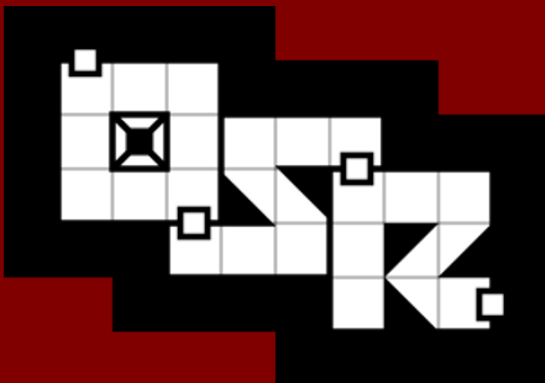


Feed a Baron!
Die of Cholera!

Burgs & Bailiffs Hunger, Disease & the Law



*Life in the Middle ages
was some kind of extremely hard-core live RPG
that went on 24 hours a day*



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Burgs & Bailiffs

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or

all those Burgers & Bailiffs that put their words on paper:

Paolo Greco, Mike Monaco, Shorty Monster, Steve Sigety, Jeremy Whalen, Rich Wilson

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Laid out on Dæmonic Automatic Machines with L^AT_EX

January 2013

Whence Burgs & Bailiffs?

Burgs & Bailiffs was conceived as a joke. My friend Michela and I were faffing around the interwebs when she joked how:

*Life in the Middle Ages was some
kind of extremely hard-core RPG
that went on for 24 hours a day*

What happened next is entirely my fault. It all started with a mocked cover, which is very close to what ended up being the cover. Then people asked “is this a real thing?” and, since I’m not able to answer “no” to such a question, it became a real thing with the help of a few good souls that contributed.

Without Shorty Monster, Steve Sigety, Jeremy Whalen, Rich Wilson, Tim Snider and Mike Monaco (which could not stop sending me articles) B&B would be much smaller or worse than it is now. Thanks guys. Really.

So, here it is, in all its non-peer-reviewed, no concerns for academic accuracy glory. Half of the articles don’t even have sources. No pretences, it’s just for fun and games.

Just some material that we hope will help you grim up your games, mix gravel in PCs’ food, stab them in the face and pierce them with arrows, bloodlet and mutilate them, besiege their city, arrest, torture, hang and quarter them.

Because we all know they deserve it.

Have fun and *grim onward!*

PS: send feedback, typos, rebuttals and complains to tsojcanth@gmail.com.

PPS: There are going to be more volumes if enough contributors will deliver articles.

Paolo Greco

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Medieval Tournaments: The Real Mêlées

by Rich Wilson

The classic image of medieval tournaments is of noble knights jousting at the tilt for glory and possibly the favour of a fair lady. Whilst this romantic image might bear some resemblance to the chivalric contests of the late medieval and renaissance period (14th – 16th centuries), the original tournaments of the middle ages (12th – 14th centuries) were an altogether more brutal and ruthless affair. But what makes a tournament a good scenario for a medieval fantasy RPG?

Dungeons have always been a staple scenario, because they provide an interesting bounded sandbox for the referee to run. They offer the players the adventure and chance of advancement and riches that they want, but only if they are willing to risk their characters' lives. In a lot of ways, this early form of the tournament can offer the same opportunities and more.

The main event in these early tournaments was known as the *mêlée* (this is where the word we all know originated). These events had more in common with an all-out battle than the later formalised sporting tournaments, and there were very few, if any, rules. They usually consisted of a group of knights and soldiers who would either be split into two sides or fight individually in a free-for-all fashion. The combat would then take place over a set area with the combatants trying to unhorse (if mounted) and capture their opponents.

The tournament would often begin with the combatants meeting on an open field and charging at each other with levelled lances, as per the norm in battles of the time, before quickly turning to try and single out another opponent. After the first ordered charge, the tourney would usually degenerate into a number of running

skirmishes with knights attempting to capture individual opponents. The fighting could then go on to potentially last all day, and the winner would be the side who held the field at the end or who had captured the most opponents.

If the tournament was being fought à *plaisance*, it was considered more of a training exercise; blunted weapons would be used and the consequences for being captured were only a few bruises and dented pride. On the other hand, if it was being fought à *outrance*, the stakes were significantly raised; real weapons were used, meaning there was a genuine chance of serious injury or death, and the victor would have the right to claim a ransom and spoils from their defeated opponents. It was this more risky form of the tournament that became most popular and was where the great knights of the period, like William Marshal, could win their fame and fortune as well as honing the skills and tactics that they would need in wars and crusades. In fact, these tournaments became so popular that a number of kings and popes became concerned that they were disrupting public order and distracting the nobility from their duties. This led to various attempts to ban tournaments over the years, however these attempts all met with little success.

Although there were no formalised rules as such in these early tournaments, there were a number of unwritten, accepted conventions and customs. Weapons that were explicitly designed to deal a blow that could pierce a mail hauberk or shield and deliver a *coup de grâce*, such as the crossbow, thrusting sword, or dagger, were not allowed. Attacking a knight who was unprepared or not in a position to defend himself was not tolerated. There were also certain specific

areas in the tournament ground known as *recets* where no one would attempt to attack anyone else. This is where knights could go to rearm or rest during the fighting and where defeated knights would go to make arrangements with their captors for their ransoms and spoils. Once a captured knight had agreed to terms with their captor, they were then free to reenter the *mêlée* if they wanted to.

Tournaments were usually announced a fortnight beforehand by messengers carrying word of the arranged time and place around the country. Outside of the *mêlée* itself there would often be preliminary jousts between the younger knights as a warm up before the main event.

As well there would be a review or *regars*, where the competing knights would parade in front of each other and have a chance to call out taunts

and war cries. The local magnates would also be expected to host parties and feasts for the visiting nobles and combatants.

So, as an RPG scenario, the *mêlée* offers the player characters the chance to win their fame and fortune if they are prepared to take the risk. It also gives them the chance to mix with the local nobility and power brokers directly. From the referee's point of view, all of these opportunities arise in a relatively structured event in a specific locale; a type of bounded sandbox.

In the following sections there are some suggestions for preparing and running a *mêlée*, as well as a random knight generator. These rules are presented with Adventure Fantasy Game (AFG) in mind, but could easily be converted to your fantasy RPG of choice.

The big questions when prepping a tournament

Who's hosting the tournament? The King, a local Lord, a wealthy merchant...?

Why is it being held? The King wants to distract attention from the simmering conflict in the borderlands, the Lord wants to curry favour with his disaffected people, the merchant is a social climber trying to ingratiate himself with the nobility ...?

What type of tournament is it? *À plaisance* or *à outrance*? A fight between two sides or an individual free for all? Is it being fought mounted or on foot?

How big is the tournament? How many people are fighting in the *mêlée*? Are any of the big movers and shakers, political or otherwise, in the region attending?

Who can enter the tournament? Is it open to anyone or just knights? Maybe there's a fee to enter?

Where is the tournament ground? What's the terrain like? What are the major features, e.g. towns, rivers, or woods? Where are the *recets*?

What's the competition like? The easiest way to define this is to set the average level of the other combatants in the tournament. This average level doesn't have to be comparable to the level of the player characters.

For example, if you want the players to feel like they're in over their heads, you could set the average level significantly higher.

On the other hand, if your players decide to crash a small tournament being held by a minor local knight, the average level of the other combatants might be much lower. You can use the random knight generator presented in the following pages to draw up a list of the other combatants.

Running a tournament

The *regars* The tournament begins with the review, where the combatants get a chance to scope each other out and call out taunts and challenges to their opponents. If the tournament is going to be a fight between two sides, this is when the teams are announced. A successful Gather Information 5MORE test will let the

players know who the main favourites are.

The Initial Charge The combat often starts with the fighters lining up for the first big charge. The players will have the opportunity to initially single out any opponents they like before the fight breaks up into a rolling *mêlée*.

Encounters per character per turn												
1d6 + modifier	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Opponent Encountered	E	A	N	E	A	A	T	N	N	N	T	N

The Flow of the *Mêlée*: Early in the *mêlée* you'd expect opponents to come thick and fast with a fairly even spread in abilities. As the tourney progresses though you'd expect to encounter opponents less frequently, but when you do encounter one, they're more likely to put up a tough fight.

The sliding scale of encounters is modelled by the Encounters per Character per Turn table. Roll on the table once per player character each turn to determine who they have to square up against. The modifier to the encounter roll begins at 0 and increases by 1 each turn to a maximum of +6.

Encounters are split into four categories:

- **E** Easy opponent, lower than the average level of the combatants
- **A** Average opponent, on par with the average level of the combatants
- **T** Tough opponent, higher than the average level of the combatants
- **N** No opponent at the moment

If the tourney is a free-for-all, simply treat each player and their opponents separately. Alternatively, if it's a battle between two sides, the opponents the characters encounter will turn up in one or more small groups over the course of the turn.

This encounter mechanic is designed with large tournaments in mind, but it can be easily tweaked to cope with smaller affairs by changing the time-scale. For example, in a small tournament being fought on foot in a field, you may want to check for encounters and increase the modifier once every 5 rounds instead.

Having a Breather Combatants may choose to take a break from the *mêlée* in the *recets*. They may receive attention for their wounds according to the usual rules for First Aid and Medicine.

Knowing When to Give Up Tournaments are full contact fights with real weapons and the normal damage and dying rules apply. In light of this most combatants will know when their fight is over and will choose to yield to a superior opponent.

Non-player combatants will need to make a Morale save to continue fighting when they have lost 50% and then 75% of their Hits. For player characters though, the choice of when to yield or when to carry on fighting is up to them.

Who Won? While at least one of the player characters is still up and fighting, keep rolling on the encounter table. The tournament will end when you roll a 12 on the encounter check.

If it was a battle between two sides, the remaining characters are among the survivors on the victorious side (assuming they were all on the same side to begin with).

If it was a free-for-all tournament, all the other fighters have now been knocked out and it's down to the remaining player characters to fight it out among themselves until only one clear winner remains.

If all the player characters get knocked out before the end of tournament, the quickest way to resolve things is to use an appropriately sized die to randomly decide which of the surviving combatants wins out in the end.

To the Victor go the Spoils You'll need to keep track of the combatants that the player characters defeat so that they can claim their ransoms afterwards. The random knight generator will give you a knight's ransom and equipment list.

If the players want to try and claim a larger ransom or their opponent's equipment or mount as spoils, they'll need to make a successful Haggle 5MORE test.



Jousting Knights, from the Codex Manesse

Random knight generator

1. **Level:** The main choice is the level of the knight. Once you've decided on that, the knight is simply assumed to be a fighter of that level with average stats. Their other important characteristics are summarised in the Knight Stats table. The knight will have 1d6+2 Hits per level. Although when generating knights at the table, you may just want use the average number of Hits instead, which is also included in the Knight Stats table.

Knight Stats

Level	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Average Hits	5	11	16	22	27	33	38	44	49	55
Fighting Capability	0	0	1	1	2	2	3	3	4	4
Morale Modifier	-1	-1	-1	0	0	0	+1	+1	+1	+2

2. **Gear:** All knights will have a a weapon from the Knight Weapons table and be wearing a mail hauberk and helm (Medium Armour). They will also have a warhorse for a mounted tourney and a shield if not using a two-handed weapon.

Knight Weapons

Roll d6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Weapon	Sword	Lance	Mace	Flail	Battle Axe	Dane Axe (2h)

3. **Ransom:** The knight's base ransom is $\text{Level}^2 \times 1d3 \times 4$ silver thalers (silver standard); this may be modified by the traits determined in the next step.
4. **Traits:** These traits are designed to help flesh out the knight and create a little variety. Roll twice per knight on the Knight Traits table, rerolling if the results conflict.

Knight Traits

d6 / d6	1 - 2	3 - 4	5 - 6
1	Noble	Hedge knight	Vigorous
2	Sickly	Crafty	Slow-witted
3	Lucky	Luckless	Stubborn
4	Craven	Big reputation	Unknown
5	<i>Cap-à-pie</i>	Dirty Fighter	Paladin
6	Weaponmaster	Men at arms	Bewitched

- **Noble** This knight is a member of a powerful noble family. Their ransom will be worth double the amount and their equipment and mount will be of the highest quality.
- **Hedge knight** This poor, masterless knight's ransom will be worth half the amount and their equipment and mount will be in shabby condition.
- **Vigorous** This knight has a High Physique stat and gets +1 on relevant 5MORE rolls. This trait conflicts with Sickly.
- **Sickly** This knight has a Low Physique stat and gets -1 on relevant 5MORE rolls. This trait conflicts with Vigorous.
- **Crafty** This knight has a High Craft stat and gets +1 on relevant 5MORE rolls. This trait conflicts with Slow-witted.
- **Slow-witted** This knight has a Low Craft stat and gets -1 on relevant 5MORE rolls. This trait conflicts with Crafty.
- **Lucky** This knight has a High Spirit stat and gets +1 on relevant 5MORE rolls. This trait conflicts with Luckless.
- **Luckless** This knight has a Low Spirit stat and gets -1 on relevant 5MORE rolls. This trait conflicts with Lucky.
- **Stubborn** This knight won't give up easily as they are an EXPERT in Morale saves and therefore get a +1 on Morale 5MORE rolls.
- **Craven** This cowardly knight will have to make a Morale save to carry on fighting when they've lost 25% of their Hits.
- **Big reputation** This knight's reputation is possibly greater than their actual ability and will be considered one of the favourites to win the tournament regardless of the levels of other combatants. This trait conflicts with Unknown.
- **Unknown** This knight and their abilities are completely unknown to people in this area. They will not be considered one of the favourites to win the tournament regardless of the abilities of other combatants. This trait conflicts with Big reputation.
- **Cap-à-pie** This knight is armoured head-to-toe in full mail leggings and hauberk, which counts as Heavy Armour.
- **Dirty fighter** This knight has a well-deserved reputation as a dirty fighter and will stoop to any unchivalrous deed to try to gain an advantage and win.
- **Paladin** This knight is noted for their piety and regularly worships their chosen Venerable. Whether this confers any sort of effect rules-wise depends upon whether the God's in your campaign world like to intervene in the lives of their faithful.
- **Weaponmaster** This knight is renowned for their skill at arms and their extensive training has allowed them to develop a Secret Combat Technique. This gives them +1 to their Hits, which will contribute to their Fighting Capability and may increase it above the value listed in the table in step 1.
- **Men-at-arms** This knight treats tourneys like any other battle and brings their retainers along. They will have 1d6 footmen (Level 1 fighters) armed with spears and wearing mail hauberks (Medium Armour), as well as 1d6 archers (Level 1 fighters) who are armed with longbows and wearing padded jacks (Light Armour). These men-at-arms will always try and fight with their master even in tourneys that are supposedly individual competitions.
- **Bewitched** This knight has made a deal with a witch, who has worked their magic to aid the knight in the tournament in some way. The exact type and level of the spell will depend on the nature of magic in your campaign world. What the witch wants from the knight in return and the possible consequences of the magic will also need to be determined.

Settling Disputes: Ordeals & Trials

by Mike Monaco

Think of the old German punishments, for instance, stoning (as far back as the legend, the millstone falls on the head of the guilty man), breaking on the wheel (the most original invention and speciality of the German genius in the sphere of punishment), dart-throwing, tearing, or trampling by horses (“quartering”), boiling the criminal in oil or wine (still prevalent in the 14th and 15th centuries), the highly popular flaying (“slicing into strips”), cutting the flesh out of the breast; think also of the evil-doer being smeared with honey, and then exposed to the flies in a blazing sun. It was by the help of such images and precedents that man eventually kept in his memory five or six “I will nots” with regard to which he had already given his promise, so as to be able to enjoy the advantages of society. –F.W. Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morality, 1887

Justice in the Middle Ages, with its dramatic ordeals and trials used to decide guilt or innocence, and even more dramatic punishments meted out, was both as a lesson to the criminal and for the edification of the witnesses. Cases could be brought before a court to be judged by one or more persons of rank, or settled by ordeals. Broadly speaking the options can be broken down into trial by ordeal, trial by combat, and trial by jury. Juries in the earliest part of the medieval period gathered to make accusations, which would then be settled by trials by ordeal or combat. The method most commonly used to determine guilt (or in civil cases, which party was in the right) most commonly involved an *Ordeal*: exposing oneself to danger, such as extreme heat, the risk of drowning, or poison. Trials by ordeal would involve both secular authorities and clergy – the secular authorities often apprehending and accusing the defendant, while the clergy determines whether divine intervention in the ordeal had shown guilt or innocence. By the early 13th century, the Church forbade clergy from taking part in trials by ordeal, which led to the rise of trials by jury. Medieval juries were not just expected to sit and hear testimony; they were also charged with gathering evidence, making inquiries, and effectively acting as detectives, prosecutors, and judges.

Trial by combat was basically a special case of the trial by ordeal. We conceive of knights squaring off, but in reality commoners, including women, took part in trials by combat as well. Even after other ordeals were abandoned, trial by combat remained an option and the tradition gave rise to public and private duels to settle matters of honour even when no crimes were alleged. Generally speaking, trials by jury would be more common in urban areas, and ordeals would dominate rural justice, except when a traveling judge happens to be available. When two parties have a dispute, the case is likely to be settled by trial by combat or ordeal if a trial by jury has proven unable to arrive at a verdict, or if the dispute is located some distance from a court (i.e. outside a city or large town). Criminals might have the option to choose between a trial by jury or ordeal in a city but would more likely have to accept an ordeal. Nobles and clergy would have the right to choose an ordeal or trial by combat rather than trial by jury. In medieval times, law and justice varied greatly from place to place, as much depended on the local rulers. For this reason, I’m completely comfortable with using random tables to assign verdicts and punishments for any PC hapless enough to be on the wrong side of the law. Keeping the legal system opaque and capricious greatly enhances the sense of absurdity and doom.

Ordeals

Trials by ordeal might vary from place to place, based on traditions and locale. Ordeals were tests of one's ability to complete a dangerous and/or painful task. The thinking was that God would protect the innocent. It was not absolutely necessary for the defendant to emerge unscathed. Often the wounds suffered would be examined a few days later, and the fact that they were healing rather than festering might constitute a "miracle" proving innocence.

Of course, the wounds could be life-threatening or fatal. *Death obviously indicated guilt.*

In a fantasy game, magic might be used to "fix" the outcome, but in a game world where magic is known, there would be countermeasures taken by the authorities, ranging from detection spells to the use of anti-magic wards. Perhaps there are low- or no-mana locations where the ordeals are held, or else the officiants might read magic-dispelling scrolls. As all ordeals rely on the direct and unhampered intervention of the gods, both arcane and clerical magic would be strictly prohibited, and any attempt to use them for the ordeal would be considered proof of guilt.

Passing (or surviving) any of these ordeals is handled with a simple saving throw or attribute check the DM deems appropriate (I'd use Fortitude/Poison saves on most of these, or CON checks). Add or subtract a modifier according to severity of the ordeal conditions as indicated. Ordeals inflict damage, and the damage is worse if the ordeal roll is failed.

Ordeal of Fire Walking across red-hot ploughshares (-2), or walking a distance holding a red-hot iron (-5), or pulling an object from a pot of boiling water (-0), oil (-4), or lead (-10!). This might be used on one person accused of a crime, or on both parties in a dispute. Damage is 1d8 (x 1d4 if roll is failed).

Ordeal of Water Being bound and dunked in a barrel, lake, or river (0). Floating might indicate guilt (the water refuses a witch) or innocence (no crimes weigh one down). Sometimes the accused would be weighted with a stone (-5). The ordeal of water inflicts 2d4 damage (2d6 if the roll is failed).

Ordeal of Ingestion An accused might simply be forced to eat dry bread and cheese; choking indicates guilt (-0). There is nothing to prevent the authorities from substituting more noxious foodstuff (-1 to -5). An ordeal of ingestion inflicts 1d4 damage (x 1d6 if failed). A variation was the Ordeal of poison – surviving the ingestion of a poisonous potion or mushroom could prove innocence. An ordeal of poison inflicts death if failed and 3d6 damage if passed.

Other Ordeals Although this article only covers the most common historical ordeals, in a fantasy setting the possibilities are endless. Perhaps one can prove innocence by braving a monster's lair, drawing a card from a magical deck or facing some other danger.



Ordeal of water

Trials

Trial by Jury

Trials by jury provide an excellent opportunity for intrigue and roleplaying. Although jury trials are ostensibly carried out in the open before a court, witnesses might be intimidated, bribed, or slain by one or both sides of a dispute, and likewise jurors are susceptible to corruption and favouritism, as well as intimidation. Trials by jury can stretch on for more than one day as witnesses and experts are called to testify. Judges presided over jury trials, offering their interpretations of law, allowing or excluding evidence, and giving the proceedings an air of authority. They stopped at towns and villages at intervals, so a speedy trial is just as unlikely as a fair trial. The judge would impose punishments, which were usually carried out very quickly. The judge may also be the one who determines the verdict, especially if he has a title of nobility or vested interest in how the case is resolved.

Although a courtroom drama has great roleplaying potential, we are presenting game mechanics to resolve it with a quick roll or series of rolls. The basic factors that might influence the verdict in a trial are the mood and biases of the jurors and judge; the seriousness of the crime (more serious crimes will outrage and provoke the jury); the quality of the arguments and evidence presented; the quality of the lawyers/litigants; and of course the facts in the case (an innocent defendant is marginally more likely to be acquitted). Did I mention politics, bribes, and vendettas? Those too.

Trial by Jury Modifier If you go to trial, the defendant (and in civil cases, the plaintiff too) must spend $d6 \times 100$ GP on legal fees (lawyers, court fees, etc.). Start by adding:

- 1/3 CHA of Defendant
- Level of Defendant
- CM: Crime modifier (see Crime Gravity Table). For civil cases (disputes between two private parties), the plaintiff may elect

to subtract his CHA modifier, and the difference between his level and the defendant's, from the roll instead of the Crime modifier.

Obviously the setting determines how different crimes are rated; the examples assume something akin to medieval Europe. Crimes committed against nobles or the clergy may shift up one rank in severity; crimes committed against serfs, outsiders (religious minorities, dispossessed foreigners, etc.), or other second-class citizens may be shifted down a rank or two in severity.

Then determine the values of the following modifiers. Assigning a zero means this factor plays neither a negative nor positive role overall. Negative modifiers are assigned for factors tending to bias the court against the defendant, and positive modifiers are for factors that tend to favour the defendant. They may each range from -3 to +3. A good way to keep all the players involved in the proceedings is to have them reach a consensus on the values (the DM has final say of course).

- social status of defendant/plaintiff
- mood of jury/judge
- bribes paid/threats made
- any relevant reputation/biases
- lawyer skill/arguments
- evidence

Trial by Jury Outcome At the end of the trial roll a $d20$ plus the Trial By Jury Modifier and the outcome on the Trial by Jury Table. Bribes can also be paid to escape punishment. The defendant's level squared times 100 GP is required to avoid punishment. The defendant's level times 100 GP is enough to reduce the punishment one category (from death to mutilation, mutilation to humiliation and fine, etc.)

Trial by Jury

d6	Civil Case	Criminal Case
12 or less	For Plaintiff	Guilty, most severe punishment
13 - 17	Mistrial or Case Dismissed	Guilty, moderate punishment
18-23	For Defendant	Guilty of a lesser Charge
14 or more	For Defendant, Plaintiff punished or fined	Innocent

Crime Gravity

Severity	Description	CM	Punishment
Against Church or Crown	Treason, heresy, murder of noble	-10	Death, often by torture
Major	Murder, Rape, Blasphemy, Extortion, Poisoning	-5	Death
Serious	Theft/e, Blackmail, Assault, Manslaughter	-3	Mutilation, Fine
Minor	Drunkenness, Bribery, Vagrancy, Gambling	-1	Humiliation and/or Fine
Nuisance	Disorderly conduct, disrespecting noble's retainers/soldiers	0	Fine

Trial by Combat

Trial by combat could take a variety of forms. Among the Vikings, duels were fought on a small field regulated size, and the adversaries usually had the opportunity to bring three shields and whatever armor or arms they owned. The duel might end at first blood or after one combatant has lost his last shield, but fighting to the death was common. Later medieval duels and trials by combat would also have rules to enforce fairness.

The audience often faced severe penalties for interfering (at one famous trial, it was death for physically interfering and the amputation of a hand for calling out to either combatant). Duels fought between men and women usually gave the men serious handicaps, such as being required to stand in a pit with a club, while the woman might be required to use an unusual weapon like a rock tied in a scarf. In a fantasy game, a society might well impose other handicaps for var-

ious races and classes and in any event would likely outlaw magical interference. The standard terms would be:

- No magic allowed
- Takes place in plaza/commons or courtroom
- Sword and shield only (or appropriate arms for setting)
- Defendant must fight, but magistrate may appoint an opponent of equal HD/ability
- To the death

Whatever the outcome, a trial by combat could lead to extended vendettas and revenge. The family of someone killed in trial by combat may try to restore their honour by rehabilitating the deceased's reputation or covering up the whole affair if they are unable or unwilling to pursue a vendetta.

Punishment

Authorities often took great pains to ensure that the specific punishments meted out would "fit" the crime and serve both as punishment for the criminal and deterrent to witnesses.

Jail Jails were usually used to hold prisoners before the trial rather than as punishment. Medieval punishment included fines, public humiliation and shaming, mutilation, torture, and execution.

Imprisonment was rare and more typically the fate of those who might be ransomed – important but not dangerous people.

Fines Fines could be very heavy and cause a criminal to be forced into servitude or serfdom if they could not pay.

Fines

d8	Amount
1	1 SP
2	1 GP
3	10 GP
4	50 GP
5	100 GP
6	500 GP
7	1000 GP
8	1d6×1000GP. CHA check to keep d6 possessions if unable to pay.

Execution & Torture Execution and torture took on a wide range of forms – far more than I can cover here. Most forms of execution included elements of humiliation and torture, and many forms of torture would prove fatal due to shock and infection.

Execution

d6	Method
1	Drawn and quartered
2	Burned at the stake
3	Impaled or Flayed
4	Broken on the wheel or Sawn in half
5	Hung
6	Beheaded

The condemned would be enjoined to confess, if they had not done so at the trial or ordeal, and sometimes a confession would earn a less painful death. For example, someone sentenced to be burned at the stake could confess and be given the mercy of being garroted (strangled) before being burned, so at least they're spared being burned alive.

Torture was also used to secure confessions, perhaps most famously in the cases of accused witches, werewolves, and heretics. Medieval torture often inflicted damage that would in itself be eventually fatal, but some forms of torture would leave the victim mostly whole. For game purposes, the important thing is that being subject to torture can cause death, permanent crippling, or temporary damage that can be healed, and the victim may be induced to confess to some crime, or might resist it to the end.

Torture was often carried out over a rather extended period, giving at least the hope that some reprieve might be granted by another authority, or perhaps a bribe could secure the victim's release. Using force to free a prisoner would be

an option too, and any of these scenarios could form the basis of, or beginning of, an adventure.

Tortured characters take d6 damage every day until dead or rescued, released, or they escape. Each day of torture, after the first, the victim must also make a save (Fortitude Save/Poison Save/CON check, as appropriate to system) or permanently lose one point from a random attribute due to physical and psychological trauma.

Roll on the Torture table to randomly determine the torture method.

Torture

d6	Method
1	Stretched (Rack, Strappado, etc.)
2	Orifice over-expanded (Pear of anguish, Judas cradle).
3	Contorted, forced in painful position (Piqchet, Wooden horse)
4	Burns (Hot irons, Hot coals)
5	Pierced (Iron maiden, Iron chair, etc.)
6	Bones slowly crushed (Spanish boot, Pressed, etc.)

Humiliation Humiliation could be as simple as spending a period of time spent in stocks or a cage. More elaborate humiliations could include being paraded through town (naked and/or shaved bald), forced public confessions, or branding. Most RPGs don't put a lot of emphasis on esteem (and self-esteem). To give humiliation some extra kick, I would have the humiliated character lose one level (perhaps 2 for a paladin or cleric), temporarily, as a result of the public shaming. A d6 roll will both indicate the number of weeks the level loss is in effect and also the specific punishment.

Humiliation

d6	Method	Description
1	Public confession	Wear sign in public place for d2 days.
2	Paraded	Brought around in wagon/cage while in chains.
3	Stocks or pillory for d6 days	Take d2 damage each day.
4	Barrel pillory	d2 damage/day for d12 days, and save vs. disease.
5	Tarred & feathered, flogged, etc.	2d6 damage
6	Branded	-2 CHA. d4 damage.

Bowmen, Class & War

by Shorty Monster

Although the term “Dark Ages” covers a period of British history defined by a lack of historical sources – a communication and written word dark age if you will – the lives lived by the commoners stayed much the same for a longer period. With the exception of Nobility and the Clergy, the written word was a mystery, and because of that, those lower down the Feudal food chain were dependent on their betters for an awful lot. This was taken advantage of by both the laity and the religious, but it was landed lords who were expected to muster an army when called upon by their King. To do this they took conscripts from the farmers and other manual workers who lived on their land.

Most of these men could not afford to spare the metal necessary for making a sword, or a shield, or even metal armour. They were bowmen, and history would see them change the face of war on the battlefields of France during the extended conflict popularly known as the Hundred Year War. How did they get this good though?

From the end of the “Dark Ages” it was by law. They were required by their land lords to practice for hours a week, every Sunday after the service, in the local town or village square, or in a designated field. A popular image from this time – mainly due to the anachronistic films that deal with the life of the fictional character Robin Hood – was that of circular targets made of hay with concentric rings denoting points. Although there’s no reason to think these weren’t used, they were far from useful when used to train bowmen for war. As would be the case for centuries to come, until automatic firearms became the norm, ranged combat was all about volleys.

To win with archers, or crossbow men if you were French, you needed as many men as you could move from battle field to battlefield, all

whom could drop an arrow at the range needed to fall into the most densely packed areas of the enemy’s army. To do this they needed to practice hitting ranges, not targets. Flags would be placed at measured intervals, and the aim of the practice sessions was to get as good a grouping as possible in line with each flag.

Now, what makes this hard isn’t getting the range just right, but the fact that an English warbow – longbow is a much more modern name for the weapon – was massive. When unstrung, it was taller than a man and took a hefty chap indeed to even string it. To shoot it effectively you needed to have massive upper body strength. Not just in the arms, but across the chest and back too, and as such, working men were ideal for this kind of work.

It is a romantic ideal that these men would then travel overseas to build the empire or fight dynastic struggles on the continent. What happened more often was fighting between English lords who were almost constantly squabbling with each other over land, title, and favour at court. These high born-men cared very little for the peasantry, seeing them as an inconvenience whose only purpose was to toil in the fields and pay tax on anything not produced directly for the gentry. They themselves lived an easy life, seeing war as a sport, fought by the lowest classes, but won by men-at-arms; men who could afford the arms and armour needed to be a gentleman on the battlefield, and even a squire to carry it around for them.

They would willingly sacrifice the serfs who toiled on their land if it would mean more land with more people to tax, a better title, or even the favour of the King who was never without enemies, especially within his circle of nobles that made up his council. If one of them decided to make a move for more power, the King

would need his other, hopefully more loyal nobles, to defend him. This may seem strange, but for most of the medieval period there were no standing armies. To wage war, the monarch needed his nobles to muster, feed, equip, lead an army to fight for him.

Loyalty then, was far from a big concern in the minds of most peasants. Yes, they would fight for their lord, but they would have no choice and could be fighting against their monarch. This was a point in English history when dynastic succession was not guaranteed, with the crown often passing to the strongest leader rather than to the monarch's first born son. A side effect of all this was how war would be fought by those at the bottom of the ladder.

Because they would fight without metal armour, and the only metal they would take onto the field would be arrowheads and a short sword or large knife, they had to be clever. And they had to fight dirty.

To fight clever, they made different shaped arrowheads. The basic, easy-to-mould regular arrow was used for firing into masses of similarly unarmoured enemy troops. They could easily kill, and used as little metal as possible so more can be made. Then there were bodkin arrows, made from stronger steel with a sharper point and designed to punch through metal armour. You needed to be close, and firing straight to get through – they were powered by nothing more than muscle after all – but they could take down a man-at-arms when used correctly, maybe even a knight. If you wanted to make sure when it came to dropping mounted troops though, you'd shoot a broad head arrow and aim at the horse itself, hoping the larger arrowhead would get through the barding and thick muscles of a warhorse. If it fell, the man on its back

would come down hard too.

To ensure as many actual kills as possible, the bowmen also fought dirty. This was done in a number of ways, each with the sole imperative of confirming the kill. First off, firing arrows from a quiver is a pain in the neck to do in the heat of a battle; instead the arrows would be placed point first into the ground. This made them easier to draw and loose at speed, but also made sure plenty of dirt and muck would go into any wound. Once the arrow was in, even if the victim survived the initial blow, just getting it out would surely aggravate their condition. As the heads were barbed they could not be pulled out the way they went in. Instead the shaft of the arrow would be snapped off while still embedded in the victim, then pushed through the rest of the body and drawn out from the other side. Even bodkins – which weren't often barbed – had to be done this way, as the arrowhead was not strongly attached to the shaft, but just pushed on instead, so that it would come off if needed.

Once the arrows had all flown, the bowmen would not be interested in taking hostages for money, as that is a rich man's game. But they could loot anything of value from the corpses. Not all the enemy would be corpses however, so the archers would all have a long thin knife or sword that would be used to finish the job. Not only was this a deplorable way to wage war in the eyes of the nobility, but the commoners took it a step further, coating the blade not just in dirt, but often in faeces.

The rules of chivalry on the battlefield are a late addition to the medieval world, but the common men who would do most of the fighting did what was necessary to come out on top, and quite often, it was far from pretty.

Food Surplus: Cities & Armies

by Paolo Greco

Food is rarely used in adventure games as an aspect integral to the plot. At most it's used for its social aspect, leading to the tropes such as "you all meet at the tavern". But there's more than that: food surplus can be an extremely compelling concept to play with in adventure games. The article considers a medieval but relatively urbanised setting with powerful cities, intended as densely populated permanent settlements whose inhabitants labour is not devoted to food production.

Eating & Farming

Staple food production in Europe was centered about grains such as wheat, rye, oats, sorghum, emmer, rice and pulses like lentils and peas. Pulses would not only provide more proteins and amino acids to a chronically malnourished population, but when included in crop rotation also increases the nitrogen content of the soil, making following harvests more bountiful.

For peasants and other low-class people the greatest majority portion of calorie intake would come from staples, consumed mostly in form of pottage, gruel or porridge. The grain, after being dehydrated for storing to reduce spoilage and weight, would be rehydrated and cooked in water to make it easier to digest and more nutritious. Gruel could be supplemented by vegetables and herbs to make it more palatable and, when available, a small quantity of meat or fish, possibly smoked or salted.

Bread baking would not be common for lower classes as it involves milling: hand milling is cheap but tiring and time consuming. The alternative is asking millers: they are both expensive (but accept a small fraction of the flour as payment) and have a fame of being dishonest. The

advantage of baking though is that bread takes time to spoil and therefore can be an option for travelers. Biscuit is baked at least twice to remove excess moisture can keeps for years, but the process is long and expensive.

Despite different preparation methods the nutritional content does stays pretty much the same. But yields of these crops varied a lot, not only from place to place but also from year to year. Other factors impacted on yield, like the amount of seeds planted per acre, so yields could more than halve or double compared to the average. To simplify, consider that a square mile is 640 acres, that a person eats 12 bushels of grains a year and that the average net yield is 5 bushels per acre. Allowing for spoilage and soil utilization the final result is about 180 people nourished by a square mile of worked fields.

Surplus & Urbanization

Much less than 200 people live in a square mile of medieval countryside: density figures go from 30 to 100 people per square mile. Five men can reap and bind two acres of wheat per day, so 30 people are not enough to harvest a full square mile before weather turns bad and destroys the harvest, especially if the crops need to be harvested all at the same time. The figure for a square mile is close to 50, so reduce production accordingly. This is also a good yardstick to determine rural and urban population in your campaign world: 16000 people living in 100 square miles of countryside can feed themselves, plus 20000 people not working the land. The food production surplus is typically hauled away and consumed in cities.

Cities are, by nature, overpopulated space. In fact cities happen only when there is an exter-

nal food surplus and this food can economically transported to the city location and there is an attraction effect that rewards clergy, warriors, artisans and other non-agricultural workers clustering together. Such attractors could be: a lot of money from either rich people or many travellers; artisans and warriors needing each other for defence and artefacts; a pilgrimage site; a mountain pass, bridge or other choke point. Many attractors can contribute. Santo Domingo de la Calzada is a good example: it started with building a bridge, hospital and inn on the French Way to Santiago de Compostela, one of the most important pilgrimage sites of Christianity. And you would rather live close to amenities, if you could avoid toiling in your lord's fields. Ask a pre-industrial peasant.

In very general terms if the total cost of food transport (including subjugating the hinterland and the horrible intramuros sanitation, of course) is lower than the network reward a city will grow. This growth will, in turn, demand more food, brought from even further away. And mobs made up by starving citizens are a force to be reckoned with: woe to the lord that lets their cities go angry.

As food needs to be transported from further away, different transportation options need to be used. Mules, carts, camels, wheelbarrows (sailing or not) and barges have each their own advantages, disadvantages, speed, costs and, most importantly, terrains that can't be navigated. Food delivery is a considerable inefficiency, but *it's the only way to grow cities*. Most pre-industrial big cities were either reliant on local food production or had access to cheap food transport. To secure the first they had armies or levies, to secure the latter they need waterway access through canals or harbours and naval superiority.

But the number presented above of 20000 people being fed by 16000 is a great simplification. It does not mean that there is a 20000 people city every 100 square miles of farmland. Cities are surrounded by a number of towns and villages forming an infrastructure mostly concerned with feeding cities. Peasants bring food to the towns that then relay it to cities.

This introduces further inefficiencies as towns have population not entirely devoted to food production peasants can reach the closest town and get back to their farm or manor in a reasonable amount of time while allowing the creation of a mercantile class busy with delivering all kind of commodities to cities.

Armies & Navies

Cities are not the only "big eaters". Armies march on their stomachs, and have similar logistic problems: supply trains must follow armies, and are a weak point to hit. But armies fighting abroad can obtain food by loot and plunder, while cities destroy their own long-term food supply by doing so. Armies can also exploit the local food production by capturing food supplies sent to cities or other armies, harming the enemy without fighting. Military and mercantile navies follow similar patterns of food delivery and denial, but are of course relevant only close to waterways.

During wartime cities become prime targets. The 800-pounds gorilla and the 10-ton killer whale of "harming cities without fighting" are sieges and blockades. While sieges and blockades are remarkably effective they have two major problems. First, besieging soldiers and blockading sailors must still be paid and fed while in hostile or inhospitable territory and, if the besieging army plundered the land, most probably the locals will not actively cooperate and might possibly be downright hostile. Second, a siege does not destroy the opponent army until the very end, and cities will keep their granaries stocked accordingly to the winds of war. Third, a city on the coast might need to be both besieged and blockaded in order to be starved, but deploying coastal batteries (or the equivalent in your campaign) might deter sea traffic.

Famine & Death

Bad harvests happen; agricultural societies survived this by filling big granaries to dampen the effect of bad harvests. So if a summer is terrible and the crops are destroyed, there's enough to eat and seed next year. Similarly cities had granaries to keep the population fed during sieges. Mostly fed. Fed just enough that it would not form angry mobs, storm the Lord's palace, capture him and deliver him in a neat package to the besiegers.

There were also other ways to get food after bad harvests. More livestock was killed, both to eat it and to limit the amount of animals to be fed. Peasants tapped woodlands for roots and fruits; chestnuts abund in autumn and even acorns, after leaching out tannins with abundant water, were commonly eaten during famines.

So it's a matter of sustainability: when you can't exploit the land as much as you need, people die. Granaries and gathering are ways to cope with short-term deficiency.

What really really killed a lot of people were a string of bad harvests in a civilization overly reliant on agriculture. The Great Famine lasted from 1315 to 1317 and killed about 10% of Europeans: the biblical 7 ugly cows would have destroyed urbanized Europe and most probably sent it back to a population level sustainable by non agricultural means.

It's also interesting to note that an intense population drop makes non-agricultural food production more viable, due to lower land usage. Hunting, herding and gathering require much more land to feed the same amount of people, with the advantage that instead of being cultivated farmland it can be wilderness so important to fantasy adventure gaming. But a lower food surplus per square mile makes cities less efficient due to increased transportation costs, up to the point where they cease to be.

Famines are not only generated by the vagaries of nature and war. Imperial politics and market forces can starve people to death too. Two modern but still pre-industrial relevant examples are the Irish Great Famine and the Holodomor. In both cases during extremely grim famines the genocides were carried out by the English and Soviet Russian empires extracting food from areas already food-deprived, killing and displacing two million of Irish in the first case and starving between three and seven million in Ukraine. While the absolute death figures are not comparable to medieval demographics, Ireland lost 20-25% of its population during the famine and another 25% in the following decades. In both cases the famines led to uprisings and still fuel the contemporary political discourse.

Adventure Ideas

Settling the Frontier The PCs are part of a group of settlers looking for new land. Choosing a location, settling down, surviving and protecting the settlement against inclement weather, feral beasts and brigands or goblins.

Feed the City A seaside city is being besieged but not yet blockaded, or vice versa. The players are in charge of bringing a merchant ship or caravan full of grain there before the situation turns dire. In addition to dealing with all possible kind of nasties along the way the quickest route is more dangerous, either because it's across a mountain range and it's wintertime or because it's controlled by the enemy, pirates or bandits, while the slow road is potentially safer but might not be quick enough. Regardless of the route taken there are great opportunities for scouting, espionage and extremely asymmetrical fights where the main concern is not to defeat the enemy but to evade it.

Granaries are the easiest Soft Spot Capturing or destroying a granary is a big deal. While in warfare the implications are evident, sabotage of city granaries during peacetime means big economic problems and hunger, malcontent and rioting until food arrives in town. Stealing supply trains strongly hurts armies' effectiveness, morale and coherence.

It's more complicated than that Take one of the above scenarios and put the PCs on the other side. Or on a side first, then the other. Or have a politician or powerful power betray them. Or put them on both sides at the same time. Or make their loyalties extremely complex and make sure that they'll do something wrong *no matter what*.

Civic Apocalypse A whole lot of people died in an area. Maybe famine, invasion, plague, war, floods and droughts, taxes, or everything together. It's not important: what's important is that *food surplus vanished and with it cities*. Cities and towns are deserted because citizens starved or migrated. Civilisation, in its original sense of *pertaining civil people*, where "civil" is one and the same with *living in cities*, died. That means that you have a perfect post-apocalyptic setting, complete with the traditional tropes of scarcity and unsafe wilderness, happening for fully mundane and, worse, *period-appropriate reasons*.

Medieval Cooking or: What is in that Meat Pie?

by Steve Sigety

Food is one of the most important aspects of human culture, although it is often glossed over in fantasy RPGs. Characters might meet in a tavern where there is ale, wine, and legs of mutton available, and perhaps the expectation of even finer culinary fare. In a medieval fantasy RPG, based on an ideal of what food was available in Medieval Europe, is this a reasonable expectation? What was food really like for the working classes and for travelers?

Most overviews of the period and histories of medieval cooking focus on feasts. These were reserved for the upper classes and the higher levels of the clergy. Even then, the medieval feast, as traditionally portrayed in popular media, was a rare occasion. In the society of the time, any excuse was used for a feast: coronations, birthdays, weddings, battle victories. However, these were mostly reserved to the highest levels of society. Even landed gentry were often too busy taking care of their estates, presiding over local festivals, and participating in sports such as hunting and birding.

The food that was consumed by the lower and working classes was very different from that served at a royal feast. Up to around 1100 AD, the main difference was one of quantity. After the changes in agriculture and trade patterns at that time, it was a matter of what one could afford.

Naturally, the upper classes could afford a wider variety of food types, oils and spices that were out of reach to the common peasant. Meat was more likely consumed by the nobility and higher levels of the clergy. Also, it was a matter of social mores. The wealthy had more refined palates and required finer foods for their delicate systems, rather than the rough and base

food consumed by the lower classes.

Commoners, particularly those living in the crowded urban areas, did not always have access to kitchen space, equipment, or cooking knowledge. They relied on street vendors and shops for their meals. Peasants in the agricultural areas may have had access to more plant-based food; however they still did not have much in the way of equipment—most likely a single stew-pot.

Water was not seen as healthy to drink. It was not socially acceptable, and the sources were often polluted. Alcoholic beverages did not have these problems. Wine was commonly consumed by all classes, although the lower classes could only afford the second pressing wine.

In northern climates, beer and ale was the beverage of choice for commoners, made from malted barley or wheat, whichever grew locally. Hops were not used until later in the Middle Ages, at least in England. Before their introduction in the brewing process, other herbs and wild plants were used for flavor, most often ivy, bog myrtle, and yarrow.

The daily fare of the lower classes was mostly simple and bland. The diet was limited to food native to their area, as imported food was prohibitively expensive. Barley and oats formed the base of the common diet, used in gruel and porridges. Later bread became an important part of the diet, and became more prevalent as agricultural techniques for growing wheat improved.

Most often this was in the form of sops, pieces of bread used to soak up soup or gruel. The poorest used bread as a trencher or plate, for whatever meager rations they could eat. Grains were also

used widely to thicken stews and soup. Vegetables were limited to those in season. Carrots, cabbage, beets, onions, leeks and garlic were the most commonly used vegetables in the medieval era. Fish, olives, pulses, onions, garlic and leeks were diet staples in the Mediterranean region. Northern Europeans relied on pulses and peas, apples, nuts, cereal grains, leeks, onions, and garlic.

Throughout Europe, gruel, or pottage, was the main form of sustenance for the poor. The exact nature of the dish is a matter of debate. Such a ubiquitous and ordinary dish of the time was not well-described in many surviving household records. Traditionally it has been thought of as a thick, heavy mixture of oats and pulses. Recent studies have considered pottage to be a thinner soup-like broth with leeks, onions and seasonal greens.

The common people had a high-carbohydrate diet because of the grains and alcohol. The intake of leafy greens, such as kale, was one way to offset the deficiencies of a cereal-based diet when meat was not plentiful. Although caloric intake was sufficient with grains, the lack of vitamins, particularly E and B, was a problem.

For proteins, several sources were used. Pulses formed part of the lower class diet and were shunned by the upper classes. Milk was another important source. Most often this was consumed in the form of cheese to avoid spoilage. Raw milk from cows, sheep or goats, was only consumed by the very young or the sick. Almond milk was commonly used to boil food. Eggs, not only from chickens but other fowl, were prepared in dozens of ways familiar to modern diners.

Meat was eaten rarely. Pies were often made using meat and vegetables, the meat being the left-over entrails and tripe from aristocrats kitchens sold to the pie makers. Beef was not common because of the need for grazing land and expensive feed for cattle. Mutton and lamb were consumed mostly by the upper classes, with pork and chicken being the most common across all classes. Pigs required less work to raise, ate almost any organic material (often fattened on acorns before butchering), and nearly every part of the pig was consumed or otherwise used.

It was not until after the widespread loss of population due to the Black Death that meat became more common at the table. More land became available for grazing and more workers were in demand, simultaneously raising workers wages and allowing more food to go around. Part of this change also included a revolution in agriculture. Northern Europeans had experience training draft animals and with the development of strong metal plows, teams of horses could till more soil than ever, allowing for increased food production.

The rise of regular trading routes and increased trade led to a greater use of spices in medieval cooking. Spices were known in the West from ancient times, although not used widely in food. In the medieval era, cinnamon, mace, cloves, pepper and ginger were the most common spices. Coriander and cumin were not used widely outside Italian cooking. Trade with the East, and a desire by the aristocracy to appear wealthy, caused spices to become common in food.

Using spices to cover the taste of spoiled meat is a fallacious assumption, as there is no evidence to suggest that rancid meat was the only choice available. Humans could not live on rotten meat, no matter how spiced. Neither is the time of the year an issue. Slaughter of livestock was seasonal; however, game birds and poultry were available at any time. In addition, preservation of meat using salt or smoking was widely practiced throughout Europe.

With regard to the use of this information in an RPG, consider the role that the player characters have in the society. If the setting is a pseudo-medieval analog to the historical Middle Ages, lower level characters will live very much like the lower classes from medieval history. Another area to look at is the power of the Church (or multiple churches), as this may influence the regulation of trade, fasting, holy days, food taboos, and the power of the aristocracy.

In a high fantasy setting with powerful magic being commonplace, some of the problems with food preservation, famine and drought may be different or non-existent. Water may be safe to drink, and meat plentiful. Think about what makes sense in the game world, and the tone you intend to convey.

Recipes: Pottage

by Steve Sigety and Paolo Greco

Steve's Pottage Place a large onion, two or three leeks, and the same number of turnips into a pot with water. Bring to a boil. Add salt and pepper and a bay leaf. Simmer and continue cooking until the mixture has reduced to a stock. Discard the vegetables to eat them later. Collect a good handful of mixed greens such as kale, mustard greens, spinach, chard or Chinese leaf, and a smaller handful of parsley. Shred the leaves and add them to the stock; bring to the boil and cook for 4 minutes. If a thicker soup is desired, a small handful of porridge oats can be added with the greens.

Paolo's Mum's Pottage I'm not sure how old this recipe is, but it's going to give you an idea. I don't advocate you actually cook this the way it's written as it might be not completely healthy. It's also richer than what the poorest of the poor would eat. Try cooking this without shopping for it. Risotto, a medieval rice dish from the plains of northern Italy, is cooked in a very similar way. Start by soaking the grains. You can use emmer, sorghum, millet, wheat, barley, or lentils, 100 to 200 grams per person, or more if you want to eat this the next day when it will taste much, much better. Rinse them a couple of times, then soak them for a long while (12 or 24 hours is good enough) because the longer they soak the shorter they take to cook. This might seem silly but saving fuel is important when you have to pick up your own wood you have a cord to last until spring and you can't buy it in winter.

Then, take a big pot. Possibly one still dirty from the sauce you cooked last night. Light a wood fire, hang the pot on top, then throw in some cooking fat, chop some vegetables and toss them in. As for fat, cheap lard is good, cheap fat fish is good, cheap meat like salami or sausages are good, but smoked pancetta (Italian pork belly) is the *non plus ultra*, especially if you toss in its skin as well as it will release a lot of flavour. Mind you, I wrote cheap but they would have been expensive. Meat was expensive enough that pig skin and fat were transformed in awesomely tasty and typical dishes and ingredients like pork crackle, frittuli, fatback, ciccicoli and cotica. By the way, if you have tripe, pig blood, bones, gild, kidneys and other entrails, that's awesome, throw them in too. Butter or oil will do as well. For vegetables I suggest garlic, carrot, onion, parsnip, celery, mushrooms. If you feel fancy add bay leaves, rosemary, sage. Of course you can add these New World newfangled chillies or expensive spices like pepper.

Now, stir. Stir, stir stir forever, as if you will stop stirring, and you will, it will stick and maybe burn, but you're surely not going to throw that lovely food away! So keep a jug of water handy and, when it sticks, add a dash of water and scrub the bottom¹. If you're fancy you can use stock instead of water, or you can warm the jug so that it doesn't cut on cooking times too much. Refill the jug when it's empty. Add some salt and, when it starts smelling good, toss in the soaked grain with their starchy water and throw in some old bread if you have some kicking around. You want to keep the soaking water because it's full of nutrients. The whole thing will need water added anyway to keep the potage of a soupy consistence or else it will burn and you'll waste food. Keep on stirring and scraping the bottom for at least half an hour. Enjoy!

¹Modern chefs call this deglazing. Bourgeois terminology, I say. Let's eat the rich instead.

Pestilence & Putrescence

by Jeremy Whalen

Life in the middle ages was rife with disease, and death commonplace. Many factors contributed to the prevalence and high lethality of disease in the middle Ages: ignorance, crowded living conditions, poor sanitation, and poor nutrition. These factors and others combined to make the Middle Ages a challenging place to survive and prosper.

The chief reason that disease was so brutal was plain ignorance. People simply did not understand the relation between environmental factors and health. Superstitions regarding disease placed the blame with spirits, foul odours, celestial phenomena, or an imbalance of the “Four Humours”; first postulated by Hippocrates and later popularised by Roman physician Galen.

The belief in the four Humours led to the practice of “blood-letting,” a procedure where small incisions would be made and blood drained from the body. Unfortunately, these methods were merely superstition and did nothing to resolve the underlying issue but may have offered the patient hope and with that hope some mental relief.

Living conditions in urban areas were crowded, filthy, and unbearable by our modern, first world, sensibilities. Buildings were costly to construct and often contained one or more extended families along with their pets and possibly livestock. Trash rotted in the streets where pigs would root for food. Chickens ran wild and rats were everywhere. All of this teaming life produced a tremendous amount of waste, the majority of which overflowed into the streets and mixed with the earth and runoff water to pro-

duce a stew of filth and disease. The mostly pedestrian populace would track this filth to every corner of the city. Therefore, as you may imagine the people and animals splattered feces everywhere and along with it fertile breeding grounds for bacteria. All of which in turn, lead to constant threat of infection.

In the country, things were not any better with people frequently living under the same roof with their livestock and food stores. Vermin, of every description, infested houses, and the primary form of relief came from the cats that lived with them. It is unfortunate that cats were often targeting for extermination based on various superstitions.

As if merely living in a superstitious, crowded, and filthy environment was not enough, people also ate and slept poorly which lead to greater susceptibility to disease. Houses were full of hungry mouths and food was scarce and often spoiled or contaminated (another source of disease). People were often malnourished and dehydrated. Sleeping would have been difficult given the number of people sharing the limited space. Disease carrying insects often infested bedding and rodents, looking for food, would leave behind droppings, which would often carry disease-causing microbes.

While it is difficult for the modern reader to understand the lives and deaths of our forebears in the middle ages it is necessary to remember that to these people the things we contemplate with horror were daily, mundane, realities. It is of little wonder that people took refuge in religious and superstitious beliefs and dreamed, when they could, of a better afterlife.

Disease Generator

To generate a disease, roll on the Number of Symptoms table, then for each on the Disease Symptom and Duration tables. Roll once in the Severity and Long Term Disabilities tables.

Number of Symptoms			
d20	1-7	8-19	20
# of Symptoms	1	2	3

Disease Duration			
d20	1-15	16-19	20
Duration	6-36 hours	3-18 days	1-3 months

Disease Symptoms	
d12	Symptom
1	Aching Joints
2	Weakness
3	Coughing
4	Nausea
5	Muscle Spasms
6	Congestion
7	Vomiting
8	Diarrhea
9	Constipation
10	Seizures
11	Fatigue
12	Fever

Long Term Disabilities	
d10	Disabilities
1	Blindness
2	Muteness
3	Deafness
4	Simpleminded
5	Paralysis
6	Anosmia (Loss of Sense of Smell)
7	Ageusia (Loss of Sense of Taste)
8	Neuropathy (Loss of Sense of Touch)
9	Insanity
10	Sterility

Severity

1d20	Severity	Chance of death or Long Term Disability
1-12	Mild	1% - 10% (1d10%)
13-18	Moderate	1% - 40% (1d4×1d10%)
19-20	Severe	1% - 80% (1d8×1d10%)

Sample Diseases

Westdelve Miners Disease This disease affects miners and quickly produces severe coughing. If left untreated it will run its course in nine days and leave roughly 25% those afflicted dead.

Graymarsh Shakes Those who travel into the dreaded swamps of Graymarsh run the risk of contracting this horrific and troublesome disease. Presenting first as uncontrollable muscle spasms and invariably worsening to produce convulsions and seizures. This disease comes on slowly over two to three weeks with full seizures starting in week four. By the sixth week the afflicted is usually on the mend and less than 5% die from it.

Cesspit Fever The people who keep towns and cities from becoming completely overwhelmed with filth occasionally succumb to this terrible disease, which runs its course over three days. Symptoms include intense vomiting and

projective diarrhea. Approximately 20% of those who develops this illness will succumb to it and die.

Wandering Sickness Occurring mostly in the aged this sickness begins as light confusion and progresses steadily over two to ten years ultimately resulting in permanent confusion and simple mindedness; many become violent. Those who suffer from this disease may eventually wander away from their homes to die in the wilderness.

Horseman's Hives This scaring disease tends to affect those who clean up after horses (hence the name). The disease begins as a mild itch progressing over seven to ten days to open sores, which eventually result in disfiguring horny scars over the entire body. Few die from the disease but most wish they had as roughly 60% of suffers become sterile and permanently scared.

Leeches, Clysters, and a Hole in the Head: Old School Medicine for Grimmer Games

by Mike Monaco

The universities do not teach all things, so a doctor must seek out old wives, gipsies, sorcerers, wandering tribes, old robbers, and such outlaws and take lessons from them
—Paracelsus

Traditional fantasy games tend to make healing abstract and fast, and clerical spells tend to make the medical profession moot. If you want to add a little grim realism to your campaign, limit or eliminate healing magic, and offer your players' characters the services of medieval medical practitioners!

The rules suggested below greatly increase the peril of wounds and disease, as the cures are sometimes worse than the ailment. Rather than catalog the treatments used for specific complaints, I propose a more on-the-fly approach after all, medicine was very much an art in the bad old days and individual practitioners developed their own methods and theories. In fact in the medieval period, there were many different kinds of people practicing medicine.

Some practitioners might be academically trained physicians, but, as Paracelsus quote suggests, other practitioners were “wisewomen”, witches, barbers, monks, and even farmers. Witches and wisewomen could offer herbal remedies and folkloric cures; farmers might have practical surgical experience from working with animals; barbers at least had very sharp tools. Monks and clergy were eventually banned from practicing medicine, although archaeological finds suggest they carried on as doctors despite this. An elite few could boast university education, and crusaders brought back lore from the east.

What all these physicians would likely have in common is a reliance on the core theory of humors, occasional resort to surgery, and perhaps the miasma theory of disease.

The Humors

The theory of the humors basically holds that four bodily fluids determine temperament and health. These fluids or “humors” are: blood, phlegm, black bile, and yellow bile. They were thought to correspond to the four elements (respectively, air, water, earth, and fire), and were thus embedded in the larger system of correspondences popular in western occultism and magic. Because of these common ties to magic, folk remedies would often be consonant with the prescriptions of “educated” doctors.

Among the educated, illnesses were generally understood as deficiencies or excesses of one or more humors, and so the standard treatments were attempts to right this imbalance. This could mean increasing or restoring levels of a given humor through herbal remedies, or drawing out excess humors.

To restore humor levels, physicians would prescribe various of herbal remedies, which could be administered by mouth, through the skin as poultices and salves, or as enemas (“clysters”). The ingredients would be determined by occult correspondences, and the effects of course range

from harmless to beneficial to fatal. Various animal, vegetable, and mineral substances might be required – rare ones giving possible adventure hooks. Everyday food and drink was also believed to affect humor levels. For game purposes, it is not terribly important to outline all the specific correspondences, although as DM you may enjoy improvising or researching these. If you have access to Bruce Galloway’s book *Fantasy Wargaming*, you might consult the table of correspondences there for some ideas.

Excess humors were drawn out in a number of methods. Most people have heard of bleeding (using leeches, lancets, etc.). Other methods included blistering by applying caustic salves, purges (which caused diarrhea to let out black bile), and emetics (which caused vomiting to let out yellow bile).

The important thing is to understand that any given disease may be treated with drugs, or by draining the body of some of its humors, and the rules here will focus on simulating the effects of these techniques.

Surgery

In addition to manipulating the humors, illness and injury could be treated surgically. In ancient and medieval times, surgery was risky and rare. It was usually only attempted when other methods had failed. Due to the horrendous sanitation of the period, and absence of germ theory, infection was a common cause of death, even when patients survived the relatively crude and brutal methods of surgery.

Note that physicians did not normally perform surgery – surgery was the purview of lowly quasi-professionals like barbers. Anesthesia (or “dwale”), when offered, could kill with overdoses (mandrake, hemlock, and other poisons were used).

A surprising fact is that trepanation (the cutting of holes in the skull) was one of the safer treatments available, and would have been an effective treatment for head trauma and certain illnesses because it relieved pressure on the brain due to inflammation. Trepanation was also used

to release the evil spirits or influences that cause mental disorders.

Surgery would of course be important for healing battlefield wounds, but might also be attempted to remove tumors and growths, amputate gangrenous limbs, or treat other mechanical problems like poorly set bones, and of course to extract teeth. One authority recommends pulling teeth to distract patients from other complaints!

The cauterization of wounds and lesions with hot irons was also widely practiced. Hot irons were also applied to the head to treat mental disorders. Even cataract surgery was offered, although most patients simply went blind from the crude surgery.

Miasma

Lastly, foul smells (“miasmas”) were frequently blamed for contagious diseases. Although observation was not considered an important source of medical knowledge, it was obvious to everyone that swamps, areas fouled with excrement and offal, and other foul-smelling places seemed to be associated with disease.

Physicians thus recommended masks stuffed with fragrant herbs, perfumed handkerchiefs, and medallions filled with potpourri to those who might be exposed to contagious diseases. In times of plague, these would be used by anyone who could afford such contrivances. Generous DMs may allow a bonus to saves vs. disease for those who use them.

Indeed, the DM should decide whether the treatments described below are effective because they are correct, occasionally work because of serendipity or placebo/suggestion effects, or simply don’t work at all.

In a grim fantasy setting, a sensible solution would combine all three views: skilled or lucky doctors will achieve results because the occult influences are real; others might have some benefit due to placebo effects, and quacks will offer completely ineffective or harmful treatments.

Procedure

When visiting a Physician roll first for a diagnosis/prescription on the appropriate column (Disease or Injury). The prescription will then direct you to roll for the various treatments. For the treatment tables, roll two d12s – the first is the ‘description’ of the treatment (for flavour) and the second is side effect(s). The ‘side effects’ of the cure must be survived for the patient to benefit from the treatment. If the patient is still alive, he is healed (1d6 HP) and/or may make one recovery roll for relief from one condition, such as blindness, nausea, one point of attribute loss, etc., per treatment undergone.

Diseases that cause attribute losses, or impose additional conditions need to be cured separately. For example, if a PC has a parasite that causes blindness, the parasite counts as one “condition” and the blindness as another. He might get his sight restored but still have the parasite (and risk a recurrence of the blindness), or he might have the parasite cured but still be blind. At the DM’s discretion, magical diseases such as a mummy’s tomb rot might be curable this way.

Insanities or mental disorders are suppressed for d6 days per treatment; there is 5% chance of permanent relief of the condition. Medieval medicine was fairly impotent against mental illness.

The cost of treatment should be significant but depends on the nature of complaint and the physician – a village wisewoman may accept smaller fees, while a monk may demand a large donation to the order.



Diagnosis & Prescription

d12	Disease	Prescription
1-3	Deficiency of one or two humors.	D
4-5	Excessive blood or phlegm.	B.
6-7	Excessive black or yellow bile.	E.
8	Imbalance.	D, B
9	Imbalance.	D, E
10	Complex case.	D, S.
11	Complex case.	E, S.
12	Unusual and publishable case!	D, B, E.
d12	Injury	Prescription
1-3	It’s not that bad.	D.
4-5	You’ve lost some blood. Better balance that out.	E.
6-7	Look at that angry, festering wound. Better bleed it.	B.
8	Better cut away the damaged tissue.	S.
9	What is that thing? I’ll cut it out.	S.
10	I’m thinking amputate.	S.
11	Hopeless. Here’s something to take the edge off.	D.
12	Hopeless. Might as well experiment a little.	D, E, P.

Prescriptions: D = Drug. B = Bleeding/blistering. E = Emetic/ Purge. S = Surgery

(continues overleaf)

Treatment: Drugs		
d12	Description	Side Effects (no refunds)
1	A simple mixture of vinegar, common herbs, and wine is prescribed.	Tastes terrible, but no side effects.
2	A disgusting mix of herbs must be drunk (save vs. poison to keep it down)	None.
3	An enema of scented water is administered.	None.
4	A poultice of foul-smelling extracts is applied to the affected area, or the chest for general complaints	None.
5	The patient must drink a large quantity of animal blood, followed by an herbal extract (save vs. poison to keep it down)	Improper dosage. Save vs. poison or suffer 2d10 damage. No benefits from this treatment.
6	A nausea-inducing potion (including many substances not normally considered safe for consumption)	Weak dose. Heal 1/2 normal or make saves for restoration at -4
7	The patient must inhale the smoke of various pleasant-smelling herbs over the course of several days	Correct dosage, but the recipe was bogus. Save vs. poison or take d10 damage.
8	An oily salve causing mild chemical burns	1d3 HP loss.
9	Extremely rare ingredients are required (it will take d30 days to collect them, unless the party agrees to go find them)	Extreme nausea for d3 days. -4 to all rolls.
10	An enema, including several obviously still-living aquatic creatures (tadpoles, fish, worms, crayfish...)	Extreme flatulence for d3 days.
11	Illegal ingredients are required – vastly inflating the cost or else requiring that the party collect them from a graveyard, living victim, local temple, etc.	Coma lasting d3 days. Lose 1 point from a random attribute.
12	Parts of a powerful monster are required – roll or select a monster of at least 3 more HD than the party average	Loss of 1 point from CON or CHA (equal chance of either).
Treatment: Bleeding & Blistering		
d12	Description	Side Effects (no refunds)
1	Arm vein opened with lancet.	None.
2	d6 leeches attached to arm.	None.
3	d4 large leeches attached to neck.	None.
4	d3 veins opened on various appendages.	Severe pain and itching, -2 to DEX for a week.
5	d4 leeches attached to nether regions.	Infection. Fever for one week. All rolls at -2.
6	Vein opened on temple/forehead.	Weakened by blood loss. Saves at -4 for d6 days.
7	Hot irons applied to back to raise blisters.	Weakness, -1 STR for three days.
8	Poultice of caustic lye or similar substance raises blisters.	Weakness. -2 STR for three days.
9	Small fire is lit on skin with chemicals and then covered with a glass jar, raising blisters.	Infection. Save vs. Poison daily for one week; lose d2 HP per failed roll, no normal healing possible.
10	Foul substance injected into skin; boils appear in a few hours, which are then lanced.	Exhilarating. +1 to all saves for d3 days.
11	Stirge, lamprey, vampire bat, or other exotic animal/monster used to suck blood.	Emotions sapped. Listless for one week.
12	Metal medallion is left on skin; a single huge carbuncle erupts in a matter of minutes.	Develop a mild phobia based on treatment.

Treatment: Emetic & Purges		
d12	Description	Side Effects (no refunds)
1	Chug two liters of cow urine, with the assistance of a pair of burly medical assistants.	None.
2	Clyster of hot peppers.	None.
3	Various insects, pounded in a mortar and mixed with sour milk.	None.
4	50/50 salt and water.	Delirium, -2 INT for d6 days.
5	? the liquid from a jar containing an embalmed fetus, species indeterminate.	Nightmares and sleeplessness; -4 WIS for d6 days.
6	Suppository of living snails and dead frogs.	Lingering cramps, -2 DEX for d6 days.
7	Frothy mixture, which the doctor fortunately mixed in another room, so who knows what is in it.	The taste stays with you for a week. Appetite wanes, -2 STR for duration.
8	1 gallon of water followed by several spoonfulls of newt eggs on the verge of hatching.	Fever and shivers for d6 days; -2 STR and DEX.
9	One cup of water mixed with baking soda, followed by one cup of lemon juice.	Weakened, -2 CON for d6 days.
10	A plate of strongly spiced food; purgative effect takes a few hours to kick in but lasts for d3 days.	Followed by foul odors for d6 weeks, -2 CHA for duration.
11	What looks for all the world like a pint of quicksilver	Complexion takes on yellow tinge for d30 days.
12	A strong liquor infused with several poisonous snakes.	Find one random, long-forgotten item in the chamber pot. Did I really swallow that?

Treatment: Surgery		
d12	Description	Side Effects (no refunds)
1	Cauterization (hot irons applied to area).	None.
2	Trepanation (small hole bored, cut, or scraped into skull).	None.
3	Surgeon fumbles around with dirty hands in wound or incision.	None.
4	Surgeon probes wound or affected area with sharp instruments for half an hour.	Heavy bleeding, d6 HP loss.
5	Surgeon completely shaves patient, then scrapes away a layer of skin.	Horrible scarring. -1 CHA
6	Metal tube thrust down throat/up wazoo, "doctor" peers inside, frowning.	Infection. Save vs. Poison or lose 1 CON permanently.
7	d3 teeth extracted. What, you didn't have a toothache? Well that other thing isn't bothering you as much now, is it?!	Soft tissue damage. Save vs. Death or lose 1 STR permanently.
8	A spoonful of dubious medicine is poured deep into the wound/incision with a long metal spoon.	Mild infection. Fever and chills for d2 weeks, act at -2 until it passes.
9	Catheter inserted to drain bladder.	Traumatic experience, save vs. Paralyzation or lose 1 WIS permanently.
10	Surgeon makes no incision/ignores wound and just probes the abdomen roughly with his hands.	Oops! Digit or part amputated – DM's choice or roll (d6: 1=finger, 2=toe, 3=hand, 4= foot, 5=arm or leg, 6=nose or tongue).
11	Diseased or damaged tissue is cut away and the gaping incision is covered with a plaster.	Patient goes into shock. Make two saves vs. Death. Miss one = comatose for d3 days. miss both = death.
12	Internal organ exposed, cauterized.	Patient dies.

The Night Watch

by Mike Monaco

I start every hour from my sleep, at the horrid noise of the watchmen, bawling the hour through every street, and thundering at every door; a set of useless fellows, who serve no other purpose but that of disturbing the repose of the inhabitants.

– Tobia Smollett, 1771

When night falls upon the medieval world, the woods and wilderness are filled with terrors. But the tamed land – farmland and roads, even city streets – are fraught with peril as well. The darkness signals the end of legitimate, lawful activity. Criminals of all sorts ply their trades; fearful travelers may well draw steel and slay their fellows, for fear that any stranger may be a brigand. Simply walking the roads and streets puts one in mortal danger, not just from violence but from accident as well – falls might lead to serious injury, drowning, or exposure, both in the country where ditches and pits may be hard to see, and in the town, where streets were often rutted, blocked, or cluttered with trash, dung, and worse.

What follows is a brief description of life at night in a medieval/pre-modern town, and tables for generating night watch patrols and nighttime encounters that more or less simulate the dangers of the night time in those days.

Curfew

As darkness nears, church bells will ring to signal the closing of the city or town gates. Most towns of any significance have walls and gates, and cities may have several gates for egress as well as internal gates that divide certain sections of the town. Ghettos reserved for minorities, and districts known for prostitution, were especially liable to be gated. Certain streets and intersections would be blocked by chains or timbers to make them impassable to vehicles and a hazard for anyone on foot. Eight PM is the normal time

for the curfew to be raised.

Townfolk must clear the streets, and go home and extinguish their hearths for fear of fire. Vagrants might be driven out of town, or tethered together in open squares. The only civilians given a pass to be out after curfew would be doctors, veterinarians, midwives, garbage and dung collectors (if there are any) and priests. Others would be assumed to be robbers, witches, or worse. Any honest man out after curfew would most likely hide from any other person he encountered, for they would be dangerous, possibly seeking to rob or arrest him. In more liberal towns and larger cities that allowed some activity at night, there were still restrictions forbidding any out at night to: carry weapons, travel in groups of five or more, be a woman or foreigner, or wear a hood or mask.

Anyone out at night lawfully would be required to carry some light source, and carrying a hooded lantern that could be quickly covered was considered evidence that the bearer was a thief. Some trades, such as baking, brewing, and textile manufactures might continue into the dark hours. As a general rule, trades that can be practiced with little light, like knitting, and trades that might require continuously burning, closed furnaces and ovens, like glass-making and baking, would be most likely to continue into the night. Farmers and certain urban laborers (collectors of dung and the dead, for example) may also work at night. But apart from cleaning crews, only the watch really has a reason to be out of doors at night and any other will face questioning and possible arrest.

The Night Watch

The night watch in most towns would consist of groups of 6 to 8 men, or pairs of vicious mastiffs, patrolling each district. Men would typically be armed with staves, bills, mancatchers, morningstars, pikes, or halberds. Even when gunpowder weapons became common, the night watch usually carried only hand arms, presumably because of the danger of a “shot in the dark”. (The exception was in the early American colonies, where firearms were commonly carried.) The watch would also commonly carry rattles, horns, or bells so that they could quickly sound an alarm if crime or fire was spotted. Some towns would post watchmen in towers or on roofs as well. The watch usually called out, announcing their presence, and perhaps the time or an injunction for good citizens to pray, be vigilant, or to put out any fires or candles. The passing

of a patrol often woke the whole neighborhood! The patrols could be respected or feared, but at times were openly mocked and even bullied; a lot depended on their competency and experience.

Anyone caught out past curfew by the patrol might be able to bribe or talk their way to freedom, but most would be brought in to a night court that might hold them until morning for trial or summary punishment. Those caught in the act of committing a crime faced summary punishment too, and it should be noted that most crimes were punished more severely if committed at night. Arson, whether intentional or accidental, would be punished in the most excruciating manner, such as being “broken on the wheel”. Large towns would reopen the gates early, before dawn, to let in farmers and merchants who have braved the nighttime roads to set up markets.

Generating the Night Watch

Patrols usually cover their area once an hour; roll a d6 every turn to determine if a patrol passes an area where the party is. If completely avoided, they will reappear in an hour. If the party is spotted but evades, the watch will likely raise an alarm. When an alarm is sounded, each building within 100’ is likely (1-2 of d6) to be roused and the inhabitants will emerge over the next turn. If combat breaks out, raise this to 1-3. Check morale for citizens, if they pass, they will attempt to assist the watch. Any militia or professional troops in town will likely be alerted if combat lasts more than 10 rounds or is especially noisy.

Night Watch Competence

d4	Competence	HP	Morale
1	Unskilled/underage	d4	low
2	Normal man	d6	average
3	Soldier/veteran	Fighter 1	above average
4	Elite	Fighter 2	above average

Smaller towns will have 1 per 1000 inhabitants (minimum, 1). Divide larger towns and cities into sections of for each 1000 to 5000 population so each section has one patrol. A large city like London might have 24 wards, each with about 8000 people, and two patrols for each ward.

Most patrols will be composed of d3+5 humans (or dominant demihuman species) per patrol. There’s a 25% chance that instead a patrol will be made of 2 mastiffs plus 1 minder. Mastiffs are large, vicious dogs that will bark at and possibly attack any living creature on the streets, except for their handlers and other mastiffs. Use war dog stats (typically Mv. 12”, AC 14, HD 2+2, dmg. 2d4, Morale average; Special: very acute hearing and smell). Humans and demihumans roll for equipment and stats on the following charts.

Night Watch Equipment

d6	Weapon	d6	Alarm
1	Staves and clubs	1	Shouting only
2	Bills or hand axes	2	Hand bells
3	Mancatchers and daggers	3	Rattles
4	Morningstars	4	Horns
5	Halberds and short swords	5	Drums
6	Crossbows and short swords	6	Whistles

If you prefer to use historical precedent, bills and staves were characteristic of English nightwatchmen; those of Stockholm carried mancatchers; morningstars – spiked clubs, not flails – were carried in Norway and Denmark, and the “rattle guard” of Amsterdam carried pikes or halberds, along with their rattles.

Random Night Encounters

These tables should provide some inspiration and flavor. Many of the encounters are non-combat, or could be if the players are not overly aggressive. However the darkness should also make even the most innocuous encounter seem potentially dangerous – a cow’s bellowing might sound like a devil, and in one incident a snoring man, passed out in a ditch, was shot by travellers who thought he might be a rabid dog!

I would recommend modifying the tables for each town or locale in the campaign, to account for local hazards, customs, and populations. The animals on the country encounters might need to be swapped depending on the location too – France was much more troubled by wolves than bears, and England was largely cleared of dangerous animals by the late middle ages, while continental Europe was still troubled by bears, boars, and wolves into the early Modern period.

Urban Night Encounters

d30	City & Town
1	d4 vagrants seeking shelter
2	d6 muggers armed with clubs, daggers, and a hooded lantern
3	d4 burglars casing a nearby building
4	d4 burglars in the act of breaking and entering
5	a patrol of the night watch (see above)
6	d3 prostitutes
7	doctor or midwife on the way to a patient
8	hazard: this section of the street is choked with filth/dung
9	hazard: this section of the street is in disrepair and may trip travelers
10	a dead body, and roll d6: 1-2, nothing else; 3-4, patrol of watchmen approaching; 5-6, roll d30 on this table again
11	brawl between two factions, each consisting of d6 people
12	fire! a house or shop has just begun to burn from an unattended candle
13	fire! a building is in full blaze and d20 locals and watchmen are trying to put it out
14	help! a wealthy victim is being robbed
15	help! a drunken, wealthy victim is being robbed
16	help! a domestic dispute has spilled out into the street
17	help! a domestic dispute in a nearby building can be heard in the street
18	help! a burglary is being repelled by a shopkeeper or homeowner, who is calling for help
19	3d6 ruffians (apprentices, servants, slaves, adolescents, etc...) up to no good
20	d6 masked young nobles with d6 bravos, causing trouble and challenging passerbys
21	d4 masked men who keep to themselves... spies? witches? worse?
22	d6 drunken laborers stumbling home
23	a merchant with two mastiffs and d6 guards who preemptively attack passerby as potential thieves
24	d6 night soil (dung) collectors (in time of plague, d6 body collectors)
25	a priest on his way to administer last rites
26	a priest (actually on his way to the red-light district)
27	a spirit, ghost, or bogey up to mischief
28	a coven of witches
29	a party of adventurers
30	monster

Countryside Night Encounters

d30	Farmlands, Roads, and Hinterland
1	2d6 gypsies
2	2d6 bandits
3	2d6 witches on their way to a Sabbat
4	d6 merchants with pack mules, lost
5	d6 merchants with pack mules, actually smugglers
6	d6 farm workers taking a break from night work
7	d6 travelers, lost
8	d6 laborers, going home from a tavern
9	a pack of 2d6 wild dogs
10	d6 ghouls
11	d6 goblins
12	d2 bears
13	d4 wild boars
14	2d6 wolves
15	3d6 wolves
16	a major undead (3+ HD)
17	d10 stray domestic animals (sheep, goats, cows, etc..)
18	1d6 tinkers, camping
19-20	random monsters appropriate to terrain
21	d6 famers with wagons, on their way to a large town with produce
22	a doctor on his way to a country home
23	hazard: ditch which poses falling risk
24	hazard: bridge with gaps, posing falling risk
25	hazard: swollen ford, crossers may be swept away
26	strange noise (spooks horses)
27	strange noise (animal growling? drunk snoring?)
28	strange light (lantern? will-o-the-wisp?)
29	strange odor (monster? miasma?)
30	d12 panicked peasants, 50-50 chance they attack or flee (roll again to see what has them so scared)

Further Reading

Medieval Tournaments: The Real Mêlées The Wikipedia entry for Tournament (medieval) makes a great starting point and then for more information on the details of tournaments and the role they played in mediaeval society I recommend: Barker, J. R. V. (1986) *The tournament in England 1100-1400*, Boydell Press. Accounts of the lives of the great knights of the period, such as Sir William Marshall, 1st Earl of Pembroke, can also be a really useful source of inspiration.

Settling Disputes A lot more information on specific medieval punishments, torture, and execution can be found, with extensive illustration, at: <http://www.medievalwarfare.info/torture.htm>

On Food Surplus I'm no medieval demographer and most of the above, due to time constraints and the non-academic nature of this publication, is written from memory. A primer on the topics treated can be found in the Wikipedia entries on Cities, Urbanization, Medieval Demography, Surplus Product, Grain, Famine. I can also heartily recommend a book on the consequences of food surplus: Diamond, J. M. (1999). *Guns, germs, and steel: The fates of human societies*. New York: Norton.

Medieval Cooking In addition to the Wikipedia entry on Medieval Cuisine the following sources have been consulted:

Cosman, M. P. (1976) *Fabulous Feasts: Medieval Cookery and Ceremony* New York: George Braziller.

Jones, M. (2008) *Feast: Why Humans Share Food* New York: Oxford University Press.

Jotischky, A. (2011) *A Hermits Cookbook: Monks, Food and Fasting in the Middle Ages* New York: Continuum.

Mead, W. E. (1967) *The English Medieval Feast* New York: Barnes and Noble.

The Night Watch I drew heavily on an excellent book I recommend it to anyone interested in the period: Ekirch, R. (2005) *At Day's Close: Night in Times Past* New York: Norton.