

Cutha's Chronicles

Adventures in Anglo-Saxon England

Our lord, the Earl has
came to the farm — so
now we have to pay the
rent.

We don't often have
money, so mostly we pay
in *food* for him and his
men.

We call rent which is
paid in food *feorm* —
that's where your word
farm comes from!

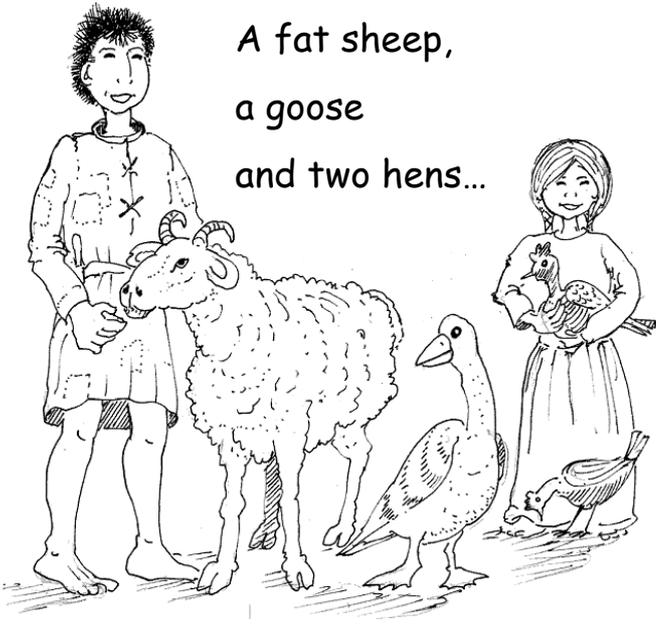


This is what we have to pay
whenever the Earl comes:

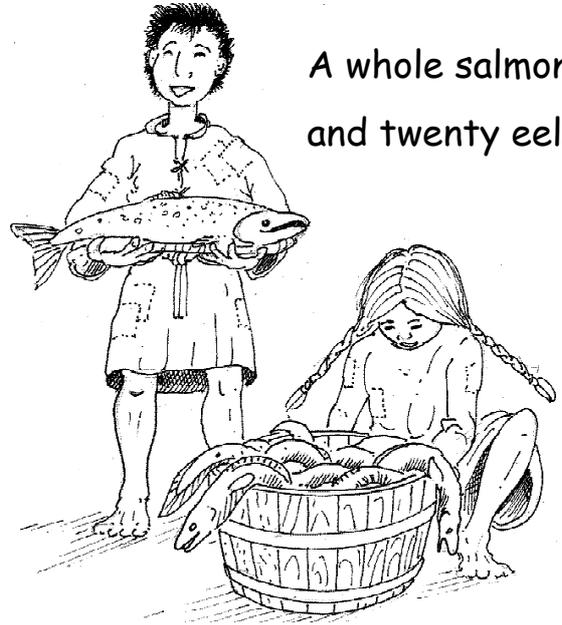
Thirty loaves and a keg of
butter;

A whole cheese and a keg of
honey...

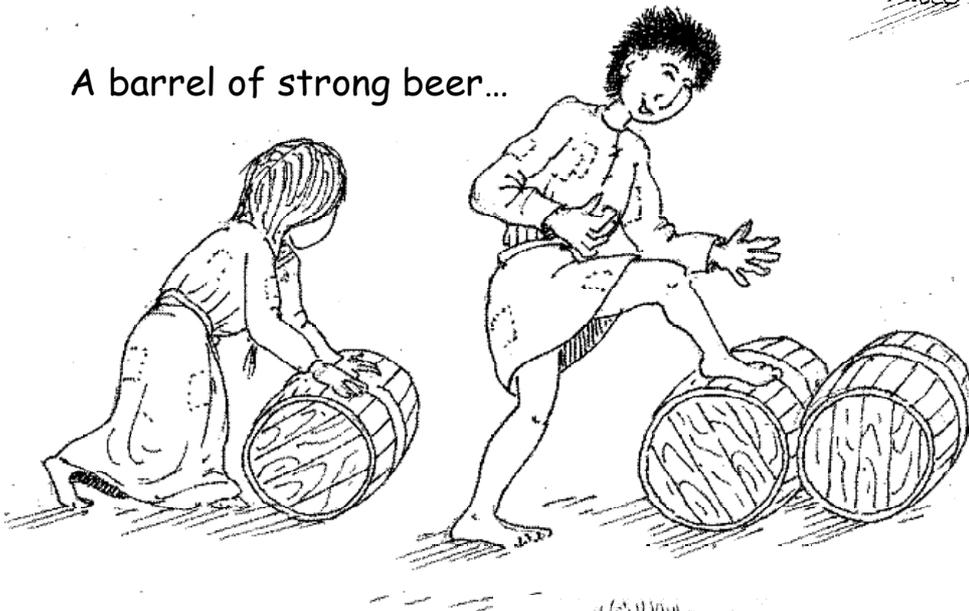
A fat sheep,
a goose
and two hens...



A whole salmon
and twenty eels...



A barrel of strong beer...



and two barrels of
ordinary beer...



Fodder for the
Earl's horses...

and wood to make
him a fire...





And when the Earl leaves, we have to see him safe on his way — and carry his things for him to the next farm.

Our lord the Earl is a good man — but we don't like to see him too often.

If we did, there would be no food left for us!



Paying the Rent

In Anglo-Saxon times, all of the land in the country belonged to the King. He would have kept a lot of farms and estates (the best ones) for himself, but many more of them he would give away to powerful *thanes*: noblemen like Cutha and Cyne's Earl. This showed that they were his friends — and made sure they carried on supporting him!

This meant that a man like the Earl would have far too much land to farm for himself, so he would do the same as the King: The best of his estates he would keep for himself. They would be farmed either by *cottars* (very poor families who could not afford land of their own) or by *theows* (slaves). Some of the rest he would give to his retainers, people like his *scop* (harper) and the fighters who formed his *geguth* (warband), as a reward for serving him. What was left, he would rent out to the *ceorls*, the free farmers, like Cutha and Cyne's family.

Cutha and Cyne's family would rent a farm big enough to support them and their servants. This amount of land was called a *hide*, a *sulung* or a *caracute* — it depended on where you lived — and it could vary in size from about 35-180 acres (0.15-0.75 square kilometres) depending on how good the soil was.

In the year ^{AD}694, King Ine of Wessex wrote down the food rent he expected to get from a five *hide* estate: this lets us work out what an average family (like Cutha and Cyne's) would have to pay. This was a *lot* of food to find, and in a bad year, it might mean they had to go hungry themselves. As well as the food, they might also have to send people to work on the Earl's own lands at busy times like ploughing and harvest, to mend roads and build bridges, or to send men and boys if they were needed to fight in the wars. All of these things would form part of the rent.

So long as a family paid their rent, everything was fine: they could live on the same farm for many years (sometimes for hundreds of years). If they didn't pay, or couldn't, then the Earl would likely come and turn them out. He might give the farm to someone else — or even burn it down as a lesson to all the other farmers! So it was always best to pay up, even if you knew that your family would be hungry all year if you did!

Competition

Congratulations to the winners of our competition! We decided to have TWO prizes in our 10+ group. They go to:

ANASTASIA BURGESS (Oxfordshire) who told Cutha and Cyne how nice it is to have radiators to keep the house warm, not just a fire in the middle of the floor;

CHRIS NELSON (Kent) explained how a flushing toilet works, and felt it was a much better arrangement than Cutha and Cyne's *micsen*.

A lot of people didn't really fancy the idea of using a pit in the garden for their toilet: our prize for the under-10 group drawing goes to **CATHERINE JANE BURGESS** (Oxfordshire) who drew us a picture of the toilet in her house!



They all win a bronze brooch made by **MERCIA SVEITER**.

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