

Timeline 1008 – 1066

1008

A great fleet was constructed by the command of Aethelred II to defend England against the growing numbers of Viking raids. It was based in Sandwich, Kent; one of its commanders was a Sussex thegn called Wulfnoth Cild, father of the future Earl Godwin and grandfather to the future King Harold II (Harold Godwinson).



Aethelred II



Godwin

1009

Wulfnoth Cild and another commander Brihtric had a dispute which led to conflict between them. In this conflict 100 english ships were lost. This allowed the Vikings (Danes) to land unopposed at Sandwich.

1014

Godwin (also called Godwine), Wulfnoth Cild's eldest son has the family estate of Compton in Sussex returned to him by the will of Athelstan, Aethelred's eldest son.

1015

King Cnut of Denmark invades England.

1016

Aethelred II dies; Edmund Ironside (Aethelred's second son) inherits the crown and becomes King of England.



Cnut



Edmund Ironside

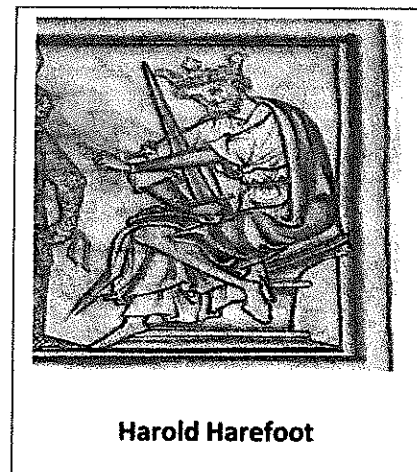
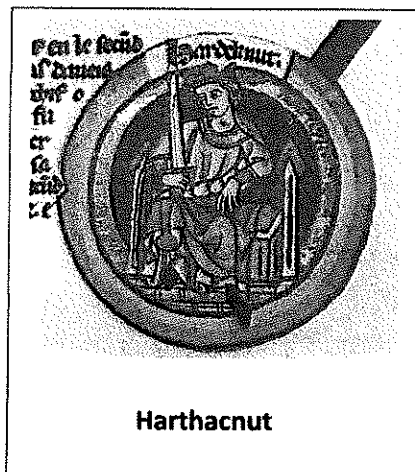
1016

Edmund Ironside dies

1016

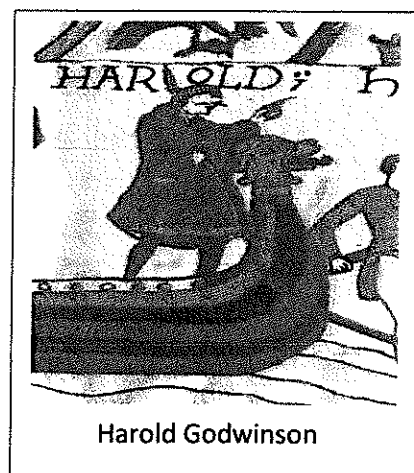
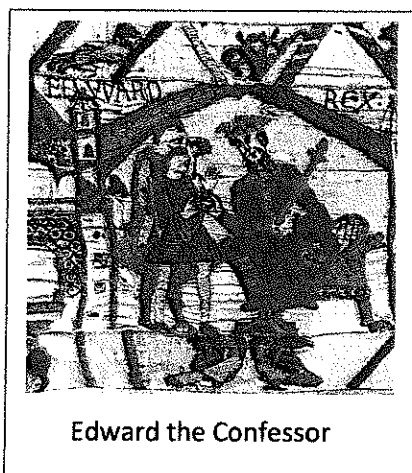
Cnut (Canute), King of Denmark, invading England, becomes King of England

- 1016** Godwin submits to Cnut, having been a close ally of Edmund Ironside.
- 1018** Godwin appointed by Cnut as earl over an area of central Wessex.
- 1019** Godwin accompanies Cnut to Denmark
- 1020** Godwin awarded further lands in Wessex, takes control of the Earldom. Also given Cnut's sister in law, Gytha, for his wife.
- 1021** Birth of Godwin's first son Swein
- 1022** Birth of Godwin's second son Harold
- 1022-23** Godwin accompanies Cnut to Denmark
- 1025** Birth of Godwin's first daughter Edith
- 1026** Birth of Godwin's third son Tostig
- 1032** Birth of Godwin's fourth son Gyrth
- 1035** Birth of Godwin's fifth son Leofwine
- 1035** Death of Cnut; Godwin supports Harthacnut's (Cnut's son ruling in Denmark at the time of Cnut's death also called Hardecnut) claim to the throne; his mother was Emma. This was disputed by Harold Harefoot, Cnut's other son by a different mother, Aelfgifu (not the same person as the mother as Atheling Athelstan or Edmund Ironside who was also called Aelfgifu).



- 1036** Emma, Harthacnut's mother calls for help from her sons from her marriage with Aethelred II (King of England 978-1016). Emma was his second wife. Her two sons Edward (Later King Edward the Confessor), and Alfred come to her aid. Edward quickly returned to Normandy while Alfred was arrested by Godwin's men and he was handed by Godwin to Harold. Godwin had now changed sides. Harold had Alfred blinded and killed. Godwin is later implicated in this crime.

- 1037** Harold I becomes King of England (Cnut's eldest son). Earl Godwin retains control of Wessex.
- 1040** Death of Harold I; Harthacnut becomes king (Cnut's youngest son)
- 1040** Birth of Godwin's sixth son Wulfnoth
- 1042** Death of Harthacnut; Edward 'the Confessor' becomes king. (Edward son of Aethelred II and his second wife Emma, eldest brother of Alfred in whose death Godwin had been implicated). At this time Godwin (Wessex) was one of three great English earls, along with Leofric (Mercia) and Siward (Northumbria). Godwin was the most powerful.



King Edward 'the Confessor' give grants of 3 small earldoms to Godwin's two sons Swein and Harold; who became Earl of East Anglia (Harold Godwinson and future King Harold II of England), along with Godwin's nephew Beorn.

Harold Godwinson marries Edith Swan-neck

- 1045** King Edward 'the Confessor' marries Earl Godwin's eldest daughter, Edith, on 23rd January. This elevated Earl Godwin to the second most important person in England after the king. He was now father in law to the king, he was Earl of Wessex, the richest earldom in England, and members of his family held a further three small earldoms.
- 1046** Swein, Godwin's eldest son abduct the abbess of Leominster and keeps her captive. After a year he is persuaded to release her and is exiled by the King. Swein's lands were divided between Harold Godwinson and Beorn. It did cause tension between the king and Godwin as Godwin supported Swein's actions.
- 1047** Another conflict arises between the king and Godwin. Swein Ulfson (Swein the II of Denmark) Godwin's nephew asked King Edward to help him defend his kingdom against Magnus of Norway. King Edward decided not to help Swein Ulfson angering Godwin.

1049

Godwin's eldest son Swein returns from exile seeking the restoration of his lands and titles. Both his brother Harold and cousin Beorn reject this idea and with the Godwin family divided King Edward rejected Swein's pleas and told him to leave England after 4 days.

Swein then kidnapped Beorn, possibly to use as a hostage, but then killed him, possibly as he refused to speak to King Edward on his behalf. The killing of a member of his own family outraged the King and members of Swein's fleet who then began to desert him. Swein was once again in exile and again relations between Godwin and the king soured as he appeared to sympathise with his son Swein. Ralph the king's nephew now takes the earldom vacated by Beorn and Herefordshire.

1050

After much persuasion by his father Godwin, Swein is allowed to return to England and regain control of his earldom, much of which is in Herefordshire leading to tension between himself and Ralph. Swein also agrees to go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to pay penance, which he embarked on in 1052.

King Edward disbands the mercenary fleet, which the Godwin family had been prominent in leading.

1051

1st March, King Edward appoints Robert of Jumieges as Archbishop of Canterbury in place of Godwin's preference Aethelric. King Edward also appoints Spearhafoc as the Bishop of London.

The newly appointed Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert of Jumieges discovers that part of the see (land) held by the Archbishop of Canterbury has in past fallen under the control of Earl Godwin. Archbishop Robert fails to get this land reappointed to church lands in the shire courts.

This was a period of great tension between King Edward and Earl Godwin. Archbishop Robert began a whispering campaign against Godwin and reminded the king about Godwin's involvement in the King's brother's death, Arthur. At this time the king has also decided that he needed to divorce Godwin's daughter, Edith as she had not yet produced an heir for Edward. There were also continuing disputes over Archbishop Roberts lands controlled by Godwin and contested land in Herefordshire between Swein and Ralph.



Robert of Jumieges



Count Eustace of Boulogne

1051 In July, Count Eustace of Boulogne (Edward's former brother in law), visited England. While in Dover, Wessex, there was an incident in which some citizens of Dover were killed. Edward it seems planned this incident in order to set up Godwin and use it as an excuse his troublesome Earl. Edward now ordered Godwin to ravage the town of Dover. Godwin refused so Edward called a meeting of the royal council in Gloucester on September 8th 1051. Both sides called on their supporters and both met at Gloucester with sizeable forces behind them. Negotiations were held and hostages exchanged. On the 21st September the two sides met again in London. By now Edward had swelled his forces while the numbers loyal to Godwin had dwindled. The king now felt confident to take direct action. King Edward declared Swein an outlaw and when Godwin refused to meet the king without assurance for his safety in October the king also declared all of Godwin's children, including Harold outlaws. The Godwin family fled into exile.

Edward now acted swiftly to redistribute the land held by the Godwin family. He retained most of Wessex for himself, Aelfgar (Earl Leofric's son) received most of Harold's earldom, Earl Siward received most of Huntingdonshire and Cambridgeshire from Harold's earldom, while Ralph's position was strengthened with land taken from Swein. The king now sent Edith to Wilton Abbey and began to arrange his divorce.

1052 In June, Godwin who had been raising an army in Bruges (Belgium) sailed across the channel and landed at Dungeness and began recruiting Kentish seamen. He then returned to Bruges. Godwin now raided towns and villages on the Isle of Wight. He then called on Harold (who had been exiled in Ireland) to meet him either at Portland or the Isle of Wight. The combined forces now sailed to London. The king's position compared to the previous year was severely weakened as the Northern Earls Siward and Leofric had not sent their forces to assist the king. Negotiations were now held. Fearing for the result of these negotiations Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert fled England. During negotiations it was agreed that all charges against Godwin and his family would be dropped and their lands returned. It was also agreed that the king would remain married to Edith. One exception to the negotiations Swein, who was at that time on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

1052 News of Swein's death reaches England. This made Harold the heir to Godwin and helped to improve the families relations with Edward.

1053 Death of Godwin; his son Harold is selected by Edward to become the new earl of Wessex.

1055 Siward of Northumbria dies. Edward appoints Tosti (Harold's Brother) to become the new Earl of Northumbria.

1057 Atheling Edward (Edward the Exile – son of Edmund Ironside former King of England prior to Cnut) arrives in England as the heir to King Edward the Confessor. He died shortly after arrival in England after 40 years in exile. His son Edgar did however

survive his father and Edward now had a legitimate heir to the throne, albeit Edgar was a young boy at this time.

30th September, Earl Leofric of Mercia died and his son Aelfgar was appointed as Earl of Mercia by Edward. Gyrth, younger brother of Harold and Tosti is appointed as Earl of East Anglia replacing Aelfgar. 21st December Earl Ralph, Edward's nephew, the Earl of Herefordshire and Gloucestershire died and his lands were absorbed into the holdings of Harold. Leofwine the younger brother of Harold, Tosti and Gyrth was appointed as Earl of East Midlands. This meant that Earl Aelfgar was now the only Earl in England who was not part of the Godwin family.

1058 Earl Aelfgar, makes an alliance with Gruffydd of Wales in which he agrees to marry his daughter Alditha to Gruffydd. King Edward could not accept Aelfgar making an alliance with one of his key enemies and therefore banished him. Aelfgar fled to join Gruffydd and with the help of Gruffydd and Magnus (son of Harald King of Norway) he raided the English coast around the Mersey and Northumbria. Edward negotiated with Aelfgar and he was restored to his earldom.

1062 It is likely that Earl Aelfgar of Mercia dies late in this year. He was replaced by his son Edwin. Upon the death of Earl Aelfgar, Earl Harold gathered a cavalry force of 100 men and led a surprise attack against King Gruffydd of Wales. The aim was to kill Gruffydd but he escaped so Harold and his men burnt Gruffydd's palace and ships.

1063 A joint military operation by Harold and Tosti was launched into North Wales. Anglesey was occupied and devastated during this campaign. This was the granary of North Wales and the foundation of Gruffydd's power. On the 5th August Cynan, son of Iago killed Gruffydd and brought his head to Earl Harold, who then took it to the King. In North Wales Gruffydd was replaced by his two half- brothers Bleddyn and Rhiwallon. In South Wales several families battled for control of the area.

1064 Around 1064 Earl Harold visits Duke William in Normandy. The purpose of Harold's visit is not clear but it appears that there are three likely reasons; 1. By accident 2. To arrange some kind of alliance, possibly marriage 3. To negotiate the release of hostages taken to Normandy by the previous Archbishop of Canterbury Robert of Jumieges in 1052 (Wulfnoth – Godwin's son and Harold's younger brother and Hakon – Swein's son). On his way to Normandy Harold's expedition was blown by a storm onto the coast of Ponthieu, a small county bordering Normandy. Here Harold's expedition was seized and imprisoned at Beaurain by Count Guy, with the intention of demanding a huge ransom. William hearing of this demanded that Count Guy hand Harold over to him, which Count Guy did. William warmly welcomed Harold to Normandy and Harold accompanied William in a military raid against the Bretons. It is at this time that Harold swore an oath to William, promising to help him to become the King of England. Harold had little choice at this time. William kept Harold's brother Wulfnoth as hostage but allowed Harold to return home with his nephew Hakon.

In October 1065 the thegns of Yorkshire and the rest of Northumbria seized York. There is a wider rebellion in Northumbria against the rule of Earl Tosti – most likely due to the demands for greater taxes from the people of the Earldom. The Northern rebels chose Morcar (younger brother of Earl Edwin of Mercia) as their new Earl. The Northern rebels now led by Morcar and joined with the forces of Earl Edwin along with some Welsh allies marched south to meet with the King and to negotiate this new reality in Northumbria. They were met at Northampton by Earl Harold, who came to negotiate as he brought no army with him. On 28th October Harold travelled to Oxford where the Royal Council was due to meet. Harold explained that the rebels could not be persuaded to take Tosti back and that the only way to do this was civil war. He strongly argued against this option and stated that the rebels' demands be met. Although King Edward initially called for troops to be gathered to regain Northumbria for Tosti he soon realised that this was unrealistic and that war should be avoided. King Edward accepted the rebels' demands, in November Tosti was outlawed probably as he would not accept the King's or Harold's actions. Tosti in exile flees to Flanders and refuge with his brother-in-law, Count Baldwin V.

Harold begins to gain support for his move for the crown. In November 1065 King Edward fell severely ill. At the Christmas royal gathering Harold canvassed for support over Atheling Edgar (Son of Edward the exile and grandson of King Edmund Ironside) who had been with the court since his and his father's return from exile in Hungary. Harold had the support from his brothers Gyrth and Leofwine. In order to push his claim over that of Atheling Edgar, Harold pointed out the youth of Edgar and the growing military threat from Normandy. He forged an alliance with the two brothers Earl Edwin of Mercia and the newly appointed Earl Morcar of Northumbria by agreeing to marry their sister Alditha. Harold also gained the support of the two Archbishops, Canterbury and York.



William of Normandy



Harald Hardrada

1066

On the 5th January 1066 King Edward 'the confessor' died. On his deathbed he bequeathed his kingdom to Earl Harold. Earl Harold becomes king- Harold II on the 6th January 1066 the same day the King Edward was buried.

In April the former Earl, Tosti with a large Flemish fleet raided the Isle of Wight and the coastline in the south. He appears to have not been joined by any additional followers. King Harold called out land and naval forces to deal with him. In response Tosti sailed North hoping to rally support from his former holdings. At this time King Harold called out further land and sea forces to prepare for what he considered the inevitable attack that was to come from William of Normandy. Men were stationed all along the south coast and the fleet gathered at Sandwich. Tosti began raiding the coast of Lincolnshire and killed a number of men, now under the control of Earl Morcar. The two northern earls Morcar and Edwin led a large force against Tosti who was expelled from Lincolnshire and who fled further north to seek refuge from his ally Malcolm King of Scots.

Harold now based his fleet at the Isle of Wight in addition to the land forces along the south coast. He also sent spies to judge the readiness of the Norman preparations.

Due to unfavourable winds the Normans had still not launched their fleet by the start of September 1066 and so Harold disbanded his forces on the 8th of September.

In late autumn of 1066, Tosti who had gained the support of King Harald of Norway (a.k.a Harald Hardradi or Harald Hardrada) sailed to England with 300 ships and a large army and landed at Riccall in North Yorkshire, 10 miles south of York. This force was met at Fulford by the Earls Morcar and Edwin. The Battle of Fulford took place on Wednesday 20th September and was long and bloody. However, the result was the defeat of the Northern Earl's army and although they escaped many of their men were killed. King Harald of Norway and his troops now took the city of York.

King Harold of England by this time had learnt of this new threat and called up a sizeable army and marched north. On this march King Harold of England learnt that the troops of King Harald of Norway were divided. On the 25th of September Kings Harold of England's troops arrived at Stamford Bridge where the bulk of the Norwegians were based. It was a crushing defeat for the Norwegians, in which King Harald of Norway and Tosti were killed and it effectively ended the Viking Age.

On the 27th of September 1066 the wind changed direction and the Norman army crossed the channel overnight and landed at Pevensey on the 28th September. Due to King Harold facing the Norwegians in the north William's invasion was unopposed.

On the 14th October 1066 the two opposing armies met and faced each other at Senlac Ridge, the English on top of the ridge with the Normans below them.

After a long day of fighting it seemed that the Normans had failed to defeat the English and William's chance to conquer England had been lost. When in the last

Norman attack of the battle King Harold was hit by an arrow and the English defence wavered and the Norman cavalry were able to infiltrate the English lines and cut them down. It is likely that Harold and his brothers Gyrth and Leofwine were all killed at this point. Harold's army largely fled the field of battle.

After the Battle of Hastings 1066

King Harold was buried by the Norman by the sea shore near the battlefield, with his brothers and his huscarls (house carls) by his side.

William now marched largely without resistance to London – the English losses during 1066 not just at Hastings but also at Stamford Bridge largely explain this.

The remaining English leaders now gathered around the Atheling Edgar in London – men like Archbishops Stigand and Ealdred and the Earls Edwin and Morcar. Indeed English forces held the Thames Bridge against the Normans forcing William to attempt to cross the Thames further West at Wallingford.

However, militarily the English were no real match for the growing numbers of Norman invaders. Atheling Edgar was still too young and inexperienced to lead an army let alone rule. The group around Atheling Edgar quickly broke up after the royal treasure stored at Winchester was seized by the Normans. Earl Edwin and Morcar sent their heavily pregnant and recent widow of Harold North to Chester and they withdrew their support from Atheling Edgar.

The remaining English leaders submitted to William at Wallingford and at Berkhamstead.

William entered London unopposed and was crowned king at Westminster on Christmas Day 1066.

With the country subdued and many castles under construction William in March 1067 returned to Normandy accompanied with any English leaders who might act as rallying points in his absence, including Atheling Edgar, Earls Edwin and Morcar and Archbishops Stigand and Ealdred.

