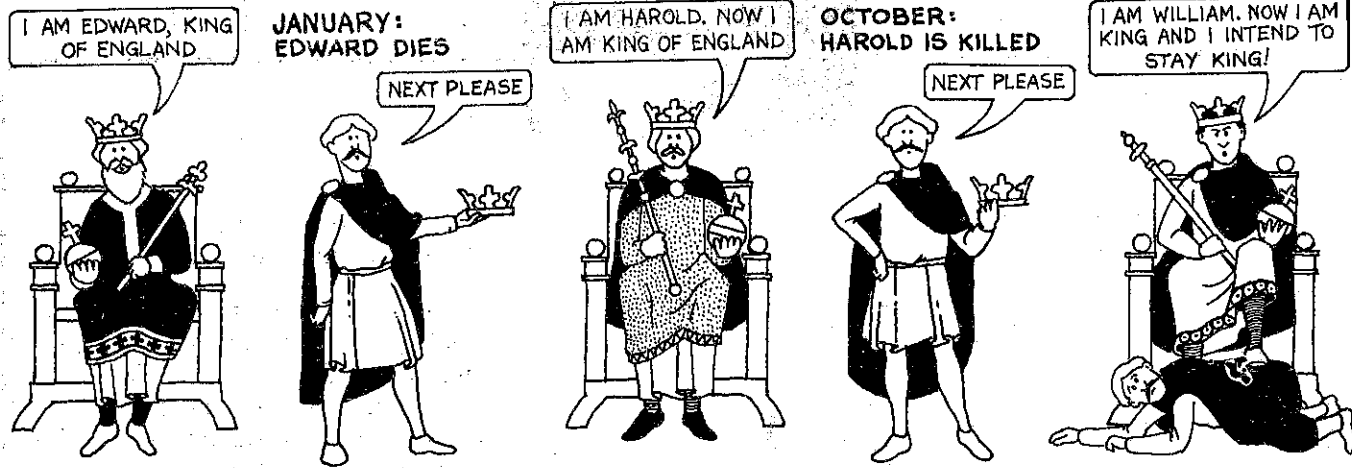


1066: A YEAR OF THREE KINGS



On the night of October 13th, Harold drew up his army on a hill about 7 kilometres from Hastings. Here, the two sides were to fight.

There were probably about 5000 to 7000 men in each army. Most of William's men were **knights**. They were trained to charge on horseback, using their long spears and swords. He also had archers who used short bows.

Harold's warriors mostly fought on foot. If they attacked, they used their long swords and swung their battle-axes. When they defended, they locked their shields together to form a wall. But the main difference was that William's knights were well trained. Most of Harold's men were farmers.

The battle began at about nine o'clock on October 14th. On the hill, Harold's army waited under their banner which showed a great red dragon.

During the day, the Normans charged up the hill a number of times but the English stood firm behind their wall of shields. The Normans had to go back.

It was late in the afternoon when William had an idea. He told his men to pretend to retreat, hoping the English would fall for the trick and run after them. It worked. When the English troops followed, the Normans turned round and killed them. More than once this happened. Each time, the English were surrounded and cut down.

It was getting dark when William began his last attack. The Norman knights charged while the Norman archers fired their arrows high into the air. They hoped to kill as many English as possible.

When William's knights finally broke through, they hacked down Harold's warriors. Harold himself was killed. The English farmers just turned and ran away.

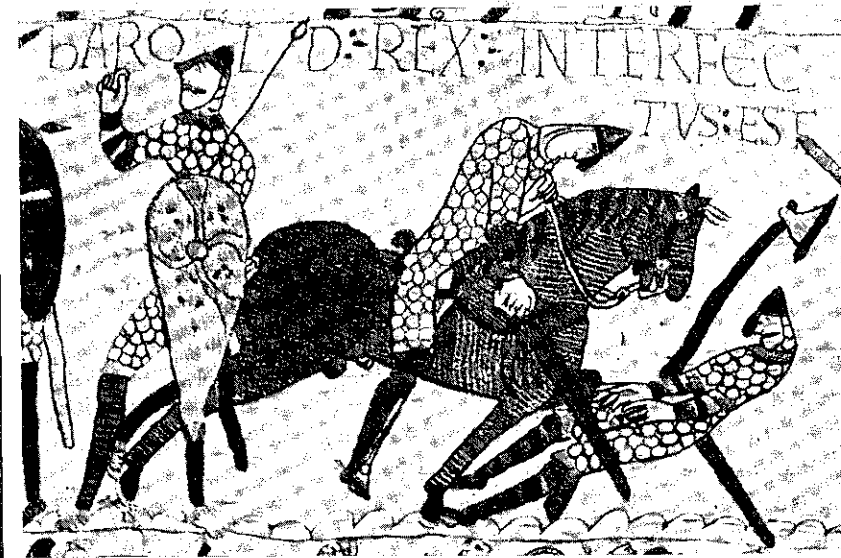
Harold had been king for less than a year. Duke William had beaten him at the Battle of Hastings and on Christmas Day, 1066 he was crowned as the new King of England.

People call him William the Conqueror because he invaded England and went on to conquer the English. He was not the first leader to do that, but he was the last. It is over 900 years since that battle but no one since has ever landed and captured England.

One of Harold's soldiers.



A The death of King Harold, from the Bayeux Tapestry.

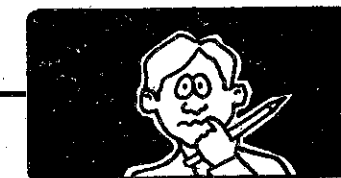


B A description of Duke William at the battle, written in about 1073:

B He led his forces with great skill, holding them when they turned to run, giving them courage, sharing their danger. He was more often heard shouting to them to follow him than ordering them to go on ahead. It is clear that it was the Duke's bravery which inspired his soldiers as they went forward and gave them courage.

Three horses were killed under him. Three times he leapt unafraid to the ground and killed the man who had killed his horse. That shows you how quick he was to make his mind up, and how strong he was.

With savage blows of his sword, he split shields, helmets and coats of mail. He struck a number of the enemy with his own shield. His soldiers took new courage when they saw him fighting on foot. Some, who were weak from bleeding, leant on their shields and fought on bravely. William himself helped quite a few to safety.



- 1 Put these five events in the order in which they happened: The Battle of Hastings; The Norwegian army landed; William became king; a comet appeared in the sky; King Edward the Confessor died.
 - 2 a) Draw the picture of the Saxon soldier.
 - b) How were his weapons different to those of a Norman knight?
- 3 Look at evidence A. Which man do *you* think is Harold? Give reasons for your choice.
- 4 Read evidence B. Does it make William sound like a good or a bad leader?
- 5 Do you think evidence B was written by a Norman or an Englishman? How did you decide?
- 6 Imagine you were a Norman knight in this battle. Write an account of what happened. Use the pictures to help you describe the clothes and weapons.