

RIVALS FOR THE THRONE IN 1066

The year, 1066, is probably the most important year in the history of England. It is certainly a date that most people will remember from their history lessons at school. On January 5th, 1066, the King of England, **EDWARD THE CONFESSOR** (1042 -1066) died. He had no children to succeed him. The decision of who should be the next king was left to a group of men called the **WITAN**. Remember at this time the throne of England was elective and not hereditary. They met together, and choose **HAROLD GODWINSON**, Earl of Wessex, as the next king of England. On 5th January, 1066, Godwinson was crowned **HAROLD II**.

Their decision to choose Harold Godwinson was to have enormous consequences! Why? Because, there were other men who felt that they should have been King of England instead of Godwinson. Men such as

1. **WILLIAM, DUKE OF NORMANDY,**
2. **HARALD HARDRADA, KING OF NORWAY,**
3. **EDGAR AETHELING**, the 12 year old Saxon Prince. (Aetheling = Saxon word for heir to the throne).
4. **SVEIN (SVEGN), KING OF DENMARK.**

HAROLD GODWINSON



1: Despite having the weakest claim to the Crown, he was in the strongest position. As Earl of Wessex, he was the most powerful man in England.

2: He was the commander of the army, and very good at his job.

3: Although, he was not of Saxon Royal blood, his sister Edith, had been married to Edward the Confessor.

4: Edgar Atheling was too young to be King.

5: Tostig had been exiled from England because of the way he had treated people in the North of England. He would not be a popular choice.

6: On his death-bed, Edward the Confessor had chosen Harold as the next king.

7: The other claimants to the throne were all foreigners.

8: Edward the Confessor was not allowed, under English Law, to promise the throne to William, Duke of Normandy.

9: He had the support of many powerful Saxon nobles (brothers) and also Archbishops **Stigand** and **Ealdred**, Archbishops of Canterbury and York.

WHY DID THESE OTHERS FEEL THAT THEY SHOULD BE KING?

WILLIAM, DUKE OF NORMANDY.



1: His Great-Aunt Emma, had been married to Ethelred II, King of England (978-1016) and then to Canute (Knut, Cnut), King of England, (1016-1035).

2: Edward the Confessor (his cousin) had lived in Normandy from 1016 - 1042, whilst Canute and his sons ruled England. Whilst in Normandy, he met William, Duke of Normandy, and promised William the throne of England when he died.

- 3: In 1051 William had helped Edward the Confessor put down a rebellion involving the Godwins. Edward had again promised William the throne on his death.
- 4: In 1064, Harold Godwinson had been shipwrecked, whilst sailing in the Channel. He was captured and handed over to William, Duke of Normandy. William believed that Harold had been sent by Edward the Confessor to make arrangements for William to become the next King of England. William claimed that Harold swore on the bones of a saint that he would help William become the next King of England. Harold, according to William had broken his promise.

HARALD HARDRADA, KING OF NORWAY



1: His father Magnus, had made an agreement with Harthacanute, King of England 1040-1042. They both agreed that if a king of either Norway or England died without a son to succeed him as king, then the Crown would pass to the other surviving King. Harald Hardrada, claimed that since Edward the Confessor had died sonless, he should be king of England.

SVEIN (SVEGN), KING OF DENMARK.

1. He was a nephew of King Canute.
2. Most powerful contender

EDGAR AETHELING

- 1: The Grandson of Edmund Ironside, King of England, 1016. He was the only claimant with English royal blood. He had the strongest claim, but was considered too young (9 - 12) and nobody wanted an unstable regency.