THE NORMAN INVASION

The Norman invasion is an important historical event, that represents the last conquest of England by the hands of a foreigner.

This expedition was organized by William, called the Conqueror. He was the Duke of Normandy and ,after Edward the Confessor’s death, decided to claim the throne against Harold Godwineson, who was crowned King of England.

He crossed the English Channel and landed on Pevensey on the 28th September 1066. They waited for a possibly English reaction. William’s army, more based on mounted warriors and archers, managed to defeat Harold’s, killing him and his two brothers.

There was no leader opposing William who imposed his own authority. The English were hostile to the Normans, so William had to fight against lots of rebellions throughout the island.

William’s people descended from Vikings that had long settled in Normandy and adopted French customs. William brought the system of feudalism in England: this was a hierarchical system based on religion and services or duties that higher levels had towards lower levels and vice-versa.

Feudalism permitted William to have a firm central administrative control of the English territory: he provided money to his vassals to build castles or fortifications. The Norman aristocracy replaced the Anglo-Saxon’s.

The main consequence of feudalism was the weakening of the following kings’ authorities: an example was King John who had to sign *Magna Carta*, advantaging vassals, merchants and churchmen.

New churches were built and adorned towns and villages: this was an evident display of William’s authority.

On a cultural level, the Norman invasion caused the establishment of closer ties to Western Europe. England turned away from Scandinavia. This caused a mixture of two different culture, a Germanic and a Romance. Old English was mixed with the Norman French and their fusion created the modern English, which is widely spoken today.

On a social level, Normans stayed separate to English: they were two different populations, hostile to themselves. Only in the 12th they could be considered one population.