

History

How did a Norman become King of England?

Lesson 3 of an enquiry of 4

3. William's Invasion Plan

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William's Claim to the Throne

William was furious when Harold became King of England. William was angry because he felt that he was the rightful ruler of England and that Harold had a weak **claim**. There were a number of reasons why William felt he had the right to become King.

1. William thought he was a more **legitimate** ruler of England than Harold. This was partly because of Norman links to English Kings. Emma of Normandy was the mother of Edward the Confessor and William was her great nephew. Therefore Normandy had close links with England.
2. William claimed that Edward the Confessor had once promised him the throne. In 1051, Harold Godwinson **rebelled** against Edward. Edward asked for help from William and William agreed to send soldiers to help Edward. After this, Edward is said to have promised that William would become King after he died.

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William's Claim to the Throne and Matilda

3. Harold Godwinson found himself in Normandy in 1064. According to the Normans, he agreed that he would support William becoming King of England once Edward died. Harold is said to have sworn an **oath** on holy relics. William was angry now that Harold had become King of England as it meant he was an **oath-breaker**. This was a very serious accusation.

It should be remembered that the stories of promises and oaths are from William and the Normans. Harold Godwinson denied that he swore an oath to say that William would one day become King.

These reasons meant that William decided to invade England. In the eleventh century, Kings fought in battles. If William went to England, then who would look after Normandy whilst he was away? Fortunately, his strong marriage to Matilda of Flanders meant that she would rule Normandy whilst he went to England. Matilda supported his invasion of England and wanted to become Queen. This helped William enormously.



William's Plan to Invade

With Matilda's support, William was able to plan the invasion of England. Throughout the summer of 1066, William prepared his boats and troops to invade. At the same time, Harold Godwinson was getting his defences ready.

In the below image of the Bayeux Tapestry, we can see William's preparations. His men are chopping down trees and building boats to sail across to England.



William's Plan to Invade

William had troops from Normandy and other areas, such as Flanders assemble on the French coast. The exact numbers are unknown but historians believe William had around 8000 men with at least 1000 of these being **cavalry** and a number of them being archers. Norman sources say that William also had the Pope's support. The **Pope** was a very powerful religious man who Christians supported.

William had reports that Harold's army was waiting on the South coast of England for his invasion force. The most difficult part was getting William's army across the sea. William intended to sail to England in August but was stopped from doing so because the wind was in the wrong direction. This delayed the invasion. William now had to wait for the winds to change before he could invade.



Glossary

Claim to the throne - someone's reason or evidence for why they should become King or Queen.

Rebelled - armed resistance against a leader or country.

Legitimate - Someone who is seen as a rightful ruler.

Oath - A promise given to someone

Oath-breaker - Someone who has made a promise and then broken it

Cavalry - A soldier on horseback

Pope - The Head of the Catholic Christian Church.



Comprehension Questions

1. What was William's mood when he heard that Harold Godwinson was made King?

Sentence Starter: William's mood was...

2. Why did William think he should be King of England?

3. How did Matilda help William with his plan to invade England?

4. How big is William's army and what kind of troops are in it?

5. Why was William stopped from sailing to England?

Challenge Question: Did William or Harold have the stronger claim to the throne of England?

Clue: Think about Harold's claim and think about the 3 reasons William has for being King of England.

