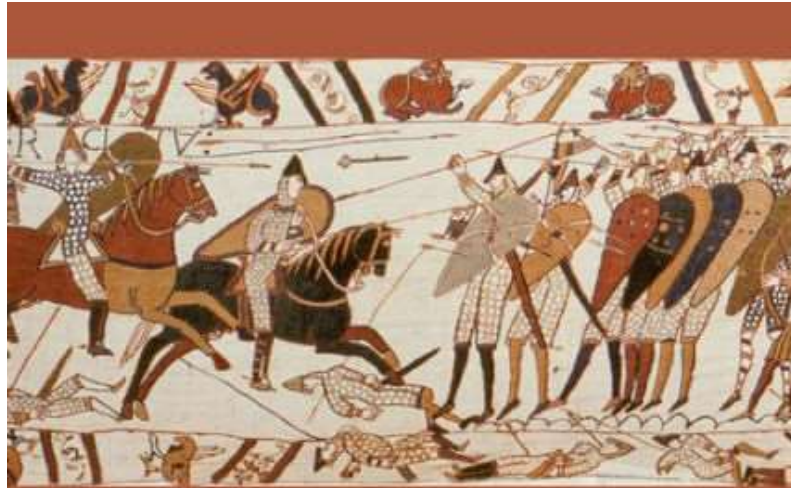


14 October 1066

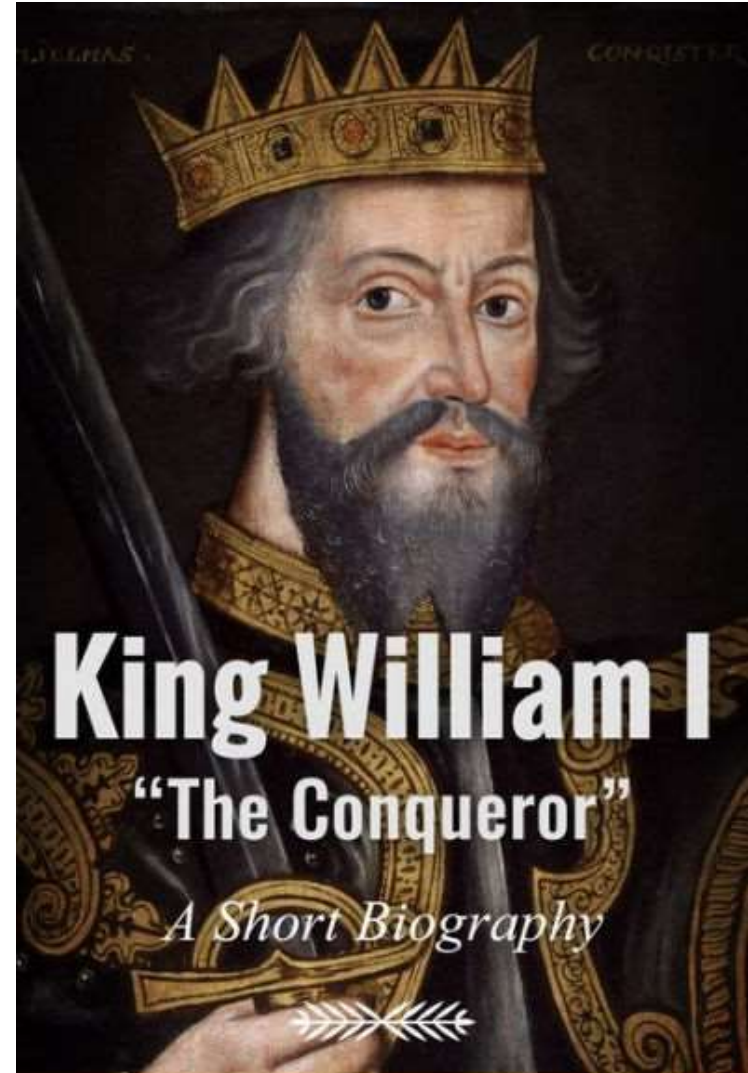
The battle of Hastings: when William the Conqueror conquered England



TERESA COLE

THE NORMAN CONQUEST

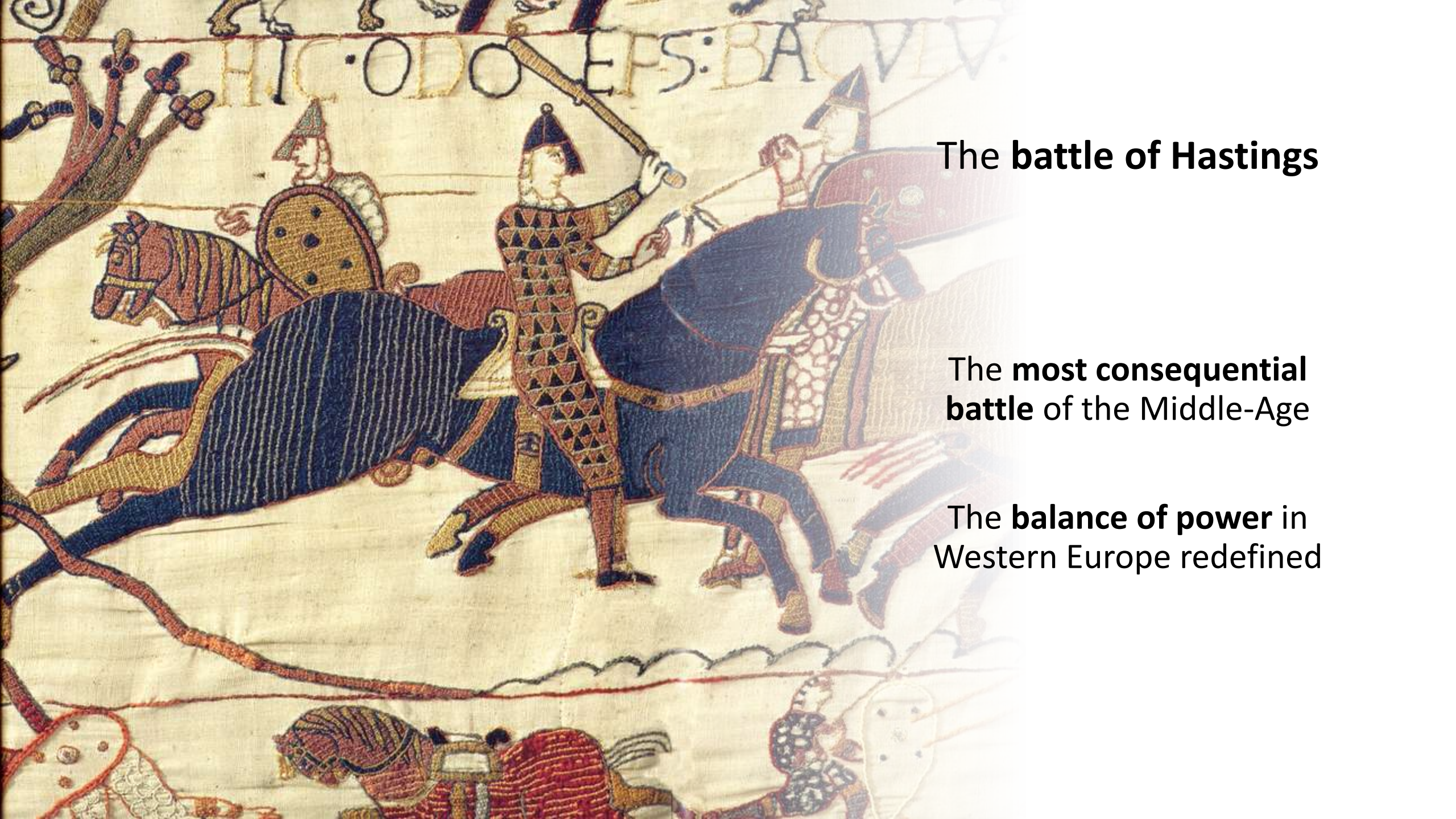
WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR'S
SUBJUGATION OF ENGLAND



King William I "The Conqueror"

A Short Biography

RYAN YOUNG



The battle of Hastings

The **most consequential battle** of the Middle-Age

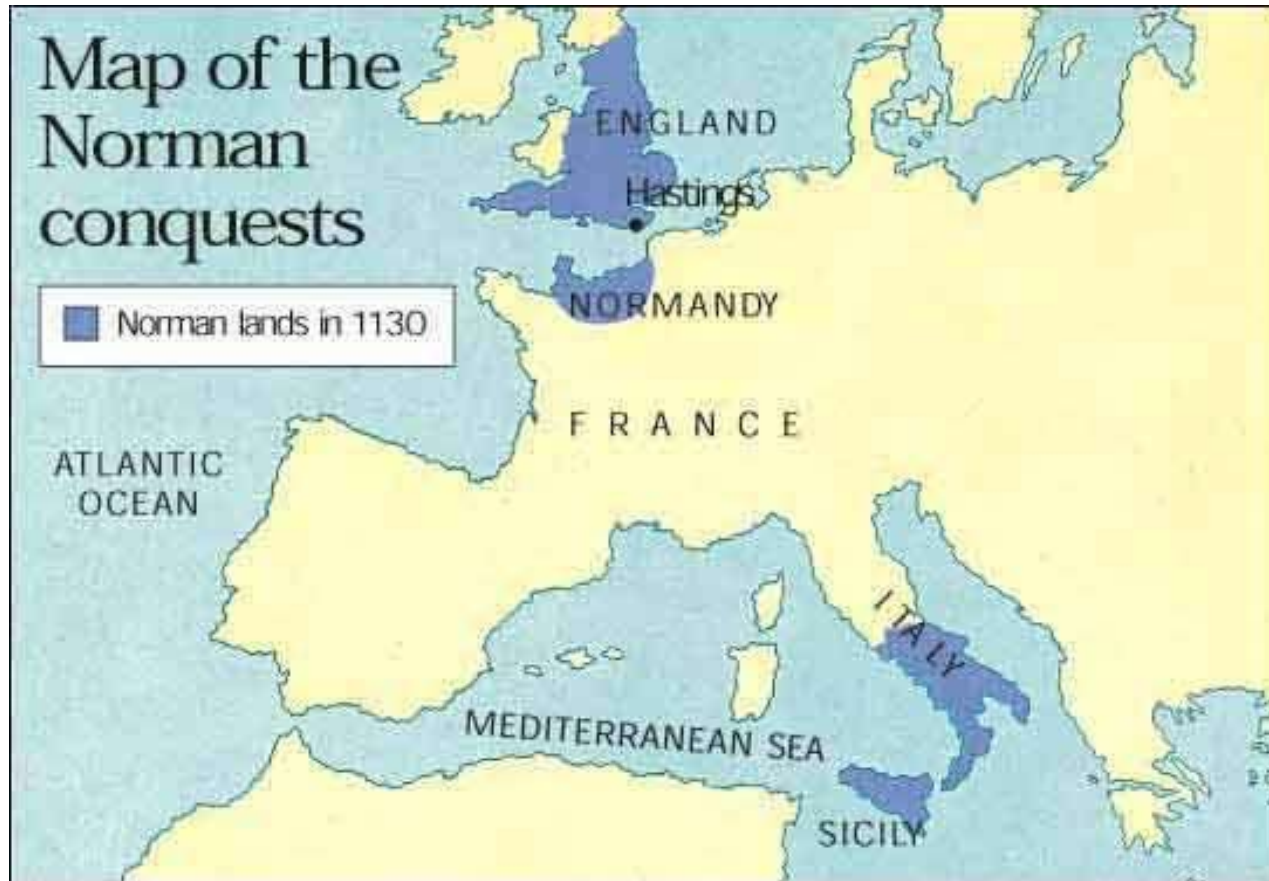
The **balance of power** in Western Europe redefined


Norman expansionism

Norman mercenaries in
Southern Italy

No pre-determined project

A Norman kingdom in
Southern Italy & Sicily





The conquest of England

A 12-month enterprise

A planned military expedition

William of Normandy crowned king
of England (25 December 1066)



The battle of Hastings reassessed

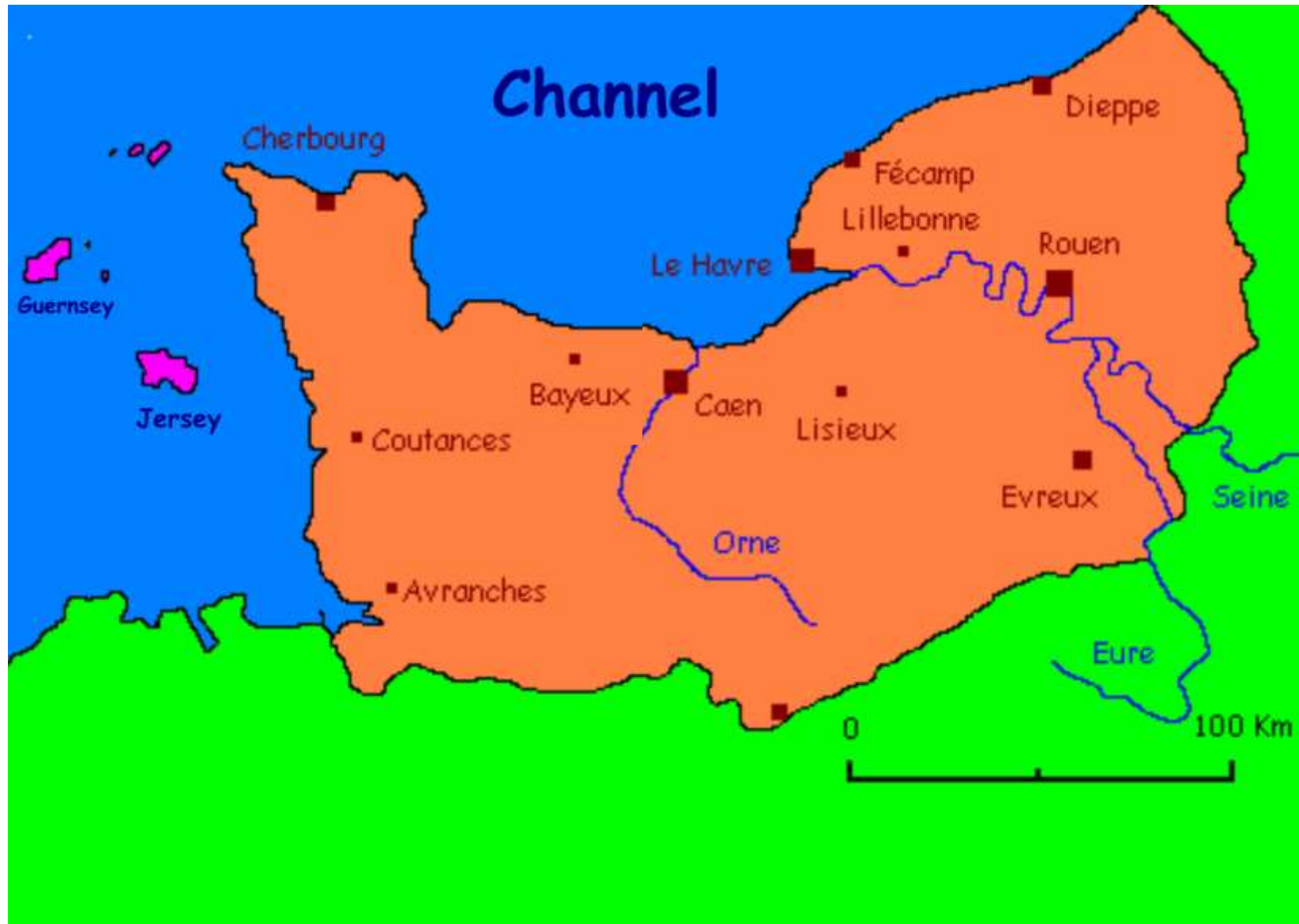
The **Bayeux Tapestry**
(embroidered cloth depicting
the **Norman conquest of
England**)

Poems
(*The Song of the Battle of
Hastings*)

70m long

Likely commissioned by William's half brother for the Bayeux Cathedral (1077)







English **king Harold**
(1022-1066)

A worthy adversary to
William the Conqueror

Came close to victory



5 January 1066

The death of **Edward the Confessor**

Harold proclaimed king of
England





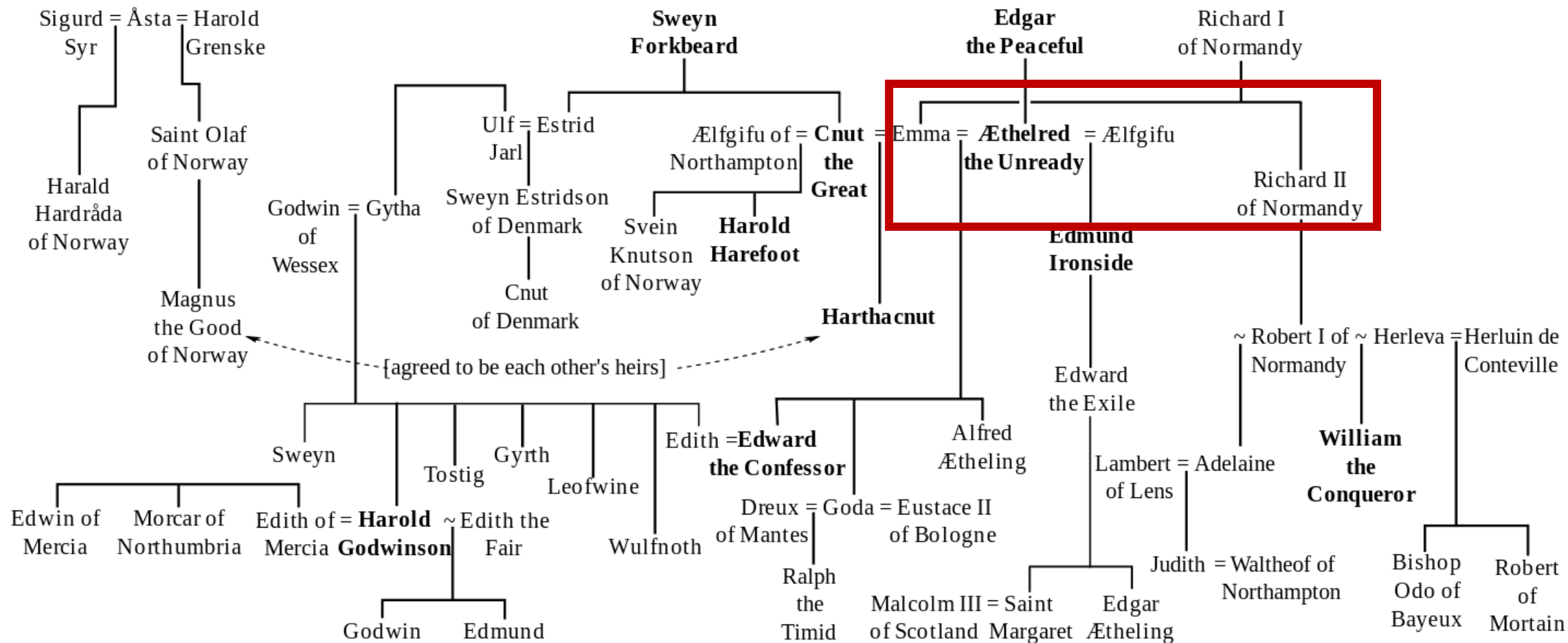
William's claim to the English throne


1051: Edward the Confessor offered William to be his successor

Childless and under the influence of **Godwin**, Earl of Wessex (his father-in-law)

No document to corroborate William's claim







William: indomitable ambition

A powerful army

England: a promising land (the **most prosperous kingdom** in Europe)

A centralized taxation system

The English king: a wealthy man

A chance to become an anointed king

Westminster Abbey: the symbol of the king's power



William of Viking stock

The descendant of a Viking warlord who had settled in Normandy in the 10th century

The Duchy of Normandy

The son of Duke Robert & a tanner's daughter



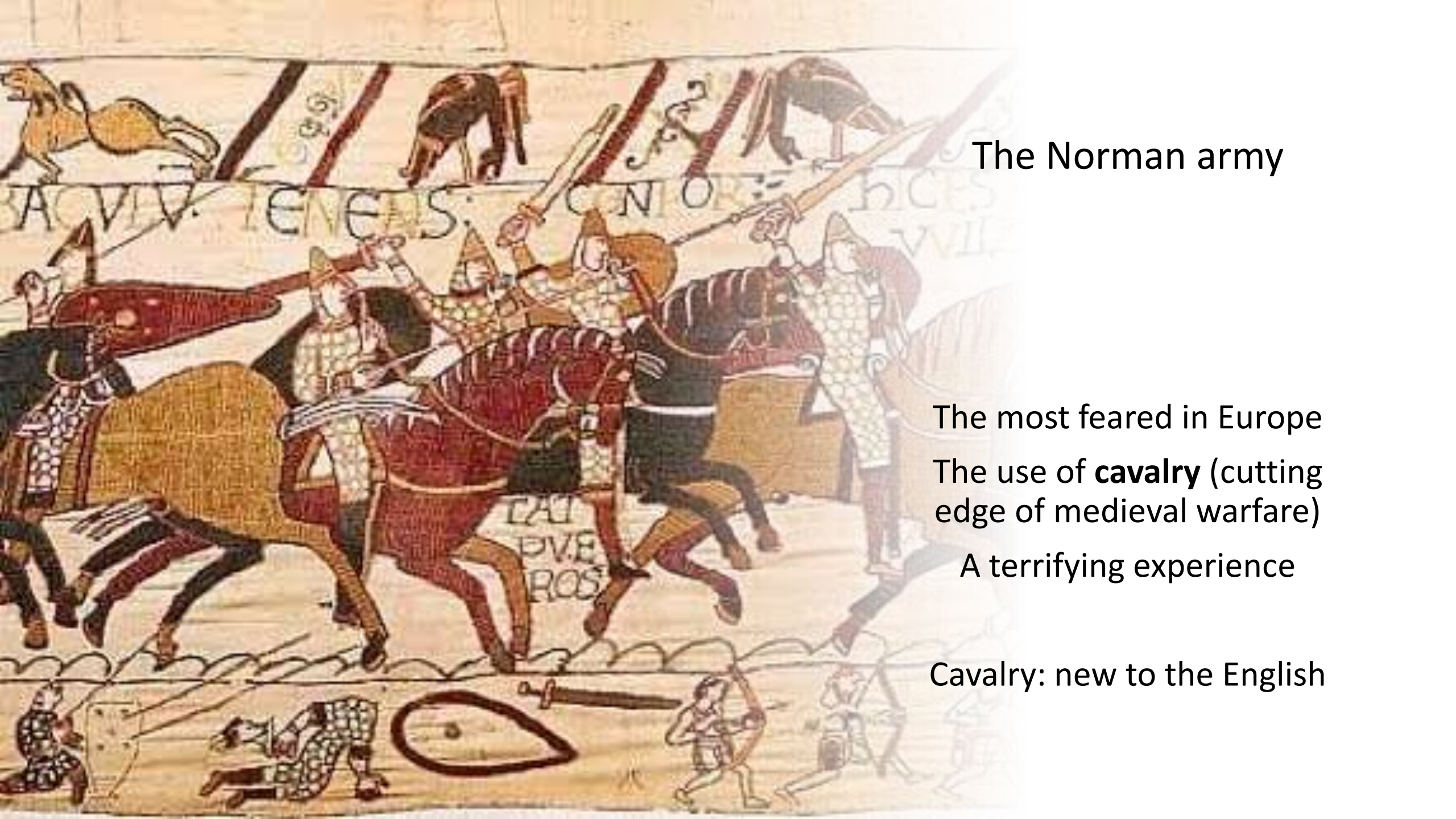


William only an infant
when his father died

Political instability
Competing factions fighting
for power

William schooled in warfare
since childhood (multiple
assassination attempts)

Ruling through terror



The Norman army

The most feared in Europe

The use of **cavalry** (cutting edge of medieval warfare)

A terrifying experience

Cavalry: new to the English



Harold Godwinson (Earl of Wessex)

The best positioned
successor (the power behind
the throne)

A proven soldier

1064: promise to help
William become king of
England?

Harold: a usurper

A conflict inevitable





Edward's only distant
relative: Edgar

Deemed too young to be an
effective leader

English nobility in support of Harold

William is a foreigner (who does not
speak English!)

Harold: no direct blood link to the
Crown

BUT dangerous times ahead

6 January 1066: Harold crowned king
of England





A third contestant!

Harald Hardrada (“hard ruler”), king of Norway – A despotic warrior

Vikings had ruled England between 1016 & 1032)

England: a place to be reconquered

A formidable foe: a fleet



William **well informed** of
what is happening in
England

A very efficient spy network

1066: the right time to
intervene militarily

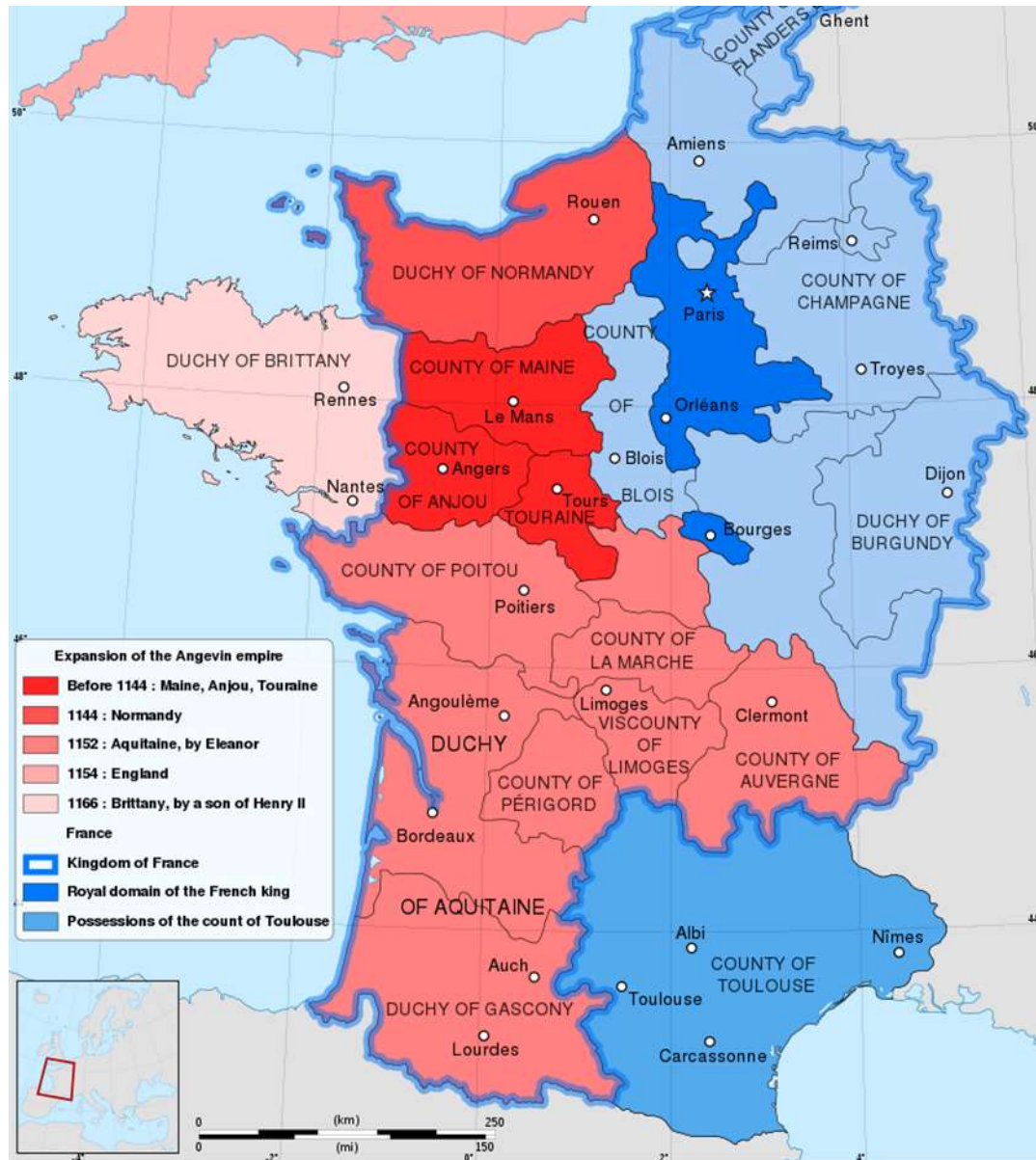
WHY?



The feudal system

A **pyramidal system** structured around **relationships** derived from the **holding of land in exchange for service**





The king: the supreme *Seigneur* (overlord)

Duke of Normandy

Duke of Aquitaine

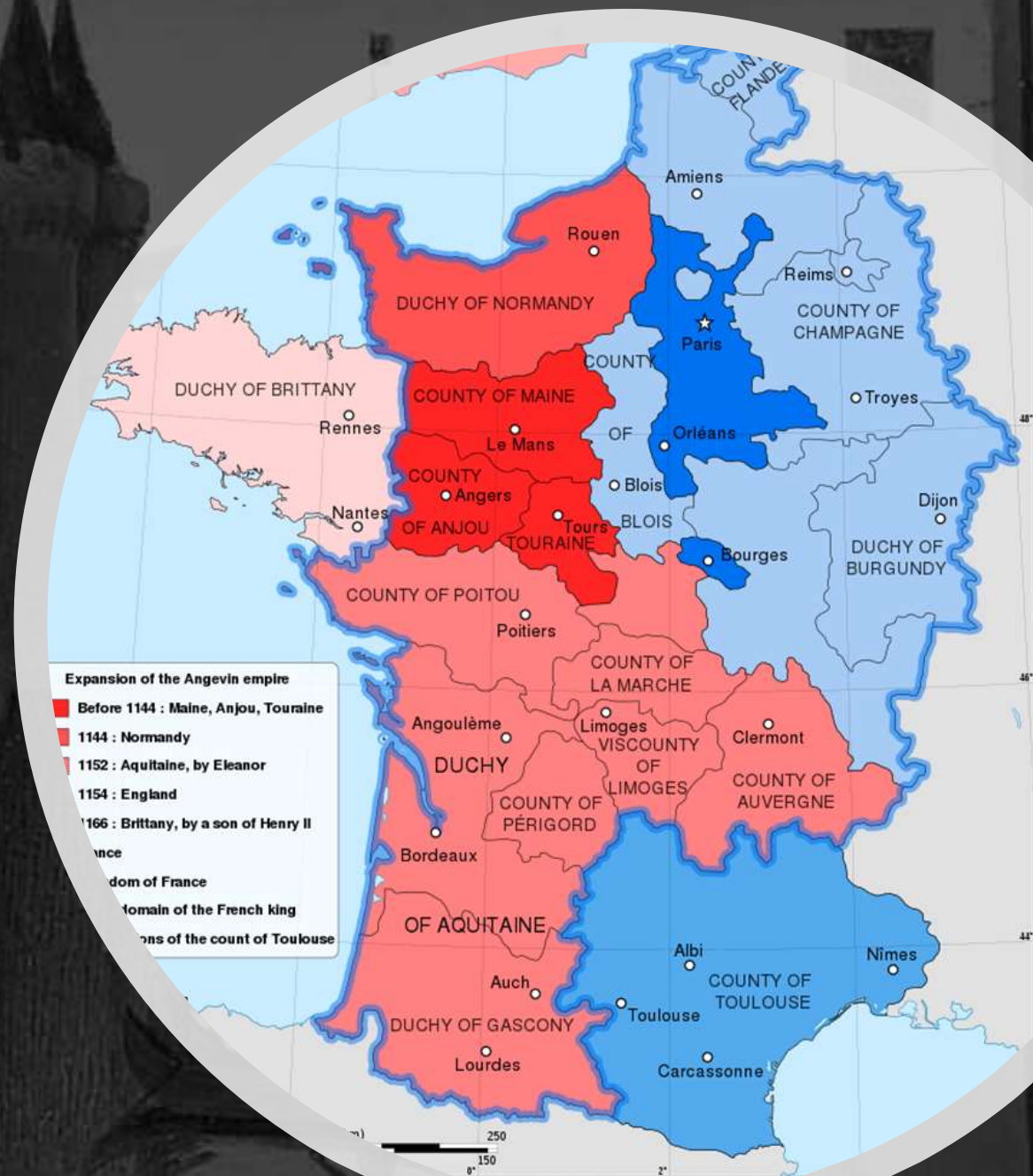
Duke of Burgundy

Direct vassals or liege subject

Pledge of allegiance & service owed to the king in return for their rights over their land (**fiefdoms** granted by the king)

Each of the direct vassals has vassals of his own who owe him a pledge of allegiance

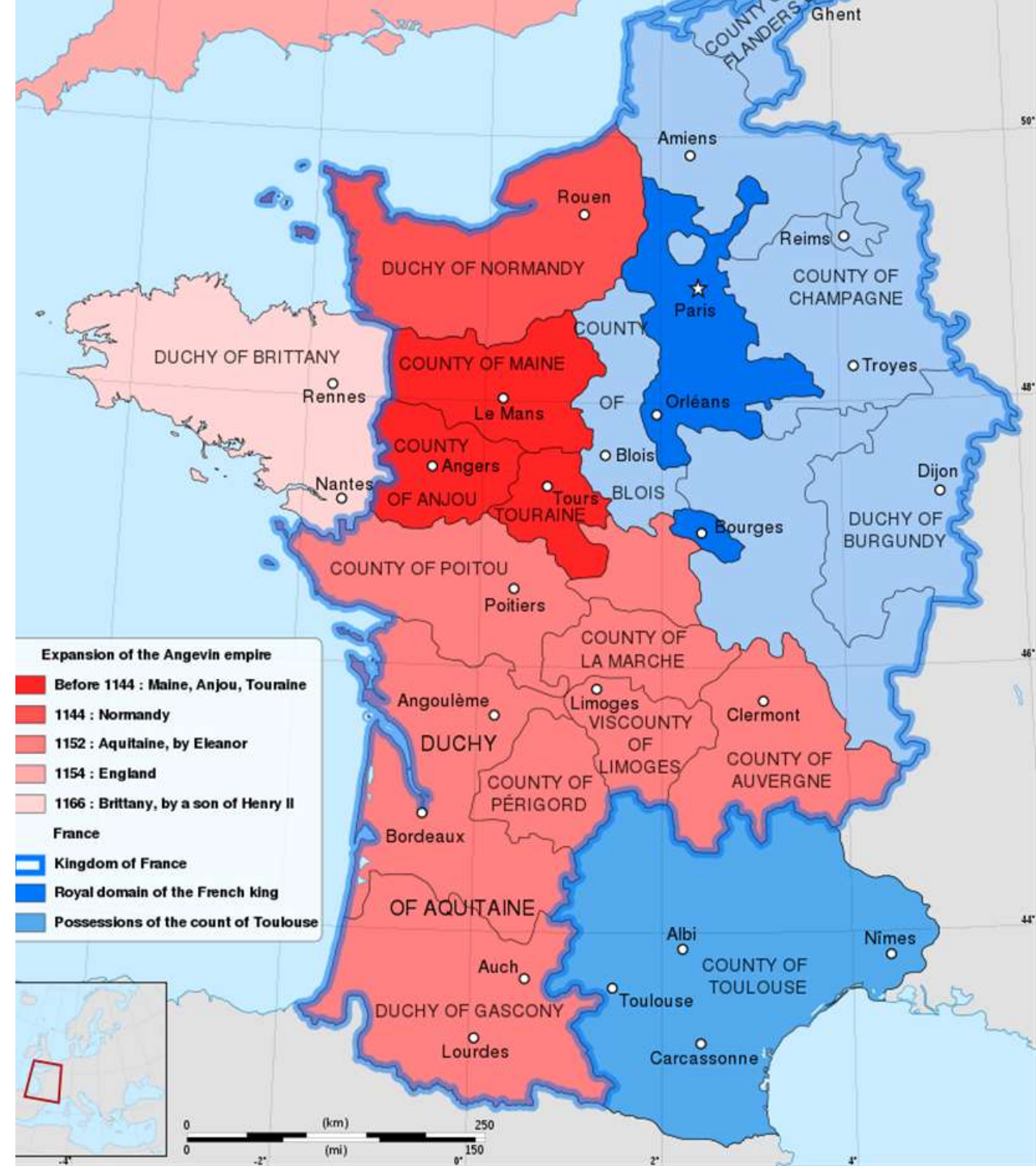
The king's coronation: a source of
unparallel prestige
King by the grace of God



The feudal system in France: a chaotic system

Ruling by force: a necessity

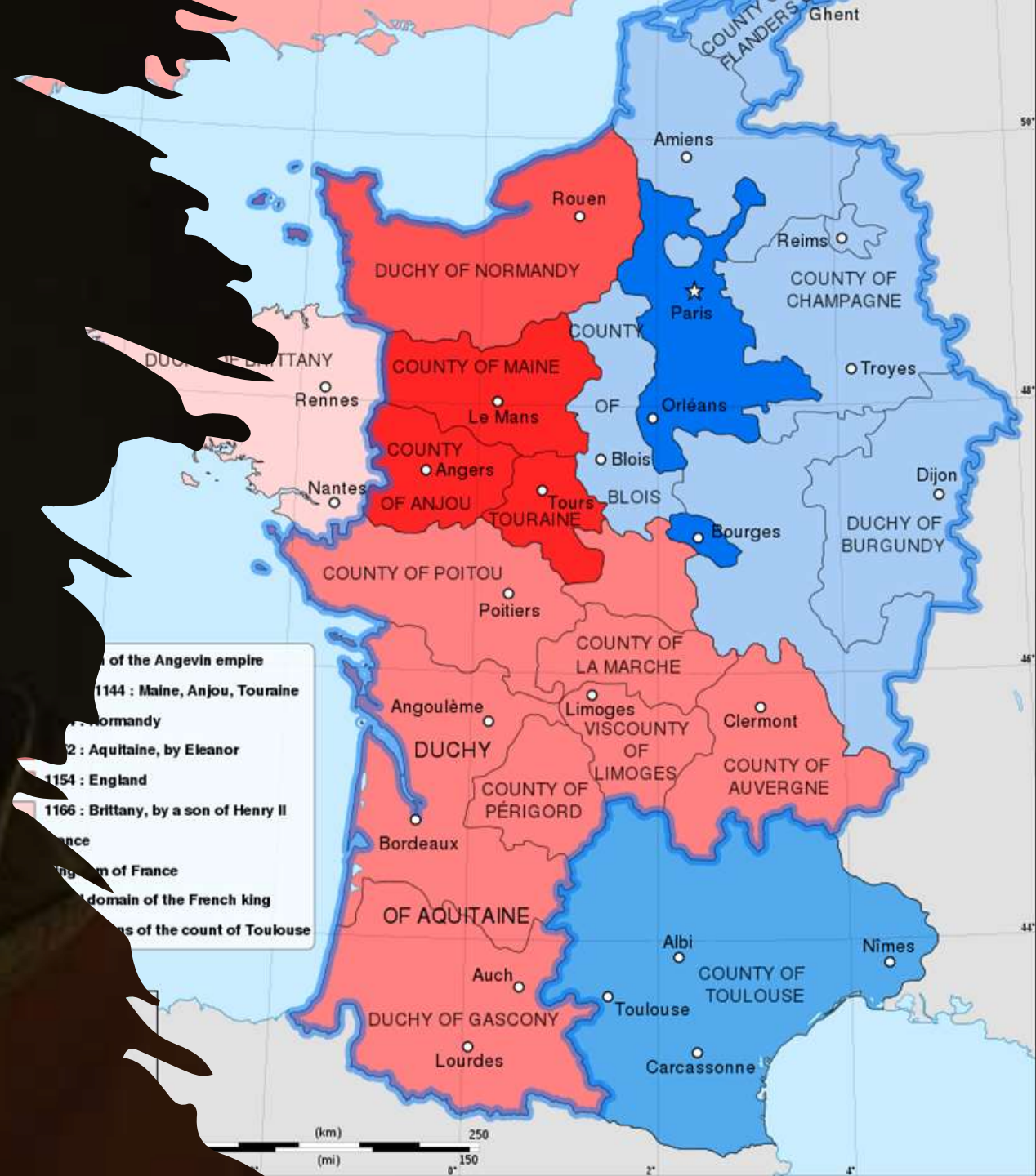
The fief had to be led by a man strong enough to defend his domains by waging constant wars against his vassals & foes



King Philip I of France (Born in 1052)

William's main rivals in France still
young

No imminent threat to William

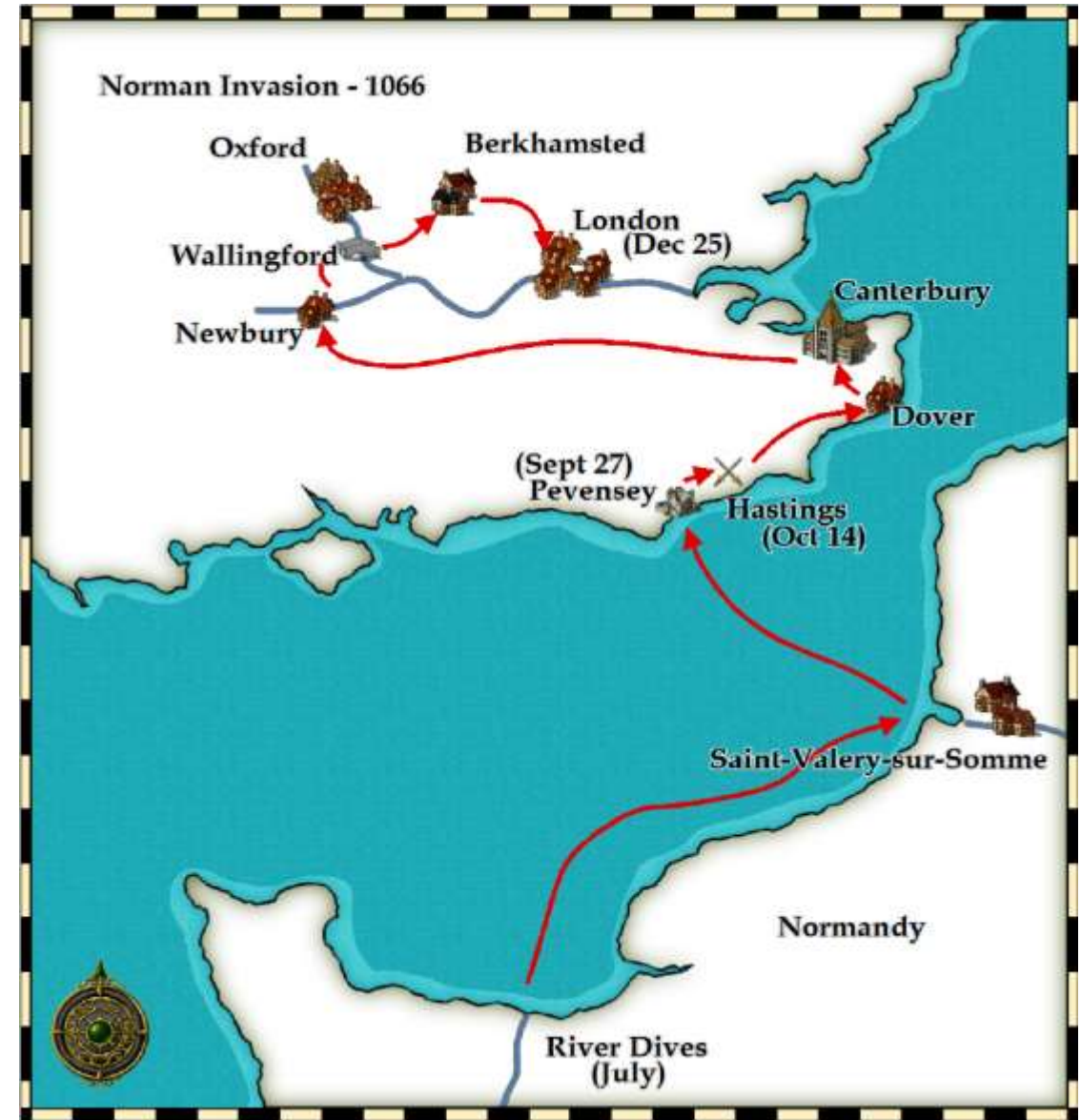


Impregnable England?

A myth

The conquest of England not
unthinkable

England conquered by Caesar and
invaded by Germanic peoples (5th &
6th centuries



Viking Invasions



The Danes (1016-1035)



The Normans hesitant

No fleet

The conquest of England: a
risky enterprise

Mercenaries & foreign
soldiers more responsive

England: the wealthiest
kingdom in Europe





England (11th century)

Population: 1.3 million

Plenty of land available

William: winning political support
for his plan

Norman nobles hesitant at the idea
of killing an anointed king



Support from the Pope (Alexander II)

A papal banner issued to William:
the status of a crusade

Political opportunism: the Papacy
allied to the Normans in Southern
Italy



- ITALY about 1050.
- States of the Church
 - Domains of the Countess Matilda
 - Possessions of the Byzantine Empire
 - Lombard principalities
 - Norman conquests
 - Saracenic territory

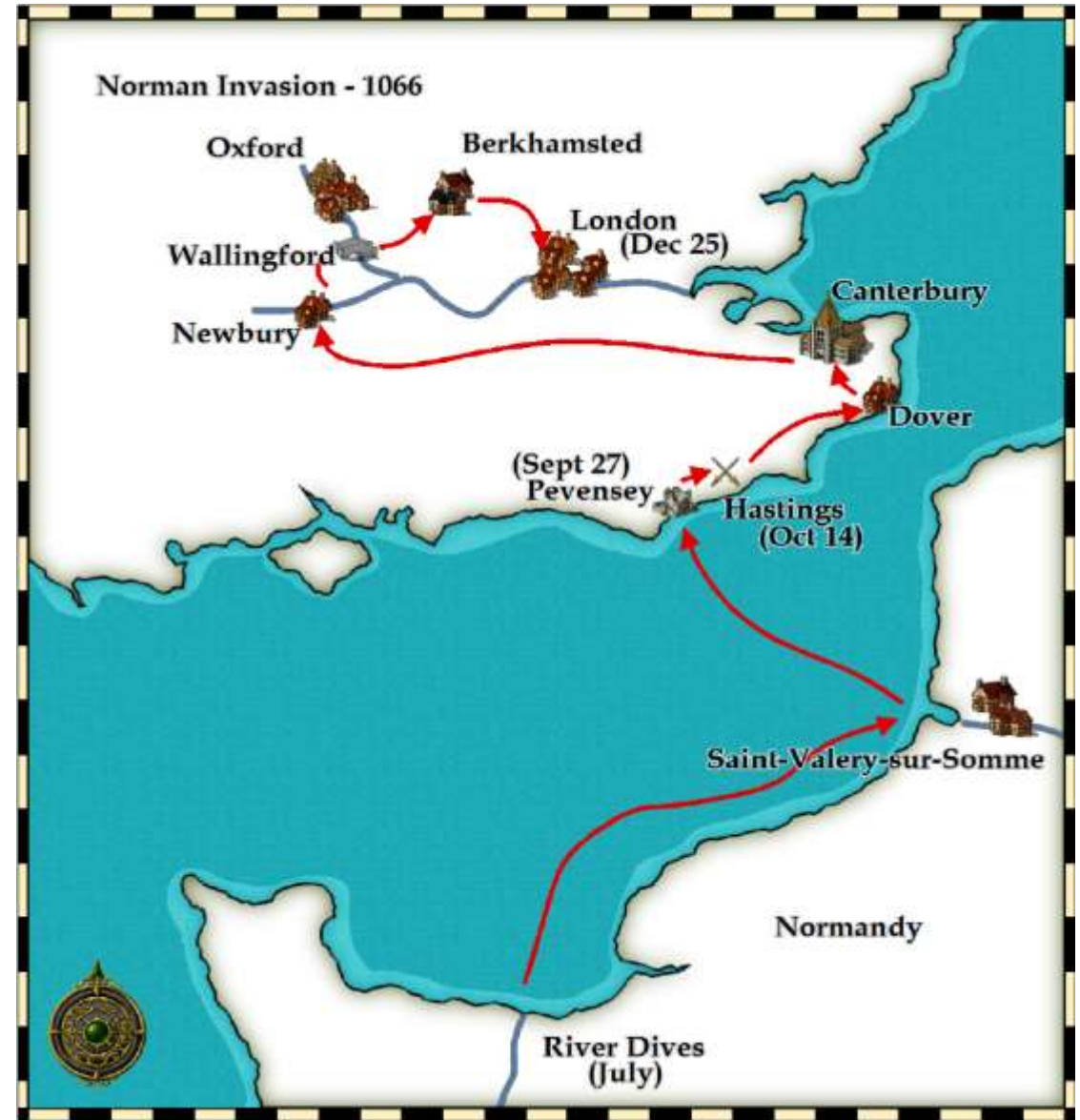
Dealing with logistics

Building a fleet: the whole army to leave Normandy **at the same time** (instead of successive waves)

Protecting the fleet from the English

No major problems (no epidemics)

No looting (efficient Norman administration)







Shipbuilding: the Viking tradition

Viking ships

Light, slender & small-draft
vessels

A fleet of nearly 800 ships (6 000
large trees)

Each of William's vassals to
deliver his quota of ships





William's flagship:
the *Mora*

A gift from his wife
Mathilda

A mysterious name:
anagram of *amor*?

Ancient French *more*
(pointed head of a
sword)



William's flagship:
the *Mora*

The bow: a golden
child pointed to
England

A new golden age for
England?

Harold's decision to disband his army (Southern England)

Lack of supplies

Soldiers levied only for a
period of 2 months

Harold did not believe
William would invade: fleet
ordered to return to London





South of England left
undefended

William kept informed by a
ring of spies



Tostig Godwinson

Had been stripped of his land by this brother and sent to exile

Act of treason against his brother
Harold

Offered his support to William AND
Harald Hardrada

Alliance

Invasion force assembled

Tostig Godwinson

Too impatient: Tostig decides to proceed alone (May 1066)

Crossed the Channel from Flanders and headed to the island of Wight

What was he trying to accomplish?
A direct assault on his brother's authority



Tostig Godwinson

His army defeated and outnumbered

Fled to Scotland



Harold's strategy

To station his troops in Southern England in anticipation of William's invasion

Oblivious of the danger of invasion from the North



18 September

The landing of **Harald Hardrada** in Northern England (Northumbria)

Several hundred ships (500) – 30 000 men

Conquering England: to create a Viking legend



Hardrada's plan

1. To attack York (the ancient capital of Viking England)

2. A march on London



Meanwhile in
Normandy...

William busy planning the
invasion of England

Mastering the techniques of
embarking and landing
troops and horses in record
time



24 September: the Norman fleet
on the move...

14 000 men – 3 000 horses
High risks of epidemics

Stormy weather
William's fleet to sail to St. Valéry-
sur-Somme (closer to England)
A rehearsal





Hardrada's initial victory

Battle of Fulford

Northern nobles defeated
York surrendered

William stuck in Flanders

Lack of favorable winds

William in despair: the end
of his plans of invasion?

A **deception** (to make Harold
believe the Normans would
not cross the channel)?



Harold's march to the North

Harold's army reached Yorkshire in only 4 days

Harold's greatest weapon: **surprise**

Hardrada & Tostig defeated at the battle of **Stamford Bridge**

Hardrada & Tostig killed



27 September: the Norman fleet
on the move... again!

The winds changed at last

800 ships & 14 000 men

Norman fleet heading to the
undefended Southern English coast





William's flagship
arrived first

Crossing the Channel:
9 hours

Landing in Pevensey

Earldom of Wessex (the heart of Harold's possessions)

William's plan: to wait near Hastings and force Harold to fight

Hastings' surroundings plundered







Harold's swift return to London

March to the coast to establish a **blockade** of William's forces (land and sea)

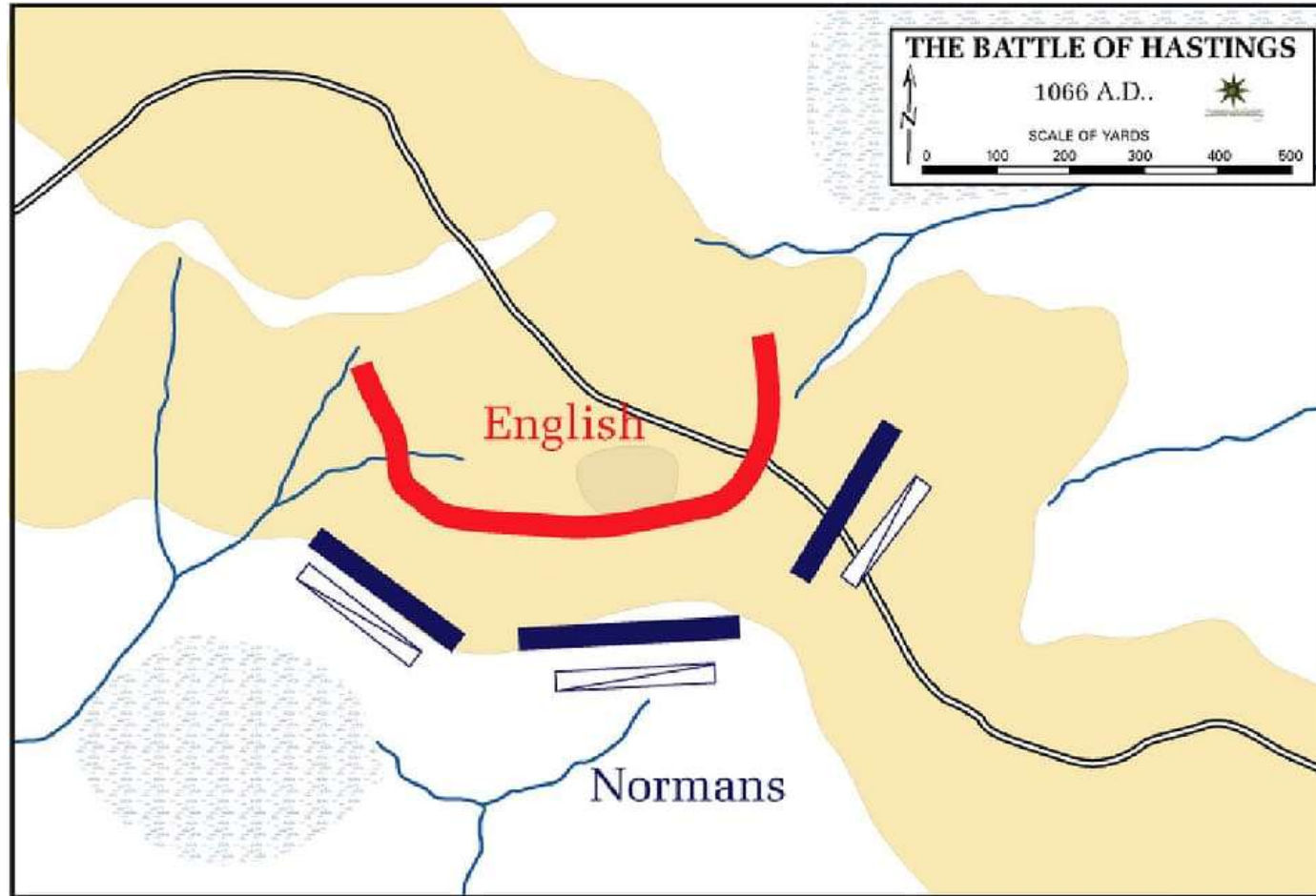


William's decision to
fight (14 October)

Better chances of success if
battle takes place before the
arrival of Harold's
reinforcements

Harold's army closer than he
thought





William's army at a disadvantage

Harold positioned on top of the **Senlac Hill** (control over the road Dover-London)



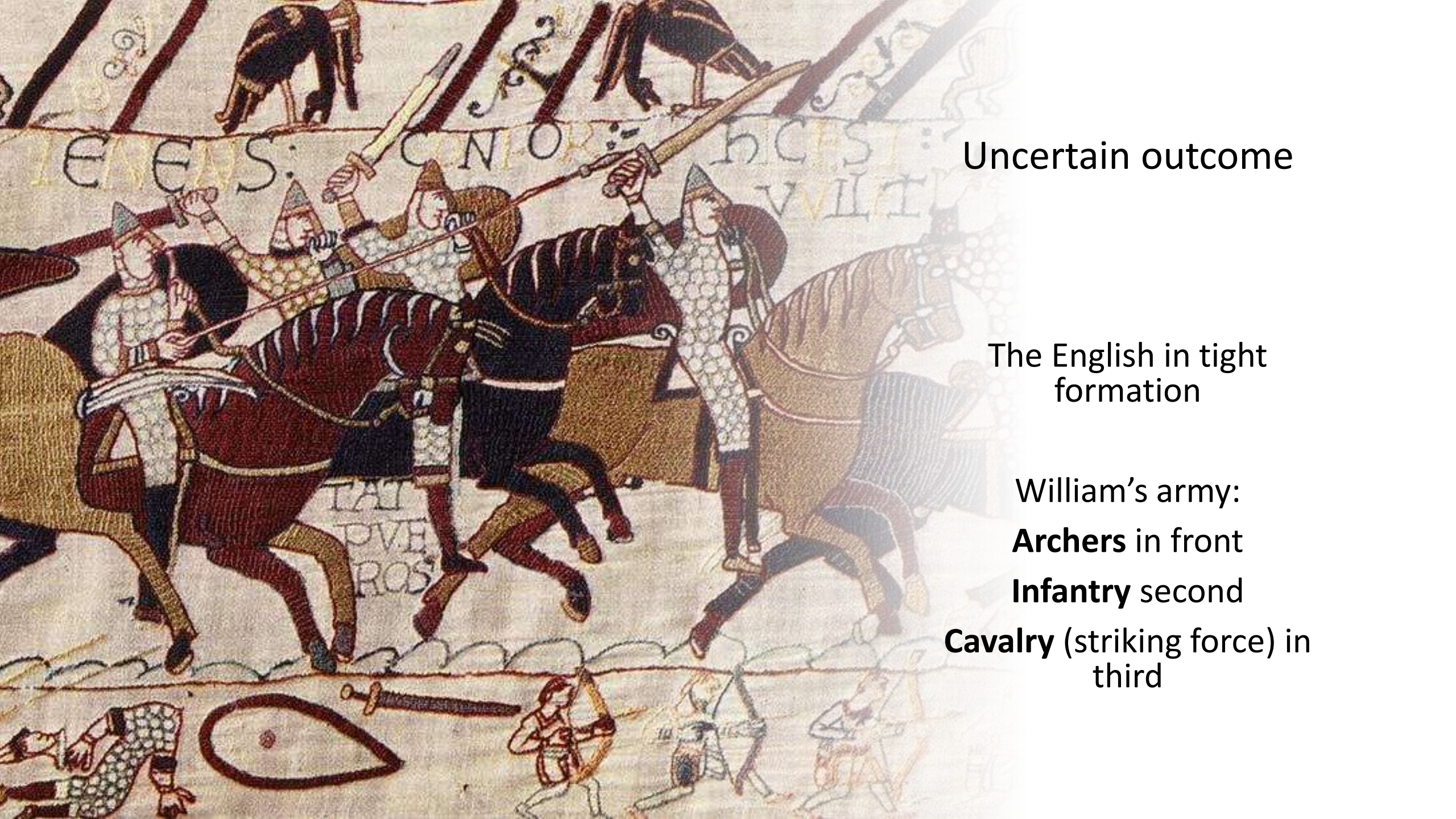


The battle of Hastings

10 000 soldiers on each side

No such battle in Western
Europe since 955

One of the longest battles of
the Middle-Age (6 to 7 hours)



Uncertain outcome

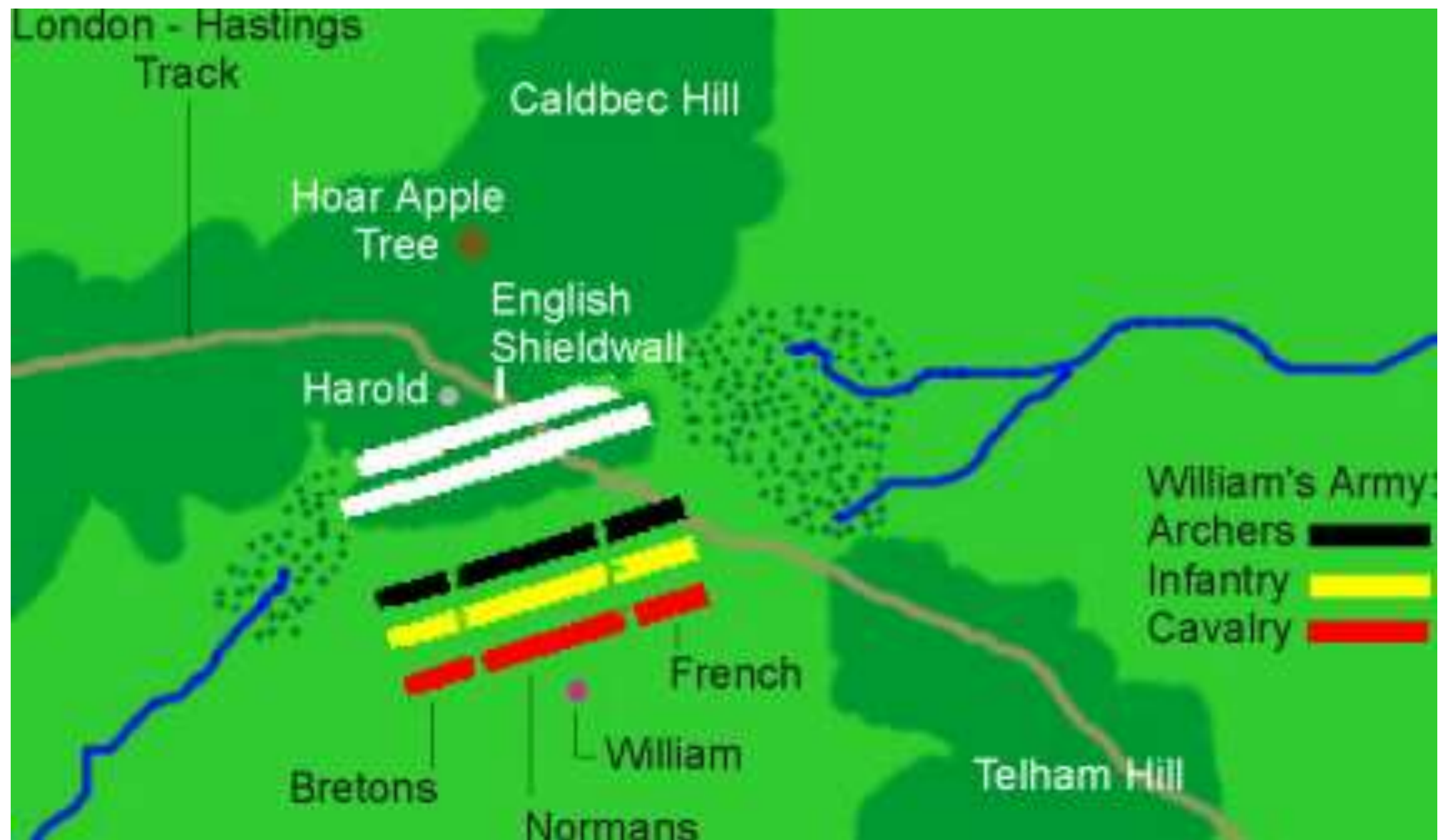
The English in tight formation

William's army:

Archers in front

Infantry second

Cavalry (striking force) in third

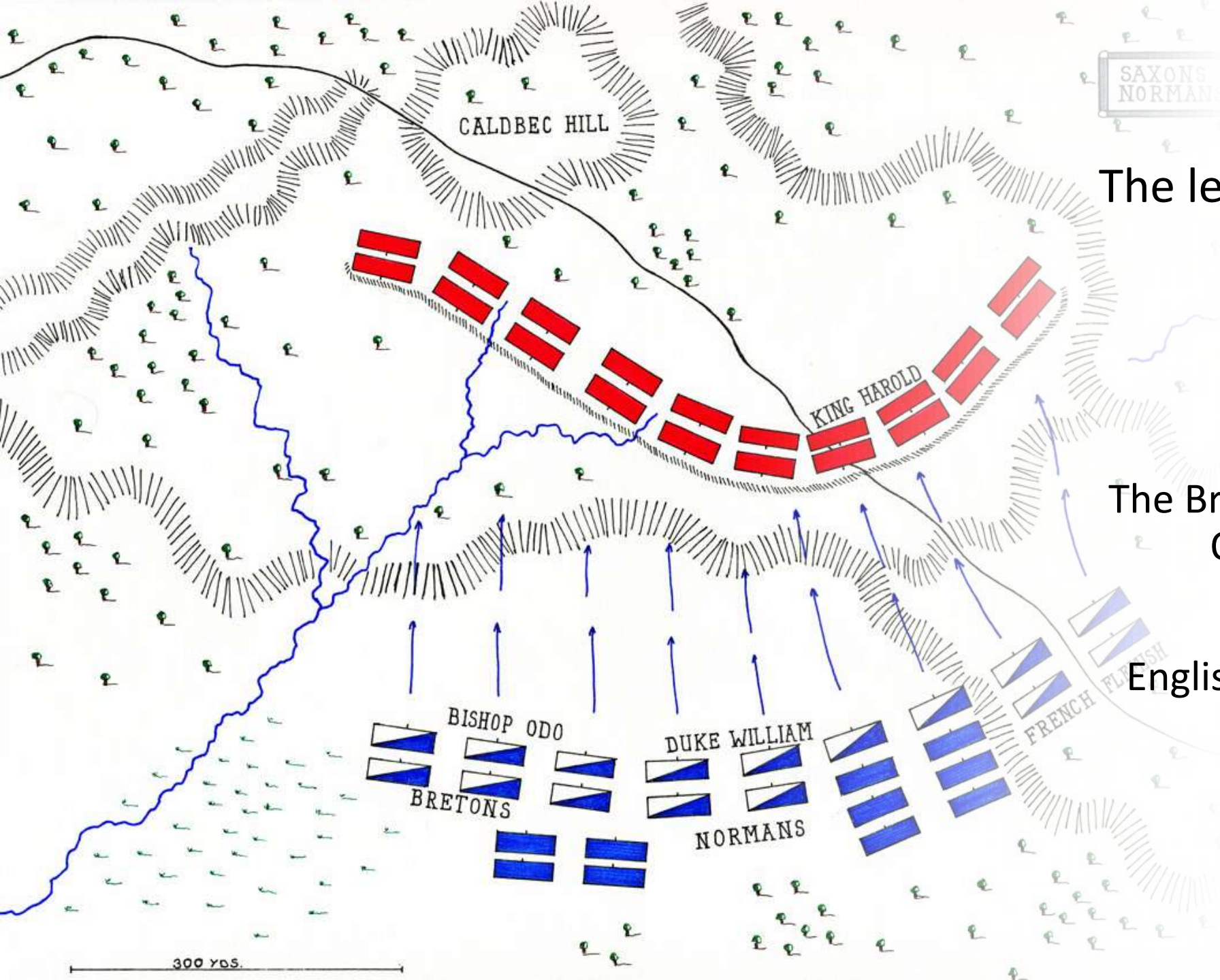




Battle locked in
stalemate

William in a precarious
position: Norman repeated
attacks unsuccessful

Battle must be won before
the night

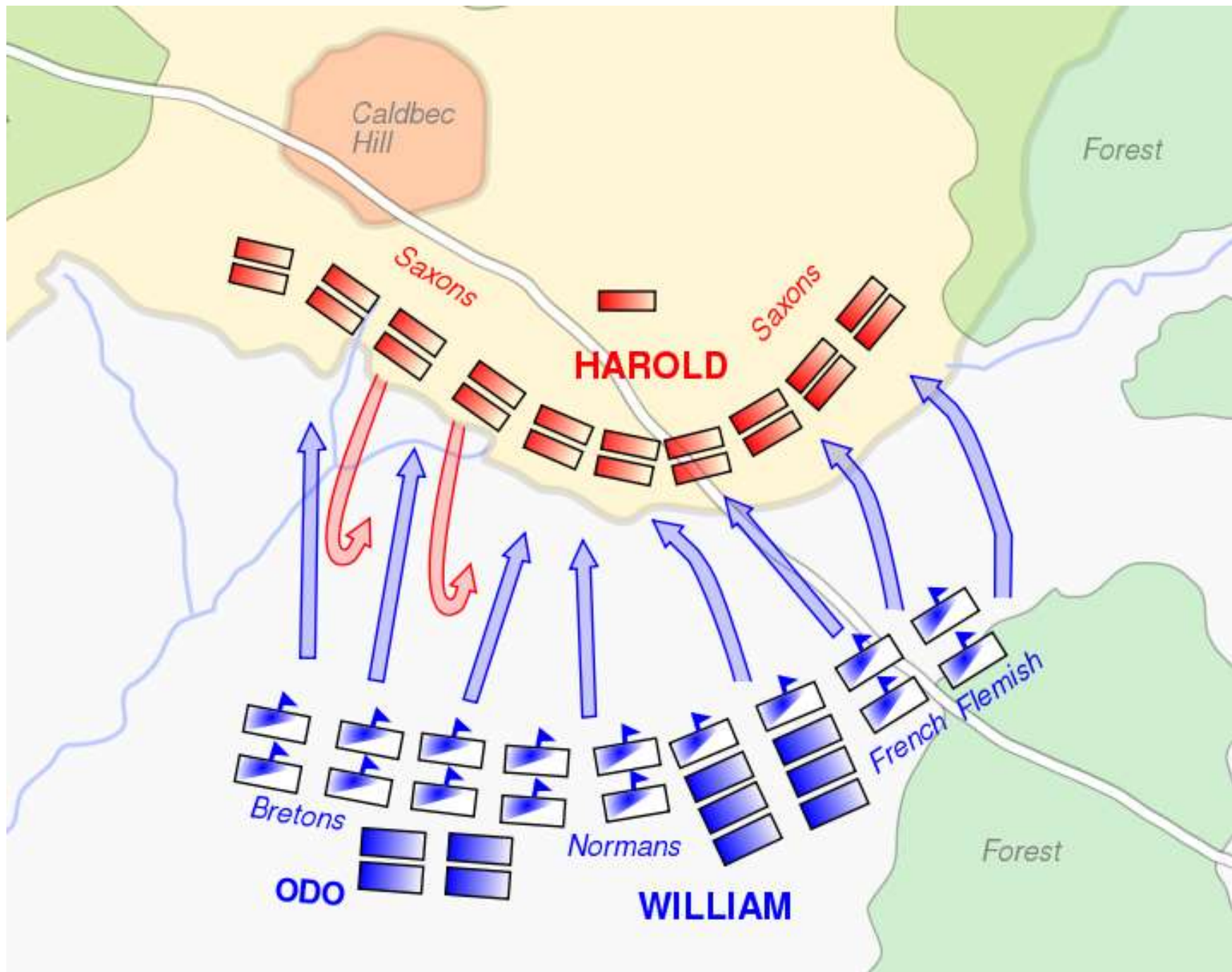


SAXONS
NORMANS

The left wing in trouble?

The Bretons in full retreat...
Or so it seems...

English soldiers in pursuit





INGLI ET FRANCI: INPRELIO:

Rumor amongst
Norman ranks

William has died on the
battlefield

The death of a commander-
in-chief = certain defeat

William removed his helmet
to be easily recognized





A **simulated flight** to lure
the English to pursuit?

Real or simulated flights?

The simulated flight: an
ancient, delicate maneuver

+

Excellent coordination
infantry-cavalry

TVS:EST



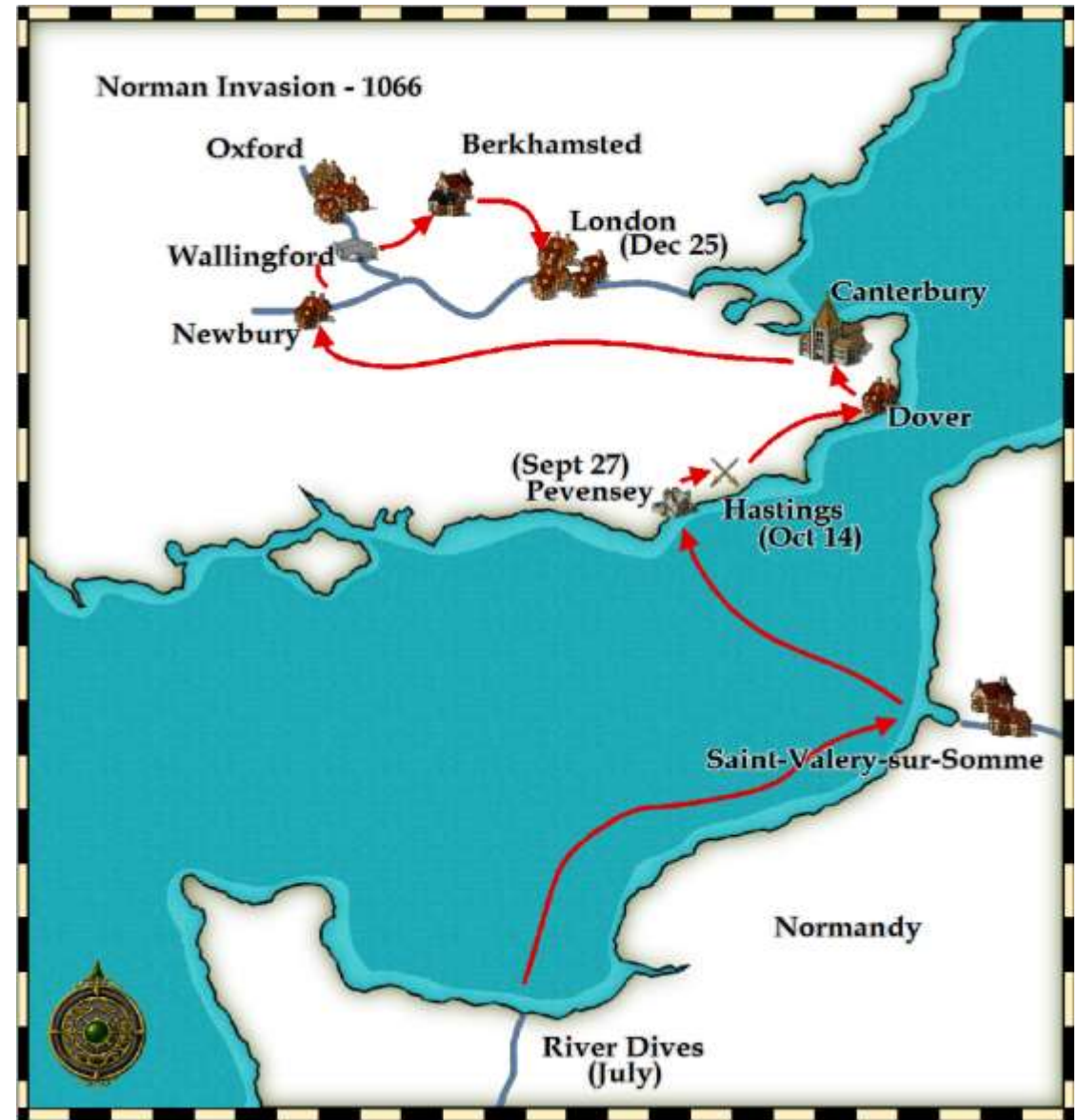
TVS:EST



March on London

20 October: Dover (powerful fortifications) surrendered without a fight

The end of all resistance?





Remember Edgar?

Promptly crowned king in
London

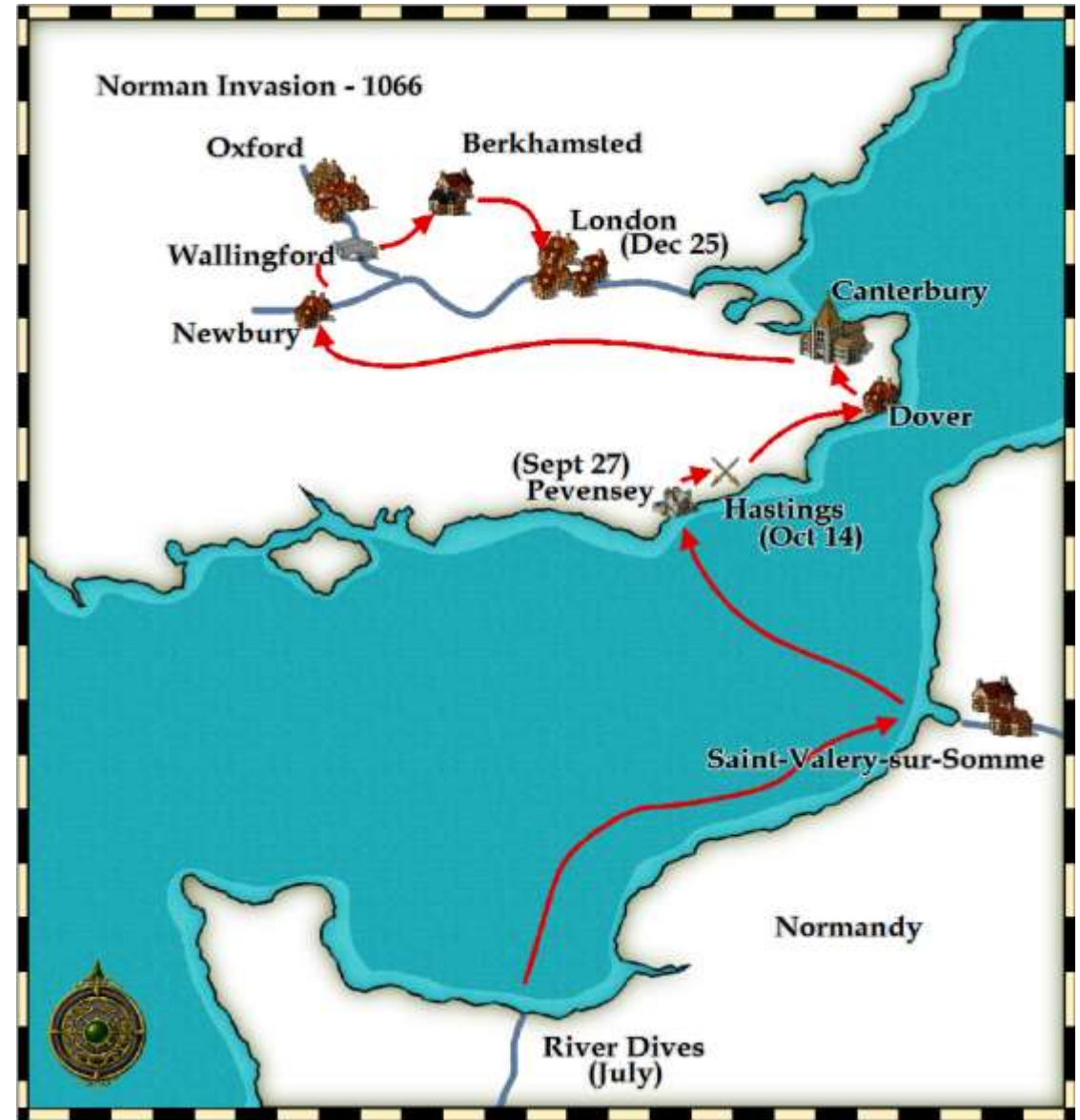
Multiple pledges of allegiance
to William

London encircled

Edgar pledged alliance to William

London capitulated

A quick coronation for William?





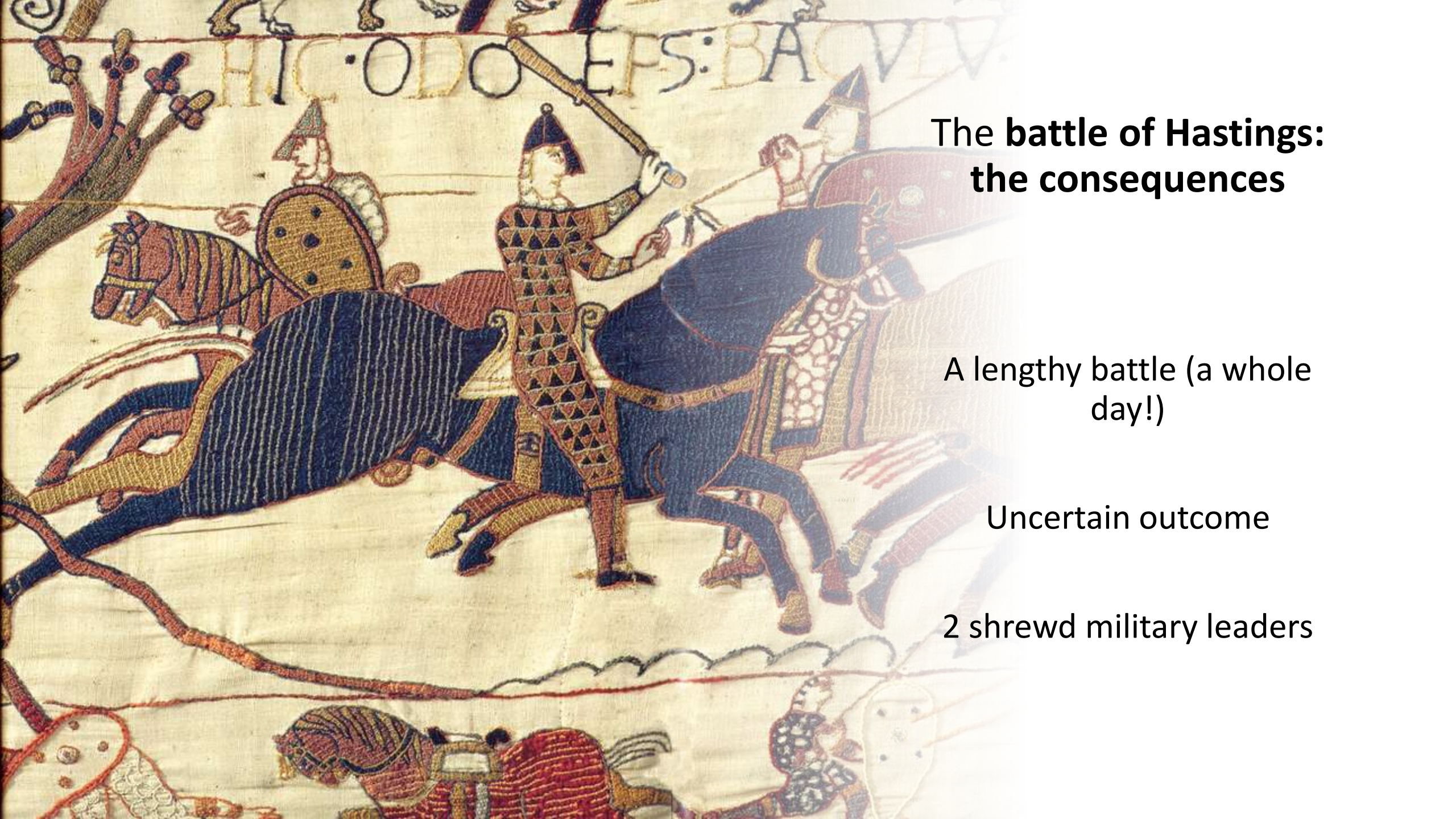
25 December 1066

William crowned king of
England at Westminster

WILLEM: DVX
NORMANNORVM ET: REX:

ALDRED VS ANGLORVM
ARCH EPS





The battle of Hastings: the consequences

A lengthy battle (a whole
day!)

Uncertain outcome

2 shrewd military leaders

2 legitimate claims to the English throne

The *Bayeux Tapestry*: a masterpiece of propaganda (Harold still portrayed as a legitimate king)

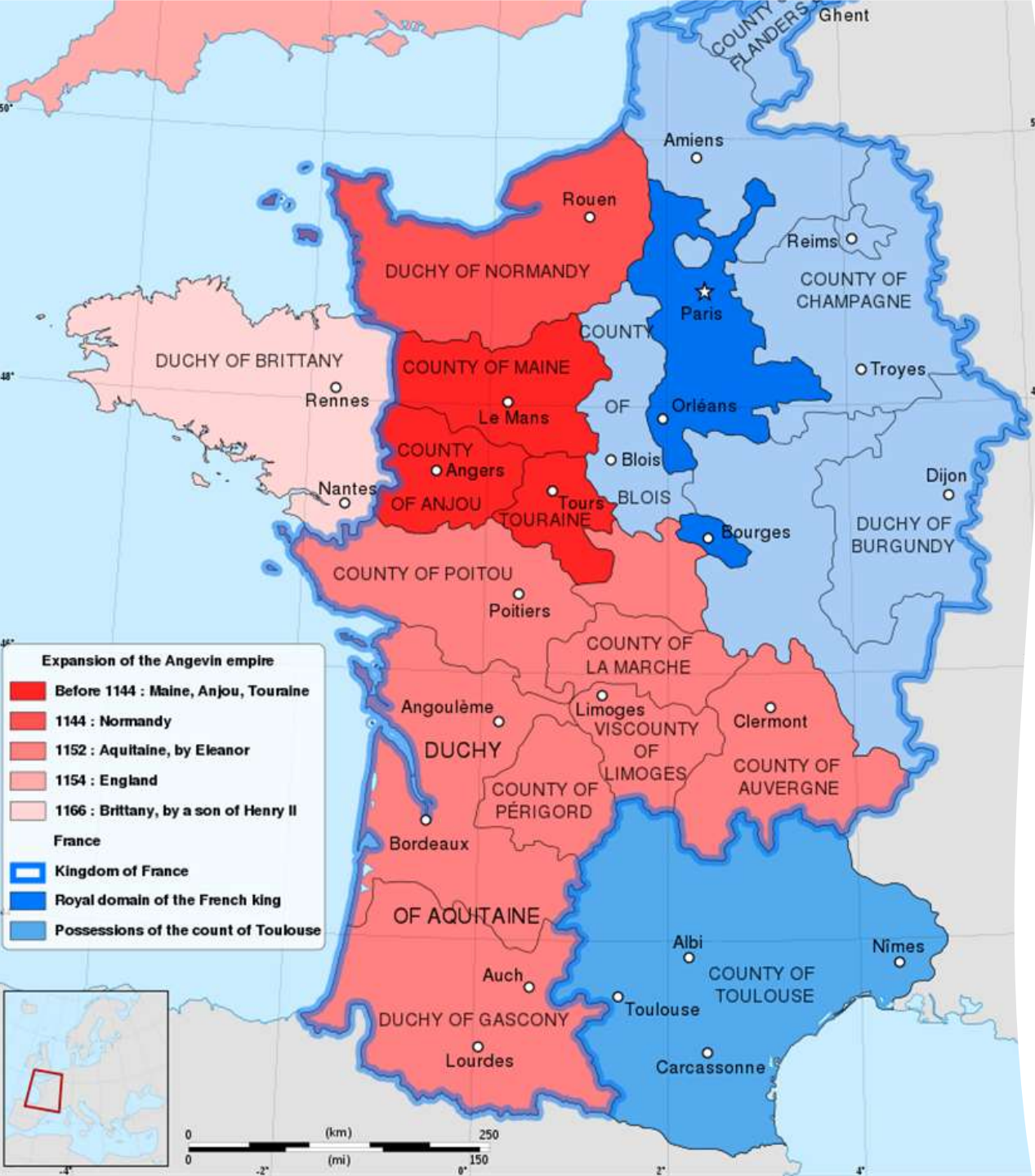


Hastings: not just a battle

Political, economic and social consequences for England, Normandy & Western Europe

The end of Anglo-Saxon England



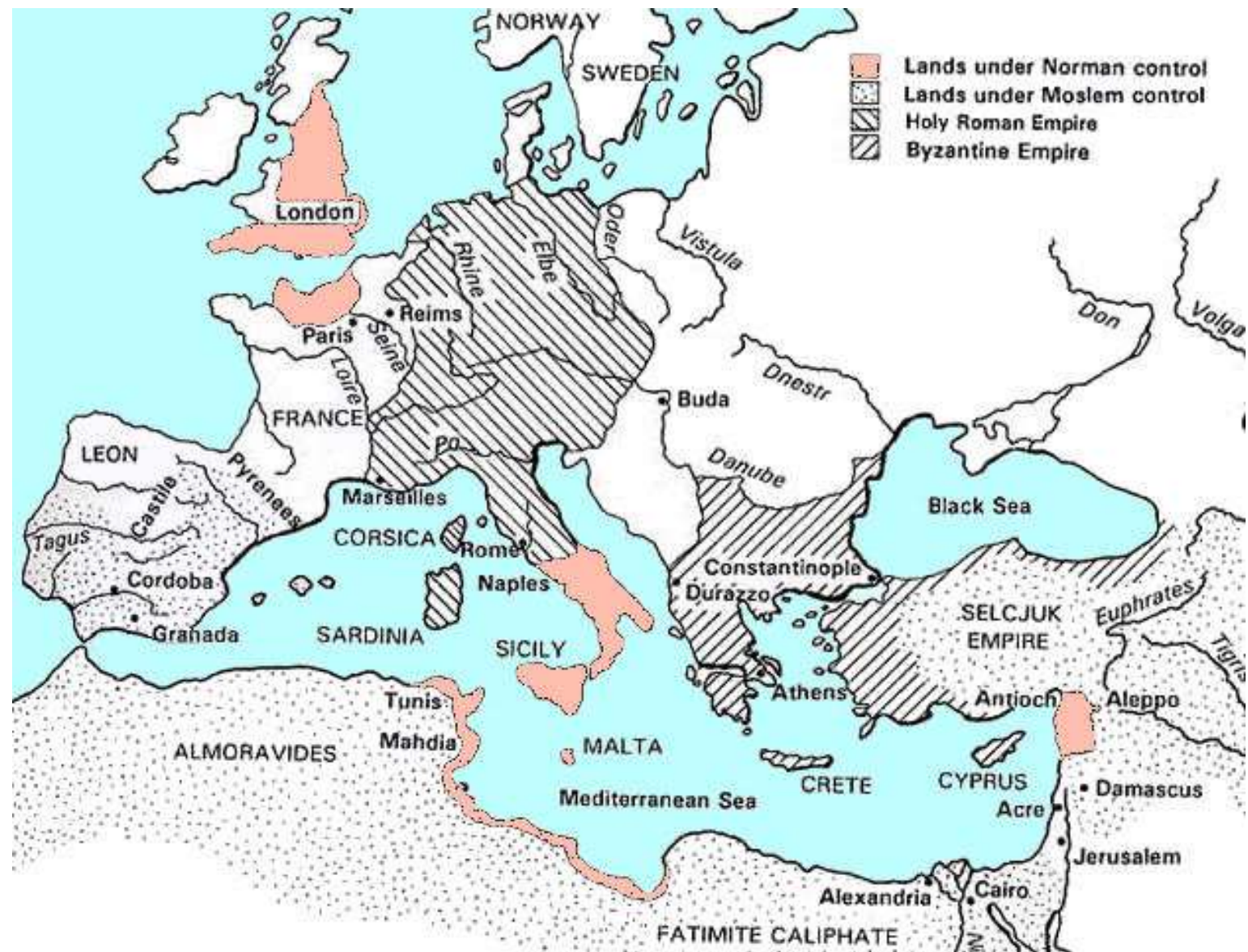


The Duke of Normandy also king of England

More powerful than the king of France

The source of multiple conflicts between France & England for over a century

Norman expansionism across Europe





Prince Charles & Diana's visit to Normandy (1987)

"William, your Duke, our King, My ancestor..."



British cemetery in Normandy

Latin inscription: *“Us,
vanquished by William,
liberated the homeland of
the winner”*