



Domesday Book

William The Conqueror

Source A

The King had much thought and very deep speech with his council about this land, how it was settled and with what manner of men. He then sent his men over all England. So very closely did he let it be searched out that there was no land, nor even – it is a shame to tell, though it seemed to him no shame to do – an ox, nor a cow, nor a pig that was not set down in his writing.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, December 1085

The King's men took eight months to carry out these orders and all the information was written down in two big books, which still exist. No other medieval king tried to do anything like it and no other ruler in Britain made a big survey like this till the first government census (population count) in 1801. Later this survey was called Domesday Book. *Doom* means judgement so perhaps people felt they were being judged when they had to answer so many questions. Here are two key facts from the Domesday Book: About 250 people controlled *all* the land of England and all except two were Norman.

Here is part of an entry from the Domesday Book for Clapham, now in South London.

Source B

Geoffrey de Mandeville holds Clapham. Turbern held it from King Edward. There is land for 7 ploughs. There are 8 villeins, and 3 bordars (the poorest villagers) with 5 ploughs. There are 5 acres of meadow. In the time of King Edward it was worth £10, now £7.10 shillings.

TASKS

1. Who is the Englishman who lost his land in Clapham in 1066, and who is the new Norman lord?
2. What clues are there that life in Clapham got worse after 1066? What may have happened during William's march to London?
3. Did people at the time seem to like the Domesday Book?
4. Why was the Domesday Book useful to William? Why is it useful today?



William orders a record of all his land and people!