

The Norman Conquest

Opponents	William Duke of Normandy v Harold II (Godwinson) king of England
Causes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Ed the conf died nominating Harold as King 2) William believed he was rightful king – Promise of Ed the Conf, related to Ed the Conf and Harold G has also promised help to become kinh 3) William ambition – English throne highly desirable. (he was only a Duke at present)
English Advantages	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Harold experienced commander 2) Housecarls best fighting troops in Europe 3) Higher ground 4) Surprise
Norman Advantages	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Harold’s army not as large as it could have been 2) Harold’s army tired – marches Stamford Bridge 3) William had knights, archers and foot soldiers, all professionals, well trained and equipped. 4) William has more flexible tactics.
Saxon Tactics	Sensible and based on what Harold knew of Norman army - Remain on hill, soak up Norman attacks and the attack when Normans tired and demoralised
Norman Tactics	Series of hammer blows made by Archers, Infantry and then knights. Chip away at Saxon shield wall. Eventually the Saxons would panic and flee
Battle begins	<p>9am start with Norman archers, then infantry, then knights</p> <p>No side showing advantage at first although Saxon shield wall holds and Normans have more casualties.</p> <p>About midday, Norman timing and sequence of attack starts to go wrong. Breton knights find themselves isolated against Saxons right shield wall – They panic and turn round. Fyrd follow but are slaughtered by Norman knights riding towards them</p> <p>Williams then tells French knights to fake a retreat against left flank. Again it works</p> <p>By mid afternoon, Saxon shield wall is thinning</p> <p>William’s archers are then told to fire over the top of the shield wall. At the same time a combined infantry and knight attack takes place under the arrows.</p> <p>Harold killed</p> <p>Normans break through shield wall and housecarls killed. Fyrd flee battlefield</p>
Why battle won/lost	See separate essay
Result of Battle Effects on England	<p>Many Saxon leaders killed which reduced the effectiveness of any later Saxon resistance and increased William’s chances of survival</p> <p>Saxon line of King came to an end. Normans would rule England until 1154, when Henry II (Plantagenet) took over.</p> <p>William I crowned king 25th Dec 1066 – Westminster Abbey</p> <p>English land divided between William, Church and his supporters. Only two Saxon landowners remained</p> <p>Feudal System and Motte and Bailey Castles introduced to control Saxons. Hard times for Saxon peasants</p> <p>Architecturally, the benefits of the Norman Conquest are obvious. Impressive stone cathedrals, churches and castles littered the country.</p> <p>William appreciated that Anglo-Saxon England had much to offer. He retained the highly organised central and local government and also relied heavily of the Saxon judicial system. The common law of England was retained, but tough new forest laws were added.</p> <p>To trial by ordeal and sworn testimony, William added trial by combat for criminal cases.</p> <p>William allowed Church courts to be set up which caused problems for later kings – Henry II and Becket.</p> <p>Written English was to disappear until the 13th Century, with literature, law and administration being written in either Latin or Norman French.</p> <p>The mixing of the best of Norman and Saxon traits was to create a great race, which in time would rule a large part of the world, dominate the seas and be the envy of the civilised world.</p> <p>If the men who died on the ridge at Senlac Hill had been allowed a glimpse into the mists of history, had seen an empire built around their little island, the path of freedom won, they might have counted their sacrifice well worth it.</p>