
CARMEN DE NORMANNICUM CONQUESTUM –

THE SONG OF THE NORMAN CONQUEST

Carmen de Bello Normannico by Guy de Amiens, Bishop of Amiens

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INTRODUCTION

Researching the Norman Conquest, I became convinced that there was vital information in the 1067 *Carmen de Bello Normannico* that was yet unrevealed. I translated the Carmen for myself, obsessed with unlocking its meaning. I publish it because this chronicle deserves much wider readership and much wider scholarship.

I started tentatively, feeling my way, unfamiliar with Medieval Latin. Many years have passed since I had a little Latin in my youth. Yet without that meagre foothold, I would never have dared begin at all.

As the story unfolded to me word by word, it became a passion to bring the Carmen to life in a way that conveys its historic import, military strategy, politics and human interest, but remains true to the original.

With only 835 lines, each word has weight, each line has import.

Errors are inevitable when Medieval Latin is transcribed to modern type. I worked with three transcriptions to compile the text translated. The primary transcription is by Francisque Michel, published in a collection of Anglo-Norman chronicles in 1840.¹ This was supplemented by a further transcription contained in a volume of historical texts compiled by Charles Purton Cooper for the Public Records Office sometime in the 1830s, finally published in 1869.² If I still had doubts after comparing these, I resorted to the Latin text in the *Carmen de Hastingae Proelio* published in 1972.³

I've suggested a few corrections, which are noted where they occur. I have also comprehensively recast the punctuation, which is absent in the manuscript. Where words are added to the translation to clarify intent, these appear in a lighter tone.

Illustrations from the Bayeux Tapestry are used to confirm similar accounts in the Carmen. I do not regard the *tituli* or words in the Tapestry to be dispositive as to events. The Latin and spelling are extremely poor and haphazard relative to the quality and organisation of the scenes themselves, with the placement of the words seeming to indicate they were an afterthought rather than planned with the scenes. It may be the Carmen was a source document for the Tapestry, as the scenes match well to the Carmen's narrative of events.

Having rendered a translation of the Carmen to my own satisfaction, I hope it will be enjoyed by enthusiasts of English, medieval and military history, and anyone just fancying a rollicking good story of blood and plunder and conquest.

Others have laboured to translate the Carmen; I let it sing to me. Yet, this is as true a translation as ardour can yield. In like spirit to the original author, I ask you to forgive its flaws and promote its merit.

¹ F. Michel, *Chroniques Anglo-Normands*, Nicetas Piriaux, Rouen 1840.

² *Appendices to a Report on Thomas Rymer*, ed. C.P. Cooper, Public Record Office, London 1869.

³ C. Morton and H. Muntz, *The Carmen de Hastingae Proelio*, Oxford Medieval Texts, Clarendon Press 1972.

Carmen de Bello Normannico

(E Cod. Bruxell. 629. f. 227b)

Quae p̄ beatā celebrat sapientia munit & ornat.
E reges & decorat. & w. saluat.
Cū studiū clarū iudeant lucifer ore?
E t̄ tenebras pollicis radus dū lumina spargit.
P̄ mare nec fragilis s̄ sit excelsissima nauis.
t̄ e p̄corā porcū carnū deducere nrm.
I nudiū m̄t̄ agitari nec paciaris.
Nec boreḡ flauū tumeat s̄ lit̄ amenuū.
R̄ emige te carpat̄ ne l̄p̄tū rupe labescat.
S̄ ut̄ uidet̄ illi inst̄ de morte magist̄.
a s̄ men̄ e addent̄ & q̄d̄ sup̄ obsec̄ radent̄.
N̄ ullus credo s̄ sub te tucore noceret.
S̄ ut̄ cuius incipias fieri meus iste libellus.
v̄ & carax̄ ū cyf̄. & laudib̄ amplifi cecur.
E utare uolens dependia desidiote.
M̄ entis & urogenij placeant cū carmina multū.
C̄ arminib̄ studiū normannica bella reponi.
F̄ loq̄ potī leuib̄ canere carmenis.
I ngerū m̄t̄ uarū q̄ sub d̄s curis.
Cū sic & egregiū desēbe gesta potemu.
f̄ inub̄ occidit̄ que gessit̄ regia p̄les.

. Appendix C to M^r Cooper's Report. (p. 72) Plate I.

Reproduction of the 12th century Carmen

(Actual size)

Carmen de Bello Normannico.

(E Cod.: Bruxell. 330 d. fol. 142 b.)

Quæ p̄bita celebrat sapientia trunat & ornata
Erigitur decorat. In v. salutat.
Cū studiis clarus videaris lucifer ortus
Et tenebras pellis radus dū lumina spargis.
p̄ mare nec fragilis s̄ sis tutissima nauis.
te p̄cor ad portū carni deducē nr̄m.
In iudis mentis agitari nec paciaris.
Nec boreæ flatū timeat s̄ leuis amenu
Remige te carpas ne lesū rupe labekas.
Sis uideri illi uis de morte magistri
Ad m̄m̄ ē addens r̄qd̄ sup̄ obsecro radens.
Nullus credo sibi subire tutore nocebit.
Sic tuus in apiat fieri meus iste libellus.
ut careat inuis & laudib. amplificet
Euitare uolens dispendia desidiolē.
Mentis & ingenii placeant cū carmina multis.
Carminib. stu du normannica bella reponi
E legi poti' leuib. cantare carmenis.
In genū m̄ris uanis q̄ subdere curis.
Cum sit regnū describere gesta potentū.
finib. occiduis que gessit regia p̄ les.
Willelm̄ titulis commisi posteritatis.

Appendix C to M. Cooper's Report. (p. 73.) Plate II

Reproduction of the 13th century Carmen fragment.

CARMEN DE NORMANNICUM CONQUESTUM

THE SONG OF THE NORMAN CONQUEST

	Dedication
	<i>Quem probitas celebrat, sapientia munit et ornat,</i>
¹	Who would celebrate virtue, build and burnish wisdom,
	<i>Erigit et decorat. L W salutat.</i>
²	Must honour and glorify. Lanfranc, ⁴ Guy ⁵ greets you.
	<i>Cum studiis clarus, videaris Lucifer ortus,</i>
³	With bright prospect, review this as the rising sun,
	<i>Et tenebras pellis; radiis dum lumina spargis.</i>
⁴	And banish the enveloping shadows; scatter your rays of illumination.
	<i>Per mare, nec fragilis sed sis tutissima navis,</i>
⁵	As if at sea, not timidly but prudently,
	<i>Te precor ad portum carmen deducere nostrum.</i>
⁶	I ask you to conduct our story to port.
	<i>Invidiae ventis agitari nec paciatis,</i>
⁷	Do not permit an ill wind's drive,
	<i>Nec boreae flatum timeat, sed litus amoenum</i>
⁸	Nor fear the north wind's gale, but to a charming landing place
	<i>Remige te, carpat, ne laesum rupe labescat.</i>

⁴ The Carmen is dedicated to Lanfranc of Pavia, Abbot of St Stephens at Caen in 1066 and Archbishop of Canterbury from 1070. Lanfranc was famed for his teachings and influential with both William the Conqueror, King of England and Duke of Normandy, and Pope Alexander II, a former student of Lanfranc's. Guy of Amiens had been earlier stripped of some of his ecclesiastical authority and may have been seeking favour with either Lanfranc or, through him, William and the Pope. The dedication is written as a request to Lanfranc to edit and improve the telling of the story that follows so that it may be disseminated widely throughout the world. Being written in Latin, it is clearly aimed more at the court than at the campfire, and is rendered in a classical style reminiscent of older epic chronicles.

⁵ Guy of Amiens, Bishop of Amiens. The Carmen was likely written in early 1067, drawing on accounts of those who had participated in the events depicted. The changing voice and style throughout the work indicate several collaborators. A single 12th century copy on vellum is preserved in the Royal Library of Belgium in Brussels, together with a 13th century fragment of just the first 66 lines.

9	Helmsman yourself, beach it, lest it founder on rocks. <i>Sis iudex illi, justa de morte Magistri,</i>
10	Do justice to this work, in the manner of a teacher, <i>Quod minus est addens, et quod super obsecro radens.</i>
11	Who supplements what is lacking and reduces what is excessive. <i>Nullus, credo, sibi sub te tutore nocebit:</i>
12	I believe no one diminishes himself in submitting to instruction. <i>Sic tuus incipiat fieri meus iste libellus,</i>
13	Thus undertake to make my text your own, <i>Ut careat viciis et laudibus amplificetur.</i>
14	That it be undimmed by its flaws and gain greater merit. <i>Evitare volens dispendia disidiose</i>
15	Wishing to avoid wasteful quarrel <i>Mentis, et ingeniis, placeant cum carmina multis,</i>
16	Consider and revise this text that the many will be pleased <i>Carminibus studui normannica bella reponi.</i>
17	Who are eager the history of the Norman Conquest be told. <i>Elegi potius levibus cantare camoenis.</i>
18	Polish these verses to tell the story. <i>Ingenium mentis vinis quam subdere curis,</i>
19	Apply your judgement to erase whatever causes anxiety, <i>Cum sit et egregium describere gesta potentum.</i>
20	Since it is fitting to describe great exploits. <i>Finibus occiduis quae gessit regia proles,</i>
21	The western border of our race's realm, <i>Willelmus, titulis commisi posteritatis.</i>
22	William's conquest swells for posterity. <i>Nam sibi sublatum regnum virtute redemit,</i>
23	He redeemed that noble kingdom stolen from him, <i>Et victor patrios extendit trans mare fines;</i>
24	And he extended his ancestors' conquest to borders across the sea; <i>Ergo decet memorare suum per secula factum.</i>
25	Therefore it is proper to recount his works to the world.

	<i>Carmen de Bello Normannico</i> The Song of the Norman Conquest⁶
	<i>Justitiae cultor, patriae pax, hostibus hostis,</i>
26	Cultivate justice, peaceful rule, among the foreign enemy,
	<i>Tutor et ecclesiae, rex benedictae, vale!</i>
27	Be guardian and evangelist, blessed king, prevail! ⁷
	<i>Amodo torpentes decet evigilare Camoenas</i>
28	It is fitting to awaken the dreamy Muses
	<i>Et calamos alacres reddere laude tua.</i>
29	And write in spirited pen a rendering of your glory.
	<i>Mutasti comitis regali nomina nomen,</i>
30	Exchange duke for king as the title,
	<i>Quod tibi nobilitas contulit et probitas.</i>
31	Justly conferred by your noble birth.
	<i>Julius alter enim, cujus renovando triumphum,</i>
32	A Caesar, indeed, whose triumphant rebirth,
	<i>Effraenem gentem cogis amare jugum.</i>
33	Compelled an unbridled people to love the yoke.
	<i>Innumerus terrae populous, nec perfida nautis</i>
34	Neither the countless brutish people, nor the treacherous seas,
	<i>Aequora, nec litus saxa nociva ferens,</i>
35	Nor the stony coastline that threatens wreck,
	<i>Incumbens hyemis nec te deterruit horror,</i>
36	Nor the impending winter discourage you.
	<i>Quin ab avis peteres regna relictis tibi.</i>
37	Nay, as of old, ⁸ campaign for the kingdom bequeathed to you.

⁶ Titled as *Carmen de Bello Normannico* (Song of the Norman War) in the manuscript, the work has been popularised as *The Carmen de Hastingsae Proelio* (Song of the Battle of Hastings). As it takes the reader from Caen to St Valery-sur-Somme to the camp near Hastings to Dover to Canterbury to Winchester and finally to London, the *Carmen de Normannicum Conquestum* or *The Song of the Norman Conquest* is more accurate.

⁷ This part of the Carmen is written as if addressing William the Conqueror in the second person.

⁸ Duke William was a direct descendent of Rollo or Robert I, first duke of Normandy. Rollo was a Norse Viking who raided France repeatedly, advancing as far as Paris, with other Vikings recruited mostly from Denmark and Northern Britain. He was given the duchy of Normandy under treaty with King Charles the Simple of France in 911 in exchange for limiting his raiding to Brittany, Flanders and other neighbours. William's grandfather, Richard the Fearless, conquered parts of

	<i>Posteritate favet tibi jus, legis quoque summa,</i>
38	Inheritance favours your claim, ⁹ the highest law likewise; ¹⁰
	<i>Ergo tibi terror omnis ademptus erat.</i>
39	Therefore the land is secured to you.
	<i>Tempore sed longo te trans freta ducere classes</i>
40	Conditions long delay you leading the fleet across the Channel.
	<i>Tempestas prohibet, imber et assiduus,</i>
41	Storms impeded you, with unrelenting rain,
	<i>Dum prestolaris ventorum prosperitatem,</i>
42	While you waited a favourable wind,
	<i>Et mare turbatum cogit abire retro.</i>
43	And turbulent seas forced you to retreat.
	<i>Eurus et equoreas cispabat flatibus undas.</i>
44	East wind and ocean surge whipped the surf.
	<i>Tunc tibi planctus erat spesque negata viae.</i>
45	Then you lamented, your ambitious journey thwarted.
	<i>Tuque, velis nolis, tandem tua litora linquens,</i>
46	And so, unwilling to sail, at last you abandoned the coast,
	<i>Navigium vertis litus ad alterius.</i>
47	The fleet turned about for another shore.
	<i>Portus ab antiquis Vimaci fertur haberi;</i>
48	The port of Vimeu has been known since antiquity;

Anjou and Brittany. Though inter-marriage with the Gauls thinned the bloodlines, the Viking culture of raiding and conquest persisted in Normandy. Raiding, plunder and conquest were viewed as a duty among Norman leaders to enrich themselves and their people.

⁹ Marriage articles contracted between Richard the Fearless of Normandy and Aethelred the Unready of England for Emma of Normandy, his second wife, provided that if Aethelred failed to sire a line of succession, the kingdom would revert to descendants of Richard. Aethelred, who fathered six sons in his first marriage, might well have believed his line already secure, and reckoned the stipulation unimportant. He went on to father Edward and Alfred with Emma. All his eight sons died or were killed without leaving male heirs. William, great-nephew to Emma and heir to Richard, could therefore claim right of succession through descent from Richard. Additionally, Edward the Confessor may have nominated William his successor either during his 28 years residence in exile in Normandy, upon William's state visit to his court in London in 1051, or anytime after. It is noteworthy in this regard that Edward styled himself *Etguardus Rex* on charters in the 1030s while still in exile, regarding Cnut as a usurper. Childless and knowing his brothers' fates, he may have agreed the succession with William before returning to England in 1041, then in his late 30s.


¹⁰ William prudently sought papal endorsement of his claim to England and a papal blessing for the invasion of England. Pope Nicolas II endorsed William's succession to the crown, ruling Harold a usurper and excommunicating both Harold and Stigand, the Archbishop of Canterbury who officiated at his coronation. The pope also sent a papal banner to signify his support of William's forces.


	<i>Quae vallat portum Somana nomen aquae.</i>
49	That walled port at the mouth of the Somme.
	<i>Docta nimis bello gens est, per cuncta fidelis,</i>
50	The people are greatly skilled in war, entirely loyal,
	<i>Fluctivagis praebens sepius hospicium.</i>
51	They often provide hospitality to the wave-tossed. ¹¹
	<i>Desuper est castrum quoddam sancti Walarici.</i>
52	Towering above is the castle of Saint Valery.
	<i>Hic tibi longa fuit difficilisque mora;</i>
53	Here you pass the long and troublesome delay;
	<i>Nam ter quinque dies complesti finibus illis,</i>
54	For fifteen days filling that region,
	<i>Exspectans summi Iudicis auxilium.</i>
55	Hoping for aid of the highest Judge.
	<i>Ecclesiam sancti devota mente frequentans,</i>
56	You haunt the holy church devoutly,
	<i>Illi pura dabas, ingeminando preces.</i>
57	You give to the chaste, to multiply your prayers.
	<i>Inspicis et templi, gallus qua vertitur aura:</i>
58	<i>Consider the church likewise Gauls who would turn the wind:</i>
	<i>Auster si spirat, laetus abinde redis.</i>
59	<i>If favourable wind blows, give back happily to that source.</i>
	<i>Si subito Boreas Austrum divertit et arcet,</i>
60	<i>If you would instantly divert and drive away a northern gale,</i>
	<i>Effusis lacrimis fletibus ora rigas.</i>
61	<i>Stream forth flowing tears to bathe your face.</i> ¹²
	<i>Desolatus eras, frigus faciebat et imber,</i>
62	You were abandoned, enduring cold and wet,
	<i>Et polus obtectus nubibus et pluviis.</i>
63	And the clouds and rain obscured the heavens.
	<i>Sed Pater Omnipotens, in quo tibi spem posuisti,</i>
64	Yet the Omnipotent Father, in whom you place your faith,

¹¹ The description of St Valery-sur-Somme is likely satirical. The people of St Valery-sur-Somme, many of them Viking settlers in the 10th century, may have been pirates and wreckers. Ships forced into port by gales, or wrecked nearby with false lights, would be plundered for sport and profit. Anyone of high status would be held for ransom.

¹² Medieval Christians believed that tears increased God's compassion.

	<i>Tempora qui fecit, temperat atque regit,</i>
65	Who makes the seasons, controls them also,
	<i>Qui palmo coelum, terram, mare ponderat aequae,</i>
66	In whose palm sky, earth and sea are likewise weighed,
	<i>Cui proprium constat omnibus esse locis</i>
67	By whose particular care everything is ordered.
	<i>Praesentem, precibus dedit et calcabile Petro</i>
68	Show yourself, offer your prayers and submit as Peter,
	<i>Aequor sub pedibus, compaciendo sibi.</i>
69	For whom compassion stilled the sea beneath his feet.
	<i>Velle tuum tandem pius ut Deus est miseratus,</i>
70	Your devout wish at last God viewed with pity,
	<i>Pro votoque tibi suppeditavit opus.</i>
71	According to your prayer, He supplied the needs of the endeavour.
	<i>Expulit a coelo nubes et ab aequore ventos,</i>
72	He drove the gloom from the sky and calmed the winds,
	<i>Figura dissolvit, purgat et imbre polum.</i>
73	Diffusing the cold, and clearing the mists.
	<i>Incaluit tellus nimio profusa calore,</i>
74	The earth baked in abundant heat,
	<i>Et Phebus solito clarior emicuit.</i>
75	And the sun shone brightly everywhere.
	<i>Festa dies Michaelis erat celebranda per orbem,</i>
76	As Michaelmas was celebrated around the world,
	<i>Cum pro velle tibi cuncta Deus tribuit.</i>
77	God granted everything according to your wish.
	<i>Protinus una fuit mens omnibus, aequa voluntas,</i>
78	At once all were of one mind, a shared desire,
	<i>Jam bene pacato credere se pelago.</i>
79	All now being well, to confide themselves to the open sea.
	<i>Quamquam diversi, tamen adsunt laetificati;</i>
80	Though spread out, they converged joyfully;
	<i>Nec mora, quisque suum currit ad officium.</i>
81	Nor delayed, each leapt to his duty.
	<i>Sublimant alii malos, allique laborant</i>
82	Some raised the masts, others laboured

	<i>Erectis malis addere vela super.</i>
83	To rig the sails on the upright masts.
	<i>Plurima cogit equos, equitum pars scandere naves;</i>
84	Many safeguarded horses and tackle aboard ships;
	<i>Altera festinat arma locare sua.</i>
85	Others hastened to stow their weapons.
	 <p>Bayeux Tapestry, Scene 37</p>
	<i>Haut secus invadit classis loca turba pedestris,</i>
86	With no regard to rank, a mob of foot soldiers descended on the fleet,
	<i>Turba columbarum quam sua tecta petit.</i>
87	Like a cloud of pigeons coming in to roost.
	<i>O quantus subito fragor illinc ortus habetur,</i>
88	Oh, think how great the sudden uproar in that place
	<i>Cum nautae remos, arma petunt equites!</i>
89	As sailors took up their oars, and knights their arms!
	<i>Hinc resonando tubae varios dant milla boatus;</i>
90	From here resounded a thousand trumpet calls,
	<i>Fistula cum calamis, et fidibus cythara;</i>
91	Pipes with flutes and zithers in harmony,
	<i>Timpana taurinis implent megitibus auras;</i>
92	Oxhide drums thundered to the heavens,
	<i>Alternant modullos cymbala clara suos.</i>
93	Their rhythm punctuated with the clash of cymbals.
	<i>Terra tremat, coelumque pavet, miratur et equor;</i>
94	The earth trembled, the air pulsed, alike stunned.
	<i>Quadrupedes fugiunt, piscis avisque simul.</i>
95	Beasts fled, birds and fish likewise.

	<i>Quippe decem decies, decies et milia quinque</i>
96	Certainly the army of five thousand
	<i>Diversis feriunt vocibus astra poli.</i>
97	Shouted variously to the pole stars.
	<i>Sed tu templa petis sancti supra memorati;</i>
98	But you make for the holy church above mindfully;
	<i>Muneribusque datis, curris adire ratem.</i>
99	You give alms dutifully, then hasten to your flagship.
	<i>Clangendoque tuba, reliquis ut littora linqunt</i>
100	Trumpets blaring, you order the rest to take leave of the shore
	<i>Praecipis, et pelagi tucius alta petant.</i>
101	And make for the deeps of the sea.
	<i>Hactenus adfix solvuntur litore puppes,¹³</i>
102	Until now fastened to the shore, the ships set sail,
	<i>Equor et intratur agmine composito.</i>
103	The fleet forming a tidy line.
	
	Bayeux Tapestry, Scene 38
	<i>Jam breviata dies, jam sol devexus abibat,</i>
104	The day now short, the setting sun inclines,
	<i>Cum tua preripuit previa navis iter.</i>
105	When your flagship sets the course.
	<i>Nox ubi caeca polum tenebrosis occupat umbris,</i>
106	When gloomy night's shadow overtook the darkening sky,
	<i>Et negat obsequium Cinthia tecta tibi,</i>
107	And the veiled moon refused to serve you,
	<i>Implet non aliter facibus rutilantibus undas,</i>
108	Torches otherwise filled the waves with reddish glow,
	<i>Sydera quam coelum sole ruente replent.</i>
109	Taking the place of the stars and fallen sun.

¹³ *Pupes* in the manuscript; *puppes*, which meaning *ships* or *sterns* is indicated by context.

	<i>Quot fuerant naves, totidem tu lumina spargis.</i>
110	As many ships, so many lights you scattered.
	<i>Impositae malis permulta luce laternae,</i>
111	Raised on masts, many lights shone about,
	<i>Tramite directo per mare vela regunt.</i>
112	Marking a straight course through the sea.
	<i>Sed veritus ne dampna tuis nox inferat atra.</i>
113	So they feared not to lose you in the gloom of night.
	<i>Ventus et adverso flamina turbet aquas,</i>
114	Gusts of opposing wind chopped the sea,
	<i>Sistere curva jubes compellat ut anchora puppes.</i>
115	You ordered the fleet to halt its course, gather, and drop anchor.
	<i>In medio pelagi litus adesse facis,</i>
116	In the middle of the sea near the coast,
	<i>Ponere vela mones, exspectans mane futurum.</i>
117	Taking in the sails, you await the coming dawn.
	<i>Ut lassata nimis gens habeat requiem.</i>
118	The exhausted men are given rest.
	<i>At postquam terris rutilans aurora refulsit,</i>
119	When the dawn spread red over the land,
	<i>Et Phebus radios sparsit in orbe suos,</i>
120	And the sun cast its rays over the horizon,
	<i>Praecipis ire viam, commitere carbasa ventis,</i>
121	You ordered the fleet to get underway, to hoist sails,
	<i>Praecipis ut solvat anchora fixa rates.</i>
122	And to weigh anchor.
	<i>Tertia telluri supereminet hora diei,</i>
123	The third hour of the day overspread the earth,
	<i>Cum mare postponens, litora tuta tenes.</i>
124	Since leaving the sea behind, when you landed. ¹⁴

¹⁴ The Carmen's description of the landing site is consistent with the enormous tidal embayment of the Rye Camber, which provided an important safe anchorage and harbour large enough for the invasion fleet. The medieval Rye Camber extended many miles inland from the sea, fitting the description of leaving the sea three hours behind.

The port of Rye (from the Norman *rie* for *bank*) was deeded to Fecamp Abbey in Normandy by King Aethelred, at the instance of Queen Emma, early in the 11th century, possibly as payment for the family's stay at Fecamp while in exile. The grant was further confirmed by King Cnut, Emma's second husband, and likewise Edward the Confessor, who spent most of his youth at Fecamp. The port was seized by Godwin, Earl of Wessex, around 1052, after his restoration from exile, and

	<i>E coelo fulgens extenso crine cometes</i>
125	Across the sky a gleaming long-tailed comet
	<i>Anglis fatatum nunciat excidium.</i>
126	Foretold England's doom. ¹⁵

the Normans were then expelled from Rye. Any return was refused by Harold after his father's death in 1053. William is said to have sworn on a knife given to Fecamp Abbey that he would secure return of the port before the invasion in 1066. Fecamp Abbey, in turn, provided a ship to the invasion fleet, and may have prudently provided a harbour pilot with it.

The Rye Camber would have been ideal for securely landing more than 700 ships, 5000 men and 600 horses, as well as all their equipment and weapons. It is inconceivable that all the preparation for the invasion neglected the choice of a secure landing site for the forces and safe harbour for the ships. As each tide receded, the heavily laden Norman boats would be securely beached for safe and orderly disembarkation. As the tide came in, they could be floated and moved to a secure anchorage or return to Normandy. They may even have been disassembled and moved inland for storage, as the Bayeux Tapestry shows a mast being lowered at the landing site in Scene 39.

The description in the line 127 of the land as "barren and undefended" accords with a tidal basin prone to flooding at spring tides or with storm surges. Local habitation would only be sited above the high water mark, despite the land being dry other times. Line 128's "auspicious calm bay" also supports the Rye Camber.

There were ruined fortifications in several places, as referenced at line 143. These date back to the Romans, who used the Rye Camber as an iron trading port and fleet harbour. The Romans would have improved roads to the port as well. In planning the invasion, William would have doubtless sought a defensible landing site to secure his fleet, as well as a road to move his army inland.

Pevensey is popularly believed to have been the landing site, but was a much smaller embayment in 1066, more exposed to both sea and attack, and Pevensey Castle was standing in excellent condition, having been recently reinforced and garrisoned by Godwin of Wessex. Pevensey was also remote from serviceable roads, and surrounded by marsh.

A landing on a tributary of the Rye Camber would explain why no artefacts of the invading fleet or encampment have been found, as the geography of the area has been transformed radically since the 11th century.



Medieval Rye Camber

¹⁵ Halley's Comet was passing in 1066, which was taken as a portent of great events.



Bayeux Tapestry, Scenes 32-33.

Debita terra tibi, pavidis nudata colonis,

127 The land promised to you, barren and undefended,

Laeta sinu placido teque tuosque capit.

128 In an auspicious calm bay you seize for your own.



Bayeux Tapestry, Scene 39

Rex Heraldus enim sceleratus, ad ultima terrae,

129 Meanwhile perfidious King Harold towards the end of the land,¹⁶

Fratis ad excidium perfida tela parat.

130 Raised his treacherous sword to cut off a brother.¹⁷

¹⁶ The text switches here from addressing William to describing the events in a third person narrative.

	<i>Non modicam regni partem nam frater adeptus,</i>
131	For the brother had taken no small part of the kingdom,
	<i>Tecta dabat flammis et gladiis populum.</i>
132	Putting roofs to the flame and people to the sword.
	<i>Marte sub opposito currens Heraldus in hostes</i>
133	Harold hastened to bring battle to the enemy,
	<i>Non timuit fratris tradere membra¹⁸ neci.</i>
134	Brother did not fear to deliver death to brother.
	<i>Alter in alterutrum plus quam civile peregit</i>
135	One of these two provoked more than civil war;
	<i>Bellum; sed victor (proh dolor!) ipse fuit.</i>
136	But the victor (Oh the sadness!) must live with himself.
	<i>Invidus ille Cain fratris caput amputat ense,</i>
137	He cut off the head of the envious Cain with a sword,
	<i>Et caput et corpus sec sepelivit humo.</i>
138	And head and body buried in the ground.
	<i>Haec tibi praevidit qui debita regna subegit,</i>
139	In this foresee yourself, who conquers a promised kingdom,
	<i>Criminus infesti quatenus ultor eas.</i>
140	Will likewise avenge a hostile trespass.
	<i>Littora custodis, metuens amittere naves,</i>
141	The landing secure, you fear to lose the ships.
	<i>Moenibus et munis, castraque ponis ibi.</i>
142	Fortifications are erected, and the camp sited therein.
	<i>Diruta quae fuerant dudum castella reformas.</i>
143	You restore the fortress that was formerly razed.

¹⁷ Harold's brother Tostig had been dispossessed of the Duchy of Northumbria and exiled prior to Harold taking the crown. Tostig first went to Count Baldwin V of Flanders, father-in-law to William, and then to William himself to urge invasion. He raided Britain from Scotland for a time, then in 1066 allied with Harald Hardrada, Harald III of Norway. They joined forces and invaded England from the north, defeating the English defenders initially at the Battle of Fulford. They met defeat themselves at the Battle of Stamford Bridge on 25 September 1066, where both Tostig and Harald Hardrada were killed by King Harold's forces.

¹⁸ *Membra* is normally construed as *member*, *organ* or *limb*, but the meaning here is clearly a limb of his own family, so I've rendered it as *brother*.



Bayeux Tapestry, Scene 45

Ponis custodes ut tueantur ea.

144 Sentries are placed to keep watch.

Non multo spacio tua gens sed pace petita,

145 After a short time your troops disturb the peace,

Invadit terram, vastat et igne cremat.

146 They invade the countryside, they lay waste and put to the torch.



Bayeux Tapestry, Scene 40

Nec mirum: regem quia te plebs stulta negabat.

147 No wonder! Those foolish peasants denied your rule,

Sons perit juste, vadit et ad nichilum

148 And so perished justly, earning annihilation.

Ex Anglis unus, latitans sub rupe marina,

149 One Englishman, hiding in the cliffs,

Cernit ut effusas innumeras acies.

150 Spied the countless spreading invaders.

	<i>Et quod agri fulgent pleni radiantibus armis,</i>
151	Every field shone full of gleaming weapons,
	<i>Vulcano flammis depopulante domos.</i>
152	Raging flames razed homes.
	<i>Perfidiae gentem ferro bachante perire;</i>
153	The faithless men perished in frenzied attack;
	<i>Quasque dabant lacrimas cede patrum pueri,</i>
154	Everywhere children wailed at their father's deaths.
	<i>Scandere currit equum: festinat dicere regi.</i>
155	He mounted horse and galloped to tell the king.
	<i>Rex redit a bello praemia laeta ferens.</i>
156	The king returned from war pleased with its outcome,
	<i>Nuncius occurrit; quae fert, hoc in ordine pandit:</i>
157	To be met with news of a further breach:
	<i>"Rex, tibi pro certo nuncia dira fero.</i>
158	"King, for certain I bring you dire tidings.
	<i>"Dux Normannorum cum Gallis atque Britannis</i>
159	"The Duke of Normandy, with Gauls and Bretons,
	<i>"Invasit terram, vastat et igne cremat.</i>
160	"Has invaded the land, laying waste and putting it to the torch.



Bayeux Tapestry, Scene 47

	<i>"Milia si queris, tibi dicere nemo velebit:</i>
161	"His army is thousands beyond counting:
	<i>"Quod mare fert pisces, tot sibi sunt equites;</i>
162	"As I cannot count the fish in the sea, such are the cavalry;
	<i>"Et veluti stellas coeli numerare nequires,</i>
163	"As I cannot count the stars in the sky,
	<i>"Ejus sic acies nec numerare vales.</i>
164	"Such are the ranks of the infantry.
	<i>"Captivos ducit pueros captasque puellas,</i>
165	"He has taken captive the boys and girls,
	<i>"Insuper et viduas, et simul omne pecus."</i>
166	"And also the widows, and likewise all their cattle." ¹⁹
	<i>Rusticus haec retulit. Rex contra sibilat illi;</i>
167	Thus the landsman reported. The king whistled in reply.
	<i>Quamvis haec timeat, velle tamen simulat.</i>
168	Though taking fright at this, he feigned spirit.
	<i>Advocat ipse duces, comites terraeque potentes;</i>
169	Summoning the dukes, counts and nobles of the land,
	<i>Verbis, ut fertur, talibus alloquitur:</i>
170	He addressed them in these words:
	<i>"Miliciae pars summa meae, magnatibus orta,</i>
171	"My elite knights, of distinguished descent,
	<i>"Solus non bello vincere cui pudor est,</i>
172	"Whose only shame is to fail in battle,
	<i>"Nothica quos misit per te superavimus hostes,</i>
173	"You have crushed the Nordic foe, ²⁰
	<i>"Et per te nostrum stravimus equivocum,</i>
174	"And you also settled the dispute
	<i>"Nutrivit proprio matrum quam lacte papilla.</i>
175	"With him who fed at my own mother's breast." ²¹

¹⁹ Slavery was widespread throughout the British Isles and Normandy at the time, and slaves were a major export commodity. The practice of slavery was diminished in Britain under Norman rule following the Conquest. Slaves were more than 10 per cent of the population recorded in the Domesday Book in 1086, but virtually obsolete by the end of the 12th century. An edict against the slave trade issued from the Council of London in 1102.

²⁰ Harald Hardrada, Harold III of Norway.

²¹ Tostig of Wessex, Harold's brother.

	<i>"Tu mihi praesidium, murus et auxilium,</i>
176	"You are my defenders, my bulwark and my succour.
	<i>"Audisti nostrum quod gens normannica regnum</i>
177	"Hear now that the Norman foe has invaded our kingdom,
	<i>"Intravit, praedans pauperat, exspoliat."</i>
178	"Ransacking, plundering and laying waste to it.
	<i>"Hoc Willelmus qui te sibi subdere querit,</i>
179	"This William, who seeks to subdue you to his rule,
	<i>"Nomen habet magnum; cor tamen est pavidum.</i>
180	"His name is great but his heart is lacking;
	<i>"Est vafer et cupidus nimiumque superciliosus,</i>
181	"He is altogether too selfish, greedy and vain;
	<i>"Nec novit pacem nec retinere fidem.</i>
182	"He does not promote peace nor preserve the faith.
	<i>"Si possit leviter molita tollere nostra!</i>
183	"He undertakes too lightly to steal what is ours!
	<i>"Sed Deus omnipotens non erit hoc paciens.</i>
184	"But God almighty will not let this stand.
	<i>"Quantus erit luctus, quantus dolor et pudo ingens,</i>
185	"How great the grief, the sadness, the shame,
	<i>"Regni quanta lues, quam tenebrosa dies,</i>
186	"What ruin on the kingdom, how dark a day,
	<i>"Si quod querit habet, si regni sceptrum tenebit!</i>
187	"Should he gain what he seeks, and seize the sceptre of the realm!
	<i>"Hoc omnes fugiant vivere qui cupiunt."</i>
188	"All who would live must this scorn."
	<i>His ita prolatis, quaerit responsa suorum,</i>
189	Ceasing speech, he waited their reply,
	<i>Scrutantur taciti dicere quit valeant.</i>
190	Weighing silently what they might say.
	<i>Nascitur extimplo clamor qui perculit astra,</i>
191	They immediately shouted to the stars,
	<i>Et vox communis omnibus una fuit:</i>
192	In one voice, all together:
	<i>"Bella magis cupimus quam sub juga colla reponi</i>
193	"We prefer more war to wearing the yoke

	<i>"Alterius regis, sed magis inde mori."</i>
194	"Of a foreign king, and so prefer to kill for that cause."
	<i>Exultans fatuus rex grates reddidit illis.</i>
195	Rejoicing the foolish king gave them thanks.
	<i>Insuper hoc unum concilium retulit:</i>
196	Appointing a council from among them, he said:
	<i>"Primum, legatos decet ut mitamus ad illum,</i>
197	"First, it is fitting to send an envoy to them,
	<i>"Illi qui dicant, si placet ut redeat.</i>
198	"Who will ask them to yield or retreat.
	<i>"Pacificum si vult nobiscum foedus inire,</i>
199	"If he is willing to make peace, undertaking a treaty with us,
	<i>"Vestro consilio, non ego reiciam.</i>
200	"By your counsel, I would not spurn him.
	<i>"Sin aliter, non sponte sua, mea littora linquet.</i>
201	"Otherwise, for his own sake, he must quit my shores.
	<i>"Desinat hoc quod agit; trans freta regna petat."</i>
202	"He must desist this campaign; he must set course for the realm across the Channel."
	<i>Aequo consultu majorum necne minorum</i>
203	The powerful nobles consulted among themselves
	<i>Providus eloquio monachus eligitur,</i>
204	To select a sage and eloquent monk,
	<i>Exploret qui castra ducis, qui credita caute</i>
205	Who would seek out the camp of the duke, and to him they confided
	<i>Verba sibi referat regis ab imperio.</i>
206	The words to be carried by royal command.
	<i>Acceleravit iter pedibus transvectus equinis,</i>
207	He sped on his way on a swift-footed horse,
	<i>Sub tunica nigra verba querenda gerens.</i>
208	Carrying under his black tunic the written protest.
	<i>Dux erat in castris. Intrans haec monachus inquit:</i>
209	The duke was in camp; brought thence the monk spoke:
	<i>"Est opus ut nostrae sic valeas patriae.</i>
210	"It is our charge to bid you from the country.
	<i>"Rex et primates, regni quoque jura tenentes,</i>

211	“The king and nobles, who together reign herein, <i>“Praecipiant dicto quod cicius redeas.</i> ”
212	“Instruct in writing your speedy return. <i>“Mirantur super his de te quae fama reportat,</i>
213	“They are greatly amazed at the report of your infamous misconduct, <i>“Quod fine te regnum ducis ad excidium.</i> ”
214	“Bringing ruin beyond the borders of your duchy. <i>“Captivos reddas et quicquid vi rapuisti.</i> ”
215	“Return the captives and make good your pillaging. <i>“Indulgens, si vis, cetera damna tibi,</i>
216	“If you consent, he will overlook your other damage to the region, <i>“Aetati parci, morum parci lenitati,</i>
217	“In consideration of age, mild habits, <i>“Olim quae fuerat parcus amicitiae.</i> ”
218	“And the former alliance between you. <i>“Si contra dicis, aut si sua reddere tardas,</i>
219	“If you say otherwise, or hinder restoration of his property, <i>“Bella tibi mandat. Ergo decet caveas.</i> ”
220	“Commit yourself to war. Thus it is fitting to take care. <i>Miliciam vix ipse suam populumque cohercet:</i>
221	“His military and his people also he can hardly restrain. <i>Gens est quae nullum novit habere modum.</i> ”
222	“He knows the nation is such that nothing can keep it bound. <i>Nam, Dominum testor, bis sex sibi millia centum</i>
223	“For, God as witness, he has twice six thousand men. <i>Sunt pugnatorum, proelia²² qui siciunt.”</i>
224	“They are fighters, thirsting for battle.” <i>Talibus objectis mutata leonis imago,</i>
225	The charges laid, the duke assumed the likeness of a lion, <i>Pondus virtutum, miles et intrepidus.</i>
226	His mien virtuous, martial and brave.

²² *Praelia* in the transcript, *proelia* is indicated by context.



Bayeux Tapestry, Scene 46

Dux flocci pendens quicquid sibi vana cuculla

227 The duke counted as immaterial whatever the vain monk

Attulerat, fatuas approbat esse minas:

228 Conveyed, deeming it empty threats.

“Verba tui regis, “dixit, “non sunt sapientis.

229 “The words of your king,” he said “are unwise.

“Nil latitare procul poterit, hoc sapiat.

230 “He can lie in hiding at no far distance, let him this understand:

“Excessi puerum, leviter nec regna petivi

231 “I am past youth, nor do I lightly claim the realm,



Edward the Confessor sends Harold of Wessex to William, Duke of Normandy, to confirm him as heir and successor. Scene 1 of the Bayeux Tapestry.

"Defunctis patribus, debita jure mihi.

232 "It's former king dead, it is my inheritance.



Bayeux Tapestry, burial procession of Edward the Confessor to St Peter's Minster, Scene 26.

"Foedus amicitiae nostrae dissolvit inique,

233 "Our former alliance he villainously dissolved,

"Dum tenet injuste quae mea jure forent.

234 "When he unjustly seized what is mine by right.



Harold's coronation with Archbishop Stigand. The Pope declared Harold a usurper, and both Harold and Stigand were excommunicated.

"Quod monet ut redeam, furor est, dementia summa:

235 "His urging retreat is crazed, madness entire:

"Tempus enim prohibet et via non facilis.

236 "The season forbids it, and the passage is daunting.

"Inmerito quamvis committere bella minetur,

237 “Whoever unjustly drives us to unite in battle,
“In Domino fidens gens mea non refugit.

238 “Trusting in God, my people will not refuse him.
“Nescit quam furtiva mihi perjuria fecit,

239 “Who is unaware that he hides his perjury to me,
“Nec penitus recolit quod meus iste fuit?

240 “Nor feels shame for taking what belongs to me?
“Si perjura manus nondum damnata resultat,

241 “If his perjured oath has yet to bring his doom,



Bayeux Tapestry, Scene 23: Harold is swearing an oath on chests of sacred relics.

“Divino tamen est jam rea iudicio.

242 “The divine court will render judgement.
“Si querit pacem, si vult delicta fateri,

243 “If he wants peace, he will confess his sins.
“Indulgens culpae parcere promptus ero:

244 “I will readily forgive, indulging his errors;
“Terram quam pridem tenuit pater, hanc sibi reddam,

245 “The land held by his father will be restored to him,
“Ut meus ante fuit, si meus esse velit.”

246 “As it was before, if he will be my vassal.”
Monachus accelerat reditum. Dux praeparat arma

247 The monk hastened back. The duke arranged his forces.

	<i>Heraldi mentem noverat atque dolum.</i>
248	He was well familiar with Harold's cunning mind.
	<i>Admonet, inflammat confortans corda suorum:</i>
249	He rallied them, rousing courage in their hearts.
	<i>"Francia quos genuit nobilitate cluens,</i>
250	"France who begets an illustrious nobility,
	<i>"Belligeri sine felle viri, famosa juvenus,</i>
251	"Warring without bitter venom, its knights renowned,
	<i>"Quos Deus elegit, vel quibus ipse favet.</i>
252	"Who God has chosen, indeed himself favours.
	<i>"Fama volat quorum per climata quattuor orbis,</i>
253	"Our fame spreads to the four corners of the earth,
	<i>"Invictusque manens miliciae titulus.</i>
254	"Our reputation as invincible endures.
	<i>"Gensque Britannorum, quorum decus exstat in armis,</i>
255	"Bretons, whose glory in war is well known,
	<i>"Tellus ni fugiat est fuga nulla quibus.</i>
256	"A country who never flee and no one drives.
	<i>"Viribus illustres Cenomanni, gloria quorum</i>
257	"Illustrious warriors of Maine, ²³ whose glory
	<i>"Bello monstratur per probitatis opem.²⁴</i>
258	"In war is revealed by bold strokes.
	<i>"Apulus, et Calaber, Siculus quibus jacula fervent.</i>
259	"Apulia, Calabria, Sicily: whose darts swarm! ²⁵
	<i>"Normanni faciles actibus egregiis!</i>
260	"Normans easily accomplish the extraordinary!
	<i>Falsus et infamis, perjurus rex et adulter,</i>
261	"False and infamous, the king is perjurer and adulterer, ²⁶

²³ William's first conquest was the neighbouring county of Maine in France which he joined to Normandy in 1062.

²⁴ *Per probitatis opem*, which appears again in line 334, may have a very precise connotation in connection with attaining glory. It is translated as "through bold strokes" in both places as suiting the context.

²⁵ This address confirms archers and crossbowmen from the Norman campaigns in the Mediterranean were recruited for the conquest of England.

²⁶ *Adulterer* here may refer to Harold's reneging on marriage to one of William's young daughters, as contracted on his visit to Normandy in 1064. It was not unusual for very young girls to be married, although they might not join their husbands until attaining a suitable age.



The mysterious lady of the Bayeux Tapestry may be William's daughter Agatha. The text *unus* may be a misspelling of *unitus*, meaning *he is united*. If so, the complete sentence might read: "Duke William comes with Harold to his palace where a cleric unites him with Agatha." The reversed image below in the margin may signify his insincerity and adultery. The man with Agatha is dressed identically to Harold in the previous scene where he is presented to nobles.

"Molitur nobis, tendit et insidias.

262 "Besetting us, he intends an ambush.

"Ejus enim mos est non vi, sed vincere fraude,

263 "Indeed, it is his habit to win not by force, but by fraud.

"Spondendoque fidem porrigit ore necem,

264 "A pledge of faith from his mouth masks murder.

"Ergo cavere decet ne decipiamur ab illo.

265 "So beware lest we be deceived,

"Ni simus risus ludus et in populo.

266 "Lest we become the butt of jokes among the people.

"Mandamus vobis quapropter castra tueri,

267 "Order vigilant guards about the camp,

"Irruat in castris ne malus ille latro.

268 "Lest the evil one rush in like a bandit.²⁷

"Sed cras si dignum vobis videatur et aequum,

269 "But on the morrow, if you deem it likewise proper,

"Contra quem misit vana referre mihi,

270 "To reply to his empty words to me,

"Reddere legatum pro verbis verba paratum

271 "To return an envoy prepared word for word,

²⁷ Duke William had once surprised the forces of King Henry of France in camp, defeating them decisively at the Battle of Varaville, and King Harold had surprised the forces of Tostig and Harald Hardrata in camp at Stamford Bridge to secure their defeat.

	<i>"Illi mitamus, qui minimum timeat.</i>
272	"We send that one, who fears little.
	<i>"Monachus est nobis quo non moderancior alter,</i>
273	"There is a monk among us no less intrepid,
	<i>"Et nulli cedens rhetoris officio,</i>
274	"And yields to none in courtly rhetoric,
	<i>"Signifer insignis, ni regula sacra negaret.</i>
275	"Fit to be a standard-bearer if not barred by sacred vow.
	<i>"Si vobuis placeat, hic mea dicta ferat."</i>
276	"If it pleases you, let him bear my words."
	<i>Dixit, et est actum: complevit et actio dictum.</i>
277	He ordered, and it was done; the word is father to the deed.
	<i>Monachus accitur; nec mora, carpit iter.</i>
278	The monk summoned; without delay, he took to the road.
	<i>Interea sedes²⁸ fuscatae, fraudis et heres,</i>
279	Meanwhile, over the darkened landscape, the fraudulent heir,
	<i>Nocte sub obscura, furis in arte vigens.</i>
280	Under cover of night, came coursing like a thief.
	<i>Rex acies armare jubet, ducis atque latenter.</i>
281	The king ordered his men to arms, still concealed from the duke.
	<i>Mandat ut invadant agmina, sic²⁹ valeant.</i>
282	He ordered his marching column to attack, and in such manner prevail.
	<i>Estimat invigiles prosternere fraudibus hostes:</i>
283	He reckoned to slyly overthrow an unwary enemy:
	<i>Fallere dum querit, fallitur atque ruit.</i>
284	Seeking to deceive, he reaped disappointment.
	<i>Dux quia, directo legato, pervigil extat.</i>
285	Having sent his envoy, the duke was proven shrewd.
	<i>Ejus et ingenio conscius artis erat.</i>
286	He cleverly anticipated the trick.
	<i>Divertens legatus iter per devia terrae</i>
287	The envoy, detouring through the countryside,

²⁸ *Fedes* in the manuscript, *sedes* (seat or throne) is suggested by context. I've translated it as landscape to suit the participle *vigens*, meaning *thriving* or *flowing*, but barony might have been more accurate, in keeping with the Norman conception of geography being tied to the overlord.

²⁹ *Si* in the transcription, *sic* is suggested by context.

	<i>Nescius accessit rex ubi furta facit.</i>
288	Approached unaware the place the king was preparing his ambush.
	<i>“Pro merito de parte ducis, rex” inquit, “aveto,</i>
289	“Greetings on behalf of the Duke, O King,” he said,
	<i>“Quem non ex aequo cogis inire malum.</i>
290	“Whom you unjustly compel to undertake harm.
	<i>“Hoc quia perplures testantur, et asserit idem:</i>
291	“That to which many testify, he asserts likewise:
	<i>“Assesnu populi, consilio procerum</i>
292	“Approved by the people, and noble advisors,
	<i>“Etguardus quod rex ut ei succederet heres,</i>
293	“He succeeds and is heir to Edward as king. ³⁰
	<i>“Annuit et fecit; teque favente sibi</i>
294	“Agreed and accomplished; you favoured him yourself.
	<i>“Anulus est illi testis concessus et ensis,</i>
295	“This assent was evidenced by a ring and sword,
	<i>“Quae per te nosti missa fuisse sibi.</i>
296	“That you know, through you, were sent to him. ³¹
	<i>“Est igitur servanda fides jurata teneri</i>
297	“Therefore you are held to keep faith with this sworn oath,
	<i>“Nexibus atque sacris dextera stricta manus.</i>
298	“This sacred oath even now binds you to him.
	<i>“Ergo decet videas ne te perjuria laedant,</i>
299	“Therefore it is proper that you desist injurious perjury,
	<i>“Et jurata tene, salvus ut esse queas.”</i>

³⁰ William, Duke of Normandy visited his cousin Edward, King of England, in 1051, during a time when Godwin and his sons were banished from England and no contesting claimant might have barred William’s succession. Edward remained childless, and his wife, a daughter of Godwin, was banished to a nunnery. William was received in great state by Edward and given many presents, but there are no records confirming his nomination as heir and successor.

³¹ Harold went to Normandy in 1064, but why is disputed. The Carmen and William of Jumieges, supported by other accounts, suggest he was sent by Edward to confirm William as successor and to swear fealty, taking in token a sword and a ring. The sword has been described as “two handled”, perhaps indicating rule over both Duchy and Kingdom. Some histories suggest that Harold volunteered to go to, possibly to dispute succession with William, or to negotiate for his brother Gyrth and nephew given as hostages when Godwin was restored from exile. Some accounts say Harold was knighted by William, accepting the obligations of a vassal. Still others say Harold swore a sacred oath on holy relics in front of noble witnesses to uphold William’s claim to the throne of England and serve him faithfully. English accounts discounted the oaths as having been made under duress. Harold’s brother Gyrth and his son were restored their freedom during Harold’s visit and Harold returned to England with Gyrth and many rich presents. The son stayed.

300	“And keep your vow of loyalty, that you may be spared.”
	<i>Heraldus, vultu distorto, colla retorquens,</i>
301	Harold, face grimacing, neck twisting,
	<i>Legato dixit: “Vade retro, stolide:</i>
302	Said to the envoy, “Go back, dullard.
	<i>“Judice cras Domino, regni pars justa patebit.</i>
303	“Tomorrow God as judge will reveal the lawful king.
	<i>“Dividet ex equo sacra manus Domini.”</i>
304	“The sacred hand of God will apportion justly.”
	<i>Ille retro gressum vertens per devia rursum,</i>
305	The other retraced his steps back the way he came,
	<i>A quo missus erat huic maledicta refert.</i>
306	To whom the cursed message was returned.
	<i>Imperiale decus, dux, pax et gloria regni,</i>
307	Imperial in splendour, the duke – peace and glory of the realm –
	<i>Prævius incedens ante suas acies.</i>
308	Advanced before the ranks of his army.
	<i>Aggregat, et strictim compellit abire equites,³²</i>
309	He called forth his knights, gathering them loosely around him,
	<i>Et faciles hasta conglomerare facit.</i>
310	He bade them form up around his planted lance.
	<i>Legati facies nativo cassa rubore,</i>
311	The ruddy hued face of the envoy,
	<i>Pallor et ostendit proxima bella fore.</i>
312	Paled in portent of the imminent battle.
	<i>Dux ait: “Est ubi rex?” – “Non longe,” monachus inquit.</i>
313	The duke asked, “Where is the king?”
	“Not far,” replied the monk.

³² *Quirites* in the transcription, it seems more probable he called forth his noble born knights (*equites*) than his spearmen, to hear the envoys’ report. The planted lance in the line below, *hasta*, indicates this was a formal assembly of knights.



Bayeux Tapestry, Scene 51a

Dixit in aure sibi: "Signa videre potes.

314 To his ear he whispered, "You can see his standards.

"Plurima verba fero quae censeo non referenda,

315 "I bring many words not worth repeating,

"Illa tamen dicam quae reticere nocet.

316 "Yet I will tell what would injure left unsaid.

"Ex inproviso sperat te fallere posse:

317 "He hopes to ambush you:

"Per mare, per terram praelia magna parat.

318 "He prepares for great conflict on sea and on land.

"In mare quingentas fertur misisse carinas,

319 "Five hundred ships have put to sea,

"Ut nostri reditus praepediatur iter.

320 "To impede our return voyage.

"Quo graditur silvas plani deducit adesse,

321 "Wherever he advances, he lays wooden planks flush,³³

"Et, per quae transit flumina, sicca facit.

322 "So he crosses rivers dry.

"Fors numerum metues: Numerus sed viribus expers.

323 "Be warned they outnumber you; they are numerous but lacking resources.³⁴

³³ The manuscript provides *silvas plani*, but most transcriptions provide *silvas planis*. I'm inclined to respect the original, and translate it as wooden planks. The marshy terrain, with few fords or bridges, justifies an army bringing the means of dry crossing swampy or wet ground or rivers. By avoiding detours to fords or bridges, they might move much more quickly, making this an important strategic detail for the envoy to communicate.

³⁴ Many of Harold's foot soldiers would have been poorly equipped bondsmen, and his nobles would have lacked the Normans' vast experience of war as they did not venture abroad for conquest as the Normans did, except to Scotland and Wales. William had leisure to recruit experienced fighters and mercenaries, and to see them well equipped before sailing. Superior Norman technology included the crossbow, the couched lance, double mail, and highly standardised quality swords, axes and helmets. Saxons fought shield wall to shield wall, whereas Normans had

	<i>"Plurimus a minimo sepe repulsus abit.</i>
324	"A greater number may often be repulsed by a lesser force.
	<i>"Est sibi milicies unctis depexa capillis,</i>
325	"Among his knights are some with oiled tresses, ³⁵
	<i>"Feminei juvenes Martis in arte pigri,</i>
326	"Like young girls, callow in the arts of Mars.
	<i>"Et quot sunt, ovibus totidem sunt aequiparandi,</i>
327	"And also among them are as many alike to sheep,
	<i>"Ut vulpes pavidis fulguris ad sonitum.</i>
328	"Fearful of foxes or the crash of thunder.
	<i>"Nobilium memor esto patrum, dux magne, tuorum.</i>
329	"Be mindful of your noble lineage, great Duke.
	<i>"Est quod fecit avus quodque pater, facias.</i>
330	"Do you as your forefathers did and your father also.
	<i>"Normannos proavus superavit, avusque Britannos;</i>
331	"Your forefather conquered the Normans, your grandfather likewise the Bretons;
	<i>"Anglorum genitor sub juga colla dedit.</i>
332	"Your noble lineage gives you a yoke for the English neck.
	<i>"Et tu quid facies, nisi quod majora parando?"</i>
333	"And you, what will you do, if not strive for greatness?
	<i>"Succedas illis per probitatis opem!"³⁶</i>
334	"Surpass them through bold strokes!"
	<i>Paulo conticuit, faciens et se remoratum.</i>
335	The duke bided a short time, composed and reflecting inwardly.
	<i>Armatas acies ordinat imperio.</i>
336	He then directed the battle array of his forces.
	<i>Praemisit pedites committere bella sagittis,</i>
337	He brought forward the infantry to defend the archers,
	<i>Et balistantes³⁷ inserit in medio,</i>

studied the art of wreaking havoc on a massed infantry beyond the reach of sword or axe, and the nobles fought on horseback, having adopted stirrups and innovated the couched lance.

³⁵ The Normans considered the long hair of Saxons unmanly, and their flowing beards as brutish. Normans, especially the elites, kept their hair shorn short and were closely shaved. This style was more practical for the comfortable wearing of chain mail in battle.

³⁶ Most transcriptions put a question mark after *opem*, but it seems more natural after *parando* in the line above, so that the speech – in classical style – ends with an exhortation to act.

³⁷ *Balistantes* makes clear there were crossbows at the Battle of Hastings. Crossbows are also depicted among the archers in the Bayeux Tapestry. Normans who had experience of fighting in

338	And placed the crossbowmen in the middle,	<i>Quatinus infigant volitancia vultibus arma,</i>
339	Since a flight of bolts in the face of the enemy,	<i>Vulneribusque datis ora retro faciant.</i>
340	Might weaken their ardour, forcing them back.	<i>Ordine post pedites sperat stabilire quirites,</i>
341	A rank of infantry was entrusted behind to defend the spearmen,	<i>Occursu belli set sibi non licuit.</i>
342	That the foemen might not reach them.	<i>Haut procul hostiles cuneos nam cernit adesse,</i>
343	For he discerned that an enemy battalion approached at no great distance,	<i>Et plenum telis irradiare nemus.</i>
344	Their massed weapons gleaming.	<i>Mars deus O! belli gladiis qui scepra coerces,</i>
345	Oh god Mars! ³⁸ Who defines realms by bloody sword,	<i>Corpora cui juvenum sanguinolenta placent</i>
346	Be appeased with the blood of these young bodies,	<i>Et cruor effusus permulta cede virorum,</i>
347	And the gore spilt as many men die,	<i>Quis tibi tunc animus, quanta captido³⁹ mali,</i>
348	Take then their spirits, those worthy to ascend,	<i>Cum medius sevas acies miserere jubebas,</i>
349	Come among the cruelly fallen dispensing mercy,	<i>Quo potius nullum te juvat excidium.</i>
350	Who prefer nothing to pleasing you in mayhem.	<i>Ex quo Pompeium superavit Julius armis</i>
351	Since Pompeii fell to Caesar's armies	<i>Et romana sibi moenia subripuit,</i>
352	And Rome surrendered its walls,	

the Mediterranean likely brought the weapons to Normandy. Crossbow bolts could more effectively pierce armour and shields in fighting against massed infantry.

³⁸ This is a prayer to Mars to stir the troops to battle, have mercy on the fallen, and embrace those dying valorously.

³⁹ *Cuptido* in the transcription, *captido* is indicated by context. By asking Mars to embrace the spirits of those who die bravely in battle, the prayer echoes the Viking belief that those who die in battle ascend to Valhalla, and indeed also the Muslim belief that those who die in holy battle ascend to Paradise.

	<i>Compulit atque metu vili⁴⁰ transire per amnem,</i>
353	Compelling fearful masses to cross the sea,
	<i>Nulla reor cedes tam tibi grata fuit.</i>
354	None has offered so much to please you.
	<i>Nec juvenile decus, nec te reverenda senectus,</i>
355	Neither youthful beauty, nor revered age,
	<i>Nec peditum vilis et miseranda manus,</i>
356	Neither poor and necessitous foot soldiers,
	<i>Flectere nec valuit te nobilitudo parentum,</i>
357	Nor richly equipped nobility will turn you,
	<i>Quin ageres quicquid mens tua torva cupit.</i>
358	From dealing whatever your savage will demands.
	<i>Caecatos miseros radiantia trudis in arma,</i>
359	Blind wretches strive for glory in arms,
	<i>Et valuti ludum cogis adire necem.</i>
360	And as game are herded to the slaughter.
	<i>Quid moror in verbis, cum jam furor extat in armis?</i>
361	Who would stay with words the frenzy of war?
	<i>Exple velle tuum, Mars, age mortis opus.</i>
362	Slake your thirst, Mars, bring forth the work of death.
	<i>Ex inproviso diffudit silva cohortes,</i>
363	Suddenly, a cohort of enemy spread from the forest,



Bayeux Tapestry, Scene 50

⁴⁰ This word has been transcribed as *vili*, *uili* or *nili*, but *vili* is indicated by context.

	<i>Et nemoris latebris agmina prosiliunt.</i>
364	And sprang forth out of hiding.
	<i>Mons silvae vicinus erat vicinaque vallis,</i>
365	There was a hill nearby above a hollow,
	<i>Et non cultus ager aspiritate sui.</i>
366	Whose field was barren and unplowed.
	<i>Anglis ut mos est, densatim progredientes,</i>
367	The English formed a shield wall, as is their custom,
	<i>Haec loca praeripiunt martis, ad officium.</i>
368	This place they seized by force of arms, doing their duty.
	<i>Nescia gens belli solamina spernit equorum.</i>
369	A people ignorant of war, they spurn the comfort of horses.
	<i>Viribus et fidens, heret humo pedibus,</i>
370	Strong and bold, they cling to the ground on foot,
	<i>Et decus esse mori summum dijudicat armis,</i>
371	And deem it glorious to hold the height in battle,
	<i>Sub juga ne tellus transeat alterius.</i>
372	And so force the foe to the field beneath them.
	<i>Ascendit montem rex bellaturus in hostem,</i>
373	The king ascended the peak to wage war in the midst of his army.
	<i>Nobilibusque viris munit utrumque latus.</i>
374	A large body of noblemen flanked him either side.
	<i>In summo montis vexillum vertice fixit,</i>
375	At the summit of the hill a streaming banner was planted,
	<i>Affigique jubet caetera signa sibi.</i>
376	Other battle standards were ranged around it.
	<i>Omnes descendunt et equos post terga relinquunt.</i>
377	All dismounted, leaving their horses behind.
	<i>Affixique solo, bella ciere tubis.</i>
378	Standing their ground, a trumpet issued the call to arms.
	<i>Dux humilis, dominumque timens, moderantius agmen</i>
379	The duke below, fearing mastery from the height, checked his column's advance
	<i>Ducit et audacter ardua montis adit.</i>
380	And boldly approached the steep slope.
	<i>Praelia percurrit: "Pedites, miscete sagittis:</i>
381	He issued the order: "Soldiers, let the archers confound them.

Quadratis⁴¹ jaculis scuta nihil faciunt.”

382 Their shields will not stop squared crossbow bolts.”



Bayeux Tapestry, Scene 51b

Festinant parmas galeati jungere parmis.

383 The English hastened to don armour and helmets and brace shields.

Erectis astis hostis uterque furit.

384 Flying spears, arrows and bolts raged between the warring sides.

Ut canibus lassatus aper stans dente tuetur,

385 As dogs weary a wild boar to turn and stand its ground,

Oreque spumoso reicit arma pati,

386 Foaming at the mouth to keep back the harrying pack,

Non hostem metuit nec tela minancia mortem.

387 The enemy stood fearless against the onslaught of darts.

Sic plebs Angligena dimicat inpavida.

388 Thus the lower ranks of the English endured gallantly.

Interea, dubio pendent dum proelia marte,

389 Meanwhile, the outcome of the battle remained doubtful,

Eminet et telis mortis amara lues.

390 Spears and bolts dealt bitter death.

Histrion, cor audax nimium quem nobilitabat,

391 A troubadour, reckless beyond measure, seeking enduring renown,

Agmina praecedens innumerosa ducis,

392 Advanced before the duke's battalions.⁴²

Hortatur Gallos verbis et territat Anglos,

⁴¹ *Quadratis jaculis* – literally *squared darts* – confirms the presence of crossbows as key offensive weaponry.

⁴² Later accounts suggest Taillefer sang the *Song of Roland*, the earliest Latin chronicle translated to French vernacular.

393	The Gauls cheering his taunts to the English, <i>Alte proiciens ludit et ense suo.</i>
394	He threw high his sword in playful jest. <i>Anglorum quidam, cum de tot milibus unum,</i>
395	One Englishman, alone among the many thousands, <i>Ludentem gladio cernit abire procul,</i>
396	Resolved to advance toward the distant sword juggler. <i>Miliciae cordis tactus fervore decenti,</i>
397	Thousands of hearts were moved by his noble ardour, <i>Vivere postponens, prosilit ire mori.</i>
398	Neglecting life, he rushed toward death. <i>Incisor-ferri mimus cognomine dictus,</i>
399	To hew apart the mummer called Taillefer, <i>Ut fuerat captus, pungit equum stimulis.</i>
400	To make him captive, he stabbed the horse with his pike. <i>Angligenae scutum telo transfudit acuto.</i>
401	Taillefer's sharp lance pierced the Englishman's shield. <i>Corpore prostrato distulit ense caput.</i>
402	His sword severed the head from the fallen body. <i>Lumina convertens sociis haec gaudia profert,</i>
403	The allies took delight in this auspicious exchange, <i>Bella principium monstrat et esse suum.</i>
404	That the first victory in battle had fallen to them. <i>Omnes letantur, Dominum pariter venerantur,</i>
405	All rejoiced, and called upon God, ⁴³ <i>Exultant ictus quod prior extat eis;</i>
406	Likewise eager to be seen triumphant. <i>Et tremor et fervor per corda virilia currunt.</i>
407	Ardour pulsed and boiled through men's hearts. <i>Fesinantque simul jungere scuta viri.</i>
408	The men massed together to charge the shield wall.

⁴³ The Norman battle cry was *Dix aie*, meaning *God decide* or perhaps as *God wills*.



Bayeux Tapestry, Scene 52a

Invadunt primi peditum ceteris⁴⁴ pharetrati,

409 At the first onslaught the opposing line wavered,

Eminus et jaculis corpora trahiciunt,

410 Their bodies pierced by swords and lances,

Et balistantes clipeos ad grandimis instar.

411 And arrows and bolts hailed among them.

Dissolvunt, quatiunt ictibus innumeris.

412 They broke, shocked by countless blows.

Sed laevam Galli, dextram peciere Britanni;

413 The French attacked to the left, the Bretons to the right,

Dux cum Normannis dimicat in medio.

414 The duke and the Normans charged in the middle.

Anglorum stat fixa solo densissima turba,

415 The English line stood firm in close order against the onslaught.

Tela dat et telis, et gladios gladiis.

416 Spear opposed spear, sword opposed sword.

Spiritibus nequeunt frustrata cadavera sterni,

417 Lifeless bodies could not fall,

Nec cedunt vivis corpora militibus:

418 Nor yield their place to living warriors.

Omne cadaver enim, vita licet evacuatum,


419 Each corpse in fact shunned to give way,


Stat velut illesum, possidet atque locum.


420 Standing as if unharmed, holding his place in the rank.

Nec penetrare valent spissum nemus Angligenarum,

⁴⁴ *Cetus* in the transcription, *ceteris* is indicated by context.

421	None could penetrate the dense English shield wall, <i>Ni tribuat vires viribus ingenium.</i>
422	Unless cunning reinforced strength. <i>Artibus instructi Franci, bellare periti,</i>
423	The French, expert in war, prepared a feint, <i>Ac si devicti fraude fugam simulant.</i>
424	Acting as if decisively defeated, they fled. <i>Rustica letatur gens et superasse putabat:</i>
425	The English bumpkins rejoiced to believe themselves triumphant, <i>Per tergum nudis insequitur gladiis.</i>
426	Pursuing the soldiers' undefended backs. <i>Amotis sanis labuntur dilacerati,</i>
427	The sound absent, the maimed collapsed. <i>Silvaque spissa prius rarior efficitur.</i>
428	The once dense wood made sparse! <i>Conspicit ut captum cornu tenuare sinistrum,</i>
429	Seeing weakness in the left wing's formation, <i>Intrandi dextrum quod via larga patet,</i>
430	Some Normans penetrated skilfully to widen the breach, <i>Perdere dispersos variatis cladibus hostes</i>
431	They wreaked ruin and carnage among the English enemy,
	
<p>Bayeux Tapestry, Scene 52b</p>	
432	<i>Laxatis frenis certat utrumque prius;</i> Widening the ground they held among them. <i>Quique fugam simulant instantibus ora retorquent,</i>
433	Those who had feigned flight presently turned about, <i>Constrictos cogunt vertere dorsa neci.</i>
434	To destroy those confined on the murderous slope.

	<i>Pars ibi magna perit, pars et densata resistit.</i>
435	A great many perished there, though others formed up to stand their ground.
	<i>Mili namque decem sunt ibi passa necem.</i>
436	On the other side, only ten warriors fell.
	<i>Ut pereunt mites bachante leone bidentes,</i>
437	As sheep retreat before the lion's fangs,
	<i>Sic compulsa mori gens maledicta ruit.</i>
438	So the cursed men were driven toward ruin.
	<i>Plurima quae superest pars bello acrior instat,</i>
439	The greater part who survived pressed vigorous battle,
	<i>Et sibi sublatos pro nichilo reputat.</i>
440	Deeming their losses as nothing.
	<i>Anglorum populus numero superante repellit</i>
441	Gaining the upper hand, the more numerous English crowd repelled
	<i>Hostes, vique retro compulit ora dari.</i>
442	The Normans who were forced to turn and give way.
	<i>Et fuga ficta prius fit tunc virtute coacta.</i>
443	Flight, before a fiction, became by force a fact.
	<i>Normanni fugiunt, dorsa tegunt clipei.</i>
444	The Normans fled, shields covering their backs.
	
	Bayeux Tapestry, Scene 53
	<i>Dux ubi propexit quod gens sua victa recedit,</i>
445	The duke saw his people fall back vanquished.
	<i>Occurrens illis signa ferendo manu,</i>
446	He brought forth the battle standard,

	<i>Increpat et cedit, retinet, constringit et hasta.</i>
447	He rebuked them, passed, stopped, and planted his lance. ⁴⁵
	<i>Iratu galea nudat et ipse caput:</i>
448	Enraged, he removed his helmet to reveal his head.
	<i>Vulum Normannis dat, verba precantia Gallis</i>
449	Showing the might of Normandy, he entreated the Gauls:
	
<p>Bayeux Tapestry, Scene 55: William, baring his head, and Eustace with the pennant.</p>	
	<i>Dixit: "Quo fugitis? Quo iuvat ira mori?"</i>
450	"Where do you flee? Do you sport at battle?"
	<i>"Quae fueras victrix, pateris cur victa videri.</i>
451	"Would you be victorious? Put forth a brave show.
	<i>"Regnis terrarum⁴⁶ Gallia nobilior?"</i>
452	"Would you rule this land noble Gauls?"
	<i>"Non homines, sed oves fugitis frustra que timetis.</i>
453	"Not men, but sheep flee in fear to no purpose.
	<i>"Illud quod facitis dedecus est nimium:</i>
454	"Those who so act bring boundless dishonour.
	<i>"Est mare post tergum, maris est iter ad remeandum,</i>

⁴⁵ Planting the lance signals a formal call to assembly.

⁴⁶ *Terarum* in the transcription, *terrarum* is indicated by context.

455	"The sea is behind you, and offers the way home, <i>"Per mare quod vobis tempus et aura negat:</i>
456	"But the seasons and the winds refuse your passage. <i>"Ad patriam reditus gravis est, gravis est via longa.</i>
457	"The return home is difficult, the journey wearing and long. <i>"Hic vobis nullum restat et efugium.</i>
458	"In these circumstances you have no means of escape. <i>"Vincere certetis solum, si vivere vultis."</i>
459	"Prevail on this battle ground if you wish to live." <i>Dixit, et extimplo serpit ad ora pudor.</i>
460	So he spoke, and thereupon they blushed with shame. <i>Terga retro faciunt, vultus vertuntur in hostes.</i>
461	They turned about to face the enemy. <i>Dux, ut erat princeps, primus et ille ferit.</i>
462	The duke led the charge and was first to strike. <i>Post illum reliqui feriunt ad corda reversi,</i>
463	After him the rest struck the opposing line, <i>Vires assumunt reiciendo metum.</i>
464	Throwing them back in a mass with awesome force. <i>Ut stipulae flammis pereunt spirantibus auris,</i>
465	As blazing stubble in the field scatters on the wind, <i>Sic a Francigenis, Angelica turba, ruis.</i>
466	So the French ⁴⁷ wreaked havoc on the English mob. <i>Ante ducis faciem tremefactum labitur agmen,</i>
467	The face of the duke made the crowd tremble and falter, <i>Mollis cera fluit ignis ut a facie.</i>
468	Melting like wax held to a flame. <i>Abstricto gladio galeas et scuta recedit.</i>
469	The shield wall fell back, holding tightly to sword, helmet and shield. <i>Illi et sonipes corpora multa ferit.</i>
470	The knights and their horses took many blows.

⁴⁷ The identification of Normans, Gauls and French is a little confused here. The Normans fled at line 444, the duke addressed the Gauls at line 452, and the French wreak havoc at line 466. It seems the duke identified his own people as Normans and sometimes Gauls. All the subjects of King Henry of France, including the Normans, would be considered French. The use of French here may indicate that more allies joined with the Gauls in breaching the shield wall.



Heraldi frater non territus ore leonis.

471 Harold's brother was unafraid to face the lion.

Nomine Gernt, regis traduce progenitus,

472 Named Gyrth, he was born of the royal line.

Librando telum celeri volitante lacerto

473 A swiftly flying javelin launched from his strong shoulder.

Eminus emisso cuspage corpus equi

474 From afar he hurled the point into the body of the duke's horse,

Vulnerat, atque ducem peditem bellare coegit;

475 Compelling the duke to fight on foot.

Sed pedes effectus dimicat et melius.

476 But reduced to a foot soldier, he fought still better.

Nam velox juvenem sequitur veluti leo frendens;

477 He rushed swiftly at the youth like a snarling lion,

Membratim perimens, haec sibi verba dedit:

478 Tearing him limb from limb, he gave this speech:

"Accipe promeritam nostri de parte coronam.

479 "Accept what you have earned from us, leaving the crown.

"Si periit sonipes, hanc tibi reddo pedes."

480 "If my horse is killed, I render vengeance on foot."

Dixit et ad bellum convertit protinus actum,

481 This he said and immediately returned to combat,

Obstat et oppositis viribus Herculeis.

482 Standing and fighting like a very Hercules.

Hos truncos facit, hos mutilos, hos devorat ense,

483 Some were felled, some mutilated, some devoured by his sword.

Perplures animas mitit et ad tenebras.


484 Very many souls he sent into the shadows.

Per medias strages equitem dum prospicit ire,

485	Through the havoc he spied a knight riding by, <i>Ex Cenomannorum progenitum genere.</i>
486	From a noble family of Maine. <i>Infecto gladio cerebro, vel sanguinis unda,</i>
487	Raising his sword covered with brains and flowing blood, <i>Innuit ut veniat et sibi subveniat.</i>
488	The duke beckoned him to come assist him. <i>Ille timens cedem negat illi ferre salutem;</i>
489	But this knight, fearing slaughter, shied at the weapon's bloody hail; <i>Nam pavitat mortem, ceu lepus ante canem.</i>
490	Dreading death as a hare before a hound. <i>Dux memor, ut miles subito se vertit ad illum.</i>
491	On recognising the duke, he quickly turned and advanced. <i>Per nasum galeae concitus accipiens,</i>
492	By the nosepiece of his helmet the duke grasped him, <i>Vultum telluri, plantas ad sydera volvit:</i>
493	And threw him head over heels to the ground. <i>Sic sibi concessum scandere currit equum.</i>
494	Thus the saddle was quickly vacated for him to mount. <i>O coeli Rector, nostri pius ac miserator,</i>
495	<i>Oh Ruler of the heavens, merciful and compassionate,</i> <i>Nutu divino qui regis omne quod est!</i>
496	<i>Whose divine will governs all things!</i> <i>Quas patitur clades Anglorum turma superstes!</i>
497	<i>Such carnage the English nobility suffered!</i> <i>Occidit hic pietas, regnat et impietas.</i>
498	<i>They fell in duty, for an undutiful king.</i> <i>Vita perit; mors seva furit, bachatur et ensis:</i>
499	<i>Life perished, death cruelly raged, and the sword swung wild.</i> <i>Nullus ibi parcit, Mars ubi sceptrum regit.</i>
500	<i>None shows mercy where Mars' sceptre reigns.</i> <i>Postquam factus eques dux est, mox acrius hostes</i>
501	After mounting the horse, the duke next fiercely assailed the enemy, <i>Vulnerat, aggreditur, fulminat, insequitur.</i>
502	Wounding, harrying, blazing he pursued them. <i>Vincere dum certat, dum campum cede cruentat,</i>

503	As he strove to conquer, staining the field blood-red, <i>Felius Hellocis, vir celer et facilis,</i>
504	A son of Helloc, quick and lively, <i>Insidiando ducem tractabat fine gravari;</i>
505	Lay in ambush to bring down the duke to end his harrying. <i>Sed misso jaculo traditur ictus equo;</i>
506	But the hurled javelin delivered its blow to the horse; <i>Corruit in terram: pedes est dux, plenus et ira.</i>
507	It fell to earth; the duke became a foot soldier, brimming with rage. <i>Quomodo se teneat cogitat aud quid agat,</i>
508	He considered how to preserve himself and how to proceed, <i>Nam binis miratur equis privatus haberi.</i>
509	Amazed to have twice been deprived of his horse. <i>Heret in hoc paulo; sed nihil esse putat.</i>
510	It presented a little difficulty, but he reckoned it as nothing. <i>Censet enim, virtute sibi fortuna favebit,</i>
511	He supposed indeed that since fortune favours the brave, <i>Subveniet votis et sine fraude suis.</i>
512	His men would assist his cause without fail. <i>Ergo sui mors, jurat, equi, si dextra manebit,</i>
513	Therefore he vowed to avenge the horse's death, if fate allowed. <i>Non sine vindicta transiet, absque mora.</i>
514	Without delay, in a spirit of vengeance he crossed over. <i>Auctorem sceleris multos inter latitantem.</i>
515	The author of the crime was hiding among the crowd. <i>Longe perspicuens, perdere currit eum.</i>
516	Seeing him from a distance, the duke rushed in for the kill. <i>Inpulsu dextrae duro mucronis et ictu</i>
517	A skilful thrust of cruel blade <i>Illi praecidens viscera fudit humi.</i>
518	Split his belly so his guts spilled to the ground. <i>At comes Eustachius generosis partibus ortus,</i>
519	Meanwhile kindly Eustace ⁴⁸ of noble family born, <i>Septus ballantum multiplici cuneo,</i>
520	At the centre of a wedge of cavalry,

⁴⁸ Count Eustace of Bologne.

	<i>Ad ducis auxilium festinat primus haberi,</i>
521	Was first to hasten to the aid of the duke,
	<i>Efficiturque pedes, dux ut abiret eques.</i>
522	Becoming a foot soldier himself that the duke might leave mounted.
	<i>Miles erat quidam comitis nutritus ab illo:</i>
523	There was a certain knight that the count had raised.
	<i>Fecerat ut domino, fecit et ille sibi.</i>
524	As he had done for his superior, this one did for him.
	<i>Talibus auspiciis comes ex dux associati</i>
525	With happy prospects the count and the duke joined forces,
	<i>Quo magis arma micant, bella simul repetunt.</i>
526	Returning at once to battle where the flashing weapons were thickest.
	<i>Amborum gladiis campus rarescit ab Anglis,</i>
527	Both swords thinned the field of Englishmen,
	<i>Defluit et numerus, nutat et atteritur.</i>
528	Fewer in numbers, wavering and weakening.
	<i>Corruit apposita ceu silva minuta securi,</i>
529	Overthrow neared, as a hatchet bites a falling tree,
	<i>Sec nemus Angligenum ducitur ad nihilum,</i>
530	So a forest of Englishmen were led to destruction.
	<i>Jam ferme campum victrix effecta regebat,</i>
531	Now they ruled the field nearly victorious,
	
	Bayeux Tapestry, Scene 56
	<i>Jam spoliū belli Gallia leta petit.</i>
532	The happy French sought the trophies of war.
	<i>Cum dux prospexit regem super ardua montis</i>
533	The duke spotted the king above on the steep hill,

Acriter instantes dilacerare suos.

534 Then fiercely cutting to pieces his attackers.



Advocat Eustachium, liquens ibi praelia Francs,

535 He called Eustace to him, leaving the French to clear the field,

Oppressis validum contulit auxilium.

536 To unite in aid of conquering the summit.

Alter, ut Hectorides, Pontivi nobilis heres,

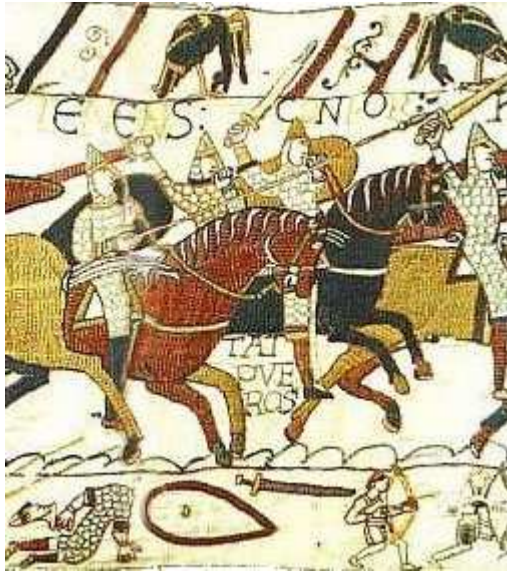
537 One of two Hughs, like Hector, the noble heir of Ponthieu,

Hos comitatur Hugo, promptus in officio.

538 Another Hugh, accompanied him, eager to serve.

Quartus Giffardus, patris a cognomine dictus.

539 Giffard made a fourth, called by his father's surname.



Regis ad excidium quatuor arma ferunt.

540 These four came armed for the destruction of the king.⁴⁹

Ast alii plures; aliis sunt hi meliores.

541 Although many others joined, these were best among them.

Si quis in hoc dubitat, actio vera probat:

542 If any should doubt this, let their actions prove it true.⁵⁰

Per nimis cedes nam bellica jura tenentes,

543 Through carnage is the contention rightly decided.

Heraldus cogit pergere carnis iter.

544 Harold was compelled to go the way of all flesh.

⁴⁹ There were four who killed Harold, but which four? The lack of punctuation in the original has led to multiple interpretations on the identity of the four killers. Some interpretations have Duke William himself as leading the charge. I choose to discount any personal role in Harold's death for Duke William, as it would have been confirmed widely in other accounts of the battle. I construe the four here as being (i) Eustace, Count of Boulogne, (ii) Hugh of Ponthieu, who was a kinsman of Guy of Amiens, styled as another Hector for a bit of classical polish, (iii) another Hugh, possibly Hugh of Monfort or Hugh of Avranches, and (iv) Walter Giffard. Supporting this interpretation of the four, *alter* can mean *one of two*, so that as used here it indicates two Hughs among the four men. Guy of Amiens might have wanted to distinguish plainly between his kinsman, Hugh of Ponthieu, and the accompanying Hugh who rode with him. By describing Hugh of Ponthieu *ut Hectorides*, he gives further glory to him here and when he appears below, tirelessly chasing fugitives all night.

⁵⁰ Guy is admitting here that the credit for Harold's death was a subject of current dispute.



Bayeux Tapestry, Scene 57: Harold is slain. Note the French stripping the dead in the margin below.

*Per clipeum primus dissolvens cuspidē pectus,*⁵¹

545 A lance first shattered his shield then pierced his heart,

Effuso macidat sanguinis imbre solum.

546 His blood spurted forth to shower the ground.

Tegmine sub galeae caput amputat ense secundus.

547 Second, a sword cut off his head, striking below the helmet's protection.

Et telo ventris tercius exta rigat.

548 Third, a spear eviscerated his bowels, spilling them wetly about.

Abscidit coxam quartus procul eger ademptam.

549 Fourth, a leg was hewn from the hip and carried afar.

Taliter occusum terra cadaver habet.

550 In such a manner the ground received the corpse.

Fama volans "Heraldus obit" per praelia sparsit:

551 The news flew "*Harold is dead*" through the scattered conflict.

Mitigat extimplo corda superba timor.

552 In a moment resolute hearts were softened by fear.

Bella negant Angli, veniam poscunt superati;

⁵¹ The couched lance was a recent and significant advance in Norman military technology, allowing the weight and momentum of the horse to propel the point into the target with much more force than a man's strength alone could deliver. Harold's death by a lance thrust powerful enough to shatter his shield and penetrate through his body may therefore reference Norman military might and superiority. There is no mention of any arrow striking Harold as shown in the Bayeux Tapestry, consistent with the theory that the arrow was inaccurately added to the tapestry at a later date.

553 The English refused battle, asking leave to surrender;



Bayeux Tapestry, Scene 58: The English surrender

Vivere diffisi, terga dedere neci.

554 To live in despair, to yield to murder.

Dux ibi per numerum duo milia misit ad orcum,

555 **There the duke buried two thousand men,**

Exceptis aliis milibus innumeris.

556 Leaving the enemy dead in countless thousands.

Vesper erat, jam cardo diem volvebat ad umbras,

557 It was evening, the day's close spreading shadows,

Victorem fecit cum Deus esse ducem.

558 God had made the duke a conqueror.

Solum devictis nox et fuga profuit Anglis,

559 Darkness on the land availed the English in fleeing,

Densi per latebras et tegimen nemoris.

560 **Obscuring their retreat and providing cover in the woods.**

Inter defunctos noctem pausando peregit,

561 The victor passed the night resting among the dead,

Victor, et exspectat Lucifer ut redeat.

562 Awaiting the return of the morning light.

Pervigil Hectorides sequitur cedendo fugaces;

563 Vigilant Hector chased after fugitives;



Bayeux Tapestry, Scene 58: Hugh of Ponthieu chasing English fugitives through the woods.

Mars sibi tela gerit, mors sociata furit.

564 Mars guided his weapons, death his wild ally.

Duxit ad usque diem vario certamine noctem,

565 He skirmished variously until night became day,

Nec somno premitur, somnia nec patitur.

566 Neither oppressed by sleep nor permitted to dream.

Illuxit postquam Phebi clarissima lampas

567 Daybreak when Phoebus' bright lamp

Et mundum furvis exiat a tenebris,

568 Redeems the world from the dark shades,

Lustravit campum, tollens et caesa suorum

569 Lighting the camp, their Caesar gathered the Norman dead

Corpora, dux terrae condidit in gremio.

570 And consigned them to the bosom of the earth.

Vermibus atque lupis, avibus canibusque voranda

571 Worms and wolves and birds and dogs might devour

Deserit Anglorum corpora strata solo.

572 The English dead left strewn on the ground.

Heraldi corpus collegit dilaceratum,

573 He recovered the torn remnants of Harold's body,

Collectum textit sindone purpurea,

574 Wrapped the collection in purple linen,

Detulit et secum repetens sua castra marina,

575 And returned with it to his camp by the shore,

Expleat ut solitas funeris exequias.

576	To accomplish the burial with the customary rites.	<i>Heraldi mater nimio constricta dolore,</i>
577	Harold's mother, afflicted with great sorrow,	<i>Misit ad usque ducem, postulat et precibus</i>
578	Sent to the duke a request and entreaty:	<i>Orbatae miserae natis tribus et viduatae</i>
579	Wretchedly bereaved of three she birthed and widowed,	<i>Pro tribus, unius reddat ut ossa sibi.</i>
580	For the three, one's bones might be rendered to her.	<i>Si placet, aut corpus puro proponderet auro.</i>
581	If he consented, the body would be purchased for its weight in pure gold.	<i>Sed dux iratus prorsus utrumque negat;</i>
582	But the duke was enraged, and utterly rejected both,	<i>Jurans quod potius praesentis littora portus,</i>
583	Vowing it was more fitting that Harold be buried on the coast of the landing site,	<i>Illi committet aggere sub lapidum.</i>
584	Having sought battle, to be marked only with a mound of stones.	<i>Ergo velut fuerat testatus, rupis in alto</i>
585	Therefore, as he had vowed, high on a cliff	<i>Praecipit claudi vertice corpus humi.</i>
586	He ordered the mutilated body buried on the summit.	<i>Extimplo quidam partim Normannus et Anglus</i>
587	Immediately a man part Norman and part English,	<i>Compatit Herald, jussa liberter agit:</i>
588	Harold's companion, volunteered to carry out the order.	<i>Corpus enim regis cito sustulit et sepelivit</i>
589	The body of the king was swiftly retrieved and buried.	<i>Imponens lapidem, scripsit et in titulo:</i>
590	Placing a stone, he wrote an inscription:	<i>"Per mandata ducis, rex, hic, Heralde, quiescis,</i>
591	"By order of the duke, lie here peacefully King Harold,	<i>"Ut custos maneat littoris et pelagi."</i>
592	"And keep guard over sea and shore."	<i>Dux cum gente sua plangens super ossa sepulta</i>
593	The duke with his men mourned over their buried dead,	<i>Pauperibus Christi munera distribuit.</i>

594	Distributing alms to the poor of Christ.	<i>Nomine postposito ducis, et sic rege locato,</i>
595	Laying aside the title duke, and the king buried,	<i>Hinc regale sibi nomen adeptus abit.</i>
596	He departed hence, securing to himself the royal title.	<i>Hastinge portus castris tum quinque diebus</i>
597	He remained at the port camp near Hastings ⁵² five days	<i>Mansit, et ad Doveram vertit abinde viam.</i>
598	Then turned onto the road toward Dover.	<i>Nec medium complerat⁵³ iter, cum territus illi</i>
599	He had not accomplished half the journey	<i>Occurrit populus partus in obsequio,</i>
600	When met by frightened townsfolk offering their obedience.	<i>Obtulit et claves castris portasque reclusas,</i>
601	They yielded also the keys to open the castle gates,	<i>Testatur simultans velle subesse sibi.</i>
602	At the same time testifying their submission to him.	<i>Est ibi mons altus, strictum mare, litus opacum.</i>
603	In that place is a high rock, a narrow sea, a shaded shore.	<i>Hinc hostes cicius anglica regna petunt:</i>
604	From here enemies may attack the English realm.	<i>Sed castrum Doverae pendens a vertice montis,</i>
605	But Dover castle, sited on the heights of a cliff,	<i>Hostes reiciens, litora tuta facit.</i>
606	Repels the enemy and defends the coast.	<i>Clavibus acceptis, rex intrans moenia castris,</i>
607	The keys accepted, the king entered the castle fortress,	<i>Praecipit Angligenis evacuare domos.</i>
608	He ordered the English to leave their homes. ⁵⁴	

⁵² The reference to Hastings here doesn't necessarily mean that the camp was at or even close to the town of Hastings. As noted at footnote 23, the Norman conception of geography identified land by reference to its overlord. St Valery-sur-Somme is identified in line 28 as "the ancient port of Vimeu". Vimeu identifies a region or barony in Normandy rather than a town. In the same way, the camp at the landing site might be referenced by the region or barony of Hastings. This would explain why there is no archeological evidence of an encampment with motte and bailey fortifications at Hastings.

⁵³ *Comperat* in the transcription, *complerat* is indicated by context.

⁵⁴ The choice of Dover as a base had symbolic import. Count Eustace and his men had been repelled by armed citizens when they attempted to commandeer the finest houses for themselves

	<i>Hos introduxit per quos sibi regna subegit,</i>
609	He brought in those who had subdued his realm,
	<i>Unumquemque suum misit ad hospicium.</i>
610	And to each he gave lodging.
	<i>Ilio pervasit terror vicinia castris,</i>
611	Fear spread through the surrounds of the castle,
	<i>Urbes et burgos, oppida queque replens.</i>
612	City and borough, surging through the countryside.
	<i>Nobilior reliquis urbs Cantorbeia dicta;</i>
613	The City of Canterbury is famed nobler than the rest;
	<i>Missis legatis, prima tributa tulit.</i>
614	An envoy was sent, seeking tribute from the mayor.
	<i>Post aliae plures nimium sua jura timentes.</i>
615	Afterwards countless other places vowed submission in fear.
	<i>Regi sponte sua munera grata ferunt.</i>
616	They brought pleasing tribute to the king of their own will.
	<i>Et veluti muscae stimulo famis exagitatae</i>
617	Like flies stirred by hunger will swarm
	<i>Ulceras densatim plena cruore petunt,</i>
618	Toward oozing sores full of gore,
	<i>Undique sic Angli regi currunt famulari.</i>
619	Thus from everywhere the English hastened to offer obeisance to the king,
	<i>Pergit muneribus nec vacuata manus.</i>
620	Bearing tribute, none came empty handed.
	<i>Omnes dona ferunt et sub juga colla reponunt.</i>
621	All brought gifts and put their necks in the yoke of his rule.
	<i>Flexis poplitibus oscula dant pedibus.</i>
622	On bended knee they gave kisses to his foot.
	<i>Per spatium mensis cum gente perendinat illic,</i>
623	He remained there for the space of a month,
	<i>Post alio vadit castra locare sibi.</i>
624	Afterwards leaving to pitch camp elsewhere. ⁵⁵

in 1051, leading to the deaths of some of his entourage and a forced retreat to the protection of King Edward. Godwin of Wessex refused to punish those in authority in Dover, leading to his breach with King Edward and exile for himself and his sons.

⁵⁵ A strict translation reveals that William only sent to Canterbury for tribute, remaining at Dover for a month. Popular belief has it he stayed at Canterbury a month, but that may have arisen through earlier mistranslation. Dover would have been a much more sensible base, easily defended, big

	<i>Guincestram misit: mandat primatibus urbis,</i>
625	He sent to Winchester, ordering the principals of the city
	<i>Ut faciunt alii, ferre tributa sibi.</i>
626	To bring tribute, as others were doing.
	<i>Hanc regina tenet regis de dote prioris,</i>
627	This place the queen held in dower from the former king,
	<i>Hetguardi; quare dedecus esse putat,</i>
628	Edward; wherefore it would be deemed shameful,
	<i>Sic sibi⁵⁶ concessam, si vadit tollere sedem.</i>
629	Which he himself conceded, if he advanced to destroy the home.
	<i>Solum vectigal postulat atque fidem.</i>
630	Merely tribute and good faith were demanded.
	<i>Una primates reginae consuluerunt;</i>
631	The nobles of the queen deliberated;
	<i>Illaque concedens ferre petita jubet.</i>
632	She yielded, and ordered them to bring that which was demanded.
	<i>Taliter et regis praecepto spirat uterque;</i>
633	In such manner they co-existed with the king's dominion;
	<i>Nam domine pariter et sua dona ferunt.</i>
634	For they ruled together and brought him tribute. ⁵⁷
	<i>Rex sic pacatus tentoria fixa resolvit,</i>
635	The king thus pacified struck his tents;
	<i>Quo populosa nitet Londona vertit iter.</i>
636	He turned his course for the thriving and populous London.
	<i>Est urbs ampla nimis perversis plena colonis,</i>
637	It is a city of boundless opportunity corrupted by its plump inhabitants,
	<i>Et regni reliquis dicio est opibus.</i>
638	And its wealthy are more influential than the rest of the kingdom.
	<i>A laeva muris a dextris flumine tuta,</i>
639	Protected by high walls and flowing river,
	<i>Hostes nec metuit nec pavet arte capi.</i>

enough to accommodate his army, and allowing him to administer both his realms with the convenience of a port.

⁵⁶ *Tibi* in the transcription, *sibi* is indicated by context.

⁵⁷ This accommodation may have given William the device used later to resolve the siege on London.

640	The enemy within neither dreaded nor objected to crowded confinement.
	<i>Hanc bello superata petit gens improba, sperans</i>
641	The king set forth to conquer these greedy people, hoping
	<i>Vivere per longum libera tempus in hac.</i>
642	To live for a long time unimpeded among them.
	<i>Sed quia pernicious terror vallaverat omnes,</i>
643	But as panic spread to everyone within the walls,
	<i>Undique planctus erat, merore⁵⁸ et impaciens.</i>
644	Everywhere there was wailing and unbearable sorrow.
	<i>Una postremum rectores, atque potentes</i>
645	Finally, together the leaders, as well as the powerful,
	<i>Tali consilio consulere sibi.</i>
646	Held a Witenagemot ⁵⁹ to deliberate among themselves.
	<i>Scilicet ut puerum natum de traduce regis</i>
647	They solicited a boy ⁶⁰ born in exile
	<i>In regem sacrent, ne sine rege forent.</i>
648	To coronate, lest they be without a king.
	<i>Autumat insipiens vulgus se posse tueri</i>
649	The foolish commoners reckoned they would be able to ensure,
	<i>Regali solo nomine, non opere.</i>
650	That he be a king in name only, not in fact.
	<i>In statuam regis puer est electus ab illis,</i>
651	The boy was procured to make him king,

⁵⁸ *Meror* in the transcript, *merore* is indicated by context.

⁵⁹ *Tali consilio* in the manuscript, meaning *so great council* or *state council*. I have translated it as Witenagemot as appropriate to this context. The Witenagemot was an assembly of nobles, ecclesiastics and secular officials who advised the king. The Witenagemot also had the right to choose the king from possible successors, although generally respecting primogeniture.

A would-be successor sought approval of the Witenagemot prior to coronation. Even Cnut sought approval of the Witenagemot before his coronation after his defeat of Aethelred the Unready and conquest of England.

Abbot Aelfric of Eynsham wrote in the 10th century:

No man can make himself king, but the people has the choice to choose as king whom they please; but after he is consecrated as king, he then has dominion over the people, and they cannot shake his yoke off their necks.

- Quoted in Whitelock, *Review of The Witenagemot in the Reign of Edward the Confessor*, p. 642.

⁶⁰ Edgar the Atheling (meaning *youthful* or *immature*), son of Edward the Exile and grandson of Edmund Ironside.

	<i>Cujus praesidium contulit exicium.</i>
652	Whose guardians would strip him of authority.
	<i>Sparsit fama volans quod habet Londonia regem,</i>
653	The rumour spread abroad that London had a king,
	<i>Gaudet et Anglorum qui superest populus.</i>
654	And what remained of the English multitude rejoiced.
	<i>Interea regni totum⁶¹ qui querit habere,</i>
655	Meanwhile he who would hold the kingdom united,
	<i>Et voti compos cui favet Omnipotens,</i>
656	Whom the Omnipotent favoured, pledged its possession.
	<i>Hostili gladio quae nec vastaverat igne,</i>
657	Neither slaughter by sword nor destruction by fire,
	<i>Ut ingenio, vindicat imperio.</i>
658	But shrewdness would vindicate his rule.
	<i>Comperit ut factum fatuis quod non erat aequum;</i>
659	He discovered the foolish act that was unjustified;
	<i>Praescriptae muros urbis adire jubet.</i>
660	He ordered that the walls of the City be besieged.
	<i>Paruit extimplo celeri velocius aura</i>
661	Immediately it was accomplished, as swift as the wind,
	<i>Agmen belligerum castra locare sibi.</i>
662	A battle army established a camp for themselves.
	<i>Densatis castris⁶² a leva moenia cinxit,</i>
663	It encircled close up the high walls of the City,
	<i>Et bellis hostes esse dedit vigiles.</i>
664	And remained vigilant for the enemy.
	<i>Dimidiae leucae spacio distabat ab urbe</i>
665	Half a league from the City is a royal palace,
	<i>Regia regalis, aula decora nimis,</i>
666	A royal court of surpassing glory,
	<i>Fertur ab antiquis quae Guest vocitata colonis,</i>
667	Built by former generations in an area called West by its inhabitants,
	<i>Post Petri nomen duxit ab ecclesia.</i>

⁶¹ It was pleasing to see this early reference to a United Kingdom, *regni totum*.

⁶² Although the manuscript says *castris*, the City, also walled, would more likely be besieged. Later references to *urbis* relate clearly to the City.

668	Afterwards the name lengthened by Peter's minster. ⁶³
	<i>Providus hanc sedem sibi rex elegit ad adem,</i>
669	Thus provided with a home for himself, the king chose to settle,
	<i>Quae sibi complacuit jure nec inmerito.</i>
670	Which was justly acceptable to him and not unmerited.
	<i>Nam veluti patrum testantur gesta priorum,</i>
671	For if a leader would establish his claim of authority,
	<i>Ex solito reges hic diadema ferunt.</i>
672	By royal custom the coronation must be here.
	<i>Edificat moles, vervecis cornua ferro,</i>
673	He built mounds and battering rams,
	<i>Fabricat et talpas urbis ad excidium.</i>
674	And had tunnels dug to undermine the City.
	<i>Intonat inde minas, poenas et bella minatur.</i>
675	Mines thundered, threatening punishment and war.
	<i>Jurans quod licitum si sibi sit spacium,</i>
676	He swore that if given time,
	<i>Moenia dissolvat, turrem equabit harenis,</i>
677	The walls would be destroyed, the bastions reduced to rubble,
	<i>Elatam turrem destruet aggerie.</i>
678	The Great Tower demolished in a heap.
	<i>Talibus auditis cives pavor atterit urbis.</i>
679	The citizens hearing such things grew fearful in the City.
	<i>Occupat, exagitat, torquet et excruciat.</i>
680	Dread possessed, shook, twisted and tormented them.
	<i>Intus erat quidam contractus debilitate</i>
681	Among those who would diminish the
	<i>Regnum,⁶⁴ sicque pedum⁶⁵ signis ab officio,</i>
682	Realm, was one whose staff of office was a shepherd's crook,
	<i>Vulnera pro patria quoniam numerosa recepit.</i>

⁶³ Westminster.

⁶⁴ *Renum* in the transcription, *regnum* is indicated by context.

⁶⁵ *Pedum* means shepherd's crook here, and as a staff of office, implies the person referenced is at least a bishop. A stylised shepherd's crook, or *crozier*, is only carried by high ranking prelates. Ealdred, Archbishop of York, is most likely as he was a leader of the City's revolt and secured the return of Edgar from Hungary.

683	Sorrowful for his country because the multitude were besieged.
	<i>Lectica vehitur mobilitate cavens.</i> ⁶⁶
684	A litter was set in motion bearing him cautiously.
	<i>Omnibus ille tamen primatibus imperat urbis,</i>
685	All those most admirable rule over the City,
	<i>Ejus in auxilio publica res agitur.</i>
686	Overseeing it in the public interest.
	<i>Huic per legatum clam rex pociora revelat.</i>
687	This thing the legate revealed to the better king, who was unaware of it,
	<i>Secreti⁶⁷ poscens quatinus his faveat.</i>
688	Asking to what extent he would support separate rule.
	<i>“Solum rex vocitetur,” ait, “sed commoda regni,</i>
689	“Let me be called king only,” he said “as a title of convenience,
	<i>“Ut jubet Ansgardus,⁶⁸ subdita cuncta, regat.”</i>
690	“As Edgar bids, to be guided, altogether submissive.”
	<i>Ille quidem cautus caute legata recepit,</i>
691	In truth, the cautious envoy received this offer warily.
	<i>Cordis et occulto condidit in thalamo.</i>
692	Tied and covered, he hid it in his pocket.
	<i>Natu majores, omni levitate repulsa.</i>
693	Produced before the powerful in the City, all ridiculed the offer.
	<i>Aggregate et verbis talibus alloquitur:</i>
694	He called them together and spoke to them thusly:
	<i>“Egregii fratres, tum vi tum sepius arte,</i>
695	“Distinguished brothers, powerful and accomplished,

⁶⁶ *Carens* in the transcription, *cavens* is indicated by context.

⁶⁷ Previous translations of this passage cast it as a secret betrayal of the City. Properly construed, it becomes an eloquent defense of the City’s historic self-determination. *Secreti* is best understood as *separate* or *apart*. Its darker clandestine sense in English is derived from this, but confuses the translation.

⁶⁸ The name *Ansgardus* here and at line 726 has caused confusion, with some thinking it the name of the envoy and others thinking it a ranking official in the City. No record of any *Ansgardus* holding any position of authority at the time has been found. I believe it is simply a misspelling of *Adgardus* by someone unfamiliar with the boy’s name. Both passages make good sense if referencing Edgar the Aethling, and the *Carmen* otherwise names nobles and royals. Spelling of names, particularly in translation to Latin, was rather fluid in the 11th century. Oral translation of the name of a Saxon child into Norman and then into Latin might easily account for the discrepancy. It is worth noting that Edward is variously spelled as *Etguardus* (line 293), *Hetguardi* (line 628), and *Eguardus* (line 737) in the *Carmen*. It is also worth considering that an envoy is usually referred to by the authority of his lord, whose word he represents. Line 726 identifies the envoy as the agent of *Ansgardus* and so strongly supports a reference to Edgar.

	<i>"Est ubi nunc sensus vester et actus ubi?"</i>
696	"Where now is your thinking and where the actions?"
	<i>"Cernitis oppressos valido certamine muros"</i>
697	"Regard the overwhelming strength to breach the City walls"
	<i>"Et circumseptos cladibus innumeris."</i>
698	"And wreak destruction on the countless sheltered within."
	<i>"Molis et erectae transcendit machina turres,"</i>
699	"From high mounds siege engines threaten the Tower,"
	<i>"Ictibus et lapidum moenia scissa ruunt."</i>
700	"The walls will fall, ruined by hurled stones."
	<i>"Casibus a multis ex omni parte ruina,"</i>
701	"Calamity to many, and all will share in this great catastrophe."
	<i>"Eminet, et nostra corda timore laban."</i>
702	"He gains eminence, and our spirits begin to fail."
	<i>"Atque manus populi nimio percussa pavore."</i>
703	"At a stroke the people may panic."
	<i>"Urbis ad auxilium segniter arma movet."</i>
704	"The City can mount only a feeble resistance."
	<i>"Nosque foris vastat gladius, pavor angit et intus,"</i>
705	"The sword will lay waste our markets, and fear and distress enter our homes,"
	<i>"Et nullum nobis praesidium superest."</i>
706	"And nothing we command will endure."
	<i>"Ergo precor, vobis si spes est ulla salutis,"</i>
707	"Therefore I beseech you, if you hope for any prosperity,"
	<i>"Quatinus addatis viribus ingenium,"</i>
708	"Since cunning supplements strength,"
	<i>"Est quia praecipuum, si vis succumbat in actu,"</i>
709	"It is advantageous, if you submit in pretence."
	<i>"Quod virtute nequit fiat ut ingenio."</i>
710	"What strength cannot achieve, let cunning accomplish."
	<i>"Est igitur nobis super hoc prudenter agendum,"</i>
711	"Therefore let us consider this prudently,"
	<i>"Et pariter sanum quaerere consilium."</i>
712	"And together seek out a sensible resolution."
	<i>"Censeo quapropter si vobis constat honestum,"</i>
713	"Wherefore consider if you honestly consent."

	<i>"Hostes dum lateant omnia quae patimur.</i>
714	"All suffer while the enemy lurks.
	<i>"Actutum docilis noster legatus ut hosti,</i>
715	"Our envoy to the enemy will seem docile,
	<i>"Mittatur verbis fallere qui satagat.</i>
716	"Bringing words to beguile one preoccupied.
	<i>"Servicium simulet nec non et foedera pacta</i>
717	"By assuming servility, neither contracts nor treaties
	<i>"Et dextris dextras subdere, si jubeat."</i>
718	"Will subdue the favoured of fortune, if you so decree." ⁶⁹
	<i>Omnibus hoc placuit: dicto velocius implent.</i>
719	This pleased everyone: the order was swiftly accomplished.
	<i>Mittitur ad regnum vir ratione capax,</i>
720	The persuasive man was sent to the king,
	<i>Ordine qui retulit decorans sermone faceto</i>
721	Prepared to render that cunning speech gracious,
	<i>Utile fraternum non secus ac propium;</i>
722	Advantageous to his brothers no less than to himself.
	<i>Sed quia vix patula teneatur compede vulpes,</i>
723	Just as an open trap will scarcely ensnare a fox,
	<i>Fallitur a rege fallere quem voluit:</i>
724	He was beguiled by the king he sought to deceive.
	<i>Namque palam laudat rex, atque latenter ineptat</i>
725	As it happened, the king flattered him lavishly, while he secretly derided
	<i>Quicquid ab Ansgardo nuncius attulerat;</i>
726	Whatever Edgar's envoy carried to him.
	<i>Obtecat⁷⁰ donis stolidum verisque fefellit</i>
727	Pressed with gifts the fool was tricked to believe
	<i>Praemia promitens innumerosa sibi.</i>
728	Promises of countless riches for himself.
	<i>Ille retro rutilo gradiens honeratus ab auro.</i>
729	He went back at dusk staggering under a burden of gold.
	<i>A quibus est missus talia dicta refert:</i>

⁶⁹ Even today, it seems the City often bows to Westminster in pretence only, evading contract and treaty as convenient. It is unclear which side was deceived more in 1066.

⁷⁰ *Obcecat* in the transcription, *obtecat* is indicated by context.

730	To those who sent him, he returned an excellent report: <i>“Rex vobis pacem dicit profertque salutem,</i>
731	“The king says peace be with you and offers greetings, <i>“Vestris mandatis parcat et absque dolis;</i>
732	“Your mandate he spares without reservation; <i>“Sed Dominum testor, cui rerum servit imago,</i>
733	“Swear by God, contrive the pretence of submission, <i>“Post dictum regem nescit habere parem:</i>
734	“Afterwards the king will not hold you to your word. <i>“Pulchrior est sole, sapientior et Salemone;</i>
735	“More beautiful than the sun, wiser than Solomon; <i>“Promptior est Magno, largior et Carolo.</i>
736	“Braver than Alexander, more generous than Charlemagne! <i>“Contulit Eguardus quod rex donum sibi regni</i>
737	“Edward determined that the kingdom should be given to him <i>“Monstrat et adfirmat; vosque probasse refert.</i>
738	“As proven and attested; he asks you likewise to assent. <i>“Hoc igitur superest, ultra si vivere vultis.</i>
739	“This therefore perform, if you want to live as before. <i>“Debita cum manibus reddere jura sibi.”</i>
740	“Acknowledge the debt with your oath, ceding his claim.” <i>Annuit hoc vulgus, justum probat esse senatus,</i>
741	The people assented, the Witenagemot certified it to be lawful, <i>Et puerem regem coetus uterque negat.</i>
742	And the boy renounced any claim to the kingdom. <i>Vultibus in terra deflexis, regis ad aulam,</i>
743	With downcast faces they bowed to the king at court, <i>Cum puero, pergunt agmine composito.</i>
744	With the boy, approaching in an orderly procession. ⁷¹ <i>Reddere per claves urbem, sedare furorem</i>
745	They handed over the keys to the City, ending the madness. <i>Oblato querunt munere cum manibus.</i>
746	They undertook the oath of office. <i>Novit ut adventum, factus rex obvius illis.</i>

⁷¹ It is widely believed the surrender occurred in Berkhamsted, but the use of *aulam* (royal court) indicates Westminster, and the Carmen is clear that William is well settled there by this time.

747	Knowing of their approach, the king made it easy for them.	<i>Cum puero reliquis oscula grata dedit.</i>
748	He gave the surviving boy a gracious kiss.	<i>Culpas indulisit, gratanter dona recepit,</i>
749	His sin indulged, the boy accepted forgiveness gratefully,	<i>Et sic susceptos tractat honorifice.</i>
750	And thence undertook to behave honourably.	<i>Perfidiae specie proprium commendat honorem,</i>
751	The king entrusted public office to those who had shown themselves disloyal,	<i>Et juramentis perfida corda ligat.</i>
752	And bound their faithless hearts with oaths.	<i>Christi natalis nostrae spes una salutis,</i>
753	On Christ's birthday we greet our hope of salvation,	<i>Quam mundus celebrat, proxima lux aderat.</i>
754	Who the world celebrates, that they may be drawn into the light.	<i>In quam promeritam disponit ferre coronam</i>
755	In respect for this, the king ordained that day for the coronation, ⁷²	<i>Et ducis abjecto nomine rex fieri.</i>
756	That <i>duke</i> might be laid aside for the title <i>king</i> .	<i>Auro vel gemmis jubet ut sibi nobile stemma</i>
757	He ordered a noble crown of gold and jewels,	<i>Illud quo deceat fiat ab artifice.</i>
758	As is becoming, to be made by an artisan.	<i>Misit Arabs aurum, gemmas a flumine Nilus,</i>
759	He sent for Arab gold, gems from the Nile.	<i>Grecia prudentem dirigit arte fabrum,</i>
760	An experienced Greek directed the craft of the workmen,	<i>Qui Salomonicum, vix deterior Salomone,</i>
761	Who Solomon-like – scarcely less worthy of Solomon –	<i>Mirificum fecit et diadema decens.</i>
762	Made a magnificent and fitting crown.	<i>Principio frontis medium carbunculus ornat;</i>
763	First, in the middle of the front a ruby was set;	

⁷² It is significant that William waited to secure the approval of the Witenagemot before decreeing the date for the coronation. This confirms a determination that his coronation accord with all customary requirements for kings of England.

	<i>Posthinc jacinctus lucifer insequitur;</i>
764	Next a jacinth gleaming like a star;
	<i>Et tunc aurifico resplendet in orbe topazon;</i>
765	Then a topaz shone from a golden ring;
	<i>Saphirus quartum ditat honore gradum;</i>
766	Fourth, a sapphire enriched the honoured rank;
	<i>Sardonicus quintus regales obsidet aures,</i>
767	Sardonyx was fifth, in a royal setting of gold;
	<i>Cui calcedonius ordine sextus adit;</i>
768	Then Chalcedony ranked in sixth place;
	<i>Septimus est jaspis, procul a quo pellitur hostis;</i>
769	Seventh was jasper, which banishes a foe from afar;
	<i>Sardius octavus, ignivomus rutilat;</i>
770	Carnelian was eighth, glowing red;
	<i>Figitur in nona cella lux chrysolithana;</i>
771	In the ninth setting a gleaming chrysolite;
	<i>Tuque, berylle, locum clarificas decimum;</i>
772	Then a beryl seated lustrous in tenth;
	<i>Undecimum viridis numerum smaragdus adimplet;</i>
773	Eleventh a green emerald was mounted;
	<i>Huic quoque chrysoprasus fert duodenus opem;</i>
774	To this a chrysoprase added in twelfth place.
	<i>Verticis in summo stat margarita suprema,</i>
775	Above on the top place was a supreme pearl;
	<i>Quae sibi subpositos⁷³ luce replet lapides.</i>
776	Which itself filled with light the stones below.
	<i>In cujus dextra levaquae parte locata</i>
777	On either side of this were placed
	<i>Est amethysti lux, cui color est geminus.</i>
778	Gleaming amethysts, matching in colour.
	<i>Ethereus veluti propulsis nubibus axis</i>
779	Like a cloudless heaven
	<i>Insitus ignitis syderibus rutilat,</i>
780	Studded with fiery stars,

⁷³ *Suposita* in the transcription, *subpositos* is indicated by context.

	<i>Aurea lucifluis distincta corona lapillis</i>
781	The gleaming golden crown was adorned with precious stones
	<i>Undique; sic reddet⁷⁴ lumine clarifico.</i>
782	On every side. Thus it reflected light made glorious.
	<i>Sceptrum cum virga componit post diadema,</i>
783	Following the crown, a scepter and rod were made
	<i>Commoda quae pariter significant patriae:</i>
784	Which together signify the protection of the realm:
	<i>Nam sceptro tumidae regni moderantur habenae,</i>
785	The scepter evidences the royal power to govern,
	<i>Dispersionem virga colligit ac revocat.</i>
786	While the rod recalls and gathers the scattered flock.
	<i>Tempore disposito quo rex sacrandus habetur,</i>
787	At the time ordained by the king for the coronation,
	<i>Terrae magnates et populosa manus,</i>
788	The great men of the land and many of their people,
	<i>Pontificale decus, venerabilis atque senatus</i>
789	The dignitaries of the church, and the venerable Witenagemot,
	<i>Undique conveniunt regis ad officium.</i>
790	From everywhere convened to see the king confirmed in office.
	<i>Ex his eligitur praesul celeberrimus unus,</i>
791	From these one distinguished bishop was chosen,
	<i>Moribus insignis et probitate cluens,</i>
792	Conspicuous for his morals and reputation for honesty. ⁷⁵
	<i>Qui regem sacret simul et sacrando coronet,</i>
793	By such a one the king was blessed and likewise the crown,
	<i>Et regale caput stemmate nobilitet.</i>
794	And the royal head exalted with its compass. ⁷⁶
	<i>Illius imperio, solito de more priorum,</i>
795	Supreme power invested, as established by prior custom,
	<i>Bini ponuntur magnificare Deum.</i>

⁷⁴ *Renitet* in the transcription, *reddet* is indicated by context.

⁷⁵ The coronation was performed by Ealdred, Archbishop of York. If Ealdred was the “persuasive man” of line 720, who returned from court weighed down with gold, then this further description of him is satirical.

⁷⁶ *Stemmate nobilitet* in the manuscript, with *stemmate* meaning *flower stem* and *nobilitet* meaning *ennobled*.

796	The two together offered praise to God.
	<i>Ordo cucullatus, clerus cum pontificali</i>
797	Ranks of hooded priests with bishops
	<i>Nobilitate petunt templa beata Petri.</i>
798	Approached the chapel of Saint Peter.
	<i>Ante ferendo cruces sequitur processio cleri.</i>
799	A cross was brought forth followed by a procession of clerics.
	<i>Post clerum pergit pontificale decus.</i>
800	Eminent bishops followed the clergy.
	<i>Rex, multa comitumque ducum vallante caterva,</i>
801	The king, surrounded by a crowd of his many companions,
	<i>Ultimus incedit cum strepitu populi.</i>
802	Advanced at last, to cheering from the people.
	<i>Illius et dextram sustentat metropolita,⁷⁷</i>
803	His right hand was held by the metropolitan archbishop,
	<i>Ad levam graditur alter honore pari.</i>
804	His left hand by another of equal rank.
	<i>Taliter aecclesiam laudes modulando requirit</i>
805	In this manner, to the singing of the <i>Laudes</i> ,
	<i>Rex et regalem ducitur ad cathedram.</i>
806	The king was conducted to the throne.
	<i>Laudibus expletis, turba reticente canora,</i>
807	The <i>Laudes</i> complete, the crowd kept silent,
	<i>Indixit pacem cantor et ut sileant.</i>
808	A precentor bade them quiet and enjoined silence.
	<i>Conticuit clerus, compescuit ora senatus.</i>
809	The clergy fell silent, and the Witenagemot ceased to speak.
	<i>Non est auditus ullus ab ore sonus.</i>
810	Not a word was heard from any mouth.
	<i>Normannus quidam praesul mox pulpita scandens,</i>
811	A Norman bishop ascended to the pulpit,
	<i>Famosis Gallis talia verba dedit:</i>
812	And spoke these words to the famous Gauls:

⁷⁷ The use of *metropolita* in the manuscript identifies an archbishop from a major city. The coronation was, in fact, conducted by Ealdred, Archbishop of York. It seems likely *metropolita* is used to distinguish the English archbishop from the Norman archbishop.

	<i>“Oblatus vobis si rex placet, edite nobis;</i>
813	“Confirm this king, if he pleases, to reign over us;
	<i>Arbitrio vestri nam decet hoc fieri.”</i>
814	If by your judgement it is fitting that this be done.”
	<i>Concessit populus, clerus favet atque senatus.</i>
815	The people assented, the clergy granted its favour, and the Witenagemot also.
	<i>Quod sermone nequit, innuit et manibus.</i>
816	Those who could not speak nodded and raised their hands.
	<i>Sermo peroratur post illum metropolitae</i>
817	After this the metropolitan bishop delivered a speech
	<i>Haec eadem lingua protulit Angligena.</i>
818	To the same effect in the English tongue.
	<i>Spirat utraque manus, laudat, spondet famulari,</i>
819	Both sides exhaled, cheered, and pledged themselves to his service,
	<i>Annuit ex toto corde subesse sibi.</i>
820	Offering with all their hearts to submit to him.
	<i>Convertens sanctam se summus praesul ad aram</i>
821	Turning he approached the most sacred altar
	<i>Ante suam regem consuit faciem.</i>
822	Before which he would be consecrated as king.
	<i>Ad se pontifices accitos congregat omnes,</i>
823	All of the bishops assembled around him,
	<i>Et cum rege simul membra dedere solo.</i>
824	And with the king together knelt there.
	<i>Inchoat incentor stans rectus kyrieleison,</i>
825	The precentor remained standing to begin the <i>Kyri Eleison</i> .
	<i>Sanctorum pariter poscit habere preces.</i>
826	He likewise prayed to the Saints for their care.
	<i>Postquam sanctorum fit lytania peracta,</i>
827	After the Litany of the Saints was completed,
	<i>Praesule cum summo pontificalis honor</i>
828	The bishops rose together with the archbishops.
	<i>Erigitur, solo prostrato rege relicto.</i>
829	Only the king remained kneeling.
	<i>Incentor siluit, omnis et ordo tacet.</i>
830	The precentor became silent, and all ranks were silent.

	<i>Summus est antistes populo praecepit ut oret,</i>
831	The archbishop invoked the people to prayer,
	<i>Incipit et proprium protinus officium;</i>
832	And immediately led them himself in this duty.
	<i>Collectam dixit; regem de pulvere tollit.</i>
833	He said the Collect, and the king was lifted from the dust.
	<i>Crismate diffuso, regis et ipse caput</i>
834	The Chrism was poured, and he himself the head of the king
	<i>Unxit, et in regem regali more sacrauit.</i>
835	Anointed, consecrating him king in the royal manner.