

John Thorp

Living in a medieval longhouse.

I think we've got to think of a complete different mindset to living in a medieval farmhouse, certainly one with an open hearth fire: windows would have no glass in, probably just plain shutters; the floor would just have been rammed earth, possibly flags but probably just rammed earth; furniture would have been minimal, a table certainly and a bench in the hall and very little else; most of your material was made locally, so your plates would have been of wood, your cups of wood or horn. So, by our standards life was then hard, dirty, embarrassingly communal and all the rest. The 17th century was the time of the arrival of a house where you might recognise the kind of level of specialisation of rooms, privacy in bed chambers and sufficient furniture and glass in the windows, nice plastered walls, furniture – beds and the like. We could have lived in a 17th century house I think, but I'm not sure we could live in a [medieval house] not through winter anyway.