This all started as an idea, to journey back in time to the visit the lives of the common folk in Medieval England. I would never have thought I would have gotten my crazy invention to actually work. That’s right, a fully functional, leather seated, ecofriendly time machine. I was finally able to make my dream come true, and interact with the English peasants of the medieval age. So I wasted no time, I packed some snacks, bottle of water and packed my other invention, an invisibility device. I sat in my time machine and flew myself back in time to the Wolds of Medieval England, just outside a village.

Before walking over to the village, I activated my invisibility device, so that I could properly observe the lifestyle of these villagers. At first glance, the land seemed rather dry and had many hills producing random drops in the land.[[1]](#endnote-1) Not an ideal spot for a thriving village, in my opinion. But, I continued on my journey and after some walking, finally was able to see building appearing in the distance. I came to a sudden drop, and was welcomed by an exquisite view of what I assume to be the local church of the village because of the magnificent stone like structure emerged at the entrance of what must have been the chapel.[[2]](#endnote-2) From my vantage point, I examined the area of the village. The church is placed at the bottom of this little plateau in between two higher elevations of land. At one side I stood, and the other side, I could see distant houses sitting on the edge of the drop into the plateau. To my right, more houses and even a river running through the valley behind the church. After some time passed trying to obtain a basic layout of the village, and some self-disappointment as to how I allowed myself to forget a pair of binoculars to better my examination, I decided to head down the drop, and make my way towards the church.

My first obstacle was the body of water separating me from the church on the other side. So I slowly lowered myself into the water and made my way across to the other side. The water had left me rather uncomfortably cold and wet, so I quickly made my way towards the church ahead. Upon closer examination of this building, it showed a Norman like appearance as to how it was constructed, reassuring myself that my machine had brought me to the right period.[[3]](#endnote-3) I then walked past the church to see a peasant’s house, a rather large one at that. The house was a hut like structure made of what looked like wood and mud mostly, with branches and wattles holding it together.[[4]](#endnote-4) It looked like some parts of the house needed to be repaired, but I still made my way inside. I entered quietly to make sure I was not heard by the peasant family living inside. The entire interior of the house was one big unified room, the peasant family was around the fire cooking their dinner for the night. They were cooking a type of stew, roots of some kind were being put into it, and some bread was laid out as well.[[5]](#endnote-5) There were meats hanging over the fire, for what I assumed to be for preservation means. On the other side of the fire was a tiny area above the ground, separated from the floor and dirt.[[6]](#endnote-6) I could only assume this to be the sleeping area for the family living here. It reminded me almost of the little beds placed in the top of certain RVs of my time. Both instances for this bed design were of course made for space convenience purposes. On the other end of the hut was this open area covered in hay, but was mainly filled with storage baskets and bins. There was a feeding trough like wooden structure setup on the side of the wall, but there were no animals here. Judging from the rather cool temperature outside, I assumed it to be around autumn, so it wasn’t cold enough out to bring the animals into the house.[[7]](#endnote-7) I made my way over to the fire, getting close enough to dry myself off but not close enough to draw attention to myself. The clothes worn be the family were dirty and let out a very pungent stench if one walked closed enough. The materials that made up these clothes were a combination of what looked like animals’ skins and wool.7 I felt bad for the family, but their faces did not show sadness or depression, they showed what seemed like comfort. This was their way of life, this what I assume to be what they have always known, and they seemed fine with what they have, food, shelter, and warmth. So after drying up, I made my way outside and looked for a secluded spot to camp for the night. I eventually found somewhere to stay, set up my camping stuff, ate, and then went to sleep.

I woke up early the next morning excited to walk back over to the village and see the people in action. I gathered all my things and put my invisibility device on again, before making my way over. While approaching the same church from the day before, I noticed the pond and stream connecting to it, had some fishermen in boats on it now, throwing their nets into water. I carefully made my way over to the fields to get a glimpse of the peasants at work. I had walked over right at sunrise, the exact time when the fields should of began getting worked on.[[8]](#endnote-8) I stopped and took a second to admire the sun rising over the plateau I currently stood in. while admiring, I heard a strange sound just behind my ear. I turned around just in time to leap myself out of the way of peasant and two oxen he was leading to the fields. To my misfortune, my split second reflexes had landed me in a ripe pile of animal excrement. Luckily however, the peasant was on the opposite side of the oxen and hadn’t noticed the loud thud or now floating smear of waste now present on my left side. I quickly adjusted my invisibility device to cover the smear. I wasn’t too worried about the smell causing any suspicions among the peasants. I carefully followed the oxen over to the fields, watching each and every step of mine for any more surprises left on the ground. I had just noticed what looked to be the peasant man’s son accompanying him to the fields. I observed the man as he attached this wooden beam like board, I think the term for it is a yoke, to the pair of oxen.8 The rest of the plow structure was then added to the oxen by the peasant man. The boy knew exactly what to do not next and started leading the oxen across the field, plowing the soil behind them. I found a spot under a shady tree and just sat there observing the man and his plowing assistant hard at work. All day they worked on that field, until finally the last bit of soil had been plowed. The man then removed the equipment and led the oxen to their shelter. The oxen were left with hay to eat and water to relieve their thirst after a long day’s work. After the man carried more excrements, an ever occurring presence here, out of the sheltered area, I made my way over to the oxen. I carefully reached to turn off my invisibility device and gently petted the beasts. The oxen were far too focused on their food to pay any attention to me. Just before I was about to leave, another peasant man walked in. I quickly hid and scrambled to turn my device back on. The new peasant walked over to the oxen and briefly scanned to make sure everything was in order. He then sat himself down, and stayed their throughout the night. I only knew this because I stayed there myself ought of pure curiosity. It was obvious that this man’s job was to watch over the animals within this shelter and protect them from whatever thieves or wild animals might make their way in.8 After what must have been hours, I finally fell asleep.

I woke up to a beam of light sneaking into the shelter through a crack in the wall, striking my face. I looked up and noticed the same man from before was back, and the other man from last night was gone. It was a new day but the same duties for everyone here, the man once again led his oxen to the fields. I walked out, and everything seemed like a copy of yesterday. The same faces were doing the same tasks, at the same time. I decided to walk back to the time machine and venture even further back in time, only four or five centuries or so. Something I will note that I found rather interesting, was when walking out of the village, I passed a cart filled with not only a variety of fish but also oysters.[[9]](#endnote-9) I wanted to note this because of how surprising it was to see oysters as far inland as this village was from the coasts. The journey back did not take very long and I was finally able to wash off that smear mark left on me. I stepped into my time machine and prepared myself to go further back in time.

I turned the machine off and examined my surroundings. The hills were the same, not much from the landscape had felt any different. Without any delay, I made my way over to the same location. I approached the same drop off into the plateau below and observed the village once again. I looked down, expecting to see that magnificent church to be standing there. To my own surprise, it was gone. The building was nowhere to be seen, the church must have not been built yet.[[10]](#endnote-10) I had not been used to seeing whole building just vanishing before, but I shook off the chills and made my descent down the hill. I decided to make my way over to the other side of the plateau that I had not taken the time to observe during my previous visit, where all the bigger huts and manors were present. I walked up to the top and discovered no such huts from before where there anymore. I looked to the north and saw some smaller huts in the distance and made my way over. I arrived at the huts and noticed some differences in their design from the huts of the later time period. These huts were definitely of smaller size, and upon closer examination, the huts’ foundations embedded into pits dug into the ground underneath.[[11]](#endnote-11) This was clearly different in design from the later huts, which had wooden posts dug into the ground as a foundation.[[12]](#endnote-12) I made my way into one of the huts and was surprised to find that the flooring was made of wood, not dirt. Also, I noticed a hearth made of clay material inside the hut. 11 Having these hearths to cook their food with, inside their own homes, showed a higher lifestyle than what I had expected there to be for peasants of an earlier period. Just before I left the hut, I noticed an item at the corner of my eye. Upon closer inspection, I determined it to be a comb, made of ivory![[13]](#endnote-13) The carvings must have been crafted by a skilled craftsmen, with each individual tooth of the comb been carefully carved out. I placed my exquisite finding down and walked back outside.

I looked out into the distance and saw a peasant man doing something strange to his field, I became curious and decided to check it out. My invisibility device was on, so I was able to get up close to check out what was going on. The peasant man was speaking words of spiritual origin out into the air. I examined the man, he had on typical peasant clothing and even had a strap end holding his belt together.[[14]](#endnote-14) I had noticed marks put down at four corners of the peasant man’s field, upon closer inspection something had been dripped over top of each one. The words being said by the peasant were as followed, “Crescite, grow, et multiplicamini, and multiply, et replete, and fill, terre, the earth. In nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti sit benedicti. And the Pater noster as often as the other”.[[15]](#endnote-15) After stating this, the peasant man gathered some type of material from each marked corner and went off into the distance. I felt no need to follow as I was still fairly confused as to what just happened. I had already known about certain rituals or charms as a practice during this time, but had never gone into depth on what exactly is done. So I left it at that, to avoid any further confusion to myself. I had worn myself out, at least enough for this trip, and went back to the time machine. I gathered a few of my thoughts on the past couple days, observing two different time periods and how they lived. I thought in amazement how those few huts and fields had transformed into a whole complex series of houses, manors, and even organized trails or roads, in just a couple of centuries. The peasants themselves even seemed to have changed, from holding certain beliefs in fantasy or myths to a more organized repetition of work. With the making of those roads, more organized village design, and what I remember from my freshman year history course, the Doomsday Book, the English village I observed, without a doubt, showed signs of advancement and more structured connections to the outside world.

**Notes**

1. Tompkins, “Description Of the Valley”. Wharram Percy; available from <http://loki.stockton.edu/~tompkink/wharram/dscript2.htm>; internet; accessed 6 December 2015 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Tompkins, “Artist's Views of Medieval Wharram Percy”; available from <http://loki.stockton.edu/~tompkink/wharram/slide1.htm>; internet; accessed 6 December 2015 [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. “ROMANESQUE”. Paul Halsall/Fordham University Fall 1996-Spring 1998 Classes Introduction to Medieval History; available from <https://legacy.fordham.edu/Halsall/med/medny.asp>; internet; accessed 6 December 2015 [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. “Life in towns and villages”. The National Archives; available from <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/domesday/world-of-domesday/towns.htm>; internet; accessed 6 December 2015 [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. “Food and drink”. The National Archives; available from <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/domesday/world-of-domesday/food.htm>; internet; accessed 6 December 2015 [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Tompkins, “Views of Peasant Houses”. Wharram Percy; available from <http://loki.stockton.edu/~tompkink/wharram/peasant.htm>; internet; accessed 6 December 2015 [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. “Life in towns and villages” (6 December 7, 2015) [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Halsall, “The Dialogue Between Master & Disciple: On Laborers, c. 1000”. Medieval Sourcebook; available from <http://legacy.fordham.edu/Halsall/source/1000workers.asp>; internet; accessed 6 December 2015. This source was very helpful in providing dialogue between peasant workers and their master. Having the actual description of a peasant’s own account for his work day was very helpful in writing my story. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Ryder, M. L. “Livestock Remains from Four Medieval Sites in Yorkshire”. The Agricultural History Review 9 (2). 1961: 105–6. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40272975> [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Tompkins, “St. Martin's Parish Church”. Wharram Percy; available from <http://loki.stockton.edu/~tompkink/wharram/church.htm>; internet; accessed 6 December 2015 [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Tompkins, “Anglo-Saxon Pit Houses”. Wharram Percy; available from <http://loki.stockton.edu/~tompkink/wharram/gruben.htm>; internet; accessed 6 December 2015 [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Tompkins, “House Site 6”. Wharram Percy; available from <http://loki.stockton.edu/~tompkink/wharram/site10.htm>; internet; accessed 6 December 2015 [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Tompkins, “Ivory Comb Found In An Anglo-Saxon House”. Wharram Percy; available from <http://loki.stockton.edu/~tompkink/wharram/comb.htm>; internet; accessed 6 December 2015 [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Tompkins, “What Was Found There?”. Wharram Percy; available from <http://loki.stockton.edu/~tompkink/wharram/finds.htm>; internet; accessed 6 December 2015. This source shows objects excavated from the very same site I describe. The strap end was dated around the 9th century, around the same time period I had brought myself to. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Louise, Karen “Field Remedy”. Anglo-Saxon Charms; available from <http://www2.hawaii.edu/~kjolly/unc.htm>; internet; accessed 6 December 2015. I cited this page to show that I was granted access to this information for educational purposes in the statement, I used the information from the Field Remedy link. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)