

**WILLIAM -  
THE CONQUEROR!**  
Stewart Ross





# CONTENTS

- Page 7 **TO THE READER**
- Page 8 **THE STORY SO FAR**
- Page 10 **TIME LINE**
- Page 13 **Chapter 1 | TO THE DUKE – IMMEDIATELY!**  
Walter Giffard returns to Normandy from Spain. William, Duke of Normandy, summons him. King Edward of England dies.
- Page 16 **Chapter 2 | THE GREEN HILLS OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE**  
Walter delivers a present to the Duke from the King of Spain.
- Page 19 **Chapter 3 | TAKE CARE!**  
The Duke of Normandy decides to claim the English crown from King Harold.
- Page 22 **Chapter 4 | TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE**  
The Duke assembles an army. It sails to England.
- Page 25 **Chapter 5 | FIRST BLOOD**  
King Harold defeats Tostig and Harald in the north. He comes south to fight the Normans.
- Page 28 **Chapter 6 | SENLAC HILL**  
The English army seizes Senlac Hill. The Normans attack.
- Page 31 **Chapter 7 | ‘I AM ALIVE!’**  
The English fend off the Normans. The Normans begin to retreat. The English come down the hill.
- Page 34 **Chapter 8 | CONQUEROR!**  
The Normans fight back. William sends Walter to kill Harold. Harold dies. The Normans win the Battle of Hastings.
- Page 38 **THE HISTORY FILE**
- Page 43 **NEW WORDS**



## TO THE READER

*William – the Conqueror!* takes place mostly in the year 1066. The main characters in the story, including Walter Giffard and William, Duke of Normandy, are real. The major events, like the famous Battle of Hastings, are also true. In this way, I have tried to bring to life one of the most important events in British history.

Stewart Ross

## THE STORY SO FAR ...

### EDWARD THE CONFESSOR

Between 1042 and 1066, England was ruled by King Edward. He was later known as 'Edward the Confessor' because he was supposed to have been especially holy. Unfortunately, he had no children – so who would inherit his crown after his death? In those days, there were no clear rules on the matter. This could lead to bitter squabbling, and even to war.

### HAROLD GODWINSON

The most powerful of King Edward's subjects was Godwin, Earl of Wessex. He had eleven sons and daughters, one of whom, Edith, married the King. When the Earl died in 1053, his sons took over his lands and his power. The eldest son, Harold Godwinson, became Earl of Wessex. On Edward's death, he was many people's favourite to become King of England.

## WILLIAM, DUKE OF NORMANDY

We are not sure who King Edward wanted to inherit his crown. At some point during his reign, he promised it to his friend William, Duke of Normandy. Normandy was a region in northern France that had been settled by Vikings ('men from the north' or 'Northmen', giving 'Normandy' its name). William claimed that Harold had visited Normandy and promised to help him inherit the crown.

## A RICH PRIZE

England was one of the wealthiest and best-governed countries in all of northern Europe. Its crown was a real prize for whoever managed to seize it. As we have seen, Harold and William were the obvious candidates. However, at the beginning of 1066, two others had a claim. One was Harald Hadrada, King of Norway. The other was a 14-year-old boy known as Edgar the Atheling, the great-nephew of Edward the Confessor.

So, as King Edward lay dying, several pairs of greedy eyes were fixed on his crown, hoping it would come to them ...

# TIME LINE

CE (Common Era)

**1042**

Edward the Confessor  
becomes King of England

**1051**

William, Duke of Normandy,  
visits England

**1020**

**1045**

Edward marries Edith,  
daughter of Earl Godwin of Wessex

**1053**

Earl Godwin dies; his son Harold  
becomes Earl of Wessex



## **1066**

**5 January** Edward the Confessor dies

**6 January** Edward buried; Harold crowned king

**8 September** King Harald Hadrada and Harold's brother, Tostig, invade northern England

**20 September** Harold defeats the invaders at the Battle of Stamford Bridge

**28 September** William's invasion fleet lands in Pevensey Bay

**14 October** Battle of Hastings; Harold killed

**December** London surrenders to William

**25 December** William, Duke of Normandy, crowned as William I, King of England

**1090**

**1064**

Harold visits Normandy

**1087**

William the Conqueror dies;  
his son becomes William II



## Chapter 1

# TO THE DUKE - IMMEDIATELY!

As I rode back from Spain on the magnificent *Principe*, I looked mightily impressive. There I was, riding at the head of my household on one of the finest horses that ever trotted upon the Earth. The long procession behind me was headed by my young squire, Roger FitzHerbert. Then came my cup-bearer Flaald, followed by my priest, and a dozen of my household servants. My fifty soldiers marched along tidily at the back.

Peasants came out of their hovels, took off their hats and bowed as we went by. I ignored them, of course. The Lord of Longueville could not be seen to show friendship with such common people.

I suppose they were jealous of my good looks, my wealth, my position and my reputation. I don't blame them. Yes, I am a proud man and I know pride is a sin – but I can't help it. You see, I have a great deal to be proud of.

Back then, towards the end of the year 1065, I was returning home after helping the King of Spain in his war against the Saracens. We had won several victories and I was famous for capturing the town of Barbastre. The Spanish king sent me home with the title 'Walter of Barbastre'. He also gave me a gift for my lord, Duke William. The gift was *Principe*, the splendid war horse

I was riding on.

The journey from Spain to my new castle in Normandy was long and hard. As October passed drearily into November, heavy rain set in. The roads became rivers of mud – except for the few paved ones built long ago by the Romans. I hated mud because it splashed onto my fine clothes and made poor *Principe* look like a farm carthorse.

When we set out, I had planned to split my small army into two, one half going in front of me and the other half at the rear. This was in case some local baron thought he could get the better of me in an ambush. My personal priest, Father Alan, told me this was not necessary.

‘You see, my lord’, he said, ‘You are a crusader. You have been fighting for Christ against the Saracens. His Holiness the Pope has commanded that no Christian harm a crusader. If they do, their soul will be condemned to hell for all eternity.’

This made a lot of sense to me, which is why I was not afraid to put myself at the head of my column. Nevertheless, to make sure everyone knew I was a crusader returning from a holy war, I had ordered one of Father Alan’s servant boys to ride beside me holding a golden banner with a silver cross on it.

We reached Longueville just before Christmas. My young wife, Ermengarde, was delighted to see me alive and well, and we spent merry days celebrating the birth of Our Saviour.

Alas! The time of idle pleasure did not last long. At the beginning of January 1066, a messenger came galloping up to my castle and requested to speak with me. He came from William, Duke of Normandy, with an urgent message.

‘Walter Giffard, Lord of Longueville,’ he said, kneeling before me. ‘The Duke requires your presence at his court. Immediately!’

I was, I must confess, rather surprised. ‘Why on earth does my lord want to see me now, in the middle of winter?’ I asked.

The messenger looked around to see who was listening. ‘He has received news from England, sire,’ he said, speaking so that only I could hear him. ‘Bad news. The holy Edward, King of England, is dead – and some villain has stolen his crown!’