

## The Good Wife's Tale

Good morrow traveller. My name is Agnes and my family and I are Yeomen living in the village of Flamstead. A Yeoman means we come from a long line of English ancestors.

My husband owns the land where we live and farm. Forty hectares of land - so much, that we have labourers and servants to help us out with it all. We grow peas, wheat, barley, beans and rye. We keep animals too – sheep, dairy cows, hogs, hens, and two oxen, which pull the plough. I spin the wool we get from the sheep and weave cloth to make our clothes. We brew beer and make bread for the family and also to pay our labourers with. We turn the milk from the cows into cheese and butter. And all that is without looking after our three children and keeping a reputable house.

We have three children; Cecilia, Viola and Alban. Two girls and a baby boy. All still young, but healthy. We live in a long house. Made from wattle and daub, but with enough space in it that we have two separate rooms for the household to sleep in. We have a barn too, so our animals can take shelter in the cold winter months. We've a large room with a central fireplace where we cook our food. Some of my favourite times have been in this room. Warm in the fire's glow, lighting candles and singing songs from our childhood.

It's a busy household. We all awake at daybreak, the family as well as servants and labourers. In the summertime this can mean getting up around 5am, but if it is light we must work – the winter comes around only too quickly where the days are dark and short.

We go about our jobs until about 11am, when we stop for breakfast. We usually have a sort of porridge call pottage, made with wheat and peas and beans boiled in water. I am lucky enough that my husband Henry has bought for me some cinnamon bark, ginger root and nutmeg. These spices are very expensive and not for the labourers to have, but they are a real tasty treat for my family.

After breakfast, it's back to work until around 5 in the afternoon. Then, the servants and I prepare an evening meal for everyone. We eat according to the

seasons and what the church allows. We are lucky to have all the vegetables my husband harvests. Some are eaten with fish, others are pickled so they keep longer. And there is always bread at my house. And beer to wash it down with. Occasionally we have bacon and eggs. If the children are hungry throughout the day, they can have sops. That's yesterday's bread soaked in milk or broth. That'll fill them up until it's mealtime.

Godliness is a quality Henry and I insist on, and I make time to go to the village church every day – as well as making sure my workers all do the same. It's a new stone church. Henry sits on the south side, I and all the women and children sit on the shady north side. There I look at the huge painted figure of St Christopher – the most important saint, looking after travellers. I give thanks to him and to God for blessing and protecting my family.