

## Open - Field Villages.

Medieval villages had fields called 'open' fields because there were no hedges, walls or ditches. These were split up into narrow strips and most peasants would have strips of land. In Cricklade the fields were known as 'Normead or North Meadow' & 'South Mead.' Peasants would have strips in each of the fields so that they got a mixture of good and bad land. On this they would grow food for themselves and their animals. Peasants could also graze their animals on the common land and collect wood from there.



### Did you know?

In 1066 90% of people lived in the countryside.

The villagers or peasants would share oxen to plough the fields and work together to sow their crops and harvest their crops. Most peasants were **villeins** and were not free people. They had to obey the lord of the manor and pay him rent. Rent and taxes could amount to as much as half of what a villein grew. All villagers had to also give one tenth of what they grew to the church. This was known as the **Tithe**. If there was a bad harvest peasants often died of starvation the next winter.

Some villagers were called **cottars or bordars** and were too poor to own any strips of land. ~~They would work for the richer peasants and just have a small plot of ground to grow their food.~~

Most peasants had to work for a couple of days a week on the lord's land, this was how the villeins paid the lord rent. The lord was the most important man in the village. His land was called the **demesne**. At harvest time peasants did extra work called 'boon work.' They were also expected to give the lord gifts at certain times of the year, this could be money or items like 32 hens at Christmas.

**Freemen** were better-off peasants and paid rent to the lord of the manor, they could leave the village if they wanted and had more freedom. In Cricklade most of the peasants were freemen, they paid rent and agreed to maintain the town walls, the Causeway, streets & bridge.



### Activities.

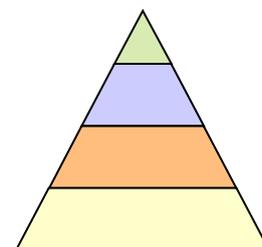
1. Explain how the villagers cooperated and helped one another.
- 2.

Draw three peasant faces and speech bubbles to explain what life was like for each person.

- Cottar
- Villein
- Freeman



3. Draw a pyramid to show the different groups of people in a medieval village. The most powerful person should be at the top.



### Villeins:

- Had to do Services or week-work all year long for the lord. 1-2 days for ploughing, weeding, fence making and carting. At harvest time they would work for 5 days.
- They might make payments to the lord rather than doing certain services for him.
- They had to attend the manor court and be on the jury if they were chosen.
- They had to pay the lord for certain rights like getting married, using the mill or taking over their parents' land.



### Villeins & Freemen:

- Boon-Work included ploughing, harvesting & hay-making.
- Payments had to be made to the lord for grinding corn into flour at the mill. Ovens were also charged for and use of the smithy where the blacksmith worked. The lord set the price of ale and it was tested by his ale tasters.

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### Bibliography:

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- Peter Moss, 'History Scene 2,' (Hart-Davis Educational, 1979)
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- Martyn Whittock, 'Life in the Middle Ages,' (Robinson, 2009)