

MYSTERIOUS AFAN CUDD

FARMING IN THE MIDDLE AGES



Miniature showing people reaping corn, gleaning, harvesting is from folio 8v of the Fécamp Psalter representing the month of August in the calendar. Fécamp Psalter, c. 1180. Manuscript (76 F 13), 160 x 125 mm. Image courtesy of Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Hague. Public domain.

Farmers were very important to medieval life.

Farms were scattered through the countryside in Wales before the Norman invasion in 1066, and the Normans did not change this.

In much of Wales and parts of England, medieval farmers could use ploughland and meadow, usually sharing it, and areas of rough grazing in areas of scrubby upland fringe pasture (ffridd) and on mountain pastures.

Farmers grew crops like wheat, rye, barley, and oats and also peas, beans for animal feed fodder and fertilizer. They grew flax to make linen, and grazed sheep for wool on the meadows and common land.

The fields were ploughed three times: once to turn the stubble over, then to remove the thistles and weeds, and finally to prepare for sowing. They often used seaweed to fertilize the land.

The most common farm tool were the metal-tipped ploughs that could turn over the soil, and harrows to cover the seeds once planted. These would be pulled by oxen and horses.

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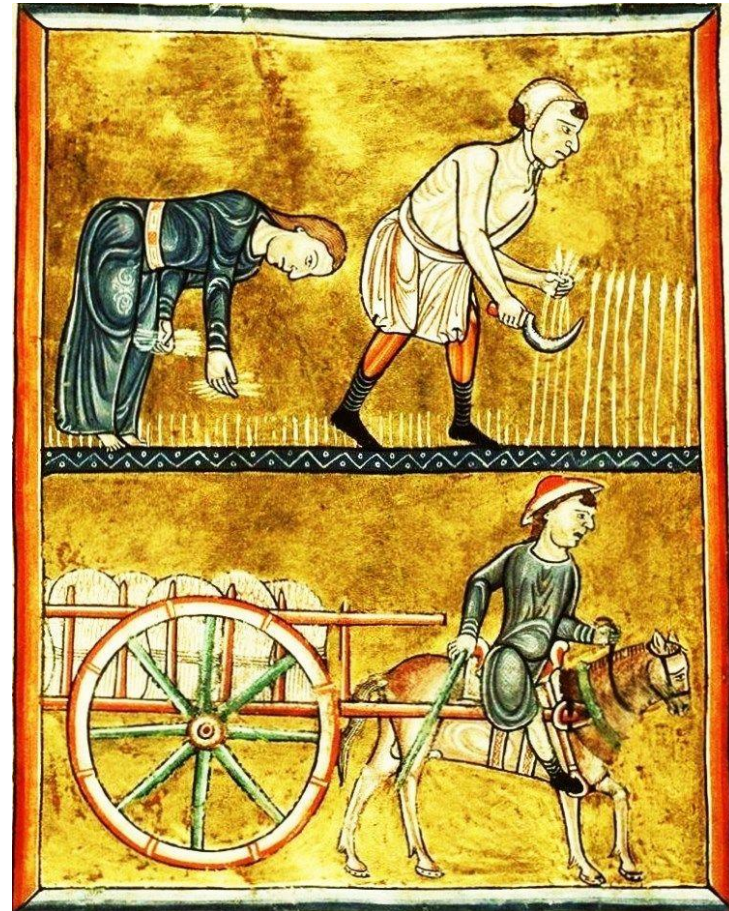
Even though medieval farmers worked very hard, crops could become easily ruined and people could go hungry. Medieval farmers helped each other, to make sure the work got done during ploughing, seeding, and harvesting times.

They ground grains into flour and processed flax and wool with watermills. There is the remains of one of these on Mynydd Dinas.

To grow their crops, they needed luck. In the summer, sun was essential for crops to grow and heavy rain could destroy a harvest. Too much sun, and the soil could dry. A frost in spring, and the seeds would die.

The larger farms had a maerdref ('bailiff's farm') and the houses of bondsmen who worked for nothing in return for having some farmland and grazing. Large houses and farmsteads were built close to churches.

Medieval Farm Workers - full-page miniature showing people reaping corn, gleaning, harvesting is from folio 8v of the Fécamp Psalter representing the month of August in the calendar. Fécamp Psalter, c. 1180. Manuscript (76 F 13), 160 x 125 mm. Image courtesy of Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Hague. Public domain.



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