restrained against the latter ... even though it gained them no respite from the noble response.*

Note the interesting difference between the situations as they were resolved in England and on the Continent.

Continental Societies (Early). The social situation of *France* (and the areas that eventually became part of of it) at the beginning of the period, ~1000 AD, were *mostly* more socially conservative than Anglo-Saxon England, having more in common with ***Norman-French Society*** of the 11th-12th centuries and can most easily be treated as such.

The *German*, *Danish* and *Scandinavian* states were more like ***Anglo-Saxon Society*****,** and the *Polish*, *Russian* and *Baltic* areas which were somewhere in between, but heading along the road to being much like ***Anglo-Norman Society***. *Eastern European* states, in general, had more in common with Russia and Poland.

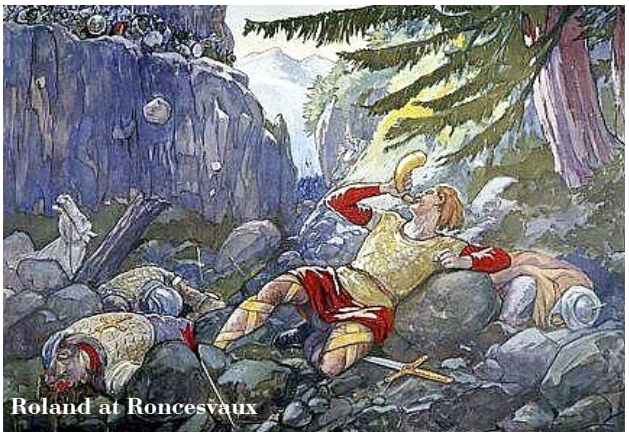
And the states of the *Iberian* peninsula, which were far more militarised than any of the others and which, as a result of the need to ensure popular support for the ongoing military ventures of the Reconquista, had to back the commons against the nobility more often than not.

The *Italian City States* were only starting to get seriously under way but were already becoming more oligarchic (i.e. based on wealth, increasingly from commerce, not on birth and/or land ownership per se) than aristocratic, though the 'struggle' between the competing social ideals was not yet completely in the favour of the rising oligarchs.

Continental Societies (Mid to Late). *French* society remained aristocratic and backwardly feudal – if anything, it progressed more to the aristocratic and backward end of that spectrum ... and would largely remain there through to the overthrow of feudal institutions as a result of the Revolution of 1789.

That is not to say that it was not possible to advance from commoner status in medieval French society, merely that it was more difficult and less common, and that the great noble families dominated the scene far more thoroughly than they did in England ... so commoners were most definitely kept in their place.

Iberian society remained much the same, as the final defeat of the Muslims would not come for almost another century even at the end of the period, and the Crown needed to retain the support of the commons for manpower more than they needed to pander to the aristocracy ... so the status of the commons re the aristos and their attitude toward them was in a much stronger position than it was later.


Roland at Roncesvaux

The final victory over the Muslims and the more or less simultaneous acquisition of the vast wealth of the New World ***after*** *the end of the period were the main reasons for the ossification of Spanish society thereafter (in ways that led to the Spanish Civil War, 1936-39).*

The largely urban, commerce-enriched, oligarchies of the *Italian City States* became dominant over the course of this period, almost completely displacing the rural aristocracies. Status now depended pretty much entirely on wealth – though the new oligarchs worked hard to be *rent seekers* and ensure the state was structured in such a way as to keep things in their favour (with struggles between wealthy clans and extended families becoming the key to politics for the most part).

However, they couldn't just ignore the commons, especially the *urban* commons, as riots, strikes and even rebellions, could unseat even the most firmly ensconced family ... so the chance for social mobility was much greater than in most places.

Scandinavia progressed more along the lines of *Anglo-Norman Society* while Germany became a mish-mash of *Anglo-Norman* practise with a varying admixture of *French* structures.

Eastern Europe remained pretty similar, often with a shallow overlay of western feudalism, but, in reality, remaining or becoming very much more conservative and aristocratically dominated ... though often in quite markedly different ways, ways which generally led to the retention and empowerment of some of the worst elements of feudalism, ensuring they remained socially backward well beyond the end of the period.

How did they relate to Technology?

This depends on which class of people you are considering, as it differed.

Landowners (Nobility & Gentry, Monasteries). The wealthier they were the more willing they were to use technological and scientific (or what passed for such) developments to enhance crop yields and productivity ... as they had the capital to implement such changes.

This was in line with the traditional Roman attitude to being 'noble' ... anything to do with agriculture (even indirectly) was fine, but ***commerce*** or ***industry*** was for the ***common folk***.

There was one area which was a clear exception to

this, despite all the period (and later) romantic chivalric clap-trap, and that was in the *military* technological sphere.

The Nobility were quite happy to adopt the latest technologies to allow them to kill their enemies more effectively and efficiently ... even the French managed to cotton on to this idea after the disastrous idiocy of their efforts in the first phases of the 100 Years War (though this improvement was largely after the end of the 14th century).

*This was largely because the new technologies (gunpowder and gunpowder weapons, mainly) were so expensive that only the very wealthy could afford to field them ... which meant that, even though it made the chivalric spectacle of a massed charge of armoured horsemen ... **risky** (or even suicidal) ... it **did** make killing and winning easier.*

Academic Elite. Since the members of this group were usually drawn from (or beholden to, or wanted the patronage of) the wealthy Landowning classes they tended to strongly adhere to the prejudices of that group – tending to regard anything that we, today, would regard as *'practical'* as beneath them.

This attitude changed, slowly, over the four centuries, and there were always *some* outliers who pursued such 'practical' matters as *alchemy* or *medicine* (as *surgery* rather than *theoretical*).

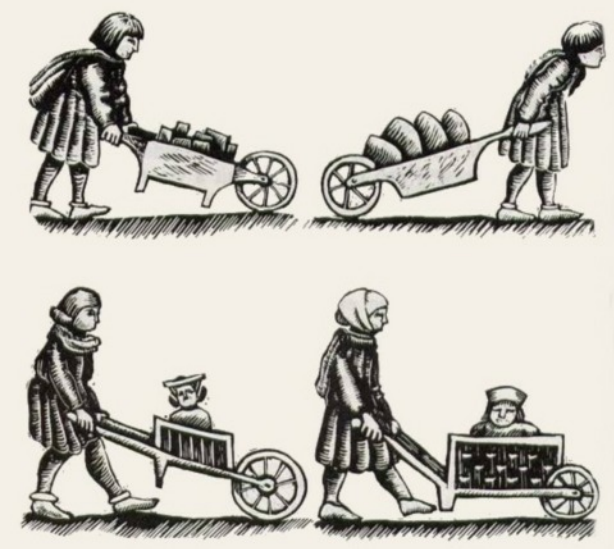
Townsmen. Towns were the centres of *non*-agricultural technological innovation during the period partly because their involvement in trade and commerce led to a concentration of the capital needed to develop and implement new technologies, but also because they largely did not buy into the aristocratic ideal that only land ownership was the mark of a 'gentleman.'

There were, of course, differences of attitude between the Guild Masters and Merchant oligarchs who quickly dominated town politics and the urban workforce, both journeymen and apprentice guildsmen *and* ordinary labourers ... as in the country side, as long as their livelihood wasn't threatened, they were generally OK with technology.

However, they could, and *did*, riot and protest when they were taken for granted.

Serfs & Freeholders. Were not opposed to new technology or new developments *unless they threatened their livelihoods*. Most simply could not afford the capital outlay – but those who *could* were, if successful, able to become wealthy enough to become, effectively, members of the Gentry.

*There **were** changed that **did** threaten the traditional feudal tenancy arrangements (i.e. serfdom aka share-*



cropping) and these were coming to a head in the 14th century ... and were one of the (several) reasons behind some of the Peasant Revolts mentioned (especially the English one).

Generally they were not hugely to the disadvantage of the serfs and other rural workers and, in England at least, led to them being able to convert feudal tenure to straight leasehold. In those cases where they were moved out by change (in the midlands, where the Open Field System gave way largely to sheep farming), there was still a general shortage of labour resultant from the impact of the Black Death and they were normally able to find other opportunities to farm elsewhere.

At least that was the case in England until the 15th or 16th centuries. On the continent, things were not so simple – and the widespread Bundschuh Peasant rebellions in Germany during the last decade of the 15th and first decade of the 16th centuries were an example of how things could go very very wrong.

How racist were they?

The evidence is not conclusive, mainly because there are ongoing arguments as to what 'race' and 'ethnicity' actually *meant* in the medieval period (or even *today*, for that matter) but the evidence that exists, especially the *archaeological* evidence, suggests that medieval people did not have strong ethnic or racial identification.'

Examination of organised burials (i.e. in church and other cemeteries) in areas of supposed (according to medieval chronicles and records) in England do not show any significant ethnicisation – even though there are cultural differences that are easily identifiable, the actual siting of burials shows no correlation between such differences and the location of contemporaneous burials within any given burial site.

*Age, social status and **local** identification (not in that order, and not consistently weighted) show up as **much** more important factors in relative location.*

Xenophobia? Perhaps it would be more accurate to ask how *xenophobic* they were (that is, how afraid they were of *strangers*), rather than how racist?

That gives us a very slightly clearer picture – medieval people, depending on locality, viewed *other* medieval people from a *different* locality with varying degrees of suspicion. Under some circumstances this could lead to xenophobic riots – Jews were, of course, a favourite target (but that was not so much racism, or even xenophobia, but religious based bias), but *any* migrants could become targets.

*For example, during the Peasant Revolt (1381), the Peasant forces that gained entry into the city of London, amongst other things, attacked areas of the City where Flemish weavers had settled ... and, very likely, this was not so much the Peasants per se, but the London commons who had opened the gates **to** the rebels.*

*Likewise, the St. George's Day rising in Estonia (and similar, smaller, localised 'troubles' in Slavic areas conquered/occupied by expansionist Germans) are most definitely examples of xenophobia ... on **both** sides.*

Skin Colour. The one thing that doesn't seem to have been a significant issue, however ... or not by itself ... was *skin colour*. Non-caucasian/Slav ('white' for want of a better term) people were so rare in most of northern Europe that there wasn't any coherent attitude towards them as a group.

In Southern Europe the presence of Muslims of colour was an issue, but only *because* they ***were** Muslims*. It was a religious matter, not a racial one ... not in this period anyway.

*See the illustration immediately below of a Medieval Iberian 'Moorish' Army **from a Christian Source**, and see how many obvious 'moors' ... i.e. non-whites ... you can see. One, possibly two at most (the topmost and second topmost trumpeter on the right side).*



How religious were they?

More than today, at least by *overt* indicators ... but exactly how much of their overt display of 'religion' was a representation of what the people ***actually*** believed is much less certain.

Except that what the common people (and, indeed, even the educated elite) *actually* believed and what they *publicly professed to believe* ... and how either or both of these compared to what the *Church* said they were *supposed to believe* ... don't necessarily even come close to being in the same ballpark.

Overt Indicators. Every *local* (in England) belonged to a *Parish (Church)*, or was supposed to ... especially as the Parish was a governmental division there ... and most people *did*.

This was important because, by law and/or custom, every Christian (and everyone who wasn't, say, a Jew or Muslim, was regarded as being a Christian for this, regardless of their beliefs) owed the local Parish a *tithe* of their income ... a full *ten percent* ... every year. At least in the countryside, most people had little chance of avoiding this assessment ... though it *may* have been possible for those in larger towns or cities who kept a low profile.

*Jews (and Muslims) were assessed taxes equivalent to or greater than the tithe that Christians were supposed to pay ... and, of course, in Muslim lands, non-Muslims had to pay the **zakat**, a 10% tax that was supposed to simulate the 10% of income Muslims were duty bound to give to charity.*

Theoretically, Christians were supposed to attend Church every Sunday and Holy Day ... but rarely did.

In fact, the Church found it *impossible* to enforce even the minimum of attending at Easter and Christmas ... and did not even *try*, for the most part. Of course, baptisms, funerals and weddings *did* require Church attendance ... and the payment of fees (taxes, in effect) to the Priest for those 'services', wanted or not.

*Churches were, therefore, likely to be mostly **empty** at most services – or, at least, mostly empty of people actually **participating** in the services. Churches were regarded by medieval people as community spaces, and were used as such **even during services** ... both in the Churchyard **and** inside the Church proper. It was a common complaint of Priests that the noise from these activities actually made hearing the Mass (or other service) difficult to hear for those actually involved!*

***Note:** Medieval Churches often do **not** seem to have had pews (seating) inside, or not routinely, not until the Reformation – and parishioners would therefore have stood during services (rather like historical and contemporary practise in Orthodox Churches).*

Basic Knowledge. While Christians were *supposed* to be versed in the basic sacraments and responses to the Mass and other services, it was a common complaint amongst churchmen that this was, in fact, extremely *uncommon* ... and, despite such complaints, very little or nothing *effective* seems to have been done to change this situation until the Reformation.

*Church authorities complained fairly frequently that the common people often had heterodox beliefs ... **superstitions** ... that were not entirely, if at all, compatible with Church teachings. This was more common, obviously, in rural areas – and the more isolated and low population the area the more likely it seems to have been.*

Given that attendance was evidently so uncommon, this is not particularly surprising ... especially as most Parish priests wouldn't even have had a complete Bible to use in their services. In fact, a not uncommon complaint by later Church authorities was that too many Parish priests had limited knowledge of the Bible and Sacraments and were often semi-literate.

*Given that the common practise was for a Priest to be granted the 'living' (income) of multiple Parishes and employ a poorly paid substitute to do the actual work so they could support an upper middle or upper class lifestyle **despite** repeated attempts to limit or prohibit the practise (usually by people who had or were benefitting from it at the same time!), it isn't surprising.*

Heterodoxy & Heresy. In general, Church authorities didn't care much about the *actual* (as opposed to *theoretical*) beliefs of *most* people during the period – if Richard by the Stream, a common serf, didn't believe in the virgin birth, it was no big deal. If his whole family agreed, ditto.

If the whole *village* started to agree with him, that was a problem ... and the big guns would be brought out to convince him of his 'error.' If he started preaching far and wide and attracted an even larger following and, for example, started to question other aspects of Church teaching or clerical organisation, that was a much much bigger problem ... and progressively more important Church officials would become involved in dealing with the threat.

Eventually, if Richard and his disciples and followers could not be convinced to give up their heterodox beliefs they would be declared *heretics* ... and then the Church started to get *serious* and you get the civil authorities involved and, eventually, massacres like the Albigensian Crusade.

The more important and powerful and individual was, the more likely the Church authorities were to take action to 'correct' their views at an early stage, based on the reasonable assumption that such a person would be powerful enough to influence others more easily and more quickly. Other than that, the progression of actions taken against them and, if and when applicable, their followers, would follow the same pattern.


This was usually the last resort for *persistent* Heretics

Superstition, Witchcraft & Xenophobia. Superstition was rife, even amongst the educated ... though it was *mostly* harmless and, while sometimes, some elements might be ridiculed or discouraged by the civil and Church authorities, it was mostly ignored and not subject to any particular penalty.

Witchcraft, as noted elsewhere, wasn't a serious problem during the period and the main Witch trials and persecutions come much later, during the Reformation. Witches seem to have been regarded much as Heterodox believers were – not generally regarded as being a problem.

Xenophobia. Fear of the other. ***That*** was a different issue – if, somehow, the superstitions were directed at a *foreigner* (which might mean someone from only a few villages over!) *then* things could get nasty. Real mob, flaming torches and pitchfork nasty ... but that seems to have been quite uncommon.

Overall Belief. Given the limitations and inherent orthodox and upper class bias of the sources available it is hard to be entirely certain what common folk believed ... but the limited evidence available *strongly* suggests that they were, as often as not, paying *lip service* to Church orthodoxy, if they even knew what the orthodox belief(s) *were*.

How Sexist Were They?

Medieval people were *at least* as sexist as modern people – and *probably* more so *on average*. Certainly the laws, such as they existed, on property ownership and legal rights were *much* more discriminatory against women then – and social attitudes *seem*, on the whole, to have been more or less in line with them, especially in those areas which were predominantly Christian *and* which had originally been part of the Roman empire (and so had inherited romano-Greek attitudes towards women ... which were notably sexist).

Warrior Women

Sikelgaita of Salerno, 1040-1090

The daughter of the the Lombard Prince of Salerno, she was the second wife of *Robert Guiscard*, the Duke of Apulia (married 1058). She often accompanied Robert on campaign and conducted military operations on his behalf while he was elsewhere ... in a command capacity, but definitely close to the combat and wearing full armour and, during the *Battle of Dyrrhachium (1081)* she *personally* rallied their troops when they initially retreated in some disarray from the East Roman forces.

Matilda of Tuscany, 1046-1115

The daughter of Margrave Boniface III of Tuscany, she outlived her brother and became his heir and openly repudiated her disastrous first marriage to a German nobleman to return to her Tuscan demesne, ruling in her own name as *Countess* and *Duchess* from 1071 to her husband's death in 1076 and, from 1080, also ruled his lands around Verdun.

She supported the Papacy against the Holy Roman Emperor from 1076 through to the defeat and withdrawal of the final Imperial forces in northern Italy between 1095 and 1097 and, during this period of struggle she organised and *led* many of the military campaigns against the invaders, outmaneuvering and defeating them militarily and politically.

Eventually, having made peace with the new Emperor, she was crowned as ***Imperial Vicar and Vice Queen of Italy*** in 1111 and died, of gout, in 1115, leaving no heirs, which allowed the main cities of her domain to seize their various independences.

Brave and ever watchful, she often tormented the perverse
Mightily she undertook terribly violent battles with the king
For she endured steadfastly through thirty years
Fighting day and night to quell the tempests of the kingdom.

Joanna of Flanders, 1295-1374

The wife of *John of Montfort*, the Duke of Brittany, she led her husband's forces after his treacherous imprisonment (1341) by the French King at the beginning of the *War of the Breton Succession* (Philip backed a different side) in the name of their son.

She mustered her husband's loyalist forces and recaptured lost territory before being beseiged in Hennebont by Philip and personally led the troops in their defence of the walls, then led a sally by 300 men against the French camp ... destroying supplies and many tents.

The conflict went back and forwards, with Joanna being supported by the English, who eventually imprisoned her for political reasons – though they did support her son to his final victory in 1364.

In those areas to which Christianity came later in the period and/or which had never been a part of the Roman Empire, attitudes towards women were actually *less* sexist ... though still more sexist than they are, on average, today.

But the laws and social mores weren't in perfect alignment anywhere ... and there were *social* rules that modified and *moderated* actual black letter law.

Married Women. Marriage was much more of an economic agreement in the Middle Ages – arranged between two families to ensure that the married couple would be able to make a go of it.

Always a part of that agreement were formal (written) or informal (customary or societal) assumptions about how the wife and children would be treated and looked after – and, despite the horror stories you can read about in court documents (see ***Survival Bias*** for some idea why these need to be at least somewhat discounted), this system seems to have, largely, worked.

Yes, there *were* Nobly born husbands who might lock their wife up in a tower and cavort openly with a mistress or mistresses ... but that would attract the wrath of the wife's family, and that could have serious military, political, economic and social consequences.

Most Nobles, however, treated their wives with the greatest of outward respect ... and, if they went off on crusade or were otherwise intending to be away from their estates for an extended period of time, their wife would commonly be left in overall charge of the running and defence of the estate. Even when the husband was in residence, the wife ultimately had charge of important elements of the estate's management – or, at least, of the *household's* management.

Wives held the keys, perhaps the only ones, but, more likely, duplicates, to all the important areas in the household with the possible exception of the armoury and other military storage areas. She might not be the primary manager of those areas, and probably wasn't, but she had access for the most part ... and, as you can see from the examples in the Sidebar, she could be a great resource for her husband their children in times of trouble ... medieval women were ***not*** *shrinking violets!*

Commoner households ran on a similar basis ... the wife was responsible for the running of the household while the husband looked after the running of the 'estate' ... but, being poorer and with less in the way of material possessions and land, there was often a much greater cross-over between the two spheres.

So, while a Commoner *could* beat and otherwise mistreat his wife, it would be unwise to do so as this might well bring down the wrath of her family on his head ... perhaps quite literally.

Unmarried Women. Even though the Church *supposedly* frowned on *forced* marriages, this was *usually* only against the sort of *'bride's arm twisted behind her back'* arrangement that occurred relatively rarely, and was *not* against *arranged* marriages.

Noble women were married off much younger than today, but were raised to know what their 'duty' was, and so the lack of 'rights' was somewhat less of an issue for them. Commoner women tended to marry later, though not as late as in recent decades, though they were still usually arranged marriages.

Widows. Widows were, at least nominally, free to manage their own affairs and, also nominally, those of their sub-adult children. The reality was, however, that the wealthier they were, and the greater the inheritance due any children, the more likely there was to be interference ... for nobles, mainly.

Like unmarried women, noble widows could be 'encouraged' by someone other than themselves to marry a specific new husbands ... and it was not uncommon for Kings to 'collect' widows and, often quite crassly, auction them off or give them as rewards to supporters.

How common this was is really not certain. Probably not so much as you might think, as it is very likely reporting bias makes it seem greater than it actually was. Certainly it doesn't seem to have been common for gentry and lesser noble widows, nor for the widows of commoners.

Property Rights. While it is a common belief that women had *no* such rights, that's somewhat misleading. They were, under the Salic Bar, supposedly not allowed to inherit *feudal-title* land unless there were no male heirs, not even distant ones ... however, that didn't apply to land that was provided as part of a dowry, or to 'book land' (i.e. freehold land not held under feudal-title, even though there may have been some feudal obligations of a general sort attached).

While an abusive/manipulative husband *could* trash his wife's dower, this was unusual in real life simply because marriages were arranged ... there were real political and social consequences for such treatment.

It *did* happen, but, even over the four centuries covered, families used increasingly sophisticated legal maneuvering to secure a woman's dower and other rights – most commonly, some form of *Trust* arrangement through which lawyers *nominally* controlled the property but *really* followed the wishes of the woman for whom the arrangement had been set up.

This was often done in such a way as to prevent the land or capital held in trust from being disposed of in order to prevent an out of control spouse from coercing a wife to sell up, allowing access only to the income produced.



How violent were they?

Hard to tell. The studies that have been done (and there are a number of them) offer widely divergent conclusions.

Older studies show *extremely* high rates (in excess of 100 per 100,000) for some towns, but have been seriously questioned because of the limited availability of sources, the basic assumption that all 'deaths' mentioned are murder (not accidental, nor manslaughter), and are based on population figures now known to be *huge* underestimations.

More recent studies have shown that, for some areas at least, the murder rate was around the same as it is for the same areas today ... and these have allowed for some of the issues that older studies largely didn't (though the paucity of surviving sources remains a significant problem).

Anarchy vs Order. When faced with violent and/or recalcitrant and/or repeat offenders, however, the system broke down, *especially* if they were part of an armed gang or mercenary company).

*Sometimes there seems to have been little difference **between** a mere armed gang and a mercenary company!*

This seems to have been *relatively* uncommon ***except*** during periods of general breakdown of authority – especially during times of civil or foreign conflict (civil wars, succession crises, foreign wars) and their aftermath ... especially if what passed for central state authority was weak (in general or because of the conflict itself) or otherwise indisposed.

*Actually, this is **still** the situation even in modern times – breakdown of authority due to civil or foreign conflict has an inevitable effect on civil society.*

Domestic Violence. Given the inferior legal and social status of women it is likely that husbands and fathers *were* much more physically abusive than would be acceptable today *and* courts were reluctant to take action against them even in extreme cases ...

in fact, a common (and seemingly effective) defence was that the woman was a scold or nag, did not properly obey her husband's (or father's) instructions or was basically a temptress and 'asked for it.' Juries were, of course, all male.

*It was also virtually impossible for a woman to **successfully** accuse a man of rape and have him convicted in the courts for this sort of reason. Much more so than it is today, but the 'reasoning' behind the failure to convict is pretty much the same.*

Certainly some husbands/fathers were nasty pieces of work (as some are, still, today) – but, as with the overall violent crime rate, it is difficult to drill down to an *overall* domestic violence rate as opposed to the cases severe enough to be brought before a court.

Always remember, however, that the sources we rely on for information about 'domestic violence' tend to be grossly skewed – court cases, for example, deal with intractable situations and those instances that appear in chronicles tend to be the worst of the worst.

Murder Rates. As noted above, older studies, now *heavily* questioned, indicated *exceptionally* high murder rates, but more recent studies suggest that rates were probably around the same as they are today.

For example, in the period 1276-1321 there were 674 *likely* murders in the City of London – a little over 15 a year (overwhelmingly committed by the very poor), on average.

Essex had ~25 and Devon ~37 murders per year in parts of the same period ... as London had, at least, a rudimentary 'watch' and the more compact area meant the civic authorities were able to maintain greater control.



Interestingly, medical studies strongly suggest that as many as 2/3^{rds} of those who died by violence according to surviving Coroner's records would very likely have survived with late 19th or early 20th century medical intervention.

Violent Crimes. As with *Murder Rates*, above, there are problems with the sources, and the results they give can vary widely according to the assumptions they make regarding the *actual* local population and other relevant factors. Broadly speaking, however, violent crimes seem to have been more common in, in roughly descending order, Rural Areas, Villages and Towns.

As with the different in murder rates between London, Essex and Devon mentioned above, the reason the level of violent crime drops according to the greater population and population density is because of the greater resources available and the more closely the authorities are able to focus on crime and criminality.

HYGIENE

While medieval towns, cities and villages almost certainly smelled of the barnyard, sewage and rotting garbage, did medieval *people* smell?

Surprisingly, probably not all that much. There were no medieval deodorants, though the very rich might use *very* expensive perfumes, but, *except for the indigent*, medieval people bathed regularly (though probably not in the same way or as frequently as today) and changed their clothes (or at least their underclothes) and laundered them regularly as well.

BATHING

Despite claims made or implied in many secondary sources, bathing was actually quite common in medieval Europe ... though not as frequent as it commonly is in modern times and different in scope and nature.

Bath-houses. In the Towns and Cities public Bath Houses were actually quite common and, in a large city there might be scores. They were often associated with Bakeries as this allowed the heated ovens to do double duty heating the water for the tubs.

Such baths were normally quite large and could be used by several, perhaps a dozen or more, people at the same time and the water was not changed between each set of users ... and the cost of using the bath dropped as the water got colder.

*It is hard to tell from the existing accounts of the process of bathing (and, yes, such **do** exist as part of the corpus of health and medical texts), but it there is some hint that bathers sponged or wiped themselves down, or doused themselves with water, before getting into a bath, though*

*not as thoroughly as is common in Japanese bathing. As a result the water may not have been all **that** dirty ... or, at least, wouldn't get that way all that **quickly.***

It is hard to be entirely certain, but a number of ecclesiastical sources suggest that, at least in some places, the bath-houses had *mixed* bathing, men and women together ... quite unlike the Roman practise of having different times of day (or days of the week) for males and females to use the same facilities.

Medieval attitudes to nudity and the circumstances under which it was acceptable or unacceptable were quite different from those we are used to ... as noted elsewhere, in Inns where beds were shared and where there might be several in the one room, married couples had first dibs on a separate bed for themselves, but still seem to have slept naked!

*Of course, those same ecclesiastical sources are **very** condemnatory of all this – regarding mixed bathing (and, by extension, Bath Houses) as little better than brothels (which they often actually **were**) and sources of and encouragement for all sorts of moral laxity and depravity.*

Interestingly, however, they 'reluctantly' accepted it as the lesser of two evils balancing immorality with the perceived need to provide an outlet for otherwise potentially uncontrollable sexual behaviour by young (presumably unmarried) men. And, in some places, at least, the Church was quite happy to tax such places (if on private property) or lease out Church lands for such usage!

Frequency. The sources are all over the place on this – and, in any case, interpreting what they mean by 'bathing' is a source of some considerable confusion.

Sometimes they mean what *we* would mean in modern times – bathing in a tub with most of the body immersed in hot water ... so stories of holy saints only 'bathing' once a year almost certainly mean *this*.

But that ***doesn't*** mean they were filthy and stank the rest of the time ... it simply means they used a jug and a basin and wash cloths to cleanse themselves, probably all over at least a couple of times a week, the smelly areas (groin, armpits, feet) at least once a day, and the hands and face (and any other visible areas) after heavy labour, after going to the toilet, and probably before meals.

The Anglo-Saxons observed that the Vikings living in the Danelaw were 'obsessed' with bathing as they insisted on a full bath at least once a week.

*Some Monastic rules were required to have a bath four times a year – though it is unclear whether this was a **minimum** or a **maximum** (and some monasteries had water piped in to separate bathing rooms!)*



On the other hand, 'Bad' King John (1215 and all that) was regarded as being 'unmanly' as he insisted on bathing once a month 'whether he needed to or not' ...

Some medical books in fact recommended a regimen of *daily* baths for good health ... but others suggested that too frequent bathing could promote obesity. Take your pick.

Implements. ***Soap***, of course – coarse to fine for common folk, probably made from animal fat and lye in the household, finer soaps made of better (professionally) refined but otherwise identical raw materials for the middling sort ... and *Castle ('from Castille') soap* (made from Olive Oil) for the wealthier types, very possibly perfumed as well.

(Wash)Cloths. Almost everyone had a personal (possibly several, for the wealthy) *Rubbing Cloth* or *Cloths* which was used as a *washcloth*, always (as far as can be told) made from soft linen.

In a peasant household it might simply be cut from worn out clothes. In better off households they are often listed in testamentary inventories as *Cloths* or *Small Cloths* or similar.

Normally one was used for washing your body and another for drying yourself off – but those too poor to have more than one would typically use one end for the one purpose and the other for drying.

Sponges (natural ones, of course) were also used, at least by the well-to-do, both as an alternative (or addition) to the use of *Rubbing Cloths* as well as to sit (and place the feet) on inside the bathtub.

Rich vs. Poor. The wealthy were usually able to afford in-home bathing, normally in large wooden tubs which would have cloths draped over the inside when in use to minimise problems with splinters and

also over the outside in a tent-like arrangement (often including bunches of sweet smelling herbs) for privacy as there were no dedicated 'bath rooms' in most places until very *very* late in the 14th century (they didn't become *common* till several centuries later).

There was no 'standard' sized tub, but depictions in illuminated manuscripts and other pictorial sources show tubs that are big enough for the water to reach the waist while sitting down or even while standing up (though, in the latter case, the tubs seem to have been narrower in circumference).

Wealthier nobles are known to have taken baths with them on their yearly progress(es) from estate to estate so they could be set up wherever they were as needed.

In some places (and not always major 'resorts', either), natural hot springs, often with improvements made in Roman times, were still in use or their water was fed into permanent baths which were used in common by many people at the same time. Depending on the circumstances there might or might not be a charge or limited access for their use, so they might be available even to very poor locals.

Middle class and well off peasants also occasionally had bath-tubs, but these were normally intended to have double duty as laundry tubs as well and were very likely smaller than those available to the nobles.

They would at least have been as large as the later tin 'Hip Baths' that became common in the 19th century ... and bathing was very likely done sitting down in them.

The *very* poor (but not indigent) would probably have relied on washing themselves with cloths from basins and jugs of hot water or, during warmer weather, are known to have (at least occasionally) bathed in local streams or ponds.



Only the truly indigent would not have bathed regularly or at all.

As a Social Activity. Especially from the 13th century, Bathing could often be very much a social activity – and it was common for bathers to carouse in bath-houses and even in the baths themselves having 'bathing parties' with food, drink, conversation and entertainment.

Wealthy Nobles and Monarchs also seem to have staged such entertainments ... sometimes with only a small number of favourites (or those they wished to suck up to), other times (at Hot Springs) with larger numbers of members of the court.

Laundry

Some sources imply that medieval clothing couldn't be washed (because of the rich materials and dye-stuffs used) and, as a result, eventually *stank* and was passed down to progressively poorer owners. This is correct, but ***only for the late 15th century and later*** when such materials became common. Prior to that *everyone* wore linen and wool cloth (or cotton in the Middle East) with a little silk for the very rich – and the weaves and dyes used were eminently washable ... so people from the 11th to 14th centuries did not *have* to wear smelly, unlaundered, clothes.

As noted elsewhere, however, laundry was quite difficult and time consuming to do – so most households would put it off as long as possible. Often the timing depended on how many changes of clothes the members of the household had and how often they changed them. Wealthy households, where the members would have many changes of clothes might only do the laundry once a fortnight, perhaps even less frequently ... but most households would do it once a week.

All except the very poor usually had at least two more or less complete sets of clothing, one of which could be laundered while the other was worn, and most would have had several sets of underwear so they could change every couple of days, at least.

To help keep their clothing cleaner for longer, most workers stripped down to their underwear when they were working in the fields or on building sites and washed themselves down before putting the rest of their clothes on again when taking a break or finishing work for the day.

Teeth

Contrary to fictional (Hollywood) portrayals, tooth decay was actually far less common in the Middle Ages than it is today for one major reason – the medieval diet, even for the rich, included far less of the major cause of modern tooth decay ... *sugar*. Likewise, for most ordinary people, their diet was

high in vegetables, cereals and dairy products, relatively low in meat, and even 'natural' sugars such as in fruit (or honey) were used extremely sparingly ...

Archaeological examination of medieval burials show that only ~20% or less of teeth show even slight signs of tooth decay, compared to up to 90% in modern western nations (or nations with a similar diet).

*The main cause of tooth loss was, in fact, quite literally, wear and tear ... stone ground grain had particles of coarse stone in the flour and, along with generally less processed (and therefore coarser) foods the teeth, and their irreplaceable coating of dentine, were much more quickly worn down than in modern times ... and worn teeth were more subject to tooth decay. So **older** people would have more worn teeth – and more **lost** teeth as an inevitable result of this.*

Bad Breath. Bad breath was also seen to be a problem that needed to be dealt with according to the medical canon – partly for social reasons but also because it was recognised it was connected with dental problems.

To aid in fighting this scourge a variety of concoctions were available, *mostly* based on vinegar or wine infused with herbs and spices such as marjoram, mint and cinnamon. Or, more simply, chewing mint, parsley or garlic cloves or other common sweet (or strongly) smelling herbs was an option

Cleaning Teeth. The medical canon included routine warnings on the need to keep the teeth clean and for a wide variety of pastes, powders and other concoctions to aid in this.

At the very least, medievals rubbed their teeth and gums clean regularly, if not after every meal then probably daily, with a rough linen cloth ... commonly using some sort of paste or powder in conjunction.

For the very poor this could simply be softly ground soot or ash from the cooking fire or salt, possibly mixed with sage or other common herbs. For the better off, a paste made of crushed pepper, mint and salt could be purchased from Apothecaries ... or many other variants.

Some people chewed twigs to a soft end and used them as crude tooth 'brushes', either by themselves or in conjunction with some of the pastes or powders. Toothpicks, usually made out of goose quills rather than wood, were also common.

The 'modern' bristle toothbrush wasn't invented until 1498 (though there are earlier, less recognisable and capable variants dating back to the 7th century BC)!

*In **China** for both cases ... and the latter was in use in Europe from at least the 17th century, though possibly earlier, brought back by travellers from the East.*

Dental Hygiene

A selection of period recipes for dental hygiene ...

Mouthwash, 1158

"One who wishes to have hard, healthy teeth should take pure, cold water into his mouth in the morning, when he gets out of bed. He should hold it for a little while in his mouth so that the mucus around his teeth become soft, and so this water might wash his teeth.

If he does this often, the mucus around his teeth will not increase, and his teeth will remain healthy. Since the mucus adheres to the teeth during sleep, when the person rises from sleep he should clean them with cold water, which cleans teeth better than warm water. Warm water makes them more fragile."

Physica, Hildegarde of Bingen

Wine & Herbs, Breath Freshener, 11th century

Wine & Herb Mouthwash. "A woman should wash her mouth after dinner with very good wine. Then she ought to dry [her teeth] very well and wipe [them] with a new white cloth.

Finally, let her chew each day Fennel or Lovage or Parsley, which is better to chew because it gives off a good smell and cleans good gums and makes the teeth very white."

Breath Freshener. "Take [some] Laurel leaves, and a little Musk, and ... hold it under the tongue before bad breath is perceived ... especially when she has to have sexual intercourse with anyone she hold these things under her tongue."

On Women's Cosmetics, Trotula

Mouthwash, Breath Freshener 14th Century

Mouthwash. " ... let the mouth be washed with wine that birch or mint has simmered in. And let the gums be well rubbed with a sharp linen cloth until they bleed. And let him eat Marjoram, Mint, and Pellitory, til they are well chewed. And let him rub well his teeth with the chewed herbs and also his gums. . . .

And let him drink every evening wine that Hyssop, or Cinnamon, or Spike, or Quibibis *(fruit of Piperaceae, Piper cubeba)* has simmered in.. . And after every meal, let him wash well his mouth and rub well his gums and his teeth so that no corrupt matter abides among the teeth."

Breath Freshener. "... let him use this powder: Take of Pepper, one ounce; and of Mint ... and of rock salt, as much ... chew this powder a good while in [the] mouth, and then swallow it down."

Gilbertus Anglicus

Toilets & Toileting

Where did medieval people go to the toilet in the countryside? Or in the Towns and Cities? And what did they do once they had finished their business there?

These questions are rarely even *considered* in most books meant for a general audience – and, when they are, the information is incomplete, usually misleading and often downright wrong.

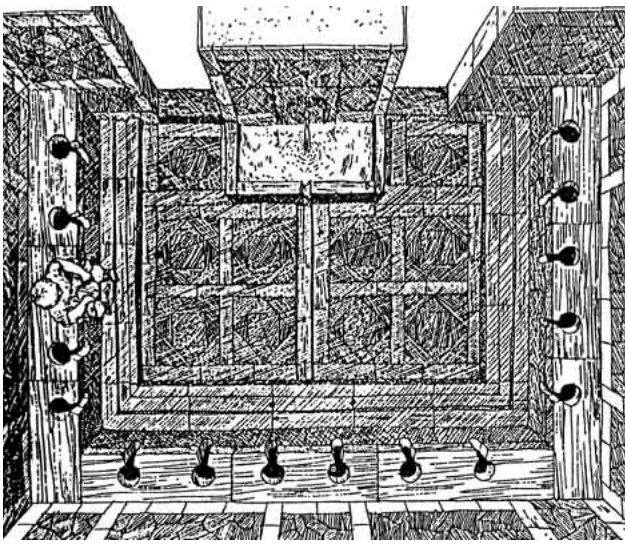
Aftermarket Products. What was used to cleanse oneself once you had used the Privy? *Toilet Paper* (and paper in general) simply wasn't known of during the period, at least in the medieval Mediterranean world.

*Paper intended specifically for use as **Toilet Paper** is definitely recorded as being in use in China by the late 9th century, but waste paper was used for the same purpose as early as the late 6th century. By the 14th century **millions** of packages were being produced every year each containing between 1000 and 10000 sheets – probably 2'x3' each.*

So, what ***was*** used? In rural areas, or those urban estates large enough to have a herb garden, a variety of plants with soft (if not necessarily absorbent) leaves were typically grown near to any outdoor Privy.

*One of the common types was **Mullein** (one of 300 similar species found throughout Eurasia, **Common ['Woolly'] Mullein** being the most common in Europe) ... the leaves also contain small amounts of an oil that has a mild soothing and anti-inflammatory effect and were commonly used in traditional preparations for Hemorrhoids and Diarrhea.*

Historically speaking, in various places and times, cleansing 'products' used in rural (or generally impromptu) locations may simply have been any or all of the following selections – smooth stones, the smooth sides/edges of broken pottery, scraps of raw wool, leaves or grass, hay, bedstraw or anything at all that was handy.



If all else failed, well, there's a reason southpaws were not well thought of in ancient and medieval times – and why the left hand is traditional regarded as 'unclean.'

In wealthier households squares of cloth might be used – typically a bucket of clean ones on the right side of the privy seat and a bucket with a close lid on the left for the used pieces.

*These would be collected and boiled in a cauldron with liquid soap as needed and then re-used. The cauldron **might** be one used for cooking as well, in which case it would be well scoured with sand once the process was finished, but, later in the period, it would probably be one used for the regular household laundry work (and would still be carefully scoured after use even so).*

Public Privies. Medieval documents indicate that towns and cities made considerable efforts, and laid out considerable sums of money, to build, maintain, light and clean public conveniences (*'Pyssingholes'*). Often they even provided attendants who kept them in good order during the daylight hours.

Just as private citizens today might pay for the provision of a seat in a public space, or even fund the maintenance (or complete provision of) a public park or other facility, medieval people would often pay for the provision of privies or the maintenance and upkeep of those already in existence. In some places the local householders or business owners are known to have clubbed together to provide and maintain these facilities.

These conveniences were usually built on the sides of Bridges, Docks, or over River or Stream banks, or nearby/in local Markets or other important public spaces (such as the Town Half square ... and squares faced by important Churches, for example). In heavily built up areas the city would often provide a central privy or privies for the population that such densely populated areas attracted.

We don't know how many such civic or privately funded Privies there were – but London, at the end of the 14th century (~100,000 population) *definitely* had *at least* a dozen funded by the City, though we don't know how many they could seat.

Yes, just as happens today, sometimes people (more often if drunk, and even more often at night) would simply duck down a side alley and do their business in a convenient nook or cranny ... but the local householders could, and did, chastise such miscreants for lacking in common decency.

Waste Disposal. Privies sited on Bridges, at the sides of Docks or on River/Creek banks were simply seats that had holes opening directly onto the (hopefully flowing) water below and were, at least theoretically, the cleanest and least smelly as a result.

Those situated elsewhere were normally seats with holes opening onto septic pits, usually stone lined, with close fitting lids to try and minimise the smells below escaping.

*Part of the cost of 'maintenance' of these dry-land privies was for them to be regularly emptied and the contents carted away to be dumped elsewhere (medieval Europeans had **not** figured out how to compost and sterilise human waste so, in most places, it was not used as fertiliser as was commonly the case in the East).*

Leisure

Medieval people liked having a good time as much as we do today – and there were many ways in which they could enjoy themselves, both rich and poor.

Games

Children's Games

Many 'modern' children's games are, in fact, only 'rebadged' medieval (and probably more ancient) games. A small selection includes – but note that they were often much more physical (and rough) than the (more recent) modern versions.

Older Children may well have played some of the simpler adult games that required nothing special in the way of equipment – Alquerque, Chequers and Nine Man's Morris, especially.

Follow the Leader was popular under a wide variety of names with rules very similar to those still common for modern variations.

Hare & Hounds was something like *Hide & Seek* where the *Hare* would leave behind clues for the *Hounds* to follow and was normally played in close terrain (woods or the forest verge).

Hide & Seek was as popular then as now, and differed from *Hare & Hounds* in that those 'hiding' could not move once the active player had started their search – though there were regional variations (just as there are today ... and many, possibly all, of them may date back as far as the 'common' version).

Hoodsman's Blind was the medieval ancestor of *Blind Man's Buff* and, like most medieval games, was much rougher than the version played by children today.

Knucklebones was played with one of the bones from a sheep's ankle, normally with five, but sometimes six.

There were many variants, one common one was to place all five of the bones in the palm of the hand then throw them up and attempt to catch as many on the *back* of the hand as possible (this seems to have been the most common in ancient and medieval times) while another involved six knuckles, that was



thrown in the air and the other five on the ground with the player attempting to pick up one of the latter before catching the former before it hit the ground.

Adult Games

As with Children's games, some of these are still played today, often with different names and/or slightly (or *very*) different rules.

Alquerque (Board Game) is the ancestor to *Chequers*, and originated in the Islamic world and was widely played by the 10th century. It seems to have arrived in Europe through the Iberian peninsula where it gained its name, probably appearing no later than the 11th century – the earliest written rules are from Castille, date to the 13th century and describe several variants of the basic game of varying complexity.

*Spanish sources describe three main variants, simple ones called **De Tres** and **De Nueve** and a more complex one called **De Doze**, which probably developed into Alquerque or Chequers – the main **obvious** difference for all three variants being that the pieces were placed on the intersices of the grid squares rather than inside the squares.*

It was played on a 5x5 grid with points connected by horizontal, vertical and diagonal lines. Each player had 12 counters placed in a 5-5-2 arrangement with the central point of the board left empty at start.

Moves are along the lines to an empty space, which may be reached by jumping over an opposing piece, removing any piece that is jumped – jumps are *forced* and all pieces that may be jumped *must* be jumped or the piece that fails to do so is removed from the game.

Chequers/Draughts (Board Game) is *possibly* related to *Latrunculi* and *Nine Men's Morris*, using, most commonly, an 8x8 board in Italy, Spain, Portugal, England and France and southern Europe in general a 10x10 one in northern Europe and Scandinavia.

The rules were different – for example, *Castling* can

only be *certainly* dated back to the mid 13th century and the first occurrence of the *forced capture* rule was only recorded in the second quarter of the 16th century ... and there were often regional variations regarding setup and movement.

Chess (Board Game) arrived in western Europe and Muscovy by the 9th century from the Islamic world, and was widespread through those regions (at least amongst the wealthy) by the beginning of the 11th century while in southern Europe it was introduced by the Moors around the beginning of the 10th century.

*It is possible that Chess was not introduced into **England**, except, perhaps, as a curiousity, until the 13th century (important note – the Isle of Lewis, from which the famous 12th century Chessmen came, is part of **Scotland**, and the Chessmen were probably made in **Norway**, which ruled the Hebrides at that time).*

The game was based on the Middle Eastern game of ***Shatranj*** (known from the 7th century) which, in turn, was based on the Indian game of *Chaturanga* (also dating to the 7th century, but based on earlier, similar, board games from much earlier times).

The early rules were quite different from those which are in use today, which did not come into widespread use until the last quarter of the 15th century and was called *Queen's (or **Mad Queen's**) Chess* as the Queen had become the most powerful piece in this later game.

The game quickly became an important part of noble culture and the ability to play well was regarded as an important skill for any (male) of gentle birth as, allegedly, it taught strategy skills for the battlefield and, as a result, it could also be referred to as the ***King's Game***.

Cross & Pile (Coin Toss Game) is simply ***Heads & Tails*** (aka *Two Up* in Australia) and involves betting on which faces of two coins tossed in the air will land facing upwards. The Cross (many English medieval coins had a cross on the *Obverse*) or the Pile (*Reverse*).

Dice (Dice Games). These were extremely popular and the rules for the different games could be quite complex (see *Hazard*, *Passage* and *Raffle*, below for some examples) and some, at least, used dice *without* the traditional 1-6 numbering pattern.


Nine Men's Morris with Dice

Twenty sided dice, for example, are known to exist from as early as the 2nd century BC!

Dice were handmade, very much smaller than modern ones, and many have survived ... including some 'loaded' dice. They were also used in other games such as *Tables* but possibly also in variants of *Alquerque*, *Hnefatafl* and *Nine Men's Morris* (amongst others).

*It is possible that knucklebones were still in use as 'dice' of sorts in the Romano-Greek game of **Tali**, which numbered the flat sides of the knucklebone 1, 3, 4 and 6 and used four such 'dice' in a game. The rules are not known, but it seems likely from the limited information available that they may have involved rolling a target number or range of numbers (such as in **Hazard**, below),*

Hazard (Dice Game) is a dice game, a more complex precursor to the modern US game of ***Craps***. The caster throws two dice in an attempt to get a specified score of 5-9. The game is first mentioned (in English) by Chaucer in *The Canterbury Tales* (14th century) but was already widely played then.

*It is thought to have arrived in England from France, possibly through Spain from an Arab/Middle Eastern origin. If you wish to replicate the game, it is easier to simply use the rules for **Craps**.*

Hnefatafl (Board Game) was a Scandinavian version of *Latrunculi* and could be played on a square board with a variable number of squares (7x7 through to 19x19) and pieces (with the two sides having an unequal number, whatever that number may have been – but typically 2:1 or, less commonly, 3:1).

The aim of the game was for the player with the fewer pieces, one of which was a 'King' equivalent, to move that key piece to an edge or corner of the board safely while the opposing player won either by capturing the King or preventing it from being able to reach safety.

The game, in all its variants, was so popular it spread widely through areas settled by (or adjacent to areas settled by) Vikings and other Scandinavian settlers but slowly lost popularity versus Chess and was largely only a memory by the 16th century.

Nine Men's Morris aka 'Merels' (Board Game) is a 'board' game of very ancient (at least Roman, possibly the game known as ***Latrunculi*** *['Little Brigands' or 'Little Soldiers']* for which boards [scratched in steps and other flat stone surfaces], but no clear rules, survive – only hints) origins, played on a grid of lines with 24 intersection *points* and nine pieces per player.

The aim of the game is for a player to line up three pieces in a row ... they then may remove one of the opposing player's pieces. A player wins when they have removed seven of their opponent's pieces and, therefore, the loser cannot remove any of theirs.

Formal 'boards' were not the most common way of playing the game, the lines and intersections could be, and were, simply scratched onto any surface – and it is common to find them on tile, stone, or brick, often on steps where the players could sit down.

The Philosopher's Game (Board Game) was played on a chequered board, 8x16 (see diagram, right), and appears around the beginning of the 11th century (claims *were* made that it was of ancient Greek origin, possibly dating back to Pythagoras' time, no evidence has been found to back these). It reached England by the 13th century and rivalled Chess in popularity with intellectuals *way* beyond the end of this period.

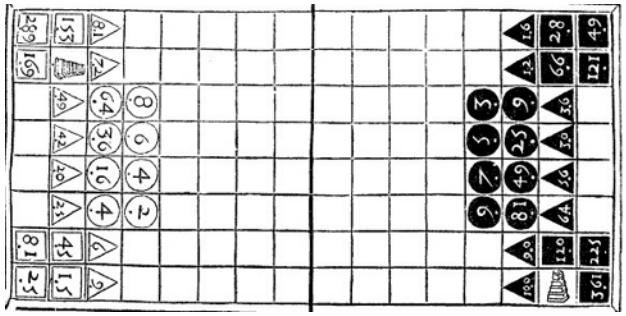
There are eight round, eight triangular, seven square pieces and a single pyramid (actually a combination of four pieces, two squares, two triangles and a round).

Each piece moves differently and may be removed by one of four methods – landing on a piece of the same value *(Meeting)*, landing on a piece with a larger value with a piece of a smaller value which has moved a number of squares which multiplies the smaller value to equal the larger value *(Assault)*, placing two pieces whose total value is equal to the value of the 'enemy piece' on either side of it *(Ambuscade)* and surrounded a piece on all four sides *(Siege)*.

There were many different ways to achieve a victory – but these were always of two different types. *Simple* victories which had numerical targets (number of pieces, minimum value, minimum value for maximum number of pieces etc.) and *Proper* victories which more complex mathematical targets (the simplest was to have three pieces whose value was in *arithmetic progression* lined up in a row).

Passage (Dice Game) is played with three dice. Each player rolls in turn until they get a pair – if the total of that pair is under ten, they are out; if it is over ten, they win. If it is *exactly* ten, the dice are passed on to the next player and the pot stands.

Playing Cards (Card Games) arrived in the Muslim world from China by the 11th century and the decks were already divided into four Suits (*Cups*, *Coins*, *Swords* and *Polo Sticks* ... the latter becoming *Clubs* in Europe, where Polo was unknown) with numbered and face cards (*King*, *Viceroy* and *Deputy Viceroy* in the original Muslim version, later the *King*, *Marshall* and *Deputy Marshall* or *Knight* and added face cards, the *Queen* and the *Prince*, aka *Knave* [which originally meant 'male child' not 'servant'] in the west).



*Suits and Face Cards varied widely across western Europe – the modern arrangement(s) are based on those eventually adopted by the **French**.*

The first record in Europe is not until the 14th century (1365) but they quickly spread, becoming common tby the last quarter of that century.

*There are no existing rules for card games dating to this early period – the earliest card games for which there are comprehensive (and **comprehensible**) rules date only from the late 15th century **at the earliest**, though they are **possibly** similar to earlier games.*

*The first **definite** mention/appearance of **Tarot Cards** isn't until the 15th century for use **only** as playing cards, **not** for fortune telling ... which is only mentioned from 1540 (the first 78 card deck with Major and Minor Arcana [which terms only date to the 19th century], for occult work, only appear in the 18th century).*

Raffle (Dice Game) was played with three dice for each player. A perfect score is throwing three identical numbers – if two or more players make such a roll, the winner is the one with the higher result ... if there is a tie, those who scored that roll again to determine the winner. If a triples result is not rolled by any player, a *doubles* roll is a winner – in the case of a tie, the value of the third die determines the winner (if *that* is a tie, they re-roll).

Tables (Board Game) was the medieval equivalent of ***Backgammon*** and had been around since the 5th century (and was known in Anglo-Saxon England during the 7th-8th centuries).

The board was identical to the modern version, but the rules were different – three dice were used, not two, and all the pieces started off board amongst other things (and some of the modern rules are *very* recent developments such as the *Doubling Cube*).

Hunting & Hawking

Fishing (for sport)

Fishing *as a sport* rather than for the pot only came into fashion in the late 17th century though the equipment in use prior to that was almost identical.

Nets were either small, weighted, hand-cast ones used in the shallow(ish) waters or larger (though still small

by modern standards) ones used by small river, estuary or seagoing vessels.

Hooks & Lines were most commonly strung out from a longer line towed behind a fishing vessel or strung along from floats.

Hooks (mostly made from iron in period) were almost identical in form to those still in use today with either an eye for the line to run through or an oval-spade shaped knob for it to be knotted around.

Poles and lines were only introduced into England some time in the 13th century and reels were not in use before the late 13th and most likely the early 14th century. Prior to this, line fishing was done by hand.

*Lines and nets were traditionally made from **nettle-hemp** as it was both strong and somewhat water resistant.*

Fish Traps of various sorts designed to direct fish into nets or traps or simply to channel them into confined spaces where they could be speared were also used in watercourses and estuaries.

Fish Spears were still used, sometimes with a single spearhead, sometimes with multiple ones, but were less common as they were less efficient than the other methods *by themselves.*

Hawking & Falconry

The sport of using tamed birds of prey for hunting is actually quite ancient in parts of the Middle East and the Central and East Asian steppelands, possibly dating back as far as 2000 BC.

***Hawking** is the more historically accurate name for the*



*period even though the sport is more commonly known as **Falconry** in modern times ... mainly because the most common modern usage of 'hawking' relates to door-to-door salesmen and peddlers.*

It was only introduced to Europe during the steppe nomad invasions of the 4th-5th centuries – and only became popular, mostly with the gentry and nobility, in the 13th century when contacts with the Muslim world led to crusaders being familiarised with the sport and the texts available on its practise.

A variety of bird species could be, and were, used, but the more common types *included* Kestrels (Beginners), Goshawks, Falcons (Gyrfalcon, Hobby, Lanner, Merlin, Peregrine, Saker – and many other subspecies of the Falcon family), Sparrowhawks, Golden Eagles and Owls (the latter two types were rare).

Depending on the size of the bird they could take birds in flight, birds flushed from ground cover by dogs or hunters on foot or horseback in either open or wooden country (depending on the size of the bird) after ground dwelling birds or small to medium animals (for larger birds like the Golden Eagle).

Members of the nobility or gentry normally rode horses while practising falconry – but it was possible to do so dismounted.

While it was possible for a non-noble to own and train hunting birds they would have had to have been careful not to breed or use ones large enough to go after ground dwelling birds or small animals because of the restrictive laws on hunting and private property.

*Being caught with such game in the wrong place was **poaching!***

Riding to the Hounds

The other common means of hunting game was by using hounds (sight and scent) to track, pursue and/or flush out a variety of animals ... or to actually bring them down or corner them so that the nobles or gentry engaged in the hunt could put in the coup de grace.

While the pursuit was most often done on horseback, the final stage of the hunt might be done by stalking the prey or approaching its lair (or wherever the hounds had bailed it up) *on foot* ... either with Bow, Crossbow or Spear, depending on the animal.

*Keeping a pack of Hounds was **expensive** – around £1-2 per year per animal for maintenance, not including the cost of wages for the staff.*

A typical pack for a middling rank noble would be ~5-10 animals grading up to 50-70 hounds known to have been kept in the English Royal Household's hunting pack in the 14th century.

Trapping

Generally speaking, trapping was done to catch meat for the pot, not as a leisure pursuit.

Deadfall Traps and ***Snares*** were the most common sort of traps used and the latter was by far the most common of the two.

*A Deadfall needs to be five times the weight of the intended target. Snares were of string, not wire (wire was **expensive**) and could only hold smallish animals.*

Steel Jawed (Leghold) Traps for large or dangerous game such as Bears or Wolves were not invented (or, at least, aren't mentioned in any sources) until the late 16th century and remained relatively rare (and expensive) until the 18th century.

Female Participation

Noble and gentry-class women might also be involved in hunting, typically pursuing Coneys, Rabbits, small ground dwelling birds (less commonly, birds in flight) with Bows or Prods (pellet firing Crossbows).

It was also common for them to Hawk as well, using some of the smaller species. Like men, they mostly hunted and hawked from horseback, though they might dismount on occasion.

Religious Attitudes to Hunting

Catholicism. The Catholic Church had no particular strictures against *non-clerics* hunting – animals did not have souls and were, according to the Bible, placed on earth for mankind to use as needed.

For *Clerics*, on the other hand, the situation is, well, *murky*. Canon Law, probably dating back to at least the 12th century, stated clearly that *"We forbid to all servants of God hunting and expeditions through the woods with hounds; and we also forbid them to keep hawks or falcons"* and the 4th Lateran Council (1215) restated it clearly as *"We interdict hunting or hawking to all clerics."*

However, there seems to have been a distinction drawn between 'noisy' hunting (which seems to mean hunting done for show or entertainment) and 'quiet' hunting done for 'necessity' (food or raw materials) – but even the latter may be prohibited by decree of the local bishopric.

Orthodoxy. The various Orthodox churches seem to follow the same basic line as the Catholic – hunting is fine for non-clergy, but, at the very least, suspect for clerics ... and even 'quiet' hunting is frowned upon if not outright forbidden.

Judaism. Jewish law allows for the hunting of wild animals – for food or raw materials, if they would not be forbidden under dietary (or other) laws, or (of course) aimed at removing the threat of dangerous animals in a locality ... *but* prohibits the causing of any unnecessary pain or for any reason of cruelty.



Of course, this was mostly moot as, at least in Western Europe, Jews were rarely, if ever, allowed to own land and the hunting laws would therefore have made it difficult for them to hunt in any case.

As in Islam, the act of killing an allowable animal in a lawful hunt renders the meat ritually pure ... kosher.

Islam. Islamic law allows hunting animals which cannot be easily caught or domesticated but with several important requirements, two of which are – that the animal is killed only when necessary for food or raw materials (or for onward sale for such purposes), not for sport *and* that the means used to kill the animal be capable of doing so with as little suffering as possible.

Hunted animals must be those that would be halal if slaughtered according to the normal rituals, and the act of lawfully hunting them makes the meat halal.

Jousting & Tournaments

Prepare to be disabused of the notions instilled by bad Hollywood movies regarding what these were like – the reality is *wildly* different, especially for the period covered by this book.

Tournaments

Provenance. These are not *definitely* referred to in surviving (period) written sources before the early 12th century, though their nature is not definitively outlined – the first description of a 'classic' tournament doesn't appear in written sources (those that have survived, anyway) until the late 12th century

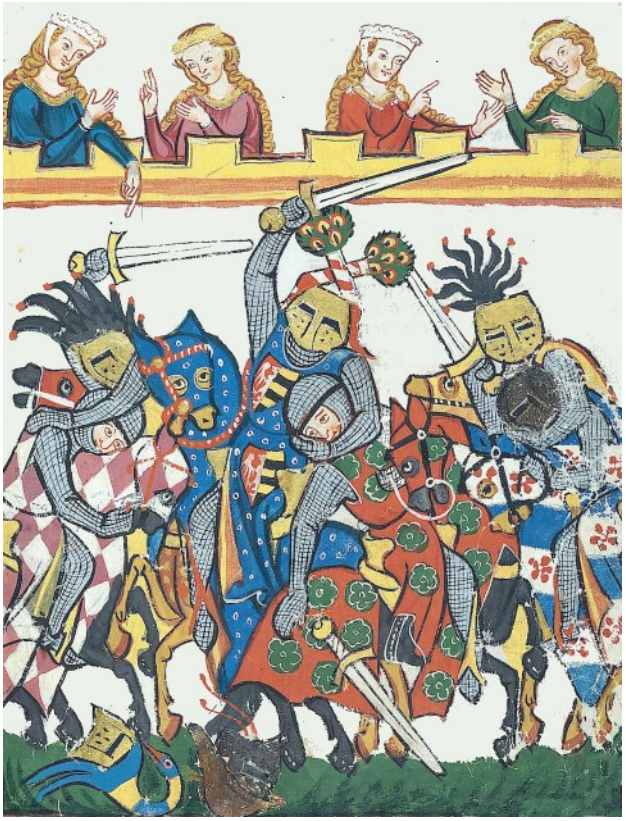
*Though this and later sources, possibly referring to now lost **earlier** written sources, claim that they came into existence in **some** form between the late 10th and mid to*

*late 11th century. There has also been some suggestion, unsupported by much (if anything) in the way of any evidence that the 'cavalry games' referred to in the 9th century Carolingian Empire might have been a precursor – and even shakier speculation that they, in turn, may have been descended after some fashion from the **Hippika Gymnasia** ('Cavalry Games') of the Roman Imperial Army's cavalry units.*

On the whole, it seems very likely that the 'high medieval' Tournaments so beloved of movie makers and writers of bad (as in *not properly researched)* historical fiction were the end result of slow and ongoing development over a long period of time.

Events. By the mid 12th century, if not sooner, a Tournament no longer consisted of just military style battle practise for the Knightly class – there were also battle-style events for non-Knights, both on mounted (Serjeants) and on Foot as well as general equestrian, archery and some more cultural events such as chess, singing and dancing, poetry composition and the like which were *mostly* for entertainment but might also, *occasionally*, be competitive.

*Competitive cultural events really only start to be part of the Tournament circuit at the very end of its popularity, but then became a much more significant, through still secondary, part of the Jousting circuit ... the emphasis on 'Courtly Love' as an integral part of the festivities and competitions, however, is almost exclusively High Medieval (i.e. **very** late 14th or, more likely, 15th century) and is much more likely to have been part of **Jousting** events rather than the older **Tourneys**.*



There were two key *combat* features that made up a Tournament – the ***Mêlée*** (normally where two teams of knights (often 1-2 *hundred* ***a side***) would charge each other in a massed formation on a designated field, either on horseback *or* on foot or first one and then the other, with the winner being the side which was able to break through the ranks of their opponents) and the ***Bourhourt*** (much the same as the Mêlée, but for *non-Knights* – Serjeants on foot or ahorse and lesser fighters on foot).

*The **Mêlée** was the most dangerous, causing more casualties and deaths – especially if local rules allowed it to devolve into **individual** combats once one **side** had won , allowing for the taking of ransoms (normally equal to the value of the loser's arms and armour).*

***The 'Round Table' Format.** Beginning some time in the 13th century, Tournaments as a whole began to emulate the 'Round Table' of the Arthurian Romances ... and non-combat skills became an integral part of the events. Singing, dancing and general revelry.*

Origin, Spread and Restrictions. *Tournaments* were a French tradition, but became incredibly popular – attracting as many as 3000 *knights* to some of those in northern France by the late 12th century and many more by the 13th century!

This mass popularity ensured they spread quickly – there were tournaments being staged in eastern England by the early 12th century and the craze had spread to central England and Germany by the middle of the century ... and encompassed northern Spain, the broader Holy Roman Empire and even western Poland by the end of that century!

Roaming bodies of armed men were always a worry, however, and prohibitions or restrictions were soon flying thick and fast.

*Jousting, since it was more individualised, attracted smaller numbers of (heavily armed) **competitors** and was never seen as a threat – merely as an opportunity to display one's wealth, chivalry, and power in public.*

The Catholic Church denounced *tournaments* as early as 1130. They were banned in England between 1154 and 1192 (*not* in English possessions on the Continent, though) and restricted to a limited number of sites on payment of a significant license fee. They were banned in French *royal* domains from 1260.

***Female Attendance.** As far as noble-class women are concerned, the first recorded attendance at an English Tournament is dated only to 1294. How different, if at all, this may have been on the continent is unclear, but, given the restrictive attitude to Tournaments in general held by the English government and the oft slow adoption of continental social trends there, it is*

reasonably likely that female (noble) attendance at Continental tournaments occurred decades earlier.

As far as attendance by non-noble women is concerned, there is no clear evidence either way.

Jousting

While individual *jousting* contests might have formed a 'grudge match' part of the mêlée in these earlier tournaments, the development of 1:1 ***tilting*** contests on a separate field with two divided sides, does not start to appear until ~ 1330 and doesn't become the 'main event' until well into the 15th century.

It gradually displaced the more generalised *Tournaments* with specialised *Jousting only* events later in that century (and had done so *completely* by the 16th century) with round-table elimination events for both knights and squires.

*Tilting became so popular for three main reasons – it was **far** cheaper to stage than a Tournament (and the last full mêlée based Tournament dates to 1379), it was a more individualised display of martial skills **and** it was more viewer friendly, with stands set up on either side of the narrow tilting field to allow individual viewers a better and closer view.*

It also became more technical, with specialist judges and complex rules that scored each 'pass' that did not result in a decisive victory (i.e. one of the two knights dismounting the other).

Plays & Drama

With the collapse of the Empire in western Europe, the long classical tradition of dramatic *performance* was completely lost ... and the Church opposed performances of 'immoral' (classical Romano-Greek) plays in any case.

It was not until the early 10th century that the Catholic Church itself began to create and perform dramatic representations of religious stories and related matters ... initially inserting very short dramatic sequences in the Mass. In the 10th century these lines (traditionally referred to as *Quem Quaeritis = 'Whom do you seek?'")* were added to the Easter Mass ...

Interrogatio: *Quem quaeritis in sepulchro, o Christicolae? (Question [Angels]: Who do you seek in the tomb, oh Christians)*

Responsio. *Jesum Nazarenum crucifixum, o caelicolae. (Answer [Mary]: Jesus of Nazareth who has been crucified, Heavenly Ones.)*

Angeli. *Non est hic; surrexit, sicut praedixerat. Ite, nuntiate quia surrexit de sepulchro. (Angels Reply: He is no longer here, he has risen as was foretold. Go outside and announce he has risen from the tomb.)*



This single change was the trigger for many hundreds of *Liturgical Dramas* and *Mystery Plays* and, through them, into secular drama.

Liturgical Drama

These were retellings of parts of the Bible and were, to start with, simply 'played' by two divisions of the clergy involved in the service, as with *Whom do you Seek?* above.

By the 12th century, however, these had transformed into actual performances with individual actors and separate staging, sometimes outside the Church proper though still in the Church environs (the main doorway or the gate to the churchyard were popular).

These early 'dramas' were still entirely about religious themes and personalities, but were presented in an entertaining manner to teach the (mostly illiterate) commons about Church beliefs (and, indirectly, about Church Doctrine).

During the course of the 13th century, these almost wholly religious dramas slowly added contemporary events, real and fictitious, depicting 'real life' including heroic deeds by local or national notables, often in battles as part of the crusades against the Muslims in the Holy Land.

The 14th century, while continuing to have realistic elements (and continuing to perform some of the older plays) is dominated by plays about various miraculous acts of the life of the Virgin Mary or miracles performed by the Virgin for historical or contemporary personages.

Mystery Plays

These really only begin to appear in the 15th century, but very early on – so it *is* possible they had actually begun to appear in the *very* last decades of the 14th century. They differed from *Liturgical Drama* in that they were *much* longer (and grew longer with the passage of time) *and* because they covered a much wider range of stories, including some that were entirely secular in nature.

There was also an increasing use of modern theatrical elements – props, for example – though in a very preliminary and less developed way. For example, attempts were made to use appropriate (though anachronistic)

costumes and actual scenery was placed on the stage ... though it did not change between scenes (the actors usually moved from one area of the stage to another) and was minimalist (two or three trees would represent a forest, a brick column would represent a stone wall or even a castle and so on).

There were four main 'cycles' of related themes into which they fell – *Old Testament* stories, *New Testament* stories, *Stories of the Saints* (all regarded as ***Miracle*** plays) and *Contemporary History* (or ***Mystery*** plays).

***Morality Plays** do not appear until around 1400 and really only become popular in the 15th century.*

England. The first mention of plays performed in England only dates to 1170 – and, unlike elsewhere, there was no clear delineation between *Miracle* and *Mystery* plays and it seems from the limited evidence that survives elements of both appeared together.

Very early on the Town Guilds (or, in some cases, the Town Corporation) began to support, and underwrite, the Mystery Plays and costuming, props and stage elements became more and more elaborate as a representation of the wealth and success of the Guild as a whole ... and the Guilds would pay for increasingly elaborate story scripts, even whole cycles of connected ones, for the same reason (and it is these scripts which have, in some cases, survived in manuscript form until modern times).

*These developed regionally – the **Townley Cycle** (30-31 survive) at **Wakefield** and the **Chester** (24 survive), **Coventry** (42 survive) and **York** (48 survive) cycles in the eponymous towns.*

*There are no plays surviving from London, but we do know that the **Holy Priory Church** on Leadenhall Street was the performance site for all the Mystery Plays in the city from the 10th century to well after the end of the period.*



Noah's Ark was a popular theme for Miracle Plays

*Guilds often (but not always by any means) sponsored Plays associated with their craft – Noah's Ark and the Flood by the **Carpenters**, The Loaves and Fishes by the **Bakers** and the Gifts of the Magi by the **Goldsmiths***

Germany & The Low Countries. These areas seem to have developed *Liturgical Drama* only by the mid 12th century but *Miracle* and *Mystery* plays only start appearing late in the 15th century.

Spain and the Iberian Peninsula. This area did not develop beyond *Liturgical Drama* during the period.

Folk Plays, Mummers & Masques

A number of sources mention the existence of 'folk plays' during the period, though details about them are even thinner on the ground than for Liturgical, Mystery and Miracle Plays and they *may* be the same as, or related to *Mummers' Plays* or *Masques*.

Folk Plays. No scripts survive, and even plot outlines may only be inferred from those which are named in the sources – and this is the case throughout Europe.

Historians believe they were most likely based on pre-Christian Pagan or Folk stories specific to a locality or region or, possibly, more generic but still pagan and the occasional vehement attacks on behaviour by the peasantry that might be interpreted as such performances could support these.

Older works which push the line that they were definitively descended from pre-Christian fertility rituals are no longer widely accepted.

Mummers' Plays. The evidence relating to these is confusing *at best* especially as the 'oldest' scripts for such plays date only to the early 18th century even though players referred to as *'mummers'* can be found in sources dating back to the late 13th century.

The best guess as to their nature is based on the fact they were mentioned in conjunction with 'fiddlers and minstrels' and strong implications they wore masks while performing (an alternate name for them at the time was *Guisers* – or 'performers in disguise').

This would seem to imply some sort of mime or similar performance, including dancing, to music but it is not clear if there was any spoken (or sung) component as in the 18th century versions.

*A standard plotline of **later** Mummer's plays involved a well known (St George or variants in England, except in a few regions where Robin Hood took his place, and Galoshin [Everyman] in Scotland) **Hero** who would fight a stock **villain** (mostly a Turkish/Moorish 'Knight,' but possibly Beelzebub) who would, initially, kill him ... and an **Alchemist** who would then restore the Hero back to life and allow a final victorious combat.*

Masques

These really don't exist during the period, but some historians believe the Mummer's Plays were at least *partly* lineal ancestors.

A Masque is typically an elaborately staged pageant with music, dancing and singing and the participants in richly decorated costumes with theatrical masks (not the leather half faced ones of the later Renaissance, but full faced ones representing the characters or animals involved).

In these later (16th-17th century) productions professionals took the speaking and singing roles while members of the Court took at least some of the nonspeaking ones.

Costumes & Cast

Costume. *These were typically everyday clothes of the period supplemented by role specific props. There was no attempt to recreate historically accurate costume, and it is unlikely anyone back in the day really had much idea of what that might have been, anyway.*

The supplemental clothing and role specific props would vary according to the wealth of the audience (and, therefore, their ability to pay the performers and, directly or indirectly, their costume).

In the case of late period Mummer's Plays or Guild-supported Mystery Plays the actors might be provided with high class finery and high quality props.

Cast. *All parts in Liturgical Dramas, even those of females, were played by men (obviously). As far as can be told, the same seems to have held for Mystery and Miracle Plays ...*

Mummer's groups ***in modern times*** *have also always been all male, but there is no certain evidence for medieval times though, for those that were* ***travelling*** *companies, there* ***may*** *have been some actresses ... but there is, again, no certain evidence.*

Song & Dance

Medieval Songs

A selection of popular songs are provided on the following pages – there were obviously many, many more than these, but very few have survived *as* songs. Even the ones for which the words are provided have no surviving music *for the period* (because, as noted in ***Ars Scholastica***, there was no real way in which music could be scored until much later).

Many of the songs performed by re-enactment groups are as authentic for the period 1000-1400 AD as their dances are – that is, ***not at all****.*

Either the music dates to much later periods (or, more commonly, is completely made up in modern(ish) times) or the songs themselves date to after the 14th century.



Greensleeves, *a perennial favourite, is first recorded at the end of the 16th century and uses styles of language and music that simply did not exist much before that period in any case, so cannot even be dated to Henry VIII's reign as is sometimes claimed.*

Medieval Dances

There are no detailed descriptions of dances or dancing during the period – and the only 'detail' that is securely known are the names of some of them.

Dances performed by re-enactment groups are either ***invented,*** *whole cloth, or are* ***anachronisms*** *from after the 14th century (usually* ***way*** *after) ... though, for role playing purposes, they probably serve well enough as substitutes.*

The few 'formal' dances (that is, those performed in noble or royal Courts) named in period sources include the ***Estampie*** (possibly 12th century, involving a complex and possibly irregular rhythm), which seems to have been mainly found in those royal and noble courts with a strong French influence; the ***Carola*** (12th-13th century, aka a ***Ronde*** or similar, involved dancing while holding hands, in a circle or line, and singing while doing so) which was often used as a catch all name for similar but different regional dances as far north as Scandinavia, as far south as Spain, and as far east as the Balkans; plus the ***Ductia*** (a 'stately' dance to a simple, regular, rhythm or beat probably performed in a line formation), the ***Nota*** (described as having elements of both the *Estampie* and the *Carola*, but still identifiably different) and ***Rounds*** (*somehow* different from the *Carola* and *Nota).*

Because the descriptions of these dances are so vague and, yet, are used to describe dancing from different regions as well as those performed in both noble and folk (common) settings, it is hard to be certain they are always referring to the exact same dance ... or merely to dances that had similar styles.

This means that it is as likely to find an ***Estampie*** *being danced at a local village wedding between two peasants as it is in a Royal Palace ... but it's hard to say whether they are exactly the same dance ... or not.*

Morris Dancing. *There is* ***no*** *evidence for Morris ('Moorish' – originally implying exotic moves and/or exotic costumes) dancing before the mid 15th century. Worse, close to* ***nothing*** *about this style of dancing is known before the mid 17th century* ***and*** *it had mostly died out*

Select Song Lyrics

Since there is usually no music *at all*, associated with surviving lyrics from the period it is difficult to be certain whether they were the words to songs or just poetry in the vast majority of cases – but these seem to be actual songs.

Very little *folk* music can be dated before the 16th century and the following songs are those that would have been carried by Troubadours from court to court rather than folk songs.

Sumer is icumen in (13th century)

Somer is y-comen in,
Loudë sing, cuckóu!
Growëth sed and blowëth med
And springth the wodë nou
Sing cuckóu!

Ewë bletëth after lamb,
Lowth after cálve cóu;
Bullok stertëth, bukkë vertëth,
Merye sing, cuckóu!

Cuckóu, cuckóu,
Wél singést thou, cuckóu,
Ne swik thou never nou!

Sing cuckóu, nou! Sing cuckóu!
Sing cuckóu! Sing cuckóu nou!

Summer has arrived

Summer has arrived,
Sing loudly, cuckoo!
The seed is growing
And the meadow is blooming,
And the wood is coming into leaf now,
Sing, cuckoo!

The ewe is bleating after her lamb,
The cow is lowing after her calf;
The bullock is prancing,
The billy-goat farting,



Sing merrily, cuckoo!
Cuckoo, cuckoo,
You sing well, cuckoo,
Never stop now.

Sing, cuckoo, now; sing, cuckoo;
Sing, cuckoo; sing, cuckoo, now!

Merry it is (13th century)

Mirie it is while sumer y-last
With fugheles son
Oc nu neheth windes blast
And weder strong.
Ei, ei! What this nicht is long
And ich with wel michel wrong
Soregh and murne and fast.

Merry it is

Merry it is while summer lasts
With birds singing
But now draws closer winter's blast
And fierce weather
Ei, ei! Oh but how long is this night
And I will very much
Sorrow and mourn

Man, Assay (13th Century)

Man have in mynde how here by-fore
For thy mysdede thou wheren for lore;
But mercy to geve now Christe ys bore.

Chorus:
A man asay, asay, asay
And ask mercy while thou may

In synne thy lyfe yf thou have ledde,
Amende hit nowe, be not a-dradde,
Ffor he his mercy forth hath spradde.
[Chorus]

And they thy synne be never so ylle,
Ffor thy synne shalt thou not spylle,
Nowe mercy to aske yf thou wylle.
[Chorus]

God that deyde uppon the rode,
Ffor thi mysdede he shadde hys blode,
Ffor his mercy ys ful and gode.
[Chorus]

He that the so dere hath bought,
Mercy he wolde that thou sought
Yif thou seke, he nyeth hit nought.
[Chorus]

Mercy is spredde on the grounde,
Therto left for a *stounde* [a while];
Therfore thou hit seke til hit be founde.
[Chorus]

Bird on a Briar

Bryd on brere, brid, brid on brere,
Kynd is come of love, love to crave
Blythful biryd, on me thu rewe
Or greyth, lef, greith thu me my grave.

Hic am so blithe, so bryhit, brid on brere,
Quan I se that hende in halle:
Yhe is whit of lime, loveli, trewe
Yhe is fayr and flur of alle.

Mikte ic hire at wille haven,
Stedefast of love, loveli, trewe,
Of mi sorwe yhe may me saven
Ioye and blisse were were me newe.

Bird on a Briar

Bird on a briar, bird, bird on a briar,
Man is come of love, love thus craves.
Blissful bird, have pity on me,
Or dig, love, dig thou for me my grave.

I am so blithe, so bright, bird on briar,
When I see that handmaid in the hall:
She is white of limb, lovely, true,
She is fair and flower of all.

Might I her at my will have,
Steadfast of love, lovely, true,
From my sorrow she may me save
Joy and bliss would wear me new

I Sing of a Maiden (14th Century)

I sing of a maiden
That is matchless:
King of alle kinges
To her sone she chose.

He cam also stille
Ther his moder was
As dewe in Aprille
That falleth on the gras.

He cam also stille
To his modres bowr
As dewe in Aprille
That falleth on the flowr.

He cam also stille
Ther his moder lay
As dewe in Aprille
That falleth on the spray.

Moder and maiden
Was nevere noon but she:
Wel may swich a lady
Godes moder be.

Puer nobis nascitur (14th Century)

Puer nobis nascitur
Rector angelorum;
In hoc mundo pascitur
Dominus dominorum.

In præsepe ponitur
Sub fœno asinorum.
Cognoverunt dominum
Christum regem cœlorum.

Hinc Herodes timuit -
Magno cum dolore,
Et pueros occidit,
Infantes cum livore.

Qui natus est ex Marie -
Die hodierna
Ducat nos cum gratia
Ad gaudia superna.

O et A et A et O
Cum cantibus in choro,
Cum canticis et organo,
Benedicamus domino.

Unto Us is Born a Son

Unto us a Boy is born,
King of all creation:
Came He to a world forlorn,
The Lord of every nation.

Cradled in a stall was He
'Midst the cows and asses;
But the very beasts could see
That He all men surpasses.

Herod then with fear was filled:
"A prince," he said, "in Jewry!"
All the little boys he killed
At Bethl'em in his fury.

Now may Mary's Son, who came
Long ago to love us,
Lead us all with hearts aflame
To the joys above us.

Omega and Alpha He!
Let the organ thunder,
While the choir with peals of glee
Rends the air asunder.

Douce Dame Jolie, 14th century



Douce dame jolie,
Pour dieu ne pensés mie
Que nulle ait signorie
Seur moy fors vous seulement.

Qu'adès sans tricherie
Chierie
Vous ay et humblement

Tous les jours de ma vie
Servie
Sans villain pensement.

All the days of my life
Served
Without base thoughts.

Helas! et je mendie
D'esperance et d'aïe;
Dont ma joie est fenie,
Se pité ne vous en prent.

Alas, I am left begging
For hope and relief;
For my joy is at its end
Without your compassion.

Douce dame jolie ...

Sweet, lovely lady ...

Mais vo douce maistrie
Maistrie
Mon cuer si durement

But your sweet mastery
Masters
My heart so harshly,

Qu'elle le contralie
Et lie
En amour tellement

Tormenting it
And binding
In unbearable love,

Qu'il n'a de riens envie
Fors d'estre en vo baillie;
Et se ne li ottrie
Vos cuers nul aligement.

[My heart] desires nothing
but to be in your power.
And still, your own heart
renders it no relief.

Douce dame jolie ...

Sweet, lovely lady ...

Et quant ma maladie
Garie
Ne sera nullement

And since my malady
Will not
Be annulled

Sans vous, douce anemie,
Qui lie
Estes de mon tourment,

Without you, Sweet Enemy,
Who takes
Delight of my torment

A jointes mains deprie
Vo cuer, puis qu'il m'oublie,
Que temprement m'ocie,
Car trop langui longuement.

With clasped hands I beseech
Your heart, that forgets me,
That it mercifully kill me
For too long have I languished.

Douce dame jolie ...

Sweet, lovely lady ...

Sweet Lovely Lady

Sweet, lovely lady
for God's sake do not think
that any has sovereignty
over my heart, but you alone.

For always, without treachery
Cherished
Have I you, and humbly

even in rural areas by the 19th century and was only revived in 1899, and, despite claims by the revivalists (then and now) there is no real way of knowing how close modern Morris Dancing styles are to those of the 15th century.

Clerics & Dancing. While there were evidently dances specifically *for* clerics (Monks, presumably), Clerics occasionally objected to common folk dancing during the period ... not so much out of anything like puritanism, but simply because the common venue for all community activities was the local Churchyard and it was not at all uncommon for the noise of such revelries to make it difficult to conduct the service inside the Church proper!

Sports

Many modern sports have medieval ancestral forms – some recognisable, others not so much (there were no international sports federations issuing printed rules to the game, after all). Those listed below are not meant to be an exhaustive list, only a sampler.

Animal Fighting

The medieval period was *not* particularly 'civilised' (not by *modern* standards, anyway) regarding the general attitude towards animals – and the following blood sports were widely popular at all levels of society.

Bear Baiting. A very popular 'sport', it involved chaining a Bear to a post near the edge of a sunken pit and letting fighting dogs loose on it. Betting would be on how many dogs would be killed before the Bear was, which specific dog or dogs might survive, which dog would get in the killing blow and anything else the punters might come up with.

Bears had to be imported into England for these events as they were extinct in the British Isles.

Bull Baiting. Worked much the same as *Bear Baiting*, except a Bull was chained to a post in a pit.

Cock Fighting. Fighting between pairs of Cocks (male Chickens) in a pit, the birds using their natural spurs against each other (as they do naturally in the wild) until one is vanquished or killed. Sometimes metal spurs would be attached to the fighting Cock's legs to speed up the fights.



Athletics

Boxing. Boxing as a widespread sport disappears with the fall of the Western Empire and doesn't reappear in England until the 17th century. However a variety of fist fighting sports were known in different parts of Italy from the 12th century and in Muscovy from the 13th century.

Most of these were man vs man fights, but in Muscovy there was also a team version that might involve hundreds of participants on each side and go on for hours in formed lines not unlike battle lines (and this version was regarded as a form of military training).

These were all bare-knuckle sports and the rules are not well understood – but, based on the casual brutality of most medieval 'sport' it is likely such rules as there may have been were minimal and it is known that death and serious injury during the bouts were not at all uncommon.

Jumping. Athletic competitions often included jumping events – all very similar to the modern events, including high jumps, long jumps and triple jumps (Hop-Skip-Jump).

Running. These were also quite popular and were over set distances, though there was no *standard* set distance, even from year to year in the same place. Often the race was for a prize set up at the end of the running field which, of course, went to the first to reach it!

Swimming. Yes, medieval people *could* swim – or *some* of them could anyway. We simply have no idea how common the skill was, though it was actually one of the skills a 'perfect' Knight was supposed to be at least *familiar* with.

*There are no textual descriptions but ancient and medieval artwork show styles that could be some form of **Breaststroke** and **Crawls**. The first written treatise on the art of swimming dates to the 16th century and includes **Backstroke** as well as the above ... so it was probably a known style much earlier.*

*Some contemporary sources suggest a Knight should be able to swim while wearing armour – and, while this might well be possible, it would very much depend on the type and weight of the armour worn **and** would have been incredibly tiring.*

There is no way anyone could have swum for any distance in any sort of Mail or Plate armour – for those wearing Mail, this would give them enough time to divest themselves of it and make their overall survival more likely; for those wearing Plate and Mail, or even full Plate, they would need to get to safety before they tired, as they would sink like a stone and getting such armour off while swimming would be ... problematic.

Wrestling. One of the most ancient of combat style sports, wrestling remained popular all throughout the Mediterranean world during the entire classical and medieval period. Exactly *what* this was is a matter for ongoing dispute – about the only thing certain is that the modern ***Greco-Roman*** style dates back no earlier than the 18th century, though it is based on 'folk' styles that *may* (or, equally, may *not*) be descended from late Imperial wrestling styles.

__Freestyle__ wrestling is even more recent, probably dating back no further than the 19th century.

Pankration, the classical Romano-Greek version (the version staged at the ancient Olympic Games) incorporated boxing *and* wrestling techniques, kicks, holds, locks and chokes. The only things prohibited with biting, eye gouging and attacks against the genitals.

Given the general medieval proclivity for brutally direct action in physical sports it is likely that the medieval version was more like __Pankration__, but there is no evidence for the survival of that sport after the closing down of the Olympics in 393 AD, and certainly no evidence for its continued existence in the soon to be lost provinces of the Western Empire then or later.

Bowling Games

Boules (Bocce). Another ancient game dating back to Egyptian times, if not earlier. These two 'games' are actually a wide variety of *similar* games that make use of heavy wooden balls of varying sizes which are thrown or bowled in a variety of ways on a field to get as close as possible to a small target ball.

Skittles (Quilles, Kegel). An ancient game with many variants (depictions of something similar date back to the 3rd Millennium BC) which were popular all over the medieval mediterranean world and related to *Bowls*, differing in that the game is played indoors or on a long, narrow, prepared pitch outdoors. The rules vary widely by region, as do the number of Skittles (usually, but not always, nine) in play and whether the ball is round or oblate (i.e. round but flattened).

The basic object is to use the ball to knock over as many of the Skittles as possible in a set number of throws but apart from that everything varies.

__Quilles__ is the French and __Kegel__ the German variant.

Combat Sports

Medieval people, from the peasantry through to the nobility, practised with the weapons they would need to be familiar with in order to defend their homes and families and to go to war as needed and directed by their governments – and, even more so than in modern times, practised these skills in times of peace by turning them into competitions of skill and not just repetitive training.



Archery. Archery and Archers were an important part of any medieval army, but were relatively rare as it took many years to train an archer to a useful level of skill – especially in *area fire* techniques which were the *militarily* useful aspects of the 'sport.'

Most archery contests were for individual skill in shooting at fixed targets at short to medium distances and were *not* intended to develop specific military skills – *massed fire* was practised as part of non-sport military training.

As noted elsewhere, the English was the main nation to develop an outstanding __military__ archery tradition – mainly because they made archery training (including training in massed area fire) __compulsory__ for anyone well off enough to own a Bow but not wealthy enough to fight on horseback as a Serjeant or Man-at-Arms.

Archery competitions for individual marksmanship were, however, still an extremely popular pastime in medieval England.

Javelin. Useful in hunting and warfare (light spears could be thrown even if the soldier/militiaman wasn't equipped with an actual Javelin), it was natural enough to turn the use of these weapons into a sport, especially for those commoners not wealthy enough to own a Bow *and* take off the much greater amount of time needed to learn to use it effectively as compared to that needed for using a Javelin.

Sword & Buckler. For anyone well off enough to afford any sort of sword – which usually included Longbow armed commoners (or better) in England. For those not that well off there would be *Spear and Buckler* matches.

These contests could be aimed at commoners who used swords as a secondary weapon, commoners who used mainly chopping (anti-personnel) swords right through to Serjeants, Men-at-Arms and Knights who used armour piercing swords as prime weapons.

Football

Archaic ('Mob') Football. Like *Shinty* (see ***Stick & Ball Games***, below), this category of game covers many regional variants and is quite old (almost cert-

ainly -pre-Conquest) and, as originally played, involved teams of any number (often whole villages) on a side with the aim being to take an inflated pig's bladder through the goals at each end of the playing area which (again like *Shinty*) could be the entire area between the two villages, two ends of a town or some other large area. Moving the Ball was done by carrying ***or*** kicking it (or both).

'Football'. The first specific mention of a 'football' game *as* ***Football*** only occurs in 1314, when it was banned in London for causing *'a great noise'* and *'many evils'* but no details of the game are given. Bans were applied to (presumably) similar games in France in 1331. None of these bans proved effective, and they were repeatedly reissued (30 times between 1314 and 1667, in fact).

The 'rules', such as they were, basically frowned upon killing or grievously wounding the opponents – apart from that, however, it seems 'anything goes' was the reality and severe injuries and occasional 'accidental' death were common enough to attract repeated banning.

Stick & Ball Games

Shinty. This game predates Christianity (it is played by *Cúchulainn* in the Celtic myths) in what would eventually become Scotland with regional variations in the name and the rules.

A very similar game called *Camánacht* was (unsurprisingly) played in the northern parts of Ireland (from whence came the Scots originally) and also on the Isle of Man (as *Cammag*).

Play was between two opposing teams of any number (usually two entire villages would play) and the sticks were any piece of wood that had a hook-like end and the 'ball' was a round piece of wood or bone.

The game was similar to Field Hockey but the ball could be hit in the air as well as on the ground and the playing area might be the entirety of the commons between the two sides' or an enclosed field of any size or shape. Scoring was by hitting the ball through a goal at either end of the field.

A a	Æ æ	B b	C c	D ð	Đ ð	E e	F f	Ȝ ȝ
a	ash	be	ce	de	eth	e	eff	yogh
a	æ	b	c	d	ð	e	f	3 (g)
[ɑ]	[æ]	[b]	[k/ʧ]	[d]	[θ/ð]	[e]	[f/v]	[g/ɣ/j/ʤ]

h h	I i	L l	M m	N n	O o	P p	R r	S ſ ſs
há	i	ell	emm	enn	o	pe	err	ess
h	i	l	m	n	o	p	r	s
[h/ç/x]	[i]	[l]	[m]	[n]	[o]	[p]	[ɹ]	[s/z]

T t	U u	Þ þ	X x	Y ý	Þ þ
te	u	wynn	eks	yr	thorn
t	u	p (w)	x	y	þ
[t]	[u]	[w]		y	[θ/ð]

Old/Middle English Alphabet

As with 'Football', the rules were mainly intended to try and prevent serious injury or death – and often failed. These were ***not*** *'civilised' games ... they were rough and brutally physical.*

Stoolball. The earliest mention of this game dates to the mid 15th century and was peculiar to southern England, but it is probably representative of similar games. It was played with stools as wickets, some sort of stuffed leather ball and the 'batsman' defended the stool with his hand against the ball.

Scoring was by defending the wicket successfully against the bowler(s) though the modern version is rather like a cross between Rounders and Cricket.

Names

During the 10th century most people, at least in the British Isles and NW Europe, had a single name, occasionally with a non-hereditary identifier.

In England, of course, Anglo-Saxon names dominated – even in the first years after the Norman Conquest – with Danish names common in the north. After the Conquest, of course, cross-cultural influence led to the adoption of many Norman-French names and these rapidly came to dominate wider society.

Anglo-Saxon Names

Anglo-Saxon names were either composed of two elements (e.g. ***Sigeberht*** from *'sige'* = victory and *'beorht'* = bright) or from a single element either derived from a nickname (e.g. ***Wemba*** from *'wamb'* = belly) or a simplified form of a two element name (e.g. *Cutha* from ***Cuthwulf***, *'cuth'* = famous and *'wulf'* = wolf ... though, in most cases, the original long form cannot be identified).

Anglo-Saxon Male First Names. Ælfnodh (*Bold Elf*), Ælfræd (*Elf Counsel*), Ælfwine (*Elf Friend*), Ædelric (*Noble Ruler*), Bada (*Battle?*), Beohtric (*Bright Ruler*), Ceadda (*Battle?* Possibly from Welsh), Cola (*Charcoal*), Cynefridh (*Royal Peace*), Cyneweard (*Royal Guard*), Dudda (*Round*), Dunstan (*Dark Stone*), Eadwig (*War Fortune*), Ealdwine (*Old Friend*), Ealhstan (*Temple Stone*), Godric (*Power of God*), Godwine (*Friend of God*), Heard (*Friend*), Hereward (*Army Guard*), Hrothgar (*Famous Spear*), Leofric (*Beloved Ruler*), Leofstan (*Beloved Stone*), Leofwine (*Dear Friend*), Osgar (*God Spear*), Oswald (*God's Power*), Pæga (unknown), Sæwine (*Sea Friend*), Swidhun (*Strong* plus *Bear Cub?*), Wealdmær (*Famous Leader*), Wemba (*Belly*), Wilfrith/Wilfridh (*Desire for Peace*), Wine (*Friend*), Wulfnodh (*Bold Wolf*), Wynnstan (*Joyous Stone*).

Anglo-Saxon Female First Names. Æbba (unknown), Ælfgifu (*Elf's Gift*), Ædelfthridh-Ælfthryth (*Elf Strength*), Ædelthrydh (*Noble Strength*), Cyneburg-

Cyneburga (*Royal Fortress*), Eadburg (*Wealthy Fortress*), Eoforhild (*Boar Battle*), Fridhuswith (*Strong Peace*), Godgifu (*God's Gift* = Godiva), Hild-Hilda (*Battle*), Leofflæd (*Beloved Beauty*), Mildgydh (*Gentle Battle*), Mildthrydh (*Gentle Strength*), Sunngifu (*Sun's Gift*), Wassa (unknown), Wilburg (*Desirable Fortress*).

The above lists are not exhaustive, however there are not huge numbers of Anglo-Saxon names known to us – partly because there are so few written records from which they can be gleaned and partly, one presumes, since (as is the case today) some names were simply far more popular, and so far more common, than others.

Surnames. As noted, surnames were uncommon and *not* hereditary (and, indeed, could change even within a person's lifetime, especially if they moved around a lot) – but followed the common format that most such do in European languages.

- ***Nicknames*** – For example, Æthelred (the) *Unræd* (*badly counseled, unwise*), Leofflæd (the) *Hwit* (*Pale, White* – in the sense of *Beautiful*), Osgar the *Thorpling* (*Farmer* – in the sense of *owner*).

- ***Place Names*** – for example, Godwine of *Mercia* (an Anglo-Saxon Kingdom), Cædwalla of *Wessex* (the Anglo-Saxon Kingdom, the one that consolidated England under its control), Æbba of *Lundunwic* (London), Fidhuswith of *Haesta* (Hastings).

- ***Work/Job Names*** – for example, Dunstan the *Smith* (*Blacksmith* or, more generally, a *craftsman*), Wemba the *Swynnhyrde* (*Swineherd*), Mildgydh the *Alewife* (*Brewer of Ale*).

- ***Patro-/Matronymics*** – for example, Eadwig *son of Leofric*, Hilda *daughter of Swidhun*.

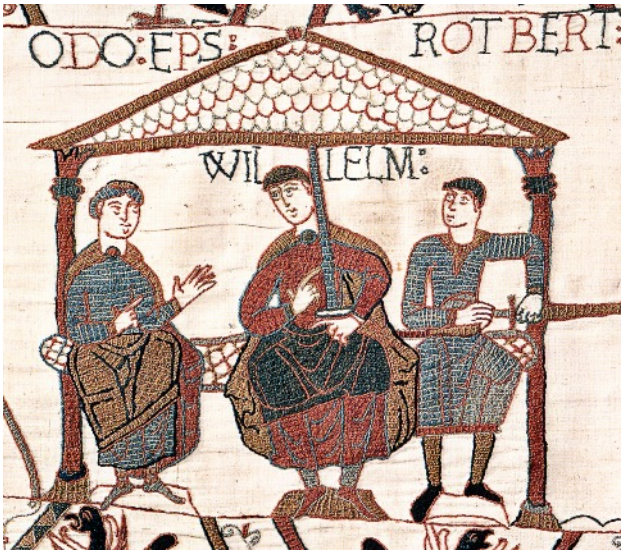
Norman-French & Post Conquest Names

The Normans brought with them a whole slew of new names – some of them were localised versions of Germanic names but many more were of French (often originally from Latin) origin and, soon after the Conquest, a continent-wide trend towards the use of Saint's names reached England as well.

*So, **Mary** for women, after the Virgin, and **John** for men and **Joan** for women, after John the Baptist became exceedingly popular.*

Within fifty years these new arrivals had largely displaced all of the older Anglo-Danish names – and certain of these came to dominate overwhelmingly.

By the end of the first quarter of the 13th century the male names *William*, *Robert* and *John* had come to represent somewhere around ***1/3rd*** of all male names in some parts of the country. By the beginning of the 14th century *John*, *Peter*, *Thomas* and *William* were



dominant ... with John and William alone representing ***over half*** of the males in some areas.

Common Male Names (late 12th century). William, Robert, Richard, Ralph, Walter, Hugh, Roger, John, Geoffrey, Henry, Gilbert, Thomas, Peter, Adam, Simon, Osbert, Reginald, Randall, Ailwin, Godwin.

Common Male Names (13th Century). William, John, Robert, Richard, Thomas, Walter, Roger, Henry, Adam, Hugh, Ralph, Simon, Nicholas, Peter, Alan, Stephen, Alexander, Reginald, Geoffrey, Philip.

Common Male Names (14th Century). John, William, Robert, Richard, Thomas, Henry, Adam, Walter, Roger, Hugh, Nicholas, Simon, Ralph, Peter, Geoffrey, Stephen, Gilbert, Alan, Alexander, Philip.

Common Female Names (late 12th Century). Alice, Mathilda, Agnes, Edith, Emma, Amice, Lettice, Mary, Richenda, Hilda, Genevieve, Cecilia, Goditha, Ivette, Isabel, Joy, Odelina, Stanilda, Basilia, Bettrys.

Common Female Names (13th century). Alice, Mathilda, Agnes, Amice, Julian, Emma, Margaret, Christina, Marjorie, Mary, Isabel, Cecily, Edith, Joan, Elena, Avice, Petronille, Sibilla, Ismenia, Bettrys.

Common Female Names (14th Century). Alice, Agnes, Mathilda, Isabel, Margaret, Marjorie, Joan, Amice, Julian, Emma, Christiana, Elena, Cecily, Dyonisia, Edith, Catherine, Beatrice, Sarra, Mary, Sibilla.

Surnames. The rapid decline in the *number* of first names in the post-Conquest period and the increasingly literate bureaucracy meant there was an need to identify all those with the same name in a given area ... and, to simplify record keeping over generations, this led to the increasing use of surnames.

It was common for the aristocracy to have such by the second quarter of the 12th century, a practise which

spread to most well-to-do Londoners by the middle of that century and to the rest of England by the early 13th century though they weren't fully hereditary until the late 14th century.

- ***Place Names.*** These were by far the most common form and could be ethnic (e.g. Robert (the) *Scot*, Gilles de *Roman*), regional (e.g. Adam (of) *Sussex*, Simon (of) *Cornwall*), an indication of the town or city of origin (e.g. Walter (of) *Bristol*, Hugh (of) *Lincoln*), or very local (e.g. Henry *Attwater* [by the river], William *Churchyard*).

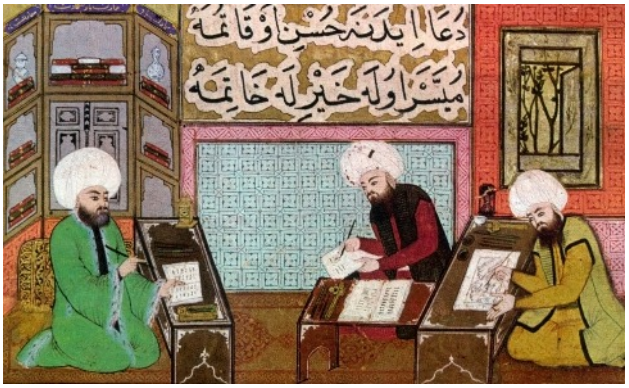
  Atte or At (at), *By- (by) de- del- or de la (at)* were also commonly added to place names early in the period, thus *Atte Wood* (at the Wood), *By Bridge* (by the Bridge) or *de la Mare* (of the Sea) ... but *most* drop the introduction later on so you can get *Atwood* or *Wood*; *Bybridge*, or *Bridge*.

- ***Patro-/Matronymics***. These were the second most common form of surname, based on who the father or (increasingly less frequently) the mother was. The modern forms of *-son* (e.g. *Johnson*, *Williamson*, *Peterson*) and *-Fitz* (Norman French, e.g. *Fitzhugh*, *Fitzreynold*, *Fitzherbert*) were becoming common in England while you would find *Mac* (or *Mc*) forms (e.g. *McGregor*, *MacIlveen*, *MacDonald*) in Scotland or Ireland and *O' (of)* forms in Ireland (*O'Brien*, *O'Shaughnessy*, *O'Laughlin*).

  Wales, being somewhat backward – or at least, more culturally insular, still used *ap* or *ab (son of)* added to the father's christian name. So, for example, Rhys *ap Dafydd* is 'Rhys *son of David*.'

  Some of the older *-daughter/doghter*, *-wyf* forms survived, though increasingly rarely in a much more male-dominated Anglo-Norman culture, but were mostly gone by the late 14th century.

- ***Occupation/Job Names.*** These were less common, and not always an accurate description of what the job of those using it (or their ancestor) may have been ... for example, *Smiths* (of any sort) were skilled craftsmen, so is it any wonder that there are so *many* of them?



  Many of these names are no longer readily recognisable as such, either because the jobs they represent no longer exist or because they now have different names. So, while *Fletcher* (a maker of arrows), *Weaver* or *Tyler* still mean something to most people, few would recognise the origin of *Webster* (a regional name for a *Weaver*), *Berger* (a *Shepherd*), *Parker* (Keeper of a *Park*) or *Hinman* (Keeper of Deer).

  A variant of this type of name was one which indicated for whom you (or your ancestor) worked – so, for example, *King* or *Lord* does ***not*** mean you are of Royal or Noble descent, but that one of your ancestors (claimed to have) worked in a Royal or Noble Houseold. Likewise, *Vickers* might indicate your ancestor worked for a Mr Vicker (something).

- ***Nicknames***. Always popular, these *might* originally have described an ancestor's personal characteristic, perhaps serious, perhaps not ... or the exact *opposite* of it, as a jest. John *Little* (we all know that 'Little John' was, in fact, *huge*) is an example of the latter sarkiness.

  Swift (Speedy – or, perhaps *anything* ***but***), *White* (possibly *Pale*, or *Blond/Blonde* – sometimes *Beautiful*), *Young* (well, *young*) and *Cutnose* (literal, or, perhaps *broken nose*) are examples of the former.

Medieval Arabic Names

The Arabic naming 'system' emphasises *kinship* and has five possible components.

Male Names (Ism). This may be drawn from any one of possible sources for males – ***Ancient Arabian names*** *(eg Ali*, *Bishr*, *Marwan*, *Mu'awiya*, *Uman*, *Uthman* and *Yazid* – though Shia do not use the last three of these as they are names of Caliphs who oppressive towards them); ***Prophets mentioned in the Qu'uran*** *(Ayyub (Job)*, *Dawud (David)*, *'Isa (Jesus)*, *Musa (Moses)*, *Buh (Noah)*, *Sulayman (Solomon)*, *Yusuf (Joseph)* and *Zakariyya (Zaccariah)*; ***Praise names*** *(which indicate praiseworthiness – Ahmad, Hamid, Mahmud, Muhammad);* ***Servant of names*** which should be followed either by the name of God or of one of His attributes *(Abd Allah*, *Abd al-Aziz (Servant of the Mighty)*, *Abd al-Jabbar (Servant of the Almighty)*, *Abd al-Hadi (Servant of the Guide)*, *Abd al-Rahim (Servant of the Merciful)*, *Abd al-Malik (Servant of the Sovereign)*, *Abd al-Hayy (Servant of the Living One))* or something related *(these are less common*, *Abd al-Nabi (Servant of the Prophet)*, *Abd al-Husayn (Servant of Husayn)*, *Abd al-Imam (Servant of the Imam)*, *Abd al-Masih (Servant of the Messiah)* and, in non-Arabic speaking areas, you might find *Abdul (Servant of)* as a *stand alone* name.

You also found ***Ethnic or Regional names*** – *Rustam*, *Feraydun*, *Jamshid*, *Esfandiyar (revived Indo-Iranian*

names); Alp Arlsan (The Lion), Ark Bagha (White Bull), which were Turkic.

Female Names. For *women*, names are also drawn from four sources, though these are slightly different – ***Ancient Arabian Names*** *(Hind, Layla);* ***Names from the Qu'uran*** *(Maryam, mother of Jesus);* ***Names of Muhammad's Wives or Daughters*** *(Khadija, Ayesha, Fatima)* and ***Names of Precious Jewels*** *(Fayruz (Turquoise), Zumurrah (Emerald)).*

Father/Mother of (Kunya). Mothers and fathers are given a suffix al-xxx where 'xxx' is the name of the firstborn son (or, if no son, the firstborn daughter) eg ***Abu al-Quasim*** is *'Abu, father of Quasim'* and ***Umm al-Quasim*** is *'Umm, mother of Quasim.'*

Likewise, ***Abu al-Zubayda*** is *'Abu, father of Zubayda'* (a daughter) – who may also be referred to, derogatorily, as ***Abu Banat*** *('Father of Daughters').*

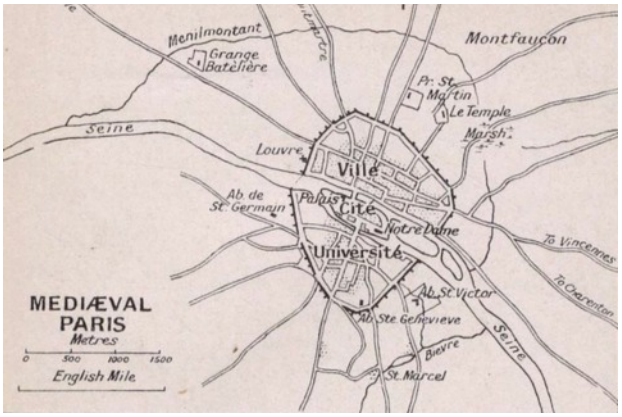
Genealogy (Nasab). This traces back one's ancestry for a variable number of generations. ***Ibn*** = *son of.* Most commonly children were called xxx *ibn* ***Father's Name*** or, about as often, xxx *ibn* ***Clan Founder's Name***.

Non-Arabian Muslims of Persian origin used *Zade/Zada* aka *'Son of'* as in *Mirzada ('Son of Zada')* and those of Turkic origin used *-oghlu*, as in *Hasanoghlu ('Son of Hasan').*

Nisba (Ascription). These could be regional, ethnic, religious or occupational (or anything else descriptive) and it was possible to have several of them. *Al-Shiraz (from Shiraz), al-Baghdadi (from Baghdad), al-Saffar (Copper smith), al-Kattani (Linen Merchant), al-Haddith (a Hadith Scholar), al-Hafiz ('has memorised the entire Qu'uran')* – women used feminine forms, *-iyya, -itha, -iza (so iyya-Shiraz, itha-Baghdadi* etc.)

Nickname (Laquab). These start to occur around the 10th century and could be much more complex expressions than the typical European ones. For example, *Sayf al-Din (Sword of the Religion), Nasir al-Dawaz (Helper of the Dynasty), Kahlil Allah ('Friend of God' aka Jesus), Kalim Allah ('One Whom God Addressed' aka Moses), al-Amin ('The Trustworthy' aka Muhammad), al-Siddiq ('The Trustworthy' aka Abu Bakr), Hujjat al-Islam ('Proof of Islam'), Nur al-Din ('Light of the Religion').* Or could be just simple – *al-Qabih (Ugly), al-Jahiz (Goggle-eyed), al-Ahmaq (Moron).*

The names listed in the above sections are ***not*** *meant to be all inclusive, nor is their inclusion* ***necessarily*** *an indication of how popular they were. As with almost all the other sections on names and naming conventions they are merely examples of how the various elements of the system worked. Note also that the* ***spelling*** *of the what is essentially the same name can vary widely depending on how it is transliterated from Arabic.*



Medieval (Continental) French Names

The following lists are not exhaustive, not specific to a particular century, or in indicative of how common the names were because of a lack of easily accessible information.

They should, however, be reasonably historic for the 10th-14th centuries.

Male Names. Adolphe (*Noble Wolf*, German), Aimé (*Beloved*), Aloys (*Famous Warrior*, Provençal, *Looys*), Bayard (*Reddish-Brown*), Enguerrand (*Angle Raven*), Bénédict (*Blessed*), Blaise (*Lisp*, Latin), Chrétien (*Follower of the Christ*), Claude (*Lame*, Latin), Damien (*Killer*, Latin Euphemism), Denis (Latin), Edmond (*Protector of Prosperity*, German, *Eadmund*), Éstienne-Étienne (*Crown*, English *Stephen*), Everard (*Strong as a Boar*, German *Eberhard*), Félix (*Lucky*, Latin), Gascon-Gaston (*From Gascony*), Geoffroi (*Foreign Peace* or *Hostage Peace*, German *Geoffrey*), Gérard (*Spear Ruler*, German), Gosse (*Goth*, German *Gozzo*), Guiscard (Norse, *Wise Hero*), Guy (*Wide*, from Latin *Wido*), Honoré (*Valour*, Latin), Jehan (Latin, *John-Johannes*), Léonard (*Lion-strong*, German), Loois-Louis (*Famous Warrior*), Marc-Marceau (*Defence*), Maxime (*Rival*, Latin), Noël (*Birthday*, Latin), Onfroi (*Humphrey = Peaceful Warrior*, Norman), Pascal (*Easter*, Latin), Perceval (*Pierced Valley?*), Piers (Latin, *Peter*), Reinald (*Wise Ruler*, German), Roland (*Famous & Brave*, German *Hrodnand*), Sévère-Sévèrin (*Stern*, Latin), Roul (*Famous Wolf*, German *Hrolf-Hrolfgar*).

Female Names. Aalis (*Noble-kind*, German *Adelais-Adalheidis*), Amée-Aimée (*Beloved*, Amaline (*Work*), Barb (*Foreigner*, Greek), Bérénice (*Victory*, Greek), Cateline (*Pure*, Greek, *Katharine*), Céleste (*Heavenly*, Latin), Cerise (*Cherry* [red[), Daniéle (*God is my Judge*, Latin-Hebrew), Denis (female *Denis*, *follower of Dionysius*, Latin), Désirée (*Desired*), Éliane (*Sun*, Latin), Félice (*Lucky*), Jehanne (feminine of *Jehan*), Godelive (*Beloved of God*, German), Helewise (*Healthy*, German) Iréne (*Peace*), Johanne (*John*, Latin *Iohanna*), Lilian (*Lily*), Lucie (*Light*, Latin), Mahaut (*Mighty in Battle*, from Norman-French *Mathilde*), Melisende (*Strong Labour*, Gothic *Amalasuintha*), Nathalie (*Christmas*, Latin), Odile (*wealthy*), Pascale (*Easter*), Rosalie (*Rose*, Latin), Sév-

èrine (*Stern*), Sylvain (*of the Forest*), Tilde (*Mathilde*), Veva (*Geneviéve)*, Yseult (*Ice Battle*).

Surnames. These fall into the same basic categories as for the Norman-French post Conquest English names, as described above but, well, in *French*.

- ***Patronymics.*** These were originally indicated by a *de*, *des*, *du*, *lu* or *Fitz-* in front of the ancestor's name, but it was also increasingly common to drop this and simply keep the ancestor's name *as* a direct surname. Jehan *de Pascal* is an example of the former, which could either remain the same or become simply *Jehan Pascal* as time passed.

- ***Occupational Names.*** Some examples include – *Boulanger* (Baker), *Berger* (Shepherd), *Caron* (Cartwright), *Fabron* (Blacksmith), *Gagne* (Farmer), *Lefebvre* (Smith, Craftsman), *Marchand* (Merchant) and *Pelletier* (Furrier).

- ***Nicknames.*** Some examples include – *Petit* (Small), *Le Grand* (Big), *Le Blanc* (Blonde/Blond), *Brun* (Brown) and *Roux* (Red).

- ***Place Names.*** Some examples include – *Breton* (from Brittany), *Gascon* (from Gascony) and may be prefixed with *de*, *des*, *du* and *le (of)*. As in English, specific places may be used rather than broad areas ... so, for example, *les Halles* (by the Markets), *de Bois* (near the Forest).

Medieval German Names

The following names, as for the Medieval French ones, are not pinned to specific centuries and are not necessarily the most common for the same reason – a lack of easily accessible information. Even so, they should be reasonably usable for the period.

Male Names. Abelard (*Noble Strength*), Adalmar (*Nobly Famous*), Aksel (*Father of Peace*, Scandinavian), Aldric (*Old Ruler*), Armin (*Soldier*, Latin – *Arminius*), Bardawulf (*Bright Wolf*), Bernd-Berndt (*Bold Bear*), Berhtram (*Bright Raven*), Carl (*Man*), Chlothar (*Loud Warrior*), Detlef (*People's Heritage*), Dieter (*People's Warrior*), Eckehard-Eckhard (*Strong Edge*), Engel (*Angel* or *Angle* [the tribe] or *Ingal* – Norse fertility god), Erdmann (*Strong Man*), Franz (*Frankish*, *French*), Frideric-Fridric (*Peaceful Ruler*), Gebhard (*Gift of Strength*), Gerlach (*Spear Play*), Hans (*Iohannes*, *John*), Haimo-Heimo (*Home*), Hartmand-Hartman-Hartmann (*Strong Man*), Hilbert-Hildebert (*Bright Battle*), Karsten (*Christian* or *Believer*), Konrad-Kuonrat (*Bold Counsel*), Korbinian (*Little Raven*), Lanzo (*Land*), Luitpold (*People Bold*), Luitger (*People Spear*), Manfred (*Strong Peace*), Mann (*Fierce Man*), Menno (*Strength*), Odo (*Wealthy*), Raban (*Raven*), Rannulf (*Plundering Wolf*), Reino (*Wise*), Rudi-Rüdiger-Rudolf (*Famous Wolf*), Sigmund-Siegmund (*Victory Protection*), Theodoric (*First of the People*), Ulfric (*Wolf Power*), Volker (*People's Army*), Waldo-Waldobert (*Bright Ruler*), Willafried (*Desires Peace*),



Female Names. Ada-Adala (*Noble*), Adelind-Adelinda (*Noble Serpent*), Amalie-Amala (*Work*), Betlinde (*Bright Linden*), Brunhild (*Armoured Warrior Maid*), Clotichilde-Clothilde-Clotilda (*Famous Battle Maid*), Elfrieda (*Elf Strength*), Frieda-Freida-Friederike (*Peaceful Ruler*), Gertrude (*Spear Strength*), Gunda (*War*), Heilwig (*Healthy Battle Maid*), Hella (*Bright Torch*), Irmgard (*Entirely Protected*), Jannika (*Johanna*), Kunigunde (*Brave War*), Luitgard-Luitgardis (*Protector of the People*), Maud-Mechthild (*Mighty in Battle*), Ortrun (*Point Rune*), Reinhilde (*Battle Counsel*), Roswitha (*Renowned Strength*), Schwanhild-Swanhild (*Swan Battle*), Valda (*Powerful Ruler*).

Surnames. These also fall into the same categories as English surnames.

- ***Patronymic.*** Adding *-sohn* (e.g. *Petersohn*) or *-s* (*Ahrens*) was common in north Germany but was rarely hereditary until the 18th century when laws enforcing hereditary succession of such surnames were first passed! So *Georg Peters* could have a son *Friedrich Georgsohn* during the period.

- ***Occupational.*** Examples include – *Bauer* (Farmer), *Becker* (Baker), *Fleischer* (Butcher), *Klingemann* (Weaponsmith), *Maurer* (Mason), *Muller* (Miller), *Schmidt* (Smith), *Schnieder* (Tailor), *Topfer* (Potter), *Wagner* (Cartwright) and *Weber* (Weaver).

- ***Nicknames.*** Some examples include – *Braun* (Brown, Swarthy), *Krause* (Curly), *Klein* (Small), *Gross* (Big), *Schwarz* or *Schwarzkopf* (Black haired) and *Herz* (Big-hearted).

- ***Place Names***. Follows the usual pattern – for example, *Kissinger* (from *Kissingen*), *Sachsen* (from Saxony), *Springborn* (Spring). Interestingly, the use of *von* did ***not*** necessarily mean one was a Noble, it meant *from* for most people (as opposed to *of* for Nobles) ... it was not forbidden for ordinary people until the 17th century.

Medieval Italian Names

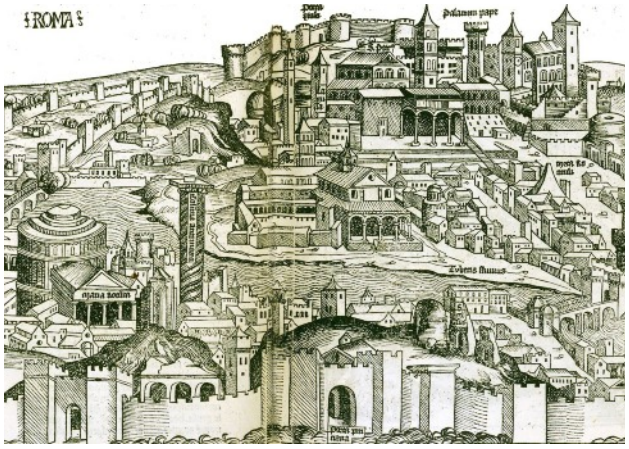
Again, these are not necessarily the most common or identifiably from a given century, but *are* medieval or reasonably representative of medieval Italian naming patterns.

Male Names. Adano (*Adam*), Agostino (*Augustinian – venerable*), Aiulf (*Wolf Sword*, Saxon-German), Alfieri (*Standard Bearer*, Spanish), Amadore (*Lover*), Baldovino (*Baldwin – Brave Friend*, German), Battista (*Baptist*), Benedetto (*Benediction*), Biaggio-Biagino (*Lisp*), Carlo (*Man*), Cesare (*Caesar*), Cosimo (*Beauty*), Cristiano (*Christian*), Drago (*Dragon*), Durante (*Enduring*), Eliodoro (*Gift of the Sun*), Ercole (*Hercules*), Eugenio (*Well Born*), Fabio (*Bean*), Fabrizio (*Craftsman*), Fausto (*Lucky*), Gabriele (*Warrior of God*), Gaspare-Gasparo (*Treasure Bearer*), Gianni-Giannino-Giovananni (*Iohannes – God is Gracious*), Ilario (*Happy*), Ippolito (*Horse Freer*), Jacopo (*Supplanter*), Lauro (*Laurel*), Marco-Marcello-Marcellino (*Border March*), Mario (*Virile*), Nico-Niccolò (*Victor of the People*), Nunzio (*Annunciation*), Orazio (*Horatius*), Orso (*Bear*), Palmiro (*Palm Sunday*), Ponzio (*Sailor*), Remo (*Swift*), Romolo (*From Rome*), Rufino (*Red-haired*), Sabato (*Saturday*), Settimio (*Sixth*), Severo (*Stern*), Silvano-Silvester-Silvio (*From the forest*), Teodoro (*Gift of God*), Terenzio (*Terentius*), Ugo (*Heart* or *Mind* or *Spirit*), Urbano (*Of the City*), Valentino (*Strong*), Vittore (*Conqueror*).

Female Names. Allegra (*Lively*), Angelica (*Angel*), Annunciata (*Annunciation*), Beatrix (*Voyager*), Bianca (*White*), Bonfilio (*Good Daughter*), Caprice (*Impulsive*), Chiara-Chiarina (*Bright*), Concetta (*Conception*), Dafne (*Laurel*), Desideria (*Longing*), Elene (Helene, *Torch*), Eufemia (*Well Spoken*), Felisa (*Lucky*), Francesca (*French*), Gemma (*Gem*), Giacinta (*Hyacinth*), Giovanna (*God is Gracious*), Grazia (*Pleasing*), Ines (*Holy* – Agnes), Lauretta (*Laurel Tree*), Letizia (*Happiness*), Lucrezia (*Wealthy*), Margherita (*Pearl*), Maria (Mary), Natale (*Christmas*), Nerina (*Water*), Ottavia (*Eighth*), Palmira (*Pilgrim*), Petronella (*Little Rock*), Romana (*Roman*), Rosanna (*Rose of Grace*), Santa (*Holy*), Silvana-Silvia (*Of the Forest*), Violetta (*Violet*), Zeta-Zita (*Little Girl*).

Surnames. These also fall into the same categories as English surnames. At the beginning of the period the older Roman *tria nomina* ('three names' – *Praenomen* [from a limited list, so not particularly useful as an identifier], *Nomen* [family/clan name], *Cognomen* ['nickname' ... often of ancient form) system was long dead and the majority of non-nobles had non-hereditary surnames of the various main types – though the hereditary principle was *slowly* adopted and almost complete by the middle of the ***15th century.***

- ***Patronymic.*** As in most places, this was the most common form of surname, and usually followed the pattern of *name* ***de*** *father's name*. For example, *Jacopo* ***de*** *Fabrizio* or *Lauretta* ***de*** *Terenzio*.



Over time (probably by the mid 15th century) the ***de*** was dropped). A concurrent process was for the patronymic to be *pluralised*, usually by adding a terminal ***'i'*** and the addition of *degli* or *dei/de* (of the) ... so Jacopo de Fabrizio became *Jacopo* ***degli*** *(or* ***dei/de****)* ***Fabrizii*** *('Jacopo of the Fabrizii')* ... and the *degli* was eventually dropped so the name simple became *Jacopo Fabrizii*.

- ***Occupational.*** For example – *Caito* (Official, Sicilian, from Arabic *Quadi*), *Cuoco* (Cook), *Ferraro* (Blacksmith), *Garitta* (Watchman), *Pastore* (Shepherd), *Passafiume* (Waterman) and, interestingly, instances where names are based on an item related to the job – *Acciai* (*Axe* = Woodsman), *Acqua* (*Water* = Water Seller), *Armati* (*Armoured* = Soldier *or* Armourer), *Delle Fave* ('*of the Beans*' = Grocer), *Farina* (*Flour* = Baker), *Martelli* (*Hammers* = Carpenter), *Mazza* (*Mallet* = Mason), *Tenaglia* (*Pincers* = Smith) and *Zappa* (*Hoe* = Farmer).

- ***Nicknames.*** Some examples include – *Acerbi* (Severe), *Agnelli* (Lamb = timid or, possibly, pious), *Allegri* (Lively), *Basso* (Short), *Bellini* (Beautiful), *Caporaso* (Bald), *Caruso* (Young Man), *Drago* (Dragon), *Esposito* (Abandoned – Orphan), *Gatti* (Cat – Agile), *Guerri* (War – Pugnacious), *Innocenti* (Innocent), *Leggieri* (Frivolous), *Magro* (Thin), *Morandi* (Steadfast), *Necchi* (Tired), *Pagano* (Rustic – Hick), *Rana* (Frog), *Rossi* (Redhead), *Sapienti* (Wise), *Sciarra* (Argumentative), *Sgro* (Curly), *Sordi* (Deaf), *Tafani* (Gadfly – Annoying), *Tosto* (Stubborn), *Vespa* (Wasp).

- ***Place Names***. Follows the usual pattern – for example, *Della/La Monte* ('of the Mountain'), *Della/La Porte* ('of the Gate'), *Della/La Valle/Valle* ('of the Valley'), *Della/La Fontana* ('of the Fountain'), *Della/La Torregrossa* ('of the big tower) are from generic places, while surnames such as *Albanese* (Albanian), *Calabrese* (Calabrian), *Greco* (Greek), *Maltesi* (Maltese), *Sardo* (Sardinian), *Toscani* (Tuscan) apply to specific regions others such as *Veronesi* (Verona), *Veneziana* (Venetian), *Pisano* (Pisan), *Padovani* (Padua) and *Romani* (Rome) apply to specific towns.

Medieval Spanish Names

A selection, not necessarily the most common (and, of course, over four centuries many went in and out of fashion), but mostly medieval.

Male Names. Adán (*Adam*), Adalberto (*Bright Noble*, Saxon-German), Agapito (*Beloved)* Alejo-Alejandro (*Defender*), Alfonso-Alphonso (*Noble Ready*), Amadis (*Love of God*), Ambrosio (*Immortal*), Arsenio (*Virile*), Basilio (*Royal*), Bautista (*Baptist*), Beltrán (*Bright Raven*, German), Bolívar (*Meadow Mill*, Basque), Carlos (*Man*), Cayo (*Lord*), Cristián (*Christian*), Cristóbal (*Christ Bearer*), Demetrio, Diego (*Santiago? Teacher?*), Donato (*Gift of God*), Eleuterio (*Liberator*), Enrique (*Home Ruler*, German), Ernesto (*Serious*), Estavan-Estéban (*Crown*), Eugenio (*Well Born*), Fabricio (*Craftsman*), Faustino-Fausto (*Lucky*), Felipe (*Horse Lover*), Fidel (*Faithful*), Gaspar (*Treasure Bearer*), Gil (*Gilles* – French), Gonzalo (*War Elf*), Gregorio (*Vigilant*), Hernando-Hernán (*Ardent Peace*), Iñigo-Inigo-Iñjgo-Ynjgo (*Little One*, Basque), Jenaro (*January*), Jesús (*Jesus*), Jorge (*Farmer*), Juan (*John-Johan-Johannes*), Lope (*Wolf*), Lucio (*Light*), Marcial (*Warlike*), Mario (*Virile*), Matteo (*Gift of God*), Narciso (*Sleepy*), Nazario (*Nazarene*), Odalis (*Wealthy*), Ovidio (*Shepherd*), Pablo (*Small*), Paco-Pancho-Paquito (from *Franciscus*, French), Pascual (*Easter*), Pedro (*Stone*), Plácido (*Calm*), Raúl (*Wise Wolf*, Saxon-German), Remigio (*Speedy*), Rodrigo-Ruy (*Famous Power|*, German), Román (*Roman*), Sabas (*Old Man*, Arabic), Salvador (*Saviour*), Santiago (*Saint James*), Silvio (*Forest*), Teófilo (*Friend of God*), Tomás (*Twin*), Vasco-Velasco (*Crow*), Ximen-Ximun (*Hearken*, Basque).

Female Names. Adoncia (*Sweet*), Adora-Adoracion (*Adored*), Aina (*Anna*), Aldonza (*Sweet*), Amada (*Beloved*), Ángela-Angélica-Ángelita (*Angel*, *Little Angel*), Beatriz (*Voyager*), Blanca (*White*), Candelaria-Canda (*Candle of the Virgin*), Concepción (*Conception*), Consuela-Consuelo (*Consolation*), Dolores (*Sorrows [of Mary]*), Dulce (*Sweet*), Elena (*Helene*), Emelina (*Rival*), Ercilia (*Delicate*), Eufémia (*Well Spoken*), Francisca (*French*), Gracia-Graciela (*Pleasing*), Guadalupe (*River of the Wolf*, Arabic), Iñes-Iñez (*Agnes*), Isabel (*God is my Oath*), Jacinta (*Hyacinth*), Juana-Juanita (*God is Gracious*), Leticia (*Happy*), Lola-Lolita-Lorita (*Dolores*), Lupe (*Guadalupe*), Luz (*Light [of Mary]*), Manuela (*God is with us*), María (*Mary*), Marienala (*Star of Mary*), Mariangela (*Angel of Mary*), Marisol (*Sun of Mary*), Neva (*Snow*), Nina (*Little Girl*), Paloma (*Dove*), Perla (*Pearl*), Pilar (*Pillar of Mary*), Prudencia (*Cautious*), Raquel (*Rachel*), Renata (*Reborn*), Rosa-Rosita (*Rose*), Socorro (*Succour of Mary*), Sol (*Sun*), Susana-Susanita (*Lilly*), Trinidad (*Trinity*), Tomasa (*Twin*), Violeta (*Violet*), Xénia (*Eugénia*), Yazmin (*Jasmine*, Arabic), Ynes-Ynez (*Holy*), Zarita (*Sarah*).



Surnames. At the beginning of the period the older Roman *tria nomina* ('three names') system was long dead and the majority of non-nobles had non-hereditary surnames of the usual types. The hereditary principle was *slowly* adopted and almost complete by the middle of the ***15th century.***

- ***Patronymic.*** This was the most common form of surname. Sometimes the father's name is unchanged, for example *Fidel* ***Pascual***, but, more commonly, ***-ez, -az, -is*** *or* ***-oz*** is added (Castilian) or ***-es, -as, -is*** *or* ***-os*** (Portuguese) – so, *Fidel* ***Pascualez***.

  For the period of the 10th-14th centuries this naming pattern was ***not*** hereditary, so *Fidel Pascual's* son could be *Rodrigo* ***Fidelez***.

- ***Occupational.*** Examples include – *Alcaldo* (Mayor), *Barbero* (Barber), *Cabrero* (Goatherd), *Cantor* (Singer), *Cavallero* (Horseman aka Knight), *Corredor* (Runner), *Herrera* (Blacksmith), *Hidalgo* (Nobleman – or the servant of such), *Marin* (Sailor), *Molinero* (Miller), *Romero* (Pilgrim), *Torrero* (Bullfighter), *Zapatero* (Cobbler).

- ***Nicknames.*** Some examples include – *Bravo* (Brave), *Cano* (Grey), *Cola* (Tall), *Cortez* (Courteous), *Delgado* (Thin), *Garza* (Lanky), *Moreno* (Brown), *Orejon* (Big Ear), *Rubio* (Blonde/Blonde).

- ***Place Names***. For example, *Iglesias* ('near the Church'), *Mendoza* ('from the peaks'), *Morales* ('by the Blackberry trees'), *Navarro* (from Navarre), *Serrano* ('from the mountains'), *Torres* ('by the Tower'), *Vega* ('from or by the meadow') ... and these may be preceded by ***de*** *or* ***d'*** (*'of'*), so you could have ***de Torres*** ('of the Tower') etc.

Sleep & Dreams

"8 hours to work, 8 hours to play, 8 hours to sleep and 8 Bob a day" – slogan of the Eight Hour Day movement

Modern patterns of daily life are so ingrained into our society that the overwhelming majority of people would believe they are 'normal' and have always been as they are. That is, that a *normal* amount of sleep roughly 8 hours a day, at night, in one uninterrupted block (as indicated by the slogan above). However, this is far from the truth!

Pre-Modern Sleep Patterns

Until the rapid industrialisation and urbanisation of the 19th century normalised the idea of eight hours of uninterrupted sleep at night being the norm, it was anything *but* normal.

Most medieval people went to bed within an hour or two of sunset for the simple reason that the available light sources were weak and, more importantly for the majority of the population, *expensive*. So most people were in bed, asleep, by around 9-10 pm.

They then typically slept for around four hours in what is routinely called the *First Sleep* in contemporary sources and then *woke up*. Depending on their natures and desires they would spend the next hour or two doing any number of things – chores, chatted (even visiting neighbours to do so!), read (assuming they could afford a light source) or even made love.

They would then go back to sleep for their *Second Sleep*, about another four hours, before waking, usually somewhat before true dawn.

*All those stories of thieves and no-goods getting up to all sorts of mischief suddenly look a **lot** more difficult to achieve – it also means the job of the Night Watch in the larger towns is both easier and more difficult with this big active period smack dab in the middle of the night!*

Dreams and Dreaming

Just as is the case today, medieval people believed that at least *some* dreams had meaning ... if only they could be interpreted!

Types of Dreams. Medieval philosophers recognised two broad categories, dreams that were ***Predictive*** and those that were ***Non-Predictive.***

Predictive Dreams included the ***Somnium*** *(a dream with unclear meaning, one requiring interpretation)*, the ***Visio*** *(a prophetic dream of the future, clearer than a **Somnio**, but still requiring some interpretation)* and the ***Oraculum*** *(a prophetic dream in which the revelation of future events or advice on future actions is made by a Parent, a Priest or by God, these were the clearest of the three, but still tricky and in need of interpretation).*



Non-Predictive Dreams included the ***Insomnium*** *(a nightmare, believed to be caused by mental or physical trauma or distress)* and the ***Visum*** *(a sort of Daydream, seen during the light initial stages of sleep).*

The World

Calendars & Chronology

Until the widespread growth of the railway in the 19th century there was no such thing as universal time. It was noon wherever you were when the sun was directly overhead ... but, since you couldn't travel fast enough to make any meaningful dent in this, it wasn't a problem.

*So, if it was noon in London it **wasn't** in, say, Paris (~1 pm) or Constantinople (~2 pm) ... based on geography rather than politics (which would place Istanbul in Turkey's ~3 pm zone in modern times).*

Railways, on the other hand, needed timetables – that meant there had to be some universally agreed time that applied to all stations on the same line.

That's not likely to be a problem for most situations that will arrive in real (medieval) life ... what ***will*** be a problem is that of *Calendars* and related matters.

Competing Calendars. There were at least *three* major Calendars in use in the medieval Mediterranean World, not just one, and even where one of them dominated a particular region there were often quirks as to its application that might trip up the unwary.

The Julian (Roman) Calendar

Th Roman Republican Calendar, as reorganised by Julius Caesar, and in force from 1 JAN 709 AUC (45 BC) with a length of 365¼ days and, therefore, a Leap Year every 4 years.

*The intercalary ('Leap Year') day added by the Romans was **February 24th** ... and there were **two** February 24ths*

*by their system, the **first** of which was the actual added day, not the second. Most Medieval states followed the Roman tradition ... it was only in the later Middle Ages when the Roman system of **numbering the days** (see below) was replaced with sequential numbering that 29th February became more visible, even though in the UK the 24th remains, legally, the Leap Year Day!*

Even though it was more accurate than the older Republican Calendar it was still out from the mean Solar (Tropical) Year – gaining one day every 128 years.

New Year's Day/Civil Years

This was 1 JAN and was celebrated as such, but the *official* start of the ***Civil*** (i.e. legal and governmental) year varied – depending on the jurisdiction it could *actually* start on one of three days, 25 DEC (Nativity), 25 MAR (Incarnation) or, as in France, on *Easter*!

*Since this could cause confusion in written communication, later practise was to use dates in the form Month/Calendar Year-Civil Year for those months that overlapped, for example, **March 24 1367** would be written as **March 1366-67** in where the Incarnation was used as the beginning of the Civil Year.*

In England, the Civil/Legal year started on 25 DEC until 1086 when it was changed to 1 JAN and remained that date until 1155 when it was again changed to 25 MAR (where it remained until 1752).

*The **Gregorian** Calendar was not instituted until after 24 FEB 1582 (and **way** beyond the end of the period covered by this book), the actual date of adoption varying from place to place. Its intent was to bring the date of Easter back into sync between the lunar and solar years as it had been in the early years of Christianity.*

Year Numbering

Years were numbered from the nominal birth of Christ as calculated by the early Church fathers, and dating from that *year*, which is the ***Year One*** of the Christian reckoning.

There is NO year Zero (0). 1 BC ended on the 31st December at midnight (24:00) and AD 1 began on the 1st January (00:00).

However, this system was (as noted in previous chapters) not always used for official documentation



which tended to use the *regnal years* of the national or local ruler (that is, how long they had been on the throne – and that could open a whole can of worms as well, as it varied as to how those regnal years were calculated. Most places dated them from the actual date of accession, so they wouldn't likely match up to either of the Calendar or Civil year systems ... but *some* made an attempt to match them up with one or the other).

Writing Dates

Dates were *almost always* written according to the old Roman system of ***Kalends***, ***Ides*** and ***Nones*** rather than numbering them sequentially from the beginning of the month until way after the end of the period covered in this book.

Principium mensis cujusque vocato kalendas:
Sex Maius nonas, October, Julius, et Mars;
Quattuor at reliqui: dabit idus quidlibet octo.

Or, loosely translated, the ***Kalends*** are the ***first day of every month:*** *six days after* the Kalends are the ***Nones*** of *May*, *October*, *July and March*, while the *Nones* are only *four days after* for the other months; the ***Ides*** come *eight days after the Nones.*

Dates were calculated, and written, by counting *forward* to the next of the named days, except, of course, exactly ***on*** the named days.

Thus January 1st would be the Kalends (*Kalendis Januarius)*, while April 22nd would be the 10th day before the Kalends of May (*Ante diem decimum Kalendas Maius*).

East Roman Calendar

The Eastern (Greek) and Russian Orthodox Churches used the Julian Calendar as well, but with a several significant differences.

New Year's Day/Civil Years

The *Church* year began on 1 SEP, not 1 JAN, which coincided with the *Civil Year*, or ***Indiction.*** However, *New Year's Day* was still celebrated as a separate ceremony.

*The **Indiction** was a 15 year taxation cycle dating from either 297-98 or 312-313 AD. It was legally required to appear on all official documents or correspondence from the 6th century AD.*

*Just to confuse things, in the successor states in the West the Indiction was still **occasionally** used, but started on the 24th September and was called the **Papal Indiction**.*

Year Numbering

The Years were numbered, not from the nominal birth of Christ, but by the number of years since the Creation of the World (***Etas Kosmiou*** or ***Anno Mundi***)

according to the genealogies in the books of the Old Testament and dated to ***September 1st, 5509 BC***. However, by law, the ***Indiction*** (which year of a 15 year taxation cycle it was) also had to be included.

Writing Dates

The days of the month were numbered *sequentially*, and not by the old (Roman) Imperial system of Kalends-Ides-Nones; the *Indiction* was included and then the *Anno Mundi*, or 'Year of the World [since Creation].'

*"The queen of cities fell to the Latins on the **twelfth day of the month of April** of the **seventh Indiction** in the **year 6712** [1204]."* (Nicholas Choniates (c. 1155-1215), *'History'*).

Islamic Calendars

The Muslim calendar adapted from earlier Arabian calendars, the ***Hijri*** calendar, was a *Lunar* calendar and consisted of 12 months, each of 29 or 30 days, giving a year length of 354/355 days.

*The months of the Hijri calendar are Muharram, Safar, Rabbi al-awwal, Ragi ath-thani, Jumada al-akhirah, Rajab, Sha'ban, Ramadan (**Fasting**), Shawwal, Dhu al-Qa'dah and Duh al-Hijjah (**Pilgrimage**).*

Since it was completely out of sync with the Solar Year, it was useless for agricultural purposes (and, in a society where the economy was largely based *on* agriculture, for taxation purposes as well) and so was used only for religious calculations.

*The length of the month was determined by **actual** observation of the Crescent marking the end of the previous cycle of the Moon and could be affected by poor visibility and other factors, so the maximum month length was **always 30 days**, regardless, but might be 29 days if the phases were just right **and** visibility was good.*

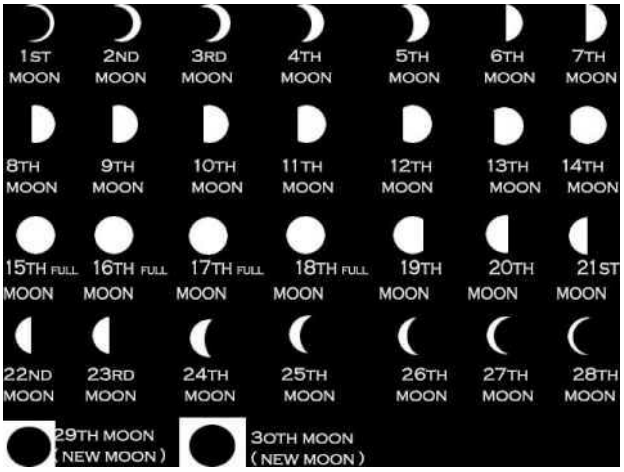
*Different parts of the Islamic world used (and still use) different criteria for these observations so no two places will **necessarily** have identical month lengths. It also means that the Islamic year can be up to 3 days out from the actual 12 month Lunar cycle.*

Civil/Legal Calendar

For civil/legal purposes the Caliphate used the ***Alexandrian Calendar*** (a development of the ancient *Egyptian Calendar*, as updated by the Ptolemies) which was *almost* identical to the *Julian Calendar* and had been widely used in the Roman East as a result.

The months of the Alexandrian Calendar were (in order), Thoth, Phaopi, Athyr, Choiak, Tybi, Mechir, Phamenoth, Pharmuthi, Pachons, Payni, Epiphi and Mesore.

The *Alexandrian Calendar* used the same nominal start date and system of *Indictions* as did the East



Roman Calendar – since most of the early Islamic conquests were ex-Roman provinces used to this and it made administration much easier both for that reason and because it more closely matched the solar (agricultural) year.

Initial Date

The Calendar was *retrospectively* given a start date based on the day on which Muhammad and his followers left Mecca to flee to Medina, the *Hijra*, which occurred on ***1 Muharram 1 AH*** *or* ***16 JUL 622 AD (Julian)***.

The Measure of All Things

How did medieval people measure things? What system of weights and measures did they use?

Area

Many principalities and cities had their own local measures of area, and those that are listed below are only a sampling of the more common measurements.

English Area Measurements

Acre. Nominally an as much land as could be ploughed in a single day. An area four (4) *Rods* wide by one (1) *Furlong* long or an area of 4840 square yards.

Carucate (aka *Ploughland*). Nominally the area of land that could be ploughed by an eight Ox team in a year. Normally 120 Acres.

Bovate. Nominally the area of land a single Ox could plough in a year, or 1/8th of a *Carucate*. Fifteen Acres.

Hide. Four to Eight *Bovates* – or ½-1 *Carucate*.

Perch. An area one *Rod* square.

Rood. One quarter (¼) of an *Acre*. One *Furlong* long and one *Rod* wide.

Virgate (aka *Yardland*). Nominally the area of land a team of two Oxen could plough in a single year. Approximately 30 Acres.

Weights & Measures, 1187-1228

King Richard, 1187

In the same year [1187] ... King Richard ... made a decree at Westminster, that, throughout England all measures of corn and pulse, both in cities and other places, should be of the same size, and especially the measure of ale, wine, and the weights of merchants.

It was also decreed that woolen cloths in all parts of the kingdom should be two ells wide, within the borders, and should be as good in the middle as they were at the sides.

It was, moreover, decreed that no trader should hang up before his shop red or black cloths, or anything else by which the sight of purchasers should be deceived in choosing a good cloth.

A decree was also passed that no dye, except black, should be anywhere made use of in the kingdom, except in the capital cities or the boroughs; and if any one should be convicted of transgressing any of these laws, that his body should be imprisoned, and his goods confiscated to the revenue.

London Corporation, ~1200 AD

Concerning sealed measures, everyone in a ward who sells by measure – that is, gallon, pottle, and quart, quarter, bushel, half-bushel and peck – are to show all their measures four times a year to the Alderman, in whatever place he wants to assign, under penalty [for defaulting] of 2/- payable to the Alderman.

There they are to be impressed with the seal of the Alderman, if they are not [already] impressed with the seal of the Chamber [the City Treasurer's Office, under the *Chamberlain*]; [the owner] will pay 2d for [application of] the seal to a gallon, 1d for the sealing of a pottle, a halfpenny for a quart, 8d for a quarter, 2d for a bushel, 1d. for a half-bushel, and a halfpenny for a peck.

If the alderman's inspection finds any measures to be smaller than they should be, they are to be burned forthwith in the main street of the ward, so that they cannot be used again, and the name of him who was using them is to be submitted by the Beadle to the *Chamberlain* [Treasurer], and [the user] to be *amerced* [fined] appropriately.

If the Beadle is discovered to have put the mark on a false measure, let him be sent to the pillory.

King Henry, 1228

King Henry [III] ... [1228] ... found a deficiency in the measures of corn, wine, and beer, of which he broke some and burnt others, and substituting larger ones, he ordered bread to be made of heavier weight, and that those who broke this law should be heavily fined.

Other European Area Measurements

Actus Quadratus (Roman). An area of approximately 14,400 square (Roman) feet or 1260 square meters.

Arpent Carré (aka *Acre*, French). An area of 4089 square yards or 3419 square meters, a square 10 *Perches (French)* on a side (220 *Pieds*).

Labor (Spain). Nominally an area of 1 million square *Varas* (Spanish Yards) or about 177.1 acres.

League (Spain). Nominally an area of 25 million square *Varas* (Spanish Yards) or about 4,428.4 acres.

Morgen (Holland, Germany, Poland). Nominally the amount of land ploughed by one Ox in a morning's work, size varied widely across those territories and it could be anywhere between ½ to 2½ Acres.

*Alternate German names were **Acker, Diemat, Jück, Steuertonne, Tagwerk** and **Tonne.** In Poland it could be called **Morga, Mórg** or **Jutrzyna***

Perche d'Arpent Carrée (Perch, French). A French *Perch*, a square 22 *Pieds* on a side, 40.89 square yards or 34.19 square meters.

Vergée (Virgate, French). A square 5 French *Perches* on a side, 1527 square yards or 1277 square meters.

Distance/Length

These varied widely from time to time and place to place. A selection of the most common are provided –

English Distance/Length Measurements

Barleycorn/Digit. This is equal to 1/3rd of an *Inch*. It dates back to at least the 10th century AD.

Cubit. Nominally the distance from the fingertips to the elbows, but normally 18 inches during the period.

Ell (English). The *English Ell* was 1¼ yards, or 45 inches. It was mainly used for measuring cloth.

Fathom. Nominally the distance from fingertip to fingertip with the arms fully stretched. Accepted to be 6 feet. Normally used only in mining and maritime pursuits as a measure of *depth*.

Foot. A *Roman* Foot (11.65" or 296) mm was still used in the building trades, otherwise it was 13.2" or 335 mm until the late 13th century when it was set to 10/11ths of this, of 304.8 mm (the 'modern' Foot).

Furlong. Nominally the distance a Plough team could work without rest. Set at ***40 Rods*** (600' to the late 13th century, 660' thereafter.

Hand. This is equal to 4 inches.

Inch. "*Three grains of barley, dry and round, placed end to end, lengthwise*" = 1 inch (~25.4 mm).

League. Nominally an hour's travel, or ~3 miles. It could *also* be 1½ *Roman Miles* or 7500 feet.

Mile. The Roman *Mille Passus* (1000 double paces, 5000 feet) – it was not set to 5280 feet until 1593.

Rod (Pole, Perch). This was only *fifteen (15) feet* to the late 13th century when it was changed to 16½ feet.

Scots Mile. Used in Scotland, equal to 8 *Furlongs*, 1.123 Statute miles (~1.81 km).

Troedfedd (Wales). A Welsh *Foot* (of 9 inches). Used until the English conquest.

Welsh Mile. Used in Wales until its conquest by in the 13th century and was 6.17 km (27000 *Troedfedd).*

Yard. Three feet ... dates back to at least the 9th century AD, but the origin and derivation is uncertain.

Roman Distance/Length Measurements

These were still in common use at the beginning of the 10th century, especially in southern Europe, and often remained in use, at least to a degree, through to the end of the 14th century or later ... though rarely the *exclusively*, especially as the period progressed.

Half Pace (*Gradus*). 2½ Feet, or 29" (73.75 cm).

Foot (*Pes*). Set at 11.6" or 29.5 cm.

Inch (*Uncia*). 1/12th of a Foot, ~0.97"

Pace (*Passus*). Five Roman Feet, 58" (147.5 cm).

Other Distance/Length Measurements

Arpent (Paris). Nominally the 'length of a field', actually 220 *Pied.*

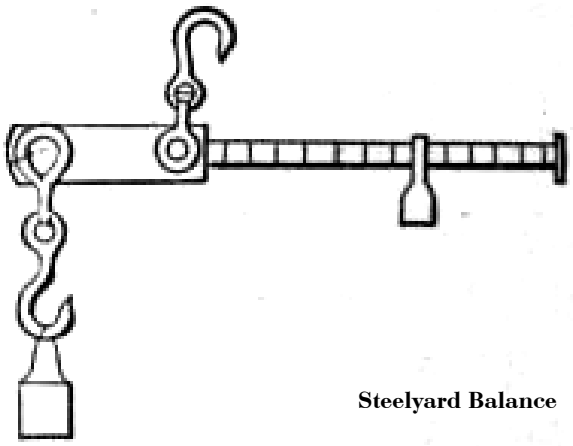
Belgian Pied/Voet. There was no one standard foot, each city (and its surrounding rural areas) used their own measurement. This varied from 273.8 mm at *Ypres* to 297.77 at *Tournai.*

Dutch Mijl. This could be an hour's walk (nominal) which could consist of ~5 km ***or*** 20000 Amsterdam (5660 m) or Rhineland (6280 m) *Voet.*

Or it could be 5600 *Ells* (which varied from place to place) which came in at 3280-4280 meters.

Dutch Voet. Differed from state to state, from 272.8 mm in *Utrecht* to 314.858 mm in *Rijnland.*

Ell (Various). The *English Ell*, as noted, was 1¼ yards. The ***Danish Ell*** was 25", ***Flemish Ell*** was ¾ yard, the



Steelyard Balance

French Ell was 1½ yards (two *Flemish Ells*), the ***Polish Ell*** was 31" and the ***Scottish Ell*** was 39".

German Fuß. As in Belgium, each Principality or Free City had their own measurement which varied from 281.98 mm in *Weimar* to 313.85 in *Prussia.*

Legua (Spain). A Spanish equivalent of the *League*, it consisted of 3 *Milla* (15000 *Pied*), ~2.6 miles or ~4.18 km

Lieue Ancienne (France). The *'Ancient League'* of 10000 feet, ~2.018 miles or ~3.248 km.

Lieue, Regional (France). The *League* could also be 12000, 13200 or 14400 *Pied* ... 2.02 to 2.91 miles (3.25 to 4.68 km) in different regions.

Milla (Spain). The Spanish equivalent of a *Mile*, they consisted of 5000 *Pies* or ~4571' (~1.393 km)

Palm (Portugal). This was 217.37 mm and used instead of the *Foot.*

Pie (Spain). The Spanish version of the *Foot*, it was equal to 10.969" or 276.6 mm

Pied (France). One sixth of a *Toise*, 12.86", 326.6 mm. The French equivalent of a *Foot.*

Pied du Angoulême (France, Occitan). Used in southern France, this was equivalent to 347.008 mm.

Pied de Terre de Bordeaux. Used in the *rural* areas of Bordeaux. Equivalent to 357.214 mm.

Pied de Ville de Bordeaux. Used in, surprise, the city of *Bordeaux*. Equivalent to 343.606 mm.

Pied du Roi (France). Equivalent to 324.84 mm.

Pouce (France). One twelfth of a *Pied*, ~1.066" or 27.07 mm. The French equivalent of an *Inch.*

Pulgada (Spain). The Spanish equivalent of an *Inch*,

there were 12 to a *Pie*, and they were equal to 0.914" or 24.5 mm.

Scottish Foot. Equivalent to 305.287 mm.

Toise de l'Écritoire (French). Nominally the distance between the fingertips of a man's outstretched arms. In fact it consisted of 6 *Pieds* each of 12.86" (326.6 mm) for a total of 77.16" (~1.96 meters) and was the French equivalent of a *Fathom*.

Vara (Spain). The Spanish equivalent of a *Yard*, they were made up of 3 *Pied*, or ~32.9" or ~0.836 m.

Weight

These depended on what you were measuring and where you were. A *selection* of those used during the period include –

English Weights

Anglo-Saxon ('Tower') Pound. Based on the weight of 120 Silver *Dirhams* (Arabic coins worth 2d), sometimes called the *Moneyer's Pound*. It was ~350 grams and consisted of 12 ounces of ~29.16 grams.

It remained in use throughout the entire period and was the basis of the English monetary system, as each ounce was equivalent to the weight of 20d, and the pound was equivalent to the weight of 240d.

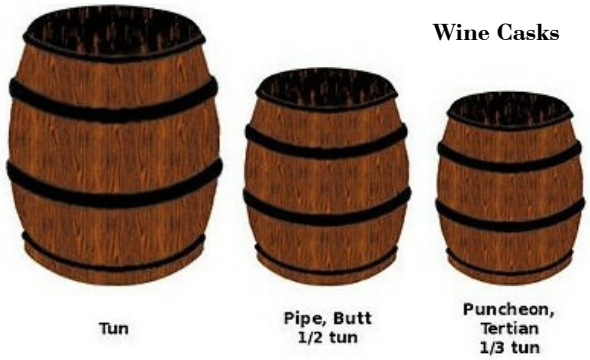
It (or something functionally identical) was used in France as the ***Rochelle Pound*** *and in Germany as the standard weight system for gold and silver.*

Avoirdupois ('Wool') Pound. Appears around 1300 AD and *during the medieval period* was ~454 grams. It consists of 16 ounces, each of ~28.375 grams.

Hanseatic ('London') Pound. This was the standard pound weight of the Hanseatic League and was ~466.7 grams in 16 ounces of ~29.16 grams.

It was never a legal standard in England but was used in and wherever the Hansa cities traded nonetheless.

Hundredweight. There were *four* different 'Hundredweights' used in England – the *Long (German) Hundred* of 120 lbs, the *Hundredweight* of 108 lbs and the *Short Hundred* of 100 lbs (based on the *Tower Pound)*.



Libra. Still used in some places, the Roman *Libra* (Pound) was ~328.9 grams and was divided into 12 *Unciae* (Ounces) of ~27.4 grams.

Load. Used to measure a variety of products, with the actual weight varying for each. For *Lead* it was 2100 lbs, for *Straw* it was 1296 lbs and for *Wool* it was 6 *Woolsacks* or 2100 lbs (all used *Merchant's Pounds*).

Merchant's Pound. Was based on the weight of 300 silver pennies or ~437½ grams and contained 15 ounces of ~29.16 grams. It was used through to the 14th century for general goods.

Stone. There were several types, around 1300 (and probably earlier) these were – 5 lbs for *Glass;* 8 lbs for *Beeswax, Sugar and Spices;* 12 lbs for *Lead* and the *London Stone* of 12½ lb for *Wool*. These were based on *Merchant's Pounds*.

In 1350 the Stone was redefined as 14 lbs *Avoirdupois* for *Wool* and *General Merchandise.*

Troy Pound. A Troy Pound was ~373.24 grams and consisted of 12 ounces, each of ~31.1 grams. It was used by Jewellers, goldsmiths and apothecaries.

Wey. This was a measurement for *Cheese*, *Lead* and *Soap* and consisted of 175 *Merchant's Pounds.*

Woolsack. This was, obviously, a measure for *Wool* and consisted of 350 *Merchant's Pounds.*

European & Other Weights

French Livre. There were several types of *Livre*, all of varying weights. For most of the period this was the ***Livre Esterlin*** of ~367.1 grams (to the mid 14th century) which was then superseded by the ***Livre Parisis*** of ~489.5 g divided into 16 ounces of ~30.59 g.

'German' Pfund. The most common measure was the *Roman Libra*, but the *Hanseatic (London) Pound* was also used.

Hanseatic Pound. See *English Weights*, opposite.

Logarike Litra ('Pound of Account'). Used in the Eastern Empire,was the weight of 72 gold solidi, ~324 grams (though this declined over time to only ~319 grams). Sometimes called the *Gold* or *Maritime* Pound.

Ratl (Arabic Pound). This was always 12 *Awqiyyah* ('ounces' more or less), but the weight of the *Awqiyyah* varied – *Aleppo*, ~320 g; *Beirut*, ~213.39 g; *Egypt*, ~37 g; *Jerusalem*, 240 g.

Spanish Libra. This was ~460 grams and consisted of 16 *onza* each of ~28.75 g.

Volume

English Volume Measurements (Liquids)

Volumetric measures were always fractions or multiples of a Gallon, always the *same* fractions or multiples regardless of the size of the Gallon in question. Therefore, a ***Gallon*** = 2 ***Pottles*** = 4 ***Quarts*** = 8 ***Pints.***

Gallon (Beer). A volume equal to 4.621 liters.

Gallon (Wine). A volume equal to ~3.67 liters.

Tun (Beer). A volume equal to 2 ***Pipes*** *or* ***Butts*** = 4 ***Hogsheads*** = 12 ***Kilderkins*** = 24 ***Firkins*** = 216 Beer ***Gallons***.

Tun (Wine). A volume equal to 2 ***Pipes*** *or* ***Butts*** = 4 ***Hogsheads*** = 8 ***Barrels*** = 256 Wine ***Gallons***.

*The **Wine Tun** was reduced to 252 Gallons some time in the 15th century.*

English Volume Measures (Dry)

The earliest definite measure of Dry volume dates back to the mid to late 13th century (we know the names of earlier ones, but there is no firm idea of their actual measurements) and notes that –

'Eight [Tower] pounds make a gallon of Wine and 8 gallons of Wine make a Bushel of London, which is the 8th part of a Quarter.'

Which is all very interesting, but the reality was that dry goods were often sold, ***not*** by volume, but by ***weight*** – and this might vary from market to market.

As with liquid volumes, the relative values of the *Gallon*, *Pottle*, *Quart and* Pint were fixed (see above) – as were the larger values, the ***Peck (16 gallons), Kenning (2 Pecks),*** *and* ***Bushel (2 Kennings).***

Corn. At various times and places during the period a Bushel of Corn (i.e. Wheat, Barley, Oats or whatever the locally dominant cereal grain was, ***not*** Maize or Indian Corn) was assessed at 43, 69, 63, 70, 73, 80 or even 163 [Tower] pounds.

Other Goods. Were often sold by the *Barrel*, but, again, this was almost always defined by *weight* more than volume.

For example, a barrel of ***Anchovies (Salted)*** was 30 lbs but a barrel of ***Soap*** was 256 lbs.

European and Other Volumes

European measures were just as chaotic, and as likely to be by weight as by volume. A selection of them, mainly from France and Spain, and mainly from the 15th century or later, are provided for comparison.

Arroba (Spain, Liquid). Nominally 25 'pounds', but



various volumes. An Arroba of Wine could be anywhere between ~5 liters and ~16 liters; an Arroba of Oil could be anywhere between ~6 and ~12 liters.

Boisseau (France, Dry). Basic French dry volume measure, ~12.7 liters.

Fanega (Spain, Dry). The Spanish equivalent of the *Bushel*, ~55.5 liters in Castille, but could be as little as ~16.6 liters. Values in the range 20-30 liters seem to have been the most common.

Feuillette (French, Liquid). Two *Quartaut* (144 *Pinte*), ~137.1 liters.

Muid (French, Liquid). Two *Feuillette* (288 *Pinte*), ~274.2 liters

Pint (Dutch, Liquid). A volume of 0.6 liters was used in some areas.

Pinte (French, Liquid). A *Pint*, ~0.952 liters.

Pot (Swedish, Liquid). A *Pint*, ~0.966 liters.

Quade (French, Liquid). Two *Pinte*, or ~1.904 liters.

Quartaut (French, Liquid). Nine *Velte* (72 *Pinte)*, ~68.55 liters.

Tønne (Norway, Liquid). The equivalent of a *Barrel*, ~139.2 liters.

Velte (French, Liquid). Eight *Pinte*, or ~7.817 liters.

Heraldry

Heraldry. A complex subject – more because the form it existed in during the period of the 10th to 14th centuries doesn't *necessarily* bear much resemblance to the form that most people are familiar with, which should come as no surprise to readers of this book by this point.

Heraldic History

While later Medieval Heralds professed to believe that Coats of Arms had been used since Ancient Times, this is unsupportable by the evidence.

Yes. There were symbols used by Ancient states in conjunction with Kingship or for military purposes, but they were ***not*** hereditary and were ***not*** unique, heritable, family identifiers.

The issue is further clouded by the whole cloth invention of Coats of Arms for key figures from earlier times by later Medieval Heralds – Arms for which there is no contemporary evidence.

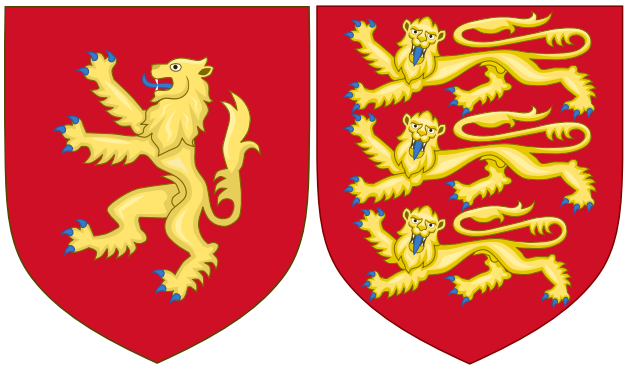
The Beginning of Heraldry

There is no significant evidence for the existence of Heraldry before the mid to late 12th century, and, often, even then, initially only as a personal identifier rather than as an intended heritable family one.

Pre-Heraldry, the 10th–11th centuries

What was the situation before the appearance of Heraldry? We know, from surviving artistic material, that groups and individuals often did have some form of identifier on their shields, but there is no evidence that this was more than an attempt to ensure easy identification on the battlefield ... an early medieval IFF ('Identify Friend or Foe') system, in effect.

*The problem is that the artistic evidence, even when it shows the same individual (let alone one of their family or descendants) rarely, if ever, shows them using the **same** device (if they **used** any at all) on their shield.*



Arms of England to 1189 **Arms of England from**

Typical efforts in this direction were at the most basic, painting the face of the shield in a single colour or simple pattern (also usually monochrome) – and this might not be easily detected in tomb covers, statues, stone carvings and the like, making such simple distinctions difficult to detect. A step up might be for groups to use some sort of local or regionally significant symbol, often a real, mythical or religiously significant animal, painted on their shields.

*In fact, it was often the case that Knights (or their precursors) carried blank shields. **Completely** blank.*

Occasionally, a wealthier individual might use a more complex, colourful, even metal, design variant of the basic local or regional pattern – or even have their own personal symbol, though these were specifically personal and were not usually used by members of the same family, even sons typically had a different symbol to that used by their fathers.

There is, likewise, little or no evidence of such early designs, colours or other devices forming part of later heraldic shield devices used by their descendants after Heraldry became an established thing.

The significant fact about all of these is that they were non-heritable and not necessarily unique or personal.

Early Heraldry, 12th-13th centuries

Recognisably modern, if much *much* simpler, heraldry begins to appear, and rapidly become popular, around the time of the Crusades – which was probably partly to do with the need for firm means of identification within large multi-national armies, especially the commanders and partly to do with the cross fertilisation of existing trends in that direction that can be identified mid century spreading across Europe on the Crusaders' return.

These early Coats of Arms were *self-selected* and did not adhere to many, if, indeed, they adhered consistently to ***any***, of the later adopted 'rules' of Heraldry.

This led to much potential, and *real*, confusion as their was nothing to prevent two Knights or Nobles from bearing identical Arms, either by design or, more likely, by accident.

There were, as yet, no established Colleges of Arms or Colleges of Heralds to regulate these inevitable disputes. In some cases they were settled amicably by one or both parties involved slightly differencing their Arms with slightly different design or the addition of some differentiating mark or symbol.

Organised Heraldry & Colleges of Arms

The disputes alluded to in the previous section did not go away and, in fact, became more and more complex as time passed. So complex that bodies of law began to grow up around the legal disputes that occurred and, eventually, in the *very* late 14th century the chief Herald in the employ of the King started to be called the *King of Heralds* (or, in the 15th century, the *King of Arms*).

These *Kings of Heralds* began, under the auspices of their employers, attempts to deal with disputes over Coats of Arms and regularise the rules in involved in their design – though with limited success.

Basic Heraldic Design

For most of the period covered by OM² the design parameters were pretty basic – they were only beginning to become more complex by the end of the 14th century, and the *real* complexity is a creature of the 15th and later centuries.

This section is *not* intended to be a 'how to' manual for the design of Coats of Arms – partly because that would simply require too much space as the rules can be quite complex but also because many of those rules only came to be (or came to be *relevant*) in the 15th century or later ... and it is difficult to determine which rules are from the period covered by OM² and which are anachronisms.

If you ***really*** want to learn the ins and outs of the design of Coats of Arms, it's best if you consult any one of the large number of websites or books available on the matter.

Main Heraldic Features

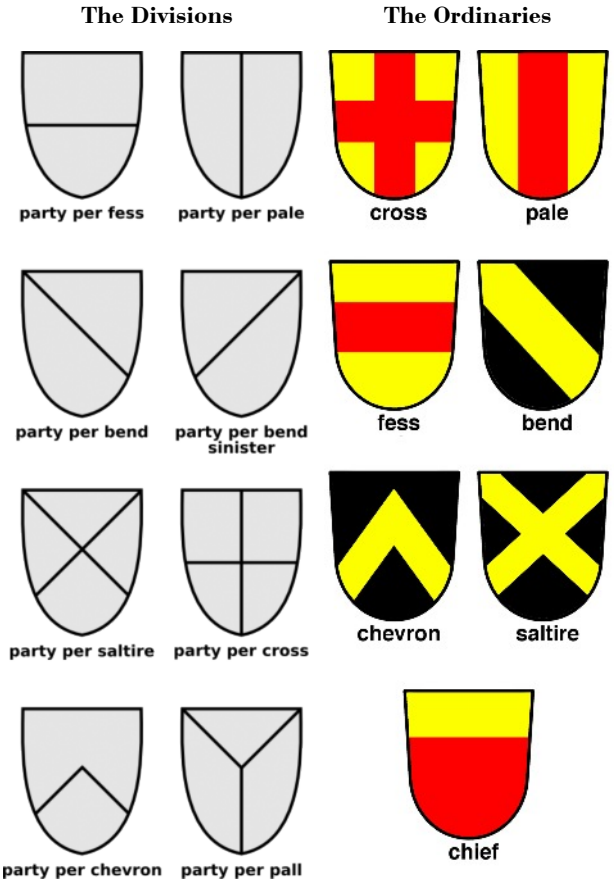
The rules described below are those which apply for the Heraldry of the British Isles – Continental Heraldry often operates by different rules, and the different nations on the Continent often have their own national variations as well.

The Shield (Escutcheon)

This is the basis of the Coat of Arms – which, after all, *was* meant as a battlefield recognition device. The shape of the shield varied over time, usually according to changes in the shape of *actual* shields used in combat, and might also vary on a regional basis.

*According to current Heraldic rules, **most** women who are entitled to a Coat of Arms must have them depicted on a **lozenge** (a **diamond shape**). Originally this was because they were not going to be personally present on a battlefield and a battlefield Shield device was, therefore, seen to be inappropriate.*

*Very few women in the medieval period would have been entitled to a Coat of Arms in any case (they would have had to have been the **only** heir to an estate with a Coat of Arms – even of collateral branches of the family, which was quite rare) – it is not clear when this particular rule was first implemented, but probably not before the late 14th century at the earliest.*



The Tinctures

The field of the Shield is *coloured*, perhaps with a solid field of a single colour at its very simplest. There are three types of tincture – *Metals*, *Colours* and *Furs*.

Metals. There are only two, *Argent*, or Silver, usually represented as White and *Or*, or Gold, usually represented as Yellow.

Colours. Only five are normally used, *Azure* (Blue), *Gules* (Red), *Purpure* (Purple), *Sable* (Black) and *Vert* (Green). Two others are quite rare – *Sanguine* or *Murrey* (a reddish colour between *Gules* and *Purpure*) and *Tenné* (an Orange-Yellow or Yellow-Brown)

Continental Colleges of Heraldry also use *Cendrée* (Ash), *Brunâtre* (Brown), *Bleu-céleste/Bleu de ciel* (Sky Blue), *Amaranth/Columbine* (Violet-Red or Pink) and *Carnation* (Flesh) but how ancient these are is unclear.

*For reasons of visibility, the accepted rule is that you should never put a colour directly **on** a colour or a metal directly **on** a metal.*

Furs. Originally only two, *Ermine* (the winter coat of the *Stoat/Weasel*, white with a black pattern represent-

ing the tip of its tail) and *Vair* (the winter coat of the *Red Squirrel*, blue alternating with white, representing the back and belly fur).

Variations on these were introduced as Heraldry become more complex, typically varying the colours of the fur pattern (so white with a black pattern, *Ermine* reversed, is *Ermines*, for example). Again, these variations probably date outside the period covered by OM[2].

The Divisions

These are different (accepted) ways in which the field can be divided into two or more parts. See some of the possibilities above.

The Ordinaries

These are the simplest, and oldest, variations on the divisions of a shield, based on geometric shapes, and, since they are actually separate *shapes* are allowed to ignore the colour-colour and metal-metal rule. See the examples on the previous page.

*Note that the dividing line between the two divisions or between an Ordinary and the Shield do **not** have to be a straight line – a multitude of variations are possible. Also note that there are complex ways in which these simple Divisions/Ordinaries can be used, and complex rules governing such use.*

The Charges

An animal *or other item* placed on a shield is a *Charge* – and the possibilities are theoretically endless. The English Royal Arms shown on the first page of this section and those shown in the large graphic below are examples of *Charges*.

Marshalling (Combining) Coats of Arms

Very early on there occurred the need (or desire) to make a public claim to an inheritance – and, originally, the two Coats of Arms were ***dimidiated***, divided down the centre with the dexter (right) side being that of the male line and the sinister (left) side that of the female, but this could lead to confusion if they matched up to form an existing Ordinary.

So, very quickly, the two *whole* Coats of Arms were placed, dexter/sinister as above, but compressed into the half-shield space, a process called ***impalement***.

Then, of course, by the 13th century, occasions arose where two already *impaled* Coats of Arms had to be combined – in which case they were ***quartered***, and this was extended to situations where even more *impaled* or *quartered* Coats of Arms were joined, and the rules as to where the various parts became increasingly complex.

Continental Variations

Dutch Heraldry

The system used by the inhabitants of the Low Countries was significantly different from that which was used in other places – the most obvious difference being that, *by law*, ***anyone*** could create and use their own Coat of Arms *as long as it did not copy another's.*

These 'Burgher Arms', however, seem to mostly date to the 16th century or later.

The other important difference was that the overall styles remained simpler and closer to the basic roots of the system rather than adopting all the flourishes and additions that other regional styles did.

Germanic & North European Heraldry

Germany, the Baltics and Scandinavia and surrounding areas do not, *in general*, change much between generations or branches of the same family, not even to show inheritance.

There are also differences in some of the common *Charges* used and a much greater use of *Crests* on top



of the Shield, often with *multiple Crests* representing different aspects of the family's background.

Eastern European Heraldry

Even though Coats of Arms are used, they are not so much individual or family based identifiers but territorial and clan based – with everyone in a village or military region having the same devices regardless of their family affiliation.

The designs of the Coats of Arms are also much simpler with relatively little use of Charges – or, at most, only one. Even then the Charges used are almost always based on clan or territorial symbology.

Livery

During the 14th century, as feudal states became more organised at all levels, it became increasingly common for noble landowners to provide their followers and servants with symbols denoting their loyalties.

These could either be specifically coloured or patterned clothing with or without a cloth badge of some sort (usually for *servants*, and considered as part of their wages) or it could be a cloth or metal badge of some sort for more important followers, or even supporters.

*The 'system', such as it was, really only **starts** to become important in the 14th century, and only **starts** to be an on-again, off-again, problem in that time frame as well ... the **serious** issues with the system don't kick in until the 15th century and, really kick into high gear with the **Wars of the Roses.***

Livery Badges

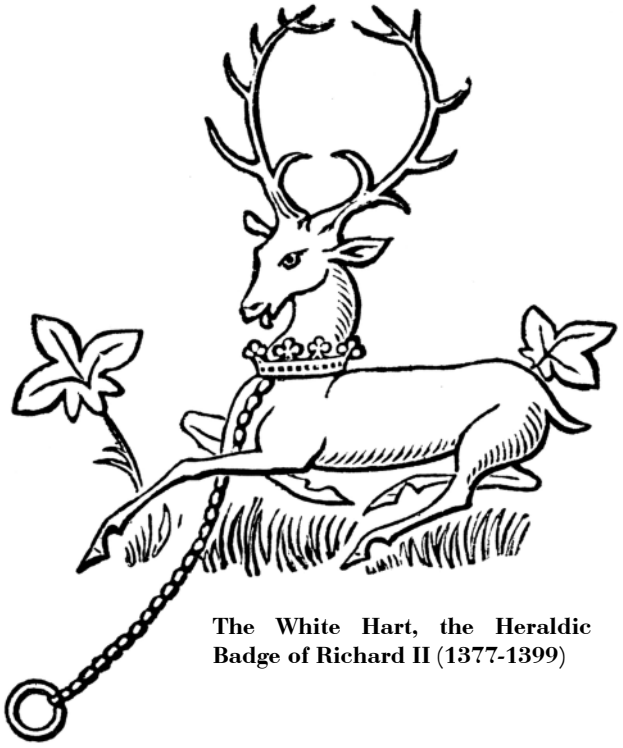
Badges were often based on some particular historical event or circumstance relating to the Noble House and might incorporate parts of another Noble Device to show traditional allegiance. Sometimes the device might be a visual pun on the Nobles' family name – and, uncommonly, they might be based on an element of the family's Coat of Arms.

The Badges themselves were mostly of lead or pewter, though for important followers or allies they might be made of more valuable materials.

Liveried Retainers

While there was generally no issue with household servants wearing some sign showing who their employer was, there were increasing problems with their use to show someone was a liveried *Retainer* – an armed *partisan* of the noble house in question as there was a tendency for such retainers to behave violently and illegally with a degree of impunity *because* of the connection.

The open wearing of such badges could be the trigger for physical attack or even rioting during times of political uncertainty or if they showed allegiance to personages currently in ill regard. By the last quarter of the 14th century there were attempts made to ban their use for *retainers* completely, though the attempts generally failed in short order.



The White Hart, the Heraldic Badge of Richard II (1377-1399)

Livery & Maintenance

*This is often confused with **Livery** or with **Liveried Retainers** (aka personal or Household troops) but is **not** what those things represent.*

*Livery & Maintenance was a system of mutual support between a greater Lord and those, usually the Knights and Gentry, who threw their lot in with him for mutual support. The deal was simple – the Lord would support their interests, in court cases, for example, or against government edicts or other decisions, using his greater resources, with the assistance of all of those with whom he had Livery & Maintenance agreements as well while, in return, those accepting his assistance (or potential assistance) would support **him** and his interests in the Courts; in local, regional or national society as well as in the Parliament ...*

*They **might** provide fighting men to support him if things came to a head – but they weren't, quite, the same as **Liveried Retainers** who were really hired men. **Livery & Maintenance** were **volunteers**.*

*As with Liveries in general, this only becomes a serious issue in the latter part of the 14th century and is one of the things that made the disputes that led to the **Wars of the Roses** so serious in the 15th century.*

REALITY CHECK

Right, as I said, all the preceding has been a bit of a miscellany ... but some general points can be made.

THE *SAME* . . . BUT *DIFFERENT*

Medieval people lived in a very different society than ours and their lives were constrained by a lack of the technologies we take for granted (and by the effects of those technologies) ... but there were still similarities.

People back in the day had much the same desires – love (or friendship), a job that would provide them with a living, security from crime or other sources of violence, the desire to have fun and be entertained – that we do, even though they had to achieve them within a different set of constraints.

*So, for example, **marriages** might have been arranged, even those amongst Peasants, based on securing property (as a source of **security**) for those involved – yet modern surveys consistently show that financial security is the **second** biggest factor, usually by far, involved in modern couples choosing whom to marry.*

*It's amazing that love really does **not** conquer all even today ... so we have a lot more in common with our ancestors than we normally understand.*

*The main difference here is that we have so much **more** of, well ... **everything**. If a marriage doesn't work out for one reason or another (or, if, say, the breadwinner dies or is otherwise removed from the scene) then it's **mostly** not going to result in complete destitution for one of the parties involved.*

Of course, both the good *and* bad side of human nature can be found in medieval people, just as they are in the modern day – and both the weaker governmental and law enforcement structures back then mean the dark side can get *way* out of hand, *mostly* far beyond what would most likely be possible today.



*So, yes, you **can** get pogroms, racially or religiously (or both) motivated violence aimed at **'the other'** in society just as can occur today ... but they tend to go out of control more quickly and spiral into mass violence and even killing. Gypsies, Heretics, Jews, Muslims in Christian areas (or Christians in Muslim areas), **Heretics** (according to **any** religion or sect) ... **foreigners** of any stripe (in an age when a 'foreigner' was someone from the next County or Province).*

*On the other hand, **racially** motivated violence or hatred doesn't seem to have been an issue – or not to the degree that it trumped religion or foreignness.*

*Regardless, when the mob gets **really** going, you **don't** want to be anywhere near them even if you're not their specific target ... and if you **are**, then they can be just as brutal as a modern mob that has gone crazy.*

Men and women still loved each other (or didn't), engaged in affairs and adultery ... and elevated those into an almost metaphysical art form, at least in theory, as compared to the grubbiness of the reality.

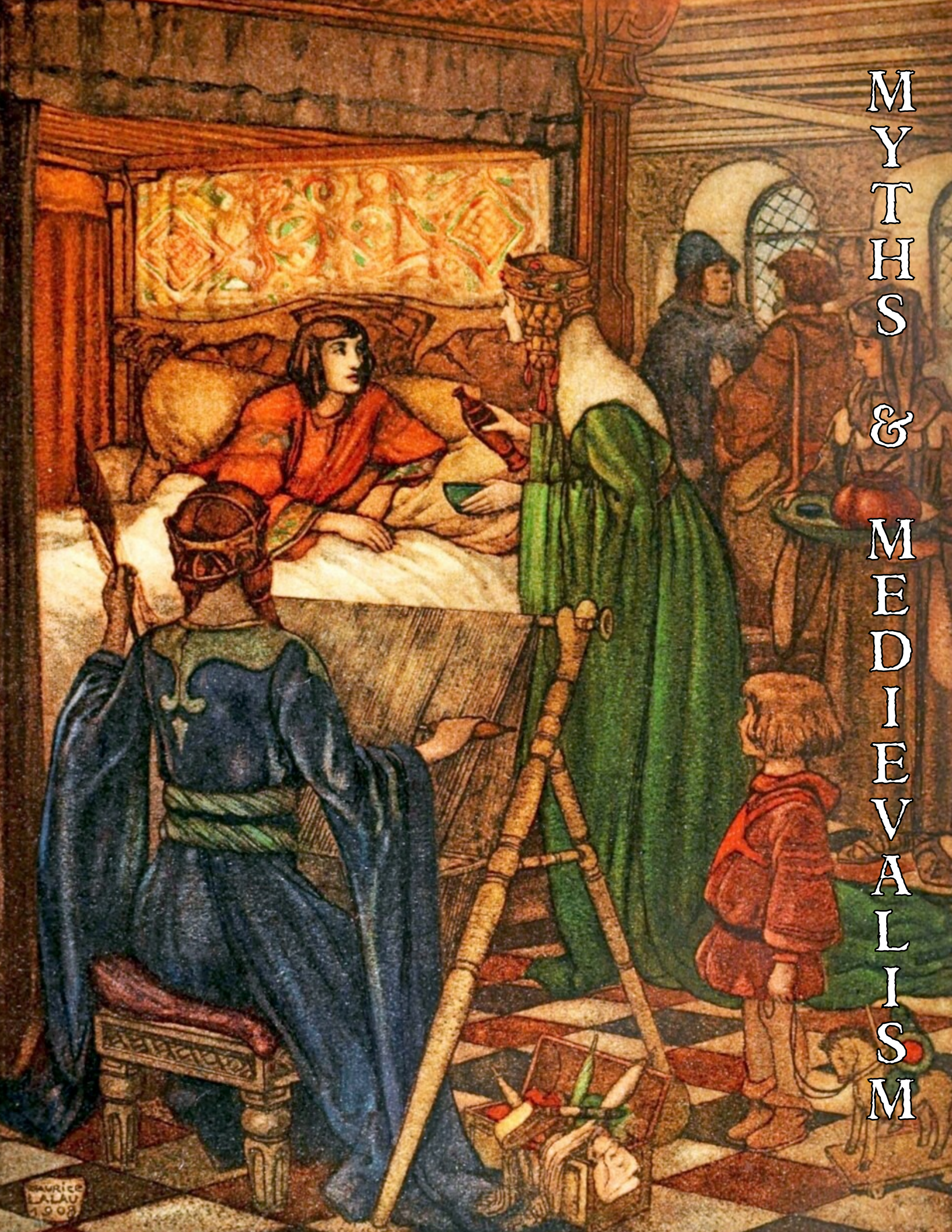
They also wanted to have fun, to sing, dance, play games or otherwise be entertained – though they had to rely on simpler, less technologically dependent, ways and means of doing so.

MEASUREMENTS

You've probably got the sense by now that what passed for 'governments' in the Middle Ages were either not very organised, did not have a strong span of control ... or both ... and it should come as no surprise that they were almost completely unable to control the weights and measures used throughout their realms.

The most successful administrations were those of the ***English***, who at least had some *pretentions* to having a 'national' system and the ***French,*** who were rather less successful at it. Other nations were a complete hotch-potch ...

Considering how tenaciously some pre-metric traditional measures have survived, even outside of the USA, it probably comes as not too big a surprise.


MYTHS & MEDIEVALISM
MAURICE LALAU 1908

Fantasy Medievalism

OM^2 is, of course, describing what Medieval Europe and the Mediterranean world were like – and you *could* quite easily set a Role Playing campaign *in* a time and place selected from the 10th-14th centuries within Europe. With some modifications (more on this later in this chapter and elsewhere) you could even create a *Fantasy* Role Playing campaign in something that looks a heck of a lot like Europe.

But there's no reason you *have* to do either of those things and still make use of lots of the material covered in this book – especially since most fantasy RPGs are, at least nominally, based on medieval European societies.

This chapter looks at some of the issues that are of interest and importance in both designing a medieval fantasy campaign from the get go and also how aspects of medievalism can be included in existing, published, fantasy role playing games and campaigns.

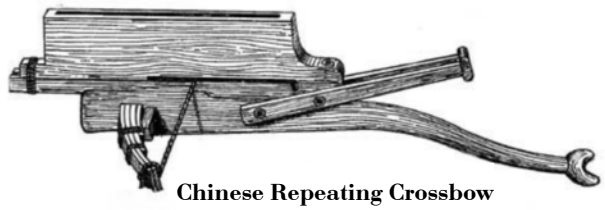
This section is intended to deal with some of the issues that should be considered by those itching to design their own campaigns or who wish to modify existing ones.

Fantasy States

One of the big problems that many role playing games have with their backgrounds is the unrealistic nature of the States that make up their society. Not all, mind, but a significant number.

The two biggest aspects of this problem is an over-reliance of two historically dubious tropes – *Static Empires* that last forever, unchanging, and the almost exact opposite, the *Snakepit*, a *Patchwork* of dozens, scores, or even *hundreds* of independent petty states permanently at each others throats ... neither of which have much claim to reality. Then there's the idea of a *City State* which, more often than not, they also handle *badly*, as some sort of independent princely or aristocratic setup rather than the more mundane reality of mostly mercantile oligarchies.

It doesn't really matter whether you're designing things from the ground up or if you're doing a retrofit to an already existing and/or published background – considering the following information will potentially enhance your gaming experience, especially with the addition of other medieval elements from OM^2.



Chinese Repeating Crossbow

Static aka *Universal* Empires

A common type in many role playing games is the 'static empire,' an all-encompassing, geographically compact, often socially and technologically static, mega-empire that dominates a whole region, continent, world, sector or sectors.

Such empires are, almost routinely, said to be *thousands* of years old and are, equally routinely, said to have remained unchanging in social structure and technology for that entire period – or, possibly, they may simply be the latest iteration of such a state to occupy part or all of the same geographical area.

There simply aren't *any* real world equivalents to, say, the *Ages of Man* in Tolkien's chronology of Middle Earth – the ***First Age***, lasts 590 years (not unreasonable); the ***Second Age***, however, lasting 3441 years and the ***Third Age***, lasting 3021 years?

*Tolkien has a largely socially and technologically static society lasting for pretty close to what has been the entirety of written history in **real life** (i.e. from the present back to approximately 5000 BC).*

I. REALLY. Don't. Think. So.

To understand *why* these are so dubious, let's have a look at some of the 'historical' states they are *supposed* to be based on.

China

Game Designers usually cite China as a proof that their universal empire is believable. Sadly, this example, and the whole idea, doesn't stack up against reality.

While Chinese civilisation is, indeed, very ancient, it is not the most ancient terrestrial civilisation and, in fact, did not manage to "unify" what we in modern times call "China" until AD 1644!

Even if one looks at the core areas, China was not really unified before the 6th century AD at the earliest.

*And the periods of unification rarely lasted more than 3-400 years, interspersed with long periods of disunity and division – and, while you **can** identify significant cultural and political trends that lasted from one such*



*period to another, there were a lot that **didn't** last, or which were later changes from earlier practises.*

*For example, **Confucianism** only really became **the** dominant philosophy under the Mongols **after** they conquered most of China in the late 13th century.*

Hardly a good example of a static society even on a socio-political level.

*And there's the unpalatable fact that those empires were anything **but** technologically static – in fact, until the 17th century or so China was **the** most technologically advanced society on the planet.*

*Also a glitch for those with the fixed idea that China was somehow **technologically** static and/or backward.*

Egypt

Then, if they're historically better read, they might trot out Ancient Egypt as an example – claiming that it lasted 'thousands of years.'

Er. No. The Old Kingdom (the Pyramid Builders) lasted only 400 years before collapsing. After over a century of chaos it was replaced by the Middle Kingdom – which lasted about 400 years as well before collapsing.

Another century of chaos and the New Kingdom (Valley of the Kings cum King Tut) lasts almost 500 years ... and collapses ... and that's it.

*While they **nominally** lasted 4-500 years, **reality** was they were in a state of increasing chaos and incipient collapse for a century or more before **actual** collapse. Nor did they remain socially or politically unchanged during the Kingdom periods, even before final collapse.*

*Also, while there's **some** continuity between the three main Kingdom periods, it's often over egged by popular historians who use the very **very** limited amount of evidence about, well, pretty much everything, to make case(s) for continuity. Even the written language changed – Heiroglyphics to Hieratic to Demotic.*

A case in point. Everyone knows that the Pyramids were built by the Pharoahs, right?

*Everyone is **wrong** – use of the term 'Pharaoh' (aka 'Great House') to designate the ruler of Egypt only starts in the New Kingdom (the first appearance being in the 18th Dynasty)! During the Pyramid Age the ruler was referred to as the **Nesu-bity** ('He of the Sedge & Bee' = 'Ruler of Upper & Lower Egypt') and this remained an important part of royal titulary in the New Kingdom.*

*Also consider that almost all of our 'detailed' knowledge of the everyday life of anyone other than those wealthy enough to have had a Pyramid, Valley of the Kings or other similar, **expensive**, tomb ... which is like using evidence from a meeting of the Bildebergers, the contents of Buckingham Palace or Trump's Mar-a-Lago) to determine what the lives of the working poor are/were like for the last 1000 years.*

Even in the technological arena Egypt was by no means static – the Old Kingdom was largely a Chalcolithic society (in this sense, one that used Stone and Copper tools) with a small admixture of Bronze; the Middle Kingdom was a Bronze Age society ... and it is only in the New Kingdom that Iron is adopted.

The Roman Empire

Another less often cited, example would be the Roman state, founded as a monarchy in 753 BC (according to legend), it managed to last until the mid 15th century (Constantinople fell to the Turks in AD 1453, but some outposts held out for another few decades).

Of course, it wouldn't have been classed as a "mega-empire" for most of that period. Certainly, it was confined to Italy proper until around the 3rd century BC, when it was still a Republic, and didn't really have a mega-empire until Augustus more or less formalised things under the Principate in the very last decades of the 1st century BC.

At its greatest extent it lasted for around 350 years before the western portion was progressively lost to barbarian incursions in the 4th and 5th centuries AD.

The eastern rump (often, incorrectly, called the Byzantine Empire) lasted for another 150 years before progressively losing territory to the expansion of Islam and other barbarians, but only really going downhill, and fast, from the 11th century.

*As you can see, 'Rome' wasn't static in either social or political areas – the **Kings** were replaced by the **Republic** (which became somewhat more democratic over time)*

*was replaced by the **Principate** (a thinly disguised hereditary dictatorship with a nominally late Republican overlay) which was replaced by the **Dominate** (a nominally hereditary rule, eventually under something like the 'Divine Right of Kings' especially after Christianity became the State Religion, which was in reality open to anyone who could successfully rebel).*

*While Rome was never as technologically advanced as China in **most** areas, it was far from backwards and, indeed, many of the scientific and technological advancements of what we call the Dark Ages and the Middle Ages were, directly or indirectly, laid on the foundations put down by the Romans.*

But there's a Static Empire already!

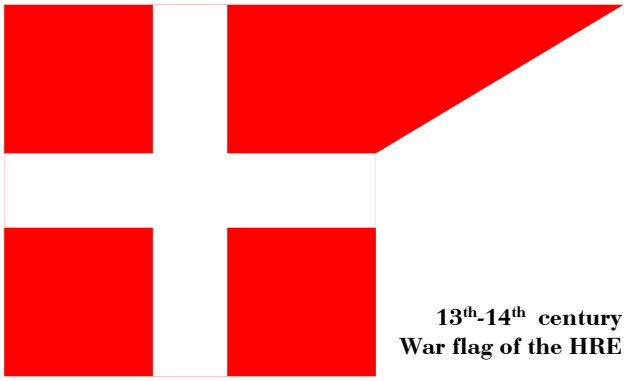
What about campaign backgrounds which already *have* a ***seemingly*** 'Static Empire?'

Well, Chinese, Egyptian and Roman rulers liked to put on a public show of continuity even when it was just that, a *show* ... a ***performance*** ... and nothing at all like the reality. So there's no reason at all that the ***supposedly*** 'static' Empire in your chosen campaign is going to be any more *real* when examined than those.

Depending on how detailed the existing background history of such a State is a little judicious rewriting will make it *much* more believable. Heck, you could even leave the 'stock' historical background as the ***official*** version ... and rewrite *any* part of it to suit your purposes!

*The difference(s) between the 'official' and 'actual' histories could even form an important part of the campaign background ... from how the older Dungeons or Ruins so loved by loot-obsessed players are laid out (or even whether they **officially** exist **at all**) and what treasure they contain through to having the 'current' unrest cum incipient rebellion by the repressed underclass who were the **original** rulers of the state by the ex-barbarian **current** overlords.*

*Just don't get carried away with the depth, or deliberateness, of the 'cover up' ... feudal governments never had that sort of reach or, more importantly, that sort of bureaucratic power (due to the lack of **enough** in the way of a literate class to draw bureaucrats from)!*



13th-14th century War flag of the HRE

*The PCs **will** be able to find out such things if they put their minds to it ... though, of course, the generally limited availability of **any** historical records due to the low levels of literacy and the fact books and manuscripts are hand-copied make **any** sort of research quite difficult enough **without** even minimal attempts to cover it up!*

Feudal Snakepits

The other ever popular trope is that of the Feudal (or other) *snakepit* of many *many* ***many*** independent petty principalities of various sizes, all perennially at each others throats. This seems, on the face of it, to have a *somewhat* better track record – many designers will cite Germany and Italy as being the obvious, but far from only, medieval examples.

But do the examples stack up? *Yes and no.*

Europe after the collapse of the Empire in the West and the barbarian invasions was, indeed, in a state of chaos – but the broad tribal divisions held, after a fashion, for a while.

The Franks broadly controlled France and much of Germany, the Goths controlled the Iberian Peninsula, the Lombards controlled much of Italy.

The problem was that none of those groups had the social or political structures needed to enable them to actual form those areas into a 'state ... which was what the whole Feudal System was intended to do. Again, after a fashion since it wasn't so much a system of government and administration as *lack* of a *system* of either ... an ad hoc way of running things when you had neither the money nor the skilled manpower to actually run things.

Still, the trend is plain to see over the course of the period covered in OM^2, *most* places become more organised, more centralised ... more state-*like*. France becomes something broadly recognisable *as* France, ditto Spain and Portugal, Sure, Italy and Germany remain divided, but even there the trend is toward a degree of consolidation.

Not so exemplary Examples

The Holy Roman Empire ('Neither Holy, nor Roman, nor an Empire') does actually bring a degree of order to the competing German and other States that made up its membership and, while much weaker than, say, France or Spain, was still more organised than a 'snakepit.'

*Italy was the main standout for a whole variety of reasons – one of the (if not **the**) main ones being that it was a stage for competing powers, the Papacy, the HRE, the Lombards and the Normans amongst others.*

*But you don't get **that** degree of balkanisation anywhere **else** in the Mediterranean region until **much** later.*

So, what's with ALL those Snakepits in RPGs?

I can't say that there are any *obvious* reasons – except the general ignorance (or *misunderstanding*) of actual historical situations (as noted above) that is 'normal' for Fantasy RPGs coupled with some vague (or not so vague) idea that it's somehow 'kewl.'

So, how to handle them?

For a start, the situation *won't* be static except in the most unusual of situations – *either* some outside force will come along and decide they're *as a whole* 'easy pickings' and simply pick them off, either one by one or sweep them up as a whole, depending on how *much* stronger the invaders are *or* they're in the marches between two strong(ish) states who play them off as catspaws against each other.

*In fact, the second is more likely if they've been in existence for more than a generation or so – and, of course, it really means they're not **really** snakepits, but under the thumb of a patron to a greater or lesser degree.*

Another other option is that they could actually be part of a large, but relatively weak, confederation and *mostly* go their own way on internal issues, though there's likely to be some central dispute resolution mechanism (a confederate court or assembly).

However the constituent mini-states are *really* likely object to the existence of a strong central *army* – only if they face an *immediate* foreign will deign to allow the central authorities to raise and deploy a combined force to deal with any foreign threat.

Regardless, they are not likely to be *anything* much at all like the way they are presented in some FRPG backgrounds!

Cities: *Oligarchies* or *Princedoms*?

Historically there *were* a number of independent City States in the medieval world but the idea is almost always presented ... *poorly* ... in Fantasy RPGs.

For a start, there was really only ***one*** 'type' of City State – which had a single large *mercantile* city which had become, along with its pre-eminent residents, so wealthy and powerful that it came to replace or overthrow any aristocratic rule (or rulers) and replace it/them with a *Mercantile Oligarchy*.

*This was the situation in many of the independent Cities in Italy, especially northern Italy, and even though some of them might **seem** to have been run by aristocratic family dynasties, the reality was (even for, say, the Medici) that they ruled because they controlled the oligarchic structures of local government, usually through their dominance in wealth (banking, commerce and trade).*



Flanders (now more or less part of Belgium) was also dominated by cities that were run by Mercantile Oligarchies, though they were more democratic within their oligarchic limits rather than being effectively dominated by one family in an almost aristocratic fashion as was the case in Northern Italian City States.

However, it was not uncommon to find *seemingly* similar independent cities, but which differed in that they had an = *aristocratic* ruler ... depending on their location and wealth these *either* transformed *into* Cities run by *Mercantile Oligarchies* (overthrowing or otherwise replacing the previous aristocratic ruler) *or* they were backward enough (economically speaking) to retain their independent status.

The Rus

*The Republic of Novgorod (but not the Kievan Rus) were a mercantile-democratic state **of a sort**, but there were strong clerical and autocratic elements in their form of government that make them unusual enough to form their own sub-category.*

In any case, there is much debate and confusion about the exact balance of power within the Republic and between the Commons, the Church and the Aristocracy that make it difficult to certainly state one way or another as to whether they were a Princedom with some aspects of a mercantile state or a Mercantile state with some aspects of a Princedom.

Civic Nobles & Knights

The interesting thing about most City States, certainly the Italian ones, wasn't that there were *no* Nobles, or that the Nobles were *completely* excluded from power, but that they were simply not the dominant force in the city's government.

They generally had a role to play insofar as they possessed any wealth, but since they mostly hewed to the aristocratic disdain for 'trade' they were generally completely outshone by the urban merchant class who had all the money.

They tended to form a significant part of any armies raised by the City, mostly as Cavalry, but, again, were outnumbered by the Civic Levies that the money rich City authorities could raise ... and, indeed, the wealthier City Magnates would often equip *themselves*

and/or *members of their household* as Cavalry in significant numbers, so even there the rural nobility were often equalled or at least not able to dominate.

Rural or City Living?

Because their developed economies made access to all sorts of 'luxury' goods and services available, often at vastly cheaper prices than in previous times, large numbers of rural nobles either abandoned the idea of living *permanently* on their rural estates and set up households in the City itself *or* they divided their time between rural and civic households, usually with more time spent in the latter than the former because of the greater facilities available 'in town.'

Government & Power

The governmental structures of City States varied – there was often some sort of Civic Council (often a 'Senate' or similar in the Roman style) which might be elected (either regularly, semi-regularly or even 'for life') by the Guilds and those citizens who met a property qualification or which might be self-selected by (probably Byzantine) manoeuvering, usually for life if so.

The Council might rule directly, with one or more of their number selected as Mayor or they might select, or be dominated by, the most powerful (not always the wealthiest) of the members (sometimes representing a clique of councillors, other times using their dominance of 'the people') who might rule almost as if an aristocratic Prince and in whose family power might descend in an almost hereditary fashion.

In some places, the rural nobility and even the rural gentry were excluded from any significant political or military office holding and might not even have any ***direct*** *say in the selection of the Council, Mayor or other Civic Officials ...* ***if*** *they owned only rural properties.*

In general, City States were not really ruled by anything ***democratic*** *in the modern sense. Even in the very early period when Guilds might have dominated, non-Guild members had no real say, direct or otherwise.*

City States in RPGs

Some RPGs will, of course, have City States – and some of these will be actual *Mercantile City States* (that is, States dominated by a single City where the main source of wealth is trade and commerce). How can you handle these and maintain a semblance of reality?



Flag of the Venetian Republic

Mercantile Princedoms

If they're *actually* a mercantile state (i.e. one in which trade rather than landownership is the primary source of wealth for the majority of the population) ruled by a hereditary 'Prince' (an aristocrat, whatever the actual title) *and* have a substantial rural hinterland, then they are really only another feudal domain.

Though the ruler may *pretend* to independent status vis-a-vis the surrounding or nearby feudal state, they are in a precarious position and will always be subject to intrigues originating both from the feudal regime(s) wishing to gain control or fealty or from the internal oligarchic forces wanting to gain control *from* the aristocrat for *themselves*. Possibly *both at the same time!*

They are certainly not in a stable situation and, despite 'accepted' histories, the reality is that they are unlikely to have held the current 'independent' status for very long ... perhaps only a century, probably less. And it is unlikely they will maintain it for long, either.

Hereditary Oligarchs

If they're ruled by a self-selected pseudo-hereditary family of oligarchs within an overall oligarchic structure then they're similar to a *Mercantile Princedom* in most ways – with almost identical external and internal problems.

The main difference will be on what, exactly, they base their power – an alliance with 'the people,' favouring them over the power of other would-be oligarchs, the aristocracy, the Guilds or a shifting series of alliances with some of the lesser oligarchic or aristocratic families, favouring them over the competition.

Like Mercantile Princedoms, despite the official 'party line,' Hereditary Oligarchies are rarely long-lived – generally lasting no longer than the former.

Depending on local circumstances they may either be specifically and deliberately targetted by surrounding feudal states *or* they may be treated as, more or less, equals ... but equals suitable for incorporation into or conquest by said state.

Oligarchic or Guild Republics

These might not be *actual* Republics, but represent those City States where no one family, aristocratic or oligarchic, dominated the state structures.

They are usually ruled by a Council of wealthy oligarchs or of the heads of the wealthier Guilds and at have at least some sort of nod, often only pro-forma, towards the populace (or Guild Members).

They are characterised by continually shifting alliances within the governing bodies though, in some cases, forceful individuals do manage to gain a degree



of dominance through using these alliances to gain repeated election and re-election to the key Offices of the state ... though such offices are rarely all powerful and their holders need to be continually playing off the factions in order to maintain their position and avoid being overthrown by a 'popular' uprising (manipulated, of course, by their opponents).

Such City States are, more often than not, seen as an active threat by surrounding or nearby Feudal states and are regularly and actively targetted by them for conquest (perhaps *re*-conquest) and/or annexation.

As a result, they tend to be the shortest lived of all the different types, rarely lasting longer than a couple of generations.

Stated Limitations

So, what were some of the key limitations that had an impact on the reality of State formation *and survival* in the pre modern period? There *must* be some, right?

Transport & Communications

The more successful states of any type were normally *either* geographically compact *or* geographically circumscribed ... or, perhaps, *both*. Communications and transport technology available had an important impact on their viability.

*Geographically **compact** means that the state doesn't have easily isolated areas around its borders – or isn't divided into physically isolated parts (by a sea, or a wide, navigable, river ... especially if the latter cannot be crossed by extant bridge-building technology). France, Spain and Portugal are all examples of geographically compact medieval states on a 'national' level.*

*Geographically **circumscribed** means that the state has well defined, easily defensible borders or some other significant defensive advantage that results from the inherent geography of the state. Rivers, Mountain Ranges, large lakes, Swamps and Marsh areas – all these can (and **did**) form excellent border lines that were hard for an attacking army to move through, especially if the defenders were able to mount any sort of defence.*

Medieval France

*France was generally blessed with good borders to the south, south east and east (mountains) and to the west and north west (the Atlantic and North Sea), but not always to the north and north east. Spain had a good border all around **except** to the south, against the Muslims.*

Medieval England

England had good borders in that it is on an island – but Wales (until it was conquered) and Scotland were perennial problems.

*In fact, England **in the period covered** had serious problems with **not** being geographically compact – her mainland (continental, mainly French) possessions were continually at risk as there was this significant water feature separating them from what became the core territory of the British Isles.*

Sure, they gave it a good effort, but lost them all eventually (Calais, the last mainland possession, was lost to the French in 1558 and was finally recognised as a permanent loss under the Treaty of Troyes in 1564).

The Expansionist Phase

While states, especially those which eventually became geographically expansive, were in their *expansionist* phase they had an edge – their opponents had to react to *them*, and the slow speed of transport and communications meant the opposition there was at a disadvantage – that is, their actions were at the *sum* of the expansionist state's action time *plus* their own reaction time – as long as the expanding State remained *mostly* active they tended to retain this advantage.

Some states only managed to do this for the span of a single ruler's reign – or, possibly, the reigns of several succeeding rulers. Very few managed to do it over many centuries, even if only in fits and starts. Rome is an obvious example – but even she reached geographical limits beyond which she proved incapable of expanding while also maintaining her existing territories.

Once expansionist states settle into a consolidation phase and go largely on the defensive, they increasingly find their *opponents* gaining the advantages of

getting inside their reaction cycle. Size, and the potential strength of their presumably much larger and better organised armed forces, *was* an advantage, but not an overwhelming one, especially as their enemies became more numerous, more persistent, and more sophisticated militarily, socially and politically (though not necessarily all three to equal levels).

Of course, this could take centuries to be a lethal problem – as was the case with Rome.

TO BIG TO SUCCEED?

*Their very size of a State could be an added problem. The Chinese, for example, even though geographically concentrated, found moving armies over **land** simply wasn't fast enough, especially when being reactive.*

*The Roman Empire at least had the advantage of the centrally placed Mediterranean Sea which provided speedy and cheap internal lines of communication, though even that was not enough **in the long run**.*

THE CUTTING EDGE

The other problem faced by all pre-gunpowder states is simply that the military technology available doesn't offer anyone a major technological edge. *A Sword is a Sword is a Sword, after all.*

*And a Bow is a Bow is a Bow ... etc. That is, individual weapon type quirks weren't **significantly** great enough to make an **overall** difference.*

The usual advantage that a civilised state had against its less civilised (or simply less organised) opponents was mostly better training, logistical support and overall strategy. The problem is that the "edge" these factors provided *simply weren't all **that** large*, probably no more than 20-30% overall.

*Early Medieval states hardly qualify as being 'civilised' in the wider sense, for reasons discussed in some detail in **De Re Militari** ... and, though they improve as time goes on, they never **quite** manage the same level of trained competence as Roman Imperial forces in their heyday (and don't, not till **well** after the AD 1400 cutoff point for OM[2]).*



BYZANTINE MILITARY

The late East Roman military had their moments, but never managed to really bring themselves back to the same level of professionalism that typified the pre-376 AD Roman military.

The Battle of Adrianople (AD 376) gutted the professional core of the East Roman Army, crippling it for several generations as it was now lacking the long service professionals to train the replacements to similar standards ... and much of the old professional skill base was lost in the reorganisation and reconstruction.

The plagues that hit the East during Justinian's reign gutted attempts to reconquer the West and the Muslim Arab expansion of the 7th century and the progressive lost of the remaining Near Eastern territories caused further damage ...

Culminating in a second gutting of the East Roman forces by the Seljuks at the Battle of Manzikert in 1071 and the loss of a chunk of Anatolia, confirmed in the equally disastrous defeat of Myriokephalon (1176), also to the Seljuks.

So civilised forces could be overwhelmed, fairly easily if they weren't united in the face of an equal or greater barbarian force, or even if the barbarian forces simply had a numerical edge.

*Mostly 'barbarians' were defeated because their 'civilised' opponents strategised to put them at a disadvantage, minimising any numerical superiority on the battlefield ... as often than not, it worked. When it **didn't**, it was disastrous ... potentially **hugely** disastrous.*

TECHNOLOGICAL STASIS

Pretty much *all* fantasy world designers seem to make the assumption that their societies are even more static in a technological sense than they are in a social one – huge periods of their "backstory" are technologically unchanging or, at best, *vastly* slower to change than was the case in the only example we know of ...

THE REAL WORLD

Taking the development of agriculture as a start point (c. 8500 BC in the Fertile Crescent) it took another 2500-3000 years to develop kiln fired pottery and, soon thereafter, metallurgy in the form of Bronze. Then it took another 2000 years to develop Iron.

But were the civilisations of the *Neolithic* and *Chalcolithic* (Copper Age) technologically static? Obviously not, they did develop kiln fired pottery and metallurgy, eventually ... even proto-writing).

How about the *Bronze age*? Again, the answer has to be no – they developed (eventually) iron and in the meantime they developed or perfected many other things.

Slow & Irregular = stasis?

Of course, while these societies weren't static, they were not exactly speedy in their rate of technological development.

The reasons for this are fairly simple and equally obvious – these early civilisations were *tiny* in terms of overall population, and the proportion of their populace that had the leisure time and physical/mental capital to develop new and improved things was an even tinier percentage of the overall numbers.

So you *can* have a slow pace of technological change. From stone age hunter gatherer to space age astronaut in eight and half millennia is slow by some standards of measurement. But having "eras" of several *thousands* of years where technology barely changes, if it changes at all, well, no, that's not possible based on what we know about how societies work and develop.

How slow is slow?

*Does this mean **all** civilisations will advance smoothly and rapidly up the technology tree? Not at all!*

In fact, it is common, historically, for societies to reject or abandon technological changes that, with benefit of perfect 20:20 hindsight we see as being a major, and usually costly, mistake. Some societies have made just such decisions and, when they do, they often find that the long term consequences are devastating.

For example, China had a huge lead over Europe in both ironworking and gunpowder weapons – and blew it. They abandoned or marginalised both technologies – and when european explorers finally rolled around to China, it was europe that had the advantage, and China is only just catching up now.

Technology on the margins . . .

For the most part the core territories of Medieval Europe remained at a similar technological level during the medieval period, 1000-1400 AD.

There *were* regional differences – the Muslim dominated Middle East held a significant scientific advantage in the early part of the period, but the Christian states of the Medieval West gradually caught up and were starting to overtake in what would prove to be key areas by the end of the 14th century.

The states that *didn't* keep up, technologically, were on the margins of Europe, mostly in the Baltics (what would eventually become modern Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia) or between Germany, Poland and the territories of the Rus. What happened to them?

Easy. They were largely gobbled up by those States that *did* adopt the new technologies ... and were in the process of having chunks of their territory annexed throughout the period.



There were also states that *couldn't* keep up – either because they were too small *or* too poor (or both) to support the latest technologies, and these were all over the map (literally) in 1000 AD, but almost entirely gone by 1400 AD.

They were gobbled up as well ... again, by the states that *could* afford (or support) advancing technologies.

The important thing to note here is that technologically backward states *don't survive for long in the company of states with more advanced technology*.

*In Fantasy RPG terms it means that, while you may well find obsolete tech, weapons especially, on sale for personal use, real cheap, any state party that is limited to such **won't** last for much longer. This **really** becomes an issue as gunpowder weapons become more common in the 13th and 14th centuries ... and it continues to get worse on an accelerating basis.*

And it won't just be military technology, either ... states with advanced agricultural technology will be able to keep bigger (and more experienced) forces in the field longer than those still relying on old fashioned methods.

Social Stasis

Another common "trick" game designers base parts of their fantasy (and other) worlds on is the old "nothing changes because of social conservatism" argument.

Some sort of rigid caste system or exclusionary and limiting social structure is assumed to be the all-encompassing answer to keeping a society unchanging over many hundreds, and, possibly, many thousands, of years. The problem is that there is ***no*** historical basis for this. ***None***.

Rigid caste or social structures are not all *that* rigid *when examined closely*, there are always loopholes.

Able men (and, in some places and times, women) are always able to circumvent the class or caste strictures and raise themselves, or their children, up to a higher social or caste level. Indeed, whole clans or tribes might be able to do exactly the same.

Indian Castes - Not Always as Advertised

***India** is usually used as a "prime" example of social stasis because of its **supposedly** all encompassing caste system ... but, in reality, the historical situation was **nothing** like the 'received wisdom' most people have assumed through cultural osmosis.*

*Whole **clans** (and the **medieval** caste system was based on classifying **clans** within the overall structure) were able to move up the caste ladder by simply arrogating the status of the higher caste to themselves.*

*Of course, the clan had to be in a position to make such a jump "stick," which meant that they had to have acquired the social and/or political or economic wherewithal to empower such a move. While such changes could take a generation or more, they **did** happen (even observably in 'recent' history under the **Raj**) and were relatively common. It was **possible** for a clan's **effective** social status/caste to be raised within the course of a person's normal lifetime ... just rare.*

*The other option clans used to get around the Hindu caste strictures was to abandon Hinduism and adopt Islam, which is, of course, much more egalitarian. In fact, for many clans, this was one of the prime reasons **for** adopting Islam, its more flexible and egalitarian social structure.*

In western societies, of course, even at their most restrictive, there was *always* a means of advancement for those with wealth or ability. ***Always***.

At best, the social "haves" will be fighting a losing rearguard action aimed at limiting social mobility not at stopping it. This normally means that, while a lower class social climber will probably not be accepted (or not fully accepted), their kids ... or their grandkids are most likely to be accepted.

Static Races

That applies *even to fantasy races*. There is no reason to believe that any of the so-called nonhuman races are any more likely to adhere to anything more workable and permanent than human societies can.

*In any case, most of the so-called 'nonhumans; (or 'demi-humans', or whatever they're referred to 'in game') in fantasy games are capable of interbreeding with humans and producing viable and fertile offspring. Which means they are as human as, well, **humans**.*



This, in turn, means that any claims that they are so vastly different that they would adhere to basic human norms of psychology and behaviour is *extremely* unlikely if not completely impossible.

Even magic must have rules!

Costs & Prices

Another illegitimate trick that many designers use is to arbitrarily link the price of goods with their game impact rather than the actual cost of production – and they often get away with it because players and game masters don't know enough history to understand what has been done.

The classic example of this "trick" is the massive over-pricing of certain missile weapons in common fantasy games.

A common problem

In one extremely popular FRPG, an English Longbow sells for 75 gold pieces while a standard Longsword sells for 15 gp.

Come again? A simple chunk of seasoned wood and some animal gut bowstring costs as much as 4 pounds of iron/steel? *Given what we know about the cost of iron and steel in the medieval world!*

*In the real world the likely price of the Longbow and the Longsword would be reversed – more than reversed. And that ignores the massive overpricing of rating them in **gold** pieces.*

The basis of this problem (and most like it) is a desire to 'balance' the 'game,' the sad news is that life is unbalanced.

The most lethal or effective weapons, or most useful technology is not always dearer than less lethal or effective weapons and more expensive technology.

Longbow Tactics

In this particular instance, however, the designers have got it even more wrong than it appears on the face of it. The thing is, the English Longbow has such a fearsome reputation as it does not for its use as an individual weapon targetted at a specific individual target, but as an area effect weapon tagetted at an area target.

*The average Englishman spent his Sundays practising with his Bow **not** to hit the classic circular bullseye target (though they **did** do some of that ... for recreation), but in formation with other archers under a Master Archer who would call elevation and deflection to the group for a simultaneous release at an area.*

This is the way the Longbow was used at the classic battles against the French. It was not a case of an individual archer picking off specific French knights that he aimed at at all.

In other words, it wasn't the weapon that was lethal as much as the training of the wielder and the tactical employment of it. As an individual point target weapon?

Well, it was OK, but hitting a target at any real range was a lot harder than in Hollywood Robin Hood movies. You were probably better off with a sword and shield, and if you could afford it, with a shield and armour as well.

At least that was the case on a one to one basis between combatants of no particular outstanding skill or ability.

The Roman Legions

Similarly, a Roman Legionary armed with a sword (either short Gladius or the long Spatha) was probably no better as a swordsman than a medieval knight. He might even have been less well trained. As an individual.

*The thing is, the Roman Legionary did **not** fight as an individual, and a formation of Roman Legionaries would certainly outmatch a similar number of Knights (as long as they were on foot, and fighting with sword and shield).*

Prohibition & Class Restrictions

It is true that some societies, from time to time and place to place, *attempted* to restrict access to some weapons for some or all of their citizens – generally with a notable lack of success.

The *Knight's Sword* of medieval Europe was *supposedly* restricted to Knights. But there really wasn't all that much advantage in a Knight's sword compared to a standard sword, so what was the point?

*Sure, various countries, including England, passed **Sumptuary Laws** attempting to lay out what each social class was **allowed** to buy or own in the way of clothing and other goods ... but the fact that they had to repeatedly pass new versions every so often is a good indication of exactly how ineffective the laws were. They were roundly flouted and widely ignored.*

The double swords of the Samurai were likewise restricted in Japan, but non-samurai could use swords, and non-samurai armies could and did win battles – and the samurai tried to stack the decks, but even that wasn't a long term solution ...

Likewise, the Japanese attempted to legislate firearms out of existence, but the rest of the world wasn't interested in this legal theory and eventually reality forced its way on them regardless.

The Pope attempted to ban the use of the Crossbow



against all but the Infidel, and failed miserably. The weapon was just too good to ignore.

Other societies and civilisations have tried to limit the spread of certain types of goods by sumptuary laws, laws limiting how much certain social classes can spend on such things as clothing, weapons, transport and the like, and these are universally ignored.

Worse, they almost always lead to corruption as those with the money, but not the status, bribe those in charge of enforcing the law!

Think ***Prohibition*** as it was in the US, a massive and complete failure that made a whole lot of social problems *worse* (think Organised Crime).

Why?

The sort of fiddling that you will usually encounter is an attempt to deal with the fact that, as this whole monograph has, hopefully, been showing, human societies are not static, and their technology continues to progress, even if (by some standards) slowly.

Which is silly – the changes in question should be part of the role playing experience, there is no reason to 'protect' players from it!

Let them take advantage of it (or be taken advantage of by it!) – which is rarely going to be cut and dried, just like it wasn't in real life.

So, be careful with costs and prices. Don't change them arbitrarily from what they were.

Magic & Medievalism

In a very real sense, *magic is simply another form of technology* and will affect a fantasy world in similar ways to the ways in which the real world was affected by scientific or technological developments – and that applies to a medieval world as well as any other.

By definition, for any game world that exists, magic has to have some internally consistent logic. It cannot simply be arbitrary and inconsistent – if it were, then the game would be unplayable because of that very fact.

Some RPGs presume, or claim, that, somehow, the existence of Magic will prevent *technology* advancing – which, based on everything that's been presented in this book (and the experience of history in general) is obviously *rubbish*.

There are basically four possibilities as to what will happen –

- Magic is easily quantifiable, reproducible and anyone can learn it.

  *Either Magic replaces or complements technology depending on the specific situation. Magic almost certainly speeds up the development of some technologies and of technological development in general **unless** some aspect of either (or both) makes them incompatible, in which case there will be competition between the two for dominance in that specific area probably based on economics and/or ease of use.*

  For example, why bother conjuring a fire elemental to start the cookfire when flint and steel is quicker? On the other hand, that fire elemental is a damn sight better than a charcoal furnace with up-and-down bellows for smelting iron ore.

  Swings and roundabouts will be the order of the day.



  *If Magic effects can be imbued into items, then you are likely to get combinations of magic and technology – Archers using Magic Arrows for extra damage, or Magic Bows for extra range, for example, but when gunpowder weapons come along, similar spells can enhance **their** damage and range.*

- Magic is easily quantifiable, reproducible but only a select few can learn it as it requires some innate inborn quality.

  *This is a more constrained version of the above. Technology will tend to dominate simply because of the shortage factor of qualified magical practitioners – but since magic is easy for them to learn and use, it will be an important supplement **to** technology.*

  *So, for example, while a Catalan Forge will be worthwhile if you can't get a Fire Mage to work with you, if you **can** it may be an economic advantage. Or you could use an Air Mage to provide a **continuous** blast of air through your forge or furnace without going to the expense of the hydraulics needed for the typical Catalan Forge. And both the Fire and Air Mages can do many other things besides.*

  If items can be imbued with a magical effect (as above), combinations of magic and technology will become possible, but be less common because of the relatively lesser number of trained magic users.

- Magic is not easily quantifiable (if it is at all), is hard to reproduce but can be attempted by anyone.

  *Technology will dominate for the simple reason that **anyone** can use it and it is quantifiable and easy (or eas**ier**) to reproduce.*

  *Magic, if it can be imbued into items, will be available for rare, expensive, and closely guarded combinations of magic and technology because of the difficulties involved in casting it, but somewhat more common because so many people **can** attempt to cast spells.*

- Magic is not easily quantifiable, is hard to reproduce and can only be attempted by those with some innate, inborn, quality.

  *Again, technology will dominate, even more so than in the above case. If magic can be imbued into items, then they will be even rarer, much more expensive and heavily guarded either in combination with technology or by themselves – **artifacts**, in a sense, because of the rarity of mages.*

MagiTech . . .

The obvious pattern of *all* human historical advancement has been to develop *technological* means of improving humanity's control of the environment and to make our lives easier. The existence of magic in a world does not in any way change this – as noted above.

In Warfare

If magic *is* amenable to some form of logical development and control, then magic will *either* replace much of the technological advances that took place in our world *or* it will supplement them.

If magic is *not* amenable to some form of logical development and control, then there will be a continued demand for the development of technology to do those things that magic simply cannot do (or cannot reliably do).

If magical ability *isn't* widespread enough there will *either* be an economic incentive to find and train more mages (if this is possible at all) *or* to supplement this magical shortfall with mundane technology.

Strategic & Operational Effects

Medieval battles were often 'by appointment' as much as anything else – armies generally blundered all over the countryside either looking for or trying to dodge their opponents while Scouts (and scouting) were almost non-existent and short range only.

So Field battles came about because one side was defending a location or marching to attack or relieve a location *or* because both sides tacitly worked toward arriving at more or less the same place.

Magic does away with this – ***Scrying*** spells allow Strategic level scouting (and ***Fly*** or ***Levitate*** Spells allow Operational and Tactical level as well) and, of course, there are likely to be *counter*-Scrying spells as well (and you could have aerial duels between Flying and/or levitating Mages).

Telepathy and other *communication* spells mean co-ordination of widely separated forces becomes not only *possible*, but, potentially *much* easier.

Teleport and ***Fast Move*** type spells mean that at least small, 'elite' (or what passes for such), forces can be moved all over the map – perhaps to key places. The *Fast Move* variety can probably be developed into sub-variants that allow forces to do *Forced Marches* without requiring rest *days*, possibly even without requiring rest *periods*.

*Depending on the parameters, **Teleport** or **Flying** Spells, especially combined with **Invisibility** or **Night Vision** Spells, would allow the creation of Special Ops assassination or penetration teams capable of taking out enemy commanders, seizing and opening Postern (or even Main) gates of defended localities and sabotaging supplies ... including, explosively, **gunpowder** supplies.*



Magic & Magically-assisted Weapons

This is the big, obvious, flashy area that everyone will think of first – though it's *often* of secondary importance except at a tactical level.

As most of you have probably noticed, even if it hasn't really registered, there are virtually no *pure magic* weapons or weapon systems of any major importance on *battlefields* in most RPGs ... even if they may be of variable importance in *small scale* or *individual combat*.

Think for a moment. Do you have more Archers than you have Mages with Magic Missile spells (or anyone with a Magic Missile Wand)? Do your armies rely on various types of Body Armour and Shields for protection against enemy attacks than on Mages casting mass 'Protection' spells of some sort?

Yes, of course, you'll have a small number of those Archers with magickal Arrows or Bows, and a small number of fighters wearing Rings of Protection or otherwise Magickal Armour – but they're normally only slightly more common than the rare Battlemage.

Why?

Generally, because soldiers and common weapons are cheaper and, in mass (heck, even *tactically*) as, or even more, effective than most magickal attacks.

The Economics of the Bow

You've probably noticed the, historically and economically ludicrous fact that, in virtually all Fantasy RPGs Bows cost more than swords.

A chunk of wood that takes no more than some part time work for a maximum of two weeks (self bows) vs a weapon made of metal that takes hundreds of full time hours to mine the ore, smelt it, hammer the iron out of the bloom, steel the iron, heat and fold and hammer and repeat over and over to make.

There's a reason why the English Longbow (and other similar Bows all over the medieval world) were the weapon of the peasantry and swords the weapon of the Gentry and Nobility. Cost.

The reason why the costs are so ludicrously skewed in FRP games is, if you think about it, an attempt to make Mages more survivable ... otherwise they'd be skewered by low level fighters using historical weapons at ranges their spells simply cannot reach!

With magick, however, there is an inevitability of progress in combat just as in other areas.

Battering down the Walls

For example, if magic *cannot* batter down castle walls, then there will still be a demand for technological means to do just that.

Catapults will lead to a better understanding of mathematics and physics and, since these are logical and consistent, will lead to the primacy of such technological means of battering down castle walls.

Heck, magickally enhanced Bombards, their barrels enchanted to resist catastrophic explosions common in iron, would make gunpowder weapon technology advance far faster than it did historically!

Of course, even for magic that is *not* powerful, consistent, or logical enough to do the job by itself, the use of magically enhanced or created missiles in mundane catapults is a certainty.

*Noble leaders and warriors aren't going to be interested in excuses, they will want any effective way of taking that enemy castle. **Any** way.*



As we have seen, things don't just stand still for hundreds, let alone thousands or tens of thousands of years! Those walls are coming down – either through magic or technology (or, possibly, a combination).

Logistics, Logistics and Logistics

As the saying goes, there are only three important things in warfare – Logistics, Logistics and Logistics. And magick will have a major effect on each of those three areas!

Create food/water spells will allow armies (small ones, at the very least) will become *much* more mobile than most pre-modern armies could be and will, likewise, allow them to campaign during winter when lack of fodder for horses was a major problem, historically.

Such spells will also have an impact on the ability of castles and cities to withstand sieges, or of fleets to stay at sea.

In a reverse look, summoning ***Plagues of Locusts*** *(or **Rats** or whatever)* to attack the enemy supplies is a counter-option, as are ***Poison*** or ***Foul Water*** or ***Food*** spells ... and the inevitable counter-spells.

*If one side is **really** nasty, then these (and other) spells could be targetted at the enemy population, ruining crops and causing, if not mass starvation, then at least weakening the basically agricultural economy. Of course that would, at least in theory, be entirely against the medieval concept of Chivalry (which, as noted previously, wasn't always adhered to anyway).*

In Agriculture

All those ***Plant Growth*** or ***Crop Enhancement*** (and even ***Weather Control***) spells that seem to exist in most magic systems will have a greater importance than might seem obvious.

Preservation *and **Protection** spells also help prevent food from going off – so you could have year round availability of fruit, for example, or the ability to store food without it being attacked and eaten by bugs and rodents while in storage meaning more of a year's crop will be available for **human** consumption.*

Many other spells could also have a positive effect on the production, processing and storage of foodstuffs.

If Food/Agriculture enhancing spells *are* possible to develop and enhance they will provide a magical but *consistent* means of enhancing crop yield.

*Even if magic is helpful, it **doesn't** mean that people won't pursue better techniques and technology – it is*

*more likely that **combinations** of both magic and technological changes will be developed.*

If these sorts of spells *aren't* amenable to development, or don't exist, then there will be the same sort of impetus there was *historically* – to develop better farming techniques and technology.

And, of course, if the spells don't exist at all or can't be improved, then technological and technical solutions *not* involving magic will still be vital and will still be developed.

Better government through Farming

*These changes mean it is unlikely that such societies could fall into the grip of social and technological stasis for any length of time. Enhanced crop yields mean better health, a stronger economy with more specialists and a larger population. These changes, in turn, mean technological **or** magical advancement will likely be **faster**.*

Coincidentally, such a change means that the likelihood of a continued existence of an unsophisticated, decentralised, basically feudal politico-military structure for a society is very low.

With increased revenues and larger populations, the trend towards a centralised bureaucratic state would seem to be inevitable.

In Health

The existence of ***Healing*** and ***Cure Disease*** spells also means an inevitable trend to develop them into a form capable of wide use throughout the populace *if* that is possible – and this will have an major impact on infant mortality and population growth.

*If these spells are **not** amenable to enhancement or mass scale usage, then the historical trends in developing a more scientific approach to health care will.*

Faster population growth (enhanced by magickally improved Farming techniques) will have a feedback effect on the development of magickal and mundane technology – more hands, more researchers (academic *and* practical) so more chances for discovering and implementing new ideas and advances.

The availability of improved, magickal, means for the combating of disease has implications beyond mere population growth – it makes a society more or less immune to the sort of die backs that weakened the Late Roman Empire.

*Of course, it would also, along with improved nutrition, prevent the outbreak of Pandemics such as the Black Death – and, consequentially, make the social mobility that that **particular** die back caused in medieval Europe less likely ... possibly delaying social developments, but*



the other impacts of magick such as the potential for anyone to be born with the ability, or to learn and excel at it, will probably outweigh such.

*In fact it is **very** likely the increased rate of population growth plus the enhanced carrying capacity of the land because of better farming practises will mean that social changes will occur sooner, though in different ways, as technological advances make social changes irresistable and inevitable.*

In fact, the interpenetration of geographical disease pools (the ultimate source of most, if not all, historical pandemics) will likely have a much reduced impact in a magickal world than in the real world.

The existence of spells of ***Regeneration*** and ***Repair*** will also have an impact, though it will likely be more limited, so there will be fewer physical disabilities amongst the populace as a result.

Fewer cripples, fewer blind or deaf people. Overall, magically enhanced medical practitioners may be able to utilise magickal (or combined) technology in some ways more advanced than what exists today!

In Industry

The existence of ***Detect Gold/Silver/Gems*** spells that make prospecting for precious materials can presumably be extended to detecting more mundane raw materials such as Iron, Copper, Tin, Lead and much more and will both increase their *availability* while decreasing their *cost*. Spells such as ***Create Air*** will allow deeper mines and, as ***Breathe Water***, even allow mining under the water table without pumping mines dry.

*The digging of Adits (tunnels to drain water from mines by gravity) will become easy and economic, making mines that would normally be below the water table and, impossible to **economically** dewater with medieval technology potentially economic with the cost of generations of labourious digging removed from the equation.*

Variant ***Convert Gas*** spells that allow explosive gases to be transformed to non explosive gases, or which

provide warnings about the buildup of explosive gases will also be helpful. Of course, the availability of inherently flameless ***Permanent Light*** spells coupled with *Create Air* make the issue of explosions considerably less of a problem *anyway*.

Transmute spells such as ***Rock to Mud*** make mining, even with pre-gunpowder technology, vastly easier ... or, alternately, using alternating ***Fireball*** and ***Cold*** spells will crack up mine walls in a much faster and more convenient way than the building of open fires and dousing the hot rockface with water of more conventional techniques.

The same spells make separation of the ore from the rock matrix much easier as well – the *rock* being converted to mud but the *ore* being left. This would be applicable, at the very least, for those metals that appear in a metallic form in nature – gold, obviously, but also copper and tin.

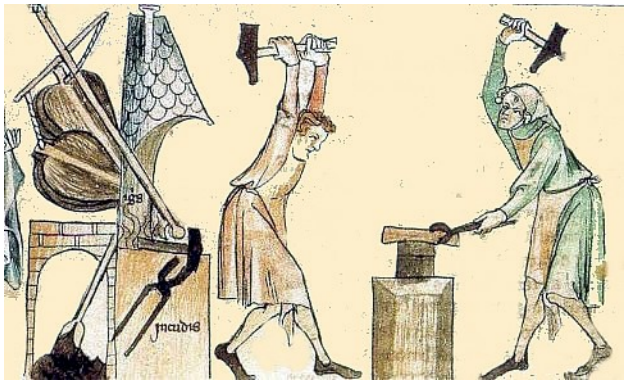
Purify spells could also be developed to work on other than food and water – *Purify* <fill in the blank> *Ore* would be obviously helpful! No need for nasty environmental pollutants in the smelting process, and probably not even a need for huge quantities of fuel for those processes, either.

Where heat is required, the use of ***Summoned*** and chained ***Elementals*** would be a useful and economic means of supply for industrial operations.

Steam engines, for example, could be a combination of a fire and water elemental in a magically warded structure, or wind turbines could be enclosed and powered by wind elementals in a similar structure.

Magically enhanced materials will lead to given architectural and engineering feats being possible much earlier. The use of magical automata will also have an important impact on the manufacturing of key items and the construction of key buildings, reducing their cost and making them more available as a result.

This will almost certainly reduce prices across the board, though, perhaps, not as massively as the mundane industrial revolution of our world did.



In Summary

In short, magic will enhance and accelerate mundane technological change unless is its completely unpredictable and totally illogical. In which case it will be replaced with (or will, at best, be supplemented by) technology at about the same rate of change that occurred in the real world.


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Maurice LALAU 1909

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Bibliography

As I've probably noted several times already, the material presented in this book is often going to contradict *'everyone knows'* information or *'received wisdom'* facts about the Middle Ages ... so you'll undoubtedly come across material herein that you may believe (even 'know') is *wrong*.

Chances are that it ***isn't*** *wrong* – that you've bouncing off one of those 'everyone knows' fact*oids* that are, at best, misleading or, at worst, downright wrong.

Sometimes they're sufficiently entrenched that I've gone into some detail about them and the issues involved (Horse Collars, Stirrups, Saddles, Nakedness and Underwear for example) but in other cases I've made a judgement call that they are less likely to have a high level of traction ...

Am I always right? I'd hope so. In some cases, maybe not – but in most it will come down to a matter of *interpretation*. I've generally gone with the one that seems to have the most traction in academic circles – which, if you *do* do some research, you might find yourself disagreeing with ... and feel free to do so!

The Internet

There are, despite my note of caution (see below, *A Note on Using the Internet*), a number of sites I have found particularly useful in my research and have proved reliable. These are three of the best –

Florilegium Urbanum (**Stephen Alsford, 2001-2015**) – The creator holds BA (Hons), M.Phil Degrees in History, a Masters Degree in Library & Information Science Degrees in History and was a Researcher at the Canadian Museum of Civilisation.

The website *'provide[s] a considered selection of primary source texts illustrative of various aspects of medieval urban life, and to present those texts in modern English'* as well as essays on various aspects of general medieval town and rural life. Highly recommended.

http://users.trytel.com/~tristan/towns/florilegium/flor00.html

Fordham University, Internet History Sourcebooks Project (**2001?**) – This site actually consists of 'Sourcebooks' (collections of documents and links) on Ancient, Medieval, Modern and Byzantine History as well as many other areas. The documents cover a wide variety of topics and sub-topics and most are in the public domain. They offer a richer insight into many of the claims or assertions made in other texts.

Be warned there *may* be dead links or the sites to which links point may have reorganised their directories so the link *appears* broken when all that may be required is a quick search in the new website. It has been indifferently maintained and infrequently updated since 2001, but is still extremely useful.

https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/Halsall/index.asp

Regia Anglorum, Early Medieval Reenactment & Living History Society (**1986-2017**) – The group behind this website has been actively re-enacting medieval history, mainly 10th-13th centuries, for over 30 years and has a permanent site with reconstructed buldings, several reconstructions of early boats and ships and more.

The website covers many topics relating to ordinary life during the period and is well supported by historical evidence cleverly supplemented by careful practical efforts at working out how people back in the day made or did things. Highly recommended for its practical take on medieval life.

https://regia.org/index.php

A Note on Using the Internet

As I've had to explain, rather forcefully, to my students over the years, the Internet is *not* a universally great source for inherently accurate research ... ***unless you know almost as much about what you're researching as the author of the web-page you're using***.

Yes. *That even means **Wikipedia**.*

*My senior (History) students used to go goggle-eyed when I showed them how to change entries to show one of the key figures in the course were related to **Mickey Mouse** ... they were touchingly trusting and quite naïve!*

*Sure, said changes **usually** only lasted 24 hours (or less), but it made them stop and think ... **anyone** can modify (or create) a Web Page and yet have **no** qualifications and do **no** real research (and a **lot** of people do just that). Wikipedia is relatively well policed – but other sites often do not have such mechanisms.*

*Books, on the other hand, generally have to be at least cursorily fact checked (though 'coffee table' and generalist works often repeat errors **known** to be errors to the specialist academic community for many decades **after** they're known to **be** errors) ...*

*So, if you **do** use the Internet, either use it to expand or confirm research you've **already** done, or confirm what*

you find by researching it further in a book ... don't simply take it at face value.

How to determine the exceptions

Yes, of course, there *are* exceptions ... web pages created under the auspices or by the staff of nationally or internationally recognised museums or universities tend to be *much* more reliable ... also, if a website provides a reasonably extensive *bibliography* (including links to known reliable websites) it *may* also be reliable depending on the nature of the sources (*check* to see that the sources actually confirm what the website *says* they say ... some creators, not many, are quite, *flexible*, about such matters).

Books

The books listed and described below are a selection of those I have found to either be particularly helpful or particularly readable, at various times over the last 20 years (and more), and which have helped form the contents of this book.

Frances & Joseph Gies

Cathedral, Forge, and Waterwheel: Technology & Invention in the Middle Ages (**Frances & Joseph Gies, 1994**) – A good, reasonably comprehensive and not too dated starting survey on the issue of technological development during the period 500-1400 as well as an overview of the technology actually available. Well written and quite readable.

Life in a Medieval Castle (**Joseph & Frances Gies, 1974**) – Deals with the English castle of Chepstow, on the Welsh border, and describes the life of its owners and occupants.

Life in a Medieval City (**Joseph & Frances Gies, 1969**) – Describes the French town of Troyes, capital of the County of Champagne, and the site of an important medieval cloth fair.

Life in a Medieval Village (**Frances & Joseph Gies, 1990**) **–** Covers life in the Medieval English village of Elton, based on surviving documentary sources.

The above books provide a fair and readable account of their topic areas based on the documentary evidence available ***at the time of publication*** *though, in some cases, they repeat information now (for certain) known to* ***probably*** *be incorrect and the* ***interpretation*** *they place on the information provided is often arguable, has since sometimes been questioned or even discarded by the academic community or is misleading.*

They are good enough even today to be in the 'General' or 'Background Reading' section of many University Survey or Introductory Courses on Medieval History – just don't take them as the be-all and end-all of writings on the topic!

General Works (Older)

Daily Life in Portugal in the Late Middle Ages (**A H De Oliveira Marques, 1971**) – Looks at medieval Portugal in some detail, which, though dated, is still a valuable examination ... and it is also one of the more comprehensive generalist works on the topic in English by a recognised scholar in the field. A good starting point for further research.

Medieval Scandinavia, From Conversion tro Reformation, 800-1500 (**Birgit & Peter Sawyer, 1993**) – A good basic survey *in English* of the intricacies of medieval Scandinavia, Denmark, Sweden and Norway, and the often quite significant differences between Scandinavian and Western European society.

Medieval Travellers: The Rich and the Restless (**Margaret Wade Labarge, Phoenix Paperbacks, 1982**) – Using surviving documents the author examines medieval travel. From pilgrims to princes, from ambassadors to crusaders, many many more people travelled far longer distances than we might suspect – despite the fact that travelling was neither speedy, particularly comfortable, or entirely safe.

This book gives an interesting account of this important aspect of a real life – one that will be of considerable interest to both players and player characters as, eventually, some sort of "road trip."

The Middle Ages, Everyday Life in Medieval Europe (**Jeffrey L Singman, 1999**)**.** This book does much to live up to the title and, indeed, specifically covers Medieval France as much as Medieval England, which is rather unusual. Even though it is an older work, the author has been involved in re-enactment and historical recreation work and much of the material is based on that ... and so it is much more reliable than its age would suggest.

General Works (Recent)

1215, The Year of Magna Carta (**Danny Danziger & John Dillingham, 2003**) – Examines English Society as it was in the decades around the momentous year of 1215. Therefore it is more focussed than most of the other works and gives a good idea of late 12th and early 13th century life – just don't assume that *that* picture applies unchanged to the whole of the 12th or 13th centuries. Remember, *things* ***change***.

Obviously it is a generalist work, but it is reasonably comprehensive and quite readable.

Daily Life in the Medieval Islamic World (**James E Lindsay, 2005**) – A considerable cut above the usual coffee table 'Day in the Life' books ... this is aa generalist work but with a serious academic bent and is an excellent *starting place* for anyone interested in the medieval Middle East or in the *opposition* faced by the Crusaders and the Crusader Kingdoms.

Everyday Life in Medieval London, From the Anglo-Saxons to the Tudors (**Toni Mount, 2014**). A good general survey of London in the period AD 500-1500 with much use of recent archaeological evidence as well as recent interpretation of older (and more recently available) documentary sources.

Focussed on England's largest town, it provides an interesting take on medieval life since most books tend to focus on the rural populations.

The Time Traveller's Guide to Medieval England, A Handbook for Visitors to the 14th Century (**Ian Mortimer, 2008**) – A rather more detailed than normal generalist work, and one which is surprisingly up-to-date with the latest archaeological evidence and the most recent modern interpretations of both the archaeology and documents.

Even though it only covers a single century of the period OM² deals with, it is detailed enough to be highly recommended. If you only access one source on the 14th century, this would be the best to read and understand.

Life in the Middle Ages: Scenes from the Town and Countryside of Medieval England (**Martyn Whittock, 2009**) – A more up–to-date generalist work than those by the Gies', with more reference to both older and more recently available source material as well as more modern interpretation and weighting of that material.

As the title suggests, it covers all of England and so is more generalist, and deals with the 10th-15th centuries, so gives a good overview of the period covered by this book and a bit beyond for good measure.

The Middle Ages Unlocked, A Guide to Life in Medieval England, 1050-1300 (**Gillian Polack & Katrin Kania, 2015**) – Even though aimed at a general audience, this is an excellent survey by an archaeologist and a historian of the bulk of the period covered in **OM²** and has an excellent handle on the latest archaeological and documentary evidence and the interpretation of same.

*Along with the **Time Traveller's Guide to Medieval England** (**Mortimer**), if you have only limited time for or access to information about the period then this work will provide more than you're ever likely to know about the 11th-13th centuries in a readable format.*

Summer of Blood, The Peasant's Revolt of 1381 (**Dan Jones, 2009**) – Covers the causes and course of the Peasant's Revolt in a readable yet accurate fashion – more of a popular history than *England Arise!* (See the next page) and possibly more accessible to those wanting something simpler.

*The map of London as it was during the reign of Richard II which forms the endpapers is **particularly** useful for those who wish to stage a 'historical' game and use medieval London as a background.*

Terry Jones' Medieval Lives (**Terry Jones & Alan Ereira, 2004**) – The book that accompanied the eponymous TV series, it looks at the lives of eight different *types* of medieval people – Peasants, Minstrels, Outlaws, Monks, Philosophers, Knights, Damsels and Kings – and does a reasonably good job of it for a generalist work. It is also reasonably up-to-date as far as the interpretation of social history goes – and will severely jar conclusions readers may have drawn from older, less up to date, 'coffee table' books.

Generalist Archaeological Works

Britain in the Middle Ages, An Archaeological History (**Francis Pryor, 2006**) – This book covers Britain in the period from 650-1550, from well before to well after the period **OM²** covers, but gives an invaluable overview of some of the more recent archaeological evidence.

The evidence presented often debunks or invalidates material provided still in recent 'coffee table' books and which may still be regarded as 'received wisdom' by the general public, and even by those who have only done general survey courses on the period.

Specialist Works

A History of Christianity, The First Three Thousand Years (**Diarmaid MacCulloch, 2009**) – A massive tome nominally 'accompanying' the eponymous BBC TV series this is, in fact, quite a detailed overview of exactly what it says.

To understand both Roman and Orthodox Catholicism (and the heresies relating to each) you can't go wrong in reading the relevant chapters in the relevant sections. If you wish to get an idea as to just how complex medieval religious matters were, even if you don't wish to have Christianity as 'the' (or even 'a') religion in your game, it is a good read – human beings are quite capable of fighting to the bitter end (and not just with words!) over religious matters, even in a religion based on the idea of peace and love.

*Part III (**Vanishing Futures: East & South, 451-1500**) looks at the impact of Islam; Part IV (**The Unpredictable Rise of Rome, 300-1500**) looks at the rise of Christianity in the west and its split from Orthodoxy; Part V (**Orthodoxy: The Imperial Faith, 451-1800**) looks at the development of Eastern Christianity through to its split with Roman Catholicism and its relationships with Islam) as well as its dominance in Muscovy; Part VI (**Western Christianity Dismembered, 1300-1800**) looks at the period up to the rise of the Protestant Churches and how that changed the face of Christianity in the West – though only parts of the first chapter are relevant to the period covered by OM².*

Before the Industrial Revolution, European Society and Economy 1000-1700 (Carlo M Cipolla, updated 1993 edition) – An older work, by an acknowledged expert in the field of Medieval studies, this is *serious* academic work, but offers some information that would take a lot of digging to find elsewhere.

For the truly serious who want to do additional research. It's moderately heavy going.

How to Plan a Crusade, Reason & Religious War in the High Middle Ages (Christopher Tyerman, 2015) – Literally as it says, it covers, in quite considerable detail, the step by step process of justifying, issuing a call for, organising the logistics, and the actual operational running of a Crusade richly detailed with more historical information than you could ever want

It also goes a fair bit of the way to explain just how huge a mess they were, organisationally, and why they ultimately all failed.

*I highly recommend that you read it in conjunction with **God's War, A New History of the Crusades** (2006) by the same author to see what a complete cock-up the whole of the European crusading period actually was.*

The Economic and Social History of Later Medieval Europe, 1000-1500 (Steven A Epstein, 2009) – A serious academic work and a bit dry, but it also offers a reasonably accessible survey of the major themes in economic and social history during the period.

Probably more detail than most people care to know – but worthwhile for those who want to do their own research.

England, Arise, The People, the King and the Great Revolt of 1381 (Juliet Barker, 2014) – A detailed examination of the one time England came closest to real revolution *before* the English Civil War – and a close examination of the social, political and economic fissures and pressures in medieval English society that brought the nation so close to the brink.

Uses contemporary sources but interprets them quite differently to older works. I am not entirely convinced the author isn't reading modern sensibilities and motivations where they don't actually exist, but she presents a well researched argument that is well worth reading – and then you can make your own mind up!

The Great Famine, Northern Europe in the Early 14th Century (William Chester Gordon, 1996) – This is a more academically aligned work than *The Third Horseman* (see below) covering the same period/event, the *Great Famine* of 1315-1322. Still readable, though – and still an accurate depiction of the terrifying and horrific events caused by climate change (or climate instability) and covering the whole region.

Spanish Society, 1400-1600 (Teofilo F Ruiz, 2001) – A serious academic work, but covers the area in fair detail and it is certainly more than enough to get you started on further research into medieval Spain which was *quite* different from Europe north of the Pyrenees.

*Interesting to use in conjunction with **Daily Life in Late Medieval Portugal** (Oliviera Marques).*

The Third Horseman, A Story of Weather, War and the Famine that History Forgot (William Rosen, 2014) – The story of the *Great Famine* and related disasters which occurred between 1315-1322 which killed 1/8th of Europe's population and which signified the climate change(s) that heralded (or caused?) the *Little Ice Age* and which, in turn, laid the foundations for the *Black Death's* overwhelming outbreak(s) twenty odd years later.

*If you want a fairly terrifying look at exactly how close to the bone Medieval European society was living and just how little it took to tip it over the edge, this is a book you can't afford **not** to read.*

Warfare in the Middle Ages (Philippe Contamine, translated by Michael Jones, 1984) – This is pretty heavy going, and very much an academic work. Some of the conclusions that have been drawn about the sources as they existed and were understood back in the day have been superseded, but it is especially good, if a difficult read, on matters relating to the theory of warfare and chivalry in the period.

*Have a look at this only if you are **really** interested in the theoretical side of things.*

Outside the Period, Use with Care

A Brief History of the Tudor Age (Jasper Ridley, Robinson, 2002) – Despite the title, this is more a social survey than a dry history book and deals with the nuts and bolts of day to day life for people of the Tudor period in some detail.

How to be a Tudor, A Dawn to Dusk Guide to Everyday Life (Ruth Goodman, 2015). By the author of several TV based re-enactment books, this this is a generalist work which includes much of the most recent results from historical re-enactment efforts aimed at recreating the odds and sods that simply aren't mentioned in the available source material ... or which are not adequately explained.

*Even though both are, technically, outside the 15th century milieux that OM² covers, they are well worth reading as they offer insights into aspects of the Medieval and Renaissance world that are not readily available elsewhere ... and there is much information that would probably not have changed much from the period OM² **does** cover.*

Osprey Books

Osprey has been publishing a series of popular illustrated books on military and historical topics for many years. Though they are quite short, typically only 64 pages, they are heavily illustrated, both with photos and historically accurate drawings, and the information included is a good starting survey to whatever particular topic they cover.

Men-at-Arms. *Armies of the Crusades (#75); Saladin & the Saracens (#171); Hungary & the Fall of Eastern Europe, 1000-1568* (#195); *El Cid and the Reconquista, 1050-1492 (#200).*

Elite. *The Crusades (#19); European Medieval Tactics #1, The Fall and Rise of Cavalry 450-1260 (#185); European Medieval Tactics #2, New Infantry, New Weapons, 1260-1500 (#189).*

Fortress. *Fortifications in Wessex, 800-1066 (#14), The Walls of Constantinople, 324-1453 (#25); Cathar Castles, Fortresses of the Albigensian Crusade, 1209-1300 (#55); Crusader Castles in Cyprus, Greece and the Aegean, 1191-1571 (#59); The Castles of Edward I in Wales, 1277-1307 (#64)*

Medieval Warfare (Terence Wise, 1976). This is actually a hardcover book, one of the first published by Osprey, and, in its 256 pages, covers the basics of the stated topic pretty well. Most of its facts regarding and interpretations regarding arms, armour and tactics have stood the test of time – and it is an easy read to boot.

Additionally, the following books, though not *'Ospreys'*, are also quite useful –

Medieval Military Costume, Recreated in Colour Photographs (Europa Militaire Special #8, Gerry Embleton, 2001) – As the title suggests, it is filled with excellent colour photos (160 in all, in 96 glossy pages) of Military (and some Civilian) costuming for the period from ~1000-1500 as recreated by various re-enactment groups. Highly recommended.

The Medieval Fighting Man: Costume & Equipment 800-1500 (Europa Militaria Special #18, Jens Hill & Jonas Freiberg, 2013) – Another detailed photographic and textual survey of Medieval military equipment and costume, also 96 glossy photo filled pages, and also based on recreations by various re-enactment groups. Highly recommended.

Role Playing Games & Supplements

Dark Albion, The Rose War: Grim Fantasy England in the 15th Century (RPG Pundit, 2015) – Well, it got the *fantasy* bit in the title right, at least. It's basically an OSR/d20 system game system which is OK as far as it goes. The background purports to be based on 15th century England (just after the end of the period covered by OM^2) – and, if you close one eye and squint with the other, it sorta almost looks like it might.

Except when you start reading the background. The History is fine as far as it is based on actual history – the fantasy elements (the French, 'Froggies,' are *actual **Frogs*** [well, they're *ruled* by such, anyway], for example) might suit you, but seem silly to me.

The Gazetteer of England and of the Continent is actually rather useful, though, of course, there are significant differences resulting from the fantasy element in some of the regions and places.

The section on ***Law & Justice*** is, however, a mish-mash of correct for period information and completely *wrong* and anachronistic stuff (no, *Trial by Combat* was long obsolete and *Sumptuary Laws* were not seriously enforced or, indeed, enforce*able*).

The ***Currency & Equipment*** section is *terrible* ... a decimal based system is used, 200 pennies (mostly of copper and *called* 'Copper Pennies') to the £Pound and 10 pennies to the silver Shilling. The prices vary from the historically reasonable to the outright fantasy – the usual idiocy of having a chunk of wood (a Longbow) costing more (£1) than a Longsword (6d) ... ludicrous. Other prices are all over the place as well.

All in all, it's not a *complete* waste of money, and the Gazetteer is useful, but I can't say it's worth the money (certainly not if you have to pay for shipping to the ends of the earth as I had to). If you see it on the shelves of your local Game Store, *maybe* – but thumb through it first!

King Arthur Pendragon (Greg Stafford) – Available in many editions, the most recent being **5.2** (2010), this is an interesting game ... it is loosely based on ***Le Morte D'Arthur*** (the retelling, in print, of Mallory's original, c. 1460, by Caxton, 1485) which is, in turn, based on a whole corpus of chivalric 'romances' about Arthur which bear not the slightest resemblance to the historical reality of 5th-6th century Arthur, and not much more to the reality of the medieval setting of the retelling.

So the background is a romantic fantasy, but has some elements of reality – but be careful. The economy and price lists, however, are the most accurate ones in any RPG that purports to be medieval that I have ever seen ... given that it really only deals with characters of Knightly status or better. Use with care.

A fun game for the mood it allows the GM to create for his players, but not at all historical. Still, it's a good investment if you have some spare money.

Robin Hood, A Giant Outlaw Campaign (Graham Staplehurst, 1987) – Covers the period from the

Battle of Hastings (1066) to the aftermath of Magna Carta (1216). It is based on ICE's *Rolemaster* system and has all its flaws and benefits. The history is, well, *historical* – and the section on ***Life in Norman England*** is quite well done for the most part and, in fact, there's very little that I'd disagree with or find to be too anachronistic.

The ***Gazeteer*** has some excellent information and a (small) number of useful maps and the two Campaign setups that are provided are quite well done.

The major shortcoming is that it requires the Rolemaster core books to run – *and* that there is no economic system or equipment list provided.

And Rolemaster use(d)/uses a ridiculous coinage system that bears no relationship to any existing during the medieval period (heck, it doesn't bear any relationship to any coinage system that has ***ever*** *existed) and, as is all too common, the prices for weapons and equipment are ludicrous and bear not the slightest resemblance to historical reality in many cases.*

Other useful Works

EABA Stuff! (**Greg Porter, BTRC, 2006**) – *Stuff!* is a set of design rules, covering, amongst other things, weapons, vehicles and "gadgets" ... which is all very nice, but not all that relevant, surely?

What *Stuff!* **Also** provides is a chapter on ***Civilisations*** which allows you to design anything from a planet spanning high tech mega-culture to a manorial estate, small village, or medieval town.

How much farmland is required to support the specific population; how many specialists (from blacksmiths to cobblers, goldsmiths to mages) can be found there; how big, physically speaking, the town is and more. *Highly* recommended.

Farm, Forge and Steam – A Nuts and Bolts Guide to Civilisations (**Phillip McGregor, PGD, 2005**) – What can I say? This is a shameless commercial plug. *FFnS* deals with the "big picture" *behind* the Medieval world of *Orbis Mundi*. It explains *why* it was the way it was – the limitations that prevented it from being different than it was ... or, equally, the factors that *could* have allowed it to be different, and what the consequences of any such changes might have been.

Some of the material specific to the medieval period has been included in OM², but there's still a lot of stuff that isn't and which explains the background to the background as well as some of the things that changed and, in doing so, moved technology and society on towards modernity.