

## THE DOMESDAY BOOK - EXTRACT

In 1086, William I summoned all the powerful men of the realm to Old Sarum near Salisbury Wiltshire, the royal castle he had built within the massive Iron Age hillfort there. It was to be the stage for a grand ceremony which underlined his position as the source of tenure of all land across England – an assertion of royal power.

There is another reason why William may have chosen this ancient site for his ceremony. It seems unlikely to be pure coincidence that Old Sarum was where the returns from the Domesday survey were collated – the great administrative exercise which, 20 years after the Conquest, recorded who held land, be they French settlers or native Englishmen, across the vast majority of the kingdom.

The Domesday book got its name because its lists were so complete that it reminded people of the Last Judgment (which people also call Doomsday, or Domesday) in Christianity, when lists of what people have done go before God for people to be judged.

Domesday Book; (the Middle English spelling of "Doomsday Book") is a manuscript record of the Great Survey of much of England and parts of Wales completed in 1086 at the behest of King William the Conqueror. The manuscript was originally known by the Latin name Liber de Wintonia, meaning "Book of Winchester", where it was originally kept in the royal treasury. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle states that in 1085 the king sent his agents to survey every shire in England, to list his holdings and dues owed to him.

The English people called it the Domesday Book, the Day of Judgement. It revealed William possessed about 20% of the wealth of England, his barons 50%, and the Church had 25%. The surviving English nobles had a meagre 5%. The Anglo-Saxons had been totally overpowered.

Domesday Book encompasses two independent works (originally in two physical volumes): "Little Domesday" (covering Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex), and "Great Domesday" (covering much of the remainder of England – except for lands in the north that later became Westmorland, Cumberland, Northumberland, and the County Palatine of Durham – and parts of Wales bordering and included within English counties).

Space was left in Great Domesday for a record of the City of London and Winchester, but they were never written up. Other areas of modern London were then in Middlesex, Surrey, Kent, and Essex and have their place in Domesday Book's treatment of those counties. Most of Cumberland, Westmorland, and the entirety of the County Palatine of Durham and Northumberland were omitted. They did not pay the national land tax called the geld, and the framework for Domesday Book was geld assessment lists.

By the summer of 1086 this process would have been completed and its results available to the king. This may have been deliberately timed to coincide with the ceremony on 1 August, to emphasise the fact that all land tenure depended ultimately on the king.

Hundreds were the main administrative subdivisions of a county, with a significant role in financial, military, judicial, and political matters, centred upon the Hundred court, which met monthly. Its voice is often heard in Domesday.

### **The Norman impact on England**

The Normans left a lasting impact on England, including:

Architecture: The Normans introduced Romanesque architecture.

Language: The Normans introduced thousands of French words into the English language.

Culture: The Normans influenced English culture, and French is still considered a language of culture.

Trade: The Normans increased trade with the Continent.

Justice: The Normans strengthened the administration of justice.

### **How the Norman rule ended**

The Anarchy began after Henry died in 1135.

Stephen, the son of William the Conqueror's daughter Adela, seized the throne in 1139.

In 1153, the Treaty of Wallingford established that Stephen would rule, but that his successor would be Henry, the son of Matilda.

Stephen died in 1154, and Henry became king as Henry II.

In 1859, they were transferred to the new Public Record Office, London. They are now held at the National Archives at Kew. The chest in which they were stowed in the 17th and 18th centuries is also at Kew.