

FEUDAL MANORS

World History Unit 2 Reading Pack

2016

Coat of Arms

Coats of Arms originated in the Middle Ages as a means of distinguishing friend from foe on the Medieval battlefield. Previous to this advent there had been much difficulty in identification of knights. For example, William the Conqueror had to remove his helmet in the midst of the battle of Hastings in order to prove himself to his followers who thought he was killed. The concept developed that each knight would bear a shield of displaying a unique design.

Terminology

By the 13th century, the rules and the terminology that we know today had started to form. Specialists in the field became known as heralds. It was their task to set forth and document all arms in existence to insure that duplication did not occur. Blazon, a heraldic term, originated with the custom of blowing a trumpet to announce the arrival of a knight at the joust or tournament. The blast was answered by the heralds who described and explained aloud the arms borne by the knight.

In a society where few people could read and write, pictures were very important. A coat of arms was more like a label for instant identification than it was like a painting. You wanted to know instantly who was coming toward you, so you could know which side he was on. Coats of arms later took on further significance and meanings. They also became a way of showing membership in the aristocracy, after they lost their significance in warfare.

Inheritance

Only the oldest son would inherit his family's coat of arms unchanged; his younger brothers would usually add a symbol to show who they were. The symbol a younger son added was often a smaller picture placed in the middle of the shield. When a woman married, especially if she had no brothers, the coat of arms of her family was often added to her husband's arms. Sometimes the arms were quartered, or divided into parts. In this case, the man's family coat of arms was in the upper left quarter (as you look at the coat of arms) and lower right, while the woman's family's arms were in the other two quarters. Shields are generally "read" like a book, starting at the upper left, going across and then down. visuals to add interest and enable the reader to scan quickly for information.

A coat of arms can have several parts. The main part is a **shield**, which can have a crest above it, a motto, and animals supporting the shield.

The background of a shield is called the "**field**". Some shields were divided (see at bottom of reading). Traditional heraldry used only the following colors and metals (except for an object that was 'proper', which means in its natural colors): Gules (bright red), azure (royal or sky blue), vert (emerald green), purple (royal purple), sable (black), or (gold), argent (silver).

A **charge** is what is shown on the base color of the shield. Animals were frequently used as a main charge.

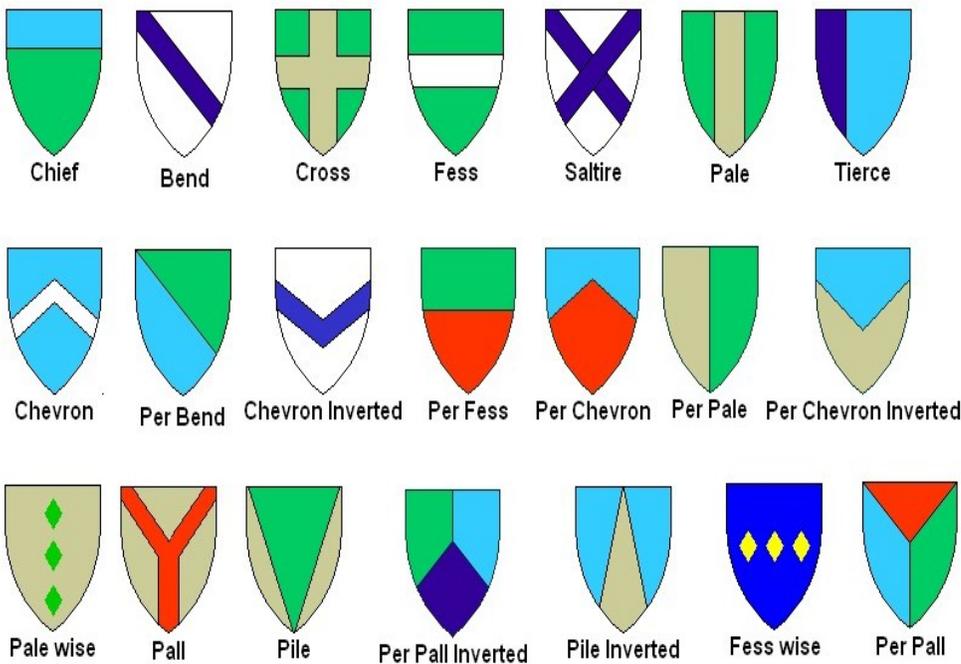
Animals were shown in certain traditional postures, which were not meant to be realistic pictures of the animals. They were not drawn to look three dimensional, but were shown as if they were flat, and with the most characteristic parts of them the most obvious. The pictures were to represent the animal as a symbol. Generally the animals chosen were fierce, and they were often shown in postures of combat. Whatever their main color, fierce animals were often shown with red tongue and claws. The most common animals on shields were:

Lion, Bear, Boar, Eagle, Horse, Dragon, Griffin

(The dragon and griffin, of course, are mythological animals. They often combine characteristics believed to be found in more than one animal. The griffin was part eagle, part lion.) A common design on a shield was a pun on the family (last) name. The coat of arms for "Wheatley" has sheaves of wheat on the shield. Some other shields showed allegiance to one side in a dispute by putting its symbol on their shields. The cross on a coat of arms often meant that the original bearer had been to the Crusades. A cross used on a shield was always taken very seriously.



Photo Caption



Coat of Arms Examples

Medieval Peasant Life

The majority of medieval peasants lived on a manor in a village. Most of the peasants were Serfs, also called villeins. The small, thatch-roofed, and one-roomed houses of the Medieval Peasant would be grouped about an open space (the "green"), or on both sides of a single, narrow street. The population of one of these villages often did not exceed one hundred people. The Medieval Peasant shared a common life of labor in the work of the fields, in the sports of the village green, and in the services of the parish church. But there was time for rest and entertainment in the life of a Medieval Peasant.

Food

The life of a medieval peasant changed with the seasons. Small animals required slaughtering during the autumn as it was not economic or practical to feed animals during the winter. The meat was then preserved in salt. Bread was a mainstay of the Medieval Peasant. Corn, grain, cabbage, ale or cider was obtained from the local area.

What did they eat?

Peasants during the Middle Ages did not have a lot of variety in their food. They mostly ate bread and stew. The stew would have beans, dried peas, cabbage, and other vegetables sometimes flavored with a bit of meat or bones. Other foods like meat, cheese, and eggs were usually saved for special occasions. Since they didn't have a way to keep their meat cold, they would eat it fresh. Leftover meat was smoked or salted to preserve it. The nobles ate a wider variety of food including meats and sweet puddings.

Life in the Castle

Servants and Medieval peasants had to provide meals and undertake menial tasks for their lord and his family. Many of the Medieval peasants who worked in the castles were women. Women worked in the kitchen and were expected to cook, clean and wait on the lord. Other occupations were carried out by the Medieval peasants within the castles as stable hands to help with the horses and kitchen staff. The horses were extremely important to the Lord and Knights - the horses had to be fed, groomed and their stables kept clean.



Houses

Peasants lived in cruck houses. These had a wooden frame onto which was plastered wattle and daub. This was a mixture of mud, straw and manure. The straw added insulation to the wall while the manure was considered good for binding the whole mixture together and giving it strength. The mixture was left to dry in the sun and formed what was a strong building material.

Cruck houses were not big but repairs were quite cheap and easy to do. The roofs were thatched. There would be little furniture within the cruck houses and straw would be used for lining the floor. The houses are likely to have been very hot in the summer and very cold in the winter. Windows were just holes in the walls as glass was very expensive. Doors might be covered with a curtain rather than having a door as good wood could be expensive. At night, any animal you owned would be brought inside for safety. There were a number of reasons for this.

First, wild animals roamed the countryside. England still had wolves and bears in the forests and these could easily have taken a pig, cow or chickens. The loss of any animal could be a disaster but the loss of valuable animals such as an ox would be a calamity.

If left outside at night they could also have been stolen or simply have wandered off. If they were inside your house, none of these would happen and they were safe. However, they must have made the house even more dirty than it usually would have been as none of these animals would have been house-trained. They would have also brought in fleas and flies etc. increasing the unhygienic nature of the house.



Cruck House

Water

The houses would have had none of the things we accept as normal today – no running water, no toilets, no baths and washing basins. Soap was unheard of and as was shampoo. People would have been covered with dirt, fleas and lice. Beds were simply straw stuffed mattresses and these would have attracted lice, fleas and all types of bugs. Your toilet would have been a bucket which would have been emptied into the nearest river in the morning.

Water had a number of purposes for peasants – cooking, washing etc. Unfortunately, the water usually came from the same source. A local river or stream provided a village with water but this water source was also used as a way of getting rid of your waste at the start of the day. It was usually the job of a wife to collect water first thing in the morning. Water was collected in wooden buckets.

Bathing was a rarity even for the rich. A rich person might have a bath just several times a year. Even then, to make life easier, several people might use the water before it was got rid of!

It was said that a peasant could expect to be fully bathed just twice in their life; once, when they were born and when they had died! Face and hand washing was more common but knowledge of hygiene was non-existent. No-one knew that germs could be spread by dirty hands.

Regardless of how water was acquired, there was a very real potential that it could be contaminated as toilet waste was continuously thrown into rivers which would make its way into a water source somewhere.

Families would have cooked and slept in the same room. Children would have slept in a loft if the cruck house was big enough. The home was usually dark, smoky from the fire, and uncomfortable.

Daily Life

It is the custom in England, as with other countries, for the nobility to have great power over the common people, who are serfs. This means that they are bound by law and custom to plough the field of their masters, harvest the corn, gather it into barns, and thresh and winnow the grain; they must also mow and carry home the hay, cut and collect wood, and perform all manner of tasks of this kind.

-Written in 1395 by Jean Froissert

The lifestyle of peasants in Medieval England was extremely hard and harsh. Many worked as farmers in fields owned by the lords and their lives were controlled by the farming year. Certain jobs had to be done at certain times of the year. Their lives were harsh but there were few rebellions due to a harsh system of law and order.

The peasants were at the bottom of the Feudal System and had to obey their local lord to whom they had sworn an oath of obedience on the Bible. Because they had sworn an oath to their lord, it was taken for granted that they had sworn a similar oath to the duke, earl or baron who owned that lord's property.

Taxes & Tithes

The one thing the peasant had to do in Medieval England was to pay out money in taxes or rent. He had to pay rent for his land to his lord; he had to pay a tax to the church called a tithe. This was a tax on all of the farm produce he had produced in that year. A **tithe** was 10% of the value of what he had farmed. This may not seem a lot but it could make or break a peasant's family. A peasant could pay in cash or in kind – seeds, equipment etc. Either ways, tithes were a deeply unpopular tax. The church collected so much produce from this tax that it had to be stored in huge tithe barns. Some of these barns can still be seen today. There is a very large one in Maidstone, Kent, which now has a collection of carriages in it.

Peasants also had to work for free on church land. This was highly inconvenient as this time could have been used by the peasant to work on their own land. However, the power of the church was such that no-one dared break this rule as they had been taught from a very early age that God would see their sins and punish them.

After you had paid your taxes, you could keep what was left – which would not be a great deal. If you had to give away seeds for the next growing season, this could be especially hard as you might end up with not having enough to grow let alone to feed yourself.

Children

Very few people attended school in the Middle Ages. Most peasants learned their job and how to survive from their parents. Some children learned a craft through apprenticeship and the guild system. Wealthy children often learned through tutors. They would go to live in the castle of another lord where they would work for the lord, learning about how a large manor was run.

The lives of peasant children would have been very different to today. They would not have attended school for a start. Very many would have died before they were six months old as disease would have been very common. As soon as was possible, children joined their parents working on the land. They could not do any major physical work but they could clear stones off the land – which might damage farming tools – and they could be used to chase birds away during the time when seeds were sown. Peasant children could only look forward to a life of great hardship.

Clothing

The Medieval Peasant clothing was basic and practical. The Medieval Peasants clothes consisted of:

- A blouse of cloth or skin fastened by a leather belt round the waist
- An overcoat or mantle of thick woolen material, which fell from his shoulders to half-way down his legs
- Shoes or large boots
- Short woolen trousers
- From his belt there hung a sheath for his knife

Medieval Peasants generally went bareheaded, but in cold weather or in rain he wore a woolen hat

Gloves were only worn by Medieval Peasants for their practical clothing value and were padded for use in tasks such as hedging

Most peasants wore plain clothing made from heavy wool to keep them warm during the winter. The wealthy, however, wore much nicer clothes made from fine wool, velvet, and even silk. Men generally wore a tunic, woolen stockings, breeches, and a cloak. Women wore a long skirt called a kirtle, an apron, woolen stockings, and a cloak.

In order to separate the nobles from the peasants, laws were passed called "sumptuary" laws. These laws stated who could wear what types of clothes and what materials they could use.