**When did the Normans complete their conquest?**

**ENQUIRY SUMMARY**

1. **The Battle of Hastings, 14 October 1066**

William crossed the channel and fought against the reigning king of England, Harold Godwinson, at Hastings. The Normans were victorious and Harold Godwinson was killed in the battle. William had won an important victory and had eliminated his key rival for the throne. However, at the end of the battle, he still only controlled a very small area of England on the south coast surrounding Hastings, and he did not automatically become king with Harold Godwinson’s death. The Witan still played an important role in deciding who should become the next ruler. In fact, evidence shows that the Witan and leading earls such as Edwin and Morcar actually initially chose Edgar the Aetheling to be the next king in the aftermath of Hastings.

1. **London, October to December 1066**

After the battle, William waited at Hastings for two weeks, expecting the Witan and leading men of the kingdom to come to submit to him. However, they did not come. William decided that he needed to put pressure on the important people in London to accept him as the rightful king of England. He marched towards London, raiding and destroying villages as he went. When he arrived outside the city, those who had originally promised to support Edgar (such as Edwin and Morcar) changed their mind and submitted to William, accepting him as the king. William was crowned in a formal coronation ceremony in Westminster Abbey on 25 December. However, despite officially gaining the throne, the kingdom was not secure, and the coming years would see William face several serious threats to Norman rule.

1. **The North: dealing with rebellion, winter 1069–70**

Morcar had been deprived of his earldom in Northumbria by William. Edwin, Morcar and other Anglo-Saxons began stirring up rebellion in the North of England. It was very serious for the Normans – William’s choice of earl for Northumbria, Robert de Comines, was massacred, along with hundreds of his men at Durham in January 1069. After this massacre, Edgar the Aetheling joined the rebellion and became its figurehead. Danes had also landed in the North and posed a threat with their ships in the Humber River. William acted quickly and decisively. He paid the Danes to leave England after the winter. He marched his army north and divided it into raiding parties when his enemies dispersed into the countryside. The ‘Harrying of the North’ began – a brutal campaign where the Norman army raided and destroyed vast areas of the North, burning crops and villages and ploughing salt into the fields. This made large areas uninhabitable and was designed to act as a warning to anyone planning to rebel against Norman rule.

1. **Ely: dealing with rebellion, 1071**

Another significant rebellion occurred in East Anglia in 1071. Hereward the Wake led a rebellion here against the Normans. Hereward was an English thegn who had become involved in disputes with the Norman barons who had been given land in Lincolnshire. Hereward’s base for the rebellion was on the Isle of Ely. He was supported by Morcar and Aethelwine, but ultimately William’s army captured Ely. Hereward managed to escape but was not responsible for any further threats to Norman rule. Morcar was captured and imprisoned for the rest of his life.

1. **Scotland: troublesome neighbours, 1068–93**

In the years that followed the Norman invasion, some Anglo-Saxons sought protection at the Scottish court of King Malcolm III. They were also hoping to use Scotland as a base from which to launch attacks into England against the Normans. These included Edgar the Aetheling and his family. King Malcolm married Edgar’s sister Margaret. In 1071, Malcolm invaded Cumberland, harrying towns and villages and taking some English people back to Scotland as slaves. Malcolm’s marriage and this attack marked him out as an obvious threat to William. In 1072, King William invaded Scotland. However, no major battle occurred, and instead King Malcolm submitted to William’s authority by agreeing to the Treaty of Abernethy. The Scottish king promised to be loyal to William, and to expel Edgar the Aetheling from his court. In return for his loyalty, Malcolm was given some lands in Cumbria in the north of England. Despite his promises, Malcolm began raiding on the English border again in 1079, and these incursions continued intermittently until his death in such a raid in 1093.

1. **Wales: troublesome neighbours, 1066–97**

The Welsh chronicle the *Brut y Tywysogion* tells us that Harold Godwinson was unpopular in Wales, as he was held responsible for the death of Gruffydd ap Llywelyn, the king of Wales. William of Normandy was described in more favourable terms when the Conquest first began, as it didn’t immediately impact the Welsh in the same way as the English. The year 1093 was much more significant for Wales than 1066, because Rhys ap Tewdwr, who had ruled *Deheubarth* (South Wales) since 1081, with the agreement of King William, was killed by Normans. Within months of Rhys ap Tewdwr’s death, Normans had taken over significant areas of Wales and had built castles to subdue the local population. However, the Normans did not take control of the whole of Wales. Henry of Huntingdon mentions that, in 1097, a Norman army of William II found the terrain in Wales difficult, and instead the Normans decided to secure the border areas of Wales (the Marches) and the areas that they controlled along the south coast, rather than attempting to take over the entire area.

1. **Castles, 1066 onwards**

The Normans began building motte and bailey castles as soon as they landed on English soil. These castles had the purpose of intimidating the conquered Anglo-Saxons and reminding them of Norman power. They were built in locations of strategic value and could be built very quickly – some early wooden motte and bailey castles could be put up in just a few days. In the first years of the Conquest, William often ordered castles to be built to secure towns that had submitted to his power. Over time, wooden motte and bailey castles were often replaced with more permanent stone structures. The most visible part of a stone castle was the high central tower. This meant that they could be seen from a large distance away and demonstrated the power of the Normans. It also meant that it was almost impossible to attack the castles without warning, and archers had excellent defensive positions from which to resist any enemies.

1. **The Domesday Book, 1086**

William commissioned men to undertake a survey to assess the value of the country; the findings of the survey were collected together and formed the Domesday Book. The survey itself was completed by two sets of officials and took just over a year. The survey worked in this way: firstly, officials went out into the villages and towns and asked people questions. The questions concerned the value of farms and animals – this was really how England’s wealth was measured at the time. Later, the answers to the questions were checked by a second group of officials. The book is still in existence today.