

Monty Python "The Background To History"

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The Background to History, Part IV

PROF. JONES: Good evening. One of the main elements in any assessment of the medieval open-field farming system is the availability of plough teams for the winter plowing. Professor Tofts of the University of Manchester puts it like this:

(A rocking beat starts and a 60s-style folk rock song with some heavy caribbean influence begins.)

To plough once in the winter Sowing, and again in Lent,

Sowing with as many oxen

Sowing with as many oxen

As he shall have yoked in the plough

Oh yes

Oh yes

As he shall have yoked in the plough.

Oh yes

Oh yes

PROF. JONES: But of course there is considerable evidence of open-field villages as far back as the tenth century. Professor Moorhead: (Dramatic metal chords, reminiscent of British punk or perhaps groups like Black Sabbath.)

Theeeeeere's ev-i-de-ence

Theeeeeere's ev-i-de-ence

There's evidence (evidence)

Evidence (evidence)

Evidence (evidence?)

There's evidence (evidence!)

Evidence of settlements with one long village street, Farmsteads, hamlets, little towns - the framework was complete

By the tiiiiime ... (OF THE NORMAN CONQUEST!) The rural framework was complete

Rur-al

Frame-work

Wa-as

Com-plete.

PROF. JONES: This is not to say, of course, that the system was as sophisticated as it later came to be. I asked the Professor of Medieval studies at Cambridge why this was.

PROF. HEGERMAN: (stuttering) Well, i-it may not have

been a - a statutory obligation, but, uh, I mean, uh, a
guy who was a freeman whuh - was obliged in the
medieval system to...

PROF. JONES: To do boonwork?

PROF. HEGERMANN: That's right. There's an example,
ah, from the village rolls, ah, in 1313. -

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