

# THE FEUDAL SYSTEM AND THE MANOR SYSTEM:

THE REASONS FOR AND  
CONNECTIONS BETWEEN  
THEM

# What are they?

Feudalism:

Feudalism is the social order that developed in Europe after the fall of the Roman Empire and existed until the mid 1400' s.

Manor System:

The Manor System was the basic economic system that grew out of and supported Feudalism.

# Why Feudalism?

After the Roman Empire fell, there was no strong central government. With no standing army or police, societies were plunged into chaos.

Feudalism provided some structure to society and offered protection for the masses.



# How did it work?

In the 600' s, powerful Frankish (French) chiefs owned large amounts of land. However, they needed an army to protect it, and loyal people to put it to use.



There was no money system, so land was the most valuable thing a chief could offer.

The Franks started giving land to important people in exchange for oaths of loyalty to the chief.

# How did it work?

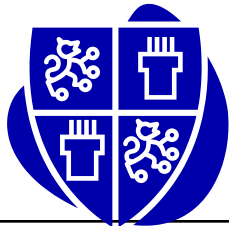
Over time, the Feudal system became more formalized, and grew into a strict social hierarchy. At the top were monarchs, and below them were nobles or lords. Next came the knights, and then, finally, the serfs or peasants.



# The Feudal Hierarchy



Monarch



Noble or Lord

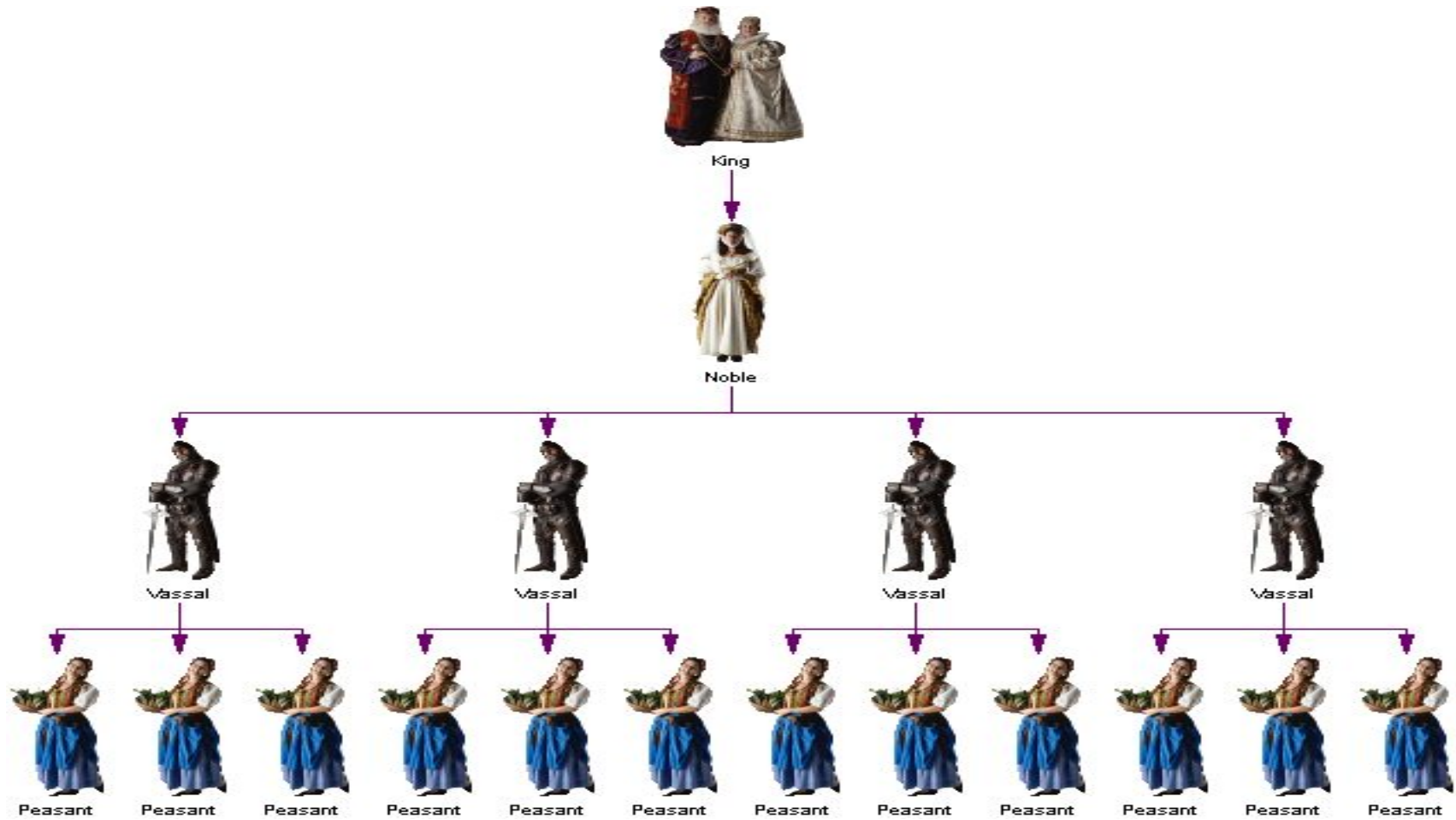


Knights



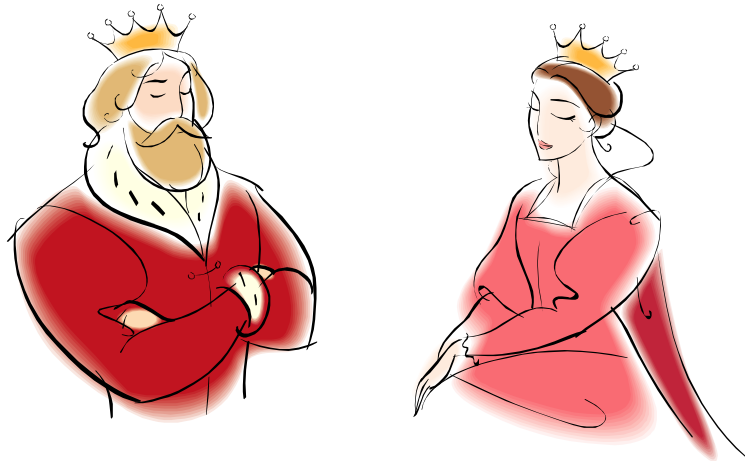
Serfs

# Feudal Hierarchy



# Monarch

A **Monarch** is another word for 'King' or 'Queen'. Monarchs 'owned' the land in their territory. To raise an army, and ensure that they could control the area, the monarch would grant fiefs of land to nobles.



## Pledge of Loyalty and service

In exchange for the land, the noble pledged loyalty to the monarch and promised to fight for the lord when called.

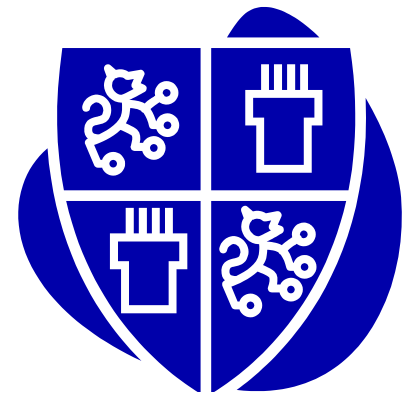
A noble who pledge loyalty became a **VASSEL** of the monarch.



# Noble or Lord

A noble is a person who serves the monarch. They can be called Dukes, Barons, Earls, or whatever. The noble can use the land to establish a manor (more on that later).

In exchange, the noble promises to send a certain number of armed soldiers or knights when called by the monarch. They also pay taxes to the monarch.



# Knight

To supply knights to the monarch, the noble would often divide his fief of land among several men in exchange for their pledge of loyalty to the noble. These men were called knights.



A knight was a highly skilled warrior. He was trained from age six in horsemanship and warfare.

Knights could also serve the noble directly, getting support and the right to live on the noble's manor instead of land.

A knight could also divide his own land among other knights!

# Peasants or Serfs

Peasants are commoners and lived on the manors of monarchs, nobles, or knights. They were granted the right to farm a plot of land in exchange for working the noble's land. Often, they worked five days on the nobles land and two on their own.

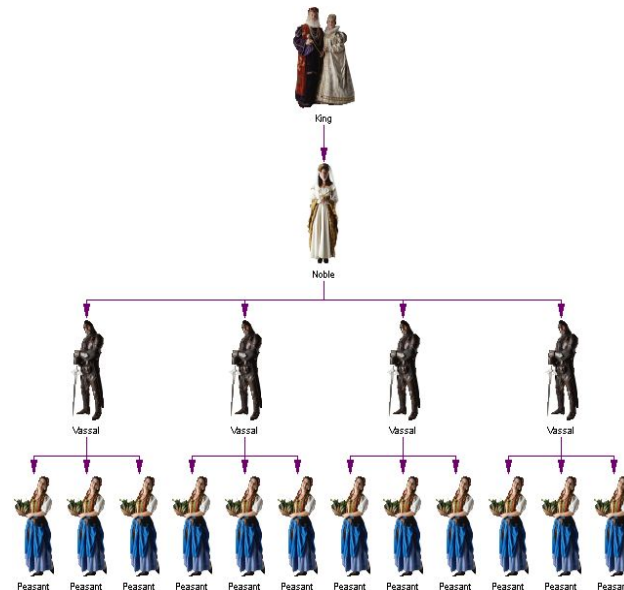
Serfs were peasants who were 'tied' to the land. They could never leave without the noble's permission.

In practice, most peasants lived and died without ever seeing beyond two miles of their front door.



# Review

- Feudalism grew out of the chaos caused by the fall of the Roman Empire.
- It was based on the granting of land in exchange for loyalty and military service.
- It provided order and some security in the absence of a stable central government.
- Serfs could farm some land on a manor and received the protection of the noble in exchange for their labor.



# Weaknesses of the Feudal System

- Nobles often challenged monarchs or each other, leading to constant warfare.
- The strength of a monarch was only as secure as the loyalty of his nobles.
- Over time, fiefs became so small they could not support a manor in some cases.
- These landless knights and nobles contributed to ever more warfare.

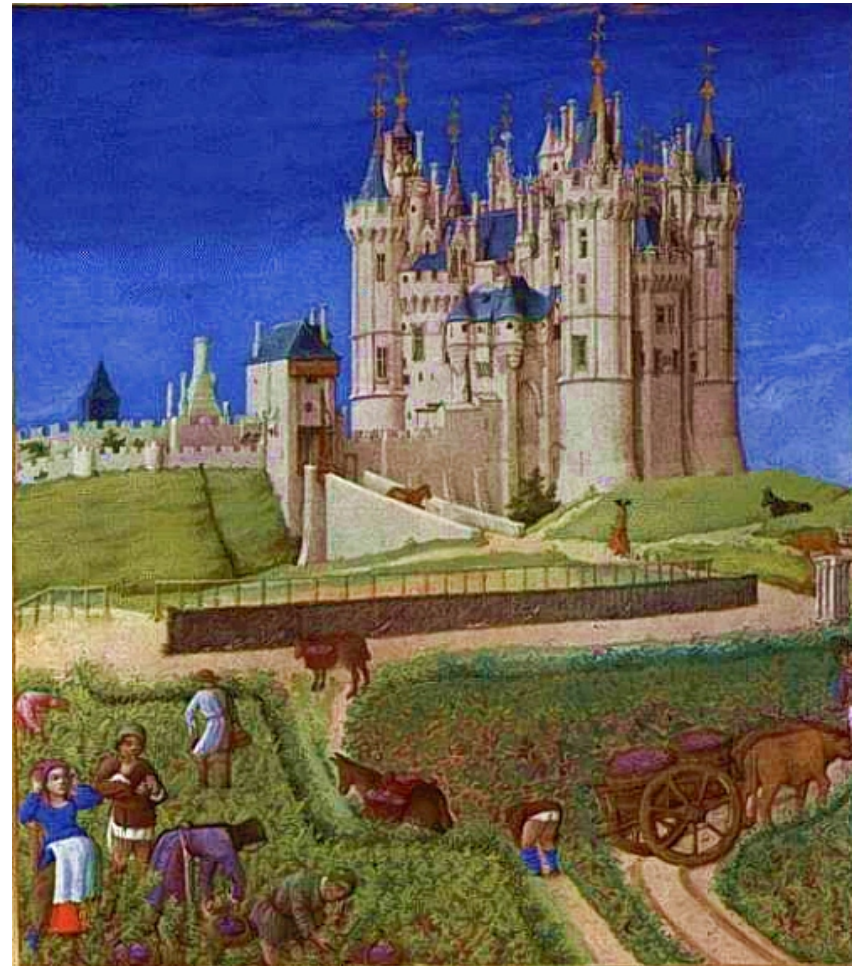
# Manor System

Manor: The estate of a knight or noble on a 'fief' of land. Each manor was designed in the same basic way.

The management of the resources on the manor and its economy came to be known as the 'Manor System' .

# Goals of Manor System

- Each Manor tried to be self-sufficient, or create all the food and other materials it needed.
- To be secure, a manor did not want to rely on outside sources of food and other essential items.



Detail from the month of September. From *Les Tres Riches Heures* du Duc de Berry.

# WHY SELF-SUFFICIENT?

- Warfare between knights, nobles, and monarchs was always a threat. You needed to create what you needed to survive. In other words, you could not rely on your neighbor.
- Commerce and trade were greatly reduced. Roads were poor or non-existent. Most manors were far from cities, where a small amount of trade still existed.

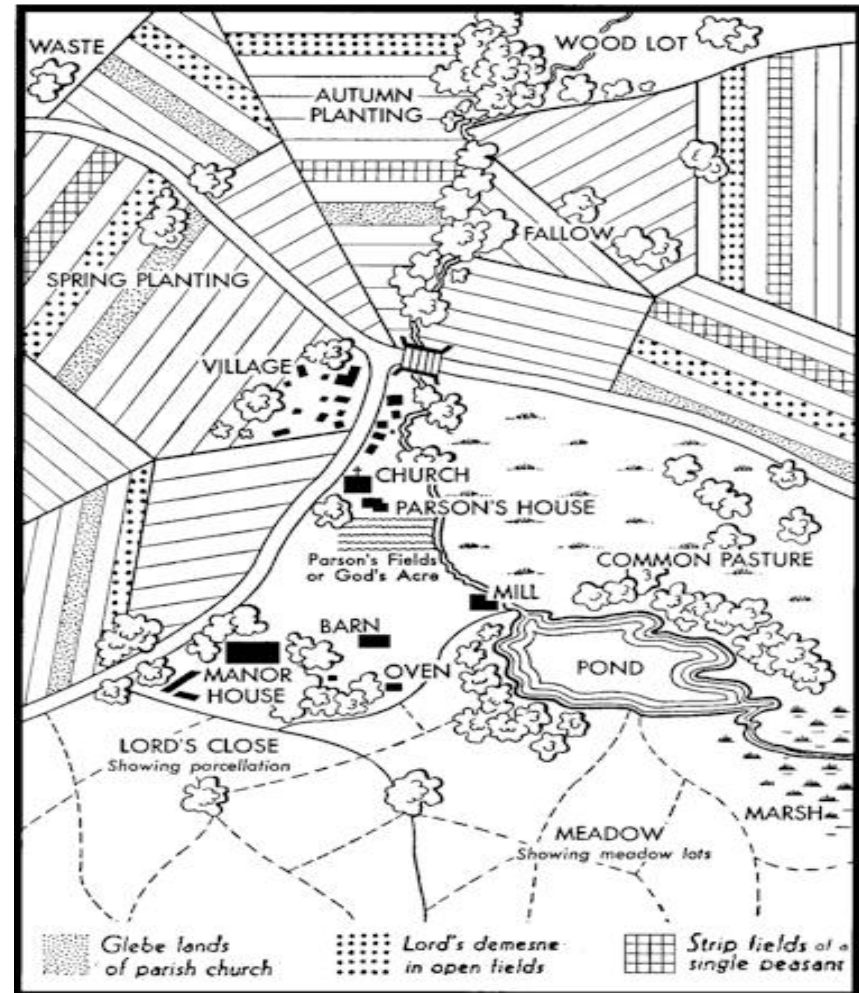


# Why Self-Sufficient?

- In short, you could not be sure when the next shipment of food, weapons, or other essentials were coming your way. Thus, you had to make it yourself, or perish.
- Arming soldiers and knights was extremely expensive. You needed to keep your manor as wealthy as possible. Sending money to a merchant cut into your profits.

# How Did A Manor Work?

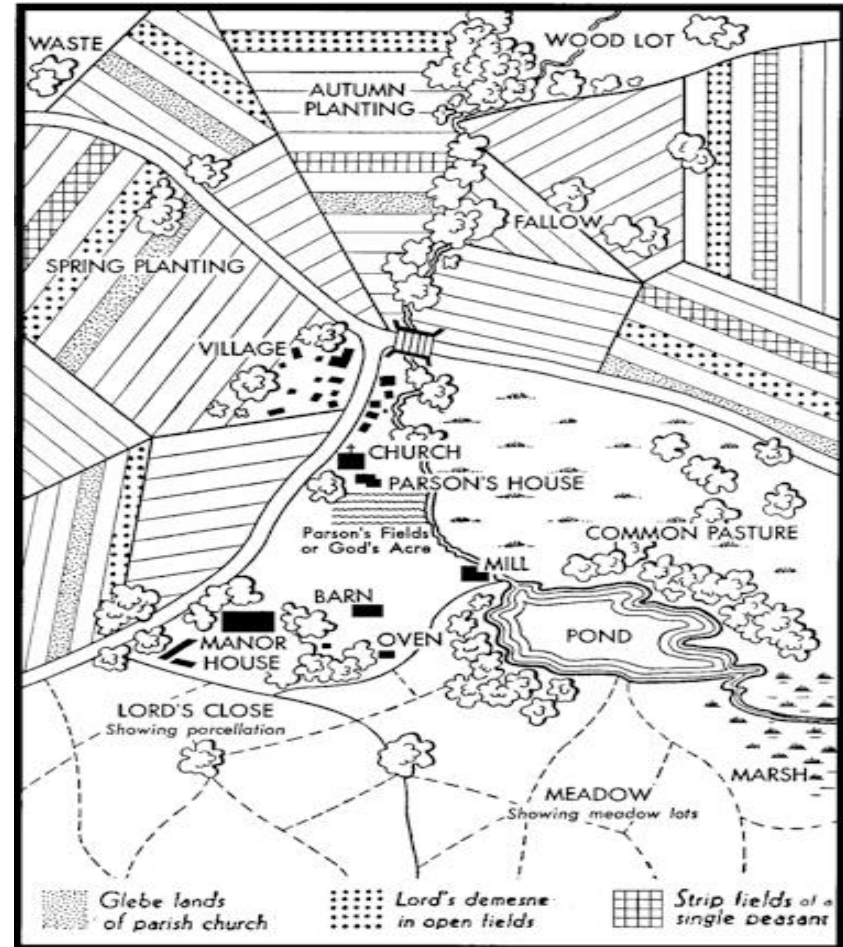
- The Manor was based around a 'Manor House' or a castle. The noble or knight lived here.
- Fields were divided into three sections: One for spring plantings, one for fall planting, and one 'fallow field'.



# How Did It Work?

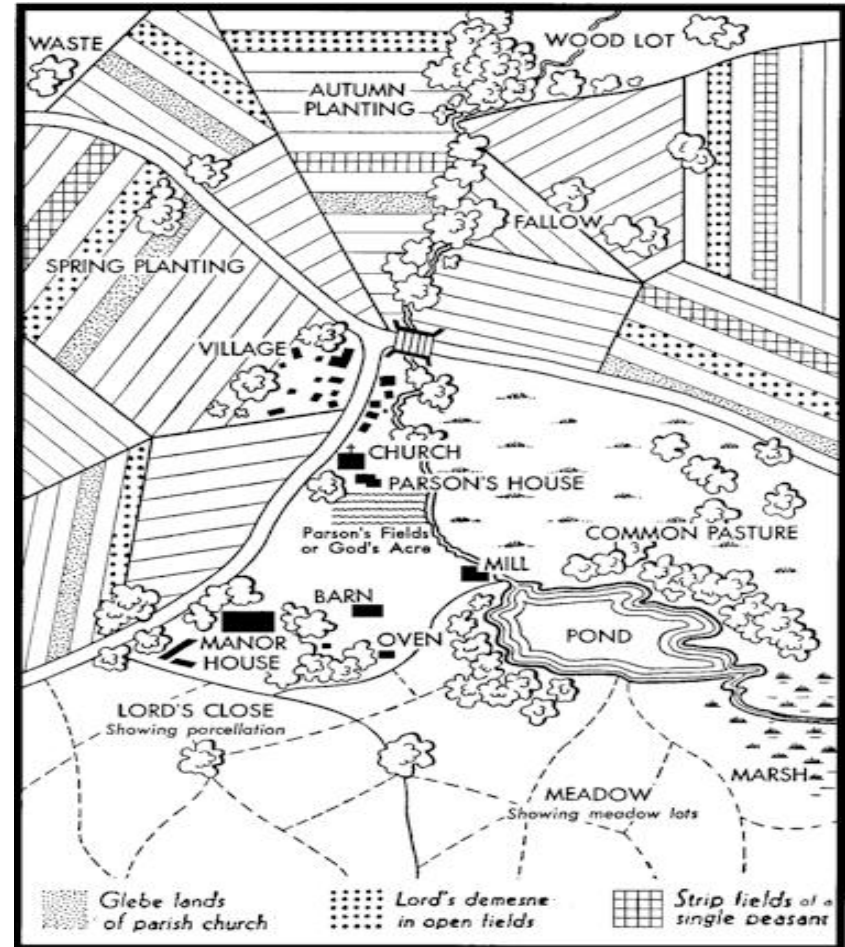
A 'fallow' field was left unplanted for one or more seasons to keep the soil from wearing out. The fields were rotated, so that each was fallow every 2 or 3 years. This is called 'Crop Rotation'.

Peasants were given small strips of land to farm after working the lord's fields.



# How Did It Work?

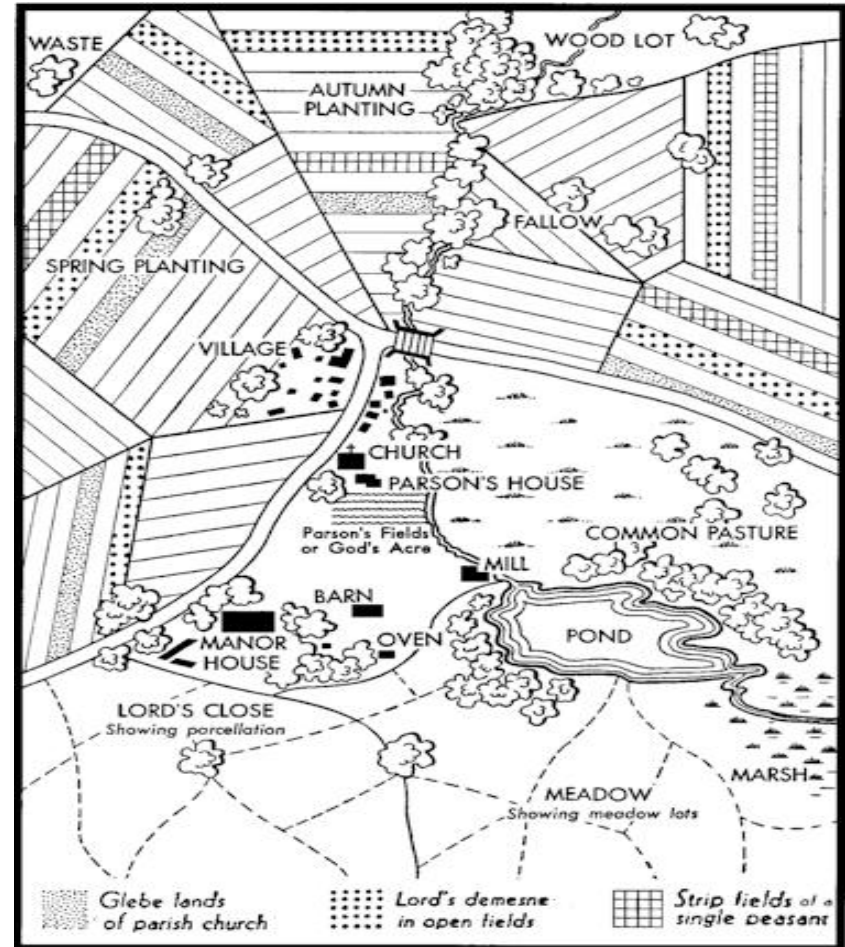
Every manor had a mill to grind grain. The noble owned it, and all peasants had to use it, for a fee of course (they truly hated this rule).



# How Did it Work?

Manors that had a pond or lake were lucky. They could farm fish and eels to add to their food supply.

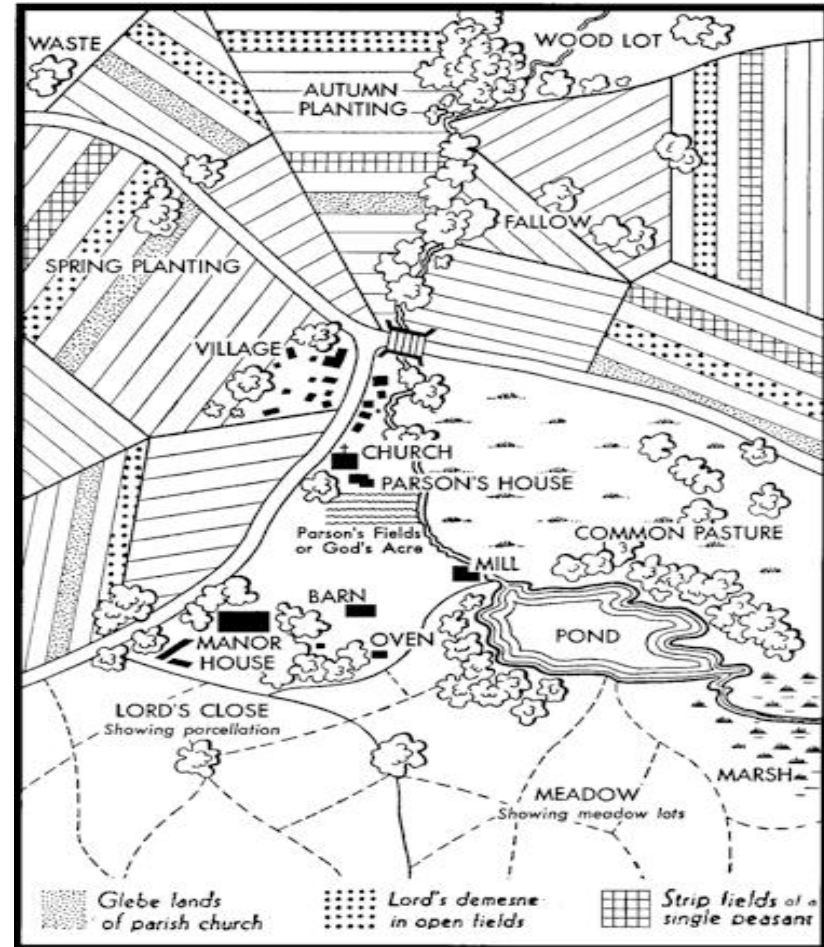
Animals (pigs, cows, goats) roamed freely across common pasture and fallow land.



# How Did It Work?

Each manor had a church, paid for by the noble. A portion of land was farmed to pay for the service of a priest.

Only nobles could hunt wild game in the fields and forests.



# Duties on the Manor: Nobles

- Nobles provided protection to peasants during times of war. They would be brought into the manor house or castle.
- The word of the noble was law. He acted as judge in disputes between peasants or knights on his land.
- Nobles had to build a church and pay for a priest to serve the spiritual needs of the people living on the manor.



# Duties on the Manor: Nobles

- The noble had to manage his manor effectively, because he had to buy weapons, armor, and horses for soldiers, and himself. These were incredibly expensive!
- Without the money for these things, he could not fulfill his oath of loyalty to his monarch.

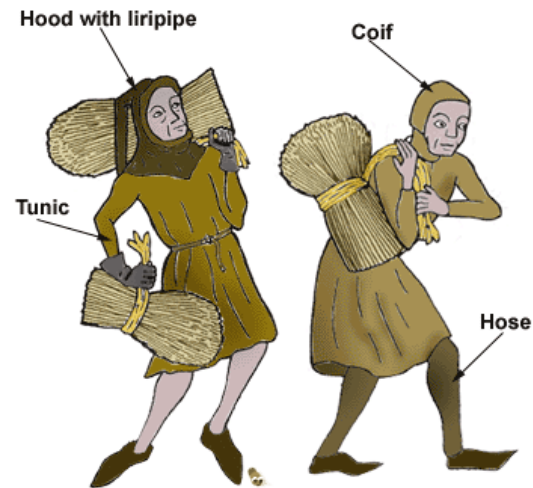


# Duties on the Manor: Peasants

- Peasants provided labor. They farmed, worked the mill, made tools, spun cloth, and everything else one could imagine.
- Peasants worked the nobles land for five days, in exchange for working a small plot of land for two days.
- Skilled peasants (such as blacksmiths who could make tools or weapons) were much better treated.

# Duties on the Manor: Peasants

- Peasants typically lived in one-room houses with any livestock they owned. Yes, they were filthy.
- Peasants paid for the ‘privilege’ to grind their grain at the noble’s mill.



# Duties on the Manor: Women

- Noble women often ran manor, either after their husband died, or was off at war (which was a lot!).
- Noble women oversaw the manor house, which was like running a small company.
- Peasant women farmed, made cloth, brewed beer, made candles, prepared food, tanned leather, raised the children, and everything else. Only highly skilled trades such as blacksmith were closed to them.



# Duties on the Manor: Priest

- Each manor had a priest. He was required to say Mass, baptize infants, and perform last rights.
- Attending mass and receiving church sacraments were seen as essential to getting into Heaven. Thus, priests were given a great deal of respect.



# Duties on the Manor: Bailiff

- The Bailiff was not a peasant or serf, but a freeman. Not a noble or knight, but not as low as a common peasant.
- The Bailiff oversaw and helped manage the manor. In other words, making sure the work was getting done.

# How did the Manor System Support Feudalism?

- It divided a monarch's land among loyal nobles
- Nobles would defend the land, as it was the most valuable thing a person could own at the time.
- Manors provided the income needed to support the knights and soldiers demanded by the monarch.
- A monarch could not oversee all the land himself. Granting fiefs made sure it was put to productive use. This would allow for taxes to be paid, and, of course, knights armed for war.

