

Keywords!

Fallow – Empty

Crop Rotation – farming system used on the manor

Cruck-House – typical peasant's cottage

Manor – an area of land owned by a lord

Village life

The land that was owned by the lord was called the manor. A manor consisted of a village with land around it. The villeins lived in the village, which was surrounded by three large fields. Each field was divided into long strips. A villein would farm strips in each of the fields. This made sure that everyone had a share of the good land and the bad land. The strips were divided by mounds of earth or by rocks.

Each year, the villeins changed the crops they grew in each field. This was called crop rotation. Have a look at the table below to see how it worked.

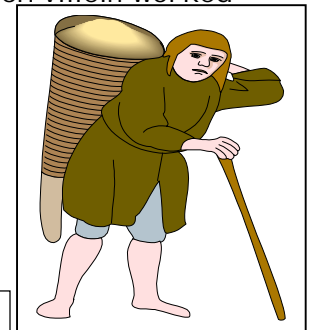
Source 1: Crop Rotation

YEAR	NORTH FIELD	WEST FIELD	SOUTH FIELD
1	Fallow	Barley	Wheat
2	Barley	Wheat	Fallow
3	Wheat	Fallow	Barley

Every year, one field was left fallow, or empty, so that the soil could get its goodness back.

Strip farming meant that villeins had to work together. A whole field would be sown and harvested, and each villein worked closely with his neighbour to get his work done.

The other land around the village was also important. Villeins collected wood from the woodland, their animals grazed on the common land, fish could be collected from the river, which was also used for washing and cooking. The land around the village supplied the villeins with nuts, berries and mushrooms.



By Miss M. Lavelle
www.SchoolHistory.co.uk

Villeins lived on the manor in cruck-houses. Their house would have a small garden, where vegetables like carrots and cabbages could be grown. The villeins usually built their own house, and had very few possessions. They would have some animals like pigs, sheep, cows and chickens, but other than their day-to-day tools and equipment, they owned very little.



Source 2: A Cruck-house

Source 3: A Villein's possessions.

- Animals
- Cruck-house
- Hay, to wear as socks, to cover the floor & to use as mattress
- A chest
- A few stools
- Table
- One change of clothes
- A few small blankets

A Villein's diet was very different to ours. It did not change very much year in, year out. Have a look at source 4 below.

Try and spot similarities and differences to your own diet.

Sometimes a villein might have meat, usually bacon because pigs were easy to keep. There were no fridges, so meat was salted or smoked to keep it fresh. Poor families often went hungry. One child in every three would die before its first birthday, because there was not enough food

Source 4: A Villein's Daily Diet

6 a.m – Breakfast. Coarse black bread, with ale to drink.
10 a.m – Dinner. Coarse black bread, eggs and cheese, with ale to drink.
4 p.m – Supper. Coarse black bread, pottage (a thick soup of vegetables and sometimes meat), with ale to drink.

TASKS

1. On your own copy of the Medieval manor map, add the following labels: Woodland, River, Road. Then, draw and label a church, tithe barn, water mill and cottages. Finally, add colour.

2. a) Copy and complete the paragraph:
A Village had _____ fields around it. Each field was divided into _____, and each strip was farmed by a _____. Different crops were grown in each field, and every year the Villeins changed the crops they grew. This is called _____. One field was always left _____ so that the soil could get its goodness back.
b) Make your own copy of source 1 (crop rotation) in your book.

3. The Woodland, River, Common land and land around the village were important too. Make a list of each area of land and give reasons why it was important.
e.g. The River was important for cooking and washing and for collecting fish.

4. Look at source 3. List all the items that a villein would own. Draw a small picture to show each item and label it.

5. Look at source 4. What did a villein eat for:
a) Breakfast?
b) Dinner?
c) Supper?
d) What kinds of meat did villeins eat?
e) How did they keep their meat fresh?

Bonus question!
Imagine you are a villein working for your lord to feed your family. Try and explain to someone from the 21st century what Medieval village life is like.

Answer NEATLY in your exercise book, using FULL SENTENCES!

