

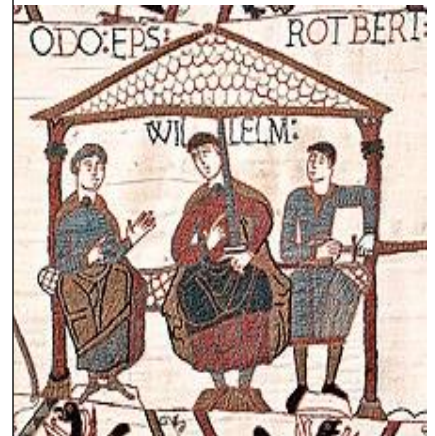
# Portslade in Medieval times. 1066-1485

## The Battle of Hastings, October 1066

The year is 1066. King Edward the Confessor of England has died childless, and Earl Harold Godwinson has been hastily crowned the new King Harold.

However, there are other contenders to the crown. 90 miles across the channel, William of Normandy's vast army is ready to invade England. He believes the crown belongs to him, and is ready to fight King Harold. The Normans envy England's efficient tax system, wealth and organised system of government; a system where only the King and his nobles could make money.

But King Harold does not want to give away his crown to a Norman Duke. The only solution is war.



The Normans land at Pevensey and the Battle of Hastings begins at 9am on October 14th. By 5pm, 14,000 fighting men are reduced to just 4000. The Normans are victorious and William the Conqueror is crowned King William 1st of England. He creates William de Warenne as the First Earl of Surrey and gives him vast amounts of land across 13 counties, including the land you are now standing on. William de Warenne was now one of the richest people in England and the owner of Portslade.

The Norman period in England has begun.

### History Detective

The drawings above are from the Bayeux Tapestry. This was made at the time of the Norman invasion, and tells the story in a 70 metre long fabric drawing.

### History Fact Checker – fake news?

Was King Harold really shot in the eye with an arrow? Actual accounts of the Battle – written at the time by the Normans – describe King Harold being hacked to death by four knights. However, the Bayeux Tapestry shows Harold with an arrow in his eye, but was this added in many years later?

## What did the Normans do for Portslade?

### Doomsday Book

The Domesday Book was written in 1086. It's a survey of all the land in England, who lives there, how many animals and what is its value. For Portslade, it states that there was one villager, farmland, four oxen, and had a rent value of 6 shillings – about £600 in today's money.

### Built stone buildings

The Normans were skilled stone masons, and built many stone castles, churches and homes. In Portslade they built St. Nicolas Church and Portslade Manor house. Can you recognise these famous Norman buildings? (answers on page 4)



### New words

The Norman French became the language of government in England. As a result of the Conquest, many French words were introduced to England:

- Beef
- Pork
- Royal
- Faith
- Science
- Famine
- Beautiful
- Castle



## Norman buildings still in Portslade.

The first building built by the Normans was Portslade Manor. It was built in 1130 by skilled stone masons from Normandy. The windows and doors are surrounded by a very special stone called Caen, so named from the place it comes from in France. This stone was more than decorative; it showed the wealth of the Lord who could afford it. The villagers and servants to the Manor would have lived in huts made of straw and mud.

The Normans were very religious, so a church was a 'must-have' for any Medieval Lord. You can see in the photo how close they were built to one another. Saint Nicolas Church was built soon after the manor was completed, although much smaller than it is today. However, by the end of the medieval period, the church was now the same size as it is today. Often, the Lord of the Manor had their own private entrance to the church, and reserved seating at the front.



## Life as a medieval Lord at Portslade Manor

The Lord of the Manor's role evolved around his Oath of loyalty to his immediate superior – usually the King. He would be expected to fight and provide soldiers and arms from his manor when called upon.

It was common for medieval lords to own several manors and therefore would not necessarily always be in residence Portslade manor house. The Lord of the Manor could equally be passed to a woman. Portslade's first female Lord of the Manor was Margaret de Burgh in 1226.

In certain cases, the Lord of the Manor performed legal functions over their workers and the villagers. They settled complaints and disputes, and granted the permission to marry. Poaching on the Lord's land was a major offence. The punishment for included hanging, blinding, or being sewn into a deer skin and then hunted down by ferocious dogs. Medieval lords were active in political discussions for England, and participated in the decision-making process.

Here is what a diary of a medieval Lord may have looked like:

6am – Wake up. Say morning prayers.

7am – Breakfast. White bread, fish and wine.

8am – Hear reports on the crops and cattle

10am – Reports on taxes and rents due

Midday – Lunch. Choice of six dishes

2pm – Preside over local disputes in manor court

4pm – Hunting and weapons practise

6pm – Evening prayers

7pm – Supper, followed by music, dancing or chat

9pm – Bedtime (for everybody!)



C'est parle d'une grant feste que le Roy Richard de Normandie fist a Londres.

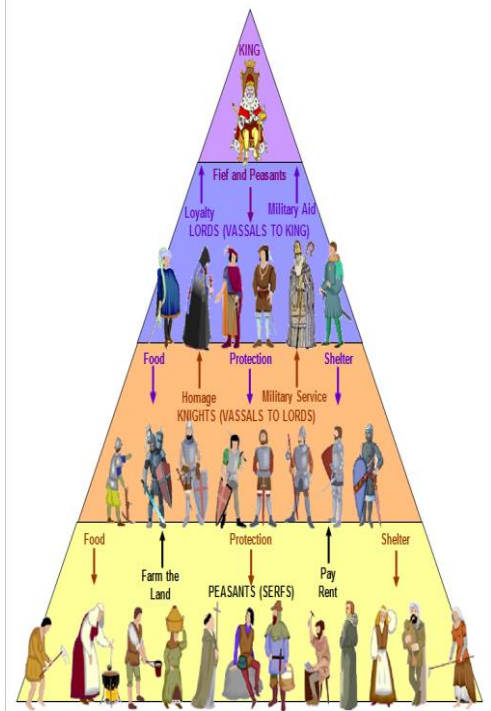
## Life as a medieval servant or peasant

The peasant's life was hard and the work back-breaking. Work duties followed the seasons: ploughing in autumn, sowing in spring, harvesting in August. Work began at dawn, preparing the animals, and it finished at dusk, cleaning them down and putting them back into the stalls. The more-fortunate peasant would work within the manor. Their duties included cooking, cleaning and waiting on the household. This was equally hard work as labouring, but had the benefit of being inside during the winter, and swiping the odd piece of food from the kitchen stores.

The peasants in the village ate mainly vegetables, plus anything that could be gathered locally – such as nuts, berries and nettles. They ate brown bread and drank weak, home-brewed beer as that was safer than drinking water, which was often contaminated. They would cook over an open fire situated in the middle of their small huts, which they shared with their animals.

The most difficult time for the peasants was in late spring, when food stores were running out and new food not yet grown. A poor harvest would mean that some villagers may starve to death. If starvation didn't kill them, then disease was always waiting in the wings. Illnesses like tuberculosis, sweating sickness, smallpox, dysentery, typhoid, influenza, mumps and gastro infections killed on a frequent basis. The average life expectancy for a peasant was just 30 years.

Typically, a labourer or farm hand would work six days a week, although they were given the odd day off for religious holidays. Peasant leisure time was rough – wrestling, shin-kicking and cockerel-fighting all very popular in Tudor times. The ball was almost unnecessary to a medieval version of football, which was basically a fight with the next village.



**Above:** A 13<sup>th</sup> century medieval peasant hut. You can visit this at Weald & Downland Museum, near Chichester.  
**Below:** Medieval football



### The Black Death

If life was not tough enough, a disease called The Black Death swept England in 1349.

Carried by fleas on rats, this disease is estimated to have killed around 30% of the population – rich and poor alike.

### Diary of a peasant

6am – Wake up. Clean and feed animals

7am – Breakfast. Weak beer, stale bread and onions

7.30am to 7pm. Ploughing, mowing, labouring

7pm – Dinner. Vegetable stew and brown bread

8pm – Sleep, as there are no lights or entertainments

Sleep, work, repeat

### Spoiler alert! Spoiler alert! Spoiler alert!

If you are feeling sorry for the peasants, fear not. Things do get better for them in the Tudor period, which starts in 1485 – or page 6 of this book



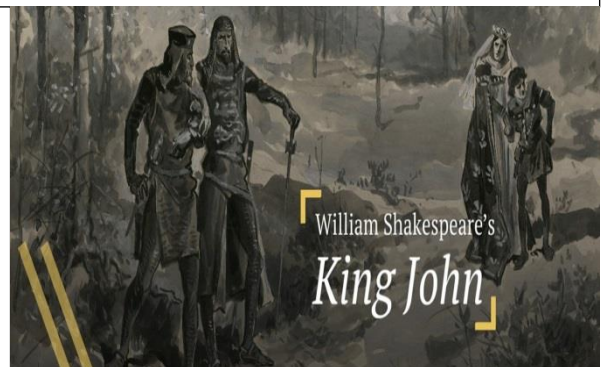
## Famous Portslade people in medieval times. Hubert de Burgh: Prime Minister

Hubert de Burgh (c.1170 – 1243) was one of the most influential men in England during the reigns of King John and King Henry III, until he lost the king's favour in 1232. De Burgh had many adventures and was celebrated by William Shakespeare play "King John".

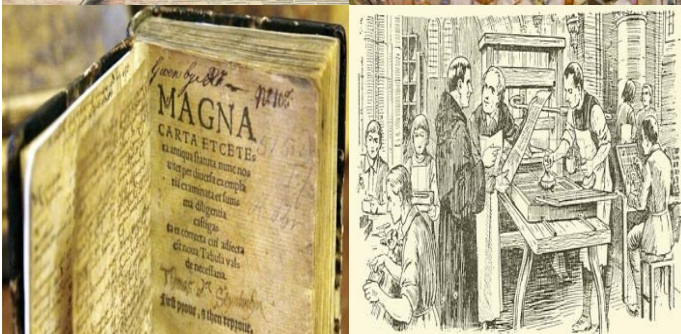
In Shakespeare's play, King John orders Hubert de Burgh to blind his 16-year-old nephew and rival to the English throne, Prince Arthur, to make him unfit to reign. However, de Burgh could not bring himself to carry out the dark deed, though told the King he had done so. In Shakespeare's play, Arthur dies jumping from a castle wall, possibly trying to escape, but it is generally believed that he was murdered by King John. King John was also the baddie in the Robin Hood stories.

In 1215, the unpopular King John was forced by the English barons to sign the Magna Carta, a charter that limited the power of the king. Hubert de Burgh was named as the person who would act on the king's behalf if the king were out of the country. He was also declared Chief Justiciar of England, the equivalent to a modern-day Prime Minister. In 1217, De Burgh commanded the English fleet that defeated the French at the Battle of Sandwich, and also became Lord of Portslade manor. In 1227 he was created Earl of Kent.

Hubert de Burgh married Isabelle, Duchess of Gloucester, the divorced wife of the late King John (who had died in 1216). Isabelle died soon after their marriage and it appears that Portslade Manor was given to Hubert de Burgh during this time. De Burgh married for a third time in 1221 to Margaret, sister of Alexander, King of the Scots. They had a daughter, also called Margaret, to whom de Burgh gave Portslade Manor in 1226.



## Famous events from medieval times. Can your name them and the year?



## Activities and discussion points

1. Draw a picture of the manor, or design your own
2. Why do you think the Normans chose Portslade to build a manor house?
3. Create a Domesday Book for your school
4. Draw your own Bayeux Tapestry on any event
5. You are Lord of the Manor. You have eight people working for you. What jobs would you give them?
6. If you had to write a school version of Magna Carta – a set of rules between teachers and pupils – what rules would you have?

## Quiz answers

Stone buildings, clockwise: Lewes Castle. Battle Abbey. St Nicolas Church, Dover Castle, Tower of London.

## Famous events

1. 1170 Thomas Becket is murdered at Canterbury Cathedral.
2. 1190 King Richard sets off on the Holy Crusades.
3. 1215 The magna Carta is signed.
4. 1476 Caxton develops the first printing press
5. 1485 King Richard III becomes the last king to die in battle, at The Battle of Bosworth Field.