

Castles and Rebellion

Enquiry: How much did England change during the Norman Conquest?

Ms Dawson



One of the first things that William did when he landed in England in 1066 was to start building **motte and bailey castles**. Before 1066 England did not have very many castles, and building them was a big part of William's takeover of England. The Normans built castles for several reasons. They provided a safe base for Normans to use to attack and get control of the local areas. Once they'd taken over, the castles were used to control the surrounding countryside, and to remind the Saxons of the power of the Normans.



The first castles that the Normans built were made from wood, so that they could be built quickly. Later they were made from stone. The motte was a small hill, so that the castle would be high up for **defence**. It meant that they could see and control the whole local area easily. If there was no hill to build on, the Normans forced the Saxons to dig one! The bailey was a cleared space in the middle where Normans could live and work. Sometimes Saxon houses were pulled down to make space for the bailey. Saxons were forced to do most of the work to build them, and charged them **taxes** to pay for them.



William had defeated the English army at Hastings and crowned himself King, but he did not have control of the whole country. In December, William marched to London in order to force the English to accept him. He did this violently, by burning down property and killing the English. William told the English nobles that if they swore an oath of loyalty to him they could keep their lands. However, William also gave a lot of land to men who had fought for the Normans at Hastings. The English did not always like their Norman lords and fought them, especially when taxes were put up. In 1067 there were **rebellions** in Kent and Exeter, and across England Saxons and Normans were fighting. It was not a peaceful start to William's **reign**.



The biggest rebellion took place in the north of England in 1069. The north of England was further away from William and more independent, so William tried to send Normans to take control of the cities there. The English didn't want to give up control, so they asked for help from the King of Denmark. With help from the **Danes**, English rebels burnt William's castle in York to the ground and killed many Normans. This included 900 Norman soldiers and William's friend, Earl Robert. William decided to act harshly to teach the English a lesson.



All through the winter of 1069-70, he led his army across the North, burning houses and killing people. This was known as The Harrying of the North. He destroyed whole villages and farms and he killed all the animals. He even put salt on the land so that those who survived wouldn't be able to grow anything for years to come and would starve to death. Orderic Vitalus, a **historian** who lived shortly after the time claimed that 100,000 people died as a result. Modern historians aren't sure that this figure is correct, but what we do know is that after 1070 William did not face anywhere near the same level of rebellion that he had before.



Glossary

Motte and bailey castle: A type of castle built by the Normans to take over England. It had a motte (hill), and a bailey (a yard to live in).

Defence: Protecting against attack.

Taxes: Paying money to the King or government.

Rebellions: Fighting back or resisting against those in charge.

Reign: The time that a King or Queen rules for.

Danes: People from Denmark.

Historian: Someone who writes about events from the past.



Comprehension Questions

1. What type of castle did William begin building when he first conquered England?
2. Why did he want to build castles?
3. Why might the castles have caused the Saxons to rebel?
4. What did William do to get people to accept him as King?
5. Why was the start of William's reign difficult?
6. What did the people in the north of England do to anger William?
7. What did William do in order to teach them a lesson?
8. Challenge: What was the impact of the Harrying of the North?

Sentence starter: The impact of the Harrying of the North was...



Extension Question

Why were there very few rebellions in England after 1070?

Use the sentence starters and key words below to answer this question

Sentence starters:	Key words
<i>One reason why there were few rebellions after 1070 was...</i>	Castles
<i>To explain this further....</i>	Harrying
<i>For example...</i>	Harsh

