

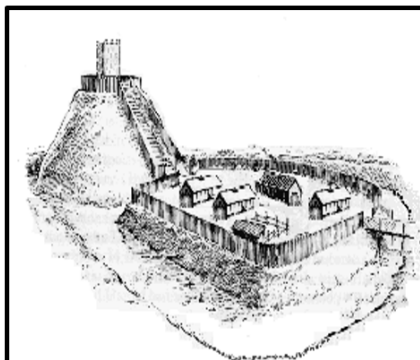
Did the historian Marc Morris get it right about significance of the Norman Conquest?

Background information:

- In January 1066 king Edward the Confessor died without an heir.
- Harold Godwinson quickly became the monarch but his crown was contested by King Harald Hardrada from Norway and Duke William of Normandy.
- Harold Godwinson beat Hardrada at the Battle of Stamford Bridge near York in September 1066.
- Harold Godwinson was then defeated by William of Normandy on 14th October 1066 at the Battle of Hastings.
- William became known as the Conqueror and ruled England between 1066-1087.

Impact of Norman rule:

- Most of England's land was now owned by Norman Earls who swore an oath to King William.
- Norman Earls became very rich and powerful but no one was as rich or powerful as William.
- The Normans built motte and bailey castles across England and used them to control the countryside.
- More and more monasteries were introduced because the Normans were very religious.



Key terms:

Heir - next in line for the throne.

Monarch - King or queen in charge.

Oath - a promise of loyalty.

Baron / Earl - important Norman Lord.

Monk - a man who devoted his life to God.

Monastery - a place where Monks lived, worked and prayed.

Peasant - poor farm worker. 99% of people were peasants.

Harrying - burn or destroy.

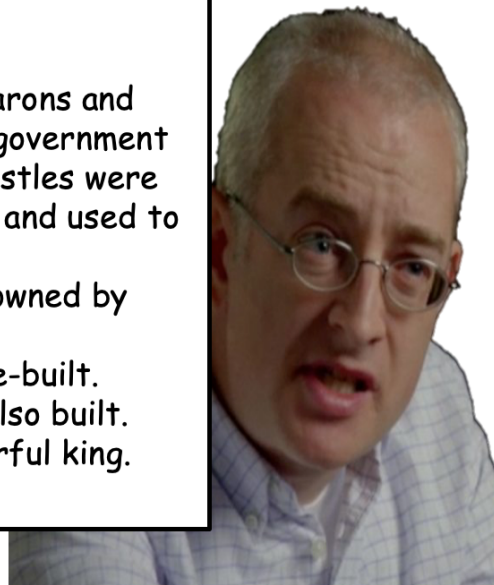
Castle - building used to defend an area - see image.

Continuities after the Norman Conquest:

- People still travelled either on foot or by horse and cart.
- Housing and clothing stayed the same for 99% of the people. They lived in wooden huts and wore clothes.
- Farming methods stayed the same.
- Medicine and healthcare stay the same. Cures were made from herbs.

Changes to England after the Norman Conquest:

- French was spoken by Barons and Earls. Latin was used in government.
- New motte and bailey castles were built across the country and used to keep control.
- Nearly all land was now owned by the Normans.
- Many cathedrals were re-built.
- New monasteries were also built.
- William was a very powerful king.



Marc Morris's interpretation of the significance of Hastings:

I agree with those historians who regard the Norman conquest as the single most important event in English history. Of course, they didn't change some things: villages, the arts or the economy. Other areas have been shown to have experienced dramatic change. Not only did they bring with them new forms of cathedral building, new castles, military techniques, a new ruling class and a new language of government (Latin), they also imported a new set of attitudes. The Conquest mattered because it altered what it meant to be English.