

# Medieval Sourcebook: Medieval Prices

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[Courtesy of Kenneth Hodges [hodges@jif.berkeley.edu](mailto:hodges@jif.berkeley.edu) ]

The list of medieval prices which follows is by no means complete or thoroughly researched; I merely extracted references from some of the books I have, and I thought others might like to inspect it. The sources I used are listed at the end. If an item is listed several times, it is because I had several references I wished to record.

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Money goes as follows:

- 1 pound (L) = 20 shillings (s)
- 1 crown = 5 shillings
- 1 shilling = 12 pence (d)
- 1 penny = 4 farthings
- 1 mark = 13s 4d

The French *livre*, *sou*, and *denier* are equivalent to the pound, shilling and penny (Latin *liber*, *solidus*, and *denarius*, which is where the English abbreviations "L.s.d" come from).

For ease, I've divided this list into the following sections:

- [Tools](#)
- [Horses](#)
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- [Buildings](#)
- [Cloth and clothing](#)
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Of course, a price list is a misleading guide to a medieval economy, because so many goods were either produced within a household, or supplied by a lord. Retainers could get money, but they would also get food, lodging, weapons (sometimes), and cloth. Knights Templar were provided with clothes, horses, and armor.

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<b>TOOLS</b>				
Item	Price	Date	Source	Page
2 yokes	4s	c1350	[3]	170
Foot iron of plough	5d	"	"	"
3 mason's tools (not named)	9d	"	"	"
1 spade and shovel	3d	1457	"	"
1 axe	5d	"	"	"
1 augur	3d	"	"	"
1 vise	13s 4d	1514	[5]	27-28
Large biciron	60s	"	"	"
Small biciron	16s	"	"	"
Anvil	20s	"	"	"
Bellows	30s	"	"	"
Hammers	8d-2s 8d	"	"	"
2 chisels	8d	"	"	"
Complete set of armorer's tools	L13 16s 11d	"	"	"
Spinning Wheel	10 d	1457	[3]	170
<b>HORSES</b>				
Item	Price	Date	Source	Page
War Horse	up to 50s	12 cen (?)	[7]	30
War Horse	up to L80	13 cen	[3]	72
Knight's 2 horses	L10	1374	"	76
High-grade riding horse	L10	13th cen	"	72
Draught horse	10s-20s	13th cen	"	"

Note: Horse prices varied dramatically; for instance, they doubled between 1210 and 1310. ([3], p. 37).

**FOOD AND LIVESTOCK**

Item	Price	Date	Source	Page
<b>Wine:</b>				
Best Gascon in London	4d/gallon	1331	[2]	194
Best Rhenish in London	8d/London	"	"	"
<b>Wine:</b>				
Cheapest	3d-4d/gal	Late 13 cen	[3]	62
Best	8d-10d/gal	"	"	"
<b>Ale (beer comes later):</b>				
Good	1.5d/gal	14 cen	[2]	201
Medium	1d/gal	"	"	"
Poor	.75d/gal	"	"	"
<b>Ale:</b>				
First-rate	1-1.25d/gal	1320-1420	[3]	58
Second-rate	.75-1d/gal	"	"	"
<b>Ale (best):</b>				
Somerset	.75d	1338	[3]	210
London	1.25d	"	"	"
Beer, good	1d/quart	late 16 cen	[8]	xx
Dried Fruit (eg raisins, dates, figs, prunes), almonds, rice	1-4d/lb, up to 6d rare	14 cen(?)	[3]	62-63
Spices (cinnamon, cloves, mace, pepper, sugar, etc).	1-3s/lb	"	"	"
Pepper	4s/lb	mid 13 cen	[9]	218
Pepper	6d/.5lb	1279-1280	[3]	11
Saffron	12s-15s/lb	14 cen(?)	[3]	62-63
Cow (good)	10s	12 cen(?)	[7]	30
Cow	9s 5d	mid 14th	[1]	99
Cow	6s	1285-1290	[3]	206
Ox	13s 1.25d	mid 14 cen	[1]	99
Sheep	1s 5d	"	"	"
<b>Wether:</b>				
Somerset	9d-10d	1338	[3]	210
London	1s 5d	"	"	"
<b>Pig:</b>				
Somerset	2s	1338	[3]	210
London	3s	"	"	"
Fowl	1d	"	"	"
2 Chickens	1d	14 cen	[4]	78
2 Dozen Eggs	1d	"	"	"
Goose (in London)	6d (legal)			
	7d-8d asked	1375	[2]	198
80 lb cheese	3s 4d	late 13 cen	[3]	114
Salted herring (wholesale)	5-10/1d	1382	[2]	198-199
Salt conger	6d each	1422-1423	[3]	69
<b>Oats:</b>				
Somerset	1s/quarter	1338	"	210
London	2s 2d per quarter	"	"	"
Cost of feeding a knight's or merchants household per year	L30-L60, up to L100	15 cen	[3]	199

Related note: around 1380, these are the average costs per day of feeding people on an estate ([3], p. 65): lord, 7d; esquire, 4d; yeoman, 3d; and groom, 1d.

### BOOKS AND EDUCATION

Item	Price	Date	Source	Page
Monastery School	L2 (approx) per year	1392-1393	[3]	75
Schoolmaster at Croyden:				
Board	2s/week*	1394	[2]	186
Instruction	13s 4d/year	"	"	"
Oxford:				
Board	104s/year	1374	"	"
Clothing	40s/year	"	"	"
Instruction	26s 8d/year	"	"	"
University:				
Minimum	L2-L3/year	Late 14 cen	[3]	75
Student of good birth	L4-L10/year	"	"	"
Fencing Instruction	10s/month	Late 16 cen	[8]	xx
7 Books	L5 (approx)	1479	[3]	76
126 Books	L113	1397	[3]	77
To Rent a book	.5d-1d per pecia**	mid 13 cen	[9]	172

\* Source says 2s/day. This is not only insanely high, but the text also claims that the board was the same as at Oxford--i.e., 2s/week or 104s/year.

\*\* A *pecia* is 16 columns of 62 lines of 32 letters, i.e., 31 744 letters, or about 7 500 - 8 000 words. Rental period is not specified, but I would guess a year; books were rented to be copied, and copying the Bible took 15 months. See [9], p. 172.

BUILDINGS				
Item	Price	Date	Source	Page
Rent per annum for 138 shops on London Bridge	L160 4s	1365	[2]	114
Rent for the three London taverns with the exclusive right to sell sweet wines (hippocras, clarry, piments)	L200	1365-1375	[2]	195-196
Rent cottage	5s/year	14 cen(?)	[3]	208
Rent craftsman's house	20s/year	"	"	"
Rent merchant's house	L2-L3/year	"	"	"
Cottage (1 bay, 2 storeys)	L2	early 14 cen	"	205
Row house in York (well built)	up to L5	"	"	"
Craftsman's house (i.e., with shop, work area, and room for workers) with 2-3 bays and tile roof	L10-L15	early 14 cen	[3]	205
Modest hall and chamber, not including materials	L12	1289	[3]	79-80
Merchant's house	L33-L66	early 14 cen	[3]	205
House with courtyard	L90+	"	"	"
Goldsmiths' Hall (in London, with hall, kitchen, buttery, 2 chambers)	L136	1365	[2]	114
Large tiled barn	L83	1309-1310	[3]	79
Wooden gatehouse (30' long), barn, and drawbridge: Contract	L5 6s 8d + builder's clothing	1341	[3]	81
Estimated total	L16	"	"	"
Stone Gatehouse (40' X 18'): with all except stone estimated with stone	L16 13s 4d L30	1313	[3]	79-80
Tower in castle's curtain wall	L333, L395	late 14 cen	"	"
Castle & college at Tattershall for 13 years	L450/annum	1434-1446	"	81
Transept of Gloucester Abbey	L781	1368-1373	[3]	79-80
Stonework of church (125', no tower)	L113 (contract)	13 cen(?)	"	"

note: tithes were often calculated at 1d a week for every 20s of annual rent paid (4, p. 208).

The following are the estimates of raw materials and labor that went into the tower of Langeais, a rectangular, tapering stone tower built in 992-994. The source is [6], pp. 47ff. The dimensions at the base were 17.5 meters by 10 meters; the height was 16m (3 floors); the walls were 1.5m thick, made of two shells filled with loose rock.

Limestone in building: about 1050 cubic meters, or 2 600 000 kg

Wood in building: 47.5 cubic meters, or 34 600 kg

Nails: 3 400, or 50 kg

Mortar: 350 cubic meters.

To make the mortar:

sand: 225 cubic meters, or 360 000 kg

limestone: 40 cubic meters, or 160 000 kg

green wood: 540 cubic meters, or 286 000 kg

Labor Costs, in Average Working Days (AWD):

procurement: 14 250

transport: 2 880

labor:

unskilled: 63 500

mason: 12 700

smith: 1 600

**CLOTH AND CLOTHING**

Item	Price	Date	Source	Page
Fashionable gown	easily L10, up to L50	late 14 cen	[2]	53
<b>Gentry:</b>				
Shoes	4d	1470s	[3]	79
Boots	6d	"	"	"
Purse	1.5d	"	"	"
Hat	10d, 1s 2d	"	"	"
Craftsman's tabard and super-tunic	3s	1285-1290	[3]	206
Reeve's murrey (dark brown) robe	6s 4d	1349-1352	"	176
Reeve's red robe	5s 3d	"	"	"
<b>Peasants (wealthy):</b>				
Linen Chemise	8d	1313	[3]	175
Shoes	6d	"	"	"
Woolen garment	3s	"	"	"
Fur-lined garments	6s 8d	early 14 cen	"	"
Tunic	3s	"	"	"
Linen	1s	"	"	"
Landless serfs' tunics	1d-6d	mid 14 cen	"	176
Cloth for peasant tunics	8d-1s 3d per yard	early 14 cen	"	"
Best Wool	5s/yard	1380	[3]	78
"Tawny and russet"	6s/yard	1479-1482	"	"
Silk	10s-12s per yard	15 cen(?)	"	"
Furs added to garment	+L2-L3 to garment	15 cen(?)	"	79
<b>The worth of cloth provided yearly by a lord to:</b>				
esquires	2s 11d/yard	1289-1290	[3]	78
yeomen	2s/yard	"	"	"
lesser servants	1s 7d/yard	"	"	"

Note: loose tunics take 2.25-2.5 yards. In the late 14th century, shorter doubled (lined) tunics, known as doublets, became fashionable, requiring 4 yards ([3], pp 175,176).

<b>ARMOR</b>				
Item	Price	Date	Source	Page
Mail	100s	12 cen(??)	[7]	30
Ready-made Milanese armor	L8 6s 8d	1441	[4]	112
Squire's armor	L5-L6 16s 8d	"	"	"
Armor for Prince of Wales, "gilt and graven"	L340	1614	[5]	20
Complete Lance Armor	L3 6s 8d	1590	[5]	185
Complete corselets	30s	"	"	"
Cuirass of proof with pauldrons	40s	"	"	"
Normal cuirass with pauldrons	26s 8d	"	"	"
Target of proof	30s	"	"	"
Morion	3s 4d	"	"	"
Burgonet	4s	"	"	"
Cuirass of pistol-proof with pauldrons	L1 6s	1624	[5]	189-190
Cuirass without pauldrons	L1	"	"	"
Lance Armor	L4	"	"	"
Targets of Proof	24s	"	"	"
Cuirass with cap	L4	"	"	"
Armor of proof	L14 2s 8d	1667	"	68
Bascinet	13s 4d + 3s 4d to line it	1369	"	88
Armor in a merchant's house (leather?)	5s	1285-1290	[3]	206
Total Armor owned by a knight	L16 6s 8d	1374	"	76
Armor in house of Thomas of Woodstock, duke of Gloucester	L103	1397	"	77
Fee for cleaning rust off corselets	5d each	1567	[5]	80
Fee for varnishing, replacing straps, and rivetting helmet and corselet	1s 4d	1613	[5]	90
Barrel for cleaning mail	9d	1467	[5]	79

Note: mail is chain mail; almost all the rest is plate-armor. The armor of the knight in 1374 was probably mail with some plates; same for Gloucester's. Mail was extremely susceptible to rust, and was cleaned by rolling it in sand and vinegar in a barrel. Pauldrons are shoulder plates; morions are open helmets, burgonets and bascinets closed helmets; and a target refers to any of a number different kind of shields. Armor of proof is tested during the making with blows or shots from the strongest weapons of the time; if a weapon is listed, the armor does not claim to be proof against everything, only that it is proof up to that weapon's strength (eg pistol proof is not musket proof, but may be sword proof). All plate armor was lined with cloth, to pad the wearer, quiet the armor, and reduce wear between the pieces. This, along with the necessary straps, was a significant amount of the expense. An armorer asking for money to set up shop in 1624 estimated production costs and profit for a number of different types of armor: I give two examples below ([5], pp. 189-190).

Cuirass of proof with pauldrons:  
 plates: 5s 6d  
 finishing, rivets, and straps: 7s 6d  
 selling price 26s  
 Lance armor:  
 plates 14s 5d  
 finishing, et cetera 40s  
 selling price 80s

**WEAPONS**

Item	Price	Date	Source	Page
Cheap sword (peasant's)	6d	1340s	[3]	174
Pair of wheel-lock pistols, with tools for them	L2 16s	mid 17th	[4]	208
Holsters for pistols	6d	"	"	"
Wheel-lock carbine	L1 10s	"	"	"
Shoulder belt for carbine	1s	"	"	"
Pair of flintlock pistols	L2 5s	"	"	"
Flintlock carbine	L1 2s	"	"	"
Musket	L2 16s 6d-18s 6d	"	"	"

Note: It was mandatory in England for all freemen to own certain types of weapons and armor. (In 1181, every freeman having goods worth 10 marks (1 mark = 13s 4d) had to have a mail shirt, a helmet, and a spear. All other freemen should have helmet, spear, and gambeson (quilted armor) [4], p. 39.) Later, the government stored arms and armour in churches for use; in the 13th century anyone with an income of L2-L5 (wealthy peasants) had to have bows; archery practice became compulsory on Sundays and holidays. You may know that the extreme range of the longbow was 400 yards, but did you know that a statute of Henry VIII no one over 24 could practice at a range of less than 220 yards? (See [4], p. 95 and elsewhere).

Note: for guessing prices, see the section on tools (an axe for 5d). An armorer might make 24s a month; say a week to make a decent sword, and you might get a price that way. See the section on books and education for fencing instruction.

**MARRIAGE**

Item	Price	Date	Source	Page
Sample peasant dowries:	13s 4d, 35s 11d, 57s, 63s 4d	14 cen(?)	[3]	179
For serfs, mechet (fees) to lord, depending on wealth	1s-13s 4d	14 cen(?)	[3]	179
Wedding feast, wealthy peasant	20s	"	"	"
Wealthy peasant wedding total	L3-L4	"	"	"
Dowry for esquire's daughter	up to L66 13s 4d	15 cen	"	84
Dowry for baron's daughter	L1000 +	"	"	"
London parents (both sets) each offered couple	L100	1385	[2]	154

Note: these costs will be wildly varying depending on circumstance.

**FUNERALS**

Item	Price	Date	Source	Page
Cheap gentlewoman's funeral (bell-ringing, clergy, food)	L7	1497	[3]	85
Brass monument, with a figure incised, on marble base-- fitting for lesser aristocrat	L8	early 14 cen	"	"
Bishop Mitford's funeral (with 1450 guests!)	L130+	1407	"	"
Memorial Chapel for Richard Beauchamp, earl of Warwick	L2481	1439-1463	"	"
Bronze effigy on gilded tomb	L400	"	"	"

Note: Christopher Dyer gives as a rough rule of thumb 1 year's income for a funeral ([3], p. 85)

**TRAVEL**

Item	Price	Date	Source	Page
Queen's chariot	L400	14 cen	[1]	99
Lady Eleanor's chariot	L1000	14 cen	[1]	99
Chariot	L8	1381	[3]	72
Chariot maintenance	1-3s/year	14 cen	"	"
Barge	L10	"	"	"
Iron-bound cart	4s	c1350	"	170
Guide for a night	1d	14 cen	[1]	129
Ferry ride per horseman	1d	"	"	"
Keeping an earl's warhorse 82 days in summer	36s 9.5d	1287	[3]	71

Note: [1], pp 126-129, gives the following prices at an inn in 1331. For one day, 3 men with 4 servants spent: Bread, 4d; beer, 2d; wine 1.25d; meat, 5.5d; potage, .25d; candles, .25d; fuel, 2d; beds, 2d; fodder for horses, 10d. The four servants staying alone sleep 2 nights for 1d. Generally, all 7 spend 2d a night on beds; in London, it is 1d per head.

**MISCELLANEOUS**

Item	Price	Date	Source	Page
6 silver spoons	14s	1382	[2]	24
2 gold rings with diamonds	L15	"	"	"
Gold Ring with ruby	26s 8d	"	"	"
3 strings of pearls	70s	"	"	"
6 gold necklaces	100s	"	"	"
Fee to enroll an apprentice: with mercers (rich merchants)	2s	14 cen	[2]	111
with carpenters	1s	"	"	"
Fee to join guild at end of apprenticeship: with mercers	20s	"	[2]	111
with carpenters	3s 4d	"	"	"
Fee to join guild	6s 8d-L3	14 cen(?)	[3]	208
Fee to gain freedom of a town (to enjoy its exemption from feudal duties, I assume)	3s 4d-20s	14 cen(?)	[3]	208
To empty a cesspit in a city	6s 8d	15 cen(?)	[3]	209
Candles				
Somerset	1.5d/lb	1338	[3]	210
London	2d-2.5d/lb	"	"	"
Candles				
tallow	1.5d/lb	15 cen(?)	[3]	74
wax	6.5d/lb	1406-1407	"	"
Vat	4d	1457	[3]	170
Barrel	3d	"	"	"
Bottle	4d	"	"	"
2 buckets	1s	"	"	"
1 sheet	4d	"	"	"
1 mattress	2d	"	"	"
4 pillows	4d	"	"	"
3 boards for a bed	4d	"	"	"
2 sheets, 4 blankets	5s 8p	1349-1352	"	"
16 bedspreads, 20 sheets, 8 featherbeds	L3 1s	1285-1290	[3]	206
Duke's bed of cloth of gold, with blue satin canopy	L182 3s	1397	[3]	77
Table	6d	1457	[3]	170
Chair	3d	"	"	"
Chest with necessaries thereto	2s 2d	"	"	"
2 chests	6d each	"	"	"
Metal ewer	6d	1349-1352	"	"
Brass pot	2s	"	"	"
Basin and ewer	8d	"	"	"
Basin and ewer	2s 8d	"	"	"
Towel	6d	"	"	"
Coffer	1s	"	"	"
2 stools	8d	"	"	"
Ceramic cooking pot	.5d	1340s	"	174

Note: most of these come from inventories of peasants' belongings. The fine goods would be more expensive.

Note about lighting: great houses could use 100 lb of wax and tallow in a single winter night ([3], p. 74). Others, not as rich, would go to sleep earlier.

	<b>WAGES</b>			
Profession	Wage	Date	Source	Page
<b>Mercenaries:</b>				
knight banneret	4s/day	1316	[4]	78
knight	2s/day	"	"	"
man-at-arms or squire	1s/day	"	"	"
<b>Regular Army</b>				
Esquires, constables, and centenars	1s/day	1346	[4]	79
Mounted archers, armored infantry, hobilars, vintenars	6d/day	"	"	"
Welsh vintenars	4d/day	"	"	"
Archers	3d/day	"	"	"
Welsh infantry	2d/day	"	"	"
Captain	8s/day	late 16 cen	[4]	181
Lieutenant	4s/day	"	"	"
Ensign	2s/day	"	"	"
Drummer or trumpeter	20d/day	"	"	"
cavalryman	18d/day	"	"	"
infantry	8d/day	"	"	"
Laborer	L2/year max	c1300	[3]	29
Crown revenues (at peace)	L30 000	c1300	"	"
Barons per year	L200-500+	c1300	"	"
Earls per year	L400-L11000	c1300	"	"
Sergeant at Law (top lawyer)	L300/year	1455	"	47
Chief armorer	26s 8d/month	1544	[5]	182
Other armorers in same shop	24s/month	1544	"	"
except "Old Martyn" who made	38s 10d/month	1544	"	"
Apprentices in same shop	6d/day	1544	"	"
Master mason	4d/day	1351	[2]	24
Master carpenter	3d/day	"	"	"
Carpenters' Guild stipend to a sick member	14d/week	1333	[2]	156
Weavers	5d/day, no food	1407	[2]	146
Chantry priest per year	L4 13s 4d	1379	[2]	24
Squires per annum	13s 4d-L1	14 cen	[1]	116-117
Carters, porters, falconers	5s-8s 8d	14 cen	[1]	116-117
grooms, messengers	per year			
Kitchen servants	2s-4s/year	14 cen	[1]	116-117
Boys and pages	1s-6s/year	14 cen	[1]	116-117
Wardens of London Bridges	L10/year	1382	[2]	128

Note: sheriffs of London paid 300L per year, hoping to make a profit from the fines they collected.

Note: 30 adult sheep could produce about 20s of wool per year in 1299 ([3], p. 114).

Note: To get a VERY ROUGH sense of money, I reproduce the following chart from Dyer ([3], p. 206). These are averages of daily wages in pence.

Decade	Thatcher	Thatcher's mate
1261-70	2	-
1271-80	2.5	1
1281-90	2.25	1
1291-1300	2.5	1
1301-10	2.5	1
1311-20	3	1.25
1321-30	3	1
1331-40	3	1.25
1341-50	3	1.25
1351-60	3.5	2
1361-70	3.5	2
1371-80	4.25	2.5
1381-90	4	2.25
1391-1400	4.25	2.75
1401-10	4.5	3
1411-20	4.75	3
1421-30	4.5	3
1431-40	4.5	3.25
1441-50	5.25	4
1451-60	5.5	3.25
1461-70	4.75	3.75
1471-80	5.25	3.75
1481-90	6	3.75
1491-1500	5.5	3.5
1501-10	5.75	4
1511-20	5.25	4

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- [1] *English Wayfaring Life in the XIVth Century*, J. J. Jusserand, trans Lucy Smith, Putnam's Sons, New York, 1931 (Orig. 1889).
- [2] *London in the Age of Chaucer*, A. R. Myers, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1972
- [3] *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages*, Christopher Dyer, Cambridge University Press, 1989
- [4] *English Weapons & Warfare, 449-1660*, A. V. B. Norman and Don Pottinger, Barnes & Noble, 1992 (orig. 1966)
- [5] *The Armourer and his Craft from the XIth to the XVIth Century*, Charles ffoulkes, Dover, 1988 (orig. 1912)
- [6] "The Cost of Castle Building: The Case of the Tower at Langeais," Bernard Bachrach, in *The Medieval Castle: Romance and Reality*, ed. Kathryn Reyerson and Faye Powe, Kendall/Hunt, Dubuque, Iowa, 1984
- [7] *The Knight in History*, Frances Gies, Harper & Row, New York, 1984
- [8] *Methods and Practice of Elizabethan Swordplay*, Craig Turner and Tony Soper, Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale, 1990
- [9] *Life in a Medieval City*, Joseph and Frances Gies, Harper & Row, New York, 1969

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