The Normans

The Norman Heritage

Jersey's links with Normandy date to the early 10th century when the second Duke of Normandy, William Longsword with the blesssing of the Feench king, annexed the Cotentin peninsula and the Channel Islands from the Bretons. However, the island's political links and associations with England are essentially down to the actions of one of its leaders - the seventh duke, William II It was the novocentenary of the death of this duke, better known as William the Conqueror, and its importance to the Channel Islands that caused these lectures to be set down.

The importance of this one man who lived and died over nine centuries ago should not be overlooked. It was because of his actions that the islands have links with England and the Kings of England embarked on a French adventure that was to last five centuries and lead to an implacable enmity that was to last for eight.

Without William's invasion of England in 1066 the Channel Islands would have remained part of France and, in all probability, would today be underpopulated backwaters.

The peculiar status of the islands is a direct result of this action and the consequent aggression. Without the imposed frontier status which brought strategic importance to the area the islands would never have achieved the measure of self government, acceptance of their own laws and custom with the resulting privileges that followed.

Therefore, the links with the Dukes of Normandy are more than romantically important to the island, they are constitutionally important. They are the basis of why an islander can be intensely loyal to the British Crown but not to Her Majesty's government in Westminster.

William II, the seventh Duke of Normandy, is worth remembering as the man who started the ball rolling.

Chapter one
The origins and growth of the Duchy of Normandy

For most people mention of the Normans immediately conjures up an image of the Bayeux Tapestry, William the Conqueror and 1066. While these simplistic images are a useful peg on which to hang an age it would be wrong to restrict ourselves to this simple view of the Norman achievement.

The Bayeux Tapestry - La tapisserie de la reine Mathilde as the French so grandly call it - was in fact made by English artists based in Canterbury to promote Norman propaganda and explain English defeat in battle by means of Biblical allusion and Divine intervention.

William the Conqueror was more usually refered to as William the Bastard or William II, seventh Duke of Normandy. Was he the typical Norman leader or perhaps his rather unorthodox beginnings moulded his character more than we have allowed for in the past.

1066 - a year of destiny with far reaching effects for many - yet a year like any other. It did not mark the beginning of Norman influence in England or the end of Anglo Saxon society, perhaps it could best be described as an English watershed. For Jersey, however, it marked the beginnings of the English connection, best summed up perhaps by the phrase "your King, our Duke".

The whole 1066 debacle was merely one aspect of a people who were to prove perhaps the most dynamic force in medieval Europe, the Normans could be described as the acceptable face of the Viking saga.

The Norman adventure could be subtitled "from pirates to potentates" with the action spanning government and the church throughout most of Europe from the Cheviots to Jerusalem and beyond. The effect of these people was felt in many areas from language to architecture from laws to the landscape. Perhaps their over-riding talent was their adaptability and skill at adapting what they found; for if we take the English experience in the late eleventh century, how else can we explain how twenty thousand Normans controlled over a million Anglo-Saxons.

In order to understand the Normans, it is first necessary to appreciate their origins and the development of the Duchy of Normandy.

The origins of Normandy lay in the Viking expansion of the ninth century. This outburst of violent raiding and colonisation has traditionally been seen as the result of a number of factors such as overpopulation, the growth of a centralised power, development of trading markets and the evolution of the supreme symbol of the viking period the - longship. However, this is, in many respects, an oversimplification of the situation.

It would be wrong to see all Scandinavian activity throughout the two and a half centuries of the Viking period as being the same. The Swedes tended to be eastward looking, developing trade routes through Russia to the Mediterranean and Baghdad. The main Norwegian thrust was westwards to colonise island chains in the Atlantic, culminating in the settlement of Iceland and Greenland and the brief colonisation of America. The Danish activity can be divided into two parts; the ninth century raiding and attempted colonisation of England and Northern France and the eleventh century military campaigns of King Sweyn Forkbeard and his son Cnut.

Despite these being national trends, most viking activity was carried out by individuals and smallgroups. Most Norse colonists in the ninth and tenth centuries emigrated for the same reason as their nineteenth century descendants who travelled to America and Australia - to improve their standard of living, simply to get a better life for themselves and, more especially, their children.

As far as the traditional reasons for the viking expansion are concerned they are worth bearing in mind but it would be a mistake to underestimate the importance of human nature.

Viking raids were often motivated by greed, the attacks on monasteries and churches were not part of an anti-christian movement rather they were simply effective money raising activities for these were the equivalent of our modern High Street banks.

The longship has been identified with this Viking expansion for centuries yet it was only one style of ship available to the Norse vikings. A whole range of viking ships has been discovered in the Roskilde Fjord in Denmark - these included the more usual style of vessel the jack-of-all-trades which is typified by the Gokstad ship. This could be used as a raider as well as a trader. The ship was the means of the Viking expansion, for while the sea proves to be a barrier to modern day living, to the Norseman it was his chief means of communication.

Overpopulation was not a real factor in the expansion period, in fact some areas were actually depopulated during the ninth century as the Norse settlers left marginal land in their homeland to take up better land overseas. True, Norsemen could be polygimous but this, of course, was only a minority as the general feeling was that one woman was enough. The picture we have of Norse polygimists practising infanticide comes from an Arab writer who was describing the "nouveau riche" traders and merchants of Hedeby. They were not typical of the period - a modern parallel would be to base a view of our times on the behaviour of the financial whizkids following the "Big Bang" in the City.

The development of markets did involve Norsemen overseas but this was surely a result of Norse expansion rather than a cause of it. These market towns such as Hedeby or Kaupang-Skirringskalr traded in goods from all over Europe, not only in goods from areas of Norse settlement - wines from the south, furs from the north, and slaves from anywhere.

The growth of a centralised authority in the Scandinavian countries was a factor in the viking expansion with Denmark developing first in the early ninth century, then Norway under Harald Hairfair towards the end of the century. However, this factor has probably been over-emphasised for we know that the Norse settlers were colonising Orkney, Shetland, the Hebrides and the Faroes in the early ninth century, well before Harald Hairfair came onto the political scene and Iceland was colonised by 880AD while Harald was still consolidating his power but we know from the Landnamabok that many of the original settlers were "Gall Gaedhl" - the Norse who had settled in Ireland.

Nevertheless, the insecure and the enemies of these centralised king-figures did leave their homelands, Rollo or Hrolf Gangr may have been one of them. He acquired his nickname, according to Snorri Sturlusson, because ... *he was grown so big that no steed could bear him and therefore walked everywhere; ...*

In chapter 24 of Harald Hairfair's Saga in the "Heimskringla" Snorri wrote . . . *King Harald declared Hrolf outlaw in Norway ... Hrolf Gangr afterwards crossed the sea to the Hebrides and from there went south west to France; he harried there and possessed himself of a great jarldom; he settled many Norsemen there, and it was afterwards called Normandy. From Hrolf are descended the jarls in Normandy*.

Essentially, the origins of the Duchy of Normandy was merely a recognition of fact by the Carolingian king, Charles the Simple. By the so called treaty of St Clair-sur-Epte in 911 the Frankish king was merely confirming ownership of the land around the mouth of the Seine between Rouen and Lisieux on the leader of a band of viking settlers in return for homage/loyalty and an instant conversion to Christianity. The leader of this band was called Hrolf Gangr, luckily he went down into history under the more familiar name of Rollo. While Rollo appears to have taken his

conversion seriously, many of his followers were of the opinion that one more god didn't matter and, indeed, were no strangers to baptism. This treaty imposed on the vikings after their defeat at Chartres resembles that of Alfred the Great with Guthrum after the defeat of the mycel-here at Edington in 878AD. As the land was already controlled by viking settlers and had been for at least fifty years Charles was not losing anything and was in fact gaining a "buffer state" across the mouth of the Seine, he had in effect turned the "poachers into gamekeepers".

There had been viking activity in the area since about 800AD with intense activity in the 840s - 841 Rouen was sacked and the raiders overwintered in the area, in 845 they were operating on the Seine and in 885 Paris was sacked. The Frankish monarchy was split and civil war allowed the Norse raiders to exploit an unstable situation.

Locally, a Jarl Hasting (Hastein?) was operating in the 850s and it was he who was responsible for the destruction of St Magloire's monastery on Sark. Wace, the twelfth century Jersey born poet described him as a saracen

"... ke firent la gent Sarrazine
en Aureni, en Guernesi,
en Sairc, en Erm, en Gersi..."

In this context saracen meant any sea-raider. In local legends there was a jarl Godefroy Haraldsson who was also known as "Geoffroi de Grand Sarrazin" and he was credited with having built a stronghold to dominate the western half of Guernsey on the site of Catel church.

In 867 King Charles the Bald gave the Cotentin, which would have included the islands, to his vassal, King Saloman of Brittany. This would seem to indicate that the Carolingian king was under pressure from the east and delegated the western defences to his sub-kings while he concentrated on the major threat. This did not prove to be a successful ploy as in 878 the monks from Dol had to flee inland to Orleans. The Vikings occupied Brittany during the early tenth century until 939 when Alan Barbetorte aided by King Athelstan of England ended Viking rule.
We know that the Viking "mycel here" was operating on both sides of the English Channel during the late ninth century and when Alfred the Great proved to be too strong an enemy they turned their attention to France and Brittany splitting up into numerous bands operating all around the coast. Indeed Rollo was probably a member of this "mycel-here" and as a jarl's son he probably lead one of the small war bands.

Rollo's land grab, later confirmed by the French king, was enlarged in 924 when he received more territory to the west as a reward for his continued loyalty. Again this land, especially the Bessin area around Bayeux, was in all probability already settled by Norse speaking settlers as this was to remain the Norse speaking heartland of Normandy for the rest of the century. Dudo of St Quentin states that although viking speech was dead in Rouen by 1025 it was still being spoken in the more traditional Norse area of Bayeux.

In the 940s following the assassination of Duke William Longsword by Frenchmen there was a revival of Norse culture and a resurgence of the Thor cult. This was a reaction against the "Frenchification" of the Norman court backed up by a fresh influx of immigrants from the Norse colonies in Ireland. This new wave of Norse speaking immigrants seem to have brought with them their Norse speaking wives, whereas the Norse settlement of Rouen was essentially a male affair which resulted in inter-marriage and children being brought up by French speaking mothers. According to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, William Longsword, Rollo's son by Poppa, the daughter of the count of Bessin, was created ruler in 928 but as Rollo did not die until 930/1 it would seem probable that this was the creation of a co-ruler to ensure the succession.

Norman expansion was actively encouraged by the French kings as long as it was directed against Brittany because this kept the Breton kings under control and weakened the power of the Normans while allowing them an outlet

for adventure and for "vikings" (raids). In 933 William Longsword annexed the Cotentin and the islands, described as "*the land of the Bretons by the seacoast*", from the Bretons who were otherwise engaged with other Viking bands. This transfer of power was recognised by the French king but effective control over the independent Norse settlers was not asserted until the early eleventh century during the reign of Duke Richard II. Indeed the Bishop of Coutances driven from his cathedral city by the pagan Norse in the mid-tenth century was unable to return until 1025 although he had made attempts as early as 990AD. This obviously had its repercussions for Jersey for the Island had been in the see of Coutances since the early eighth century. Perhaps this explains why there was an outburst of ecclesiastica building in the Island following 1025.

The coast provided the Duchy of Normandy with natural boundaries, the River Couesnon was a fairly permanent boundary with Brittany but there was no natural southern boundary. The Vexin, with its chief town of Mantes only 30 miles from Paris, was always a bone of contention and, indeed, it was here that William the Conqueror received his fatal injury in 1087.

Perhaps the most important aspect of these landgrants and Norman expansion was the effect that the Frankish society had on the Norse leadership. Rollo recognised the strength of Frankish style government: whereas Viking society was a loosely democratic system where loyalty was freely given or witheld based on esteem, the Frankish system was one in which loyalty was imposed and assured by threat. All land and laws belonged to the ruler to be dispensed with as he chose, land was given in return for loyalty - shirk the obligation and lose the land. Adopting this style of government Rollo made landgrants and this practise was continued and developed by his successors into the system we refer to today as Norman feudalism.
Norman feudalism had its roots in the Carolingian political organisation and in modern day terms would best be described as a protection racket. By the end of the tenth century the old Norse concepts of freedom and equality as the right of every common man had disappeared beneath a centralised, military, authoritarian, bureaucratic administration.

The new model for society was for a mass of peasants, many unfree, to produce an agricultural surplus necessary to support a military class of knights who in turn existed to support and to serve lesser or greater magnates who in turn were vassals of the ruler. Therefore, nobility in Norman society became linked with territory.

As far as the islands were concerned they were administered by a Seneschal of Normandy, who appointed a deputy, known as the Vicomte of the Islands, to act for him on the spot. When the duke's writ covered the Islands, his laws were upheld by visiting justices from mainland Normandy and this continued after the the Norman conquest of England. The islands were firmly in the Duchy even when the dukes were not the king, for example in 1087 when Duke/King William died he was succeeded as king by his second son William Rufus and as duke by his eldest son Robert Curthose. When there was a divergence of loyalty on the part of someone who held lands in England from the king and lands in Normandy from the duke, the duke invariably confiscated the land of those who remained loyal to the king. This in turn meant that the duke had new land to re-allocate and in the islands this resulted in both Guernsey and Jersey having their own Vicomtes responsible to the Seneschal of Normandy.

It was also during a time of divergence that the Islanders were granted an exemption from military service outside of their Islands unless it was to help the Duke of Normandy to recover England - but even then, only if the Duke went in person.

Despite being an integral part of the Duchy of Normandy from the mid-tenth century onwards there are records of only one ducal visit and even that was by mistake. In 1029/30 Duke Robert, the sixth duke, assembled a fleet to invade the England of Cnut in support of

his cousin Edward the Confessor. The fleet was driven to Jersey by a storm and the Duke and his army waited for a favourable wind that never came. A greatly disappointed Duke Robert left for mainland Normandy.

Throughout the Norman period Jersey was a political backwater. Duke William sent his uncle Mauger, Archbishop of Rouen, into political exile here. Loyal followers of the dukes were rewarded with land here but it was not their major land holding as can be seen from the de Carteret family. There were no major independent ecclesiastical buildings here, only daughter houses. To all extents and purposes the Channel Islands were drowning in a sea of obscurity. Unimportant in everything and only held because territory equalled power and wealth.

Chapter two
From the Cheviots to Jerusalem
Norman expansion in the eleventh and twelfth centuries

In many respects the eleventh century itinerant Normans could be regarded as "carpetbaggers", in that they moved into an area and exploited it using either their skill as soldiers of fortune or through their positions of churchmen. In this there was no sinister grand design or plot, they were simply immigrants who were out to better themselves as other immigrant groups have done so throughout history.

An eleventh century writer, himself a Norman, Geoffrey of Malaterra wrote, *"They are to be sure a cunning race, vengeful of injuries, despising their own patrimony in the hope of gaining more elsewhere, eager after gain and domination, given to imitation of every kind, holding a certain mean between ostentatious luxury and avarice - their leaders are very lavish in their desire to make a good impression. A race skilled in flattery, much attracted by the studies of eloquence, ... a race entirely unbridled unless restrained by the yoke of justice. They are enduring of toil, hunger and cold, when need be; devoted to hunting and falconry, delighting in extravagance of dress, horses and warlike accoutrements."*

ENGLAND

The first Normans to move into England did so in the 1040s in the reign of Edward the Confessor, son of Ethelred the Unready and Emma of Normandy, William the Conqueror's great aunt. In 1044 Robert of Jumieges was made Bishop of London, in 1049 Ulf was made Bishop of Dorchester. In 1051, the pro-Norman, Edward appointed Robert of Jumieges Archbishop of Canterbury. The pious Edward brought in a number of Norman officials and churchmen to positions of influence and planned to build a new abbey along Norman lines on a site by the River Thames in an area to be known as Westminster. It was about this time that he gave the island fortress of St Michael's Mount in Cornwall to a group of Norman Benedictine monks.

This growing Norman influence was not without opposition amongst the Anglo-Saxon nobility and it became focussed in the ambitious earl Godwin Wulfnothsson of Wessex, the most powerful man in the kingdom and father-in-law of the king. In a fit of self-assertion Edward exiled Godwinsson and his son and even went as far as putting his wife, Edith Godwinsdottir, into a nunnery. This exile only lasted a year when the king was forced to allow the Godwinssons to return and expel the Normans. In modern day political terms the Godwinssons would be termed fascists or right-wing nationalists with their ideas of "England for the English" (or Anglo-Scandinavians). However, such was Edward's pro-Norman sympathy that they soon returned.

In fact before 1066 there were at least three motte and bailey castles built by Norman soldiers on the Welsh border, Robert fitz Wimarc had a small castle at Clavering in Essex. Many Normans were employed as mercenaries and were given land in England as a reward some such as Osbern Pentecost even gave up castles they had built to move north into Scotland where MacBeth employed them as mercenaries. Others Normans received titles; Ralph, Edward's cousin was made an earl before 1051 and Odda was made earl of Devon, Somerset and Cornwall in that year.

After 1066 the Norman influence became obvious in that the country was subjected to a Norman aristocratic takeover. Yet even here it must be said that there were only twenty thousand Normans controlling an estimated million and a quarter Anglo-Saxons. This becomes obvious when one considers that it was a moderated form of Anglo-Saxon that survived to give us the foundation of the modern English language. The most obvious moderation was that as the majority of

English speakers were from the lower orders the grammar, declensions and gender of words as used by the higher and literate classes disappeared. This was the language that absorbed the new Norman-French words.

WALES

The Norman conquest of Wales was a piecemeal affair, taking a long time and it was never completed. This was largely due to two factors:

1. the heavily forested, mountainous interior being unsuitable for Norman cavalry, and,
2. the guerilla-style resistance put up by the Welsh.

As a result of this, the Normans exploited the geography of Wales and gradually took over the wide, fertile coastal plains.

There had been some Norman activity on the Welsh border before 1066 but this was restricted to raids and personal actions, Normans built and garrisoned three motte and bailey castles. The English kings laid claim to be overlords of the Welsh kings; a practice carried on by successive Norman kings.

After the Conquest, William simply consolidated any gains made and remained on the defensive although the earls of Shropshire and Hereford did make advances into Wales on their own volition. The Normans went for positional advantage by building castles at strategic points to deter Welsh raids but this assumed the Welsh thought as the Normans. Unfortunately they didn't and so they simply by-passed them on their raids. The Welsh were not strong enough or united enough to withstand the Normans but then the Normans were not strong enough to overwhelm and completely conquer the Welsh in their mountain strongholds. The traditional account of the conquest of Glamorgan by Robert Fitzhamon and twelve of his knights in 1089 is an Elizabethan fabrication.

William "Rufus" led three expeditions into Wales and each time they failed because the Welsh simply retreated into the mountains where Norman cavalry could not operate. The Marcher lords who were allowed to create "buffer" states between the Welsh and the English extended their domains but all too often their outposts were recaptured. These Lords of the Marches were offered absolute power over any frontier land that they could subdue. The great Marcher families were the Fitzalans, Gilberts, Clares, Mortimers and Laceys.

In 1098 William sold the earldom of Shrewsbury to Robert of Belleme. Belleme was a capable soldier, an excellent castle builder and utterly ruthless. By building ever increasing rings of castles strongly garrisoned he took over vast areas of the Welsh Marches. In order to save their land some Welsh princelings became his allies. By using the divide and rule principle Belleme grew prosperous and powerful. Because these "Marcher" lords held their Welsh lands by right of conquest, not by grant from the English king Henry I regarded this as an unsatisfactory situation and so set about extending his control into Wales. In 1102 Henry isolated and politically out-manouvred the powerful Belleme who lost his lands in England and Wales which were then redistributed amongst his own supporters. Henry bribed Prince Jorwerth ap Bleddyn to support him with the promise of the principality of South Wales. However, on the day of reckoning the Welshman was imprisoned. As part of this policy of extending Royal control Henry married off one of his many illegitimate sons, Robert, to Robert Fitzhamon's heir, his daughter, Mabel. In 1122 Robert was created earl of Gloucester and Lord of Glamorgan holding all his land directly from the king. It was to Cardiff castle under the watchful eyes of his son that Henry I despatched his brother Robert Curthose to remain as a prisoner for the rest of his life.

One of the most westernmost Norman castles in Wales is Pembroke built by Arnulf de Montgomery in 1090. It was from here that in 1170 that one of the de Clare family, Richard Fitzgilbert, set off to Ireland to help King Dermot of Leinster retain his kingdom on condition that he marry the king's daughter and be guaranteed succession. He was to go down into Irish history as "Strongbow".

IRELAND

Strongbow was only one of a number of Norman adventurers carving little niches out of the Irish countryside. In 1169 Robert Fitzstephen landed with thirty fully armed knights, sixty half armoured horsemen and three hundred archers and foot soldiers to help King Dermot in return for the town of Wexford. Maurice Fitzgerald landed at Wexford later that year with one hundred and forty Norman-Welsh warriors and ravaged the area around Dublin. trongbow arrived with a force of two hundred armoured horsemen and one thousand footsoldiers with which he captured Waterford and Dublin.

Afraid of an independent Norman kingdom in Ireland, Henry II ordered all Normans in Ireland to return on the pain of losing their lands in England and prevented any ships sailing to Ireland. Strongbow was deprived of supplies and reinforcements but he still retained control of his new territory.

In 1171 Henry II mounted an invasion of Ireland with a papal blessing and a reported 240 ships. Unable to resist such a superior force the Irish rulers submitted to Henry's authority. Henry also received the submission of the various Norman adventurers including Strongbow, before leaving Ireland in April 1172. While the Normans saw this as a conquest to the Irish nothing had changed, the Normans were merely playing the role of opportunist auxiliaries that the vikings had before them.

SCOTLAND

A group of Norman mercenaries fought for Macbeth in the battle of Dunsinnan Hill in 1054 against earl Siward of Northumbria and the rival Scots claimant, Malcolm Canmore. As long as the "buffer" states of Northumbria, between the Tees and the Tweed, and Cumbria, north of the River Lune existed with their own semi-independent earls, Scotland had nothing to fear from Norman political expansion. However, once King Malcolm III married Margaret, the sister of the Anglo-Saxon claimant, Edgar the Aethling, the doors of opportunism opened.

Strangely, it was this marriage to an Anglo-Saxon princess which marked the beginning of the decline of Gaelic Scotland and the rise of Norman power and influence for she introduced the ceremonial, vestements and Norman style architecture of the new reformed Church into Scotland. In 1072 Malcolm sent a plundering raid into Northumberland supposedly in support of his new brother-in-law and this provoked William into personally leading an army, backed by a fleet of transports, north. At Abernathy on the banks of the Tay Malcolm instead of fighting paid homage, gave hostages and promised not to shelter political refugees from England.

Malcolm took this to be a personal rather than a territorial submission. The Normans, however, later used it to lay claim to the kingdom, In 1080 Robert "Curthose" launched an unsuccessful retaliatory raid on Scotland and in effect withdrew the effective border south to his new castle on the Tyne. This situation soon changed with the Conqueror's successor, William "Rufus" who pursued an aggressive policy in the north. In 1092 he seized Cumbria as far north as the Solway and the Esk building a castle at Carlisle to protect the river crossing and then provoked Malcolm into an invasion of England which resulted in his death at Alnwick in 1093. William "Rufus" and his successor, Henry I, treated the Margaretsson kings of Scotland as vassal rulers until the youngest of them, David I, managed to reassert Scotland's independence in 1136 on the death of Henry I.

The price the Scots paid to be free of Norman conquest was drastic in that they found the only effective way of dealing with Norman England was to use Scottish Normans so Norman families such as the Bruces, the Comyns, the Sinclairs (St Clair) and the Stewarts (stewards) moved in bringing with them their way of life which gradually saw the introduction of feudalism, castles, lordships and methods of fighting, coinage and mints and continental religious orders into the country. Rather than an overt military conquest Scotland suffered from a gradual

pervading form of social and economic Norman takeover.

SICILY

It is a common mistake simply to look for Norman activity in the British Isles and in northern France yet to do this is to deny the work of the greatest families of Norman adventurers - the Hautevilles. While William the Conqueror had been born into an already powerful family, within one generation the Hautevilles were transformed from penniless adventurers into the rulers of an oriental capital in a rich and prosperous kingdom in which the for the only period in history three great Mediterranean civilisations - Latin, Greek and Arab - came together in peace and harmony. Sicily.

In May 1061 Robert de Hauteville, also called Guiscard, crossed the Straits of Messina with his younger brother, Roger, and two thousand men. In January 1072 they made their triumphant entry into the capital, Palermo; eight years after an earlier seige had been broken due to a lack of ships and a surfeit of flatulence. The latter problem was caused by a plague of tarantulas whose poisoned sting induced a build up of foul gasses in the body. The Norman Kingdom of Sicily had been born.

Despite this being a particularly neglected area of modern day Norman study, the links between Norman England and Sicily in the twelfth century were strong. Henry II's chancellor, Thomas Brown, had served King Roger II of Sicily in the same capacity and another Englishman, Walter of the Mill, was chief minister to King William II, the "Good", as well as being the only man in history ever to regularly sign himself "Emir and Archbishop". William the Good's queen was Henry II's daughter, Joanna.

The Norman Italian adventure had its roots in 1016 when an exiled Lombard obleman, Melus of Bari, tried to enlist the help of forty Norman pilgrims in restoring himself to a position of power. Although they refused they promised to mention it when they returned to Normandy. The first Norman adventurers arrived the following year. In 1018 the Lombards and their Norman mercenaries were defeated by the Byzantine and their Norse mercenaries, the Varangian Guard. The survivors under Rainulf regrouped in the hills and despite the desertion of Melus decidedto stay and carve themselves a niche amongst the warring cities. By shifting alliances Rainulf and his men obtained their first territory in 1028 - the small village of Aversa near Naples. All the time he was collecting more and more Normans about him including three brothers who arrived in 1035 from the Cotentin, William, Drogo, and Humphrey, the three eldest sons of Tancred de Hauteville and his first wife, Muriella.

In 1046 the greatest of the Norman adventurers in Southern Italy arrived, Robert Guiscard, the sixth son of Tancred de Hauteville. He did not join an already existing group, instead he set up with a carefully chosen band of followers at San Marco Argentano from where he moved out in ever increasing circles using terrorism as his main threat to take over small areas at a time. It was only the actions of Pope Leo IX in 1053 that welded the separate Norman groupings into a distinct Norman "country". For in 1053 the Pope launched a Papal army against the ever increasing Norman power in Southern Italy. This forced the various factions to join together and the hero of the day was Robert Guiscard. The Papal army was defeated at Civitate and the Pope was held prisoner for over a year in the town of Benevento.

Within six years the enemies of the Papacy became its defenders when in 1059 the Church split in schism. The Normans supported Pope Nicholas II and captured the conservative Benedict X. As a reward Robert Guiscard was invested as Duke of Apulia and Calabria and also of Sicily, despite never having been there and it not being the Pope's to give away in the first place. However, these were mere minor technicalities to Guiscard.

The Norman conquest of Southern Italy and Sicily was achieved in the same manner as the Norman adventure in Wales was to be a

generation later but it was unhindered by feudal obligations to a foreign king.

By 1080 Robert was even looking at the Imperial throne in Byzantium. For the next five years Robert in the company of his sons was campaigning across the Adriatic intent on carving out even more land, while his brother Roger was consolidating himself as Great Count of Sicily. In 1085 the seventy year old Robert Guiscard died of typhus while campaigning against the Greeks. Perhaps the career of Guiscard is what the eleventh century Norman adventure was about - a sort of local boy makes good, a true rags to riches story. It certainly illustrates the benefits of running protection rackets, extortion and double dealing backed up by brute force. The prize was there if you had the ability.

The independent Norman kingdom of Sicily lasted until 1194 when King Tancred de Hauteville died leaving his son William III still a boy. The Holy Roman Emperor, Henry VI, who was married to Tancred's cousin, Constance, laid claim to the throne and invaded Sicily. Unwilling to support a child the Norman barons deserted William and his mother who were captured in 1195. To ensure his position as the only male claimant to the throne of Sicily, Henry had William blinded, castrated and locked up in a monastery.

JERUSALEM AND THE OUTREMER (Antioch)

In 1099, when Robert Curthose was beseiging Jerusalem. a defector came from the enemy camp. He was a Norman who had lived amongst the Saracens for over twenty years, he spoke their language, knew their customs and wore their clothes. He was Hugh Bunel, to all extents and purposes a Norman-Saracen. In 1077 he had beheaded Mabel of Belleme, wife of Count Roger of Montgomery, a leading Norman magnate, and mother of Robert of Belleme, she was thoroughly wicked, bon-viveur and reputed witch. In order to avoid the wrath of the Conqueror and her children, who had inherited her wicked streak, he had fled first to Norman Apulia, then to Norman Sicily, then Byzantium where he found that he was still not beyond the reach of the vengeful king and the Belleme family so he quit the Christian world to live amongst the Saracens. This perhaps shows the extent and power of the Norman connection in the late eleventh century.

When the First Crusade moved through Byzantium in 1097, Robert Guiscard's eldest son, Bohemund, deprived of his birthright in Italy through the scheming machinations of his stepmother, was grudgingly recognised as "de facto" leader of the European forces. By 1099 the crusaders had recaptured Jerusalem without him. The reason for his absence was that the previous year he had captured Antioch and was claiming it as his own principality held by right of conquest. Perhaps he recognised that the throne of Jerusalem would bring with it too many problems of allegiance, indeed Raymond of Toulouse and Robert Curthose had turned it down.

It is also possible that Bohemund had inherited his father's desire for the Imperial throne as Antioch was in striking distance of the Eastern Empire and could provide the wealth to support his campaigns. In 1108 he had an estimated force of over 30,000 men campaigning on the eastern coast of the Adriatic, however, he was defeated and forced to acknowledge the Emperor Alexis as overlord of Antioch. In 1111 Bohemund died, his second son Bohemund II succeeded him as Prince of Antioch. His successors were to govern that eastern outpost of the Norman world until 1287 (ninety three years after the end of Norman Sicily) when, the unimagintively named, Bohemund VII died without an heir.

The meteoric rise of the Norman holdings around the Mediterranean were the result of great men (or thugs depending how one looks at it) such as Robert de Hauteville and his brother, Roger, and his son, Bohemund, but then it mmediately lost its dynamism and went into a gradual decline. A gradual decline in which the arts flourished and wealth was generated the Normans' successors had perhaps lost their fathers' aggressive

assertiveness, they had become softened by good living.

Although we speak of a Norman world, the Normans were always a minority within it, their children were in effect half breeds; how would we describe the third and fourth generations. This is true of the Norman success story, England, which required 20,000 first generation Normans to control and was even more true of the other areas Norman expansion.

Jersey was part of the Duchy that spawned these adventurers and, therefore, the opportunity to take part in this "great adventure" was available to the islanders. Whether they did or not is another matter.

Chapter three
From Bastard to Conqueror
Duke William II - 1020-1087.

"... King William ... was a man of great wisdom and power, and surpassed in honour and strength all those who had gone before him. Though stern beyond measure to those who opposed his will ..."

(The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle)

At dawn on 9 September 1087 in the city of Rouen, one of the most controversial men of his age, William II, Duke of Normandy died. He had lain in great agony for over a month, his stomach ruptured as a result of having been pitched against the high pommel of his saddle whilst riding through the burning streets of Mantes, near Paris.

His family had deserted him; his eldest son, Robert "Curthose", was in a state of revolt against him but was bound by the Norman law of primogeniture to inherit the Duchy of Normandy. The kingdom of England had no such tradition, therefore, he bequeathed the crown to his second son, William "Rufus". His youngest surviving son, Henry "Beauclerc", who was to unite the split inheritance, received five thousand pounds of silver.

Even in death William attracted controversy for his funeral was interrupted by a man called Ascelin who raised the *Clameur de Haro* claiming that the Abbaye-aux-Hommes had been built on his father's land and that he had received no compensation. Once terms had been negotiated and accepted it was discovered that the stone sarcophagus was too small for the corpse so the body was broken and crammed in which resulted in the bowels bursting. Even the incense could not disguise the nauseating stench.

William II, Duke of Normandy who was referred to in his early years by the unflattering nickname of "the Bastard" went into the annals of history under the more flattering appellation of William “the Conqueror", King of England.

Born in the wooden castle of Falaise in Lower Normandy in 1027 or 1028, (the confusion may stem from the habit of starting the year in the spring) William was the son of Robert the Magnificent, the sixth Duke of Normandy and Herleve, daughter of Fulbert the Tanner. Herleve is sometimes referred to as Arlette, this was Robert's pet name for her.

This was more than the romantic dalliance between two star crossed teenagers so beloved of story tellers, in all probability Herleve was the hand-fast wife of Robert while his elder brother was Duke Richard III. The couple also had an older daughter, Adelaide, and this would indicate that this was a fairly long term relationship.

Hand fast marriages were marriages in the viking fashion and, of course, this region so beloved of the Dukes of Normandy was the most viking area of the Duchy. Harold Godwinsson was married to Edith "Swan-neck" in this fashion, and many of William's predecessors had been married in this manner. Had Richard III, Robert's brother, lived would it have mattered what form his younger brother's marriage took or indeed what his wife's social status was.

It was only with the death of Richard III that these questions mattered and it would seem significant that as soon as Robert became Duke Robert I Herleve was put aside yet her father was made chamberlain in the ducal household and Robert found a wealthy husband to protect her in 1029/30. This was Herluin of Conteville and by him she bore two more sons who were to loom large in the

Conqueror's story, Odo, Bishop of Bayeux And Robert, Count of Mortain.

Duke Richard had only been Duke for a year when he died rather suddenly, there was a suspicion that Robert had ordered him to be poisoned as he put aside the claims of his young nephew, who he sent to a monastery, and had himself recognised as Duke. Robert's other nickname was "the Devil" probably because he was actively committed to violence and the subjugation of his duchy to his will. In this he was completely ruthless both to Church and laity and was even excommunicated by his own uncle, the Archbishop of Rouen.

In 1034 Robert went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to atone for his sins, however, he did not let his new-found piety cloud his political foresight. Probably with the treatment of his own nephew in mind he persuaded the Norman magnates to recognise his six year old son William as rightful heir, despite his being a bastard in the eyes of the Christian Church. This would appear to have been prophetic for the following year, 1035, Robert died in Anatolia returning from the Holy Land.

William's accesssion went smoothly under the protection of his great uncle Robert, the Archbishop of Rouen, he was even sent to the Parisian court of Henry I. The anarchy that Robert had envisaged erupted in 1037 when the archbishop died. The fact that William survived was due to a large extent to a small band of faithful followers and, more importantly, it was in the French king's interest to support him as a minor for then he could claim the Duchy's revenues for himself and takeover the debateable areas.

In 1042 William was recognised as a man when he was made a knight by King Henry. Even at this early age he had survived the murder of three of his guardians, rebellion, assassination attempts and was rapidly becoming skilled in the dark world of political intrigue. His precarious youth had taught him the value of patience and deceit, and left him very much a loner in that his only deep and lasting friendship, other than with his wife, was with, the churchman, Lanfranc of Bec. Their only serious arguement was when he denounced William's marriage to Mathilda.

William was 5' 10" tall, heavily built, physically strong, graceful in his movements and had gained a reputation for bravery and stamina. He was typical of his age in that he was both illiterate and brutal but he was puritanical in his hatred of drunkeness, promiscuity and maried priests. He was a great supporter of religious reform and a generous patron of the Church.

In 1047 an organised rebellion led by William's cousin, Guy of Burgundy, broke out and it was only the quick response of Henry I that enabled William to defeat the rebels at Val-es-Dunes near Caen. In the October of that year William presided over an ecclesiastical council at which the Truce of God was imposed on Normandy. This was an attempt by the Church to minimise warfare. It stipulated that private wars were not allowed to be fought between Wednesday evenings and Monday mornings, as well as during the seasons on Lent, Easter, Pentecost and Advent. The only exemptions to the Truce were the Duke of Normandy and the King of France. The penalty for breaking the Truce was excommunication and all the Norman nobility swore their oaths on the relics of St Ouen, the seventh century Bishop of Rouen.

In 1049 William sought the hand of Mathilda, daughter of Baldwin V of Flanders, and of Adela, daughter of King Robert I of France. The reaction of Pope Leo was to ban the marriage on the grounds of some relationship between them which was within the Church's prohibited decrees (consanguinity).

There were three reasons put forward for a ban on the grounds of consanguinity.

1. Baldwin V was William's cousin through his father's marriage to Duke Robert's sister, Eleanor. Baldwin's mother had been Ogiva, daughter of Duke Richard of Ardennes.

2. Both William and Mathilda were descended from Rolf Gangr (Rollo) which made them cousins in the 5th degree.
3. William's uncle, Richard III (1026/7) had married Adela who may have been Adela of France, Mathilda's mother, but the marriage was certainly never consumated, therefore, it was deemed never to have taken place.

None of these were sufficient to ban the marriage. The contesting of the marriage on the grounds of consanguinity was political rather than religious. The German emperor, Henry III, was against the marriage as the alliance would create too strong a bloc with Normandy and Flanders on his western flank. Pope Leo IX needed the support of the German emperor against the Normans in southern Italy and Sicily and so intervened to try to prevent the marriage.

The marriage went ahead in 1051 or 1052 and this angered William's former protector, Henry I of France, who saw this as a presumption on the part of his vassal to marry his neice. A French army invaded Normandy in 1054 using this as a pretext, in reality the growth of Normandy's military strength and independence was seen as a threat to the realm. The army split into two to devastate the Duchy. William waited until the French army led by the King's brother were resting in the small town of Mortemer. At dawn he set fire to the town, massacred many of the Frenchmen and sent a report to the French king who immediately withdrew.

In 1057 the last French effort was defeated at Varaville near Caen. William allowed the French vanguard to cross the Dives and then annihilated them in front of the French king who could do nothing to help them. William had showed himself to be a strong, ruthless leader and Varaville had set the seal on the consolidation of his duchy.

The marriage was finally recognised by Pope Nicholas II in 1059, well after Pope Leo's death and only after a Herculean effort on the part of William's friend Lanfranc of Bec. Part of the couple's penance was the building of two abbeys in Caen - L'Abbaye aux Hommes and L'Abbaye aux Dames.

As well as being a politically sound marriage it would appear to have been something of a love match. William was totally faithful to her, he was the only one of his line who only had a single wife and one of the rare moments that he showed any emotion was when he shed tears at her death in 1083. Mathilda was only four foot two inches tall yet still bore William four sons and at least five daughters.

The most "newsworthy" event in William's life was undoubtedly his conquest of England in 1066. This is too well known to go into in detail but one or two points could do with being brought to the fore.

The "official Norman party" line was that William's claim to the throne of England was based upon King Edward the Confessor's promise delivered by Robert of Jumieges, Archbishop of Canterbury in 1051/2 and supposedly affirmed by Harald Godwinsson's visit in 1064. This is most unlikely if one considers that:

1. The English monarchy was elective not hereditary;
2. In 1054 Edward invited Edward the Exile, the surviving son of his half brother, Edmund Ironside, to return to England from exile in Hungary. This would suggest that this was to ensure the succession of the royal House of Wessex - unhappily, Edward died a few days after his return in 1057.
3. Would the leading Saxon subject, Harold Godwinsson, have agreed to go to Normandy on a mission such as this when he knew that as the most powerful man in the kingdom the Witan would elect him. That Harold's succession had been agreed beforehand is obvious when one considers the speed of events in January 1066. 5 January, Edward the Confessor dies; dawn 6 January, Edward buried; noon 6 January, Harold elected and crowned.
4. In 1062 William had invaded Maine on the pretext that its dead count had bequeathed it to him.

In his invasion of England, William had the support of the papacy. The great Church reformer, Archdeacon Hildebrand, supported William in order to extend the new reforms into England and to end the schism that had developed. The Pope, Alexander II had pro-Norman sympathies from his dealings with the Normans in Sicily and southern Italy.

The reason why the battle of Hastings was fought at Senlac Hill only becomes obvious when one realises that in the eleventh century Hastings was on the end of a peninsula and the only way out was across that hill, hence the battle site. Had Harold waited for the Fyrd and allowed his weary troops to rest after their forced march from Northumbria then an English victory would have ensued, however, he didn't and the result is known to us all.

Once Harold was dead there was no "national" leader and in this William had the advantage. Despite the smaller number of Normans he saw England as one nation. The English still regarded themselves as men of Wessex or as Northumbrians. The uprisings that followed remained local affairs as the shown by the Rising of the North when the Northumbrians cleared the Normans from the ancient kingdom of Northumbria and failed to follow up their success. While William saw England as one kingdom the English regarded it as a collection of regions.

Despite being a devout Christian and a supporter of the Hildebrandine reforms, William showed his political shrewdness and expediency when Hildebrand, now Pope Gregory VII issued three decrees.

1. Clerical marriages were declared null and void; Lanfranc as Archbishop of Canterbury allowed existing marriages amongst the English clergy to remain valid.
2. The Pope declared himself feudal suzerain of nearly every kingdom in Europe; William stated that as king of England he would pay no homage that his predecessors had not.
3. The Pope declared that only he could confer Church positions under pain of excommunication; William and Lanfranc argued that England always had special privileges and was allowed to invest his own bishops for the rest of his reign.

Despite his known piousness and support of the Church, William resisted the Pope's efforts to centralise his power where they encroached on his political power base.

William's greatest administrative act was undoubtedly the national inquiry of 1086 which resulted in the Domesday Book, a general survey of land, property and lordship. It is also evidence to the effectiveness of Anglo-Saxon bureaucracy. William decided he needed to know who owned what and how much they owed him at Christmas 1086 and he wanted the information before he sailed to Normandy in the late summer of 1086. The Anglo-Saxon administration which had developed under Athelstan in the early part of the tenth century had eight months in which to comply. The main volume is in one English hand; he may have been the mastermind of the whole enterprise, almost an eleventh century "Whitehall mandarin" showing that even then senior civil servants carry on running the country despite changes in government.

The country was divided into several circuits and teams of royal commissioners, each working in unfamiliar country, recorded all land in the circuit. These records were then re-checked by a separate team to prevent collusion and fraud. This would indicate that the Anglo-Saxon administrative system was still working.

So comprehensive was this inquiry that the resulting information, amounting to over 2,000,000 words, has been used since its inception to sort out court cases involving land disputes. It also provides a fascinating insight into post-Conquest England. By 1086 only 8% of land was still held by Englishmen and out of William's 180 tenants-in-chief only two were English. The Norman Conquest had in effect been an aristocratic take-over, over 4,000 English nobles had lost their land and been replaced by less than 200 Norman barons.

William's autocracy and his deep-seated distrust of people even extended to his own

family, he would not delegate responsibility or power to his sons. Even though Robert "Curthose" had been made Count of Maine in 1073 he was excluded from any decision making. He kept his sons continually short of money and this had the effect of driving Robert into the arms of King Philip I of France who saw in this family arguement a chance to weaken the power of William as Duke of Normandy. This family division almost resulted in Robert killing his father on the battlefield and it was in a campaign against the French and Robert that William received his mortal wound.

By his elevation to the crown of England, William put himself in a strange situation for as a king he was the equal of his feudal lord, the king of France. Throughout Philip I's reign he tried to break the Anglo-Norman connection in this he succeeded in 1087 on William's death but lived long enough to see his plan fail with the accession of Henry I in 1100 and his victory over his brother, Robert, at the Battle of Tinchebrai in 1106.

William the "Conqueror" is without doubt the most famous king in English history, the victory at Senlac Hill and the death of Harold has shrouded his life in a romantic haze. His greatest achievements are regarded as:

1. the conquest of England which was probably motivated by greed, backed up by the old adventurer ideal of his viking ancestor Hrolf "Gangr" of self aggrandisment and helped by a considerable amount of luck.
2. the reorganisation of English society; this was not carried out with any philanthropic ideals, he did it to exploit the nation's wealth and to control the native population.
3. the reformation of the English Church; yet in doing so, he defied a reforming Pope on a number of occasions to ensure his own personal power.

William's conquest of England could be described as the beginning of England's "French adventure" which was to last nearly five hundred years.

Despite his greatness William also had his weaknesses. He failed to look to the future in that he refused his sons the opportunity to govern. In the division of England and Normandy between William "Rufus" and Robert "Curthose" he showed little regard for the future. He did not recognise that a united, rich and populous Anglo-Norman empire could be a formidable power in a Europe that was weakened and divided by feudalism, feeble rulers and a war between the papacy and the Holy Roman Empire. The one man who did see these things was William's youngest son Henry "Beauclerc" and he did not share in the division of the land.
By nominating William "Rufus" King of England and by the actions of Archbishop Lanfranc in acceeding to the will of his friend, the "Conqueror", in death, changed the pattern of the English monarchy. The concept of an elective monarchy chosen by the King's advisors, the Witan, was replaced by that of an hereditary monarchy recognised by the Church in the person of the most senior English churchman, the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Perhaps in is fitting that the last words on William should be those of the contemporary Anglo Saxon chronicler:

A hard man was the king... he was sunk in avarice ...
Alas! that any man should bear himself so proudly
And deem himself exalted above all other men
May Almighty God show mercy on his soul
And pardon him his sins.

Chapter 4
Norman Society

Every man is the product of the society of which he is a member, and in this the Normans were no different. The aggressive individualism of the Vikings tempered by the bureacratic centralism of the Carolingian Franks and merged with the native Neustrian culture resulted in what we, today, term the Normans.

The most popular picture of the Normans is that of a mounted knight carrying a kite-shaped shield and wearing a conical helmet. The epitomy of the Norman army, these were the elite of Norman society, for in modern day terms to turn out wearing all the right gear would cost in the region of £25,000; in a World War Two context, the Norman knight was the cost-equivalent of a light armed tank. Obviously not the kind of money your average Norman in the fields was able to spend, therefore, these knights were the storm-troopers of the Norman "blitzkrieg" war-machine, the majority of men fighting within a Norman army, with the probable exception of Hastings, would be the lightly armed feudal levy - the arriere-ban, dressed in modified everyday clothes and used as infantry and manual labour at seiges. This feudal levy was not liable for service outside Normandy.

Because of their importance to the Duchy's security, the Duke granted his tenants-in-chief sufficient land to provide him with a specific number of mounted knights. These in turn granted land to lesser tenants on the same terms. So in Norman society military service was systematically assessed and attached to a specific piece of land known as a knight's fee or fief de haubert.

By the mid-11th century knighthood was an obligation as well as a status and an honour. It was conferred on a young man in a ceremony in which the dubbing could be referred to as a drubbing for he was given a hefty blow on the shoulder in the belief that the pain would remind him of the occasion and his obligations. The sheer expense of the equipment and the war horse, the necessity to be free of all commitments in order to serve the long apprenticeship meant that knights had to be members of the aristocracy. Obviously not all knights could be "enfeoffed", therefore, a landless knight had to take service with a lord in the hope of being rewarded with land for his services. This meant that within the aristocratic, knightly class the enfeoffed knight was further up the social ladder than his landless brother. While he might be employed as an envoy or an escort the knight's most important task was to practise and exercise his knightly skills whether on the hunting field or the battle field, thus, in effect, making himself a professional soldier.

It is because of this practice that the Normans were able to employ the tactic of feigned flight at Hastings to some effect. While some modern historians have doubted their ability to carry out such a tightly disciplined manoeuvre, it was a tactic used by their Viking forebears and by the Normans themselves at St Aubin-le-Cauf in 1053 and at Messina in 1060. While it is true that in essence the Norman knight was an individual mounted warrior, many lances depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry carry small flags or gonfanons which would appear to be the insignia of small groups of knights who lived, trained and fought together as a military unit. There is no reason why such units acting individually or by combining with others should not be able to employ this tactic.

The Norman army was in effect divided into a number of natural units commanded by its own lord, thus achieving an element of organisation and cohesion. It was because of this that William was able to maintain such a high degree of discipline within his army and to employ the "wait and see" tactics in the

campaigns leading upto Mortemer and Varaville in the 1050s.

While the system had its advantages it also had its problems for all the military potential of the feudal system was not at the disposal of the ruler. William, as Duke of Normandy, was obliged to assist the King of France, his overlord, with only part of his feudal army. Likewise, his tenants were not obliged to bring all their feudal troops to assist him. The greater part of a lord's feudal troops owed service to him and not the Duke. For example Robert de Cureio was only obliged to provide 10 knights from the 33 who owed him service and William's half-brother, Odo, was obliged to provide 20 from the 120 who served him. The feudal survey of Normandy carried out in 1172 shows that of the 1500 knights in Normandy less than 600 were available for the service of the Duke: and, none of those were obliged to serve overseas - military service was only owed for the defence of the Duchy.

The Normans themselves did not refer to themselves as knights; they used the Latin term "milites" to identify the tenants-in-chief, "barones" for their vassals, and "vavasseur" for the tenants of the "barones". These "vavasseurs" did not have the status of knighthood and while their equipment and weapons were similar to those of the knights were of inferior quality - quilted coats and leather hoods instead of coats and hoods of mail.

A common misconception is that the Normans were almost exclusively mailed cavalrymen, this only came about at the end of the tenth century, prior to then the Normans had fought as their Viking forbears had done - on foot. The Franks, however, had been using armoured cavalry since the end of the eighth century and this coupled with the Normans inherent interest in the technology of war and the rich horse pastures of Normandy resulted in the Norman knight of the mid-eleventh century being generally regarded as the best armoured cavalryman of the period.

Man and horse were trained for battle to near perfection. The man required great technical skill to be able to handle a shield, spear or sword and the reins, while at the same time manoeuvring to gain the advantage. Meanwhile the horse, usually a stallion, was trained to join in the fighting with hooves, teeth and forehead.

It is important to remember that the whole of Norman society was geared up to provide an effective fighting force for the defence of the Duchy. This required wealth and the main form of wealth was land. Therefore, in return for military services the knight received enough land to provide himself with the wherewithal to provide that obligation.

This social system is generally referred to as the "feudal system". The bottom line of the feudal relationship and custom was that there were mutual obligations between a lord and his vassal.

Traditionally this feudal system has been seen as a fairly standardised form of land administration whose main recipients performed tasks which in later periods would be the responsibility of professional bureaucrats. This is largely due to an rationale imposed on the medieval world by seventeenth century scholars. It is a simplified version of a very complicated practice, in it the ruler owns all land, he invests it in his barons who repay him in loyalty and military service. In post-Conquest England five "hides" was the area required to support one knight (a hide was the area of land sufficient to support one family and, therefore, varied with the quality of the land although 100 acres was about average for one hide).

In reality, while this was the basis of a knight's fee, the end result was the product of complicated and hard bargaining. The ruler wanted as much service as possible for as little land as possible and the tenant wanted as much land as possible for as little service as possible. Five hides was only the starting point for negotiations with the result that some tenants might be cheaply enfeoffed while his neighbour might find himself involved in very

costly services. Then in turn the tenant sub-let his land to his own tenants and the same style of bargaining took place.

The situation of these land grants were an important factor in the feudal obligations due, in the frontier areas of Wales or the North territory had to be hacked out before it could be exploited and one must remember that In England the Normans were colonisers as opposed to settlers as they were in the Duchy. This of course meant that the terms and style of the feudal system varied with time and place. It only became formalised in the twelfth century towards the end of the Norman period.
It would be wrong to regard feudalism as a new system that the Normans imposed on the English, for Anglo-Saxon society was governed by hierarchical personal relationships and service tenure as was most of early medieval Europe. The Normans simply adopted a home grown system whether it was in tenth century Neustria or eleventh century England and used it to their own benefit. In both cases, the settlement or the Conquest, it was an aristocratic takeover.

Perhaps, the whole feudal system can best be described as one massive protection racket with the King/Duke playing the role of the Godfather and his leading tenants-in-chief playing the heads of Mafia families collecting wealth in return for making sure nothing goes wrong in their patch. Just as in twentieth century Chicago, the eleventh century Norman barons were not averse to a little bit of free enterprise when it came to muscling in on their weaker neighbours' territory. This did not unduly worry the Godfather/King/Duke as long as they did not become too strong or ambitious. If they did, they had to be reminded of who was "Top-dog".

The Church

While most of the dealings so far have concerned laymen, the Church was also part of the system receiving land in return for obligations including the provision of knights or "scutage" (shield-money) with which to hire mercenaries. Many of the tenants-in-chief were Church leaders, indeed, many of the leaders of Norman society were Churchmen and one would be hard pressed to find a more avaricious and belligerent Norman than that fine Christian gentleman, Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, William's half-brother and the Church Militant incarnate.

The Church did well out of the Norman Conquest, indeed one of the ostensible reasons for the invasion of 1066 was the need to reform the English Church. This reformation and reorganisation of the English Church was carried out by William and his Archbishop of Canterbury, Lanfranc. Monasteries were founded, sees were transferred to larger towns and gradually Frenchmen replaced Englishmen in important positions. The result was a sharp division within the Church with the prelates and their servants French and the parish priests English.

All Lanfranc's reforms had one eye on God and the other firmly on William. Under the king's instructions he established a Church that was a mirror image of the military state - a strict hierarchy with Lanfranc as Archbishop of Canterbury supreme at the top owing loyalty to the King. Along with this went the firm conviction that the Normans were about God's work, after the uprising in Norwich, Lanfranc wrote "By God's mercy the clamour of war has ceased on English soil". Around the battlefields of Europe the Normans warcry of "Dex ais" (God aid us) was heard even when they were fighting the Pope's own army. The period after the Conquest brought to England a period of renewed vigour in ecclesiastical building following the pattern of what had been happening in Normandy for the previous half century.

About the year 1000, during the reign of the fifth Duke, Richard II, the Conqueror's grandfather, the relative stability of the period produced a measure of peace and prosperity which resulted in an awakening in the Normans of what must have been an intense religious fervour for an immense programme of Church reconstruction adopting the new Romanesque style of architecture was begun.

The upsurge in the reforming movement within the Church caught the imagination of the Normans.

However,if one looks at the Norman genius in taking existing structures of administration and then adapting and reorganising them to suit their own needs one must ask the question, "Did this outburst of ecclesiastical activity stem truely from religious fervour or did they originally see it as a way to control and ensure the loyalty of a major non-hereditary power within their duchy?" Perhaps this is cynical view but it is true that many of the more important positions within the Norman Church were held by members of the Ducal family. Duke Richard II's son Mauger was Archbishop of Rouen and despite the strength of the reforming movement brought his wife and child to the Channel Islands when he was exiled here in 1055 for dabbling in court politics. William's half-brother, Odo, was Bishop of Bayeux yet was imprisoned for dabbling in politics. These appointments would appear to come from political expediency rather than religious vocation.

The Church was also seen as a handy place to get rid of unwanted relations such as mothers-in-law, nephews, nieces, the occasional daughter. The last Norman Queen of Sicily and her three daughters were forced to spend the rest of their lives in a convent. The boy king William III of Sicily was handed over to a monastery after he had been mutilated. The Conqueror's own father got rid of his nephew, Duke Richard III's child, when he became duke in 1028. The Church was obviously a the ideal way to get round the laws of primogeniture. By agreeing to these placements the Church often benefitted financially.

By endowing churches one could always get a reputation for piousness for piety and self-interest went hand in hand - by building churches and endowing manasteries, the Normans gained prestige on earth and prayers for their souls after death.
The Church was seen as yet another area of exploitation and the reorganisation and building programmes may be interpretted as expressions of power by the younger sons who were placed in them for family advancement.

In this idea of family advancement we have one of the problems of Norman Society, how did a knight provide for his sons, the eldest inherited the land, so how do you provide for the others. Tancred de Hauteville definitely had a problem for he managed to sire twelve of them. For the de Hautevilles the world was their oyster and eight of them went off to find fame and advancement in southern Italy. Other younger sons served in the "familias" of rich magnates hoping to be rewarded with land of their own in return for service, others became stipendiary" knights or mercenaries, while for some the Church was the answer. For this group of younger sons, William's English adventure must have appeared a God-sent opportunity.

While sons could be an expense and a problem they were regarded as a necessity, daughters were often considered liabilities. In Anglo-Saxon society if a man died without a male heir then his daughters inherited the property, after the Conquest land tended to pass only to males because of the obligations that went with it. For the daughters of the rich, the pattern of life was dictated from a very early age. Daughters were seen as a commodity with which to make family alliances through marriages and as a result they were betrothed and often married very young. Duke Richard II's daughter, Emma, was married to two kings of England, Ethelred the Unready and his successor, Cnut. She had sons by each man of whom two,Harthacnut and Edward the Confessor were also kings of England. The Conqueror's's niece Judith was married off to the leading Saxon earl after the Conquest, Waltheof of Huntingdon. While his daughter Constance was married to Count Alan "Iron Glove" of Brittany.

This pattern of using daughters as links in family chains and for family advancement was echoed all the way down the social ladder. If, however, you had an unmarriageable daughter she could always enter a nunnery. When it came to running their own lives most women had to wait until their husbands died for a widow had the greatest freedom and in towns they could pay a fee to be allowed to carry on their husband's trade. Alternatively by entering the Church some

women were able to administer large estates and become influential, literate and rich.

However, one does not have to be in a position of authority to exert power as William found out in 1070. The Norman chronicler, Ordericus Vitalis tells how the women of Normandy caused William to lose some of his most able and trusted soldiers. Tired of their neglect they sent an ultimatum across the Channel, "home or else!" or as Vitalis puts it "... inflamed by passion they sent frequent messages to their husbands, requiring a speedy return ... what were honourable soldiers to do, when their licientious wives threatened to stain the marriage bed with adultry, and stamp the mark of infamy on their offspring." Vitalis' disapproval rings loud and clear when despite William's offer of even more land, wealth and power some men "returned obsequiously to their lascivious wives in Normandy". Of course given the Norman character, I bet more men decided to stay to collect the rewards.

It is usually accepted that the Conqueror's army at Hastings was about six to seven thousand strong. Of these, only the names of fifteen men can be convincingly shown to have fought in the battle and only the family of William Malet can claim continuous descent through the male line. However, not all the victorious army remained in England after 1066. Some returned to their estates in Normandy, some of the mercenaries were paid off to seek pastures new and others who had not joined in the 1066 expedition or who had been left behind to guard the Duchy arrived to grab their share of the action. The "carpet-baggers" following in the wake of the successful army. By 1086 an estimated 20,000 Normans were in the country.

Sickness and Health

As with any society the Normans did fall ill and there was an abundance of help available. Sickness was regarded as a punishment from God for sins, therefore, prayer was a useful start to a treatment. Treatment was varied and usually cost a lot, the more you spent the more exotic treatment you received it didn't necessarily cure you but you felt you had had your moneysworth.

Doctors were strictly for the wealthy and the best were reputed to come from Chartres or Salerno. William's own doctor, Bernard of Chartres, used the most up to date method such as his cure for *epilepsy "... draw the brains of a mountain goat through a gold ring and then swallow*". Generally doctors were on home ground if they could cut you and cauterise but then blacksmiths and barbers could do the same for much less.

The Church was also a useful place to go if you were ill for you could always consult the monks. More widely available than doctors they tended to rely on herbs and spices but they also made a charge. Again for epilepsy there was a cure which involved using a spell using the names of rebel angels to cast out the demons that caused the condition. Unfortunately one had to be wary of this cure as there were heavy penalties for magic.

Holy men and women were regarded as having God-given power to cure illness but it was difficult to sort out the real ones from the charlatans.

The relics of saints were good for a cure but which saint there were so many to choose from. For epilepsy the Welsh saint Winefride of Holywell was a reputed winner although one could go to any holy well with a chicken after sunset, throw in your money, say the Lord's Prayer and hope that the sickness was transferred to the bird. Pilgrimages were also a good cure but these could be expenses and you could die on the way of something completely different such as marsh fever.

The parish priest was also regarded as a healer as he could exorcise the demon that was causing the sickness and while he was not allowed to charge for spiritual services he should get a little something for his trouble.

The cheapest form of medicine was undoubtedly self-help; making the sign of the cross and saying prayers to ward off evil spirits. Making infusions from the blessed Palm Sunday branches or a real winner was to find someone who could write to put down the names of the Magi on a piece of parchement and wear it as an amulet. This last remedy was good for the falling down sickness because the Bible said that "they fell down and worshipped the Christ Child".

Another cheap source of help was the wise-woman, unpopular with the Church they existed in most villages and they did not charge but they were very unpopular with the priests who saw them as witches. Perhaps these white witches were the safest to go to as they were steeped in herbalism.

While it can be easy to portray the Normans as avaricious, illiterate, superstitious thugs this would be to do them a great disservice. They were magnificent builders producing some of the most spectacular and colourful churches ever to be built, they had no artists of the calibre of the Anglo-Saxons but then surely architecture is another branch of the arts. Their chroniclers such as William of Poitiers, Ordericus Vitalis and Florence of Worcester were the equals of their Anglo-Saxon counterparts.

During the twelfth century a leisured class eager for knowledge and entertainment grew up amongst the Norman aristocracy. Typical of their age, in that they were illiterate and unable to understand Latin, they demanded a literature in their own language and so a group of writers began to cater for their needs. A prominent figure amongst these writers was the Jerseyman, Maistre Wace.

Wace, born in the Island about 1100, was sent to Caen to study for the Church and he actually states that he earned his bread by writing romances. His two most famous epic poems are the "Roman de Brut" concerning the kings of Britain and his unfinished "Roman de Rou" concerning the Dukes of Normandy. While he often foresook accuracy for the sake of a good storyline this should not detract from his skill - he was a storyteller not a journalist.

Chapter five
Ma Normandie - the links are severed

"Never having been either a colony or a part of the United Kingdom and with ancient insular traditions of their own, the Channel Islands can claim to be fundamentally different from any other territory in the world".
(Geoffrey Weston, The Times 25 January 1973)

Before Duke William II's conquest of England and for a century afterwards the Channel Islands were administered as a whole by a Seneschal of Normandy through his appointed deputy, the Vicomte of the Islands, who lived here. The conquest of England by Duke William II made no difference to the status of the Islands as they were part of the Duchy of Normandy and the position of duke same person. On William's death in 1087, his eldest son Robert became Duke and his second son William became King. In 1106 the youngest son, Henry, who had become king largely because he was rather suspiciously in the right place at the right time, defeated Robert at the Battle of Tinchebrai and held him prisoner for the rest of his life thus becoming Duke as well as King.

When Henry died in 1135 the succession of both countries was disputed between his nephew, Stephen, and his daughter, Mathilda. By 1144 Mathilda's husband, Geoffrey of Anjou, had successfully captured the Duchy and had himself declared Duke, Stephen held on to England. On Geoffrey's death in 1150, his son, Henry Plantagenet, became Duke and four years later by the terms of the Treaty of Wallingford became King of England on the death of his uncle Stephen. Only then did the English monarch and the Norman dukes coincide. But even then only for the reign of Henry II and his son Richard I. It was a dispute between Henry's youngest son, John, and his young grandson, Arthur, that enabled the French king to exploit the divisions within the duchy to such an extent that he was able to take it over. The origins of the Channel Islands' semi-autonomy stem from this time of differing dukes and king. Geoffrey of Anjou was able to confiscate land holdings of those men loyal to Stephen and redistribute them and to ensure loyalty guaranteed certain exemptions and liberties under local law, hence trial in Island courts. At the same period, the Islands were exempted from military service outside the Islands unless "that they will go with the Duke of Normandy, if need be, when he goes in person to recover England". There was no real need of this proviso before the struggle between Geoffrey and Stephen as during the period 1087 - 1106 the idea of one man ruling both countries had not really developed and between 1154 and 1204 the rulers were the same. The increase in ducal holdings within the Islands as a result of Geoffrey's actions resulted in Jersey and Guernsey each having their own Vicomte.

It is at this point that history books usually place the end of the Norman period in England on the death of King Stephen, the nephew of Henry I, in 1154. Yet Stephen was only one of the Norman claimants to the throne, his elder brother Theobald of Blois technically had a better claim on the grounds of age. The other legitimate claimant was Henry's daughter Mathilda and through her Henry's grandson, who was to become King

Henry II. Yet Henry II is refered to as the first of the Angevin or Plantagenet kings. This neat, compartmentalised view of history is far too simplistic as it merely refers to the dynasty in power. The English aristocracy still refered to themselves as Norman. With the acession of Henry II society did not change only the name of the ruler and he was still Duke of Normandy. Therefore, a better date for us to end the Norman period would be 1204 when the French king finally reconquered mainland Normandy thus depriving the English kings of their ducal revenues.

On the death of Henry II, his eldest son Richard "Couer de Lion" succeeded him as King/Duke and because of his father's marriage to Eleanor of Aquitaine the English kings through a variety of titles actually controlled more of France than the French king.

During the reign of Richard "Coeur de Lion" as king/duke, his youngest brother, John "Lackland", was created "Lord of the Isles" between 1195 and 1198. This meant that for the first time the Channel Islands became a distinct administrative unit. John was responsible for the government and the defence of the Islands and received the revenues that would normally have gone to the duke. When John succeeded his brother he carried on this practice of separation from mainland Normandy by creating Pierre de Preaux Lord of the Isles in 1200. It was this same man who was to surrender to King Philip Augustus of France at Rouen four years later, but forgot to include the Islands in his submission.

It was Richard "Couer de Lion" more than anyone who brought about the loss of the Duchy of Normandy although throughout history his younger brother John has been blamed.

In early 1190 Richard as King of England and Philip Augustus, King of France planned the Third Crusade as a joint venture agreeing to share the spoils. When the crusaders wintered over in Sicily the English army attacked and plundered the city of Messina which forced King Tancred to come to terms with Richard over a personal matter. As part of the peace agreement Richard's 3 year old nephew, Arthur of Brittany, was betrothed to one of Tancred's daughters on the understanding that should Richard die without heirs Arthur would succeed him. Obviously this would not win any favours from brother John. These actions alienated Philip and caused an implacable hatred that resulted in the failure of the Third Crusade and the eventual loss of Normandy. The Norman minstrel, Ambroise, summed the situation up when he wrote:

Which in the French King did create
Envy that time will ne'er abate.
And herewith was the warring born
Whereby was Normandy sore torn.

Although the matter was temporarily smoothed over, the situation got out of hand when the news broke that Richard who had been betrothed to Alice, sister of Philip of France, was to marry Berengaria of Navarre in order to ally himself with her father, King Sancho VI. This obviously brought about it a number of problems one being the legality of the marriage and the other was more personal to the King of France in that a man who was his feudal inferior, as Duke of Normandy, had jilted his sister and in effect cocked a snook at him as King of France. The tension was heightened still when Richard accused Alice of being his father's mistress. Philip made his intentions clear when he told Richard that should he put his sister aside and marry Berengaria then they would be enemies for the rest of their lives.

Both continued to Palestine to fight the crusade and recover the holy places. However, Richard's overbearing behaviour caused Philip to re-evaluate the situation and to return to France where he could plot Richard's downfall with his disgruntled brother, John.

After his various adventures following the crusade Richard returned to his Kingdom and Duchy his usual bombastic self and began the construction of Chateau Galliard at Les Andelys, high above the River Seine. The resulting castle was one of the greatest examples of late medieval defensive architecture. This was despite an earlier treaty between the King of France and the Duke of Normandy which specifically farbade a defensive construction on the site.

The French king invaded the Norman Vexin at this affront to his power and was soundly beaten on the battlefield at Gisors and Richard had the pleasure of watching his enemy fall off his horse into the River Epte. In a gloating letter to the bishop of Durham Richard said "*Thus we have defeated the King of France ...; but it is not we who have done the same, but rather God and our right (Dieu et mon droit)..."* It is from this letter that the English Crown adopted Dieu et mon droit as its motto.

This enmity carried on and it was at the storming of Chalus castle near Limoges in 1199 that Richard was killed by a stray arrow. This brought the question of the succession out into the open with England, Normandy and Aquitaine accepting John as ruler while the nobility of Brittany, Anjou and Maine supported the child, Arthur - probably on the grounds that it was easier to gain more power from a child ruler and his Regents than from an adult. This, of course, drove a wedge between the areas loyal to John and Philip was not slow to exploit the situation to strengthen his position and to reassert his authority in those parts of France beyond his control lost by his weaker predecessors. In 1202 he invaded Normandy in support of Arthur's claim.

John had captured Arthur and while he was held prisoner the youth died in mysterious circumstances. Rumours of murder alienated many of John's Norman supporters and one by one the Norman strongholds surrendered to Philip. In March 1204, Richard's dream, Chateau Galliard surrendered and within three months Philip was in control of all of mainland Normandy. Tales and rumours of double dealing by Pierre de Preaux, Lord of the Isles, have been used to explain why the Channel Islands were not included in the French take-over but the most likely explaination is that the French didn't have a strong navy whereas the English did and as a result could protect and recapture the islands if the need arose.

However,John was obviously unsure of the loyalty of the Islands because in 1205 he allowed a group of mercenaries, lead by Eustace the Monk, to ravage the Islands and he took hostages from the leading Island families to ensure good behaviour. Thes were only released in 1214 when a force of Jerseymen recaptured Sark from Eustace's men who were by now in the pay of the French king. In a revenge raid Eustace captured the Islands for the French in 1215 only to see them returned by the peace treaty in 1216.

Not all Islanders were loyal to John, there was a sizeable pro-French faction in both major islands. This is understandable if one considers what was at stake - land and feudal obligation. Should they accept the rule of their ultimate feudal superior,

or remain true to the Duke. The choice had important consequences for if one remained loyal to John then the result was land on mainland France was confiscated, swear allegiance to France and lose land in the Islands. Obviously the choice was made on hard headed, economic grounds; which land was the most valuable. Many of the lesser landholders saw in it a magnificent opportunity to get rid of feudal obligations to mainland superiors. The Church, of course, remained aloof as it was supposedly above earthly politics and so the Islands became a religious anachronism for they remained part of the diocese of Coutances - a peculiar state of affairs that lasted until 1569.

With the loss of mainland Normandy the position of the Channel Islands changed dramatically, they ceased to be a peaceful backwater and instead became a frontier post of the utmost strategic and economic importance, for a strong naval and military presence here dominated and threatened every port between Cherbourg and Brest as well as straddling the lucrative sea-route between England and the wine producing area of South West France. This of course was the thirteenth century equivalent of North Sea Oil.

Having decided that the Channel Islands were worth holding onto John treated them as his personal possession, he did not include them in the kingdom of England and this was a practice carried on by his successors. Over the next two centuries the laws and government of the Islands developed and there was no attempt to introduce English laws, weights, measures or currency, therefore, the laws were based upon old Norman law and the government evolved from "ancient liberties and customs" tempered by necessity. Obviously the Islands were in a strong bargaining position as the Kings of England needed them more than they needed the kings of England and so it is not beyond our imaginations to see some very new "ancient liberties and customs" appearing as the process evolved.

Of course, these were not written down. However, in 1218 Henry III, wrote to Philippe d'Aubigny, Warden of the Isles;

"It is not our intention to institute new Assizes in the Islands at present, but it is our will that the Assizes, which were observed there in the time of King Henry our Grandfather, King Richard our Uncle, and the Lord King John our father, should be observed there now".

In 1221 Henry III wrote to the new Warden Philippe d'Aubigny the younger

"Rule the Islands by right and due custom, as they have been accustomed to be ruled at the time of our ancestors, Kings of England"

In 1248 Henry III called upon the people of the Islands to declare what these customs were which they claimed to be governed by.

They declared that King John instituted twelve Coroners, sworn to hear law cases and rights pertaining to the Crown; and that for the security of the Island the Bailiff hold law cases without the King's writ. This system of the twelve jurats appears to have been in existence before the reign of King John, he merely formalised it. It was important for the Bailiff and Jurats to be able to try cases without the King's permission because it was becoming increasingly difficult for the King to send Justices to administer justice in the Island. This was because his English Justices knew nothing of the language and let alone the laws of the Island. So in effect Henry III was creating a complimentary, parallel system to that of England to replace an earlier system lost with the Duchy.

In 1254 King Henry III granted the Islands to his son, the future Edward I, but at the same time stipulated that the Islands were never to be seperated from the English Crown.

In 1333 following a particularly long period of misgovernment by the Lord Warden of the Islands, Otto de Grandison, the Islanders made a statement to the Kings Bench in England in which they stated that,

1. the Islands were part of the old Duchy of Normandy
2. they regarded the King as Duke
3. the law used in the Islands had always been the Custom of Normandy tempered by local custom.

By 1368 England no longer attempted to interfere in the legal system of the islands. If something happened in the islands then the case had to be heard in the islands. The only time it went to England was if it was an appeal to the Sovereign.

We appear to have overshot the Norman period by a considerable margin but then history is not a cut and dry process many historical actions have far reaching results. The loss of Normandy did not end English activity in France this only ended in the reign of Mary Tudor when the French finally recaptured Calais. For the Islands the loss of Normandy resulted in their peculier constitutional status but life went on as usual despite efforts by the authorities to change certain aspects of it. True, the fish trade with Normandy was lost but then surely this was only on the large scale, individual Islanders would still have continued to visit the old duchy where many still had relatives - the sea was no "Berlin Wall".

What we see after 1204 is merely an adaption and formalisation of a state of affairs that had existed before. The Islands were still ruled by a King/Duke figure from overseas - only this time the sea was a little bit wider. The French King still continued to try and exert his influence in what he still considered part of his domain despite recognising the Islands as English in a number of treaties. The Church organisation still remained the same, based on the cathedral city of Coutances and many French religious institutions had daughter houses on the Island. The Islanders continued to be separated from the English by language and custom. So despite the political links with Normandy being severed other links remained which continued for centuries and allowed the political entity of the Channel Islands to develop.

This is why we must celebrate William the Conqueror's death and the Norman achievement because the Islands were part of that dynamic society and it is most definitely a cornerstone of the Island heritage.

Appendix

The Norman Knight

Every man is the product of the society of which he is a member, and in this the Normans were no different. The aggressive individualism of the Vikings tempered by the bureacratic centralism of the Carolingian Franks and merged with the native Neustrian culture resulted in what we, today, term the Normans.

When one mentions the Normans the picture that springs most readily to mind is that of a mounted knight carrying a kite-shaped shield and wearing a conical helmet. The epitomy of the Norman army, these were the elite of Norman society, for in modern day terms to turn out wearing all the right gear would cost in the region of £25,000; in a World War Two context, the Norman knight was the cost-equivalent of a light armed tank. Obviously not the kind of money your average Norman in the fields was able to spend, therefore, these knights were the storm-troopers of the Norman "blitzkrieg" war-machine, the majority of men fighting within a Norman army, with the probable exception of Hastings, would be the lightly armed feudal levy - the "arriere-ban", dressed in modified everyday clothes and used as infantry and manual labour at seiges. This feudal levy was not liable for service outside Normandy.

Because of their importance to the Duchy's security, the Duke granted his tenants-in-chief sufficient land to provide him with a specific number of mounted knights. These in turn granted land to lesser tenants on the same terms. So in Norman society military service was systematically assessed and attached to a specific piece of land known as a "knight's fee" or "fief de haubert".

By the mid-11th century knighthood was an obligation as well as a status and an honour. It was conferred on a young man in a ceremony in which the dubbing could be referred to as a drubbing for he was given a hefty blow on the shoulder in the belief that the pain would remind him of the occasion and his obligations. The sheer expense of the equipment and the war horse, the necessity to be free of all commitments in order to serve the long apprenticeship meant that knights had to be members of the aristocracy. Obviously not all knights could be "enfeoffed", therefore, a landless knight had to take service with a lord in the hope of being rewarded with land for his services. This meant that within the aristocratic, knightly class the enfeoffed knight was further up the social ladder than his landless brother. While he might be employed as an envoy or an escort the knight's most important task was to practise and exercise his knightly skills whether on the hunting field or the battle field, thus, in effect, making himself a professional soldier.

It is because of this practice that the Normans were able to employ the tactic of feigned flight at Hastings to some effect. While some modern historians have doubted their ability to carry out such a tightly disciplined manoeuvre, it was a tactic used by their Viking forebears and by the Normans themselves at St Aubin-le-Cauf in 1053 and at Messina in 1060. While it is true that in essence the Norman knight was an individual mounted warrior, many lances depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry carry small flags or gonfanons which would appear to be the insignia of small groups of knights who lived, trained and fought together as a military unit. There is no reason why such units acting individually or by combining

with others should not be able to employ this tactic.

The Norman army was in effect divided into a number of natural units commanded by its own lord, thus achieving an element of organisation and cohesion. It was because of this that William was able to maintain such a high degree of discipline within his army and to employ the "wait and see" tactics in the campaigns leading upto Mortemer and Varaville in the 1050s.

While the system had its advantages it also had its problems for all the military potential of the feudal system was not at the disposal of the ruler. William, as Duke of Normandy, was obliged to assist the King of France, his overlord, with only part of his feudal army. Likewise, his tenants were not obliged to bring all their feudal troops to assist him. The greater part of a lord's feudal troops owed service to him and not the Duke. For example Robert de Cureio was only obliged to provide 10 knights from the 33 who owed him service and William's half-brother, Odo, was obliged to provide 20 from the 120 who served him. The feudal survey of Normandy carried out in 1172 shows that of the 1500 knights in Normandy less than 600 were available for the service of the Duke: and, none of those were obliged to serve overseas - military service was only owed for the defence of the Duchy.

The Normans themselves did not refer to themselves as knights; they used the Latin term "milites" to identify the tenants-in-chief, "barones" for their vassals, and "vavasseur" for the tenants of the "barones". These "vavasseurs" did not have the status of knighthood and while their equipment and weapons were similar to those of the knights were of inferior quality quilted coats and leather hoods instead of coats and hoods of mail.

While we tend to think of the Normans almost exclusively as mailed cavalrymen, it would appear that this only came about at the end of the tenth century, prior to that the Normans had fought as their Viking forbears had done - on foot. The Franks, however, had been using armoured cavalry since the end of the eighth century and this coupled with the Normans inherent interest in the technology of war and the rich horse pastures of Normandy resulted in the Norman knight of the mid-eleventh century being generally regarded as the best armoured cavalryman of the period.

Man and horse were trained for battle to near perfection. The man required great technical skill to be able to handle a shield, spear or sword and the reins, while at the same time manoeuvring to gain the advantage. Meanwhile the horse, usually a stallion, was trained to join in the fighting with hooves, teeth and forehead.

While it may appear that a long time has been spent discussing the knight it is important to remember that the whole of Norman society was geared up to provide an effective fighting force for the defence of the Duchy. This required wealth and the main form of wealth was land. Therefore, in return for military services the knight received enough land to provide himself with the wherewithall to provide that obligation.

This social system is generally referred to as the "feudal system". The bottom line of the feudal relationship and custom was that there were mutual obligations between a lord and his vassal.

Traditionally this feudal system has been seen as a fairly standardised form of land administration whose main recipients performed tasks which in later periods would be the responsibility of professional

bureaucrats. This is largely due to an rationale imposed on the medieval world by 17th century scholars. It is a simplified version of a very complicated practice, in it the ruler owns all land, he invests it in his barons who repay him in loyalty and military service. In post-Conquest England five "hides" was the area required to support one knight (a hide was the area of land sufficient to support one family and, therefore, varied with the quality of the land although 100 acres was about average for one hide).

In reality, while this was the basis of a knight's fee, the end result was the product of complicated and hard bargaining. The ruler wanted as much service as possible for as little land as possible and the tenant wanted as much land as possible for as little service as possible. Five hides was only the starting point for negotiations with the result that some tenants might be cheaply enfeoffed while his neighbour might find himself involved in very costly services. Then in turn the tenant sub-let his land to his own tenants and the same style of bargaining took place.

The situation of these land grants were an important factor in the feudal obligations due, in the frontier areas of Wales or the North territory had to be hacked out before it could be exploited and one must remember that in England the Normans were colonisers as opposed to settlers as they were in the Duchy. This of course meant that the terms and style of the feudal system varied with time and place. It only became formalised in the twelfth century towards the end of the Norman period.

It would be wrong to regard feudalism as a new system that the Normans imposed on the English, for Anglo-Saxon society was governed by hierarchical personal relationships and service tenure as was most of early medieval Europe. The Normans simply adopted a home grown system whether it was in tenth century Neustria or eleventh century England and used it to their own benefit. In both cases, the settlement or the Conquest, it was an aristocratic takeover.

Perhaps, the whole feudal system can best be described as one massive protection racket with the King/Duke playing the role of the Godfather and his leading tenants-in-chief playing the heads of Mafia families collecting wealth in return for making sure nothing goes wrong in their patch. Just as in twentieth century Chicago, the eleventh century Norman barons were not averse to a little bit of free enterprise when it came to muscling in on their weaker neighbours' territory. This did not unduly worry the Godfather/King/Duke as long as they did not become too strong or ambitious. If they did, they had to be reminded of who was "Top-dog".

While most of the dealings so far have concerned laymen, the Church was also part of the system receiving land in return for obligations including the provision of knights or "scutage" (shield-money) with which to hire mercenaries. Many of the tenants-in-chief were Church leaders, indeed, many of the leaders of Norman society were Churchmen and one would be hard pressed to find a more avaricious and belligerent Norman than that fine Christian gentleman, Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, William's half-brother and the Church Militant incarnate.

The Church did well out of the Norman Conquest, indeed one of the ostensible reasons for the invasion of 1066 was the need to reform the English Church. This reformation and reorganisation of the English Church was carried out by

William and his Archbishop of Canterbury, Lanfranc. Monasteries were founded, sees were transferred to larger towns and gradually Frenchmen replaced Englishmen in important positions. The result was a sharp division within the Church with the prelates and their servants French and the parish priests English.

All Lanfranc's reforms had one eye on God and the other firmly on William. Under the king's instructions he established a Church that was a mirror image of the military state - a strict hierarchy with Lanfranc as Archbishop of Canterbury supreme at the top owing loyalty to the King. Along with this went the firm conviction that the Normans were about God's work, after the uprising in Norwich, Lanfranc wrote "By God's mercy the clamour of war has ceased on English soil". Around the battlefields of Europe the Normans warcry of "Dex ais" (God aid us) was heard even when they were fighting the Pope's own army. The period after the Conquest brought to England a period of renewed vigour in ecclesiastical building following the pattern of what had been happening in Normandy for the previous half century.

About the year 1000, during the reign of the fifth Duke, Richard II, the Conqueror's grandfather, the relative stability of the period produced a measure of peace and prosperity which resulted in an awakening in the Normans of what must have been an intense religious fervour for an immense programme of Church reconstruction adopting the new Romanesque style of architecture was begun. The upsurge in the reforming movement within the Church caught the imagination of the Normans.

However,if one looks at the Norman genius in taking existing structures of administration and then adapting and reorganising them to suit their own needs one must ask the question, "Did this outburst of ecclesiastical activity stem truely from religious fervour or did they originally see it as a way to control and ensure the loyalty of a major non-hereditary power within their duchy?" Perhaps this is cynical view but it is true that many of the more important positions within the Norman Church were held by members of the Ducal family. Duke Richard II's sons Robert and Mauger both became Archbishop of Rouen and despite the strength of the reforming movement in the Duchy Mauger brought his wife and child to the Channel Islands when he was exiled here in 1055 for dabbling in court politics. William's half-brother, Odo, was Bishop of Bayeux yet was imprisoned for dabbling in politics. These appointments would appear to come from political expediency rather than religious vocation.

The Church was also seen as a handy place to get rid of unwanted relations such as mothers-in-law, nephews, nieces, the occasional daughter. The last Norman Queen of Sicily and her three daughters were forced to spend the rest of their lives in a convent. The boy king William III of Sicily was handed over to a monastery after he had been mutilated. The Conqueror's own father got rid of his nephew, Duke Richard III's child, when he became duke in 1028. The Church was obviously a the ideal way to get round the laws of primogeniture. By agreeing to these "placements" the Church often benefitted financially.

By endowing churches one could always get a reputation for piousness for piety and self-interest went hand in hand - by building churches and endowing manasteries, the Normans gained prestige on earth and prayers for their souls after death.

The Church was seen as yet another area of exploitation and the reorganisation and building programmes may be interpretted as expressions of power by the younger sons who were placed in them for family advancement.

In this idea of family advancement we have one of the problems of Norman Society, how did a knight provide for his sons, the eldest inherited the land, so how do you provide for the others. Tancred de Hauteville definitely had a problem for he managed to sire twelve of them. For the de Hautevilles the world was their oyster and eight of them went off to find fame and advancement in southern Italy. Other younger sons served in the "familias" of rich magnates hoping to be rewarded with land of their own in return for service, others became "stipendiary" knights or mercenaries, while for some the Church was the answer. For this group of younger sons, William's English adventure must have appeared a God-sent opportunity.

While sons could be an expense and a problem they were regarded as a necessity, daughters were often considered liabilities. In Anglo-Saxon society if a man died without a male heir then his daughters inherited the property, after the Conquest land tended to pass only to males because of the obligations that went with it. For the daughters of the rich, the pattern of life was dictated from a very early age. Daughters were seen as a commodity with which to make family alliances through marriages and as a result they were betrothed and often married very young. Duke Richard II's daughter, Emma, was married to two kings of England, Ethelred the Unready and his successor, Cnut. She had sons by each man of whom two,Harthacnut and Edward the Confessor were also kings of England. The Conqueror's's niece Judith was married off to the leading Saxon earl after the Conquest, Waltheof of Huntingdon. While his daughter Constance was married to Count Alan "Iron Glove" of Brittany.

This pattern of using daughters as links in family chains and for family advancement was echoed all the way down the social ladder. If, however, you had an unmarriageable daughter she could always enter a nunnery. When it came to running their own lives most women had to wait until their husbands died for a widow had the greatest freedom and in towns they could pay a fee to be allowed to carry on their husband's trade. Alternatively by entering the Church some women were able to administer large estates and become influential, literate and rich.

However, one does not have to be in a position of authority to exert power as William found out in 1070. The Norman chronicler, Ordericus Vitalis tells how the women of Normandy caused William to lose some of his most able and trusted soldiers. Tired of their neglect they sent an ultimatum across the Channel, "home or else!" or as Vitalis puts it "... inflamed by passion they sent frequent messages to their husbands, requiring a speedy return ... what were honourable soldiers to do, when their licientious wives threatened to stain the marriage bed with adultry, and stamp the mark of infamy on their offspring." Vitalis' disapproval rings loud and clear when despite William's offer of even more land, wealth and power some men "returned obsequiously to their lascivious wives in Normandy". Of course given the Norman character, I bet more men decided to stay to collect the rewards. It is usually accepted that the Conqueror's army at Hastings was about six to seven thousand strong. Of these, only the names of
fifteen men can be convincingly shown to have fought in the battle and only the

family of William Malet can claim continuous descent through the male line. However, not all the victorious army remained in England after 1066. Some returned to their estates in Normandy, some of the mercenaries were paid off to seek pastures new and others who had not joined in the 1066 expedition or who had been left behind to guard the Duchy arrived to grab their share of the action. The "carpet-baggers" following in the wake of the successful army. By 1086 an estimated 20,000 Normans were in the country.

While it can be easy to portray the Normans as avaricious, illiterate, superstitious thugs this would be to do them a great disservice. They were magnificent builders producing some of the most spectacular and colourful churches ever to be built, they had no artists of the calibre of the Anglo-Saxons but then surely architecture is another branch of the arts. Their chroniclers such as William of Poitiers, Ordericus Vitalis and Florence of Worcester were the equals of their Anglo-Saxon counterparts.

During the twelfth century a leisured class eager for knowledge and entertainment grew up amongst the Norman aristocracy. Typical of their age, in that they were illiterate and unable to understand Latin, they demanded a literature in their own language and so a group of writers began to cater for their needs. A prominent figure amongst these writers was the Jerseyman, Maistre Wace.

Wace, born in the Island about 1100, was sent to Caen to study for the Church and he actually states that he earned his bread by writing romances. His two most famous epic poems are the "Roman de Brut" concerning the kings of Britain and his unfinished "Roman de Rou" concerning the Dukes of Normandy. While he often foresook accuracy for the sake of a good storyline this should not detract from his skill - he was a storyteller not a journalist, perhaps he could best be described, in modern day terms as being the Catherine Cookson or Jack Higgins of his age. Although, personally, I prefer to see him as the forerunner of the "soap opera" script writer in that he was providing a popular form of entertainment.