

## After Hastings: The Norman Struggle to Control England



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## Introduction

The Battle of Hastings in 1066 marked a turning point in English history, as William, Duke of Normandy, defeated King Harold II to claim the English throne. However, the battle was merely the beginning of a much larger transformation. In the years following Hastings, England underwent profound political, cultural, and social changes as Norman rule was solidified.

This eBook examines how William's governance strategies transformed England's feudal landscape and quelled local resistance after Hastings.

From the construction of motte-and-bailey castles to the Domesday Book, the tools of Norman governance are examined in detail. It also investigates the resistance faced by the Normans, including the uprisings in the north, culminating in the Harrying of the North.

By analysing these events and their long-term effects, this work offers a comprehensive understanding of how the Norman Conquest shaped medieval England. The insights presented are supported by detailed historical accounts and scholarly interpretations, ensuring accuracy and depth.

### Disclaimer

*This eBook was authored by Edward Davis, with the assistance of AI tools for drafting and formatting under my direct guidance. The content reflects extensive research and interpretation based on scholarly sources, ensuring accuracy and depth. Any errors or interpretations are solely the responsibility of the author.*

### **Key Events of the Norman Period**

#### *1066: Battle of Hastings*

- *October 14, 1066: William defeats King Harold II at the Battle of Hastings, securing his claim to the English throne. Harold's death marks the end of Anglo-Saxon rule.*

#### *1069: Northern Rebellion*

- *1069: A widespread uprising against Norman rule erupts in northern England, led by Anglo-Saxon nobles. York becomes a centre of resistance.*

#### *1069–1070: Entry of King Sweyn II of Denmark*

- *Late 1069: King Sweyn II of Denmark invades England, allying with Anglo-Saxon rebels and raiding northern territories. His forces temporarily occupy York before withdrawing.*

#### *1070: Harrying of the North*

- *Winter 1069–1070: In retaliation for the northern rebellion, William orders the Harrying of the North. Entire regions are laid waste which eventually breaks local resistance.*

*1070–1071: Hereward the Wake's Rebellion*

- *1070–1071: Hereward leads a rebellion centred on the Isle of Ely. He allies with Danes and local resistance fighters. William suppresses the rebellion after a prolonged campaign.*

*1075: Revolt of the Earls*

- *1075: The last major rebellion against William's rule, led by Ralph de Gael (Earl of East Anglia), Roger de Breteuil (Earl of Hereford), and Waltheof (Earl of Northumbria). The rebellion is swiftly crushed, thus underscoring Norman rule.*

*1078: Construction of the Tower of London*

- *1078: William commissions the Tower of London to strengthen Norman control over London. The White Tower is the centrepiece.*

## **Chapter 1: Securing the Throne**

After his victory at Hastings, William faced the monumental task of securing his claim to the English throne. Despite his triumph, resistance to Norman rule remained widespread. William understood that military strength alone would not suffice; he needed to establish legitimacy and consolidate his power.

### **The Coronation**

On Christmas Day 1066, William was crowned King of England at Westminster Abbey. The ceremony was a carefully orchestrated event, blending Norman and Anglo-Saxon traditions to signal continuity and authority. However, tensions between the Normans and the local population were evident even at the coronation, with reports of confusion and violence erupting during the ceremony.

### **The Construction of Castles**

To secure control, William introduced the Norman practice of building motte-and-bailey castles. These fortifications served as military outposts and symbols of dominance. Strategic locations such as London, York, and Exeter saw the rapid construction of castles, which allowed Norman forces to suppress uprisings and project power across the kingdom.

### **Rebellion and Suppression**

Despite these measures, resistance flared up in various regions. Notable revolts included:

- **The Kentish Rebellion (1067):** A short-lived uprising seeking to restore English rule.
- **The Uprising in Exeter (1068):** Led by Gytha, Harold's mother, this rebellion was quelled through a combination of military force and negotiation.

Each uprising reinforced William's understanding that he needed both military might and administrative reforms to maintain control. Despite these initial efforts, the road to consolidating his reign would be marked by further unrest and thus decisive action, which was required.