

*A Medieval monastery was a farm, an inn, a hospital, a school and a library.*

*A Medieval monastery received pilgrims and travellers, at a period when western Europe was almost destitute of inns*

*A Medieval monastery performed many works of charity, feeding the hungry, **healing** the sick who were brought to their doors, and distributing their medicines*

*A Medieval monastery provided **education** for boys who wished to become priests and those who intended to lead active lives in the world*

*A Medieval monastery copied the **manuscripts** of classical authors preserving valuable books that would otherwise have been lost*

*A Medieval monastery kept records of the most striking events of their time and acted as **chroniclers** of the medieval history of the Middle Ages.*



*These are monks – you can tell by their hair styles. Can you spot their working boots? What are they doing?*



# MEDIEVAL FACT SHEET 4



## *Buildings and Rooms in a Medieval Monastery*

*The following rooms would be included in a plan of a Medieval monastery.*

**Cellarium** - *store-house of a monastery*

**Chapter-house** - *The chapter house was a room in which monks met daily, to discuss business and to hear a chapter of the monastic rule*

**Cloister** - *the cloister was a covered walkway in a monastery often situated around an quadrangle. A cloister often comprised of a plain wall or colonnade on the outer side and a series of windows on the inner side*

**Dorter** - *a dorter was a monastic dormitory. Sometimes the monks slept in isolated rooms called cells*

**Frater** - *a frater was another term for a refectory (dining room)*

**Garderobe** - *a garderobe was a lavatory in a medieval building*

**Granary** - *A monastery storehouse for threshed grain*

**Infirmary** - *the infirmary was the part of a monastery which housed the monks who were too sick or old to take part in the normal monastic life*

**Kitchen** - *The monastery kitchen where food was prepared and cooked*

**Lavatorium** - *the lavatorium was a room which contained a trough with running water where monks washed their hands before meals*

**Misericord** - *a misericord was the part of a monastery where monks were disciplined*

**Night Stair** - *A staircase used by the monks to enter a church directly from their dormitory in order to attend late night and early morning services*

**Refectory** - *the refectory was dining hall of a monastery*

**Sacristy** - *the sacristy was a small building, usually attached to the chancel in which vestments and sacred vessels were kept*

**Scriptorium** - *the scriptorium was the room in a monastery used by clerics or scribes copying manuscripts*

**Warming-house** - *the warming house was the only room in a monastery, apart from the infirmary and kitchen, where a fire was allowed. Also called a Calefactory*



# MEDIEVAL FACT SHEET 5



## *Food facts - Bread*

*In the middle ages the diet was mainly bread, meat and fish. Bread was the most important and versatile part of the diet. Rich people ate a type of bread called Manchet which was a bread loaf made of wheat flour. Poor people ate rye and barley bread. Different types of bread made from wheat were as follows:*

*Manchet - Fine White Bread*

*Cheat or wheaten bread - Coarse texture, grey in colour*

*Ravelled Bread - containing less of the pure substance of the wheat*

*Brown or Black bread*

***Bread*** - until the 11<sup>th</sup> century bread was baked in the embers of the fire. It was polite to cut the crusts off as they were usually black and sooty. The first people in Britain to use ovens were the Romans, but this method of cooking disappeared until around the time the Normans invaded Britain.

*Bread that used yeast to make it rise was uncommon in Europe in the middle ages, so loaves were hard, thin and flat. Generally this kind of bread was used as "Trenchers" which were used instead of plates to serve meals. Once the gravy and juices had soaked into the bread it became soft enough to eat.*

### ***Biscuits***

*The crusaders developed a bread twice baked, or biscuit. This bread was very hard, and easier to keep than any other type. It was brought back to Europe and used for provisioning ships, or towns threatened with a siege, as well as in religious houses. At a later period, delicate biscuits were made of a sort of dry and crumbling pastry which retained the original name.*



# *Monasteries, Abbeys and Priories*

- *Monasteries were places where groups of men or women could live together and worship God. The men were called monks and the women were called nuns.*
- *A monastery is sometimes called an 'abbey' or a 'priory'. Monasteries for women are also sometimes called 'nunneries' or 'convents'.*
- *A monastery is sometimes called an 'abbey' or a 'priory'. Monasteries for women are also sometimes called 'nunneries' or 'convents'.*
- *Most important was the rectangular church (British or Saxon) to worship in. Saxon monasteries usually had more than one church in a line.*
- *A wall around the outside formed an enclosure. Monastery buildings within an enclosure are called the 'enclave'.*

- *The first monastery in Britain was set up in AD 429, by St. Cadfan on the Island of Bardsey in North Wales. The first Saxon monastery was set up by St. Augustine in Canterbury in Kent.*
- *Double monasteries were also popular. Here, men and women lived separately in two enclaves, but worshipped in the same church.*
- *An abbess was always in charge of a double monastery.*
- *There was a famous British double monastery at Gwytherin (in North Wales), set up by St. Winifred. There was a famous Saxon one at Whitby (in Yorkshire), run by St. Hilda.*
- *In the 10th century, St. Aethelwold reformed all the Saxon monasteries. He told them how they should set out their buildings and what they should believe.*
- *Monasteries were very popular in medieval times but, later, King Henry VIII destroyed them all. A few were set up again in Victorian times.*



## *Monks had lots of different jobs in the monastery*

*Abbot* - the head of an abbey

*Almoner* - an almoner was an officer of a monastery who dispensed alms to the poor and sick

*Barber Surgeon* - the monk who shaved the faces and tonsures of the monks and performed light surgery

*Cantor* - the cantor was the monk whose liturgical function is to lead the choir

*Cellarer* - the cellarer was the monk who supervised the general provisioning of the monastery

*Infirmarian* - the monk in charge of the infirmary (a kind of hospital)

*Lector* - a lector was a monk entrusted with reading the lessons in church or in the refectory.

*Sacrist* - the sacrist was the monk responsible for the safekeeping of books, vestments and vessels, and for the maintenance of the monastery's buildings

*Prior* - in an abbey the deputy of the abbot or the superior of a monastery that did not have the status of an abbey

*Which job would you chosen to do?*



# MEDIEVAL FACT SHEET 8



## Prayer

*The daily life of a Medieval monk during the Middle Ages centred around the **hours**. The Book of Hours was the main prayer book and was divided into eight sections, or hours, that were meant to be read at specific times of the day. Each section contained prayers, psalms, hymns, and other readings intended to help the monks secure salvation for himself. Each day was divided into these eight sacred offices, beginning and ending with prayer services in the monastery church. These were the times specified for the recitation of divine office which was the term used to describe the cycle of daily devotions. The times of these prayers were called by the following names -*

***Matins, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, Nones, Vespers and Compline:***

*Matins : the night office; the service recited at 2 am*

*Lauds : the early morning service approx 5am*

*Prime : The 6am service*

*Terce : the second of the Little Hours of divine office, recited at the third hour (9 am)*

*Sext : the third of the Little Hours of divine office, recited at the sixth hour (noon)*

*Nones : the fourth of the Little Hours of the divine office, recited at the ninth hour (3 pm)*

*Vespers : the evening service, recited before dark (4 - 5pm)*

*Compline : the last of the day services of divine office, recited before retiring (6pm)*

*Any work was immediately ceased at these times of daily prayer. The monks were required to stop what they were doing and attend the services.*

## *The Daily Life of Medieval Monks*

*The daily life of Medieval monks in the Middle Ages were based on the three main vows;*

*The Vow of Poverty*

*The Vow of Chastity*

*The Vow of Obedience*

*Medieval Monks chose to renounce all worldly life and goods and spend their lives working under the strict routine and discipline of life in a Medieval Monastery.*

*A monk's job was to **worship, read** and carry out **manual labour**. As well as attending church eight times a day (and night), they were expected to read the bible, pray and meditate. They spent the rest of the time working hard in the monastery and on its lands. Some monks looked after the monastery's animals on farms called Granges, which were often many miles away from the main monastery.*

*Here is a list of jobs that monks did;-*

*Washing and cooking for the monastery*

*Growing of vegetables and fruit in the garden*

*Reaping, Sowing, Ploughing, Binding and Thatching, Haymaking and Threshing*

*Producing wine, ale and honey*

*Providing medical care for the community*

*Providing education for boys and novices*

*Copying the manuscripts of classical authors*

*Providing hospitality for pilgrims*