



KING ETHELRED'S COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING

Established in 978 (ish)

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSIVE ENGINEERING,
CROWN WORKS AND APPLIED STUBBORNESS

UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT: A POST-IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW OF THE EVENTS OF 1066, CONDUCTED SOMEWHAT LATE

*Being an assessment of whether the Norman Conquest was a rescue, a takeover or merely a change of catering, prepared by
an institution that was there and was not asked*



HIC COLLEGIVM NON CONSVLTVM EST

A departmental review prepared under the College Fellowship Ordinance
(Hills, Walls and the Holding Thereof) 1066

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*Fortitudine.
Ingenio.
Tea and biscuits.*



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ABSTRACT

In 1966 Field Marshal Montgomery told a furious schoolboy over lunch that the Normans had brought ordered government to England and that the Conquest had been, all things considered, for the best. The schoolboy was unmoved, grew up to be a distinguished historian, and remained unmoved. Nine hundred and sixty years after the event, with the Bayeux Tapestry unrolled in the British Museum, a Shadow Minister has asked in the Sunday Times whether 1066 saved the English from chaos or was simply colonialism with better cooking, and a former Leader of the House has commended the question as a sign of a civilised nation.[1,2] The College agrees that it is a good question. It notes that it was founded eighty-eight years before the event, was standing throughout it, and was consulted by neither side.

This paper treats the Conquest as what the documents show it to have been: a change of management. It reviews the transaction the way the Bursar reviews any transaction, and somewhat later than he would have liked. It surveys the business as found in January 1066, which was orderly, rich and therefore worth stealing. It examines the three bidders and their paperwork. It follows the takeover through the autumn, in which the incumbent walked four hundred miles, won, and then lost by moving. It costs the integration programme: castles for head office, the removal of nearly every senior English landholder, the clearance of the North, and an asset register so complete that the Bursar has asked to be buried with it. It then tests the Field Marshal's claim against the record of who actually built what.

The Department finds that ordered government was not brought by the Normans but found by them, inventoried, taxed and kept; that the chaos from which England was saved is not in evidence; and that conquest, mass dispossession and elite replacement make 'colonialism' arguable, though later absorption complicates the label. The affair is best described as the acquisition of a well-run firm by a worse-run one that fired the staff, kept the ledgers, and improved the menu. The College takes no view on whether this was for the best. It has watched the cooking improve and the rent go up, and has drawn its own conclusions about management.

Research status. This is a fictional King Ethelred's College review. The dates, battles, statutes, Domesday figures and chronicle quotations are real and referenced; the Sunday Times article and the post that commended it are cited as the prompt. The Department, its Fellow, the Bursar's feelings about Domesday and the Major's views on moving are not real, though the last are widely held. The College takes no position on the Conquest beyond noting that it was not asked.

Keywords: 1066; Norman Conquest; Hastings; shield wall; Domesday; Harrying of the North; change of management; due diligence; Applied Stubbornness; Bayeux Tapestry; Montgomery; catering.

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The author thanks Major (Retd.) Alistair B. F. MacTavish, Senior Research Fellow in Infantry Systems, Field Craft and Practical Engineering, for supervising the review and for the observation, made on being shown the Tapestry, that the English had the hill, the wall and the whole day, and lost the moment they went downstairs. He has asked that the Department's founding principle, which is not to move, be printed in capitals somewhere in this paper. It is in Chapter 4.

The Bursar read Chapter 6 in one sitting and asked for a copy of Domesday Book for the office. He has been told that it is in Kew and that the National Archives will not lend it. He has written to them. He regards the survey of 1086 as the finest piece of administration in the history of these islands, has said so at High Table more than once, and does not accept that its purpose was to tax everyone as a defect in it.

The Department of Strategic Geography confirmed the distances in Chapter 4 and added that Harold's army did them on foot, in September, with the harvest in, and that anyone proposing to complain about the trains should first walk to York. The Department of Civil, Siege and Unnecessarily Robust Engineering reviewed the castles in Chapter 5 and observed that a motte is a heap with ambitions.

The Trebuchet Research Group offered its assistance with the reconstruction of Hastings. It was informed that the trebuchet had not yet reached England in 1066. It replied that this had never previously stopped it. The offer was declined, minuted, and declined again.

Mrs Enid Partridge of the Senior Common Room, asked whether things get worse after a change of management, said that they always do, and then you get used to the cooking. The Department records this as the most complete account of the eleventh century it received.

Gerald was asked for the Department's copy of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. He has brought the Treaty of Union, which he had out anyway, and a jar of something. The jar has been returned to Catering.

The College notes with approval the post of 13 September in which a former Leader of the House commended the erudition of Shadow Ministers and recommended the article to the nation.[2] The Department regards him as a King Ethelred's man in all but matriculation, and observes that he is the only member of the modern Commons to have demonstrated the essential principle of the shield wall, which is to lie down on the front bench and not move, in full view of the House. A Visiting Fellowship is discussed in Appendix C.

Statement on impartiality. The College takes no view on whether the Conquest was for the best. It has Fellows of Saxon, Norse, Norman and Manx descent, and one who claims to be Welsh when it suits him. The humour in this paper is directed at field marshals, bidders, auditors and management, in that order, and at nobody who was actually on the hill.

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NOMENCLATURE

Symbol	Meaning
TRE	tempore regis Edwardi, 'in the time of King Edward': Domesday's shorthand for the business as found, on the day that King Edward was alive and dead, 5 January 1066
change of management	the College's term for 1066; the last one it was not warned about
the incumbent	Harold Godwinson, King of the English from 6 January to 14 October 1066
the bidders	Harold; Harald Hardrada of Norway, with Tostig; and William, Duke of Normandy, called the Bastard, later the Conqueror, never to his face
shield wall	a line of men with shields who do not move; the founding doctrine of this Department
feigned retreat	the Norman device of appearing to run away so that the shield wall would move; it did
Applied Stubbornness	the Department's discipline: the study of holding a position until something better than an argument moves you
shire, hundred, wapentake	the units of English local government before 1066; the Normans kept them, having found nothing to improve
the Harrying	the winter of 1069-70, in which the North was laid waste; Domesday still records it as vasta sixteen years later
Domesday	the survey of 1086; two snapshots of every estate in England, TRE and now; the Bursar's favourite book
motte and bailey	a heap of earth with a wooden tower on top and a yard beside it; the Norman head office, one per hilltop
due diligence	what a buyer does before a purchase; what William did after it, at great expense to the vendors
spiv	a well-dressed man of uncertain income; the article's term for the Normans, which the Department adopts

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The lunch

In late 1966, on the nine hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Hastings, Field Marshal Viscount Montgomery of Alamein wrote a piece for the Sunday Times mocking the provincial inadequacies of the Anglo-Saxons and suggesting they had been lucky to be conquered by their betters. A schoolboy wrote a furious reply in the voice of King Harold. Montgomery, impressed, invited him to lunch and explained that the Normans had brought ordered government, that Domesday Book proved it, that ordered government was the basis of freedom, and that the Conquest had welded the nation together and set it on the road to empire. The boy, Michael Wood, was unmoved.[1] The Department notes that the Field Marshal claimed descent from Roger de Montgomery, in whose charge William left Normandy when he sailed, and that a man whose family was on the winning side has never yet described the result as a loss.

1.2 The question, re-asked

Sixty years later, with the Bayeux Tapestry unrolled at the British Museum for the first time in its existence, the question was put again, by a medieval historian who has since become a Shadow Minister: did the Conquest save us from chaos, or was it simply colonialism?[1] The following day a former Leader of the House commended the article to the nation as a sign of civilisation.[2] The College, which has been standing since 978 (ish) and therefore watched the whole affair from a safe distance, agrees that the question is a good one, and observes that it has now been asked by a field marshal, a schoolboy, a Shadow Minister and a man in a double-breasted suit, and answered to nobody's satisfaction by any of them. It proposes to answer it the way the College answers everything, which is by treating it as a job of work and reading the paperwork.

1.3 The College's standing

The College was founded in 978 (ish), in the first year of Æthelred, a king remembered chiefly for taking bad advice, and it has been offering advice ever since. It is older than the Conquest by eighty-eight years, and has recorded elsewhere that 1066 was the last change of management it was not warned about.[11] It was not consulted by King Harold, who had a hill to hold; it was not consulted by Duke William, who had a hill to take; and it was not consulted by the Domesday commissioners, who wrote down what it owned anyway. It notes with some pride that its founder's law of 997 required twelve senior thegns in every district to swear that they would accuse no innocent man and conceal no guilty one, an important forerunner of sworn presentment.[5] The College was named for the man whose law required consulting twelve people before an accusation, and has never sat on a jury itself.

1.4 Scope and method

This is a post-implementation review, which is what the Bursar calls the meeting at which everyone explains why the thing that was done should not have been done that way. It surveys the business as found; identifies the bidders; follows the takeover; costs the integration programme; reads the audit; tests the Field Marshal's claim against the record; and reaches a verdict on the two words in the question. It does not ask whether the Conquest should have happened. It has noticed that it did.

College hypothesis. A change of management is judged by what the new owners kept, what they threw away, and what they claimed to have invented. If the Normans brought ordered government, the paperwork will show them building it. If they found it, the paperwork will show them using it to work out what everyone owed. The Department has read the paperwork. It is called Domesday, and it is very good.

2 THE BUSINESS AS FOUND

2.1 An orderly firm

The kingdom that the Normans acquired was not a rabble waiting to be organised. It had come into being in the tenth century under Æthelstan and Edgar as one of the more sophisticated states in Europe: a crown whose writ ran to the smallest village; a rational division of the country into shires and hundreds, with a court in each; a careful fiscal assessment of the land, so that the Crown knew what every district owed; a single national currency, recoinced at intervals, with many millions of pennies in circulation; and a body of written law which held that every man, rich or poor, was entitled to justice.[1,3,5] The Department has surveyed a good many organisations and has rarely found one so well documented before the auditors arrived.

It was also rich, and the Department wishes to be precise about what that meant, because it is the whole explanation of what followed. A country with an accurate register of who owned what, and a system for collecting what they owed, is a country that can be taken over in a single afternoon and run at a profit the following morning. Orderliness attracts buyers. The English had, in effect, prepared the sale particulars themselves, and the Department has a note on file from the Bursar observing that this is what always happens to well-run firms.

Asset	In place by 1066	What the new management did with it
Shires, hundreds and wapentakes	Yes; the whole country divided and named	Kept, unaltered; used to organise the audit
Shire and hundred courts	Yes; local justice for all free men	Kept; presided over by new men
A national silver coinage	Yes; one design, recoinced regularly	Kept; portrait changed
A fiscal assessment of the land	Yes, in hides; the geld	Kept; used to raise the geld harder
Æthelred's twelve thegns, 997	Yes; sworn local presentment	Kept; became the jury, eventually
A written law code	Yes; Alfred to Cnut	Kept, with additions in French
An English aristocracy	Yes; about four or five thousand thegns	Removed; see Chapter 5

Table 2.1 - The asset register before the sale. The Department notes that the left-hand column is the one the Field Marshal said the Normans had brought, and that every entry in it is dated before they arrived.



Figure 2.1 - The business as found, surveyed with the normal degree of suspicion. The Bursar has checked the balance and would like the shire returned.

2.2 The Department's note on orderliness

The Department holds that the orderliness of pre-Conquest England was not merely a fact about it but its principal vulnerability. A country whose every estate is assessed, whose every district has a court, and whose coins are all the same shape has, without meaning to, built the controls by which it can be seized. The Normans did not have to invent anything; they had only to sit in the chair. This is not a criticism of the English. It is a criticism of orderliness, which the Department has always regarded with suspicion and the Bursar with love, and which the two of them have agreed to discuss at a later date.

3 THE BIDDERS

3.1 Three claims and their paperwork

King Edward died on 5 January 1066 without an heir, and Harold Godwinson, the most powerful man in the kingdom, was crowned the next day, which the Department regards as brisk even by its own standards.[3] Two other parties considered themselves entitled to the business. Harald Hardrada of Norway rested his claim on an arrangement between two previous kings, neither of them English, and on a large number of ships. William of Normandy rested his on a promise he said Edward had made him some years earlier, an oath he said Harold had sworn on relics while a guest in Normandy, and a papal banner, which is to say on the support of a referee who had been shown one side's evidence.[1,3] Table 3.1 sets the three out as a tender board would.

Bidder	Basis of claim	Supporting documentation	Departmental assessment
Harold Godwinson	Edward's deathbed nomination; election by the Witan; possession	The Witan; the crown, already on his head	Incumbent; strong on process, weak on cavalry
Harald Hardrada	A pact between Magnus of Norway and Harthacnut, c. 1038	A fleet of about three hundred ships	Speculative; supported by Tostig, which is not support
William of Normandy	Edward's alleged promise; Harold's oath on relics; papal approval	The relics; the banner; seven hundred ships, by his own count	Hostile; well financed; the referee had been briefed

Table 3.1 - The tender board. The Department notes that the only bidder with domestic constitutional machinery behind him was the one who lost, and draws the usual conclusion about machinery.

3.2 The Normans, as found

The article describes the Normans as French-speaking Viking spivs, and the Department, having checked, adopts the phrase.[1] They were Northmen who had helped themselves to a slice of northern France in the ninth and tenth centuries and been confirmed in it by a Frankish king who could not get them out. When their first leader, Rollo, was required to kiss the king's foot in token of homage, he declined to bend and had one of his men lift the royal foot to his mouth instead, tipping the King of the Franks onto his back before his court, to great laughter.[6] The Department records this as the earliest documented Norman approach to due process, and observes that the technique, which is to comply with the letter of an obligation in a manner that puts the other party on the floor, was used again in 1066 and at intervals since, latterly by the Treasury.

Departmental observation. Of the three bidders, two arrived by sea with an army and a grievance, and the third was already in the building. The Department has sat on tender boards. It knows how this one was going to go, and so did everyone at the time, and they held the tender anyway, because that is what tender boards are for.

4 THE TAKEOVER

4.1 The programme

Figure 4.1 sets out the year as a programme. The incumbent took office on 6 January. A comet appeared in April and was widely taken as a comment. In September Hardrada and Tostig landed in Yorkshire, beat the northern earls at Fulford on the 20th, and were themselves destroyed by Harold at Stamford Bridge on the 25th, in one of the most complete victories in English history and one of the least remembered, because of what happened next.[3] Three days later William landed at Pevensey, unopposed, the English army being at that moment two hundred miles away and rather pleased with itself. Hastings was fought on 14 October. William was crowned at Westminster on Christmas Day, eighty-eight days after stepping off the boat. The Department has managed programmes. Eighty-eight days from landing to handover, against an incumbent who had just won, is not a schedule it would have accepted from a contractor, and it would have been wrong.

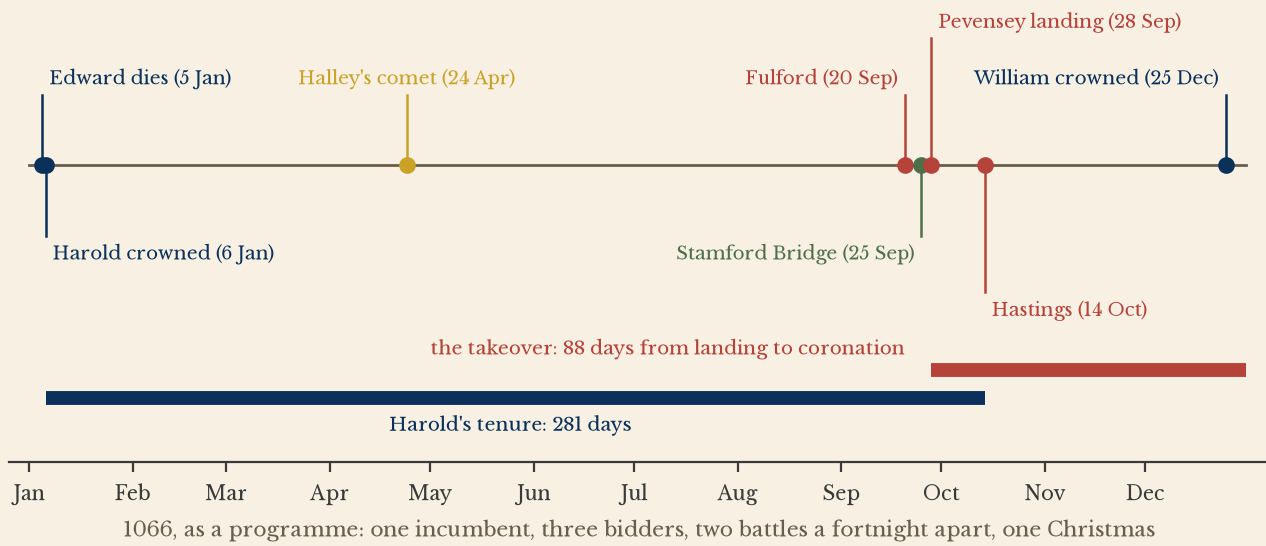


Figure 4.1 - The year 1066 as a programme. The Department draws attention to the fortnight between the two battles, in which the incumbent's army was in the wrong county twice.

4.2 The march

Harold's response to the Norwegian landing was to walk to York. His army covered something like a hundred and ninety miles in about a week, fought and won a battle at the end of it, learned that William had landed, and walked back.[3] Figure 4.2 shows the distances. The Department of Strategic Geography has confirmed them and added that they were done in September with the harvest in, on roads the Romans had left and nobody had mended, and that the men who did them then stood on a hill for a day. The Department has walked from the Porters' Lodge to the wind tunnel in the rain and regards itself as qualified to comment.

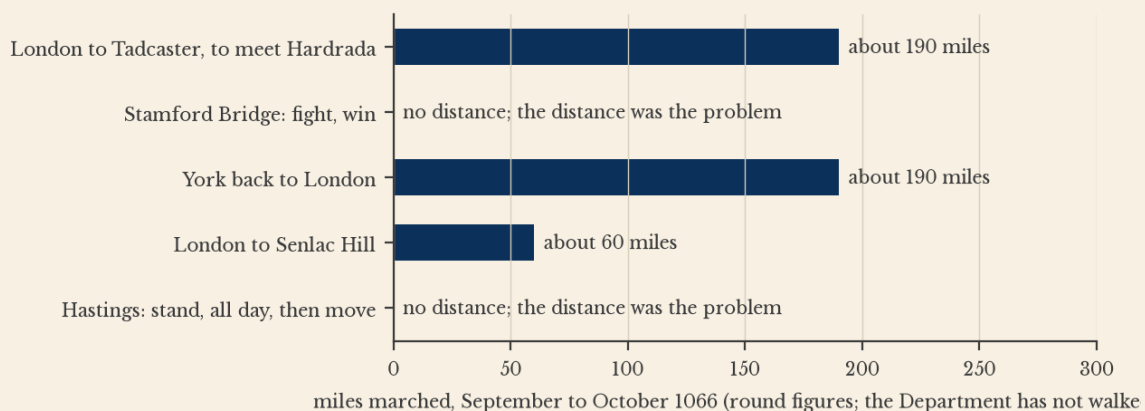


Figure 4.2 - What Harold's army walked, and then what it was asked to do. The Department notes that the last item on the chart has no distance, and that the distance was the problem.

4.3 The hill, and the wall, and the moving

At Hastings the English held the ridge with a shield wall: a line of men, shoulder to shoulder, shields overlapping, who did not move. It is the founding doctrine of this Department, and the Major has asked that it be printed in capitals: DO NOT MOVE. From nine in the morning until the light went, the Norman cavalry rode up the hill and came back down it, and the wall stood. What broke it was not force but the feigned retreat: the Normans appeared to run, part of the wall went after them, and the wall was no longer a wall. Harold was killed towards dusk. The Chronicle records the result in a sentence; the Department records the cause in three words, and they are the same three words as before.[3,7]



Figure 4.3 - The shield wall, with the Major's advice displayed in the language of management. It remained sound until somebody moved.

Departmental finding. The English had the hill, the wall and the whole day, and lost the moment they went downstairs. The Department has taught nothing else since 1066 and does not propose to start. The Major adds that a brew would have helped, and that the Normans knew it, which is why they attacked before elevenses.

5 THE INTEGRATION PROGRAMME

5.1 Head office

A new owner announces itself with a building, and the Normans announced themselves with a great many. The motte and bailey, a heap of earth with a wooden tower on it and a fenced yard beside it, went up on hilltops from the Channel to the Tyne within a generation, and the Tower of London, in stone, was begun in the 1070s to make the point in the capital.[1] The Department of Civil, Siege and Unnecessarily Robust Engineering, consulted on none of them, describes the motte as a heap with ambitions and the bailey as the car park, and observes that a country which suddenly needs five hundred castles is a country in which the management is not expecting to be popular.

5.2 The redundancies

Twenty years after Hastings, all but a dozen or so of the great English landholders had been dispossessed, and the lesser men had been left with much less. By 1086 no more than about eight per cent of the landed wealth of England remained in English hands, and the King claimed every acre of the rest as his own, so that anyone who held land held it from him.[1,4] The Department has seen takeovers. It has not seen one in which the entire senior management was removed, the middle management halved, the freehold of the premises transferred to the new chairman personally, and the staff told that nothing had changed. There was no transfer of undertakings. There was a transfer, and there was an undertaking, and they were not the same thing.

5.3 Site clearance

The North objected. In 1069 it killed the Norman earl of Northumbria and invited a Danish fleet into the Humber, and in the winter that followed William laid it waste. The Chronicle says he 'utterly ravaged and laid waste that shire'; Domesday, sixteen years later, still records estate after estate in Yorkshire as *vasta*, waste, which is the auditor's word for a place where there is nothing left to count.[3,4] Elsewhere the English cathedrals were pulled down and rebuilt in the new style, and Bishop Wulfstan of Worcester watched his own come down in tears.[1] The Department does not make jokes about the Harrying. It records it as the item in the integration programme that the new management does not mention in the brochure.

Measure	What was done	Modern equivalent	Departmental note
Head office	Castles on every hill; the Tower begun in stone	New headquarters with the old sign taken down	A heap with ambitions
Senior redundancies	All but a dozen great English landholders removed	The board replaced in full	No consultation period was observed
Change of freehold	The King claims all land; all hold from him	The chairman buys the building personally	The Bursar has asked how this was minuted
Site clearance	The Harrying of the North, 1069-70	None; the Department declines the comparison	Not in the brochure
Rebranding	French at court; Latin in the ledgers; English in the fields	New logo, new language, same customers	See Chapter 8 on the dinner table
Church estate	Cathedrals demolished and rebuilt in Romanesque	The premises refurbished at the tenants' expense	Wulfstan wept; the Department understands
The audit	Domesday, 1086	Due diligence, conducted after purchase	The Bursar's chapter follows

Table 5.1 - The integration programme, with the modern equivalents the Department has been able to bring itself to supply.

Departmental observation. The Normans kept the shires, the courts, the coinage and the tax assessment, and replaced the people. Every consultant the College has ever met has recommended the opposite, and the Department has begun to wonder whether the Normans were the last management to understand the difference between a system and the people who are good at it.

6 THE AUDIT

6.1 Domesday, or the Bursar's chapter

At Christmas 1085, at Gloucester, William ordered a survey of his kingdom, and within a year his commissioners had recorded, county by county, hundred by hundred, manor by manor, who held every estate in England, what it was worth, what it had been worth, and who had held it on the day King Edward was alive and dead.[4] The result is Domesday Book, two volumes, more than thirteen thousand places, and the Bursar's favourite work of literature. He reads it, he says, the way other men read poetry, and has asked that the Department record his view that no organisation before or since has known so precisely what it owned, and that the purpose of the exercise, which was to tax everyone to the last pig, is not a defect in it but the point.

The Department, which is not the Bursar, notes two things. First, the survey was possible only because the English had already divided the country into hundreds, assessed every estate in hides and kept the records; William's commissioners did not invent the units they counted in, they inherited them, and the Field Marshal's proof that the Normans brought ordered government is in fact a record of the ordered government they found.[1,4] Second, the two columns of the survey, then and now, are the whole Conquest in tabular form: the same estates, the same values, different names. Figure 6.1 gives the shares.

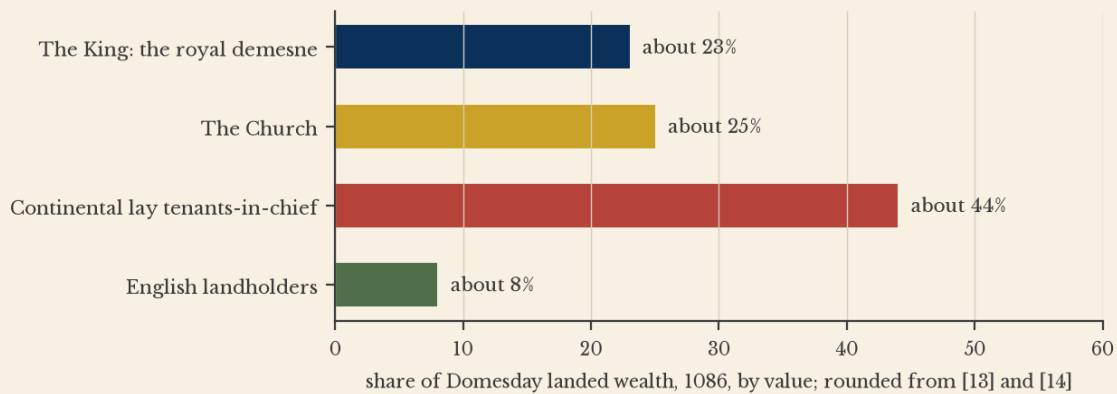


Figure 6.1 - Who held England in 1086, by value. The royal demesne and the English share are Baxter and Lewis's figures from the Domesday database, the Church's is the ecclesiastical total of about £18,400 in £73,000, and the lay tenants-in-chief have the remainder.[13,14] The Bursar has checked the addition and initialled it.



Figure 6.2 - The audit. The villagers have brought the pigs; the Bursar has brought enthusiasm.

Departmental finding. Domesday is not evidence that the Normans brought order. It is evidence that they could count, and that there was something worth counting. The Bursar has asked for this finding to be reworded and has been refused, politely, twice.

7 THE FIELD MARSHAL'S CLAIM, TESTED

The Department now tests the claim made over lunch in 1966, that the Normans brought ordered government, against the record of who built what. Table 7.1 lists the components of a governed country and dates each. The Department has been generous to the Normans where it could be, and has given them the castles.

Component	Before 1066	After 1066	Brought by the Normans?
Local government by shire and hundred	Yes	The same	No; kept
Courts in every district	Yes	The same, in French	No; kept
A national currency	Yes; millions of pennies	The same coin, new face	No; kept
A land tax on assessed values	Yes; the geld on hides	The same, collected harder	No; kept and sharpened
Sworn local presentment	Yes; Æthelred's thegns, 997	Continued; the jury grows from it	No; kept
A written record of who owns what	Partly; assessments and charters	Domesday, 1086	The book, yes; the data, no
Castles	Almost none	Hundreds	Yes
Cathedrals in the Romanesque manner	Present, notably at Westminster	Rebuilt everywhere at formidable scale	Not introduced; industrialised
A ruling class that spoke the language of the ruled	Yes	Not for three hundred years	Removed

Table 7.1 - The claim tested. The Normans brought castles, industrial-scale cathedral rebuilding and new owners; everything the Field Marshal called ordered government was already on the premises.

The result is not close. Of the instruments of ordered government the Field Marshal admired, every one was in place before William landed, and the Normans' contribution was to use them, which they did with an efficiency the English had never quite managed, largely because the English had not previously wanted to tax themselves to the last pig. The Department has seen this before. A new management arrives, finds the systems working, runs them harder, and within a year is explaining to the staff that it introduced them. The staff, who built them, say nothing, because the staff have been replaced.

Departmental observation. The Field Marshal said that Domesday proved the Normans brought ordered government. Domesday proves that the English had it, that the Normans took it, and that somebody wrote the receipt. The Department has offered this to the Bursar as a definition of an audit and he has accepted it.

8 WHAT THE NORMANS DID BRING

8.1 The dinner table

The Department is not ungrateful. The Normans brought things, and the most durable of them is on every menu in the country. The animal in the field kept its English name, because the English were in the field with it: cow, sheep, swine. The same animal on the table took a French name, because the French were at the table: beef, mutton, pork. Sir Walter Scott's jester put the point in 1819 and nobody has improved on it: the beast is Saxon while it needs looking after and Norman when it is ready to eat.[10] The Department regards this as the Conquest in a single dinner, and Catering has been asked to serve it as such on 14 October.

8.2 The rest of the inventory

They rebuilt in Romanesque on a formidable scale, which the Department admires, being thick. They delivered a formidable French vocabulary, though Shakespeare would otherwise still have had all the words for weather. They wired England into the politics of northern France, which the article describes as mad as a bag of bellicose frogs in the heat of high noon, and which led in time to the Angevin empire, the Crusades, and a King of England negotiating as an equal with Saladin, which is not bad, as the article says, for a bunch of well-manicured thugs from a damp petty duchy.[1] And they brought castles, which the Department has already counted, and which are the one Norman contribution nobody has ever claimed was for the benefit of the people living underneath them.

Brought by the Normans	Departmental verdict
Beef, pork and mutton, as words	Accepted with thanks; the animals were already here
Romanesque cathedrals	Magnificent; built on the sites of the ones they knocked down
A formidable French vocabulary	Useful; delivered in several consignments
Castles	Five hundred reasons to be polite to the management
French politics	Three hundred years of it; the Department declines to say thank you
A written survey of the whole kingdom	The Bursar has this on a cushion
A new aristocracy	Same jobs, new people, worse manners at the foot-kissing

Table 8.1 - The inventory of contributions, with the Department's thanks where due and its reservations where not.

9 CHAOS OR COLONIALISM?

The question offers two words. Chaos is not in evidence: the business as found had shires, courts, coinage, assessments and a jury in embryo; the disorder of 1066 arrived in about seven hundred ships. Colonialism is harder to dismiss: conquest, mass dispossession and elite replacement are all present. The Normans stayed, married in and eventually became English; that absorption complicates the label but does not annul the takeover. The Department therefore records 'colonialism: arguable' and proceeds to the diagnosis on which the instruments agree: a well-run firm, acquired by a worse-run one, which removed the staff, kept the ledgers, put a head office on every hill and improved the menu.



Figure 9.1 - Luncheon, 1966. The Field Marshal advances the case; the schoolboy holds his ground. Neither asks the newspaper to adjudicate.

As to whether it was for the best, the Department refers the reader to Mrs Partridge, who has observed that after a change of management things always get worse, and then you get used to the cooking. Nine hundred and sixty years on, the cooking is very good, the rent has never come down, and the College still has not been consulted. It regards this as a fair summary of English history and has put it in the prospectus.

Statement of neutrality. The College takes no position on whether the Normans should have come, or on whether the English should have moved. It has Fellows descended from both sides and one who claims descent from the horse. Its interest is in what was kept, what was thrown away, and who wrote the receipt.

10 CONCLUSIONS

- The business as found in January 1066 was orderly, documented and rich, and was acquired for exactly those reasons. Orderliness is a sale particular.
- Three bidders tendered. The one with domestic constitutional machinery behind him lost; the one with a papal banner and seven hundred ships won. The Department has sat on tender boards and was not surprised.
- The incumbent walked about four hundred miles in a month, won a complete victory at Stamford Bridge, held a hill all day at Hastings, and lost it by moving. The Department has taught nothing else since.
- The integration programme removed all but a dozen of the great English landholders, transferred effective control of the kingdom to the chairman, cleared the North, and rebuilt the cathedrals. It kept the shires, courts, coinage and tax.
- Domesday is the finest audit ever conducted in these islands and the Bursar's favourite book. It records the ordered government the Normans found, not one they brought.
- The Field Marshal's claim fails except for the castles and the scale of cathedral rebuilding. The Normans brought castles, monumental rebuilding, a formidable vocabulary and a better dinner.
- Chaos is not supported; colonialism remains arguable. The instruments agree on hostile acquisition, and the new owners stayed long enough to become the customers.
- The College was founded eighty-eight years before all this, watched it, and was not asked. It was named after a king whose law required twelve sworn men. It has noted the irony and moved on, which is more than the shield wall should have done.

Principal finding. The Normans did not bring ordered government to England. They found it, sat in the chair, ran it harder, valued it and replaced its builders. Chaos is not in the record; colonialism remains arguable. The Department's operational verdict is hostile acquisition: asset-stripping with cathedrals, and it observes that the cathedrals are very fine.

Secondary finding. DO NOT MOVE. The Major has asked for this to be the last word of the paper, and the Department has given it to him, because it was the last word of the shield wall and the Department sees no reason to improve on it.



Figure 10.1 - The former Leader of the House demonstrates recumbent defence. The position was maintained without unnecessary movement.

REFERENCES

- [1] Alex Burghart, 'Did the Norman Conquest save us from chaos or was it just colonialism?', The Sunday Times, 12 September 2026: the Montgomery lunch of 1966 and Michael Wood; the Tapestry at the British Museum; the Normans as French-speaking Viking spivs; Rollo and the foot; Domesday and the eight per cent; the Harrying; Wulfstan of Worcester; the sophistication of the tenth-century kingdom; the Angevin empire and Saladin; beef, mutton and pork. The author is deputy leader of the Conservative Party and taught medieval history at King's College London. [thetimes.com](https://www.thetimes.com)
- [2] Jacob Rees-Mogg, post on X, 13 September 2026: 'It is a sign of a civilised nation that Shadow Ministers are so erudite', with a link to [1]. Cited as the prompt and, in Appendix C, as a candidate. x.com
- [3] The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, annals for 1066 (the death of Edward on 5 January; Harold's consecration; the comet; Fulford, 20 September; Stamford Bridge, 25 September; the landing at Pevensey, 28 September; Hastings, 14 October; the coronation at Westminster on Christmas Day), 1069-70 (the Harrying: 'he utterly ravaged and laid waste that shire') and 1087 (the obituary of William: 'laid taxes on people very severely').
- [4] Domesday Book, 1086, The National Archives, Kew, E 31/1 and E 31/2: the survey ordered at Gloucester at Christmas 1085; holdings recorded as they were 'on the day that King Edward was alive and dead' and in 1086; estates in Yorkshire recorded as vasta. nationalarchives.gov.uk
- [5] III Æthelred, the Wantage code, 997: twelve senior thegns in each wapentake to go out with the reeve and swear on relics that they will accuse no innocent man nor conceal any guilty one; an important forerunner of the jury of presentment.
- [6] Dudo of Saint-Quentin, De moribus et actis primorum Normanniae ducum, c. 1015-26, on Rollo's homage to Charles the Simple at Saint-Clair-sur-Epte, 911: the foot raised by a follower, the king tipped over, 'great laughter and great uproar'. A Norman source written about a century later, for the Normans, and therefore proud of it.
- [7] The Bayeux Tapestry, c. 1070s, about seventy metres of embroidered linen in some fifty scenes, from Edward's court to the flight from Hastings; on loan from Bayeux to the British Museum from September 2026, the first time it has left France in nine centuries. britishmuseum.org
- [8] Field Marshal Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, article in The Sunday Times, 1966, on the nine hundredth anniversary of Hastings, and his subsequent lunch with the schoolboy Michael Wood, as recounted in [1]: 'William conquered England ... I have always considered it was for the best'; 'The Normans brought ordered government. Look at Domesday Book.'
- [9] Orderic Vitalis, Historia Ecclesiastica, c. 1123-41, on the Harrying of the North and its death toll, which he put at more than a hundred thousand; cited for the scale of the clearance as remembered a generation later, not as a census.
- [10] Sir Walter Scott, Ivanhoe, 1819, chapter 1: Wamba the jester on why the swine is Saxon in the sty and pork in the hall, the ox is Saxon under the serf and beef before the lord, and 'Mynheer Calf' becomes 'Monsieur de Veau' when he is wanted for eating.
- [11] King Ethelred's College, 'Demolition Sequencing for a Kingdom', 2026, section 1.2: the College older than the Norman Conquest by eighty-eight years, 'which it regards as the last change of management it was not warned about'.
- [12] King Ethelred's College, departments register: the Department of Defensive Engineering, Crown Works and Applied Stubbornness, 'Founded 1066 (reorganised that October)'. See Appendix D for the reorganisation.
- [13] Stephen Baxter and Chris Lewis, 'Domesday Book and the Transformation of English Landed Society 1066-1086': in 1086 the royal demesne was worth about £17,800, about 23 per cent of the kingdom's landed wealth; the king and the fifteen wealthiest tenants-in-chief held almost half; about 1,600 English landholders above the dependent peasantry shared about 8 per cent; the value of Yorkshire fell by two thirds between 1066 and 1086. ora.ox.ac.uk
- [14] 'Ecclesiastical Wealth in England in 1086', Studies in Church History: the Church's Domesday holdings valued at about £18,400 of a recorded total of about £73,000, roughly a quarter. cambridge.org

Sources were consulted on 14 September 2026. King Ethelred's College is fictional; the Chronicle, the Tapestry, the Book and the hill are not, and neither, regrettably, is the moving.

APPENDIX A - SAMPLE CALCULATIONS

A.1 The age of the College against the age of the management

The College: 2026 minus 978 (ish) gives 1,048 years (ish). The present management: 2026 minus 1066 gives 960. The College has therefore been standing for 1.09 Conquests, and was asked about neither end of the one that happened.

A.2 The march

London to Tadcaster, about 190 miles, in about a week: roughly 27 miles a day, on foot, in September, with the harvest in and a battle at the end. York to London, the same again. London to the ridge above Hastings, about 60 miles. Total, something over 400 miles in a month, followed by a day of not moving, followed by moving. The Department's rate for a Fellow between the Porters' Lodge and the wind tunnel is about 200 yards in ten minutes, in the dry, with a complaint at the end. The Department has withdrawn the complaint.

A.3 The takeover

Landing at Pevensey, 28 September; coronation at Westminster, 25 December: 88 days. Harold's tenure, 6 January to 14 October: 281 days. Ratio of the incumbent's tenure to the takeover, about 3.2 to one. The Department's estimate for the same figure in any organisation it has ever surveyed is nearer thirty to one, and it has never seen the shorter figure achieved by anyone who was not already on the hill.

A.4 The Bursar's share

Landed wealth in English hands by 1086: about 8 per cent.[1] Landed wealth claimed by the King as his own: 100 per cent, held out to everyone else on terms. The Bursar has computed the difference and asked whether the College's endowment is held in the same way. Estates has said it would rather not check.

A.5 The Tapestry as a presentation

About seventy metres, some fifty scenes, no speaker notes. At the Department's standard rate of four minutes a slide, the Conquest runs to three hours and twenty minutes with questions, which the Department regards as long but, unusually for a presentation about a change of management, worth staying for.

APPENDIX B - THE BURSAR'S CARD

If asked	Answer
Did the Normans bring ordered government?	No. They found it, sat in the chair and ran it harder. Domesday is the receipt.
Did 1066 save us from chaos?	The chaos is not in the record. The shires, courts and coinage are.
Was it colonialism?	Arguable. Conquest, dispossession and a new elite say yes; three centuries later the colonists were English and complaining about the French, which says something else.
Then what was it?	A takeover of a well-run firm by a worse-run one that kept the ledgers, fired the staff and improved the menu.
Why did Harold lose?	He moved. The Department has a placard about this.
What is the finest book in England?	Domesday. The Bursar will not be taking questions on this.
What did the Normans actually bring?	Castles, cathedrals, half the dictionary and the word for beef. The cow was already here.
Was the College consulted?	No. It was founded under a king whose law required twelve sworn men. It has noted the irony.
Was it for the best?	Ask Mrs Partridge. Things got worse, and then everyone got used to the cooking.

Table B.1 - Answers approved for High Table. The Bursar has asked that the sixth be read with feeling.

APPENDIX C - FUTURE WORK

The Department proposes a companion review of Stamford Bridge, the complete English victory of 25 September 1066 that nobody remembers because of what happened nineteen days later, with the assistance of the Department of Strategic Geography, which reports that the site still has no proper museum and would like the Department to say so.

The College has resolved to offer a Visiting Fellowship in Recumbent Defence to the former Leader of the House whose post prompted this review.[2] The Department notes that he is the only member of the modern Commons to have demonstrated the shield wall's essential principle on the government front bench, at length, in full view of the House and the cameras, and that he did not move until the sitting ended. The Fellowship carries no stipend, a seat at High Table, and the Major's respect, which is rarer.

The Bursar's application to borrow Domesday Book from The National Archives has been declined. He has asked whether the College might commission a survey of its own estates on the same model. Estates has said that it would rather not know, and the Department has recorded this as the first sensible thing Estates has said since the Porters' Lodge roof.

The Trebuchet Research Group's offer stands. So does the Department's answer, and so, for the avoidance of doubt, does the Department.

APPENDIX D - DEPARTMENTAL NOTE

The Department of Defensive Engineering, Crown Works and Applied Stubbornness was founded in January 1066, when the College, having watched the coronation of a king who was going to be attacked from two directions at once, decided that somebody ought to be thinking about hills. Its first and only advice to King Harold, delivered by letter and not acknowledged, was to find a good one, stand on it, and not move. The advice was sound. It was followed for most of a day.

The Department was reorganised that October, under new management, on the afternoon of the fourteenth. It retained its principle and lost its client. It has since advised on the holding of a great many positions, some of them hills, most of them arguments, and has never once revised the advice. It records that this paper was written in a week in which a field marshal's lunch was remembered, a tapestry was unrolled, a Shadow Minister asked the right question and a former Leader of the House approved of him for asking it, and that at the end of it the hill was where it had been, and so was the Department.

Persevera Etelred