

man in the country, a position that was further cemented with the granting of earldoms to his brothers. These included Tostig, who became the Earl of Northumbria in 1055, and it was the capable and soldierly Tostig who was to join his brother in the early 1060s in subduing the Mercians who had allied with the Welsh against the king.

But in 1065, a local uprising broke out against the tyranny of Tostig's rule in the north of the country and this was pursued with such vigour by the people of Northumbria that Harold Godwinson was forced to side against his brother. As a result, Tostig was replaced with the brother of the Earl of Mercia, thus making the two Godwin brothers the bitterest of enemies. Tostig was to prove this sibling enmity a year later when he sided with Harald III Hardrada, the son of Magnus of Norway, when the latter invaded to claim the throne of the Confessor.

King Harold and the Battle of Hastings

Edward the Confessor died in January 1066 after a short illness, probably following a series of strokes, and was buried at the abbey that he had built at Westminster. In 1161, Edward the Confessor was to be canonised and was lauded as England's patron saint until the elevation of St George in about 1350. The Confessor's abbey at Westminster, built in the new Romanesque Norman style, was demolished two centuries later and rebuilt in a newer and more grandiose style. This new abbey, one of the best examples of high gothic English Perpendicular, was built by Henry III in the thirteenth century and was to have the Confessor's tomb as its centrepiece.

On his deathbed, Edward the Confessor had chosen Harold Godwinson as his successor. However, Harold faced three other men with seemingly equally or

backed up in 1064 when this was confirmed by Harold Godwinson during a visit to Normandy. Various different chroniclers suggest various different reasons for this visit with some suggesting that it was because a storm blew Harold's ship towards Normandy. Others mention a mission on behalf of Edward the Confessor in order to seek the release of members of the Godwin family held hostage, but, either way, it seems clear that Harold found himself in William's court in 1064 and it was during this visit that he swore, on the bones of various saints, to support William's claim to the throne of England after the death of the Confessor.

But on his deathbed, in early January 1066, Edward the Confessor had chosen Harold Godwinson as his successor and this was a decision soon confirmed by a meeting of the Witan in London, a Godwin stronghold. Harold let himself accept this despite the promise he had earlier made to William in Normandy, now claiming that this had been forced from him under duress and that, in any case, it was superseded by the late king's change of mind. But he was obviously concerned about the threat to his new throne from Normandy, and he was to spend much of the spring of 1066 collecting together a peasant army to augment his housecarls, the troop of royal soldiers chosen as boys to serve the Wessex earls.

In this way, he mustered his forces on the Isle of Wight in preparation for the invasion that he knew was likely to take place during the summer. While this was taking place, the sighting of Halley's Comet, on seven consecutive nights in April 1066, was not to help the new king's preparations. This was seen as a terrible ill omen.

these was the White Tower Keep at the Tower of London that was eventually finished in about 1100. This was built to preserve and control the city that soon after the Conquest was to become England's capital. The size and magnificence of 90-foot-high White Tower, so-named after Henry III had it whitewashed in the 1240s, pays tribute to the seriousness of the Norman mission.

The building of another such fortification was ordered, after the Harrying of the North, besides the River Tyne in Northumbria. This new castle, built under the direction of the Conqueror's son, Robert, and completed in 1079, came to dominate the new town of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and was used for the next hundred years to patrol and control the northern extremes of the Norman empire. These were two of around a thousand such castles that were built to protect William's Norman domination of England.

The Harrying of the North meant that the subjugation of England to all intents and purposes had been completed by 1071. However, this did not stop isolated but stubborn opposition from many rogue rebel leaders and these included Hereward the Wake, an East Anglian nobleman whose band of followers waged an early example of guerrilla warfare against Norman rule from the fenlands around Ely. Hereward, who had been exiled by Edward the Confessor in 1062, had returned home in 1066 to find both his father and brother killed and with his ancestral land now in the hands of a Norman, Peter de Bourne. Hereward's campaign against the Norman invaders, around the Isle of Ely, was particularly significant because East Anglia gave a home to some 25% of England's population and produced much of its agricultural product.

Hereward the Wake, probably aided by Viking invaders, held out against the Normans by using a secret maze of passageways through the marshes from where he launched his attacks. In 1071, the Normans finally took the Isle of Ely although Hereward, slipping away from his pursuers, was not captured and finally was to die in about 1080. Confirmation of the subjugation of the Fenlands came in the 1080s when the construction of the enormous Norman-styled Lincoln Cathedral was begun. Later, in the fourteenth century, the cathedral had a spire added to it that was to make it the world's tallest building. This was an accolade that it took from the Great Pyramid at Giza and was one that it kept until the spire was blown down in a storm 238 years later.

After England had been finally pacified in 1071, William remained in France for much of the rest of his reign and returned only when forced to do so by further uprisings. In the main, he concentrated his energies on maintaining the position of pre-eminence for Normandy that his fighting there had brought about since the 1030s. As with many of his Norman and Plantagenet successors over the next 150 years, the king spoke no English and considered England to constitute only one small, though significant, part of his overall empire.

King William I, Feudalism and the Domesday Book

But despite this absence, William's influence over England remained all pervading and his mark on English history indelible. This all meant that the Norman Conquest, following three earlier conquests of the island of Britain by the Romans, by the Angles and the Saxons, and by the Vikings, was to be a much more complete and permanent affair, with the country turning geopolitically very much to the south with Scandinavia replaced by France as a point of social, political and economic focus. Perhaps the most obvious way that this presence

down in 1088, although Odo himself was allowed to move abroad. Later, in 1097, he was to die in Sicily while on the way to serve in the First Crusade.

William II's grip on the English throne was never seriously threatened again and, indeed, it was strengthened by victories in both Scotland and Wales. William II's rule was ruthless and his grip on power tyrannical but England remained calm and prosperous throughout much of his 13-year reign with this peace bringing a return of a relative prosperity not seen since the time of the Confessor and Harold Godwin.

The king was also responsible for a huge development in the nation's history when he transferred the seat of power from Winchester, the Anglo-Saxon capital where kings since Alfred the Great had based their courts, to London where he ordered the construction of a huge palace beside the abbey church that the Confessor had built 50 years before. The Palace of Westminster has formed the seat of English, and subsequently British, governments ever since. The oldest surviving part of the Palace of Westminster, Westminster Hall, was originally built by William Rufus in 1097 and 1098. This is slightly newer than the oldest surviving part of Westminster Abbey, a wooden door to the Chapter House that has been dated to 1050.

One major characteristic of William II's reign was his confrontation with the Church that he believed had become too powerful. This struggle was one affecting the whole of Europe and it centred on the disagreement between the papacy, led firstly by Gregory VII and then by Urban II, and the Holy Roman Emperors, Henry IV and Henry V. The political chaos caused by this Investiture Controversy was precipitated by the election in the 1070s of Gregory VII, a