



Harold, now a prisoner, is treated with respect; he rides in front, with his hawk, towards Beaurain, Guy's capital town. Guy sits on his throne and speaks with Harold.



### The Prisoner - Scene 2

The next three segments continue the story in reverse order. Here, two messengers arrive from Count Guy's overlord Duke William of Normandy to demand Harold's release. Turolf may be the very short figure, or one of the two messengers. On the right, the messengers ride furiously, with their hair flying in the wind, to take a message from William to Guy.



### The Prisoner - Scene 3

This is really the first of the three scenes: news is brought to William that Guy has seized Harold. Guy obeys William's order and takes Harold to meet him. Guy points to Harold; both men carry their hawks.



### The Mysterious Lady - Scene 1

William and Harold ride with soldiers to Williams's palace at Rouen (Now William has the hawk!). William sits while Harold talk to him. The mysterious incident on the far right seems to have nothing to do with the main story, but it may have been well known in the 11th century. It might refer to a sexual scandal - the man in the lower border is naked in the original tapestry, but he has been provided with shorts by the Victorian embroiderers who made this copy.



### Brothers In Arms - Scene 1

Harold accompanies William and the Norman soldiers as they set off to fight Duke Conan of Brittany. They pass Mont St. Michel, which is on the border between Normandy and Brittany. To get into Brittany they have to cross the river. They hold their shields above their heads to keep them out of the water. Some soldiers sink into quicksand and Harold rescues them - two at a time!



### Brothers In Arms - Scene 2

The Norman soldiers attack the Dol and Duke Conan escapes down a rope from the castle. Chasing Conan, the Normans pass Rennes, the capital of Brittany.



### Brothers In Arms - Scene 3

The Normans catch up with Conan at Dinan. During the battle soldiers on horseback throw lances, and others try to set fire to the defences. Conan surrenders. He passes the keys of Dinan to William on the point of a lance. As a reward for his services, William honours Harold with the gift of arms. This ceremony would have been seen as making William Harold's overlord - an important event from the Norman point of view.



### The Oath - Scene 1

William and Harold return to Normandy and reach the town of Bayeux. In the climax of the story so far Harold swears a solemn oath on holy relics. Was Harold promising to support William? Harold is at last set free, and sails back to England.



### The Return - Scene 1

Harold talks to King Edward. The King is shown as frail and ill, although he was in fact perfectly healthy at this time.



### The King Is Dead... - Scene 1

Edward died on the 5th January 1066. The Tapestry reverses the scenes of his death and his burial. Here we see his funeral procession to Westminster Abbey, his great new Church. Edward had been too ill to attend its consecration on 28th December 1065. In the upper chamber King Edward is in his bed talking to his faithful followers, including Harold and Queen Edith - below he is shown dead with a priest in attendance. Two noblemen offer Harold the crown and axe, symbols of royal authority, that will make him King. He accepts the offer.



### Long Live The King - Scene 1

Harold is crowned King of England on 6th January 1066 - Edward's funeral was that very morning. The new king sits on a throne with nobles to the left and Archbishop Stigand to the right. At the far side people cheer him. On the far right Halley's comet appears; people think it is an evil omen and are terrified. News of the comet is brought to Harold; beneath him a ghostly fleet of ships appears in the lower border- a hint of the Norman invasion to come.



### Planning The Invasion - Scene 1

News of Edward's death and Harold's coronation is carried across the channel to William, Duke of Normandy. William is furious - he claimed that the throne of England should be his and saw Harold as a usurper. William decides to attack England and organises a fleet of warships. To his left sits Bishop Odo of Bayeux, his half-brother, making his first appearance in the tapestry.



### Planning The Invasion - Scene 2

William's men prepare for the invasion. Woodmen fell trees and shape them into planks. The planks are used for building boats which men drag down to the sea.



### Planning The Invasion - Scene 3

Food and drink are taken to the boats. So are weapons: coats of chain mail, helmets, swords and lances.



### The Crossing - Scene 1

William leads his army to the boats; they embark and set sail.



### The Crossing - Scene 2

The sea is crowded with ships, full of soldiers and horses. William sails in the ship, Mora, bought for him by his wife Matilda.



### Beachhead - Scene 1

They reach the south coast of England on the 28th September and land at Pevensey. Soldiers ride off towards Hastings and gather food.



### Beachhead - Scene 2

A feast is prepared in the open air - chickens on skewers, a stew cooked over an open fire and food from an outdoor oven. William sits down to a feast with his nobles and Bishop Odo says grace. Servants load food onto shields to carry it to the banquet. Wadard (mounted on the left of the panel) was a follower of Bishop Odo.



### Beachhead - Scene 3

Duke William appears in discussion with his half brothers Odo and Robert, Count of Mortain. A motte, a type of castle, is built to strengthen the Norman invaders' base at Hastings. A messenger brings William news of Harold and his army. On the right a woman and her child flee from a burning house.



### William Rides To War - Scene 1

On the morning of the battle, 14th October 1066, William, in full armour, is about to mount his horse. William's Norman cavalry gallops off to face Harold's English soldiers.



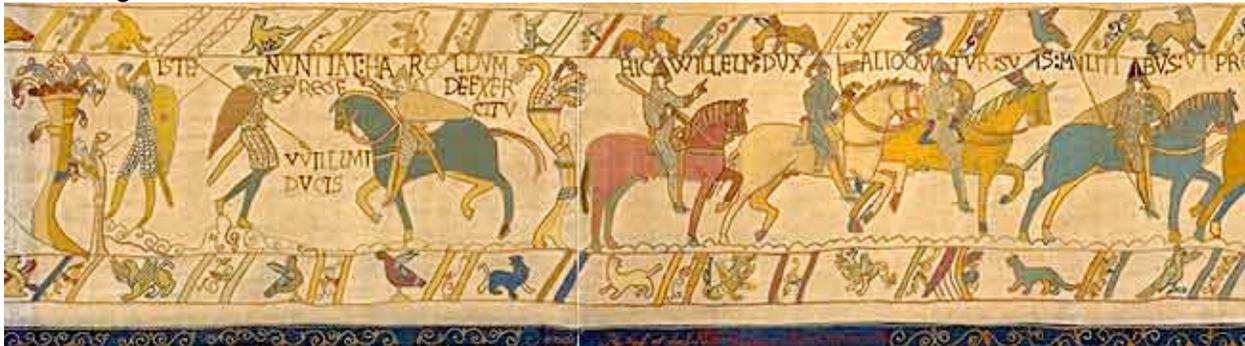
**William Rides To War - Scene 2**

William is shown twice: first on a dark horse at the head of his troops; then immediately to the right asking Vital (one of Odo's followers) if the enemy has been seen yet.



**William Rides To War - Scene 3**

The scene changes to the English side. A look-out warns Harold that the Norman army is approaching. Back on the Norman side: William, mace in hand, gives a speech to encourage his soldiers.



**The Battle Of Hastings - Scene 1**

The Normans charge and the Battle of Hastings has begun.



### **The Battle Of Hastings - Scene 2**

As the air fills with arrows and lances, men lie dying. The English soldiers, who are all on foot, protect themselves with a wall of shields. The Normans attack from both sides. The lower border of the tapestry is filled with dead and injured soldiers



### **The Battle Of Hastings - Scene 3**

The violence continues as men hack and spear each other to death. Harold's brothers both die fighting.



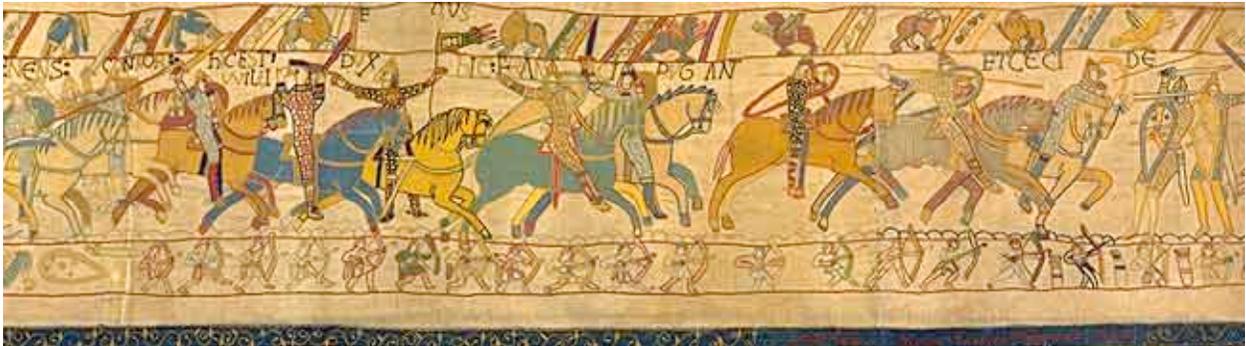
### **The Battle Of Hastings - Scene 4**

The battle rages on; men and horses crash to the ground, the lower border is strewn with slaughtered troops and animals. Bishop Odo appears in the thick of the fighting waving a club and encouraging his followers. Odo uses a club rather than a sword as bishops were not supposed to shed blood.



### The Battle Of Hastings - Scene 5

After a fall from his horse, William raises his helmet to reveal his face. This shows his troops that he is still alive and encourages them to continue fighting. Count Eustace carries an elaborate banner, which may be the one given by the Pope to show his support for William's invasion of England.



### The Battle Of Hastings - Scene 6

The Normans seem to be getting the upper hand as the battle continues. Many more soldiers die, one appears to be having his head cut off. On the right is the best known scene in the Tapestry: the Normans killing King Harold. But how is Harold killed? He seems to be shown twice: first plucking an arrow from his eye, and then being hacked down by a Norman knight. The tapestry is difficult to interpret here, but the second figure is probably Harold being killed.



### The Battle Of Hastings - Scene 7

With Harold dead, the battle is over. The victorious Normans chase the remaining English from the battlefield. The final scene from the tapestry has been lost. It may have shown William being crowned King of England. This would match the scene at the very beginning of the tapestry which shows King Edward, secure on the throne just two years earlier.



## Britain's Bayeux Tapestry

After the Battle of Hastings, William still had to conquer England. He marched from Hastings, crossing the Thames at Wallingford and then on towards London. At Little Berkhamsted he received the surrender of the city. William took hostages to ensure that the surrender was kept.

William wanted to be crowned King as soon as possible. His Coronation took place on Christmas Day, 1066. It was held at Westminster Abbey, which had been built by Edward the Confessor. During the Coronation, as the people inside the Abbey shouted out their acceptance of William, the troops outside thought a fight had broken out. Fearing that William had been attacked they began to set fire to Saxon houses. As the Norman soldiers could not understand the language of the Saxons, and the Saxons could not understand the language of the Normans, it was difficult for them to communicate.



Illustration of a Norman Soldier in chainmail

William kept the promises he had made to the barons who fought with him to give them English land. He gave them lands taken from the Saxons. In exchange, the barons had to be loyal to William and provide knights to fight for him when he needed them. They might also

have to pay sums of money to the king. William made sure that the barons could not easily rise against him by giving them pieces of land in different parts of the country, which made it difficult to raise a private army in secret.

In their turn the barons granted land to their followers. The knights promised in return to be loyal to the barons, to fight for them when needed and to raise money when the barons demanded it.

The peasants had to work the land for the knights at certain times of the year, and pay the knights in produce which kept the knights' families supplied with food. Peasants were not usually allowed to leave their own villages. Every person owed his or her living to the people who had allowed them their land and was paid in service, money or goods. It was called the FEUDAL SYSTEM, and was the basis of society in the early middle ages.

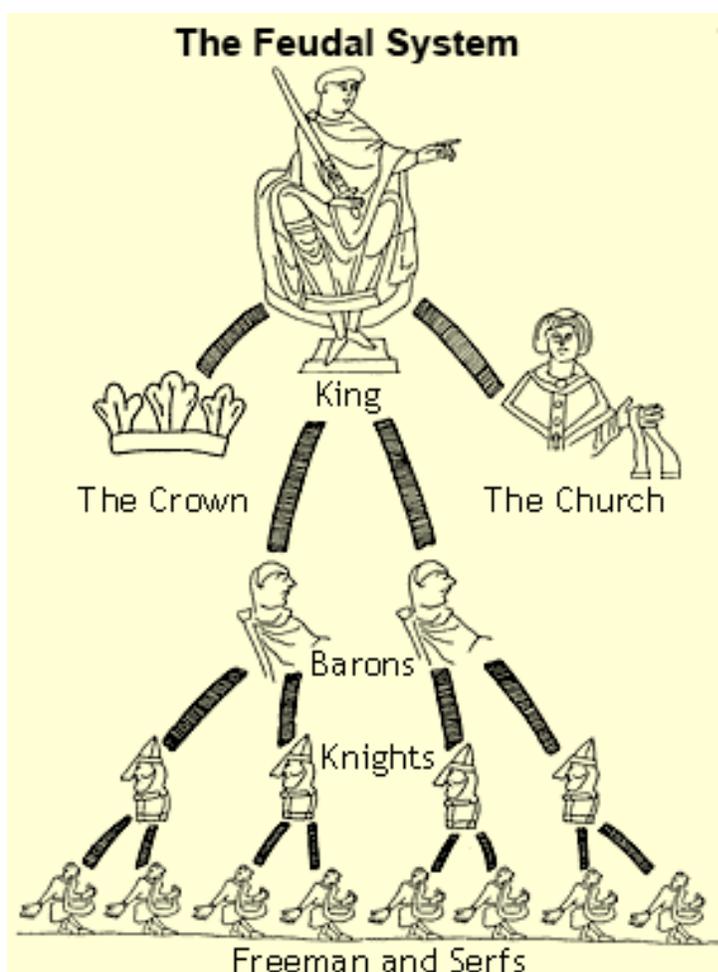


Illustration depicting the structure of the Feudal System, the King is at the top with the Crown and the Church in charge. The Barons are below them, then their knights and at the bottom are the freemen and serfs.

William also gave lands to the Church because the Pope had supported William in his claim to the English throne. One of the first promises William kept was to build an Abbey to celebrate his victory. He chose the site of the Battle of Hastings and the abbey became

known as Battle Abbey. It is said that the high altar was built at the place where King Harold lost his life.

William wanted to raise money in his new kingdom, so he made the Saxons pay taxes. In 1086 he ordered a survey and his men went all over the country writing down exactly what everyone owned in land, cattle, crops and tools so that he knew exactly how much people could pay. When all the information had been collected, it was written down and is known as the Domesday Book.

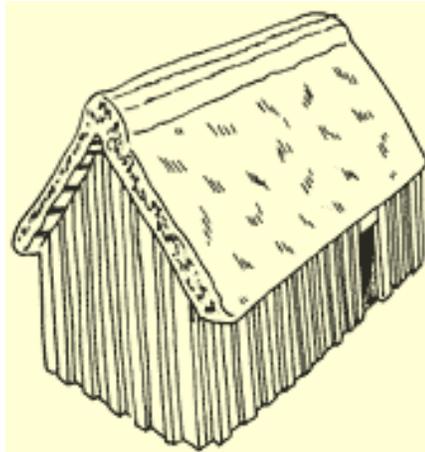


Illustration of a wooden building

Life gradually returned to normal. Ordinary people lived in wooden buildings and these gradually rotted away, so that we cannot see exactly what they looked like. However, the barons wanted more permanent buildings than the hastily built timber castles put up soon after the Battle of Hastings. Soon castles, churches, cathedrals, abbeys and monasteries were being built in stone. Some of the stone was brought across from Caen in France. The Normans brought their own style of building and decorating with them too. Some of their castles and cathedrals took a very long time to build, but we can still see many of them today. The style of the building at that time is called ROMANESQUE.

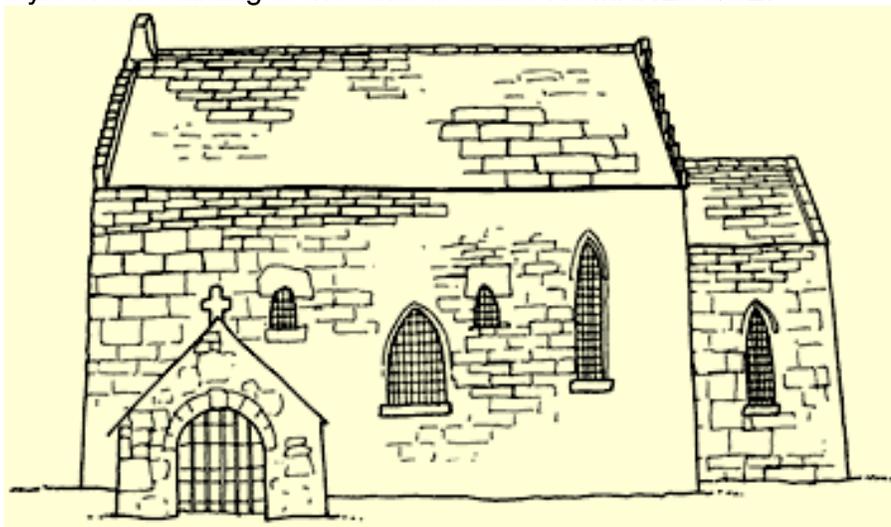


Illustration of a Norman Church

We should remember that William the Conqueror was not only King of England, he also ruled Normandy and he spent a lot of time there. Barons and knights in England spoke French for many years, and most writing was in Latin or French. The ordinary people spoke in their own Saxon language, and the Chroniclers continued to write in it until the reign of William's grandson Henry II.

- The Norman Succession -

William of Normandy became King of England in 1066. He died in Rouen in 1087, and was buried at Caen. He left four children, Robert, William, Henry and Adela.

The eldest, Duke Robert, ruled in Normandy and his second son William became King William II of England, known as Rufus because of his red complexion. Rufus was not a popular king. He was killed by an arrow in 1100 when hunting in the New Forest and he may have been murdered. Rufus did not marry and had no children to succeed him. His brother Henry took the throne, but Robert of Normandy also claimed it. Eventually Henry imprisoned Robert who died in Cardiff Castle.

Henry I had two legitimate children, a son and a daughter. His son was drowned on the White Ship while crossing the English Channel. Possibly the loss of this son moved Henry to found the Abbey at Reading. When Henry died in 1135 he was buried in Reading, before the high altar of his abbey.

Henry had named his daughter Matilda, married to Geoffrey Plantagenet of Anjou, as his successor and the barons had sworn that they would accept her as sovereign. On his death, Stephen who was the son of William the Conqueror's daughter Adela, seized the throne and from 1139 until 1153 civil war raged in England. In 1153 the Treaty of Wallingford established that Matilda's son Henry would become king when Stephen died. Stephen passed away a year later and Henry took the throne as Henry II, the first of fourteen Plantagenet Kings.