



Lands, Lords, and Ladies

Worldbuilding Guide

A guide to the feudal structure including gainint titles and managing lands.

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- The blog *Life in the Middle Ages* by C. Dale Brittain:
cdalebrittain.blogspot.com
- Middle Ages Reference Site lordsandladies.org
- The blog *The Tao of D&D* by Alexis Smolensk:
tao-dnd.blogspot.com
- *A Magical Medieval Society: Western Europe* by Joseph Browning and Suzi Yee
- *Grain into Gold* by John G. Josten
- *Medieval Demographics Made Easy* by S. John Ross
www222.pair.com/sjohn/blueroom/demog.htm



On the Cover: Everybery paints the scene of a lady looking out over her lands and village from the secure and comfortable vantage point of her own castle.

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INTRODUCTION

After several months of traveling through the unexplored wilderness, and delving into lost tombs, a group of adventurers returns to civilization looking to spend their newfound wealth. Finding an expanse of land on the outskirts of several Kingdoms, these adventurers begin construction of a Keep, where they can secure their future treasures, and defend themselves against threats. The nearby barons all take note of this new presence, and the construction of such a strong fortification on their borders. A council is called between them to discuss the appearance of the adventurers, and after some deliberation, it is decided that they must destroy these newcomers before their sovereignty is threatened.

After successfully stopping the cultists from calling forth a demon horde to destroy the great city of Niben, the heroes are called before the Duke. In a ceremony honoring them for their bravery, they are each offered the title of Baron, and co-ownership of a small fief in the countryside. Excited at the opportunity, the adventurers accept the offer and swiftly swear their oaths of fealty to the Duke, becoming his vassals, and being granted their titles and lands.

Scenarios such as these are not uncommon for many adventuring groups that reach higher levels. Figuring out the complex political, social, and economic structure that is a feudal Kingdom can be a complicated affair. This can become an even more complicated situation when DMs must also determine their players position within such a hierarchy.

This guide is not meant to be a campaign setting. Instead this is a general purpose supplement that can be used to aid in the creation of a feudal government, common in most D&D worlds, and to find where an adventuring group might fit for any fifth edition campaign. The following sections will explore the basic structure of a feudal government, the methods by which one can gain a title, and all the rights and responsibilities that go along with that. Furthermore, the details of managing a fief for the purposes of determining how much gold the lands could generate or cost the new lord are discussed.

RACE & GENDER

This guide focuses mostly on humans and their Kingdoms, simply because it is only human kingdoms that we have historical perspective from which to draw. These guidelines were designed to be compatible with any race that uses a feudal or clan based system of government, and can be adapted by a DM in accordance with their own interpretation of the various races of Dungeons & Dragons.

Similarly, while the medieval period is not well remembered for promoting gender equality, it is the principal of this text that there is no difference in capability or

social expectation between men and women. The presence of magic in a D&D world should prevent any such gender bias from forming in the first place, and this text will assume that it is equally common for a noble to be lord or lady.

PREVALENCE OF MAGIC

This guide assumes a fairly low-magic environment as the norm for most people living in the campaign world. There are guidelines for how magic could be used by those wealthy lords that can afford to hire such skilled magic users, as well as for adventuring parties that have access to powerful spellcasters amongst them.

For communities that do have spellcasters, these are typically low level, and will focus more on mundane and practical magic instead of the flashy and powerful displays used by adventurers. A village might have an untrained sorcerer, able to harness just a fraction of the power they never fully explored. A town might occasionally attract an outlander who is willing to offer what little natural magic they have learned in exchange for a hot meal and temporary lodging. Towns and villages near a holy temple might benefit from the low level clerics that focused on being priests instead of adventuring to develop their powerful divine magics.

Magic that finds its way into a lord's lands will be quickly noticed, and controlled. Magic users, even low level mundane casters can be powerful allies and useful tools for lords. These magic users can be harnessed to greatly benefit the lord, assist in the defense of their lands, and protect against the threat of revolts and uprisings.

THE MANORIAL SYSTEM

The manorial system is the backbone of any feudal society. Ultimately a nobles power, from the mightiest King to the lowest Knight, is derived from the amount of land they control, or more specifically the number of *manors* they control.

A manor is a region of land, around 2-3 square miles in area that is a self-sufficient economic unit in an agricultural society. This should not be confused with the *manor house*, where the lord or lady of the manor will live. This means that a manor is a region with enough farmland, forest, and meadow to support a village and ruler. All fiefs must contain at least one manor in order to support the noble who oversees the fief. The more manors a noble controls, the more power and influence they wield.

On average there is one manor every 5 to 15 square miles throughout a Kingdom. Regions with lower densities of manors are often left deserted, or populated by the fringes of society cast out of everywhere else.

LORDS & LADIES

The wielders of political and economic power in the medieval world were the various members of the nobility. They ruled through a combination of the accumulation of power, and belief in their innate rights to rule. In a D&D campaign where the gods are real and active, the forces of nature exert themselves, and anyone can read the right book and become a powerful wizard, the management of rights and power will be a delicate balance for any ruler.

FEUDAL STRUCTURE

The governments and economics of most D&D societies are based in Feudalism. This structure is common for societies at this stage of development due to its ability to simultaneously gather strength behind a ruler, as well as allow for the management and defense of huge plots of land by singular owners. A land owning lord would give out some of their land in the form of a fief to a Vassal. In exchange for these lands and their incomes, Vassals swear loyalty to their new liege, and promise services in the form of council and military support.

This section will explore the form of that feudal structure, the various tiers, and ranks that compose the complex hierarchy. This can be used to populate the nobility of a Kingdom by the DM, as well as for players to understand their place in any feudal structures they join. It should also be noted that the names of the various tiers and ranks used here is just one example of a very common structure used by virtually every feudal society. Royalty is royalty regardless of if it's a King, Rex, or Shogun.

IMPERIAL TIER

The imperial tier is the highest tier that can exist in a feudal hierarchy, but is not always present. Empires form when a number of individual and independent states are bound together under a single ruler either through political maneuvering, religious affiliation, or conquest. Regardless of its manner of formation, imperial states tend to be very weakly bound, and require constant work on the part of the Emperor or Empress and the Imperial Family, the only members of this tier, to maintain their authority over the various states.

Empires have no definite size, simply being as large as their member composing states. As a rule of thumb the more powerful the Emperor or Empress, the larger the Empire can become under them, but the larger the empire is the more difficult it becomes to maintain it. For empires formed through conquest, it is quite common for such entities to break apart upon the death of the conquerer, unless their heir can demonstrate they have the strength and resolve to maintain the empire. Empires of political alignment tend to exist in a place between formed and broken, with infighting between

member states constantly, but remaining united when dealing with outside threats. Religiously affiliated empires tend to be the most stable, as their cultures are united by a singular belief if nothing else, but can still fracture under a weak leader.

For most empires, the leader is also the reigning monarch of their home kingdom, and gain the benefits from that position as described in the next section.

ROYAL TIER

The royal tier is often the highest tier that exists in a countries hierarchy. This tier is defined by the formation of an independent country, or Kingdom, and is composed uniquely by the Royal Family of that Kingdom. As with the imperial tier, while members of the royal family may have titles belonging to the Peerage or Gentry, they are still considered to be members of the Royal Tier, and thus their titles while bestowed upon them are considered to be Royal Titles.

The King or Queen is the head of the Royal Tier as the leader of a Kingdom. This is often the person that owns the majority of the land within their Kingdom, though not all. Typically weak royals would only own 55-60% of the land in their kingdom, and will rely heavily on strong alliances with the other land owning nobles of their kingdom to remain in power, or depend heavily on rights bestowed upon them by powerful entities. Stronger rulers will own closer to 80-85% of their own territory, and are much more secure in their rule.

Kingdoms range in size wildly from 8,000 square miles at the smallest up to a limit of around 165,000 square miles, with most falling in the region from 30,000 square miles to 80,000 square miles. Typically the more resources a region has the smaller the Kingdoms tend to be, as more states compete for the plentiful lands. Population densities in these kingdoms will be around 80 - 100 people per square mile on average, and will have around 45% - 55% of their total land area be habitable in the form of manors. More desolate regions have large sprawling Kingdoms with large swaths of empty, uncontested land, an average population density that can fall as low as 20 - 40 people per square mile, and will only have Manors on around 10% - 25% of their land.

THE PEERAGE

The peerage is the most populated tier within the feudal hierarchy and is made up of at least three different ranks; however, it is possible to create multiple titles for the same rank differentiating them in a variety of ways. For instance some might call the lord of a County along the border of a country a Marquis, which would have a greater military obligation, and therefore a higher social rank than a traditional lord. Or differentiation could be made between nobles who own their land, and those who have been granted lands as vassals. Furthermore for different organizational structures, one could even intro-

duce another whole set of titles. For this section, the basic three ranks shall be focused on, and the information provided can be extrapolated to fit in extra titles as needed.

Unlike with the imperial and royal tier, the family of a noble are not considered to be members of this tier until they gain a title of their own. Depending on the rank within the peerage however, it is not uncommon for children of nobles to have stations of their own, and even at lower ranks it is considered common courtesy to apply the rank of the parents to the children as well.

Duchy A duchy is the largest form of fief that exists within a Kingdom, and they are ruled by a Duke or Duchess. A typical duchy is around 8,000 square miles in land area and contains 1,000 manors, though duchies have been as small as 1,600 square miles (200 manors) and as large as 15,000 square miles (1,875 manors).

While considered a fief, really many Dukes and Duchesses will own their duchy, and will exist in an alliance with the ruler of the Kingdom. Some will be vassals of the ruler directly, though highly respected and valued, as they are granted the huge swaths of land to oversee. 90% of the land in a Kingdom that isn't owned by the Sovereign themselves is owned by the Dukes and Duchesses of the Kingdom.

County Counties are smaller than duchies, but still considered to be sizable plots of land. They are often granted as fiefs to powerful and loyal vassals, known as a Count or Countess. A typical county is around 500 square miles, composed of around 63 manors, but they can be as small as 160 square miles (20 manors) or as large as 800 square miles (100 manors).

It is rare for a Count or Countess to own the county they rule, as most are vassals of another, but around 10% of the land not owned by the Sovereign themselves is owned by a few counts or countesses.

Barony The smallest fief among the noble ranks is the Barony ruled by a Baron or Baroness. Virtually all barons and baronesses are vassals to another, be it the Sovereign, a Duke/Duchess, or even a Count/Countess. The typical barony is only around 90 square miles and composed of 11 manors. As with the other fiefs a large range of sizes do exist from 15 - 120 square miles ranging from 2 - 15 manors.

THE GENTRY

The Gentry spans a rather large group of people in the feudal structure who are land holding vassals, but not members of the peerage. This commonly gets broken down into either Knights or Gentlemen and Ladies. All members of the Gentry typically held fiefs of only 1 or 2 manors, and were always vassals to another who granted them their lands.

Knights were trained warriors who provided military service in exchange for their fiefs. They formed the basis for medieval armies. When a noble would march to war, he or she would call upon all of their vassal knights, who in turn would collect the able bodied men from their own villages, and march to the aid of their liege.

Gentlemen and Ladies were members of the Gentry not trained for military action. Such individuals are typically only found far away from border territories and in older Kingdoms. They are typically important advisors to their liege and are compensated in the form of their own lands.

FREEMEN

Freemen are considered to be low born, but they are not bound to a land or the feudal system. As with the Gentry, this covers a range of individuals of different positions. Merchants and Tradesmen were freemen that were able to train and learn their craft. Merchants typically travel around and between Kingdoms moving various goods. Tradesmen typically settle into villages along side peasants and apply their trade, with the lords permission, or else go to cities.

Yeoman are also freemen, who own their own tracts of land, usually 15 - 60 acres. It is not uncommon for a member of the Gentry to sell or give out some of their lands to special Yeoman who can then help to manage the rest of their manor for them, or in the case of Knights to become capable men-at-arms within their fighting force. Most Kingdoms had requirements for yeomen, allowing a lord to re seize their lands if they failed to meet these arbitrary requirements.

PEASANTS

The lowest class in society, peasants, or serfs are bound to the manor they work unable to leave. The serfs are given lands within the village to build a home and land on the manor to farm for themselves, and in exchange they work the lords farmlands, fight in their conflicts, and owe taxes to their lord. Richer peasants could be granted 20-40 acres of land for their families, while poorer cotters might only have around 2-5 acres, and would often have to work as farm hands in order to survive.

THE KINGDOM OF UDHAR

The Kingdom of Udhār is an middling Kingdom for comparison. It is 42,500 square miles in area with a population of around 2,500,000 people. Udhār is divided up into 6 duchies. Within these duchies are a total of around 85 counties, and several hundred baronies. In total there are approximately 5,300 manors across the kingdom, meaning around 31% of the Kingdom is settled.

BECOMING A NOBLE

For most D&D groups that play long enough, they will eventually become involved with the nobility. Whether the result of players attempting to gain lands to build a Stronghold of their own, or a King attempting to bind the players and their power to their own rule, the path to lordship is one most adventuring parties find themselves on in one form or another.

The question for players and DM's alike then becomes, how can a party gain lands and titles. This section will explore the different methods to become a noble in a typical feudal system that are potentially available for a player character.

INHERITANCE

The most straightforward, and most commonly used method to gain lands and titles is through inheritance. Most campaign worlds operate on a hereditary system, where the lands and titles of an individual pass to their next of kin upon their death. A player that takes on the **Noble** background can work with their DM to establish what noble rank their family holds, and where they sit in the line of succession for that title.

Similarly, players that become romantically involved with a nobles son or daughter could wind up as an heir to those lands through their noble spouse. While such a union is generally frowned upon by a noble family if an adventurer is of common birth, exceptions can and are made for powerful adventurers regardless of their station.

The rank of ones parent, and the order of one's birth together will decide what kind of titles and lands a child could eventually earn. Higher ranks typically have a number of lesser titles that they can bestow upon children, making them into vassals of their mother or father, with the eldest child eventually inheriting that title for themselves.

It is not uncommon when inheriting lands for the liege to charge a fee, known as a relief, upon the inheritor. Paying the fee, typically a full years income from the fief, guarantees the heir a position as the new vassal and possession of the fief held by their parent.

BECOMING A VASSAL

Next to inheriting a title from a parent, becoming a vassal to another noble is the most common way to gain a title. This is most common to occur in relatively young Kingdoms with relatively few nobles. In these states there are still many opportunities and availabilities for new vassals to be made. In older, more established Kingdoms, creating a new vassal requires the creation of a new fief, which means reducing ones own lands, or taking of lands from another vassal, a process that's very difficult to do.

Rising adventurers are a group for whom lands can often be scrounged up. When adventurers are operating

within a Kingdom, they are often viewed as political rivals as they accomplish feats of heroism and gain popularity with the masses. That threat to a nobles authority can be turned into a political tool against other rivals if the adventurers can be made into vassals. As a result, it is common for player characters of high enough level to be offered lands by any nobles that know them and are aware of their exploits.

SETTLING UNCLAIMED LANDS

Settling of unclaimed lands is uncommon for most, though this is the method by which the first Kings took their power. This particular option for lordship comes with its own complications, the first of which is where to find such territory. Nearby to a settled Kingdom, it is rare to find sizable plots of unclaimed fertile land. When one does find such an area, it's typically unclaimed due to the presence of savage creatures, or fierce monsters. After such things are removed, neighboring lords will then often make opposing claims on the land in an attempt to suppress a new rival.

If lands are claimed in the relative proximity to an established Kingdom, they will often feel pressure from that Kingdom to join and pledge allegiance to the crown. Such arrangements typically grant the claiming lord a suitable title and ownership of their claimed land within the Kingdom in exchange for an oath of fealty.

Alternatively, making claims on land distant from an established Kingdom can make finding these lands to be easier, though its certain to have to use force to secure the claim. These distant regions also have problems attracting a peasant population.

PURCHASING LANDS

This is the rarest option by far for gaining lands and titles. Land is the basic unit of wealth and prestige in a feudal society. Only the most desperate and destitute of lords would consider selling lands they own. Even in those rare situations where lands can be purchased, doing so typically doesn't result in the bestowing of a title. Such an arrangement can allow players to gain lands to build their strongholds, without the need to engage with the social necessities of being a lord.

BEING A LORD OR LADY

Regardless of the method used or the rank of nobility granted, once an individual gains a title over lands of their own, they are empowered with certain rights on that land, responsibilities for the upkeep and management of that territory, and obligations owed to their liege. The only exception are those nobles that own their land and therefore have no liege.

NOBLES RIGHTS

The first right of a lord, is to manage their fief in any way they see fit, so long as it doesn't harm the land, nor the

integrity of their liege. This allows a lord to give out parts of their land as fiefs to their own vassals, enlist the use of Yeoman by giving or selling them small plots of land, or any other method they will use to manage it. It also means that a vassal owes loyalty only to their liege, and not directly to their liege's liege.

A noble also has exclusive rights to certain events and functions within their fief. They may hold tournaments, balls, banquets, and they have the lone right to hold court and administer justice. They also own the rights to all markets, fairs, and trade within their fief, which they use to collect taxes and fees from merchants that wish to organize such action within their manor. Under this right, nobles also have the right to visit a vassal's lands and be hosted by them, so long as they do not permanently damage their vassals ability to support themselves.

Nobles also retain certain rights over the lands they bestow as fiefs to their vassals. These are specifically the rights to forfeiture, relief, wardship, and escheatment, which all have to do with the transfer of possession of a fief. Under the right of forfeiture, a noble can revoke vassalage if they feel that their vassal is dishonoring them or violating their oaths. The right to a relief entitles a noble to a fee upon the transfer of a fief and vassalage to the heir of a deceased vassal. Under the rights of wardship, a noble can re-exert their control of a fief in the event of an underage heir, until the heir comes of age. Finally, escheatment is the right of a noble to reclaim their fief to their own possession if a vassal should die without an heir.

NOBLE'S OBLIGATIONS

In the vassalage ceremony, when a liege and vassal are made, a number of oaths are sworn by both parties. The first oaths sworn guarantee that the vassal shall not harm the reputation, lands, or person of their liege, and the liege vows not to abuse their power and order their vassal to take any actions that would dishonor them.

When taking on a vassal, a noble is honor bound to provide their vassals with a reasonable means to provide for themselves and their families, as well as swearing to provide military defense should they come under attack unjustly. The vassals of a noble then vow their service to their liege. For vassals this service comes in the form of military service and providing council to their liege.

MANAGING A MANOR

Regardless of the methods used to gain them, once players have acquired lands, they will almost certainly want to use them for personal gain. While most players will find the tedious duties of managing their lands undesirable, the information in this section is useful for DM's and those few players that wish to be more active in their lordly duties. Here the various resources, industries, and

expenses of the lands will be explored.

As mentioned in the introduction, the manor is an economically stable, self sufficient region. The 2-3 square miles of the manor will be composed of a mix of 60-85% arable land used for farmland, 10-30% of land is useful as meadow and pasture land for supporting livestock, and the rest of land is usually used by the lord for the construction of their estate, the village, and a church. Such manors are typically surrounded by forests that are part of the lords fief, and are used to collect firewood, hunt, and to let animals forage.

Manors could also be based upon the presence of a mine or quarry, with these industries forming the basis of their income. These manors could also have a few acres for agricultural pursuits, though the rocky terrain usually means most of the land is used for meadow and pasture land.

THE SHIRE OF YALLIS

The Shire of Yallis within the Kingdom of Udhar shall be our example for the following sections. The manor sits on 13 square miles of land, most of which is dense forest, though one corner does enter into a mountainous region. It contains two manors.

The primary manor of Yallis is 1472 acres in total, with around 78% of arable land, 1148 acres, another 12% of meadows and pasture, 178 acres. Of the remaining 146 acres, around 30 acres are used to support the village, 70 acres are reserved by the lord for his private estate, and the last 46 acres are set aside for the construction of a church.

A secondary manor in the mountainous corner of Yallis is 386 acres total, with 188 acres of arable land, 164 acres of pasture, and 34 acres for the village. The remainder of the manor is mountainous terrain with an existing Iron mine that can be worked.

FARMLAND

Agriculture is the backbone of any medieval economy. As self sufficient agricultural entities, Manors form the basis of that economy, and therefore of power in a feudal society. In early medieval periods, it was rare for a manor to produce more than it consumed. In later times, the average manor was able to produce extra food, and sell that food in city markets to support the beginnings of urbanization.

Within a manor, the lord dispenses lands to serfs in a similar feudal arrangement to those between a lord and vassal. A certain amount of farmland, usually around 15-25%, the lord will keep for their own uses, while the rest will be split up and awarded to serfs. The average serf is given around 12 acres of land, but it is seldom distributed equally, as shown in table 1 below. Those serfs that hold



less than 10 acres are typically forced to work as farm hands and perform various tasks in order to survive.

Acres	% of Serfs
25 - 35	11%
17 - 24	16%
10 - 16	27%
4 - 9	22%
1 - 3	18%
0	5%

Table 1: Distribution of Serf Lands

In exchange for being allowed to work these lands, serfs owe a rent to their liege, typically around 4 silver pieces per acre, as well as a labor obligation, requiring them to work the lords lands or perform other service for the lord of the manor.

As long as the lord continues to receive these rents, they tend to take little concern over these allotted lands. This allowed peasants to inherit their parents lands, as well as trade and exchange lands amongst themselves. It also meant that the village could decide what to plant. Note that most medieval farming systems utilized a three-field rotation system, meaning only two-thirds of a villages farmland would be planted in any given year.

Grains were the most important crop to be planted, coming in both spring and winter varieties. Wheat was generally more taxing on the land and was thus typically reserved for nobles. Rye and Corn (Maize) were the most common grains consumed by commoners. Barley was also grown in large quantities and usually made into beer, and lastly oats could be grown, typically to serve as extra animal feed.

Field space would also be set aside to grow peas, beans, and other vetches that were rotated with grains to keep the land fertile. In particularly cold areas that experienced a winter freeze, fields might also be planted with potatoes as they were a robust source of food.

The table below shows information on the typical

planting, yields, and prices of various crops on a feudal manor. These numbers would be common for the allotted lands, and for most manors the nobles lands would be planted in kind; however, it is always the right of the noble to decide how their lands were planted.

Crop	Planting	Yield	Price
Grains	70%	420 lb/ac	1 cp/lb
Vetch	21%	120 lb/ac	0.3 cp/lb
Potatoes	8%	1,500 lb/ac	0.1 cp/lb
Other	1%	—	—

Table 2: Crop Information

YALLIS - FARMLAND

On the primary manor of Yallis, the lord will reserve 240 acres for their own uses, 54 acres are given to Yeoman, and the other 854 acres are used as dependent lands to 72 peasant families, around 320 serfs in total.

On the secondary manor, the lord will keep only 48 acres to grow feed for the livestock kept there. The rest will be divided up among the 60 serf families on that manor, likely also for animal feed. The citizens here only pay 3 silver pieces of rent per acre due to the quality of the soil.

It is to warm in Yallis to reliably grow potatoes, so instead fields are typically planted with around 74% grain, 24% Vetch, and the rest with miscellaneous crops such as flax or and other utility crops. The lord of the manor can expect to collect around 49,725 lbs of grain, 4,600 lbs of vetch, 1,400 lbs of flax, as well as small amounts of various other crops in an average year. The lord will sell excess grains, around 15% of the harvest, for 77 gold pieces. He will also collect 3,836 silver pieces in rent from both manors.

LIVESTOCK

Raising livestock is another essential component of an agricultural economy. On some manors with particularly poor soil, livestock and the products they produce might become the center of their economy. Trading away their surplus for the foods they are unable to grow themselves.

The balance between using land to farm or raise livestock is a delicate, and as a result of this, only animals that are able to provide multiple products and benefits throughout their lives are given space on the farm. The ability to provide manual labor, wool, milk, meat, and hides are all valuable commodities on the farm, and the more of these things an animal can produce the better.

Unlike with arable land which is divided up into the nobles and dependent lands, and further divided among the serfs, pasture and meadow are more communal structures. All members of the community have the right, and sometimes the obligation, to the use of the manor pasture lands for their large animals. The villagers benefit by gaining access to grazing land for their animals, and the noble benefits by having exclusive access to the manure for use as fertilizer on his or her farm lands. Similarly, all villagers are entitled to cut a certain amount of hay from the meadows for use as winter feed.

This section will address the different types of animals that can be expected to be found on a typical farm, how common such an animal was, and what they would be used for or what could be collected from them. The tables will detail the average price, and upkeep requirements for various animals, as well as listing their annual yields averaged over their lifetime.

Animal	Feed (lbs)	Pasture	Price
Warhorse	2,500	6 ac	400 gp
Riding Horse	2,000	4 ac	75 gp
Draft Horse	3,000	5 ac	50 gp
Cattle	1,000	3 ac	12 gp
Goat	70	1 ac	15 sp
Sheep	375	0.75 ac	2 gp
Pig	50	–	1 gp
Chicken	12	–	1 sp

Table 3: Livestock Costs

Horses were rarely owned by peasants; however, even poor lords would own a few as a symbol of status, to serve them in war, as well as transport them and their goods between their own manors and the manors of their vassals and liege. A typical horse will be productive for between 20 to 25 years before they will be sold off and put down. Aged horses typically only sell for around 35 gold pieces.

Cattle were valuable in the medieval agrarian economy as a source of labor, milk, meat, and leather. Despite their value, they were also very expensive, creating a high barrier to ownership for many peasants, and even

prevented many lords from having large herds. A typical head of cattle will have around 12 to 15 years of productivity before being sent to slaughter. Male Oxen provide labor, but little else, while the cows will produce calves for slaughter and to replenish the herd, as well as milk. In an average year a herd of cattle will provide around 16 gold pieces of income per head.

Sheep were also valuable animals being able to provide milk, meat, hides, and importantly wool. Sheep also were cheap enough that they could be raised in large numbers, where it doesn't get too warm. An average sheep will remain productive for around 9-10 years before being sent to slaughter, though they don't start producing until they turn 2. In an average year a flock of sheep would produce an average of around 4 gold pieces per head.

Goats were valuable mostly in rocky terrain where it was difficult to raise cattle and other large animals. They provided meat, milk, and hides but in smaller quantities. Goats are also much easier to care for since they are able to eat a lot of waste rather than the more valuable grains and grasses used to feed other animals. The reduced overhead in caring for them make up for their lower productivity. An average heard of goats will produce around 2 gold pieces per goat.

Swine were also very important for peasant families as the primary source of meat in their diets. Swine foraged, and ate farm waste. A whole litter of 8 - 9 piglets could be born in spring and slaughtered before winter. Most peasant families would keep 1 - 2 pregnant sows through the winter with the litter being slaughtered at the end of the following Autumn. Swine were rarely a source of income for a family, instead providing meat directly; however, those that were selling the litter could expect a net income of around 3 gold pieces for a full grown litter.

Chickens are a universal presence on every farm. They are cheap, easy to maintain, and provide a constant source of protein in the form of eggs. It takes less than 6 months for a hen to begin laying eggs, and most continue to be productive for around 5 years. As with swine, chickens are rarely a source of income with the harvested eggs and meat being consumed by the family. For those families with extra chickens, an average chicken only provides around 22 copper pieces per year.

Animal	Annual Income
Cow	16 gp
Sheep	4 gp
Goat	2 gp
Swine	3 gp
Chicken	22 cp

Table 4: Livestock income per head

OTHER CREATURES

Bees For some lords that are lucky enough to have a hive of bees within the forests surrounding their manor, bee keeping can be a profitable endeavor. Hives are collected in the spring and relocated to the lords estate and looked after through the summer. In the autumn, the honey would be collected. Wealthier lords might hire specialized bee keepers able to collect the honey without destroying the hive, while poorer more inexperienced lords would often destroy the hive in the harvesting process and have to hope for a new hive next spring.

Dogs Like today, dogs were not uncommon on medieval farms and were considered pets and companions, though they were also often put to work as herders and guard dogs. Nobles would keep whole teams of dogs that would be trained to help with hunting, as well as herding.

Cats Cats were not uncommon, though it was rare to find a family that considered a cat their family pet. Instead they wandered the village and farmlands freely hunting mice, and other pests keeping them away from the villagers, and their stored grains.

YALLIS - LIVESTOCK

On the primary manor, the lord of Yallis keeps his warhorse, two draft horses, and 4 riding horses, 11 head of cattle and 28 sheep. On his estate the Lord also keeps 10 sows and 85 chickens year round. The livestock will consume around 39,720 lbs of feed per year and will use 93 acres of pasture. After his own consumption the lord can expect to make around 312 gold pieces.

The secondary manor holds another 164 acres of pasture. In this rocky manor the lord keeps another 36 sheep, consuming all of the feed grown by the lord on that manor and earning him an additional 144 gold pieces.

MINES

Mining can be a highly profitable enterprise when present on a manor; however they are rare. The presence of a mine can also create additional difficulties for a lord as they will face increased pressures by others to gain some control over their riches, and competition from neighboring lords for possession of the veins.

The tables in this section allow a DM to determine the presence, type, and worth of any mine located on a manor. Rolling on table 5 should only be done if the manor exists in a region where a mine is possible to exist, and details the presence, and quality of a present mine. Rolling, as required, on tables 6 and 7 will then determine what materials are present in the mine. Finally ta-

d100	Result
1-60	No Mine or Quarry
61- 90	Roll once on Table 6
91 - 95	Roll twice on Table 6
96 - 98	Roll once each on Table 6 and Table 7
99	Roll once on Table 6 (2x Yield)
100	Roll on Table 6 (3x Yield)

Table 5: Mine Existence & Quality

ble 8 later in this section will detail the average yield of such a mine and its overall worth.

d100	Result
1 - 24	Sandstone
25 - 43	Limestone
44 - 55	Slate
56 - 65	Clay
66 - 73	Iron
74 - 80	Lead
81 - 85	Coal
86 - 89	Tin
90 - 93	Copper
94 - 97	Salt
98 - 99	Mercury
100	Roll on Table 7

Table 6: Common Materials

In more realistic, low magic settings, mines are most likely to be found in manors that lie in the foothills or at the base of nearby mountains where such deposits have been pushed up near the surface. In more magical campaign worlds with rich histories of great magical feats and magic-induced calamities, mines could occur anywhere either through direct formation by magic, or the formation and subsequent obliteration of a mountain range.

d100	Result
1 - 33	Granite
34 - 47	Common Gemstones
48 - 70	Marble
71 - 72	Uncommon Gemstones
83 - 97	Silver
98	Rare Gemstones
99	Gold
100	Special*

Table 7: Rare Materials

Special: Adamantine, Mithril, or Platinum

Mines typically operate under what is known as the **Rule-of-Thirds** when determining the distribution of wealth for the mine. The first third of the mined material is paid to the noble who owns the land the mine is on, this is typically the King/Queen or one of the more pow-

erful members of the Peerage such as a Duke or Duchess. The next third of the mined material is paid to the lord who manages the fief, this could be any member of the nobility from the Sovereign to a member of the Gentry, whichever vassal is directly managing those lands. The final third of the mine's wealth is awarded to the miners themselves, distributed by the foreman who gained the lords permission to operate a mine.

Material	Annual Yield	Price
Rare Gems	(1d4)x20 gems	2,500 gp/gem
Uncommon Gem	(1d4)x50 gems	300 gp/gem
Common Gems	(1d4)x150 gems	30 gp/gem
Adamantine	100 lbs	1,000 gp/lb
Mithril	100 lbs	750 gp/lb
Platinum	150 lbs	500 gp/lb
Gold	1,000 lbs	50 gp/lb
Silver	3,000 lbs	5 gp/lb
Mercury	1,500 lbs	4 gp/lb
Copper	12,000 lbs	5 sp/lb
Tin	10,000 lbs	8 sp/lb
Coal	10,000 lbs	6 sp/lb
Lead	50,000 lbs	1 sp/lb
Iron	60,000 lbs	1 sp/lb
Clay	80,000 lbs	2 cp/lb
Salt	150 lbs	100 gp/lb
Marble	800 tons	15 gp/ton
Granite	800 tons	12 gp/ton
Slate	1,000 tons	9 gp/ton
Limestone	1,000 tons	6 gp/ton
Sandstone	1,000 tons	5 gp/ton

Table 8: Prices & Yields for Mines & Quarries

YALLIS - MINE

The secondary manor within Yallis is known to host an iron mine. The roughly 290 residents of the manor split time between the management of the farmland and livestock, and working the mines themselves. The mine yields around 60,000 lbs of Iron a year, and using the rule of thirds, 20,000 lbs go directly to the King of Udhar, 20,000 lbs go directly to the Lord of Yallis, and the last 20,000 lbs of Iron are divided up amongst the miners. The foreman who has rights to operate the mine keeps 2,500 lbs for himself, and the other 17,500 lbs are divided up amongst the serf families, around 290 silver pieces per family.

VILLAGE & INDUSTRIES

In addition to the lands, the lord or lady of the manor also has exclusive rights to operate all trade and industry within the manor. This allows the noble to give out the right to operate certain trades on their lands in exchange

for hefty rents. Table 14 below lists a number of common industries, the village population needed to support it, and the annual rent owed to the noble. This list is not exhaustive, larger villages and towns will attract rarer and more exotic industries and artisans to provide their services.

Industry	Population	Annual Rent
Grain Mill	200	200 gp
Baker	100	75 gp
Brewer	125	50 gp
Butcher	250	75 gp
Blacksmith	300	125 gp
Cheese Maker	350	25 gp
Carpenter	400	75 gp
Tanner	500	25 gp
Fuller	350	25 gp

Table 9: Industries & Rents

The circumstances of a manor will also affected the expected population minimum. Villages that use very little land for raising animals, preferring instead to farm as much as possible will see fewer Butchers, Tanners, and Fullers, and possibly an extra mill. On the other hand villages that are almost exclusively based on raising livestock might not have any mills and would have more butchers, tanners, and fullers than would be expected.

The common industries listed on the table are detailed further in the sections below. As mentioned, this list is not comprehensive; however it does display the types of industries that can be found in most every village across a Kingdom. When determining the rent owed for an industry not included on here use, the rents are typically 20-40% of the estimated annual income from such an industry in the manor.

MILLS

For obvious reasons, grain mills were vital to a large agricultural economy. Watermills were fairly common using running water to power the mill, although windmills would be used in regions with no powerful waterways around and decently strong winds. Millers grind raw grain into flour to be used in baking bread and other goods.

Millers also commonly serve other functions on the manor. It is common for mills to be connected to bridges over the waterways that power them, and millers were entitled to collect a toll from anyone using their bridge to cross. The miller would also typically collect stalks and reeds that grew in the millpond, to sell for use in thatch or swine feed. The miller could also sell permissions for villagers to fish in the millpond.

BAKERS

Connected to the Miller, bakers are the next step in the agricultural economic system. Bakers buy the flour from

the mills, and bake it into breads which they sell back to the villagers.

Bakers were much more common than millers because of the lower overhead for setting up a bakery compared to a mill. It was common for bakers and brewers in small communities to be run by a husband-and-wife pair to consolidate costs in these lower profit areas.

BREWERS

Brewers, like bakers and millers, are attracted to large agricultural regions. They buy raw grain, typically barley, and use it to brew beer. Any who calls themselves a brewer will know how to make an ale, and in smaller villages its likely all they can make. Larger villages, and those with orchards, and vineyards, will attract more skilled brewers that are capable of making ciders, wines, and liquors.

As a general rule you get 1 gallon of beer for every 5 lbs of grain. Ciders also produce 1 gallon for every 5 lbs of fruit. 1 gallon of wine will consume 35 lbs of grapes, and a gallon of liquor will consume an entire around 50 lbs of grain or fruit.

As mentioned in *Bakers*, it was not uncommon for the baker and brewer to be a husband-and-wife team. As villages grow larger however, it becomes more likely to attract a more specialized brewer to start their own tavern to sell their wares. In even larger villages the most popular of these taverns will begin to become inns.

BUTCHERS

The more important livestock is to a manor, the more butchers will be attracted to the village. Butchers buy the aging, or unproductive animals from their owners, slaughter and carve the animal, and then sell the meats to the village.

BLACKSMITHS

There tends to be at least one blacksmith on all but the smallest of villages, often with a lord waiving their rent if necessary to attract one. This is because blacksmiths are essential to the village. They make all the basic tools ranging from plows to scythes and sickles. They also make and repair the lords weapons and armor, and make and replace parts for the mill.

Smiths are attracted to mining towns and in such places they will often start to specialize with lower skilled smelters being common to separate metals from the base ores, and a few smiths that specialize in the use of whichever metal is being mined.

CHEESE MAKERS

This is another common industry as milk tended to go bad quickly without a source of magic to preserve it. Cheese however was much easier to store for long periods of time, and to transport to markets. Any community with sizable populations of cows, goats, or sheep would

typically need at least one cheese maker to be able to turn the collected milk into cheeses, butters, and other dairy products.

Skilled cheese makers could produce 4 lbs of cheese from every 5 gallons of milk they purchased on average.

CARPENTERS

As with blacksmiths, all but the smallest villages will have a carpenter. Carpenters are vital for the construction of the most important buildings in a village: the mill, barn, silos, and even the lords manor.

Once a village is formed the carpenter often keeps busy making various repairs to the structures that are around, but it takes a rather large village to attract additional carpenters.

TANNERS

Tanners, like butchers, rely on the livestock of the manor to make their living, buying the skins and hides of the animals after slaughter. Tanners are typically set into distant parts of the village due to the odors released in the production process, and a reluctance from the village to increase the odors generally keeps the number of tanners fairly low.

FULLERS

Fullers rely on the presence of sheep. Fullers take the raw wool sheered off of the sheep in the spring and turn into into workable thread and cloth. They will then sell that to the villagers, or in larger villages to tailors and seamstresses for the production of clothing.

YALLIS - INDUSTRY

The primary manor of Yallis has a population of around 350 people. This means we would expect there to be 1.75 mills, 3.5 bakers, 2.8 brewers, 1.4 butchers, 1.17 blacksmiths, 1 cheese Makers, 0.875 carpenters, 0.7 tanners, and 1 fullers. Given the make up of the manor we will round this out to 2 mills, 4 bakers, 3 brewers, 1 butchers, 1 cheese maker, 1 blacksmith, 1 carpenter, and 1 fuller.

The secondary manor of Yallis is slightly smaller with a population of around 290 people, producing an expected 1.45 mills, 2.9 bakers, 2.32 brewers, 1.16 butchers, 0.97 blacksmiths, 0.83 cheese makers, 0.73 carpenters, 0.58 tanners, and 0.83 fullers. Being dominated by livestock and miners, and with no real source of power for the mill we will say that there are 2 butchers, 3 blacksmiths (2 are smelters), 1 cheese maker, 1 tanner, and 1 fuller.

The lord of Yallis will collect a total of 1,650 gold pieces in rents from the various industries on both manors.

THE PRIVATE ESTATE

A noble's estate is a private sanctuary for themselves, as well as their guests. Nobles can use the land for their own enjoyment, building opulent gardens and landscapes, or use the lands to produce different commodities such as honey, wine, or liquor. This section will discuss the various sources of income that hail from a lords estate.

ORCHARDS & VINEYARDS

It is not uncommon for nobles in the right latitudes to have a small orchard or vineyard located on their private estate. Apple orchards are common in northern climates, though the fruits are rarely eaten by people with very few palatable varieties. Instead these apples are mostly used to make ciders, liquors, and some are used for animal feed. Other regions might also see orchards growing cherries, peaches, plums, or pears for use as food, as well as in the production of wines or liquors.

In warmer climates, vineyards are more common growing grapes for use in wine. On average a vineyard can produce around 100 gallons of wine per acre, though this is typically the more common, and watery variety of wines. With a proper winemaker, an acre of vineyard could produce 80 gallons of good wine or 45 gallons of fine wine.

A noble will typically keep most of what they produce for themselves and entertaining guests, but on average a vineyard or orchard can produce around 25 gold pieces per acre.

LORDS JUSTICE

As mentioned in the *Lords Rights* section, the lord or lady of a manor has exclusive rights to administer justice on their manor. They settle all criminal and civil disputes brought before them by the villagers who inhabit the manors they oversee, within the bounds of the laws of their liege. It is also a lord or ladies right and responsibility to settle disputes between their own vassals. Bringing a case before the noble costs court fees, and criminals found guilty are often forced to pay additional fines that all go into the nobles coffers.

In an average year, the total amount of fees and penalties that a lord will collect from the dispensing of justice will average out to around 5 silver pieces for each serf family within the village.

MISCELLANEOUS INCOMES

There are a variety of other small incomes that a lord or lady might be able to collect on their manor. This might come from specific abilities that a player or non-player character have, or fees and taxes levied within the manor. A DM can consider each of these sources individually, or approximate these various incomes as 1% of the incomes from agriculture and livestock.

YALLIS - LORDS MANOR

The lord's private estate spans 70 acres on the primary manor. On these lands the lord has built his house, complete with both decorative and vegetable gardens. He also has a small 10 acre orchard on the estate.

In an average year the lord will collect 250 gold pieces from the sale of ciders and spirits, 66 gold pieces in fines and penalties from dispensing justice among the 132 families living on the two manors, and another 11 gold pieces in miscellaneous incomes throughout the year.

MANOR EXPENSES

The noble will have several expenses to maintain their position and status among the nobility. Paying staff, maintaining and upgrading their residence, fees they owe to their own lieges, the social costs of hosting and attending balls, and tournaments, and a myriad of other events.

This section will delve into these various expenses and provide estimates for determining their average annual cost.

MAINTENANCE

Throughout the year, a noble must maintain their own residence, a large communal barn, other buildings located on their estate, as well as the mill, ovens, and other structures needed for licensed industry.

On average, a manor will have to completely rebuild itself every 25 years, providing an average of 4% of the manors construction value in a year. To provide some randomness from year to year, this can be approximated as $1\% \times (2d4 - 1)$. You can determine a structures value using rules in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* or other rule source of your choice. Alternatively you can use the following estimate based on the noble's rank.

Noble Rank	Est. Keep Value
Gentry	15,500
Baron/Baroness	30,000
Count/Countess	60,000
Duke/Duchess	120,000
Royal	250,000
Imperial	275,000

Table 10: Estimated Stronghold Values

SOCIAL CONSUMPTION

In order to maintain status among the other nobility, a certain amount of coin must be spent on social matters. This includes the costs for entertaining visitors to the manor, hosting tournaments, donations to religious groups or patronage of the arts, and the various outfit-



ting, decorating, and other expenses that go into such an arrangement.

As a general rule, the more a lord or lady spends on this, the greater their standing will be. It is considered a sign of wealth and opulence to spend on such matters. Poorer nobles can get away with spending only around 5% of their total incomes; however, as their rank grows, they will be expected to attend more social functions and give more, with expenses could reach as high as 15-20% of the income for a powerful Duke or member of the royal family.

SERVICE & SCUTAGE

It is the feudal obligation of a vassal to perform service for their liege. This often takes the form of military service such as hunting outlaws, providing an escort for their liege, serving as a sentry at one of their liege's outposts, or serving in the army of their liege during times of war. Higher tier nobles such as Dukes, Counts, and even powerful Barons typically pay a fee known as a scutage, typically around 8-12% of a manor's incomes, to be released from this service in times of peace. During times of War these nobles will be expected to lead their own knights and armies in opposition to their enemy.

Additionally, vassals are expected to provide council for their liege. This includes providing differing opinions, advice in their areas of expertise, assistance in settling disputes between other vassals, and any other service of the kind. Liege's are much more lax on this service, typically only requiring those vassals who have valuable expertise or experience to serve.

SERVANTS

Paying the various members and attendants of a nobles court is one of the most expensive parts of running a manor. These costs can be reduced by shrewd nobles through the awarding of fiefs, lands, or other forms of

payment, but it still remains a significant expense.

For officers of the lords court, it is not uncommon for a lord to pay them by making them Yeoman, and giving them 12-20 acres rent free that they will own outright. Higher ranking advisors, such as arcane and divine advisors, will be made into vassals, granting them their own fiefs, and ensuring their loyalty, if the lord is of high enough rank and with enough holdings.

Table 11 shows the annual pay due to various positions in a nobles employ should they pay in gold. Additional details on each position are given below.

Position	Annual Pay
Advisor	500 gp
Steward	300 gp
Officer	225 gp
Skilled Hireling	115 gp
Guard/Soldier	75 gp
Unskilled Servant	30 gp

Table 11: Servant Pay Rates

A special note on the pay rates listed in Table 11. These are lower than suggested in the *Player's Handbook* because employment outside the city provides a lower cost of living, less risk, and greater consistency than whatever the adventurers that just rolled into town are paying for.

Advisor Advisors are highly skilled and experienced individuals hired to offer council in their specific areas of expertise. The three most common advisors are in arcane matters, often a wizard, religious matters, often a priest or cleric, and legal advisor or military advisor. It is uncommon for advisors to be paid for their service, instead

being granted fiefs of their own and tying their knowledge and experience to their liege's rule.

Steward The most important official in a noble's court, the steward is responsible for overseeing all of their lord or lady's manors. They speak with the authority of the lord, and it is often the Steward that will handle minor affairs within the manors. As with advisors it is more common for a steward to be granted lands (as a Yeoman) rather than to be paid.

Officers The officers of the court are individuals empowered by the noble to run the various aspects of the manors. They are overseen by the Steward, but are the ones present to handle the day-to-day affairs of the manor they serve. There will be a set of officers on each of the lords manors, while the lord will visit at least once a year. There are a total of five different officers, though smaller manors might see one person filling multiple titles and some offices simply not occupied out of lack of necessity. Officers are just as common to be made Yeoman as not, depending on the size of the manor.

The Baliff is the head of the manor when the noble or the steward are not present. They oversee the operation of the manor as a whole, collect all taxes, fees, etc.

The Reeve is in charge of keeping the peace and enforcing the laws, as well as ensuring that labor obligations are served by the serfs.

The Hayward is the officer responsible for overseeing the lords agricultural holdings. They organize and work the farmhands, as well as oversee the livestock and pastures.

The Warden is employed to look over the lands *outside* of the manor. They watch the forests and lands at the boundary of a nobles lands on the look out for threats, poachers, or any other ill.

The Chamberlain is the last of the officers, and is the head of the lord or lady's household staff. Everything that happens in the manor house is under the purview of the Chamberlain from the decoration, to the meals, and even the idle gossip spread by the servants.

Skilled Hirelings Examples of these hires include barbers, doctors, huntsmen, tailors, captain-of-the-guard, or any other trained professional that offers a service or insight useful to a noble. Typically any skilled hireling is paid, and will live at the primary manor and travel with the lord or lady.

Guards/Soldiers These individuals have undergone minor training and been outfitted with simple armor and weapons by the lord in order to provide security for the estate, village, and manor as a whole. These individuals are not a hardened fighting force, though they are a little better than a standard conscript, and they are prepared

to utilize the defenses of the manor to defend it against raiders and bandits.

Unskilled Servants The most numerous of positions in the lords employ. Unskilled labor is used for everything from farmhands to chambermaids, attendants to shepherds, and any other task the lord or lady requires. There will typically be a permanent staff of a dozen unskilled servants on the primary manor of a lord or lady, and each other manor will employ 1-2 servants to assist with the officers. All other service needs are fulfilled by the serfs of the manor.

ALMS

It is social custom that a certain amount of the lord or lady's wealth will be given as charity to the poor. This usually takes the form of giving out stale loaves of bread from the previous day, discarded clothing, older animals, and other things that have diminished worth to the noble, but that the poorest members of the manor couldn't live without.

The average noble will see around 2% of their total income be given away as alms to the poor on their various manors.

YALLIS - EXPENSES

As a member of the Gentry, the lord of Yallis only pays 280 gp for various social functions and 750 gp to his liege as scutage. His large residence does cost him around 800 gp in annual upkeep, in addition to around 110 gp worth of alms.

The lord compensates his religious advisor with 46 acres upon which to build a church. His Steward holds 20 acres in compensation for his services and 17 acres each go to the two Reeve's for the two manors. The lord additionally pays a sorcerer to advise him on magical affairs, a Baliff, Heyward, Chamberlain, costing him a total of 1,400 gp for their services.

The lord also employs a dozen guards stationed around the manor, and fourteen unskilled servants costing the lord an additional 1,320 gp in wages.

The lords total incomes average out to 4,894 gp while his annual expenses are around 4,660 gp. The extra 234 gp will often be saved for leaner years, used to finance additions to the lords estate, and used on extra social functions to boost the lords influence and favor within the Kingdom.