

ANGLO-SAXON SOCIETY (PRE-NORMAN)



Who were the Anglo-Saxons?

The Anglo-Saxons came from Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands; they were warrior-farmers who invaded England because they wanted control and land. These fearsome warriors rowed across the North Sea in wooden boats to England and forced the tribes in Britain to flee their homes. There were three groups of people who settled in Britain, which collectively are called the Anglo-Saxons. These three groups were the Jutes, Angles and Saxons. Within a few centuries, the land they had invaded was known as England, named after the Angles. The Angles and the Saxon tribes were the largest of the three attacking tribes and so we often know them as Anglo-Saxons. For about 150 years the Britons fought the Anglo-Saxons, but by the year 600 the Britons had either been forced to flee to Wales or the West Country and had become slaves. By the year 600 Britain had been divided into 7 main Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms: Northumbria, Mercia, Essex, East Anglia, Wessex, Kent and Sussex. The Anglo-Saxons were tall, fair-haired men, armed with swords and spears and round shields. Their other skills consisted of hunting, farming, textile (cloth) production and leather working.

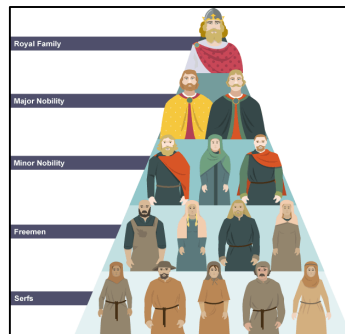
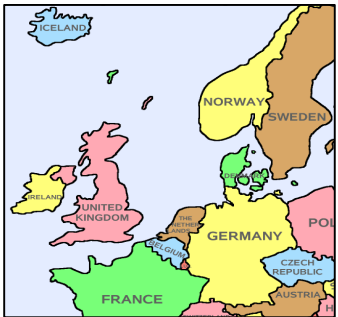
People and Power

England had been ruled by Edward the Confessor since 1042, he was an Anglo-Saxon king. There were around 2 million people living in England, but few people lived in the northern and western parts of the country. England was divided into areas ruled by earls. The main towns were London, York, Winchester and Oxford. London was the biggest town, but it only had 10,000 inhabitants! Life was hard and life expectancy was low. The population was organised into a hierarchy. The king was the most important, followed by the church and the earls, then the nobility (rich people who supported the king) and the peasants at the bottom with slaves below them. Family of the king were known as 'athelings'. The king's government was called the Witan, this was made up of the nobility and the king's advisors. The king and the earls had around 2,500-3,000 housecarls who were professional, well-trained soldiers. The earls could also call on their peasants to fight for them if needed. There were hardly any castles so England wasn't very well defended.



Religion and Wealth

Anglo-Saxons were Christians who followed the Roman Catholic religion. The Pope was the head of the Church and lived in the Vatican in Rome. The Church was important in society as it provided rules for living; it was a major landowner; it heard legal cases and set rules on marriage and inheritance. Most villages had a church, which took 10% of what people earned in a year (known as a tithe, meaning 'a tenth'). The wealth of the churches made England a target for foreign raids by invaders such as Vikings. England also had many natural resources which meant that it could establish trade with other countries. King Edward the Confessor had been brought up in Normandy, so England had strong trade links with France too.



RIVAL CLAIMANTS



Edgar the Atheling/Outlaw

Edgar was the closest blood relative and great nephew of Edward the Confessor. Edgar's grandfather, Edmund Ironside, was Edward's half-brother. Edgar and his sister had lived with Edward and his wife Edith, since they were small children. He was only 14 years old at the time of Edward's death and had no money, no soldiers and no military experience. However, Edgar was an Anglo-Saxon and had the support of many earls. Edmund Ironside's son, Edward the Exile (Edgar's dad) had been named as successor by Edward the Confessor in 1056, however, when he returned to England in 1057 he died!



Harald Hardrada

Harald was the King of Norway and had ruled for 20 years. He was a seasoned warrior and his name meant 'hard ruler'. He had the support of Harold Godwinson's brother Tostig who had been an earl in the north of England until his exile. Hardrada was a powerful Viking with a large and successful army, furthermore he was related to King Cnut who reigned in England from 1016 to 1035. It was said that Hardrada's father Magnus had been promised the throne by Cnut's son, Harthacnut. Edward had claimed the throne while Magnus was away in battle.



Harold Godwinson

Harold was the most important earl in England as the EARL OF WESSEX. He was not a blood relation but he was the King's brother in law as Edward was married Harold's sister Edith. The Godwins' had tried and failed to overthrow Edward in 1051. They were exiled but dominated the witan so they were allowed to return to England just a year later. Godwinson was the richest man in England and was a skilful military leader. He was the Sub-Regulus to Edward, a deputy king who ran England and represented Edward in battle from 1060 onwards. Harold said that Edward had promised him the throne on his deathbed. The witan and the nobility supported Godwinson.



William of Normandy

William became Duke of Normandy at the age of 7; he became a successful and brutal warrior. He was a distant cousin of Edward through Edward's mother, Emma. In 1051, the Godwins' rebelled against Edward, and William travelled to England to give his support to Edward and as a result Edward promised him the throne. William said Harold Godwinson had sworn to support his claim to the throne in 1064. Harold did not deny making the oath but he said he only swore it as he was a prisoner by William and his life was threatened so it wasn't binding. William had proved himself a capable ruler of Normandy and hoped to expand his power into England.

Key terms



Key Term	Definition
Atheling	Family of the king
Sub-Regulus	Deputy king: runs the country on the king's behalf
Novissima Verba	A verbal promise made during a lifetime
Post Obitum	After death
Witan	Council of advisers

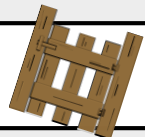
FULFORD GATE AND STAMFORD BRIDGE



Hardrada Invades

Harald Hardrada invaded England in September 1066 to fight Harold Godwinson for the crown. He sailed up the river Humber with 300 ships and landed 10 miles from the city of York. Earls Edwin and Morcar were waiting for him with the northern army and attempted to prevent the Norwegian forces from advancing to York.

Fulford Gate



The first battle that took place was at Fulford Gate near York on 20th September 1066.

Hardrada had an army of around 7,000 Vikings, plus Godwinson's brother, Tostig! Godwinson was not at the battle; the Anglo-Saxon army of 3,500 was led by Edwin and Morcar. Both armies lined up either side of the beck, which eventually subsided and the battle began. Hardrada had hidden some of his best soldiers, which were able to sneak round to enclose the Anglo-Saxon army. Hardrada's army won; Edwin and Morcar were forced to flee. The Vikings demanded hostages from the Anglo-Saxon army.



Godwinson Reacts

The loss at Fulford meant that King Harold had to move quickly to deal with the Viking invasion. Harold had already disbanded the Sothern army earlier in the month, so he moved north with his private army and gathered forces as he went. The journey of 190 miles was covered in 4 days; he arrived on the outskirts of York on 24th September. Harold waited overnight with his troops and on 25th September he entered York and came upon the Viking troops at Stamford Bridge who were waiting on hostages. The Anglo-Saxons had the advantage that the Vikings were not expecting King Harold to reach York so quickly.

Stamford Bridge



Hardrada's army were split either side of the river, and as they saw the Anglo-Saxon's arriving, they fled across the bridge. One brave Viking berserker blocked the bridge to protect the Vikings that had already crossed. He killed 40 men single-handedly. Eventually the Anglo-Saxons crossed the bridge and fought the Vikings. Godwinson won; Hardrada and Tostig were killed. Only 24 of Hardrada's 300 ships were needed to return the survivors to Norway.

Timeline



5th January 1066 – Edward the Confessor dies

6th January 1066 – Harold Godwinson becomes King of England

Summer 1066 William of Normandy lines his troops along the north coast of France and Godwinson send troops to defend the south coast of England

8th September 1066 – Godwinson sends the fyrd (peasant soldiers) home for the harvest rather than guarding the southern coast

Mid-September 1066 Harald Hardrada and his Vikings attack from the north and enter the River Humber

20th September 1066 Battle at Fulford Gate

21st September 1066 Harold Godwinson's army move north from London to Stamford Bridge (190 miles in 4 days!)

25th September 1066 Battle at Stamford Bridge



WILLIAM'S PREPARATIONS

William's Fury

William expected that he would become king after Edward's death, as this had been promised to him by Edward during his lifetime (novissima verba) after William had supported him when the Godwin's rebelled in 1051. William also said that Harold Godwinson swore an oath to accept William as king in 1064 which was in the presence of Norman noblemen. Harold didn't deny the oath but he said that he swore loyalty to William personally and not as future king. Godwinson also said he had been forced to swear the oath as he was William's prisoner at the time after William had rescued Harold from a shipwreck!



The Norman Army

Gonfanon	A flag used for signalling manoeuvres
Shield	Kite shaped, protects left side of body
Horses	Specially trained and strong
Armour	Chain mail, conical helmet with nosepiece
Weapons	Lance, javelin, sword, mace

William's Preparations



1. William was supported by the French in his invasion of England. William lined his army along the coast of Normandy at the mouth of the River Dives he then moved his army to the mouth of the River Somme at Valery to make the distance crossing the channel shorter; the journey was only 20 miles. In the time that they were waiting, William kept his army well-fed.



2. William sent Lanfranc (a leading member of the church) to Rome to inform the Pope the English Church needed reforming and William was the man to do it. Pope Alexander agreed and gave William a Papal Banner, this meant that William had the support of the Pope in what was now a Holy War.



3. William built a fleet of 700 flat-bottomed boats that were able to transport horses. He had weapons made and flat-pack castles so that when the Normans arrived in England they would be able to build castles quickly.

4. Once William had the Papal Banner he was able to recruit men from all over France. Many men joined because they wanted to be part of a Holy War, but recruits were also promised land and riches. William recruited an army of around 7,000 men.

Harold's Preparations

Godwinson prepared a navy to stop the Norman fleet from landing in England. Godwinson also needed an army. He only had a small group of professional soldiers called Housecarls. To prepare for battle, Godwinson had to ask his Thegns (lords) to fight for him and to bring the Fyrd (ordinary people) with them. Godwinson had raised an army of several thousand by May 1066. The Housecarls were very experienced and were well armed. The Fyrd were not as experienced and were not well equipped. Also, Godwinson's army did not have any cavalry, his soldiers were trained to fight on their feet. He did not have any archers either. Godwinson prepared for William's invasion by lining his troops along the south coast of England. His navy was also stationed there. However, he disbanded the southern troops on the 8th September, leaving the coast undefended.

THE BATTLE OF HASTINGS 1



Timeline

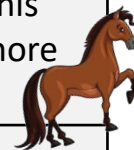
11th August: William is ready to launch his invasion from Normandy
25th September: Harold fights at Stamford Bridge
28th September: William lands at Pevensey and Harold starts to march south
6th October: Harold and the remnants of his army reach London
11th October: Harold leaves London, choosing not to wait for 30,000 reinforcements and marches to meet William
14th October: Battle of Hastings



Summary

Harold's army arrived at Hastings exhausted. The Normans used archers and cavalry, while the English relied on foot soldiers and hand-to-hand fighting. William won the Battle of Hastings due to a combination of superior tactics, better leadership, the flexibility and discipline of his troops as well as a little luck. By winning the battle, William cleared the path to become King, but he had much more work to do to fully secure the English kingdom as his own.

Harold's Mistakes	William's Leadership
Harold hurried to face William: he could have waited for between 20-30,00 extra troops from the South-West, but he chose to go straight to Hastings.	The weather delayed William's invasion. This demoralised Harold's soldiers as they stood waiting for an army that didn't arrive.
Harold fought alongside the Normans in 1064, and was aware of their tactics but still used the old Anglo-Saxon techniques of the shield wall.	William gained a Papal Banner so his soldiers believed they had God's blessing to fight and if they died, they went to heaven. This boosted morale.
Harold chose to fight on foot rather than horseback, so it was difficult for him to communicate with his troops or give orders in the battle.	William's troops were highly organised into divisions with a system of communication. William was on horseback so had more control of his troops and could be more responsive.
The double invasion occurred during harvest season, which led to desertions (people running away) by the fyrd.	William took his time invading, he ensured that he had made all the preparations necessary.



William Arrives

The wind had been blowing the wrong direction at the River Dives and this led to the relocation of the Norman fleet to the River Somme at Valery. William eventually landed at Pevensey on 28th September 1066. During the summer months Harold had waited in the south with an army but when William didn't come, many of the English soldiers were allowed to return home. Harold himself had travelled North to face Harold. On arrival, William's troops immediately started building wooden castles and could defend their landing spot.

Harold's Reaction



King Harold was in York, recovering from the Battle of Stamford Bridge, when he heard about William's invasion fleet landing in Pevensey. Harold's armies were exhausted from long marches and the battles with the Vikings. Harold heard news that William and his Norman forces were attacking villages on the south coast and were making their way to London. So Harold left immediately and marched his tired army south to confront the invading Normans.

THE BATTLE OF HASTINGS 2

Fighting positions...

1. Harold arrived at Senlac hill and organised his army in a shield wall formation, a traditional Anglo-Saxon tactic, at the top of the hill. His army was around a mile long and around 7 men deep. Harold was among the most experienced soldiers at the front. William's soldiers faced the hill, with archers at the front, followed by infantry and cavalry.

The battle begins...



2. The battle started at 9.00 am. The archers walked up to Senlac Hill and fired a volley of arrows. Some of the Norman infantry charged up the hill but were blocked by the housecarls. The arrows were ineffective, they went over the heads of the Anglo-Saxons or buried themselves into the hill. The shield wall was proving an effective defence for the Saxons.

Slaughter in the marshes...

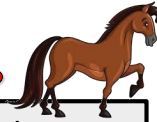
3. After the first Norman attack failed, a section of the Norman army ran away from the Anglo-Saxon wall. Members of the fyrd ran after them but became stuck in the marshy land at the bottom of Senlac Hill. The Normans turned and slaughtered the Anglo-Saxons who chased them. Harold panicked, he couldn't stop his soldiers chasing the Normans as he was on foot. His soldiers were breaking ranks!

Tactical shift...



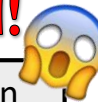
4. There was a break in the fighting at midday to allow both sides to remove their dead and wounded. William changed his tactics and moved his archers from the front of the battlefield to behind the infantry. The change in position of the archers meant that, rather than flying over the heads of the housecarls, their arrows hit the Anglo-Saxon army squarely and caught them by surprise.

Fake retreat...



5. William ordered his cavalry to charge which led to heavy casualties on both sides. Harold's troops managed to stay in formation but the Normans feigned retreat. The Anglo-Saxons couldn't resist and chased the Normans again! William ordered his knights to dismount and attack on foot. At the same time his archers fired their arrows and the knights and infantry charged at the Anglo-Saxons.

Harold's dead!



6. By 4pm the Anglo-Saxon shield wall was beginning to disintegrate and the Normans began to attack and break through the sides of the wall. Harold was hit by an arrow and the remaining housecarls moved into a defensive position around Harold. Seeing that Harold had died, the fyrd broke ranks and fled. William was victorious.

Aftermath



William won the Battle of Hastings on the 14th October 1066. However, he was not in control of the rest of England. The country was full of angry Anglo-Saxons, many of whom were still loyal to the King William had just killed. Two powerful Anglo-Saxon earls, Edwin and Morcar, had not been at Hastings, and there were still significant English forces ready to oppose William.

CONTROL AFTER HASTINGS



William is crowned

William met little resistance as he moved around southern England. But his army was repulsed to the south of London as he tried to enter it. William had to march around the city looking for suitable river crossing points. As he did, he laid waste to the land depriving the Londoners with supplies. William crossed the Thames at Wallingford but at Berkhamsted he was met by a peace delegation including Edgar the Aetheling, Aldred of York, Wulfstan; bishop of Worcester, Walter; bishop of Hereford and several other high ranking Earls who accepted William as their new King. William the Conqueror was crowned King of England on December 25th 1066, Christmas Day, at Westminster Abbey in London. William's control of England was not complete. In the following years he had to deal with several uprisings against him

William seizes control

Date	Event	Details
14th October 1066	Battle of Hastings	The English infantry was broken, William had won the battle. He gave thanks for victory by founding an altar and later an abbey at the place known afterwards as Battle.
October 1066	Taking of the treasury	Following the defeat of Harold at the Battle of Hastings, William made it his first priority to gain control of the English treasury.
Late October / Early November 1066	Taking of London	William mounted a campaign of devastation in and around London which forced Edgar Atheling to surrender.
25th December 1066	Coronation of William	William, Duke of Normandy, was crowned King of England in Westminster Abbey.
1066 onwards	Feudal System	All land belonged to the crown. One quarter was treated by William as personal property and the rest was leased out under strict conditions.
1067	Land distribution	William distributed land to his trusted Norman barons. He was careful to ensure that no one man was given too great an area in any given region. The estates were also scattered all over the country to easily put down any sign of rebellion against Norman rule.
1070	Taxation	William used tithes. Under this system, the population had to pay one-tenth of their annual increases in profit for the upkeep of the church
1070	Power struggle with the Church	Although William was very religious, he refused to allow church authority to be greater than his own.

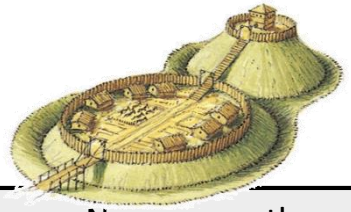
NORMAN CASTLES



Castle building craze

Between 1066 and 1086 the Normans built around 500 motte and bailey castles. The Normans needed to build their castles quickly – sometimes in just a few days so at first they used earth and wood which were easily available and quick to use. Using this method they could build Motte and Bailey castles in 2 weeks. Castles were part of William's long term strategy to secure his position on the throne of England. Defeated Anglo Saxons did not want William as their leader and so Normans built castles as bases for offensive patrols in different areas in England – to protect Normans from further attack.

Purpose of castles



Norman castles were built for defence against invaders and to control the Anglo-Saxons. Norman castles were primarily built by nobility and symbolised the suppression of Anglo-Saxons. Castles were large imposing buildings built to intimidate, bully and to administrate the local area and were a visible distinction between the rulers and the ruled. Motte and Bailey castles were easy to build and made use of geographical features, such as hills. Wooden motte and bailey castles were built until 1070. After 1070, stone keeps were added and by 1100 all new castles were made from stone.

Pevensey castle



Pevensey was the first Norman castle, although there were stone remains of a Roman fort there. It was typical of castles in Norman England and was originally created as a temporary shelter for William and his nobles, to use as a base to launch their invasion of England. Pevensey was seen as the gateway to Britain as it was a coastal location. William used the Roman remains to build his motte and bailey castle. Pevensey developed as an important castle site during the Norman period and beyond.

Location, location, location

Castles were built at sites that were strategically important. William personally ordered the building of a number of castles. They were often built near an existing town, on high ground and close to a water source. Often land had to be cleared to build houses within the castle grounds. The location of castles was extremely important as they had to be high enough to see attackers coming to allow defence of important routes.









Nottingham castle

Nottingham was an Anglo-Saxon town originally named Snottingham. By 1066 Nottingham had around 1,500 inhabitants, which was large for a town at the time. The Normans built Nottingham Castle in 1067 to help secure the route to the north of England. The castle was controlled by the Norman lord William Peverel (believed to be an illegitimate child of William the Conqueror). Between 1150 and 1189 the castle was rebuilt in stone. The population of Nottingham grew around the castle and two boroughs emerged; one English and the other, French. Peverel founded the Cluniac Priory of Lenton in 1103 and St. Peter's Church was also built by the Normans in 1100.



REVOLTS 1067-1075

1067 Hereford	1068 Exeter	1068 Mercia	1069 York	1069 Exeter	1072 Scotland	1075
<p>Trouble broke out in Herefordshire when Edric the Wild started a revolt with a number of English followers. Edric was supported by the Welsh princes and managed to steal property along the Herefordshire / Welsh border</p>	<p>The city of Exeter rebelled against William's rule. William took back control by besieging the city, Exeter held out for 18 days and then were forced to surrender to the King.</p>	<p>Edwin and Morcar provided a challenge to William's rule. The two earls began to gather allies against William and in Edwin's land in Mercia.</p> 	<p>Edgar needed allies in order to continue his pursuit of King of England, he flees to the North. Edgar attacked York and the North of England became the most rebellious area of England. Danish Vikings joined forces with Edgar and Waltheof. The joint English and Danish army defeated the Norman forces and captured the castle in York.</p> 	<p>William is once again under attack from King Harold's sons, who landed in Exeter in the South West and attacked.</p>	<p>Scotland invades northern England in 1070 led by King Malcom III of Scotland.</p> 	<p>William faced rebellion from his own Norman earls. Ralph de Gael and Roger de Breteuil had support from a variety of people, this included King Philip of France who didn't want William to become too powerful. This was a serious threat to William. However, William did not deal with the threat himself, he left it to his trusted regents, Lanfranc and Odo.</p>
<p>OUTCOME: Edric failed to take control of the area</p>	<p>OUTCOME: The King built a castle on the highest ground and left his half brother Robert of Mortain in charge.</p> 	<p>OUTCOME: William acted as quickly as soon as he realised there was danger. He led an army swiftly northwards, stopping in Mercia ensuring no revolts and then to Northumbria, building castles along the way.</p> 	<p>OUTCOME: William decided to deal with the attack in York himself, and marched North, as he approached the Vikings retreated and William paid them to leave.</p> 	<p>OUTCOME: The Norman soldiers placed at the castle after previous unrest, defeat them and force them to return to Ireland.</p>	<p>OUTCOME: William assembled his troops and marched on Scotland and by 1072 King Malcom III was forced to sign the Treaty of Abernethy, this meant that he accepted William as his overlord and exiled Edgar.</p>	<p>OUTCOME: During Christmas of that year, William had the rebels blindfolded and murdered, Earl Roger was imprisoned and Ralph retreated to Brittany. This was the last serious threat during William's reign</p>

HARRYING OF THE NORTH

Rebellious Northerners



The North of England was the most rebellious area, as it saw itself as semi-independent from the rest of the country. There was also a large number of people who were of Danish Viking descent who sympathised with their country of origin. Edgar the Atheling came to the North to gain allies in his pursuit to dethrone William. King Malcom of Scotland gave Edgar his support against King William. Malcom had just married Edgar's sister so was now related to him.



Capture of York



Cumin was given the position of Earl of Northumbria. As his army moved north, they looted and killed the Northumbrians. As a result, Edgar attacked and 240 Danish Viking ships came to support in the summer of 1069. The joint English and Danish army defeated the Norman forces and captured the castle in York. William decided to deal with the attack in York himself, and marched North, as he approached the Vikings retreated and William paid them to leave.

The Harrying



William punished York and the north; he laid waste to vast areas of land, burning and salting the fields and killing any living creature. The Domesday Book written in 1086 records that 80% of Yorkshire was known as 'waste' which meant it was uncultivated and unpopulated.

HEREWARD THE WAKE

Rebellious Earls and Thegns



The English earls, Edwin and Morcar, continued to cause problems for William in East Anglia. They joined forces with King Swegn of Denmark and Hereward the Wake, an English thegn (a person who owned land). Hereward had a grudge against William and wanted to dethrone him, the attackers used guerrilla style tactics in the marshes of East Anglia.

Fighting in the marshes



The rebels set up a base on the Isle of Ely, where they built up supplies to survive a siege. The area surrounding the base was fenland (marshy) which made it extra difficult for William. He made a bridge to cross the fens, but it sank when the soldiers tried to cross it due to the weight of their armour. William built another bridge, but this time the rebels set it alight.

William wins...again



The events at Ely did not all go William's way, however in the end the Monks helped William find a secret route to Hereward; he disappeared and the rebels surrendered to the Normans. This was the last serious threat to William in England. He was yet to face challenges from Scotland as his Norman earls.