



The Normans

Part 1 (50 years before Hastings)

Norman / Viking history is alive and well today. Just recently a *hoard* was discovered. It is thought to be from Mr Bluetooth who went on to create wireless communications.

We'll be sure and talk more about him later,...Let's get started.

In the half century before the Normans conquered the hell out of England there was no peace to be found. The entire territory was caught in a never ending conflict between the ambitious nobles who were either avenging previous battles or fighting for the crown that they felt belonged to them. The entire thing was a murderous 10th century reality show full of nutty characters with great nicknames.

Emma of Normany Queen of England Twice! And son who were King of England
Born 984 and died 1052 at 68
Encomium Emmae "In Praise of Emma"

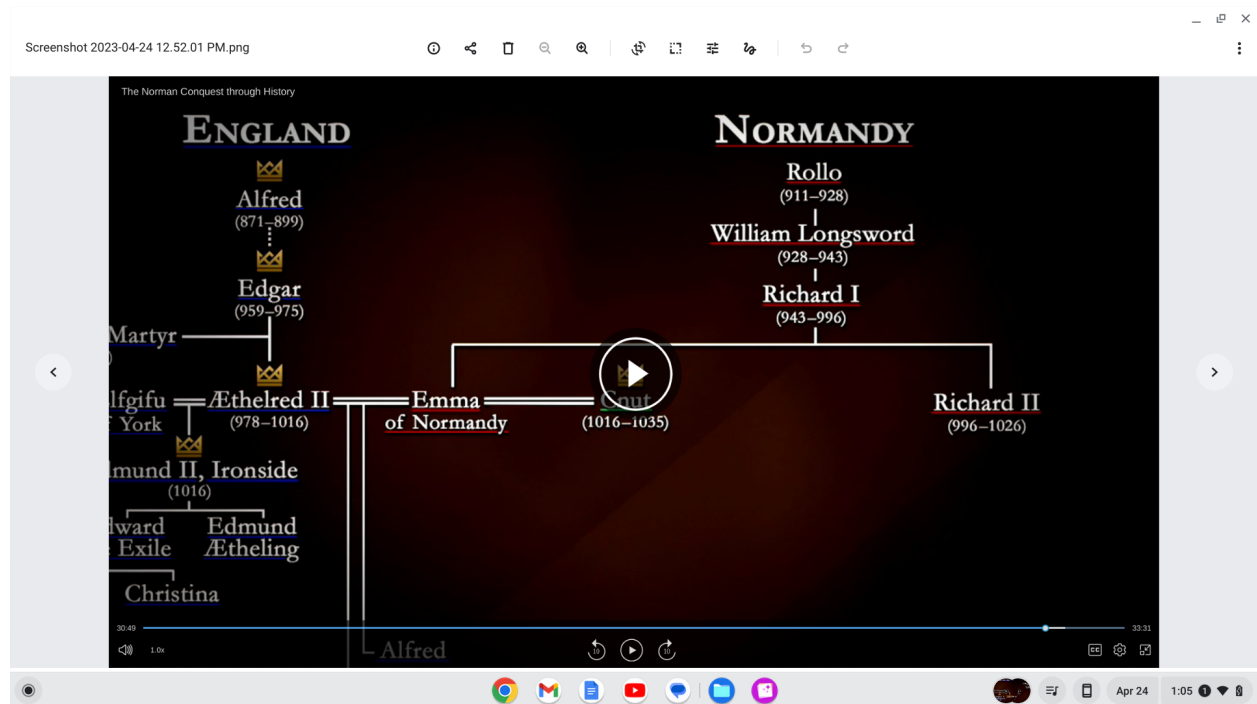
Language: There are 240,000 words in the English language (not counting the ones Shakespeare invented). Spanish by contrast has 140,000. The reason is that Spain was never conquered by France although they tried.

For basically every Anglo noun there is its French/Norman counterpart that just sounds more fancy.

Examples: Meet vs Encounter, eat vs dine.

Words related to law & government are mostly Norman (prison, jury, traitor, govern, justice)

Words for low skilled labor are Anglo-Saxon (baker, showmaker) high skilled trades are French (mason and tailor)



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-----INTRO-----

Welcome - This is a Humorous History podcast and We are the Goofy Historians. Today we are going to talk about the Mormans. What. Oh, The Normans. That's right. We will have to swing back around and talk about the Golden Plates and Steve Young.

Seriously, today we are going to start our Multi Part series on The Normans. From Alfred's Prodigy to Norman conquest of England to The Crusades. Special focus on Rolo, William 1 the conquering bastard, and Cnut the Greatest King of England!

The Normans are a significant part of the story of the Vikings. When you zoom out you can see 300 years of Scandinavian influence from Ireland to Spain and from Russia to the Mediterranean Sea. We will try to keep on topic but they are so damn interesting. Plus, I just started watching a Viking Valhalla on Netflix. So we may end up discussing Vikings in general because it's fascinating how they went from Pagan Raiders to Christian Kings and then blended so well they eventually disappeared. Or did they?

Rolo the 1st Duke of Normandy born 860 died 932 at 72

Cnut King of England and more! (990 to 1035) (died at 45)

William the Conqueror Born 1028 died 1087 (59 years old)

Duke of Normandy 1035 to 1087

King of England 1066 to 1087

**William felt remorse at his horrible behavior that he inflicted upon the English
(think Charles V)*

What's the difference between a Norman and a Morman anyway?... Did the Mormans start out as Normans? Did William have Gold plates?

With Chords:
credit to chat GPT

Verse 1:

G D Am C

The year was 1066, and the Normans did arrive

G D Am C

They sailed across the English Channel, ready to take the prize

G D Am C

Led by Duke William, they landed on the shore

G D Am C

And with the Battle of Hastings, they changed England forevermore

Chorus:

G D Am C

The Normans, the Normans, they came from across the sea

G D Am C

Conquered and changed history, that's how it came to be

Verse 2:

G D Am C

The Normans were a people, from a land far away

G D Am C

Their story starts in Normandy, with the Vikings' stay

G D Am C

They learned the art of war, and became a mighty force

G D Am C

And with their steel-clad knights, they rode through Europe's course

Chorus:

G D Am C

The Normans, the Normans, they came from across the sea

G D Am C

Conquered and changed history, that's how it came to be.

Part 2

Last time we ended up with the slightly ridiculous Ethelred the Unready et al.

Well, Ethelred was certainly unready for many things, but he was good at taking naps and having babies. Someone suggested he should be the Patron Saint of Naps and the origin of the Quiverfull movement.

Ethelred the Unready had quite the quiver full of offspring. At least 19 arrows from his various wives, and then Emma and Cnut had at least 6 more among them.

That gives at least 25 potential heirs to the throne.

Unfortunately, they all petered out, - in the end, the quiver was empty except for one last arrow: Edward the Confessor.

So, Ed became King of England.

And Ed the Confessor was only good at roaming around England confessing to stuff he didn't do and muttering not very helpful prophecies to no one in particular.

One thing he didn't do was make babies. So, the quiver remained empty. Thus, would end the dynasty of Alfred the Great. And as it turned out, the last Anglo-Saxon to rule England.

While Ed was basically useless, a dude called Godwinson took care of the business of running the country and lining his pockets. (Adjusted for inflation he was probably worth about 100 billion dollars.)

And apparently, he was doing a pretty good job of it. He was a conniving slimy bastard trying to get himself into that empty quiver by hook or by crook.

He married his poor daughter Edith to Ed the Confessor. But it is somewhat doubtful that the union was ever consummated.

(there is some indication that Edith was responsible for the Bayeux Tapestry, and she was the only old guard that W had any affection for.)

When Ed died, Godwinson said Ed had made him king. Like, yeah. Sure, he did. But turns out there were other claimants to the throne.

Among them Harold Hardrada and William the Bastard of Normandy.

It wasn't long after Godwinson took the crown off of poor Edward the Confessor and put it on his own head, that:

Duke William of Normandy invaded Wessex with 700 to 1,000 ships in 1066. He lost two ships however on the way.

One of the boats that was lost held the “official” royal prophet.
William was overheard to mutter under his breath:
“Lousy Prophet. Couldn’t even choose the right boat. Sheesh”

When they finally arrive at Dover Beach, William jumps off the boat and falls flat on his face.
Jumps up and says: “Tastes better than French Sand! I’m staying!”

His servant said: “See! He is embracing his new conquest!”

There were no English soldiers there to greet him, as they were all up north at Stamford Bridge beating the fertilizer out of Harald Hardrada and his Norwegians Vikings.

Fortunately for Godwinson, the Norwegian army was caught with their pants down – all their weapons and body armor were left on their ships. Tactical error that.

Instead of being a gentleman and a scholar and giving the Vikings a chance to get into fighting attire, Godwinson massacred them while they were still in their “tighty whities”.
(Thus, the Age of the Vikings came to an inglorious end.)

H was in a hurry, no time for niceties. He had to get his troops down to Normandy to give Will a proper Anglo Saxon greeting.

While H was going up and down England, W was ravaging the Wessex. Just to mostly piss Harold off.
Which he did. He was building mud castles and monasteries (for some reason).

When H got there, he was able to take the high ground. Which is weird tactical failure for W.
Will had a lot of time to get ready. He knew H was coming. Take the high ground Will! OMG!

W came with his erstwhile enemies and with the blessing of the Pope. The Pope’s banner went before W army.

W told the pope that the English church was corrupt and needed to be purged of its sins, and he was just the right man at the right time to be an honest to goodness scourge of God.

To be fair, the English church was corrupt. The Bishop of Canterbury had been ex-communicated three times by then. I think it funny that folks could have multiple ex-communications at the same time.

But hey, the Norman/French were just as corrupt. And come to think of it, so was the papacy. Around that time, there were three popes in Rome. I wonder if it would be possible to get ex-communicated by three different popes all at the same time.

Basically, it got down to W was better at power politics than H. Having the head of the Catholic church supporting your genocide is a good thing, I suppose.

Also, Will had a necklace of saint's bones he wore around his neck – which has got to be pretty cool. Creepy yeah, but effective.

These are the bones Harold had sworn over to support Will rule England. That's another story. Hey Harold, the toe bone of Saint Anthony knows I'm king!"

Besides the bones and the pope, The Normans were the best warriors of the age, hands down. And they were everywhere. By the time of the Norman invasion of England, they had already conquered southern Italy and Sicily and set up kingdoms there. Among other places. (Rus?)

Normans were the best at fighting on a horse and had the best cavalry on the planet. They were also the best at archery. And they had the most experience. While besides beating up naked Vikings H was useless. He wasn't known for his military proficiency.

So, anyway, because of a screw up by W, H took the high ground the evening before the battle. He didn't have many archers and didn't use his horses. Basically, his troops dismounted and fought on foot. He had also lost many be men (mostly archers for some reason) on his long trek up and down England. He didn't have a professional army. He just levied farmers who were thinking more about their crops.

W is on the low ground. But he has his archers ready, and his mounted cavalry.

But before they could get started night fell and they had to wait until morning.

On W side, maybe since they had all those saint bones and the popes banner, they spent the night praying.

They were praying mostly to massacre their fellow Christians.

The A/S on the other hand spent the night partying. Mooning the Normans on throwing their empties down on the hill.

The Normans woke up fresh and ready to kill. The A/S woke on cranky and ready to kill.

It was the A/S battle to lose. They just had to hold their ground and wait for reinforcements. Maybe find the archers and levy more peasants put a pike in their hands and send them down the like honest fodder.

William had his archers launch a hail of arrows over the A/S. Unfortunately, as the A/S were on the hill, the N had to shoot up hill, and missed their mark. The A/S shield wall held over their heads.

Error#1 Normans.

W tried to give a rousing speech to goad his cavalry. But they were sufficiently goaded to start with and took off up the hill and left W giving a rousing speech to his horse. Apparently was so flustered in put his helmet on backward. Not a good start.

Then William sent up his mounted warriors. But sending horses uphill didn't work either.
Error#2 Normans.

Finally, W sent up his infantry to crash the shield war, mano-a-mano.
Error#3 Normans

Part of the Normans infantry started to break down and slipped down the hill.

This caused the A/S to break rank and chase the N. Bad idea.
W saw this and instructed his men to fake a retreat and got the whole A/S line to break the shield war and run haphazardly down the hill.

That is all it took. This made them easy pickings for W's cavalry.
He specifically targeted Harold himself.
His troops isolated H and quite gratuitously had him chopped to the point he was unrecognizable.
Only his mistress was able to ID him by a body part "only she and God knew."
W build a monastery on the hill where H died. The alter is at the spot where H was dismembered.
You can still go say your rosary at the very spot. Though neither H nor W became saints.

Almost all the English nobility died at Hastings. And W divvied up their land among his minions.

W ruled about 20 years, but ended up dying in France fighting the French a fat and very rich man.

What would have happened had Hardrada won. Would we all be shopping at Ikea and eating pizza with meatballs and herring? Or maybe we do that anyway?

Anglo Saxon language became almost French.
Though the French words in English still seem some what snobby.

When HRR Tolkien wrote the Lord of the Rings, he tried to use on A/S based words, to make it sound more middle earthish.

In Harry Potter series, all the good guys have A/S names, while the creep bad guys have French sounding names.

Good

Harry Potter,
Ron Weasley
Dumbledore

Bad

Malfoy
Lord Voldemort
Dudley Dursley