

The Battle of Hastings

The Battle of Hastings is one of the most famous battles in English history.

What Caused the Battle?

In 1066, three men were fighting to be King of England: William of Normandy, Harold Godwinson and Harald Hardrada.

Harold Godwinson was crowned king on 6th January 1066. William and Harald were not happy. They both prepared to invade England in order to kill King Harold and become king themselves.

Harald Hardrada attacked from the north of England on 25th September. However, he was killed in battle and his army was defeated by King Harold's army. King Harold was then told that William of Normandy had landed in the south and was attacking the surrounding countryside. King Harold was furious and marched his tired troops 300 kilometres to meet them.

Eight days later, Harold and his men reached London. William sent a messenger to London. The message tried to get Harold to accept William as the true King of England. Harold refused and was angered by William's request.

Harold was advised to wait before attacking William and his army. His troops were very tired and they needed time to prepare for the battle. However, Harold ignored this advice and on 13th October, his troops arrived in Hastings ready to fight. They captured a hill (now known as Battle Hill) and set up a fortress surrounded with sharp stakes stuck in a deep ditch. Harold ordered his forces to stay in their positions no matter what happened.



The Battle of Hastings

On 14th October, the battle began. William's troops raced up the hill on foot to attack Harold's army. It was hard running up hill and they could not break Harold's shield wall. The battle lasted for around thirty minutes and William's forces suffered heavy losses.

Next, William ordered his troops to race up the hill on horses. They too were unsuccessful and did not break Harold's wall.

Many hours later, William's troops managed to break through Harold's shield wall. The two sides fought hand to hand. William sent his best knights to find Harold and kill him. Once they achieved this, the battle was over and William had won.



After the battle, William became the new King of England.



Questions

1. When was Harold Godwinson crowned King of England? Tick **one**.

- ☐ 6th January 1006
- ☐ 6th January 1600
- ☐ 6th January 1066
- ☐ 6th January 1006

2. Which two other people wanted to be King of England?

3. Who attacked England on the 25th September? Tick **one**.

- ☐ William of Normandy
- ☐ Harald Hardrada
- ☐ Harold Godwinson
- ☐ The Saxons

4. From where did William of Normandy attack England? Tick **one**.

- ☐ the south
- ☐ the north
- ☐ the east
- ☐ the west

5. Explain why King Harold's troops were not ready to fight William and his army.

6. When did the Battle of Hastings begin? Tick **one**.

- ☐ 13th October
- ☐ 25th October
- ☐ 16th October
- ☐ 14th October

7. Who did William send to kill King Harold?

The Battle of Hastings

The Battle of Hastings is one of the most famous and important battles in English history. It was fought between the Saxons and the Normans in Hastings in the south of England.

What Caused the Battle?

In 1066, after the death of the king, three men were fighting to take the throne of England: William of Normandy, Harold Godwinson and Harald Hardrada.

Harold Godwinson was crowned king on 6th January 1066. William and Harald were not happy and both prepared to invade England in order to kill King Harold and claim the throne for themselves.

Harald Hardrada attacked first from the north of England on 25th September. However, he was killed in battle and his army was swiftly defeated by King Harold's army. King Harold was then informed that William of Normandy had landed in the south of England and was attacking the surrounding countryside. As part of the attack, William scorched the earth of the land that was owned by King Harold. King Harold was furious and marched his exhausted troops 300 kilometres to meet them.

Eight days later, Harold and his men (the Saxons) reached London where they were finally allowed to rest. William sent a messenger to King Harold asking him to give up his throne and accept William as the true King of England. Harold refused and was angered by William's request.

Harold was advised to wait before attacking William and his army. His troops were tired and unprepared for a battle. They had suffered some losses fighting Hardrada's troops and needed time to rebuild. However, Harold ignored this advice and on 13th October, his troops arrived in Hastings ready to fight. They captured a hill (now known as Battle Hill), set up a fortress and formed a shield wall that was surrounded with sharp stakes stuck in a deep ditch. Harold ordered his forces to stay in their positions no matter what happened.



The Battle of Hastings

On 14th October, the battle began. William ordered his troops (the Normans) to race up the hill on foot to attack Harold's army. It was hard running up hill and they could not break Harold's shield wall. The battle lasted for around thirty minutes and William's forces were cut down and suffered heavy losses.



Next, William ordered his troops to race up the hill on horseback. They too were unsuccessful and, even though the Saxons lost many men, they did not manage to break Harold's wall.

Many hours later, the Normans charged again and eventually managed to break through Harold's shield wall. The two sides fought hand to hand. William ordered Eustace of Boulogne and some of his best knights to find Harold and kill him. Once they achieved this, the battle ended and William had won.

After the battle, William continued his invasion of England and was crowned the new king shortly after. He was also known as William the Conqueror.



Questions

1. Who was crowned king on 6th January 1066? Tick **one**.

- ☐ William of Normandy
- ☐ Harald Hardrada
- ☐ Harold Godwinson
- ☐ Edward the Confessor

2. When did Harald Hardrada attack England?

3. Find and copy a word which means 'quickly'.

4. Why do you think William of Normandy 'scorched the earth of the land that was owned by King Harold'?

5. How long did it take the Saxons to march to London? Tick **one**.

- ☐ eight weeks
- ☐ five days
- ☐ twenty days
- ☐ eight days

6. Why do you think Harold ignored the advice to wait before attacking William and his army?

7. What were William's army called? Tick **one**.

- ☐ the Saxons
- ☐ the Normans
- ☐ the English
- ☐ the French

8. Who did Eustace of Boulogne kill? Tick **one**.

- ☐ Harald Hardrada
- ☐ William of Normandy
- ☐ a soldier
- ☐ King Harold

The Battle of Hastings

The Battle of Hastings, one of the most legendary battles in English history, was fought between the Saxons and the Normans. It took place in Hastings in the south-east of England and changed the course of English history forever.

Before the Battle

After the death of the current English king (Edward the Confessor) in 1066, three men were fighting to claim the throne of England: William of Normandy from Normandy, France; Harold Godwinson from England and Harald Hardrada from Norway.

On 6th January, one day after Edward's death, Harold Godwinson was crowned King of England. William and Harald were angry with this decision and prepared to invade England. They both planned to kill King Harold and claim the throne for themselves.

Harald Hardrada invaded first from the north of England on 25th September. However, his army were easily defeated by the Saxons (King Harold's army) and Hardrada was killed in battle. King Harold was then informed that William of Normandy had landed in the south of England and was attacking the surrounding countryside. As part of the attack, William scorched the earth of the land that was owned by King Harold. King Harold was furious and marched his exhausted troops 300 kilometres back towards the south to meet him.

Eight days later, Harold and his men reached London where they were finally allowed to rest. William sent an envoy (messenger) to King Harold asking him to hand over the throne and accept William as the true King of England. Harold refused and was angered by William's treacherous demand.

Harold was advised to wait before attacking the Normans. His troops were weary and unprepared for a battle. They had suffered some losses fighting Hardrada's troops and needed time to rebuild. However, Harold ignored this advice and on 13th October, his troops arrived in Hastings ready to fight. They captured a hill, now known as Battle Hill, and set up a fortress by forming



a shield wall that was surrounded by sharp stakes stuck in a deep ditch. Harold ordered his forces not to leave their fortified positions, no matter what.

The Battle

On 14th October, the battle commenced. Norman infantry raced up the hill on foot to attack Harold's army. However, they were at a disadvantage as it was hard running up hill. Despite their efforts, they could not break the Saxon shield wall. The battle lasted for approximately thirty minutes. William's forces were cut down and suffered heavy losses.

Next, William ordered his cavalry to charge up the hill. They too were unsuccessful and, even though the Saxons lost many men, they did not manage to break Harold's wall.

Many hours later, the Normans attacked once again and eventually managed to break through the Saxon shield wall and the two sides fought hand to hand. William ordered Eustace of Boulogne and some of his best knights to find Harold and kill him. Once they did so, the battle was over and William was victorious.

After the battle, William continued his invasion of England and was crowned the new king shortly after. As a result of his success, he is famously known as William the Conqueror.



Questions

1. Who fought in the Battle of Hastings?

2. Who was Edward the Confessor?

3. Where was Harald Hardrada from? Tick one.

- ☐ Sweden
- ☐ France
- ☐ Norway
- ☐ England

4. How do you think King Harold felt when he heard that William of Normandy had attacked England in the south? Explain your answer fully.

5. How far did the Saxons march back to the south? Tick one.

- ☐ 300 miles
- ☐ 500 kilometres
- ☐ 300 metres
- ☐ 300 kilometres

6. Find and copy a word that means disloyal.

7. Explain how the Saxons protected themselves in the Battle of Hastings. Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

8. Explain what you think 'fought hand to hand' means.
