

Year 9- Anglo-Saxon and Norman England

Title: How did William use loyalty to gain control of England?

William was crowned King of England on 25th December 1066 in Westminster Cathedral. William swore an oath to rule England like the best Anglo-Saxon kings had, if the English people would be loyal to him. This clip explains why the Marcher earldoms were created.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/clips/z2vhfg8>

TASKS:

1. Read the information on page 45. How did William reward Anglo-Saxons who were loyal to him?
2. What did William do to reward his own followers?
3. Use the map on p.46. Draw a simple map of England/Wales and show the 3 marcher earldoms.
4. Re-sort the information below to work out the key features of the Marcher earldoms. The first one is done for you

| Key feature | Purpose |
|--|---|
| Shire-sized centred on a shire town Smaller and more compact earldoms than in Anglo-Saxon times. | Size made them easier to control and stopped the earls from being too powerful against the king. |
| Special privileges for creating settlements Marcher earls had the right to create towns and markets & establish churches. Normally only granted to the king. | Castles were used to control the area and attack in Wales. They were essential to establish a border here. |
| Granted full power of the law Sheriffs working for the earls, rather than the king. Could control the legal system and courts in the earldom. | This was to reward loyalty, but also helped to create money for earls to build up defences or settle there. |
| Exempt from tax Did not have to pay tax to the king for their lands, unlike all other earldoms | The earls could respond to any disobedience quickly and firmly. |
| Right to build castles The king allowed marcher earldoms to create castles wherever they liked, unlike other earls who had to apply for permission. | These rights helped to attract Normans to come across and settle in England. |

Extra challenge: Answer the 4 mark question “Describe two features of the Marcher earldoms”.

place the crown on his head, that he would govern the nation according to the best practice of his predecessors if they would be loyal to him. Nevertheless he imposed a very heavy tax on the country, and went oversea to Normandy in the spring.

Rewarding Anglo-Saxon loyalty

The Anglo-Saxon aristocracy would have understood this oath to mean that William was going to be a king like Edward the Confessor. Historians agree that William also wanted a trouble-free takeover, with Anglo-Saxons continuing to have important roles in government. Earls like Edwin and Morcar kept their earldoms, archbishops like Stigand and Ealdred kept their positions. A Northumbrian lord, Gospatric, was made Earl of northern Northumbria after paying William a large amount of money. William also offered rewards for Anglo-Saxon loyalty. He promised that Edwin could marry his daughter, which would have made Edwin very powerful in the new kingdom if it had happened.

Rewarding William's followers

A problem with the plan for a trouble-free takeover, however, was that William also needed to reward his own followers. He had convinced people to join his invasion with the promise of land, and he had hired mercenaries from all along the coast of north-west Europe with the promise of money.

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William went about making good on his promises in three ways:

- He sent **rich gifts** to the pope and to Church supporters in Normandy, probably from the royal treasury at Winchester.
- Soon after his coronation, he set a **geld tax**. We do not know how much, but it was described as being 'very heavy' (see Source A). This would have brought in revenue to pay his mercenaries.
- He declared that, as king, all the **land** in England now belonged to him. He was free to grant this land to those who had served him well.

William said that all those who had fought against him at Hastings had lost the right to their lands. This gave him all the lands of the Godwinsons, for example, including Wessex, the richest earldom of all. As king, Harold had also inherited all the royal estates from Edward. William kept much of this land for himself (around a fifth of all the land in England was crown land), but that still left a huge amount to grant to his followers.

The biggest winners of William's followers were his family and closest advisers, almost all of whom were Normans and none of whom were Anglo-Saxons. While the Anglo-Saxon aristocracy might have hoped for some of Harold's lands, it was accepted in Anglo-Saxon society that a victorious king would reward his own followers with the lands and treasure of his defeated foe. Previous Anglo-Saxon and Danish kings had done the same.

Extend your knowledge

Rewarding loyalty

William used the Godwinsons' earldoms to reward three key followers in particular:

- William's half-brother, Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, received all of Kent (William made him Earl of Kent at Dover, before the earls had even submitted).
- William FitzOsbern, one of William's most trusted advisers (and a relative), was granted the Isle of Wight, much of Hampshire and large areas in the west.

