

Peter's Tale

Hello there and welcome to Flamstead!

My name's Peter. I'm 10 years old and live here with my mother and father, my grandparents and my sister and brother. It's the Twelfth Century, and we all live in a small thatched hut with wattle and daub walls. Wattle is the wooden frame of our home. Daub is plastered over this frame and it's made from mud, straw and animal dung. Our hut has an earth floor covered in rushes, but it doesn't have any windows. Our light and heat comes from the fire in the middle of the room. That's where we cook our food too. My sister Elis uses the quern stone in our hut to grind rye into flour. She hates that job! But it does mean we can make bread on the fire to eat. We keep our food in nets hung from the ceiling, to try and stop the mice nibbling at it. We barely have enough as it is, without the mice taking some.

Me and my brother Wyot help the family out by working with my father. My father's a farmer. He's a tenant farmer, which means he doesn't own the land but pays rent for our hut and two acres of land. He also has to farm the lands of the Lord of the Manor sometimes. We're left in charge when he has to go and do that. We grow barley, so my mother can brew beer, and oats and rye for our bread. We grow broad beans and peas, cabbages, leeks and turnips as well. We've got a plough but can't afford to rent an ox to pull it, so we must push the plough ourselves. It's a long day, sunrise to sunset working in the fields. But we're lucky at the moment, 'cos we've got two pigs on our small holding. We feed them by foraging beechnuts from the nearby woods when grandfather is out looking for firewood.

We pay our rent to the Bailiff. You may have heard about him; he's the one put in charge here by the Lord of the Manor. You don't want to get on the wrong side of him! We also pay a tithe, a tax, to the Church. We don't have much money left over after that.

I don't go to school – there's no need for me to read or write. I'll leave that to the wealthy. I speak in English, like all us workers and labourers. The rich and

educated speak in French and Latin. The priest speaks in Latin too. I can't understand much of what he says. But he did tell me that at the new stone church being built now, there's brightly coloured paintings all over the walls that'll show me stories from the Bible. Imagine that. No more trying to work out what the priest is saying during mass.