

The Village of Thamesly



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Thamesly is the largest village in the barony of Thamesly, but it is a small place: a dozen or so cottages, a church and a mill surrounded by fields and forest. Most of the peasants are serfs, with only a few free men. The church is the only stone building. While travellers pass through on the way to Gloucester or London, and the villagers sometimes go to market in nearby Marlborough, most never go more than a few miles from home.

The village is small, and everybody knows everybody else. Below is some information on the village families, from highest status to the lowest. Note that children under the age of 13 have not been defined (due to lack of child players). Where it makes sense, families may assume that they have a number of children under the age of 13.

The families

The Aylings are the richest family in the village. Descended from the former Saxon lords, they are freeborn and proud of their heritage even if they now have only a fraction of their former power and wealth. The head of the family is **Harold Ayling**. His wife, **Joan Ayling**, is sister of the Baroness's steward, **Edwin Faulkner**. They own two virgates of land, and unlike the other villagers they run sheep, selling the wool to a merchant from Gloucester, **Thomas Wooler**.

The Millers are social climbers. Previously serfs, **Greedy John Miller** has purchased his freedom and that of his son with the ill-gotten gains from running the Baroness' mill. He overcharges the other peasants, adulterates the flour, and tilts the scales shamelessly in his favour. Recently he has used his wealth to purchase the land forfeited by **William Bywater**. Miller's wife, **Beatrice**, is the sister of **Christopher Oakes**.

The Poles are a respected and powerful family, despite being serfs. **Ralph Pole** is the village Reeve, and the position has been in the family for generations. His brother **Henry** is a bit of a troublemaker, notorious for arguing over theology in church, which has seen the village Bible locked away. **Old Mother Pole**, the family matriarch, is also the village midwife. The family is notable for being literate, and for having a famous relative: **Bishop Osmund Blythe** is **Old Mother Pole's** brother.

The Eastfields are also serfs. **Robert Eastfield** is the village hayward, and widely respected for his fairness. **Emma Eastfield** was recently widowed by the death of her husband, and her son **Little Richard Eastfield** is struggling to work the family's lands.

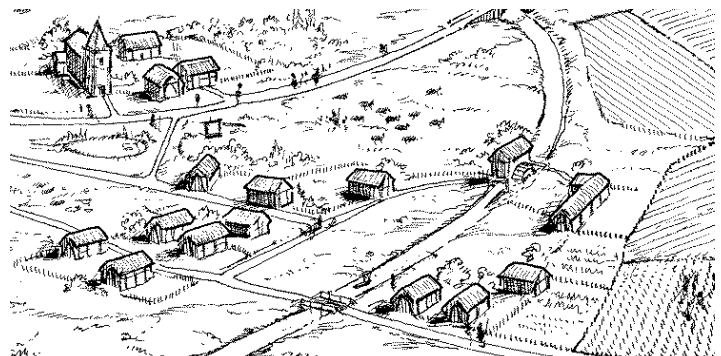
The Bakers run the village oven. **Nicholas Baker** is a townsman from Gloucester who caused a stir by accepting serfdom to marry **Christina**; when her father died, he naturally took over the running of the bakery. He has publicly denounced the quality of John Miller's flour.

The Oakes are a family of unfree labourers. **Christopher Oakes** works the church field for **Father Benedict** while caring for his spinster sister **Estrild**. His widowed sister **Agnes** is the housekeeper of **Father Benedict**.

The Bywater family was the second richest in the village, but has recently fallen on hard times. Last month **William Bywater** fled into outlawry after being accused of poaching, leaving his wife **Old Mott** behind. She refused to give up the cottage despite their land being forfeit. Their two sons **Walt** and **Will** have just returned to the village after serving in the army, to find that they now face becoming landless labourers.

The Cotters are serfs and the poorest family in the village. Landless, they work as labourers and servants for the Aylings.

The Notegoods are poor serfs who live up to their name, as dishonest as the Millers, but less successful. If anything goes wrong in the village, it is invariably a Notegood who is responsible. **Roger Notegood** is a drunk, his son **Lazy John** is a shiftless layabout. The eldest daughter, **Maggie Butcher**, married a townsman but recently returned to the village as a widow. Landless, the family currently labours for the Millers.



People of note

Jane Star is a widow who has been making ends meet by selling ale. She has been doing well recently due to the presence of three thirsty armies nearby. She is the sister of **Richard Eastfield**.

Peter Woodward is responsible for protecting the Baroness' woods from poachers.

Father Benedict has served as the village priest for five years. He is widely suspected to be in an illicit relationship with his housekeeper, **Widow Agnes**.

The Woolers are merchants from Bristol, and regular visitors to the village, arriving twice a year to buy **Harold Ayling's** wool.



Local history

The Rose and the Dragon

The last Saxon lord of the village, **Æthelric the Dragon**, refused to accept the Norman yoke and rose in rebellion. On May Day Eve Æthelric was slain by one of William the Conqueror's knights, **Sir Reynold**, whose emblem was the rose. King William granted the area to this knight and named him Baron Thamesly. Every year the villagers re-enact this event on May Day, which has come to be represented by a dragon being tamed with a rose by a lady of the Thamesly family.

The Dragon's Hoard

According to local legend, Æthelric the Dragon had a vast treasure and hid it before his death. While the Normans searched high and low and even tortured Æthelric's servants, they were unable to find it, and it has not been found to this day. Some poor villagers still dream of unearthing a hoard of silver in the woods. Note that the King claims ownership of all buried treasure.

Local events

The bad harvest

Last year the harvest was bad, and many families struggled over the harsh winter. If the crop fails again this year there will not be enough seed remaining to replant. So far the crop seems to be doing well and the village will be saved provided the weather remains good and the soldiers do not damage the crops.

The death of Richard Eastfield

Four months ago **Richard Eastfield** was found drowned in the river after a night out drinking at his sister **Jane Star's** alehouse.

The outlawing of William Bywater

One month ago a leg of venison was found in William Bywater's barn. Bywater fled rather than risk the noose, and was declared an outlaw. His land was forfeited, and later purchased by **Greedy John Miller**. Bywater is widely believed to be hiding with other outlaws in the Hens Wood.

Strangers

A group of Irish Travellers has moved into the Hens Wood in the last week, and some of them have visited the village. So far nothing has been stolen, but you can never be too careful with these landless vagabonds about.

The armies

There are three armies camped near the village and their lords are visiting the Great Hall on their way to London. Some of the soldiers have been drinking in the alehouse, but so far there has not been any trouble.

Sheep thefts

Three nights ago two dozen sheep went missing from the Ayling's field. There has been no sign of them within the village.

