GCSE
HISTORY (8145)

Paper 2 Shaping the Nation

Resource pack for the 2019 historic environment specified site

Pevensey Castle, East Sussex

Norman England, c1066–c1100

The purpose of this pack is to provide you with guidance and resources to support your teaching about Pevensey Castle, the 2019 specified site for the historic environment part of Norman England, c1066–c1100. It is intended as a guide only and you may wish to use other sources of information about Pevensey Castle. The resources are provided to help you develop your students' knowledge and understanding of the specified site. They will not be tested in the examination, as the question targets AO1 (knowledge and understanding) and AO2 (explaining second order concepts).

General guidance

The study of the historic environment will focus on a particular site in its historical context and should examine the relationship between a specific site and the key events, features or developments of the period. As a result, when teaching a specified site for the historic environment element, it is useful to think about ways of linking the site to the specified content in Parts 1, 2 and/or 3 of the specification.

There is no requirement to visit the specified site as this element of the course is designed to be classroom based. However free site visits for school groups can be booked via the English Heritage Education bookings team http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/learn/school-visits/.

Students will be expected to answer a question that draws on second order concepts of change, continuity, causation and/or consequence, and to explore them in the context of the specified site and wider events and developments of the period studied. Students should be able to identify key features of the specified site and understand their connection to the wider historical context of the specific historical period. Sites will also illuminate how people lived at the time, how they were governed and their beliefs and values.

The following aspects of the site should be considered:
- location
- function
- the structure
- people connected with the site eg the designer, originator and occupants
- design
- how the design reflects the culture, values, fashions of the people at the time
- how important events/developments from the depth study are connected to the site.

Students will be expected to understand the ways in which key features and other aspects of the site are representative of the period studied. In order to do this, students will also need to be aware of how the key features and other aspects of the site have changed from earlier periods. Students will also be expected to understand how key features and other aspects may have changed or stayed the same during the period.

Background information for Pevensey Castle, East Sussex

Why was there a fort at Pevensey?

Pevensey is about half way between Brighton and Dover on the south coast of England.
The Romans built a fort there in about AD 290 as one in a chain of nine forts along the south and
east coasts which defended the 'Saxon Shore', a coastal frontier facing attack by barbarian Saxon
pirates. All these forts shared architectural features, particularly the D-shaped wall towers which were
a new feature of Roman fortifications at this time. After the Romans withdrew troops from Britain in
the early 5th century, Pevensey's walls continued to shelter a community. The Anglo-Saxon
Chronicle records that in AD 491 the fort was besieged and its population slaughtered by Saxon
raiders. After this, although the fort may still have housed a settlement, it probably gradually fell to
ruins.
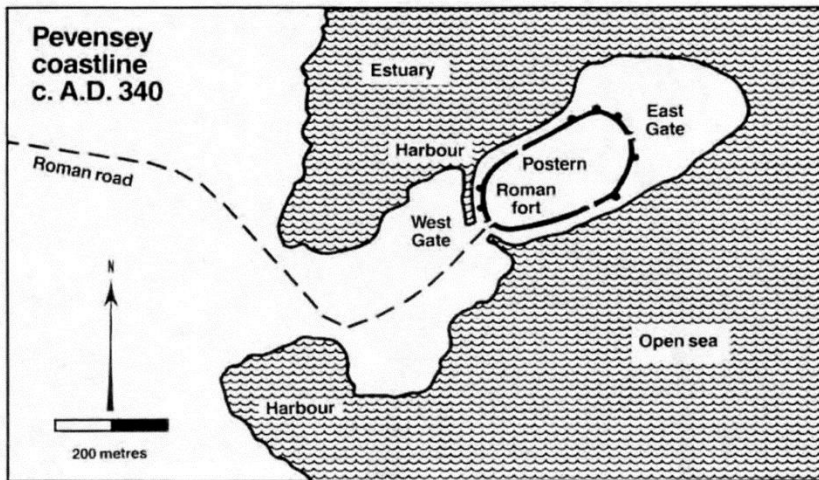
In those days, Pevensey was on a peninsula which jutted out into the sea, with Pevensey itself joined
to the mainland by a narrow neck of dry land. This area around the coast must have been marshland
but was sheltered from the prevailing south-westerly winds by the South Downs and Beachy Head.
Today, however, the remains of the fort stand on dry land about a mile from the Channel coastline
which has changed considerably since Roman times.

Why was Pevensey a good place for William and the Normans to land?

William the Conqueror's fleet assembled at the mouth of the River Dives and after setting off was
blown north to St Valery where he was kept in port by unfavourable weather conditions. Before dawn
on 28 September 1066 – three days after King Harold's victory at Stamford Bridge – William, Duke of
Normandy, sailed his invading fleet into Pevensey Bay. William's landing site was well chosen.
Firstly, it offered a shallow beach and natural harbour to disembark his troops and resources.
Secondly, he must have known about the Roman fortification at Pevensey that would serve as a
temporary base for his army.

Pevensey played a crucial role in the Norman invasion of 1066 because it provided a defensible site.
After landing, he immediately built a temporary timber fortification, almost certainly within the walls of
the Roman fort, to shelter his troops. It is likely that it took him less than a day to build this fort from
pre-cut and prepared components that he brought with him in the invasion fleet. William ordered a
ditch cut across the peninsula to isolate the ruins from the mainland and repaired the Roman walls.
The Roman tower in the north-west corner of the new inner Bailey was raised in height to provide an
observation point as the Normans might have feared a counter-attack from the North. The next day
William marched his army to Hastings, and waited for Harold to arrive from the north – in the

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meantime pillaging and burning the surrounding countryside. To maintain an active army in medieval times usually meant treating enemy countryside in this way. This tactic fulfilled several objectives as the army supplied itself with food, denied the enemy resources and at the same time satisfied the private soldiers' desires for plunder.

The timing of William's arrival was also shrewdly chosen. Supplying a medieval army with food and keeping it healthy and ready for battle was a major challenge. Harold had managed to do this for four months until 8 September when he ran out of supplies, disbanded his army and allowed his men to return home to help with harvesting. Perhaps he concluded that William was now unlikely to invade until the following year. William's spies might have informed him of this and so he delayed his departure from Normandy until Harold's provisions ran out and William could be sure that Harold's army and fleet had dispersed leaving the English less prepared to withstand an invasion.

It is likely that William learned of Harold's rapid gathering of troops and his march north to confront the invasion of Harald Hardrada and Tostig at Stamford Bridge. Harold's march north proved to be good fortune for William because the weather changed on 28 September and William was able to cross the English Channel. Although when William set sail he may have known that the South coast of England was largely undefended, he would not have known the outcome of the battle of Stamford Bridge and whom he might have to defeat in a battle for the crown of England.

Why did Pevensey continue to be important for the Normans?

In 1067, King William sailed from Pevensey to make a triumphal tour of Normandy. Before leaving, he distributed land amongst his victorious followers in front of a group of defeated Anglo-Saxon nobles. It was then that he gave Pevensey castle with its surrounding land, known as the Rape* of Pevensey, to his half-brother Robert, Count of Mortain. It was probably Robert who created the first permanent defences, refortifying the Roman outer wall and creating two enclosures (or baileys) within it, divided by a ditch and a timber palisade.

Pevensey offered a natural harbour facing the Normandy coast, and control of it not only ensured lines of communication with the Continent, but prevented it from being used as a base for another seaborne invasion. Pevensey and the other Sussex Rapes cut across established and inherited Anglo-Saxon land holdings and would now be held by William's trusted supporters. They provided a safe and secure route to Normandy for supplies and, had it been necessary in the months after the battle of Hastings, for retreat. In the years that followed, this route was important because William and his nobles held land in both England and Normandy that they needed to govern. By 1073 this area of the Sussex coast had been divided into 5 rapes, each one owned by a trusted follower or relative of the Conqueror. The two at Pevensey and Hastings were attached to campaigning castles established by William after his landing in 1066. The other three, Arundel, Bramber, and Lewes were newly built at the mouth of rivers that gave access inland.

Norman Castle Building

William's ability to build castles after his victory at Hastings gave him a weapon and an important technological advantage. Anglo-Saxon England had nothing like the castles that had sprung up in many parts of eleventh century Western Europe. England had fortified towns, and some noble halls had simple fortifications but the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle had no doubt that the many castles built by William during his early campaigns were crucial to Norman success.

Although most of the Norman castles, like those at Pevensey and Hastings, were simply motte and bailey constructions, they dominated the English towns, protected scattered Norman garrisons and made it much harder for resistance and rebellion to gain momentum. For William, it was natural and made good strategic sense that, after fortifying Pevensey and Hastings, more castles were built as he proceeded to London after his victory over Harold. In 1068–69, as William travelled across England, castles were constructed as far apart as Exeter and York, with many in between. These

primitive castles would not provide a permanent advantage and would need rebuilding in stone and although not all of them would be needed in the future, they were vital assets in the decade after the Conquest.

Norman castles changed the landscape of England after the Conquest. The motte and bailey castle was a new design and William was soon building the first stone keeps in England such as the White Tower that astonished Londoners. These castles became lasting symbols of Norman authority to a hostile and restless native population who saw the new royal castles dominate the urban landscape and project William's power. Castles were not exclusively royal creations as in the Marcher earldoms and the Sussex Rapes, they were built by trusted men with delegated responsibility for their areas. The great nobles also preferred to consolidate their local power by building castles, while the king, of course, had to make sure that these private castles were constructed only within limits set by him.

The result of so much castle building was that England was now fortified to a much greater extent. Having conquered England, William made it harder for other foreign invaders to repeat the Normans' success because they would now be faced with fortified towns, residences and large castles. In a landscape now covered with many fortifications, control of any area could not be achieved without its most important castles being taken, thus shifting the balance of warfare decisively away from battles and towards sieges.

The Siege of Pevensey, 1088

After the death of William the Conqueror in 1087 there was a compromise over the succession. Despite a preference for his second son, William Rufus, William I divided his enormous empire between the elder two of his three sons. He gave the throne of England to William Rufus, who became William II. He bequeathed Normandy to Robert his eldest son, and made a large settlement of treasure on his youngest son, Henry. As most important barons held land on both sides of the channel they now owed feudal service to William Rufus for the lands in England, and to Robert for those in Normandy. The division of William the Conqueror's empire was a recipe for conflict and a grave mistake. Moreover, the dying William, making his peace with God, had also ordered the release from prison of a number of his political opponents including his half-brother, Odo, held since 1082 for conspiracy. Odo, Bishop of Bayeux in Normandy, was also Earl of Kent, and lord of the strategic castle of Rochester. He was a dangerous man and quickly became central to a revolt of the Anglo-Norman barons against the new King of England, William II. The aim of their revolt was to replace William with Robert on the English throne. Fighting occurred in several parts of England during 1088, but the real threat was in Kent and Sussex where Odo and other rebels held lands. Pevensey had a strategic importance in the conflict as there was a real danger that Robert would invade England from Normandy as his father had done. Pevensey lay in the Rape given to Robert, Count of Mortain, also a half-brother to Odo, and another one of the rebels against the new English King, William II. After taking the great motte and bailey castle at Tonbridge in Kent by siege, William spent 6 gruelling weeks besieging Pevensey Castle from land and sea. He was supported by his father's friend, William de Warenne, who had been created Earl of Surrey early in 1088. Warenne, had fought with William the Conqueror at Hastings, and controlled the adjacent Rape of Lewes. In 1088 the rebels in Pevensey Castle were finally forced to seek a truce when they ran out of food.

Despite this rebellion the Count of Mortain was allowed to keep Pevensey but his son subsequently lost it, along with the other family estates in England, as a result of his opposition to William Rufus's successor and younger brother, Henry I. Henry granted most of the confiscated lands of the Pevensey Rape to a Norman lord, Gilbert Laigle. However Henry recognised the importance of Pevensey Castle for his security and kept it under his own direct control. In 1101, when Duke Robert again threatened to invade England, Henry I spent the summer at Pevensey in anticipation of an attack.

The word, 'Rape' in this context probably comes from Normandy and an old Norse word for 'rope' as there are cases of the Normans measuring and allocating land 'by the rope'.

Resources

Resource A   A map of William the Conqueror's Castles and campaigns

Resource B   A plan of Pevensey Castle

Legend:
- 3rd Century
- 3rd Century (fallen)
- Medieval (date uncertain)
- 12th Century
- Mid 13th Century
- Early 14th Century
- Later Medieval
- F   Fireplace

Labels on plan: Roman East Gate, East Tower, Keep, Probable line of early Norman inner bailey, North Tower, Inner Bailey, Well, Postern, Chapel, Inner Bailey, Gatehouse, Dam, Postern, Tudor Gun Emplacement, Roman West Gate, Ditch, Norman Ditch, 0 50 Metres, 0 150 Feet

Resource C   An archaeological map of Pevensey Castle and the settlement

Resource D   A map showing the division of Sussex into Rapes or territorial strips
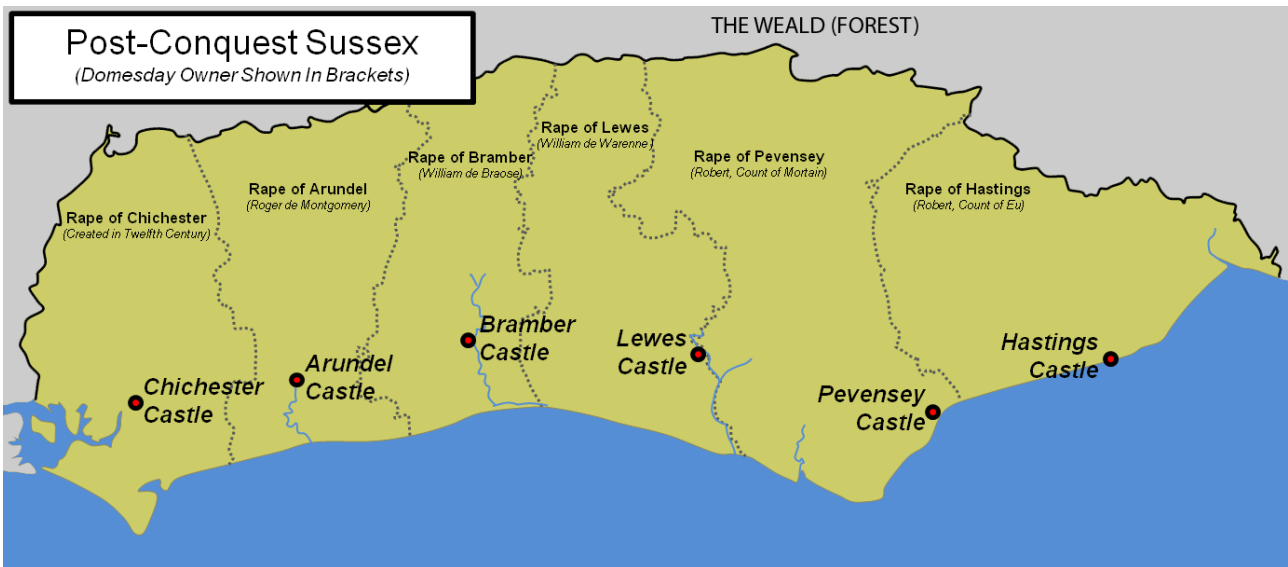
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Resource E An artist's reconstruction of how the Roman fort at Pevensey might have looked in 1066 when used by the Normans

Resource F   A part of the Bayeux tapestry showing the construction of a simple motte and bailey castle

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Resource G   A photograph of the outer Bailey of Pevensey Castle viewed from the west and towards the coast

Resource H 1 **A photograph of the outer Bailey of Pevensey Castle viewed from the north-west**

Resource H 2 **A photograph of the outer Bailey of Pevensey Castle viewed from the south-west**

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Resource I   An extract adapted from 'The Struggle for Mastery, 1066–1284' by David Carpenter, (2003)

Following his initial victories the English had accepted William as king. After all, he took the same coronation oath as his Anglo-Saxon predecessors. When he returned to Normandy in March 1067, he left his brother, Bishop Odo, and his childhood friend, William FitzOsbern as regents, but he also kept many English sheriffs and recognised and appointed English earls. However, over the next few years William, faced with a series of rebellions, was to destroy this Anglo-Norman cooperation completely. There was immediate discontent at the taxation and castles which were a central part of Norman rule. Contemporaries believed that William had broken his coronation oath to rule his people well. They were angry at not being able to pass on their estates, and at the death of family members and fellow countrymen. From the start, William confiscated the lands of all those who had stood against him at Hastings and been killed, which included Harold and his brothers. This destruction of Harold's house which had dominated England for a generation and the disinheritance of the families of the other fallen houses sent shockwaves through English society. From William's point of view, this was justified as he believed that Harold had had no right to the throne of England as a perjurer and usurper. These confiscations were also necessary to secure his grip on the country and reward those who had fought with him at Hastings and prayed for his success in the monasteries of Normandy.

Trouble began before William returned to England from Normandy in December 1067. In January, 1068 he marched into the West Country, and besieged and took Exeter, building a castle in the town. Earl Edwin of Mercia, was joined in rebellion by the Northumbrian Earls, Morcar, Waltheof and Gospatric. Most dangerous of all, however, was Edgar Atheling, the last male member of the royal house of Wessex who, with support from King Malcolm of Scotland, now revived his claims to the English throne. William's first response was to march north in 1068, building castles as he went at Warwick (where Edwin and Morcar surrendered), at Nottingham, and York. Early in 1069 Edgar attacked York so William went north again and built a second castle there. In the autumn of 1069 a fleet sent by the King of Denmark entered the Humber and joined up with the Atheling, capturing York

This was the most serious crisis of William's reign and he knew it. He ignored a rebellion which threatened his conquest of Maine in France, and acted in England with a combination of energy, brutality and conciliation. He again marched north, and on Christmas Day, 1069, wore his crown, especially sent from Winchester, in the ruins of York Minster, as a symbolic response to the claims of Edgar. William then marched to the Tees, ravaging the country as he went. The Danes were bought off, Edgar retired to Scotland, and Gospatric and Waltheof admitted defeat, although they kept their earldoms. But William was not finished. He led his troops on an extraordinary winter march across the Pennines, defeated the Shrewsbury rebels, built castles at Chester and Stafford, devastated the surrounding areas, and was back at Winchester in time for Easter of 1070. By this time his forces had reduced much of Yorkshire to a wasteland.

Historians have sometimes been sceptical about the extent of 'the harrowing of the north' but the evidence is powerful and consistent. A C12th chronicler wrote of the great famine, the exodus of refugees, the decaying corpses and 'land deprived of anyone to cultivate it with no village inhabited between York and Durham.' William's knights, moving rapidly from village to village, could easily have accomplished this destruction between Christmas and Easter. They were helped by the winter season as the corn for eating and sowing was in barns so by setting them ablaze the food for two years was effectively destroyed. William's northern campaign did not quite end English resistance. Edwin and Morcar kept out of the upheavals of 1069–70 and in 1071 they escaped from court. Edwin was soon trapped and killed, while Morcar was surrounded on the Isle of Ely and captured. The Conquest itself was over.

Resource J   An extract adapted from 'England under the Norman and Angevin Kings, 1075–1225' by Robert Bartlett, 2000

The castle was an innovation, brought to England by the Normans from France, where it had been important in restructuring French society in the eleventh century. A contemporary wrote that although the English were warlike and courageous, they could only put up weak resistance to such fortifications. William's army built two castles in the fortnight between landing and the battle of Hastings and, in this respect, they started as they meant to go on. Hundreds of castles were built in the years after the Conquest, and became the building blocks of royal and noble military and political power.

The innovation that the castle represented can be best seen in comparison with the fortifications of the earlier Middle Ages. These were either large earthwork perimeters, such as the burhs built by the Wessex kings when fighting the Danes, or aristocratic halls, built of wood and sometimes surrounded by a timber stockade with a gatehouse. The function of the burh was to defend whole communities and is reflected in their size which averaged 25 acres. In contrast, castles only covered a couple of acres. The crucial feature of the new castle was its central defensive tower which contrasted sharply with the old aristocratic timber hall which was vulnerable because it could be easily surrounded and set on fire. This led to situations such as in 1080 when the Bishop of Durham and his men were trapped in a wooden church at Gateshead and faced a choice between death by burning or at the hands of their enemies. Castles were not immune to fire, but the central tower had first to be reached and in the early motte and bailey castle this was made difficult by placing it on an artificial mound (the Motte). From the tower on the Motte the defenders had a positional advantage looking down on their attackers. If there was a stone tower rather than a wooden one, the castle was even more difficult to capture, so the loss of the outer walls was not as crucial. Building in stone was more expensive than timber construction, but brought prestige, offered greater security, especially against fire, and lasted longer, as the wooden motte and bailey castle would have rotted in time. As a result, stone walls often replaced timber ones during the twelfth century. These new castles were designed to protect leaders and their households not communities, so were smaller, relying on height rather than creating barriers. Motte and bailey castles were relatively simple to build, needing only earthmoving and rough carpentry which could be obtained from the surrounding population, which was therefore forced to build the means of its own domination by the Normans.

There were probably over a thousand castles built in this period and the construction and maintenance of these new fortifications was one of the most distinctive features of England at this time. The location of castles was determined both by feudal and natural geography. A nobleman's castle was at the centre of their feudal territory while for great lords a network of such castles would be both convenient and prestigious. Geography was also important as castles needed a water supply. They might be sited to control a river crossing or command a mountain pass or gap. At the national level castles could secure strategic points. The huge, expensive, and elaborate fortress at Dover was there because it was seen as the 'key of England', while the number of castles in the Welsh Marches were a response to an insecure border. Some castles built in Northern England were a defence against both Scottish raiders and rebellious locals. Castles at Newcastle and Durham date from the time when the Normans were as concerned to secure their control of Northern England as they were to protect it from incursions by the Scots.

Many castles were located in towns. One of William's more drastic policies was to demolish whole quarters of towns to accommodate his new, intrusive castles. In Lincoln, for example, about one in seven of the city properties were 'destroyed on account of the castle'. Eventually most English county towns had a castle, which served as an administrative centre, storeroom, and gaol. England was now covered with a network of castles, ranging in scale and style from the tall stone keep of the tower overlooking London to hundreds of short lived motte and bailey's in every corner of the land. Not all castles were on a permanent war footing and might only have a skeleton staff. However, once hostilities threatened, castles needed to be repaired, restocked, and garrisoned and once this was done warfare was shaped by their presence. A campaign in a landscape with castles was

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fundamentally different from one where there were no castles.

Castles could not be ignored as garrisons could sally out to harass passing forces. The rebel Earl Ralph of East Anglia could not carry out his intended aggressive campaign in 1075 because he was attacked by local troops and castle garrisons. An actively hostile castle was an irritant, a drain on resources, and an insult.

As a result, most military activity in England in this period concerned seizing or defending castles. The balance between attacker and defender depended on local considerations, but even a small garrison could delay larger forces. A frontal assault on a castle was rarely an attacker's first preference. Castles could be blockaded and starved out but this was a lengthy task, or they could be attacked with a variety of siege weapons. The development of sophisticated siege weapons went hand-in-hand with the strengthening of castle defences, with royal engineers being responsible for both improvements. Castles could also be confronted by siege castles built in the immediate vicinity to protect a harassing and besieging force. Henry I, besieging Arundel Castle in 1102 realised that a quick outcome was unlikely so 'had castles made in front of it and filled them with his men'.

Resource K   An extract adapted from 'Castles, Lordship and Settlement in Norman England and Wales', by OH Creighton, published in 'History Today' (2003)

Traditionally, medieval castle design has been seen as a struggle between the siege engineer and those improving castle defences. More recently, however, it has been recognised that castles had a broad range of functions and a wider place within medieval society and landscape. As well as being defensible strongholds and elite private residences, most castles were also at the centre of estates. The castle was a conspicuous emblem of royal authority or feudal lordship. The medieval landscape was dotted with castles of all shapes, sizes and status, built by a wide range of individuals from kings, bishops and major magnates, through to petty manorial lords and sometimes their tenants. Although the crown may have been able to encourage or discourage private castle-building in certain places at various times, there is no evidence of a master-plan of castle-building designed for national defence. Instead, castle-building was carried out as a result of a multitude of individual decisions.

Another misconception is that most castles were built on hilltops. Sites such as Corfe Castle in Dorset may have stunning settings but are not typical. The domestic, administrative and economic functions of castles ensured that relatively low-lying positions with better access to communications and resources were more likely to be selected with many such castles being overlooked by higher ground. Most castles were not inaccessible or isolated but closely associated with settlements and other features reflecting their status as centres of lordship and consumption, such as fish ponds, deer parks and mills. Some castles, such as the one at Lewes in Sussex, were 'twinned' with a nearby monastic house while others even had the monastic foundation within the walls of the castle. This formed a powerful combination which would have seemed a formidable instrument of domination and exploitation to the surviving English people. These religious houses also bestowed spiritual rewards on the lord who could gain comfort from the services offered by the religious community to him and his family. Castle chapels were often served by the monastic house of which the castle lord was patron, while feudal lords also controlled appointments to local parish churches.

The most significant impact of the medieval castle on its surroundings, however, was its effect on settlement patterns. The new Norman power holders looked to make their mark on society and the landscape and as a result many British settlements came into being, or in some way bear the imprint of, their castles and the policies of their authorities. Landscapes and townscapes throughout England show that Norman castles acted as catalysts for settlement change. As their lords energetically created, planned or re-shaped communities, these sites also had a psychological impact on contemporary populations. After 1066 Saxon towns were subjected to a whirlwind programme of castle-building as William suppressed populations in the regions by creating a network of fortified power-bases which dominated communications and government nationwide. These castles disrupted urban road networks, encroached on church property, displaced housing, and doubtless overawed civilian populations.

The urban castles of England were clearly statements of power to the native population. In London, for example, the Norman fortifications of 1067 were described as 'a defence against the numerous and hostile inhabitants', while Exeter castle was built after the south-western revolt of 1067-68 was put down. Imposed on existing communities, urban castles also had important administrative, economic and legal functions, and many became county towns. Most urban castles were built inside existing defences which was a logical decision to use what was already there, as at Winchester fortress which sat within the Roman city walls. Some Norman castles made propaganda of the past as at Colchester where the castle was built on the site of a Roman temple to stress continuity of occupation in the minds of the population. Nothing stood in the way of Norman castles as houses were demolished and even church property was not immune as the castle built within the abbey precincts at Malmesbury shows. An estimated three-quarters of all English towns founded between 1066 and 1150 were next to castles. As manorial centres and high-status residences, castles attracted a large and varied population, including guests and their retinues, various officials, and military personnel. The pull of a castle could attract craftspeople and traders with many castle towns starting life as informal gatherings at the castle gate. This relationship between castle and associated

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town was mutually beneficial as the castle community gave commercial opportunities while the linked settlement provided a source of labour, services and income through rents and tolls. In the countryside, castle owners also re-cast settlement, as in Yorkshire where, after William's brutal 'harrying' of 1069–70, ambitious new Norman lords re-organised devastated estates and planned villages. Therefore, the establishment of these castle-town units after 1066 was a crucial way of making the Norman Conquest permanent.

Resource L   An extract adapted from 'William the First and the Sussex Rapes' by J F A Mason, (1966).

The territorial strips in Sussex known as Rapes exist because of the Norman Conquest. In the last year of Edward the Confessor's reign, land in Sussex belonged to the King, to Earl Godwin, or to Harold Godwinson, Earl of Wessex. Although much land was also in hands of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the church, there were no other Norman laymen established in Sussex in 1066. Sussex was not yet divided into the compact parcels of land running from the Channel back to the Weald, as the lands of the King and the others were scattered throughout the county.

However by 1086 all that had changed. Now the king only held two estates, with the rest of Sussex divided into those blocks of land stretching from the Channel back to the Weald and held by five Norman tenants in chief of King William. All the English landowners in this most prosperous county had lost their land. The Rape of Pevensey extending to the River Ouse, was held by Robert, Count of Mortain. There was one other significant contrast as in 1066 there were no castles in Sussex, but by 1086 there was one in each Rape, at Hastings, Lewis, Bramber, Pevensey, and Arundel.
The situation confronting William after his victory was simple: he had to march towards the capital and, if necessary, defeat other claimants while securing a base or bases to which reinforcements could be brought. Before the battle William had built a castle at Hastings, and after the battle left Humphrey of Tilleul in charge. There was probably already a similar organisation at Pevensey giving the sense of a temporary military government. By the time of William's coronation on Christmas Day in 1066, however, the situation had changed slightly, but probably not enough to allow a large-scale distribution of land, for the new King wished to return to Normandy in triumph and was away from February 1067, when he sailed from Pevensey, until the following December. He left William FitzOsbern and Odo of Bayeux in charge, with instructions to build castles. It was when William returned in December 1067 that his half-brother, Robert Count of Mortain, received the Rape of Pevensey. By 1073 all the great inlets and harbours of the south-east coast had been entrusted to chosen vassals.

Who were the men who held these key positions from the King? They had one thing in common: all were Normans, and none were Bretons or Flemings, the other main groups among Williams's vassals. As there were non-Norman soldiers in William's army at Hastings, the choice of only Normans for these lordships in south-east England must be seen as deliberate. In fact they were well-fitted to occupy these strategically important positions in England as they already held similar positions in Normandy with Robert of Mortain, for example, holding lands on the southern frontier of Normandy. Also important was the fact that several of this small group, including Robert, were related to the King.

It might have been expected that William would create a single earldom out of strategically important Sussex but the idea of a single earldom may have been unattractive because it could concentrate several castles in the hands of just one person. Also his campaign in 1066 would have shown him the large number of ports that needed safeguarding. Therefore at this stage we should think of the Rapes as military districts rather than as pre-conquest units merely adapted by the Conqueror. What did William achieve by his land settlement in south-east England? Although his actions had placed the ports linking England to Normandy in five different hands, William, in the early months and years of his reign, was perhaps not only thinking of safe communications with Normandy, but of possible dangers from a Scandinavian fleet. The southern ports were liable to attack from up and down the Channel as well as crucial to communications across it. Another possibility was that there was still great support for Godwin and Harold in Sussex. The division of Sussex into Rapes, at a time when William could not foresee the nature of any future trouble, may also have been to guard against resistance on land from those still sympathetic to Godwin's family.

The King's allocation of land was only the first step in the Norman's land settlement as lords such as Robert began organising their own administrations within their territories. They exploited their position to the utmost, exacting rents from others higher than from their own manors, but they also looked to

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the future, with Robert of Mortain joining in the colonisation of undeveloped parts of the Weald to the north of his Rapes.

The creation of the five Sussex Rapes was not designed for the long term but reflected a short-lived phase in Norman policy, but one which had results long after the causes behind it were forgotten. Initially the Rapes and south-east England had been guarded by a small group of men almost all of whom were very closely bound to the Conqueror and to each other by ties of relationship and service. But the emergency was soon over.

Resource M   An extract adapted from 'Robert of Mortain' by Brian Gosling, (1991)

Robert of Mortain, half-brother to the Conqueror was one of the wealthiest magnates in post-conquest England. As well as holding the important Rape of Pevensey, he had a number of strategically placed manors around London and owned land in 20 counties with particularly extensive estates in Northamptonshire, Yorkshire and the south-west where he dominated feudal society. He also held a frontier lordship of great strategic importance in south-west Normandy so that by his death in 1095 he had established a large 'empire' stretching from northern England to Maine. His legacy, though short lived, was enormous.

The relationship between castle and town was important in the Norman colonisation of England and this can clearly be seen at Pevensey where Robert, or his officials, pursued an active, even aggressive, policy of commercial expansion. Pevensey was a small centre in 1066, probably of late Anglo-Saxon origin. In 1066 there were 24 burgesses[1] and they and the borough belonged to the King. Edward received £1 per year from them, and almost another £3 from tolls and port dues. In addition there were a further 28 burgesses who were the men of other Lords. When Robert took over the town only 27 were left as, presumably, the rest had fled due to the uncertainties of the invasion and war. By 1086 the position had been transformed. Robert had 60 burgesses and from them he received nearly £3 in rent, £4 came from tolls, and a further £1 from the mint. There were a further 51 burgesses who held their land from Robert's vassals. Eight of these were the men of Roberts own religious foundation of Mortain. These men paid rent totalling more than £2 10s. This was not all, for the Count received £1 from the town mill. Domesday Book therefore reveals Pevensey to have been a flourishing local centre which, though not as large as nearby Lewes, dominated the land around it. Moreover it is likely that the town served as a market for the thriving local industry of salt making, of which Robert had a lucrative monopoly. A total of 24 salt works are recorded on Robert's coastal manors and together they brought him over £5 per year. Robert's vassals were essential for administering his territorial and economic interests in England, especially since he seems to have spent comparatively little time on this side of the channel. Walter de Ricarville, who came from near Dieppe in northern Normandy, was important enough to be made Sheriff of Pevensey. Men like Walter were rewarded with large estates and were, in some cases, able to establish English baronies of their own.

Like many Anglo-Norman magnates Robert seized English monastic lands but was generous to Norman monasteries or to religious houses that they founded on English soil. He gave large gifts of land to the Benedictine monastery at Grestain in Normandy, along with houses, pannage[2] and pasture rights in Pevensey Forest with the use of building materials for the monks' churches and houses included. The Priory of Mortain also owned English estates concentrated in the Rape of Pevensey and in Dorset. However, Robert made sure that none of the English manors granted to religious houses were of greater value than the manors he kept for himself so they were often isolated and at a distance from the main areas of Robert's interest and control.

When Robert died he chose to be buried with his father and first wife in the family monastery at Grestain. He may have been amongst the great magnates of England, but he was a Norman not an Anglo-Norman. He came with his Norman vassals to help with his brother's conquest of England. He stayed to help consolidate the victory and was duly rewarded, but probably spent little time in his new possessions. Robert was essentially an absentee landlord.

[1] Burgess = a freeman of the town or borough.
[2] pannage = the right of feeding pigs or other animals in a wood.