

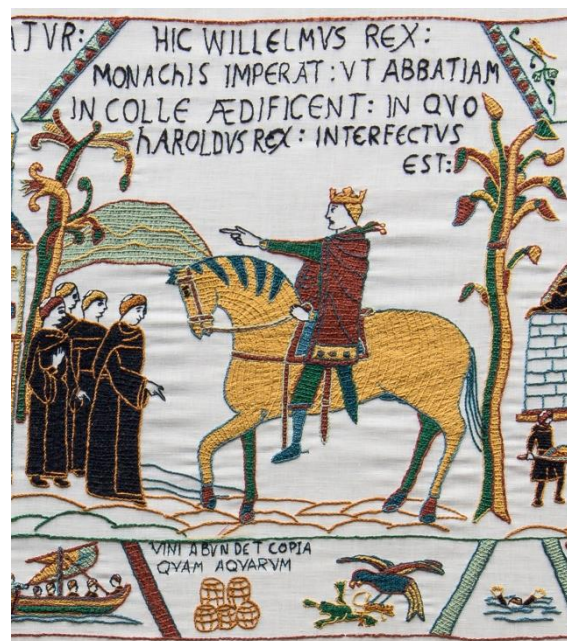
Did William the Conqueror ever re-visit Battle or eastern Sussex?



The Itinerary of William I 1067-1087

There is no record of William I re-visiting Battle after his victory of 1066. William did however 'come this way' to eastern Sussex on a few occasions en route to and from Normandy in 1067, speculatively in 1070-1071 and to bring an army to help defend against the Danes in 1085. He may have used the eastern Sussex ports at other times on his journeys to and fro Normandy but the record is silent about the details of these.

We know that he ordered the monks who were building the abbey sometime after 1070 to stop building it on the site they had chosen, which would have more easily supplied the abbey with water. They had to start again so that the high altar would be at the very spot that Harold had died (*see article in Section A*). Tina Greene in her Battle Community Tapestry imagines that he visited Battle to 'to check things out' – and she shows him resplendent on a fine charger informing the monks of Marmoutier of his displeasure.



The imagined scene where William tells the monks of Marmoutier to build Battle Abbey on top of the ridge, where Harold fell, not in a valley. From Battle Community Tapestry ©Tina Greene 2017

His itinerary in fact hugely lacks detail, but looking at it there were possible interludes from mid-1070 and another before October 1071 when he *could* have visited to see progress. Tempting as it is to think that he did so and did not just rely on the reports of others, this must forever be conjecture.

William's itinerary has such large gaps as William I's courtiers did not make the extensive records that later kings of England made. So we have to use many sources to make some sense of where and when he went. His *precise* whereabouts are known for only 42 days of the nearly 21 years of his reign although other locations at other times can be inferred.

William I's most up to date formal recorded itinerary from 1066 to 1087 is in *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum: The Acta of William I (1066–1087)*.

Below are tracked his movements which are known and can be inferred on maps of Britain and Normandy. The colour of the lines on the map correspond to the year or years with the same text colour sub-headings as below (e.g. **1067-1068** is red). The maps are clearly crude overviews and are displayed as straight lines between known or supposed locations, which would clearly have been impossible.

1067

21 February: Pevensey en route to Normandy. *He took with him Edgar Atheling, Edwin, Morcar and other prominent English nobles.*

8 April (Easter): Fécamp

April: Vaudreuil

1 May: St. Pierre sur Dive

1 July: Jumièges

6 December: landed Old Winchelsea
then to Oxford

25 December: London

1068

Sometime in early 1068:

William besieged Exeter because Harold's mother, Gytha, had fled there and had incited the people of the city to resist. The city fell in 18 days. He moved on into Cornwall (unknown location, possibly Launceston)

23 March(Easter): Winchester

11 May(Pentecost): Westminster

Summer: Warwick
Nottingham
York

This march was to suppress a northern uprising. Castles were built en route at all the above places: Then back south via

Lincoln

Huntingdon

Cambridge

Again building castles which enforced the submission of the eastern counties

End of Summer in Normandy. *Crossing points and venues not known*

1069

4 February: Salisbury

12 April (Easter): Winchester

1 September: Forest of Dean

Autumn: Uprisings in the North (again) in South-West and on Welsh borders

First moved to Axholme on the south bank of the Humber where Danes had landed. The Danes moved to York but William went west to deal with the Welsh, then back east to Nottingham and finally re-took York, devastating the lands en route. The south-west issues were dealt with locally

25 December:

York

After Christmas he ordered further deliberate harrowing of Yorkshire and Northumbria. This 'Harrying of the North' caused widespread famine and death of at least 100,000 people. Himself he moved on.

1070 -1071

1070

1 January:

at RiverTees *precise position not known.*

Crossed Pennines in late winter losing many troops and returned south via Mercia. Large areas of Yorkshire, Cheshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire and Derbyshire were left derelict extending the brutal harrying by William's forces. A southern route through the Pennines is suggested by the lack of mention of Lancashire. Castles were placed at Chester and Stafford.

4 April (Easter):

Winchester. *Ceremoniously re-crowned by papal delegates led by Cardinal Ermenfrid, who also issued a Penitentiary which led to a start on the building Battle Abbey*

11 April:

Winchester.

23 May (Pentecost):

Windsor

27 May:

Westminster

End of Summer:

Normandy

Late 1070:

If he went via Pevensey did he detour to Battle to view site of Abbey?

1071

January:

London

Early 1071

? To Battle to view site of Abbey

27 October:

Ely Rebels led by Earl Morcar and Hereward surrendered after being abandoned by yet more Danes

1072

8 April 8 (Easter):

Winchester.

16 April:

Clarendon (nr. Salisbury)

27 May (Pentecost):

Windsor

September:

Via Durham, Lothian, he passed near Stirling to ford the River Forth and onward to Perth, into Scotland. William went to deal with King Malcolm of Scotland. William led the Norman army across the river Tweed into Scotland, while his fleet sailed up the coast parallel to it carrying supplies. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle says, the king "found nothing there of value" in Scotland, nor was he met with any resistance. He continued to march north around the Firth of Forth to Abernethy, near Perth, where King Malcolm met him. The Treaty of

Abernethy (near Perth) was signed and King Malcolm III of Scotland paid homage to William I, King of England, acknowledging William as his feudal overlord.

2 November : Durham.

1073-1074

1073

30 March: Bonneville sur Touques, *with a large force from England. Route unknown*

April: Le Mans. *To expel Fulk of Anjou who had occupied Maine*

Fresnay

Beaumont

Sillé

Troarn

Lillebonne

Le Mans

Bonneville sur Touques

1074

William appears to have spent the whole of 1074 and into 1075 in Normandy. A further revolt in England was put down without his presence

1075-end of 1080

1075

5 April (Easter): Fécamp

25 December: Westminster.

1076

May: Brittany. *Non-specific locations*

September to early November: Dol. *Undertook an unsuccessful siege*

Very late 1076-very early 1077: La Fleche

1077

Pre July: L'Aigle

25 July: Rouen

Robert Curthose, eldest son of William I, led a revolt to take Rouen from his father. The revolt failed and Robert was forced to flee to Gerberoy.

13 September: Caen

Bayeux

1078

Early 1078: Vallium *First pact between Fulk of Anjou and William. Probably somewhere in Maine*

?date: Rémalard

Post Christmas: Gerberoy

1079

January: Gerberoy
Rebels under Robert Curthose, William's son, were besieged for three weeks. On their breakout William was wounded in an arm

7 January: Caen

11 January: St. Georges de Boscherville

12 April: ? Rouen

1080

31 May: Lillebonne *Ecclesiastical Council*

14 July: Caen

Followed by ?Rouen

Late July: *Returned to England, route unknown*

Sometime returned to Normandy, route unknown

Lillebonne

Caen. *Back to England date and route unknown*

c. 25 December: Berkeley. *Ecclesiastical Council at Gloucester*

1081

3 January: Gloucester

St Davids (Lampeter)

Cardiff (*castle planted*)

February: London

31 May (Whitsun): Winchester

Return to Normandy exit port unknown

Cherbourg

Bernouville (*on the border with Royal France*)

Late 1081: In Normandy/Maine.

New conflict with Count Fulk of Anjou. Pact made at 'Blancalanda or Brueria' probably in Main. Many failed attempts have been made by others to locate this place.

25 December: ?Westminster

1082

24 June: Oissel

5 September: Oxcensus villa *This was a royal house near Oissel, near Rouen.*

Return to England, route unknown

Downton, Wiltshire

London

25 December: ? Gloucester.

1083-1085

1083

9 April (Easter): Fécamp

1084

19 May (Pentecost): Westminster

19 June: Rouen

1085

Autumn: Pevensey William brought an army from Normandy and Brittany to help prevent an invasion of England by King Cnut IV of Denmark assisted by Count Robert of Flanders and King Olaf of Norway. The army was stationed throughout eastern England and other precautions were taken. No invasion materialised following internal disputes in Denmark and Cnut IV's murder in 1086.

Mid-winter: Gloucester. Domesday survey planned

1086-1087

1086

Easter: Winchester

Pentecost: Westminster

1 August: Salisbury Great oath taking at Old Sarum. Draft of Domesday probably presented

Then to Isle of Wight and then Normandy

Late 1086: Rouen. William fell ill 'with a swollen stomach'

1087

After June: Moved into Vexin and attacked France

24-31 July: Mantes. Injured. This is reported as an internal abdominal injury from being thrown forward in his saddle. Returned to Rouen

9 September: Death of William I at Rouen

Buried at Caen

Keith Foord © BDHS 2017.

The primary sources are the Charters, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (ASC), and the works of Florence, Ordericus Vitalis, and Eadmer. These form the basis for both Davis' and Bates' works listed below. The author has used some charter information and the ASC, otherwise mainly secondary sources.

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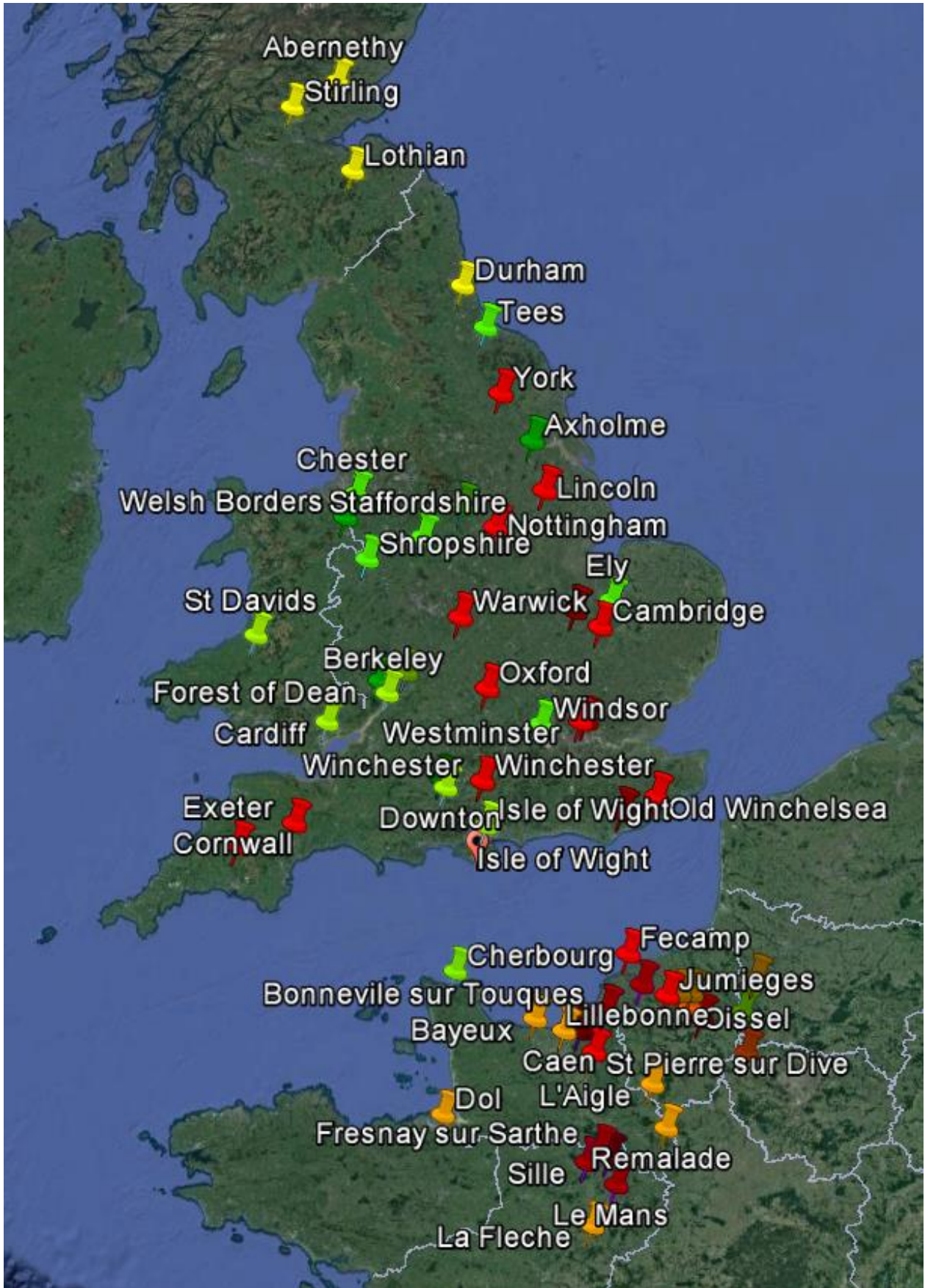
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The maps below use Google maps as a base and for location finding. Some parts of itineraries are missed off for clarity, and sometimes a place name does not show because of overlaps, but each major itinerary is included. Some locations cannot be identified and the maps are of known movements only and solely for illustrative purposes. Clearly William would not have moved in straight lines, and would have visited unknown places, so there is much cartographic licence.



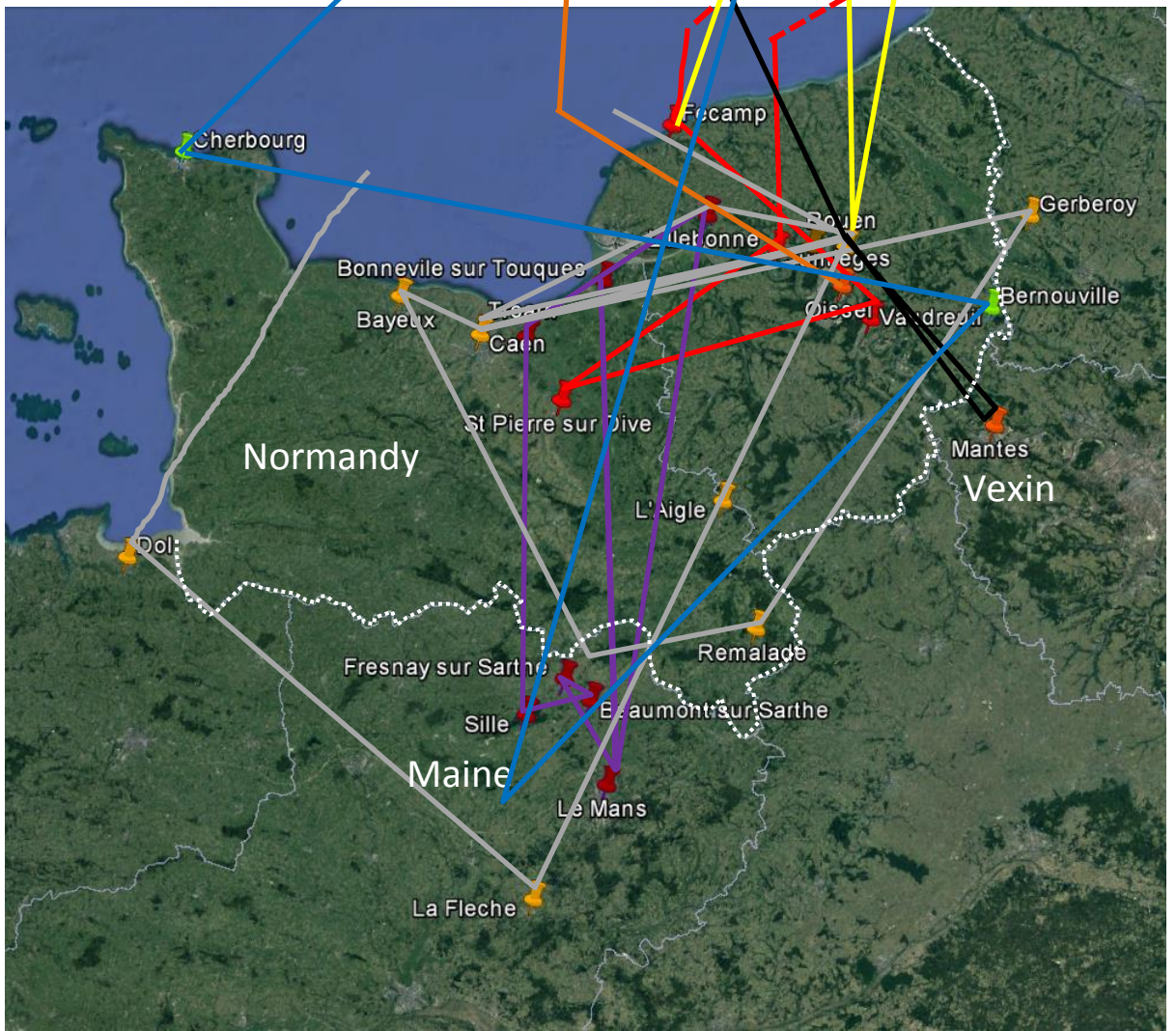
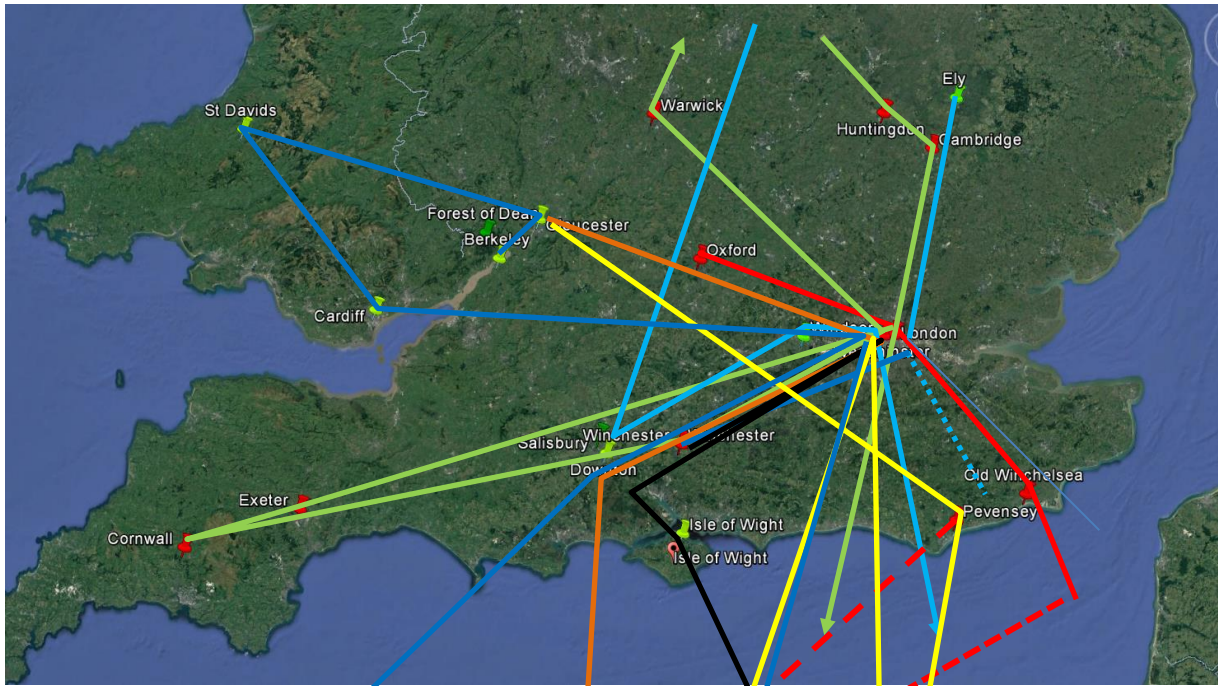
The spread of William I's known travels by place



The longer itineraries in England and into Scotland during the subjugation of the kingdom:

Green 1068, Gold 1069, Cyan 1070-1071, Cerise 1072

The maps of Southern England and Normandy below are not to the same scale



Itineraries in Southern England and Normandy [see text for colour code for year(s)]