

The Anglo-Saxons

by Rob John

7. 1066 - the year of three kings

- Narrator:** January 1066. The king - Edward the Confessor - is dying and has no children to follow him on the throne. It is said that, years before, Edward named William Duke of Normandy as his successor. But it is also said that Edward changed his mind; now he wants Harold Godwinson, the Earl of Wessex, to become king.
- Harold:** Your Majesty, you sent for me. I am here.
- Edward:** You have been a strong ruler in Wessex. Harold Godwinson, I name you as my successor.
- Harold:** But Your Majesty, it is said -
- Edward:** It is true. William of Normandy was my choice. But a better person has come forward and that person is you.
- FX:** *A church bell tolling*
- Narrator:** **King Edward was buried on January the 6th. On the very same day the witan confirmed Harold as King of England. Across the sea in Normandy, Duke William was furious.**
- William:** Villain! Harold Godwinson has stolen my crown!
- Earl:** He says that Edward named him heir.
- William:** He is lying! Edward wanted me for the throne. He gave me a solemn promise. The throne of England is mine and I will have it!
- Earl:** It is too late, my Lord. Harold is already crowned.
- William:** It is not too late! Gather together my nobles. If England will not give us the crown then we must cross the water and take it.

Narrator: Harold knew that William would be angry. He told his army to expect an attack from the Normans. But when news of an invasion came, it wasn't the one Harold was expecting.

Captain: My Lord, we are under attack.

Harold: I knew it! We will march south to meet William in the morning.

Captain: Not William, my Lord. We are attacked in the north by Hardrada, king of Norway! He has already defeated our nobles in the north.

Harold: So now Hardrada thinks he can take my crown as well? Let him try! We will march north and send him back into the sea.

Narrator: Harold knew that it was only a matter of time before he would have to fight William, but before that, a different battle lay ahead. Hardrada and his Viking army were resting after battle. They thought it would take Harold's army weeks to make the journey north; Harold had other ideas.

FX: Horses. Men marching

Harold: Keep them moving!

Captain: Yes, my Lord.

FX: Louder marching. Drum beat

Narrator: Harold's army took Hardrada and his army completely by surprise. They fought a battle - the Battle of Stamford Bridge.

FX: Sounds of battle

Narrator: Hardrada was killed and his soldiers fled back to their ships. Now at last Harold and his men thought they could rest. But almost immediately after the battle, he received the news he had been waiting for...

Captain: My Lord, the Normans have come.

Harold: When?

Captain: Three days ago. Duke William has landed with a huge army. Our troops are all here in the north, there was no one to defend our coast in the south. William's ships landed and his men just walked onto English soil without even drawing their swords.

Harold: William's stay in England will be short. We will send him home very soon. Let our men sleep tonight and we will march in the morning.

Narrator: So Harold's army was on the move again - this time speeding south, where they arrived in London.

Captain: My Lord, we must stay here for a few days. It will give the army a chance to rest while others come to join us.

Harold: No. We will keep going!

Captain: My Lord, we don't have enough men to fight William at the moment. But every day our army grows, as more and more fighters come to join us.

Harold: We will not wait! Not while there is a foreign power in our land. We will act now.

Narrator: The English army went south. They collected more soldiers on the way but by the time it reached a village called Hastings, Harold's army was still small and his men were exhausted.

The morning of October the 14th 1066 - the day of the battle...

Harold: Today we face a mighty enemy. They have greater numbers, they have better weapons, but they do not have our strength and they do not have our courage!

FX: Cheering building through the following

Harold: For we have the blood of Saxons and Angles in our veins! This Angle-land - this England - will never fall. Remember our Anglo-Saxon heroes - and victory will be ours!

FX: *Slow drum beat*

Narrator: **Harold's men fought bravely throughout that long blood-soaked day, but by evening the battle was lost and Harold lay dead.**

Harold's defeat at Hastings marked the end of the Anglo-Saxon dynasty. On Christmas day 1066 William was crowned king of England and the land became ruled by Normans.

So 1066 was the year when England had three kings: first Edward the Confessor, then Harold Godwinson, and finally, Duke William of Normandy - William the Conqueror.