

William the Conqueror 1066-87

**As William the Conqueror was making his way
To be crowned at Westminster on Christmas day,
He knew it was only a battle he'd won,
And the conquest of England had just begun...**

Rebellion

Saxon Earls
1069-70

Though Morcar & Edwin raised rebellion,
York to sack & seize,
Revolt was traced where flames lay waste
The Humber to the Tees;
And when the Danes, led South by Sweyn,
Joined Hereward the Wake,
Revolt was sunk by one sly monk ~
He-reward to take.

Hereward the Wake
1070-1

Malcolm of
Scotland 1072
Revolt of the 3 Earls
1075

Those rebels Malcolm had made welcome
Peace would overcome;
To steel & stealth were Roger, Ralf
And Waltheof to succumb...
With Norman earls to answer calls,
From English-built stone towers;
Tax & tariffs, raised by sheriffs,
Financed stern royal powers;

Outcome:
establishment of his
authority

**William the Conqueror took England by storm:
So, wrote his chronicler, of rebel teeth drawn;
With Domesday to monitor all built, grown & born,
William the Conqueror made Norman the norm.**

Government

Crime &
punishment

Into his system, English custom
Fitted or was shrunk:
From Saxon times, ordeal judged crimes,
And all the floaters, sunk;

Forest laws

His forest laws "...kept harts and boars"
As his alone to claim,
And "...who...slew hind should be made blind
...Protecting thus the game..."

Domesday survey
1085-6

To thwart the Danes, he asked his thegns
How much tax there should be,
Saying, "All of value noted, shall you
Bring on back to me..."

Salisbury Oath
1086

Then William summoned Normans whom
He'd granted English soil,
To Salisbury, to pledge they'd be
To his royal person loyal...

**William the Conqueror took England to task:
So, wrote his chronicler, of forest made fast;
With Domesday to monitor all within his grasp,
William the Conqueror made conquest to last.**

Church

Norman
appointments

For Church, as with the counties his
Intention was the same:
The English priest would be replaced
By one of Norman fame:
New churches planned with Stigand and
His priestly kin kicked out
Lanfranc of Pavia was
To bring reform about...

Reform of abuse
1070

No promise made ~ no homage paid
For papal blessing sent;
No knight to forgo bread, and no
Appeals sans Royal consent.

Royal rights
confirmed

But plans to save more cash, which gave
The bishops courts to judge,
Had not foreseen what this would mean,
When Becket would not budge...

Church courts 1076

**William the Conqueror took England in hand:
So, wrote his chronicler, of church reform planned;
With Domesday to monitor loyal Service for Land,
William the Conqueror made law his command...**

References: EHD: English Historical Documents Vol. II
Feiling : A History of England
Oman: History of England:
Poole: Domesday Book to Magna Carta
Purser: Medieval England 1042-1228;

❖ The Northern rebellion: 500 Norman knights were
slaughtered in Durham & York & its Minster sacked & burnt.
• "leniency & cruelty, bribery & lightning speed were
all used.." to crush the rebellion (Feiling p111)
• Hereward held out in the Fens, but was forced to
surrender eventually betrayed, but was pardoned by William
• ...last heard of fighting for William in France.

❖ King Malcolm of Scotland had given refuge to rebels, but
was persuaded to do homage to William; Scots kept Cumbria...
• Roger, earl of Hereford & Ralf, a Breton baron, led a
Norman rebellion v. William, which was brutally put down
• A major development was the replacement of Saxons
by Normans & stone castles to control the population
• "The king was so very stark & deprived his underlings of
many a mark of gold and more hundreds of pounds of silver, that
he took by weight & with great injustice from his people and
with little need for such a deed." (Anglo Saxon Chronicle 1087E
qu. EHD II p164 & Purser)

Symbols of authority: Sceptre, orb, seal, crown & sword

❖ William heard Mass daily & was loyal to his wife &
his councillors
• Saxon laws were transferred or assimilated, not wholly
abandoned eg trial by ordeal
• "...he loved the tall deer as if he were their father..." &
his forest laws were oppressive & unpopular...
• Much of the transformation was assimilation of
English customs into Norman feudalism: Land for Service
❖ The Domesday survey was a response to a possible
Danish invasion
• Wm. sent four circuits of his leading magnates to
traverse all England, South of the River Tyne
• He then called all his thegns, by now almost exclusively
Norman, to Salisbury; they owed "service for land" (feudalism)
• Here they swore an oath of fealty (loyalty) to him.

❖ Lanfranc by birth Lombard (N. Italy) abbot of model
Norman monastery at Bec.
• King & archbishop allied to depose Stigand, who'd
resisted attempts to reform & died in 1072 of voluntary starv'n
• Lanfranc at once filled abbeys & bishoprics (sees) with
well qualified Normans
• By 1107, 15 cathedrals had been built or rebuilt.

❖ Yet William would not bow to papal authority, even
though Pope Gregory VIII had blessed the 1066 campaign
• His nobles & knights could not be excommunicated,
nor could appeals be heard in Rome without royal consent
• He hoped to reduce expenses by allowing bishops to be
responsible for crimes committed by priests
• Becket used this right to oppose Henry II, which led to
Becket's murder in 1170.

**... But then hastening to deal with rebellion in France,
He was thrown by his horse while besieging Mantes;
Whence he died as he'd lived, without fear & remorse,
Fought his way into history & altered its course.**