

Medieval Girl

My name is Nest and I live in a village in Glamorgan with my family.

My family

I live with my mother, father and two brothers. My grandmother lives here with us too.

My father is a carpenter and he works for the Lord of the Manor. My father came to live here when the Lord's family wanted to build a manor house for themselves. My father says that the family is very important because they know the King of England. My father is important too because he has a trade, which means that he's looked up to in the village.

My mother works very hard keeping us all fed and clothed. She didn't really know my father before she married him because it was her father who chose him for her. Luckily they are very happy together. My Mother hasn't long had my baby brother so she is tired all the time. She still has to cook our food, spin the wool and then weave it all together to make material for clothes. I help her as much as I can look by looking after the chickens. More than anything, she's teaching me how to be a good wife when I grow up.

My elder brother is 12 years old and practices with his bow and arrow every day. The king has said that he has to practice on a Sunday too! He started learning when he was small and as he's grown his bow has grown bigger too. His right arm, where he pulls the bow is very strong! My father will make him a longbow when he's older. He is apprenticed to my father and one day he will be a carpenter too.

My grandmother helps my mother in the house and helps the women in the village when it comes time for them to have their babies. We have a lot of babies born here but unfortunately not all of them grow up to be adults. Before I was born a lot of people in the village died from a plague called the Black Death. I'm glad to say that no one has died from this disease for a while now.

I help my grandmother look after the small garden that we have at the side of the house. We grow all sorts of herbs there but we have to make sure that we keep the goat well away because she eats everything!

Our home

With the help of the other people in the village, my father built our cottage using a strong wooden frame and then made the walls by making a woven lattice of wooden strips called wattle. He then covered the gaps between the lattice with daub which is a mixture of soil, clay, sand, animal dung and straw. My grandmother's brother helped to paint the outside walls with white lime-wash. My father then asked our neighbour, the thatcher, to cover the roof with a thick layer of reed to make sure that the bad weather didn't come inside our cottage.

Inside we have one big room with a fire in the middle of the floor. The smoke rises to the roof and this is where my mother hangs large joints of meat to smoke so that they last a long time. My father has made us two big beds. One is for my brother, grandmother and me and the other is for my parents and new baby brother. My gran stuffed the mattress with straw and we have warm woollen blankets to cover us. My mother makes sure that the fire is kept burning all night to keep us warm. My father also made us a very big table where we eat our food. The last time he was away working in a town

far away, he brought back some fine green and blue jugs for my mother. The other women in the village were very jealous.

Clothes

My mother keeps our clothes in a big wooden chest against the wall. We don't have much because we don't need much. I wear a cotton shift under my woollen tunic and around my waist I have a leather belt. On my feet I wear wooden clogs. I also have a pair of leather shoes that I must keep for best to wear to church when the weather is fine. We have to be very careful what we wear because we will be punished if we dress like rich people.

Work

My dad keeps busy as a carpenter but there isn't enough work in the village and sometimes he has to travel to large towns looking for work. Luckily he belongs to a Guild, which means that the other carpenters in a town let him work there. He also works on the land that he rents from the lord of the manor just outside the village. He has lots of strips of land and like all of the other villagers, they aren't all in one field but all over the place. This is so that every villager has some good land and some not so good. It's only fair.

Since the village clubbed together to buy two oxen, ploughing is much easier now. My father always hopes that when it comes to his turn with the oxen it will be during good weather although he shouldn't worry as everyone in the village helps one another.

Play

We also have a dog and a cat. These are good for the family because the dog makes sure that the rats don't come into the house and the cat loves to have his tummy tickled!

I have lots of friends in the village. We play hide and seek, catch me if you can and a board game called 9 men's morris.

Sometimes a fair will come to the village green. The last time they came there were men blowing fire from their mouths, tumblers and jugglers performing tricks, stilt walkers, singers and jesters.

There are also lots of stalls selling pottery, jewellery and fine leather shoes and bags.

The Landscape

Our village is out in the country and very near to a lake. It's very handy for fishing but once, when the heavy winter rains came, the water flooded right in through our front door. My dad and the other villagers dug a lot of ditches so that the water would run away from the village. My dad worries about the water flooding the fields because the plants don't grow so well if the soil is too wet. We also have a few sheep that we graze on the common and the lord of the manor lets us collect wood from the forest for timber and firewood. My brother also takes the pigs to the woodland to feed on the acorns.

Food

My mother makes sure that we all eat well. We have lots of meat stew, porridge, milk, butter and cheese. We also have apples and pears at harvest time and as many berries as we can pick.

Sometimes my mum makes us each a portion of flat thin bread and covers it with meat, vegetables and juices from the meat.

Religion

We go to church as often as we can because we believe that if you are good then God will reward you but punish you if you are

bad. We don't live far from a monastery and the monks there will help if we are in need of food when the crops fail or if we need a doctor to help us if the local wise woman can't help.

My mother's friend was very sad two years ago because she thought that she couldn't have a baby. The priest told her that she and her husband should go on a pilgrimage. This meant that they had to walk all the way to St David's in west Wales, which took them over a week. Everyone walks everywhere, unless you can afford a horse or a mule. The Lord of the manor has a carriage but it looks very uncomfortable when it passes on the road near our village because the wheels keep sticking in the pot holes in the road and bump over the stones all the time. Once my mother's friend and her husband arrived at St David's, they were told to pray to God and that He would answer their prayers. They made some good friends on the way and came home with lots of presents for us all. I had a little tin brooch and my brother had a piece of a Saint David's finger bone to keep him safe if he ever has to go to fight for the Lord of the Manor in France.

Their prayers weren't answered straight away but I think I heard her tell my grandmother yesterday that there was a baby on the way at last!