

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

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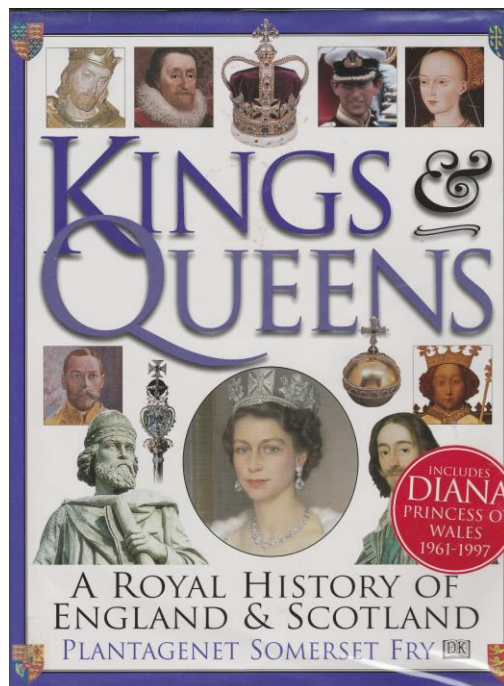
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Kings and queens: a royal history of England and Scotland. (2001). London: Dorling Kindersley.



WILLIAM I

1066-1087



THE COAT OF ARMS OF WILLIAM I

There is some confusion as to whether two or three lions were featured on William's coat of arms, but two is the usual number. The use of three lions was not confirmed until the reign of Henry II in 1154.

BORN THE ILLEGITIMATE SON of Robert, Duke of Normandy, William inherited his father's duchy in 1035 at a young age. By 1047 he had established a reputation as a brilliant commander, one who was never to fight a battle he did not win nor besiege a castle he did not take. In 1051 he visited Edward the Confessor in England, where he was promised the succession to the English throne. When Edward was succeeded by Harold, Earl of Wessex, in January 1066, William felt cheated, brought a Norman army over to England, defeated Harold at the Battle of Hastings and was crowned King of England. Now known as "the Conqueror", William subdued the local population by confiscating Anglo-Saxon estates and giving them to his Norman followers. William died in 1087 after falling from his horse while besieging the French city of Nantes.

 WILLIAM I

- ◆ **Born** Falaise Castle, Normandy, 1027/28, illegitimate son of Robert of Normandy and Arlette of Conteville.
- ◆ **Married** Matilda of Flanders, Cathedral of Notre Dame d'Eu, Normandy, 1050/52, 10 children.
- ◆ **Acceded** 14 Oct 1066.
- ◆ **Crowned** Westminster Abbey, 25 Dec 1066.
- ◆ **Died** Rouen, Normandy, 9 Sept 1087, aged 59/60.



CONTEMPORARY REFERENCE

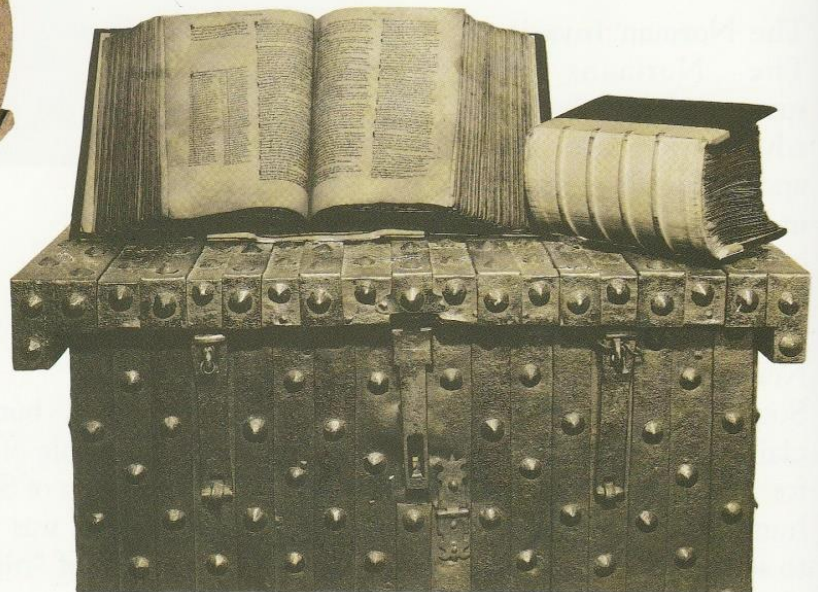
The writ above was issued by William I to Ralph, Sheriff of Surrey, concerning the dues owed by Pyrford Manor. Its importance is that it is one of the few contemporary sources to make reference to the great Domesday Book.

DOMESDAY BOOK

Consisting of two volumes – one a survey of the prosperous counties of Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk and the other of the rest of England – the Domesday Book is shown (right) on the replica of the casket in which it was kept upon its completion in 1086.

A GREAT SURVEY

In 1085 William sent out commissioners to all the counties of England, except those in the far north, to make a record of the population, extent, value, state of cultivation, ownership and tenancy of the land. The commissioners paid great attention to detail, even recording the numbers of livestock in each shire, and wrote the facts and figures up in what is known as the Domesday Book. One of the most interesting facts to emerge was the size of the population, which stood at some two million.





THE CONQUEROR

William was about 1.8 metres (5 feet 10 inches) tall, thick-set, with a rasping voice, a fist that could fell an ox and “an eye that could quell the fiercest baron”. Charismatic and demonstrating considerable powers of leadership from an early age, he became a patient, tactful, courageous, devout, ruthless and sometimes cruel king. Such qualities inspired loyalty among his followers and fear among his enemies, made him constantly victorious in battle and enabled him to introduce the feudal system, strong government and an accompanying political, social and economic stability to England.

WILLIAM I

This portrait of William is unlikely to be realistic, for it was not drawn until the 13th century, when it appeared in the Great Chronicle of Matthew Paris. The church William holds in his right hand represents his ecclesiastical patronage.

THE NORMAN NOBILITY

When William landed with his army on the shores of England in 1066, he was accompanied by most of the leading nobles of Normandy and a number of church dignitaries. Among these were two of William's half-brothers (one of whom, Odo, was created Earl of Kent and later became Bishop of Bayeux) and several personal friends, including his childhood friend William FitzOsbern. After William's victory at Hastings, many of his followers were rewarded with huge tracts of land, confiscated from the Anglo-Saxon nobility, and they were licensed to build castles.

WILLIAM AND HIS NOBLES

This manuscript illustration depicts William accompanied by members of the Norman nobility.



EVENTS OF THE REIGN 1066 – 1087

- ♦ 1066 William and his Norman army defeats Harold II and the Saxons at the Battle of Hastings. Harold is killed and after subduing the rest of the country, William is crowned King of England on Christmas Day.
- ♦ 1067 William suppresses a Saxon revolt in the southwest of England.
- ♦ 1068-9 After putting down a revolt led by Edwin and Morcar, grandsons of Leofric of Mercia, William lays waste to the northern counties of England.
- ♦ 1070 Stigand, the Anglo-Saxon Archbishop of Canterbury is dismissed by William, and the Frenchman, Lanfranc of Bec, is appointed in his place.
- ♦ 1070 Archbishop Lanfranc lays the foundations of Canterbury Cathedral after the earlier building is destroyed by fire.
- ♦ 1071 William defeats a revolt led by Hereward the Wake in East Anglia, thus putting an end to Saxon resistance to his rule.
- ♦ 1072 William invades Scotland and compels Malcolm III to pay homage to him at Abernethy.
- ♦ 1073 Archbishopric of York subordinated to Archbishopric of Canterbury.
- ♦ 1078 William begins the construction of the White Tower at the Tower of London.
- ♦ 1079 William begins the construction of a Norman Cathedral at Winchester.
- ♦ 1079 Robert, William's eldest son, leads a rebellion in Normandy, but is defeated by his father at the battle of Gerberoi and his life is spared.
- ♦ 1079 New Forest enclosed by William as a royal hunting area. Severe Forest Laws against trespassing introduced.
- ♦ 1080 William refuses to pay homage to the Pope.
- ♦ 1082 Odo, Bishop of Bayeux – William's half-brother – is arrested for conspiracy.
- ♦ 1085 William orders a survey of the shires of England; the information is recorded in the Domesday Book.
- ♦ 1086 The Domesday Book is completed and William gathers all the feudal lords and tenants-in-chief of England to renew their oath of fealty to him at Salisbury.
- ♦ 1087 William dies of his injuries after falling from his horse while besieging the French city of Nantes.