

My name is Devon Bartholomy. Devon is my first name, Bartholomy is a shortened form of the name of the village where I was born. I was born in northern England, in a village called Bartholomy's Cross. The year is now 1215. I am a freeman, an archer, and a foot soldier. I work for the Sheriff of Newcastle, who is one of King John's vassals. We keep order here in the Shire, and enforce the laws that King John makes. We protect John's subjects from outlaws and border raiders.

I live in a wooden barracks inside the castle walls, with the other archers in the garrison. When King John visits, his men stay in the barracks and I stay with a family from the village outside. I spend a great deal of time practicing archery and training with the Sheriffs' men in order to fight together effectively.

I am not wealthy. This is not likely to change. My father is very old, 60, and is likely to die soon. My mother is already dead. I have one brother, and HE will inherit my father's carpenters' shop. He is the first son and was my father's apprentice in the shop. When I was little my mother, father, brother, and I lived in the loft above the shop. There is a woodshed for storing and drying wood behind the shop. It is lucky that I am a good archer and could find a place with the Sheriff. Many younger sons have a very hard time in life.

I am not married, but if all goes well, I may be able to marry one of the castle's serving women. There is a cook's assistant that I have been flirting with for years. It would be convenient since we both live here and work for the Sheriff.

**DUTIES:** I build archery equipment, arrows, bows and strings. I practice archery, and instruct new archers. I train for foot-combat, and perform other odd jobs around the keep, such as carrying water, helping with the Sheriffs' horses, and whatever else needs be done.

**ARMOR:** I have a padded shirt called a Gambeson, and a leather tunic that goes over it. I have a chain-mail coif that I took from the battlefield the year before last. I have an old sword, and my bow. There is a blacksmith at the castle that makes arrowheads, and also repairs some of the armor. Some of the leather armor, we make ourselves, but for commoners, like me, most often we get things when our side wins a battle.

**PAY:** I receive a place to live, food, the supplies for building arrows, and ONE new piece of clothing every year. If there is a battle, I may be allowed to choose a piece of armor or a weapon from those we take from the killed or captured.

**FOOD:** I eat bread, cheese, eggs, fish, and root vegetables like turnips, parsnips and carrots. We get meat when King John comes to visit, in the fall when they kill the animals that are too difficult to keep alive through the winter, and on special feast days. I sit below the salt with the other commoners when the Sheriff eats. Dishes that start at the high table are pretty well picked over by the time they get to us, but the Sheriff allows us to hunt rabbits and squirrels to practice our archery sometimes, and then there are savory stews and soups. We have weak beer or ale to drink at every meal. On very special occasions, we may get mead, or wine. When I was young we had cabbage at almost every meal. The Sheriffs' livestock are often fed cabbage.

**FUN:** I enjoy archery contests, foot races, wrestling matches, games of chance (like dice) and flirting. Sometimes there are town fairs. I also go fishing in the mill-pond and stream. I like fairs, for there are often jugglers, storytellers, and minstrels... I saw a man with a trained bear once.

**EDUCATION:** My father taught me some archery and the basic skills for crafting wood. A Yeoman who was quartered with my family taught me more archery, and told his Sergeant about me. When I was 12, I went to live at the castle and learned how to build bows. Now I am a Sergeant, and teach the other archers. I can not read or write, but I have no need to.

**LANGUAGE:** I speak English, and can recite the Latin responses at Church, even though I don't know what they mean. When the Sheriff speaks French to the other nobles, I sometimes understand parts of what he says.

**HYGIENE:** I swim whenever I can during the summer, and always wash my hands and face before going to Church. I don't like to get cold or wet in the winter, though. There is no fireplace in the barracks. The cook's assistant gets to wash up much more often than I do, but it is nice and warm in the kitchens, and there are often big tubs of water which can be heated there.

**MEDICAL CARE:** The man who cuts our hair also takes care of small wounds. If someone is seriously injured, a surgeon may cauterize the wound or amputate the arm or leg that is injured. The Sheriffs' Lady and her servants grow herbs in the kitchen garden that are used for medicines.

**EVENTS OF IMPORTANCE:** In 1208, England was placed under interdict by Pope Innocent the third, because King John refused to accept the Pope's choice for the Archbishop of Canterbury, (Steven Langton). A year later, King John was excommunicated. The priests and bishops were not supposed to hold any church services or give any sacraments. Most priests obeyed, but some did not, feeling that it was unfair to punish the people for what the King had done. The Pope lifted the interdict in 1213 when King John gave in and pledged fealty to the Pope. In the meantime, the Barons have taken advantage of King John's troubles to rebel against him. They have demanded that he restore privileges that they held long ago. The Magna Carta was signed in June this year (1215). It is not the King's fault that he is not as great a warrior as his brother Richard was. At least he is more concerned with England than the Holy land, and is doing his best to reign here. John may have the last word yet.

