**THE NORMANS**

The Normans were descendents of the Vikings that settled in the Northwestern part of France, in the X century, that took the name of Normandy. They adopted French customs and spoke Norman-French. In 1066 the king of England, Edward the Confessor, died childless, but Harold the Godwineson, who was his brother-in-law, didn’t waste time to assert his right to the throne and crowned himself on the day of Edward’s burial. There was, however, another pretender to the throne, William duke of Normandy, who claimed his right to the English throne, as he had earlier been promised it by Edward. So, William crossed the English Channel, and invaded England in 1066. William tactic was focused on attacking Harold’s land, and then waiting for his reaction. This brought to the final clash, in the bay of Hastings, where the mounted men and the archers of the Norman army took over on Harold and his foot soldiers. After this, William killed the two brothers of Harold, so there was no leader to oppose the duke of Normandy. In the following years, William had to put down rebellions in various part of the land. William replaced the Anglo-Saxon aristocracy with his followers, who reinforced their position with castle-building. The Norman were interest in the development of the Church, so they created several new churches in towns and villages. William also introduced the feudal system, he took away manors(villages) from English nobles and passed them to Norman barons and bishops, who shared them among themselves. On the social side, the Norman society was organized in ranks. At the top of the social scale there were the king and his nobility, who lived in massive castle, that were the symbol of their power. After them there were the knights, who were mainly gentlemen farmers. Below them there were traders, craftsmen and freemen. At the bottom were “villeins”, unfree peasants with no rights against their feudal lord. The women were inferior to men, and they had to obey to their husbands in all things. The Church was divided in “regular” clergy, who lived in convents and monasteries, and “secular” clergy, who lived among ordinary people. At first the king and the Norman nobility spoke in French and wrote in Latin, while the majority of the population spoke in English. As the two population learned to live together the English language grew richer with French borrowings and French use went in decline.