

Arming Squire

Dream of becoming a knight in shining armor? Not so fast. You have to be an arming squire first. Arming squires were 13 - 18 years old. During battle, you ran, unprotected, into combat to replace broken armor on your knight. After the battle, it was your job to scrape all the mud, blood, and ahem, other stuff off armor with sand, vinegar and, yes, urine.

Gong Farmer

You may be called a farmer, but what you are farming is nothing but a bunch of poop. High up on the second and third floor of every castle were little rooms called garderobes. Inside were rock slabs with holes in them where you sat to do your business. The hole led down to a gong pit and, you guessed it, the gong farmer's job was to clean out the pit. Super gross!

Turnspit

In castle kitchens, fresh meat was run through with a roasting spit (a long rod) and cooked over an open fire. The roasting spit requiring constant turning so the meat wouldn't burn. Young boys called turnspits had the hot, sweaty, and dangerous job of turning the meat in front of a roaring fire, for hours, trying not to catch fire.

Leech Collector

Leeches were used in medieval medical treatments, and **SOMEONE** needed to supply them! Leech collecting consists of three easy steps. One: wade around in leech-infested water. Two: let the leeches attach themselves to your legs. Three: let the leeches suck your blood until they are full (usually about 20-40 minutes) and then fall off. You could lose a lot of blood, get ulcers from leech bites, and have festering wounds on your legs. Ewwwww.

Lime Burner

In medieval times, lime (calcium oxide) was mostly used to make mortar for buildings. The lime kilns were kept at 2010 degrees Fahrenheit and were operated 24 hours a day by a two-man team. The lime that came out of the kiln was an extremely unstable, dangerous substance that could blow up unexpectedly. So Lime Burners could get blown up, die of carbon-monoxide poisoning, or be burned to a crisp if they fell into the super-hot kiln. Yikes!

Barber Surgeon

Trained doctors were rare in the Middle Ages. So when people got really sick, they went to the Barber Surgeon. Being a Barber Surgeon was really, really gross. To diagnose a problem, you would often examine, sniff, and even *taste* a person's urine. Next came the "cure." Often, this was blood-letting (jabbing them with a pointed stick and catching the blood in a bowl) or applying leeches. You might also get called for emergency surgery, which usually ended with the amputation of a limb. With a saw. And no painkiller.

Wise Woman

Many villages had a Wise Woman, who relied on curing illness using natural remedies and plain old-fashioned experience. Sound good? Well, let's talk about some of these "natural remedies." Stinging nettles inserted up a patient's nose to stop a nosebleed. Earth worms tied around a patient's neck to cure a sore throat. Other remedies involved eel heads, horse poop, and cat ears. Can you imagine handling all that nasty stuff in a day's work? Probably best not to.

Fuller

Since most medieval cloth was woven from wool, the wool trade was booming. But to prepare the wool for carding and weaving, you needed a fuller. Fullers walked up and down all day in huge vats of stinking, stale urine. The ammonia produced from the urine made the wool wonderfully soft, but the smell was beyond eye-watering. Two hours of marching resulted in one length of cloth. And ten very clean toenails.