



How Did the French Normans Conquer England?

Introduction

The Norman Conquest of England (1066 CE) was one of the most significant events in European history. Led by William, Duke of Normandy (William the Conqueror), the conquest transformed England's political system, feudal structure, language, military organization, and culture, marking the beginning of Norman rule.

Background

Death of Edward the Confessor (1066)

King Edward the Confessor died without an heir, creating a succession crisis. Multiple claimants emerged for the English throne.

Main Claimants

Harold Godwinson – Chosen king by the English nobles (Witenagemot).

William, Duke of Normandy – Claimed Edward had promised him the throne.

Harald Hardrada – King of Norway, claimed the throne through earlier agreements.

Why Did the Normans Invade England?

William's Claim

William argued that Edward had promised him the English crown.

He also claimed Harold had sworn an oath to support his claim.

Papal Support

Pope Alexander II supported William.

The invasion was presented as a just and religiously sanctioned campaign.

Political Ambition

William sought to expand Norman influence across the English Channel.

The Norman Conquest (1066)

Battle of Stamford Bridge (25 September 1066)

Harold defeated Harald Hardrada of Norway in northern England.

However, his army was exhausted after the battle.

Importance

Weakened the English army before facing William.

Battle of Hastings (14 October 1066)



William's Strategy

Used disciplined cavalry, archers, and infantry.

Employed the famous feigned retreat, luring English forces from their defensive position.

Harold's Army

Relied mainly on infantry and the shield wall formation.

Lacked significant cavalry.

Outcome

Harold was killed during the battle.

William achieved a decisive victory.

Why Did William Win?

- **Superior Military Tactics:** Combined use of cavalry, infantry, and archers.
Better battlefield coordination.
- **Norman Cavalry:** Mounted knights gave greater mobility than the English infantry.
- **Harold's Exhausted Army:** Soldiers had marched rapidly from northern to southern England after Stamford Bridge.
- **Leadership:** William maintained discipline and adapted tactics during battle.
- **Papal Legitimacy:** Papal blessing increased Norman morale and attracted support.

Consequences of the Norman Conquest

Political

Norman Rule

- William became King William I of England.
- Strong centralized monarchy emerged.

Feudalism

- Norman feudal system introduced across England.
- Land redistributed to Norman nobles.

Administrative:

- Comprehensive survey of land, wealth, and taxation.
- Improved royal administration and tax collection.

Military: Castles

- Construction of Motte-and-Bailey castles.
- Strengthened Norman control over England.

Social: New Aristocracy

- Anglo-Saxon nobles replaced by Norman lords.



- Restructuring of English society.

Cultural

- French Influence: Norman French became the language of the royal court and administration.
- Influenced the development of the English language.
- Architecture: Romanesque (Norman) architecture flourished. Construction of cathedrals, abbeys, and castles.

Legal

- Strengthened royal justice.
- Improved governance and administrative efficiency.

Conclusion

The Norman Conquest of 1066 was more than a military victory; it fundamentally transformed England's political institutions, landholding system, military organization, language, and culture.

By introducing feudalism, centralized governance, and Norman administrative practices, William the Conqueror laid the foundations of the medieval English state. It remains one of the defining events in European history and a landmark in the evolution of the English nation.



THE FRENCH NORMANS CONQUER ENGLAND (1066 CE)

HOW WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR WON THE BATTLE OF HASTINGS



BACKGROUND

- King Edward the Confessor died without an heir in January 1066.
 - Harold Godwinson was chosen king by the English nobles.
 - William, Duke of Normandy, claimed Edward had promised him the throne.
 - Harald Hardrada of Norway also claimed the crown.
- England faced a succession crisis.

3. BATTLE OF HASTINGS (14 OCTOBER 1066)

- Harold's army relied on the shield-wall formation.
- William used the "feigned retreat" strategy to break the English line.
- Norman cavalry attacked from the flanks and the English army collapsed.
- Harold was killed and William won a decisive victory.



1. BATTLE OF STAMFORD BRIDGE (25 SEPTEMBER 1066)

Harold defeated Harald Hardrada in the north. But his army was exhausted after the victory.

2. NORMAN INVASION

William landed in England on 28 September 1066 with a well-trained army: cavalry, archers and infantry.

4. WILLIAM CROWNED KING

William was crowned King of England on 25 December 1066, becoming William I – "The Conqueror".



WHY DID WILLIAM WIN?

- ✓ Superior military tactics and discipline
- ✓ Effective use of cavalry, archers and infantry
- ✓ Harold's army was tired after Stamford Bridge
- ✓ Strong leadership and adaptability of William
- ✓ Papal support gave moral and political legitimacy

MAJOR CONSEQUENCES

- Strong centralized monarchy established.
- Feudal system introduced; land given to Norman lords.
- Domesday Book (1086) created for taxation and administration.
- Construction of motte-and-bailey castles across England.
- Norman French became the language of the court and administration.
- English language and culture were greatly influenced.

THE COURSE OF EVENTS (1066)

January 1066



Death of Edward the Confessor

January 1066



Harold Godwinson becomes King of England

25 Sept 1066



Battle of Stamford Bridge – Harold defeats Harald Hardrada

28 Sept 1066



William lands in England with Norman army

14 Oct 1066



Battle of Hastings – Norman Victory

25 Dec 1066



William is crowned King of England

SIGNIFICANCE

- ★ Marked the end of Anglo-Saxon rule and beginning of Norman rule.
- ★ Laid the foundation of medieval England.
- ★ Strengthened royal authority and administration.
- ★ Led to social, cultural and linguistic transformation.
- ★ Created historical links between England and Normandy.

