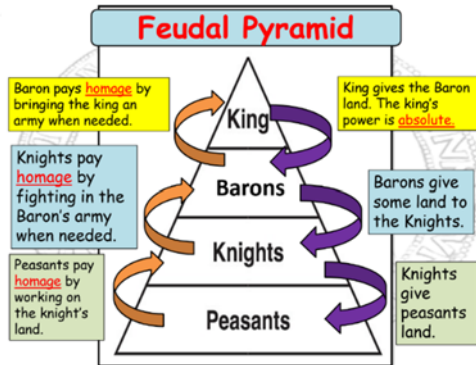


Norman England 1066 – c.1100

Part 2 – Life under the Normans

Feudal System

William declared himself the owner of all the land in England. Everyone else was his tenant. If you rented land directly from the King you were a tenant in chief. They would then rent that land to others through subinfeudation.



William dealt with difficult areas like the Welsh border by creating Marcher Lords with special powers such as waging war.

Domesday Book

In 1086 William commissioned a survey to find out exactly what he had conquered. This became known as the Domesday book (meaning judgement day). It tells us who owned the land and how much wealth they had. It showed William owned 20%, the church 25%, 10 tenants in chief held another 25% between them. The final 30% was held by about 170 people. This was about the same as before the conquest. The difference is that the land now belonged to Normans. 250 barons, with 2000 knights and about 10,000 settlers ruled over an Anglo-Saxon population of about 2 million.

Law and Order

The Normans kept most of the Anglo-Saxon legal system intact. They made some changes. Large **earldoms** were broken up into smaller ones with their own courts. **Primogeniture** was introduced meaning the eldest son inherited the fathers land. **Murdrum fines** were introduced meaning if a Norman was attacked or injured then everyone in the area where the criminal lived would be punished. **Latin** was used to write laws. **Trial by ordeal** such as fire or water continued. Ordeal by combat was added. **Forest laws** meant anyone caught hunting in forests could be fined, mutilated or killed.

Villages

Life in the village did not change much. Peasants lived in cottages farmed strips of land and grazed their animals on common land. They grew wheat, oats, barley and rye. Land was clearly divided between houses, farm land, pasture for animals and woodland.

The **church** was the most important building. Built out of stone it provided religious services, a bell to signal the start and end of the day, storage for goods, a prison, and could act as a fortress.

Open field system – fields were divided into strips that were divided between peasants, with 25% kept for the lord. Peasants had to pay rent to the lord in the form of crops or money. Peasants had to make enough food to feed themselves and to give to their lord. Some fields were left **fallow** (empty) for a year or two so the soil could recover and provide better crops when planted again.

Peasants

A peasants life was dictated by the seasons. Spring was for planting seeds, summer: harvesting crops, Autumn: ploughing fields, and winter was for surviving. Peasants worked from sunrise to sunset. Not all peasants were farmers – some were brewers or millers. Other important people were Reeves, Bailliffs and Priests. Peasants had to work for the lord at least 1 day a week, sometimes up to 5 days. They paid taxes to the lord and a **tithe** (10% of all farm produce) to the church. After all taxes were paid peasants had to live on what was left. Days off were Sundays and religious holy days. These started with church services and were followed by entertainment like wrestling, shin-kicking, cock-fighting, music or a travelling bear!

Towns

The Normans encouraged the growth of towns to improve trade. London had 10,000 inhabitants. Norwich, York and Lincoln had around 5000. new cathedrals were also built. **Salt trade** – salt was vital to preserve food. **Metalwork** – Iron and lead were very important for making houses and weapons. **Wool trade** – wool was in great demand for making clothes. It was often exported abroad to places like Belgium. **Guilds** – members of crafts would band together to form guilds. E.g weavers, bakers, butchers. **Markets and fairs** – Markets could only be held if a franchise had been granted by the king. 2800 grants were given. Fairs were major events with lots of trade and entertainment.

