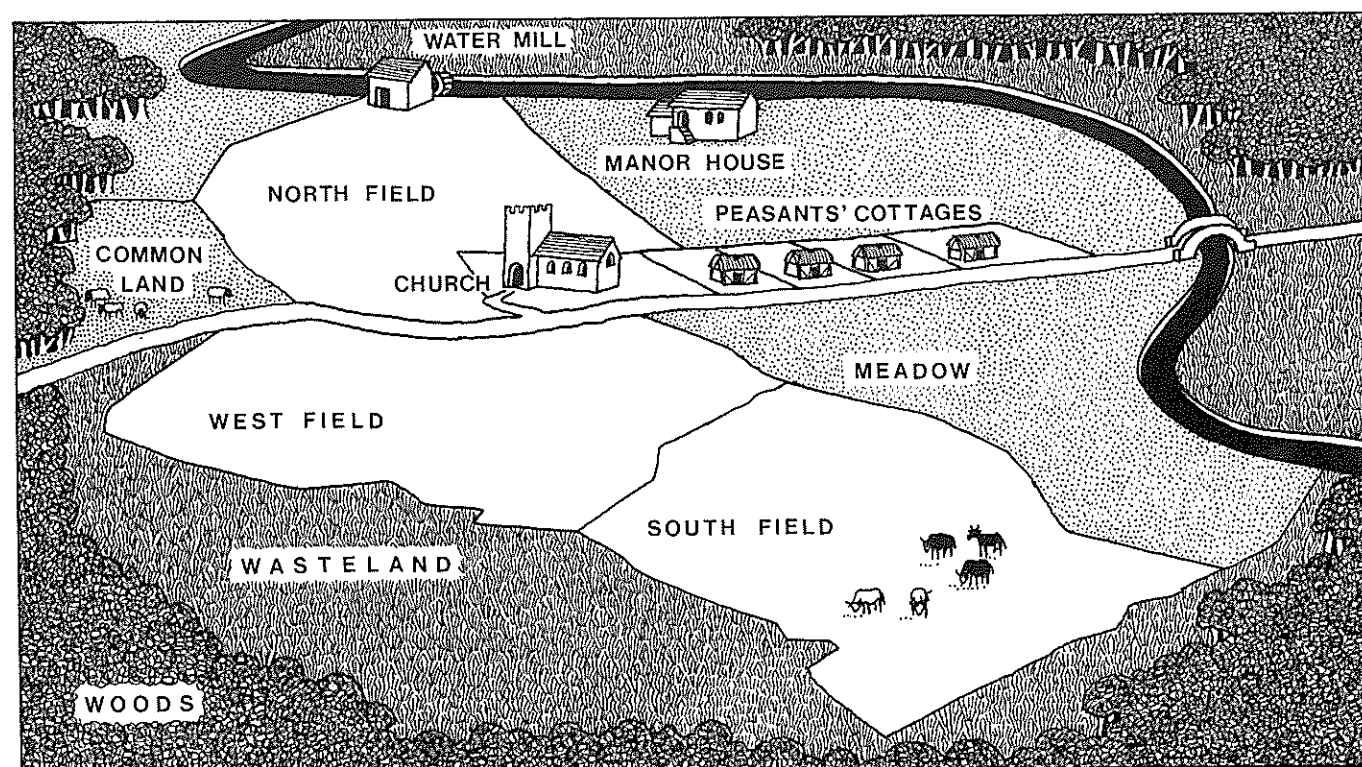


## 5 Life on the Manor



cruck house fallow  
wattle and daub week-work  
pottage threshing

The land that a lord owned was called a manor. A baron would own a lot of these. Each manor was like a village with the land around it.

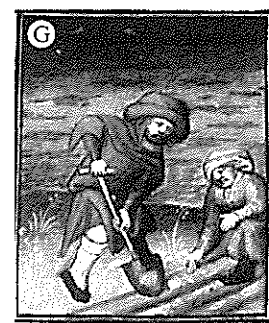
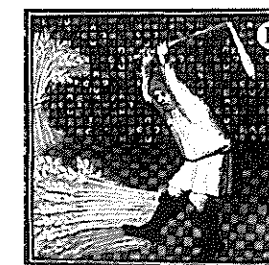
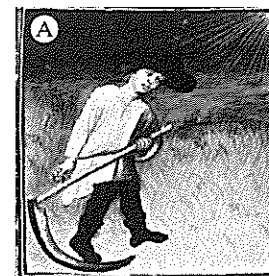
Nearly everybody who lived in England at that time lived in a village. There were no shops as we know them in these villages and villeins could only go to the nearest town if their lord let them. So most of the food which the villeins needed they had to find or grow for themselves. This meant sharing out the land and using every piece of it fully.

The villeins spent much of their time working in the open fields around the village. These were huge. Each one could be over 100 hectares. This was where the villeins did **week-work** for their lord and it was where they grew their own crops.

They were called open fields because they had no hedges or fences in them. Instead, they were divided into strips, which had earth banks in between them. Everyone in the village had some strips in each of the fields. This made sure that everyone had a share of both the good land and the bad land.

Because they had no fertilisers, they changed the crops they grew, year by year. In the plan above, there is barley growing in west field. Next year, it will be wheat. Then it will lie **fallow**, which means it will rest to get back its goodness.

But the other land was just as important. The meadow provided hay for the cattle. The common land was where the sheep grazed. The villagers got fish from the river and all kinds of things, like berries and mushrooms, might be found on the wasteland. The woodland supplied them with wood, and also nuts and roots for the pigs. And, in their gardens, the villeins kept chickens and grew vegetables, such as carrots or cabbages.



These pictures show life on the manor in different months of the year.

FEBRUARY: Breaking up the soil and sowing new crops.

MARCH: Pruning trees and planting vegetables.

APRIL: Planting new fruit trees.

MAY: The lord goes hunting.

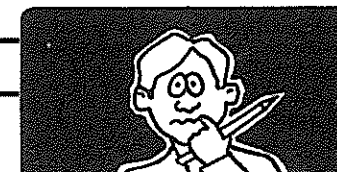
JUNE: Haymaking begins.

JULY: Getting in the harvest.

AUGUST: Threshing the corn, to separate the grain from the chaff.

OCTOBER: Sowing seeds in the open fields.

NOVEMBER: Knocking down acorns to fatten up the pigs.



- 1 Write sentences to explain each of these words: week-work; fallow; villein.
- 2 Draw the plan of the village on page 18.
- 3 Divide your page into two columns, using a pencil. At the top of the columns, write these titles:

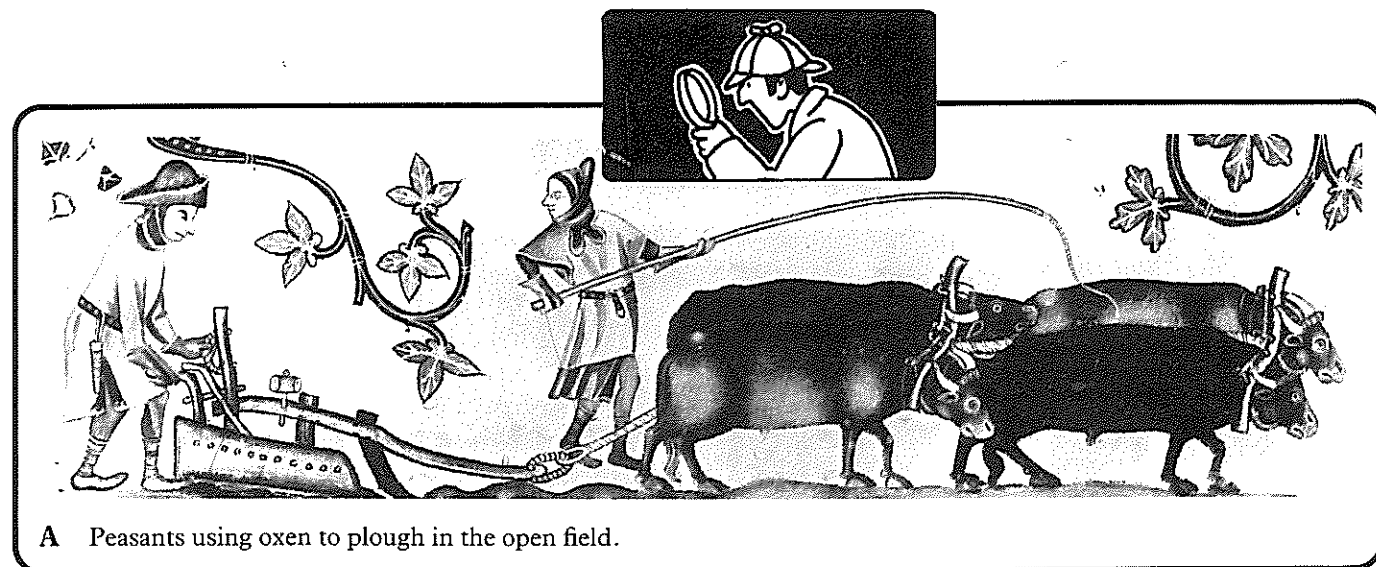
**Piece of land and What it was used for**

Using your plan, write down the name of each piece of land in turn and, in the second column, list as many uses as possible. Try to think of

uses which are *not* mentioned on page 18. For instance, what else could the river be used for, apart from fishing?

- 4 Look at the evidence above and try to decide which description fits which picture. When you have decided, write down the months and, beside each, the letter of the picture.

- 5 Some months are missing. In September, they picked fruit and in December, they killed a pig ready for Christmas. Draw pictures for each of these months.

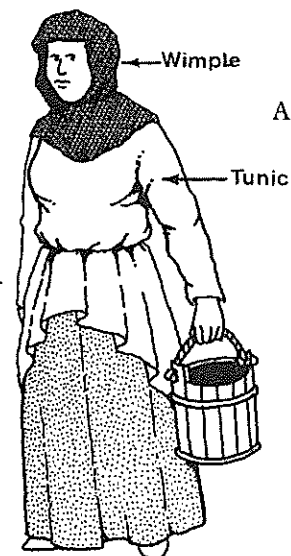


A Peasants using oxen to plough in the open field.

Imagine one of the open fields. It is early in the morning and a villein is out with the oxen ploughing his lord's strips. He was up at dawn to go to the fields, despite the cold weather. He is dressed in a rough coat and wears a hood that is full of holes. His shoes are caked with mud and his toes are sticking out through them. Even his mittens have got holes in them. His fingers are covered in mud.

His wife is with him, carrying a sharp stick to prod the oxen. Her coat is too small for her and she has wrapped a sheet round herself to keep out the cold. Her feet are bleeding because the ground is frozen solid and she's got no shoes.

At the end of the field, a little bowl stands on the ground. In it is the couple's baby. Two other children, each aged two, are nearby.



A villein's wife and her clothes.

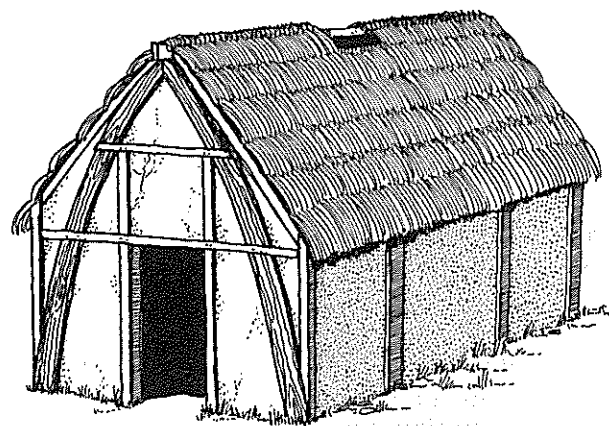
They are all crying. All the man can do is to sigh and say, 'Children, be quiet'.

His work does not end with the ploughing. He will have to clean out the sheds, water the oxen and carry out the dung. Meanwhile, his wife has to do the cooking, make their clothes and look after their animals.

Why doesn't he leave the manor? Why doesn't he get a better job? The answer is simple. He is a villein, so he can't. The lord owns the manor and he owns the villeins. He even owns their children.

The villein could not leave the manor unless his lord let him. He might be lucky and be given his freedom. Or he might be able to buy his freedom — if he ever had the money. Or he could run away. If he was not caught for a year and a day, then he became a free man.

A cruck house. The sort of home a villein had.



This is the sort of house the villein lived in. He and his family probably built it for themselves.

The frame is made of wood and the spaces between are filled with **wattle** (twigs woven together) and **daub** (mud and straw). Inside, there was often just one room. There were no floorboards, just earth covered with rushes or hay. The windows were holes in the wall, with wooden shutters or waxed cloth to keep out the wind. In the middle was the fire, its smoke rising up through a hole in the roof, which was made of straw or turf. It must have been very smoky here in the evenings, when the villein brought his animals in from the cold.

It was also bare. The only pieces of furniture were a chest and a few stools to sit on, and a trestle table for meals. The villein and his family slept on the floor, on a bed of straw, wearing the same clothes they wore during the day. Perhaps they wrapped themselves in blankets. But if the lord had guests, the villein might have to lend his blankets to him.

A villein's food and drink was much the same, year in and year out. There was no tea and coffee and the water usually wasn't fit to drink. So he and his family drank ale.



B These are two of the most important craftsmen in a medieval village.

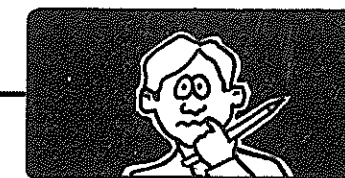


His basic food was coarse black bread. He ate it for breakfast at 6 a.m. He ate it with his dinner at 10 a.m., along with eggs or cheese. And he ate it at 4 p.m. when he had a supper of soup or stew. The villeins mainly ate pottage — a sort of thick soup, mostly of vegetables.

Bacon was the most common meat because pigs were easy to keep. There were no refrigerators to keep food fresh so, in winter, meat was usually salted or smoked.

A villein's diet was probably healthier than a noble's diet because villeins ate plenty of vegetables. The nobles ate mainly meat.

But the nobles did not go hungry. The villeins often did. On one occasion, a starving mob stopped a traveller and seized his horse. They were so hungry that they ate it on the spot. It is not surprising that one child in three died before its first birthday.



- Draw the cruck house in your book.
  - Where would the peasant get the materials to build his house?
- Draw the outline picture of the peasant.
  - Which of these materials could the peasant have used to make her clothes: wool, nylon, plastic, leather, silk?
- Here are five things which a villein might own: cooking pot; blankets; stools; knives and spoons; an ox. Write down these five things in the order of their importance to the peasant. For instance, if you think the blankets were most important, write down: '1. Blankets.' Then explain how you made your mind up.
- Which craftsmen are shown in evidence B? Write down *at least* three useful things they could make for the villagers.
- Draw the scene described on page 20, where the villein is ploughing in the open field. Use evidence A to help you.
- List all the foods and drinks you have had today. Which ones do you think a villein could have had too?