

Landholding and Feudalism

Rents, Tax and Manorial Values

The total value of the land in *Domesday* has been estimated at about £73,000 a year. The most common form of land ownership was under-tenancies, whose holders owed military services to their lords, and subsequently to the King. Another form was leasing or renting land for money, often large amounts. Thaxted in Essex, for example, was worth £30 in 1066 and £60 in 1086, but its holder had leased it to an Englishman for an annual amount of £60. The tenant was unable to pay and defaulted on at least £10 a year.

The value of an area of land and its resources was calculated according to size, with set values on each resource unit. In some areas, the values of the manors and their geld assessments are also connected, these are the figures in hides, virgates and carucates.

Domesday shows to some extent the cost of the Conquest on land values, which was particularly devastating in Northern England where many small villages were destroyed or damaged so badly their land values decreased by about a quarter since 1066. King William was partly to blame, for his men's ruthlessness, but raiders from Ireland in Devonshire also had a bad effect on land values in the areas they passed through.

Justice was a valuable business in the Middle Ages. *Domesday* records that the yields of the soke (the jurisdiction) of a hundred or wapentake went to the holder of the manor. While the earl kept a third of the money, the king reserved two thirds of that made from justice in the manor.

Therefore, the value of a manor was an estimate of the money its lord would receive annually from his peasants, including the annual dues paid by a mill or mine, a proportion of the eels caught or pigs kept, etc.

Population

The total population of England in 1086 cannot be calculated from *Domesday* for several reasons: only the heads of households are listed; major cities like London and Winchester were omitted completely; there are no records of people in castles, nuns, and monks; . Also missing are those people in castles, nuns and monks. The population of England at the time of *Domesday* has been tentatively estimated at between 1¼ and 2 million. However, these figures are much lower than the 4 million people there are estimated to have been in Roman times.

Licolnshire, East Anglia and East Kent were the most densely populated areas with more than 10 people per square mile, while northern England, Dartmoor and the Welsh Marches had less than three people per square mile. This is because many villages had been razed by the conquest armies.

Agriculture

In 1086, 80% of the area cultivated in 1914 was already used for farming. The table on the left shows the extent to which land was being farmed, with other land being occupied by settlements, heath, moor and fen, and devastated land.

The figure in the entries giving the actual number of ploughs is the best guide to the agricultural capacity of the manor. A plough team consisted of eight oxen and either belonged to the lord who had peasants working them for him or belonged to the peasants themselves. Some areas of Sussex and Hertfordshire were highly fertile and could support at least four ploughs per square mile, while the poor land of the North and the Somerset levels could only support one plough in every two square miles or more.

Domesday Land Use

Arable	35%
Pasture / Meadow	25%
Woodland	15%
Other	25%

The arable land was used to grow wheat, barley, oats and beans. *Domesday* records over some 6000 mills to cope with the heavy work of grinding the grain; these were all water mills as windmills did not appear in England until the 12th century.

Pasture, Livestock, and Fisheries

Pasture was land where animals grazed all year round. Meadow which was much more valuable, was land bordering streams and rivers, which was used both to produce hay and for grazing. Pasture was entered in *Domesday* less regularly than meadow and was measured in several different ways; In Essex size was estimated according to the number of sheep it could support, whereas in Sussex and Surrey, sometimes according to the number of pigs.

Sheep were of great economic importance. At Puddletown in Dorset 1600 sheep are mentioned. Other animals included in the records are goats, cows, oxen and horses, wild horses and forest mares. Bees were also extremely important to produce honey and wax.

Many of the references to fisheries in the Domesday Book are to weirs along the main rivers, but fishponds are also noted. A millpond at Stratford in Warwickshire is said to have produced 1000 eels per year; Petersham in Surrey rendered 1000 eels and 1000 lampreys.