

## *The Origins of Newcastle-under-Lyme (1066 - 1173)*

*At the time of William the Conqueror's invasion in 1066, the area of modern-day Newcastle would have been covered by the Lyme Forest and grassland, a land of small farms and hamlets. There is no direct mention of a settlement where Newcastle is today in the Domesday Book of 1086. A double entry for Trentham in the book may suggest a small settlement.*

*The area we call Newcastle today grew in significance in the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century. In the years following the death of Henry 1st, his daughter Matilda and nephew Stephen fought a bloody civil war to inherit the throne. Staffordshire found itself surrounded by barons with rival ambitions.*

*During this turbulent time a castle was built here in the 1140s to defend this strategic position on the north-south route and near the Welsh border. The early castle was constructed out of earth and timber, but was later rebuilt in stone. It consisted of a "Motte" (or mound) on top of which the castle was constructed, and a "Bailey" (or walled enclosure) comprising the storehouses and stables. To protect the castle from invaders, the nearby Lyme Brook was dammed in two places - "Pool Dam" and "Rotterdam" - to create a large pool surrounding the castle. The castle would have been accessible by either a bridge or causeway, with the entire site occupying the land of modern-day Pool Dam Playing Fields. Remains of the motte and remnant of the walls can still be seen today.*

*A settlement sprang up outside the castle walls, near to the areas of modern-day Dunkirk and Holborn. For the soldiers stationed in the castle and the local population, this would have been a mutually beneficial arrangement. The early settlers would have received the protection of the castle, and the garrison would have been provided with the food, clothing and other resources it needed. Under the medieval feudal system the settlement was in the Manor of Trentham, controlled by the Prior. As Lord of the Manor, the Prior of Trentham wielded considerable control over the "villeins" or common people living on his lands. This included the power to require them to work for him - for instance, he could order them to plough his fields. They*

*were are the beck and call, and mercy, of the Lord of the Manor.  
The first Royal Charter for the town in 1173 began to change the  
balance of power in the town.*

