



## Press Release

04 August 2006

### **“Domesday book? ...isn’t that the new Dan Brown novel?”**

The National Archives, Kew, home to the nation’s iconic Domesday Book, was amazed to discover that nearly 2% of the population think the document is actually a novel by Dan Brown.

The shocking discovery was made as part of a research survey performed by NEMS Market Research for The National Archives to launch the new online Domesday Book service [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/domesday](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/domesday). A further 13% of the nation believed the book to be a chapter in the Bible.

Domesday Book is the oldest public record at The National Archives and the latest document to be digitised and searchable on the web. It was commissioned in 1085 by William I who conquered England after the Battle of Hastings in 1066. In 2005 it was voted the nation’s finest treasure, yet the survey revealed that less than 1% of the population had actually been to see the original in The National Archives museum. By putting the book online, The National Archives hopes people will take the opportunity to visit Domesday Book from the comfort of their own homes, and learn more about this iconic document.

Visitors to [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/domesday](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/domesday) will be able to learn about the history of the book, where it has been stored through out its 920-year life and why it became known as Domesday Book. The most interesting aspect of the website however is that visitors will be able to search a place name and see the index entry made for the town, city or village. They will be able to purchase for a small fee\* a copy of the original page featuring the place they are researching and a translation of the entry into modern English.

Adrian Ailes, Domesday expert at The National Archives, said: ‘It is a fantastic achievement for The National Archives to put Domesday Book online. It is important that people of all ages should be able to read and use this national treasure. Everyone can now enter The National Archives’ website, discover how and why Domesday was made and read about its enormous importance in history.’

\*Visitors who would like to see an exact entry within Domesday Book will be charged £3.50 per entry selected. All other aspects of Domesday Online, including the folio reference, names of people (including ecclesiastical people), the internet game and the informative text will remain free.

Other key statistics learnt through the research:

- Just under 80% of the population had heard of Domesday Book
- Only 41% of the population could successfully name William the Conqueror as the person who commissioned the document. 8% named King Harold, 3% Richard the

- Lionheart, 3% Henry VIII and one person thought the document was the brainwave of Tony Blair. 44% were unable to name the person who commissioned the document.
- 65% of the population were able to correctly identify that the book is believed to be some sort of land survey/valuation.
  - Only 13% knew that The National Archives is the home of Domesday Book. 22% think the book is at The British Museum and 10% think the British Library is the home of Domesday Book.
  - Only 3 of the people interviewed (under 1%) had seen actually seen the document yet 42% of the population have been to see the Crown Jewels.

For more information on Domesday Book, the new online service, interviews and images please contact:

Nicole Hambridge and Tim Matthews at The National Archives Press Office on 020 8392 5277 or email [nicole.hambridge@nationalarchives.gov.uk](mailto:nicole.hambridge@nationalarchives.gov.uk) or [tim.matthews@nationalarchives.gov.uk](mailto:tim.matthews@nationalarchives.gov.uk)

## **Notes to Editors**

The National Archives, [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk), based at Kew, west London, is a government department; it is also an executive agency of the Secretary of State for Constitutional Affairs. Its 550 staff work in Kew or at the Family Records Centre in Islington. The National Archives leads on record management policy with government, and provides access to government records on its two sites and through digital resources available online. The National Archives also oversees information and archive management across the UK, setting standards and providing advice and support to raise the standards of information management.