

The Norman Conquest



Consequences

- The Norman conquest of England was achieved over a five-year period from 1066 to 1071.
- The conquest saw the Norman elite **replace** that of the Anglo-Saxons
- The **Church** was **restructured**
- A **new architecture** was introduced
- **Feudalism** became much more **widespread**
- The **English language** absorbed thousands of new **French words**



The Ruling Elite

- The Norman conquest of England was not a case of one population invading the lands of another.

BUT

rather the wresting of power from one ruling elite by another.

- There was no significant population movement of Norman peasants crossing the channel to resettle in England
- Many Anglo-Saxon warriors fled to Scandinavia after Hastings



The Anglo-Saxon Aristocracy



- 20 years after Hastings there were only **two** powerful Anglo-Saxon landowners in England.
- Some 200 Norman nobles and 100 bishops and monasteries were given estates which had been distributed amongst 4,000 Anglo-Saxon landowners prior to 1066 C.
- The **sheriffs** governed in the king's name **the districts or shires** into which England had traditionally been divided.
- The Saxons sheriffs were eventually replaced with the Normans

The Church

- Norman bishops were **appointed**.
- By 1087 there were only **two** Anglo-Saxon bishops left.
- Many dioceses' headquarters were moved to urban locations .
- This move gave William much greater **administrative and military control of the Church** across England.
- Also the Church itself benefitted by bringing **bishops closer to** the relatively new **urban populations** .



Motte & Bailey Castles

- From Cornwall to Northumbria, the Normans would build over **65 major castles**.
- The Normans new concept of castle: the motte (small hill) and bailey (open area) castle.
- The **motte** was a raised mound upon which a fortified tower was built .
- The **bailey** was a courtyard surrounded by a wooden palisade .
- The whole structure was further protected by an encircling ditch or moat (*fossato*).
- They will be converted into **stone** versions in the early 12th century.



The Rebellious North

- The king spent the winter of 1069-70 CE 'harrying' the entire northern part of his kingdom from the west to east coast.

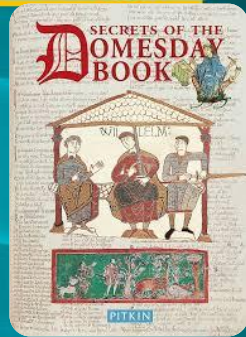
This involved:

1. **hunting down** rebels,
2. **murders** and **mutilations** amongst the **peasantry**,
3. and the **burning** of **crops**, **livestock**, and **farming equipment**, which resulted in a devastating **famine**.

Much of the northern lands were devastated and catalogued as worthless. It would take over a century for the region to recover.

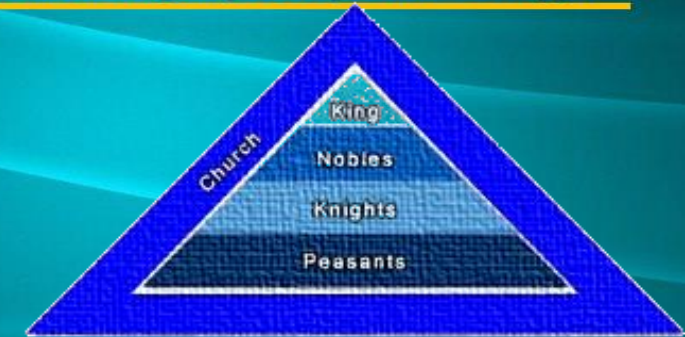


Domesday's Book



- **Domesday Book** was compiled on William's orders in 1086-7 .
- He wanted exactly to find out who owned what for **tax purposes** which were **exacted** by the **sheriffs**.
- Domesday Book is the most comprehensive **survey** ever undertaken in any medieval kingdom.
- 90% of the population lived in the countryside and 75% of the people were serfs (unfree labourers).

Feudalism



- Feudalism developed under William.
- William, who considered all the land in England his own personal property:
 1. **gave out** parcels of **land** (fief) to **nobles** (vassals)
 2. The **nobles in return** had to give **military service**
 3. Not necessarily giving service in person, a noble had to provide a number of knights depending on the size of the fief.
 4. The noble could have **free peasants** or serfs **work** his lands.
 5. If a noble had a large estate, he could rent it out to a **lesser noble** who, in turn, had peasants work that land for him, thus creating an elaborate hierarchy of land ownership.

Under the Normans, **ecclesiastical landowners** such as monasteries were similarly required to **provide knights** for **military service**.



English and French alliance?

- Even as the King of England, William remained the Duke of Normandy (and so he had to pay homage to the King of France).
- The royal houses became even more interconnected following the reigns of William's two sons (William II Rufus, r. 1087-1100 and Henry I, r. 1100-1135)
- Civil wars which broke out between rivals for the English throne from 1135 onwards.



Middle English



- A side effect of this close contact was the significant modification over time of the Anglo-Saxon Germanic language, both the **syntax** and **vocabulary** being influenced by the **French language**.
- That this change occurred even amongst the illiterate peasantry is testimony to the fact that French was commonly heard spoken everywhere.

Random Facts

- The king ensured loyalties by imposing harsh penalties on any dissent.
- If a Norman were found murdered, then the nearest village was burnt.
- William withdrew hunting rights in certain areas, notably the New Forest.
- Poachers could expect to be blinded or mutilated if caught



William's Death



- William had always been a bulky man.
- He died in Ruen in 1089 and it took some days to take the corpse back to England.
- After so many days, because of the process of putrefaction the corpse had swallowed.
- As priests tried to stuff William into a stone coffin that proved too small for his bulk, they pushed on his abdomen, causing it to burst. Mourners supposedly ran for the door to escape the putrid stench
- *“the swollen bowels burst, and an intolerable stench assailed the nostrils of the bystanders and the whole crowd.” “The putrid contents spilled across the floor, filling the church with a smell that was so overpowering that all present were forced to flee the church.”*

Conclusions



- The Norman conquest of England, then, resulted in long-lasting and significant changes for both the conquered and the conquerors.
- The fate of the two countries of England and France would become inexorably linked over the following centuries as England became a much stronger and united kingdom within the British Isles and an influential participant in European politics and warfare thereafter.
- Even today, names of people and places throughout England remind of the lasting influence the Normans brought with them from 1066 onwards.