

Byrchall School

History Department

Revision Notes

Norman England 1066-1100

Norman England (1066-1100)

Section 1 - Conquest and Control

Claimants to the Throne

1. Edgar Aetheling

- King Edward's nearest blood relative
- Edgar was only 14 years old in 1066
- Edgar had no money, no soldiers and no military experience

2. Harald Hardrada

- Hardrada had been King of Norway for 20 years
- He was a great military leader
- Vikings had ruled England so he believed he had a good claim
- He was supported by Tostig, Harold Godwinson's brother

3. William, Duke of Normandy

- William was a distant cousin of Edward the Confessor
- William said Edward promised him the throne in 1051
- William said Harold Godwinson promised him the throne in 1064
- William was an experienced ruler of Normandy
- William had the support of the Pope

4. Harold Godwinson

- Harold was King Edward's brother-in-law (his sister Edith had married Edward)
- Harold was Earl of Wessex and his family were the most powerful in England
- Harold helped King Edward rule the country in the last years of his reign
- Harold was a skilful military leader
- Harold said King Edward promised him the throne on his deathbed
- Harold said he had been forced to swear an oath of loyalty to William

Edward the Confessor died on 5th January 1066. The next day Harold Godwinson was crowned King of England.

Why did William Win the Battle of Hastings?

January to May - Harold's Preparations

- Harold assembled a navy very quickly
- Harold's army was made up of:-
 - (i) Housecarls - loyal professional soldiers
 - (ii) Thegns - lords called up by the king when needed
 - (iii) Fyrd - ordinary people called up when needed

By May, King Harold had raised an army of several thousand. They were stationed across the south coast of England, waiting for the expected invasion of William.

Harold's army did have weaknesses. Harold had no cavalry (his knights fought on foot) and no archers.

May - September - William's Preparations

- William got the support of the Pope and he promised that if the Norman's won, they would be given land in England
- William ordered hundreds of ships to be built, which took months
- The Norman's built pre-fabricated castles to take to England
- By August, William had assembled 7,000 soldiers (including cavalry and archers), 3,000 horses and 700 ships.

September 8th - Harold's Army goes Home - Hardrada Arrives

- By September, Harold had to send his soldiers home as many of them had to get back to their villages to bring in the harvest
- As Harold did this, Harald Hardrada and Tostig were sailing down the north east coast from Scotland with a fleet of 300 ships and 8,000 soldiers to prepare to invade the North of England
- On 20 September during the Battle of Fulford, Hardrada's army defeated Earls Edwin and Morcar and they captured York

Mid-September - Harold Marches North

- When Harold learned of Hardrada's arrival he quickly gathered an army and marched north. His men covered nearly 200 miles in under a week
- At the Battle of Stamford Bridge on 25 September, King Harold's men won a stunning victory. Hardrada and Tostig were both killed in the battle
- Three days later William's army landed in England!

The Norman Landing and Harold's Reaction

- After the landing at Pevensey, William's army quickly erected their first castle and began terrorising the local population
- Harold's army quickly marched back to London covering the 200 miles in 4-5 days
- On 11 October, King Harold left London to go to fight William's army

The Battle of Hastings - 14 October 1066

Formations

- Harold placed his army on top of Senlac Hill. The housecarls formed a shield wall. Behind, were the Fyrd armed with simple weapons like clubs, axes and slings. They were led by thegns, armed with swords and spears
- William relied heavily on his cavalry with their speed and power. William's first line of foot soldiers included many archers. The second line of foot soldiers was armed with swords and shields and wore chain mail.

The Start of the Battle

- Firstly, Norman arrows rained down on the English troops but the shield wall held firm
- The second row of Norman soldiers advanced with shields meeting shields. Again the English resisted
- The Norman cavalry advanced towards the English shield wall but the English battle-axes drove them back

The Turning Point

There are 2 theories about what happened next:

1. A rumour started amongst the English army that William was dead, which caused some of the English soldiers to leave their position of strength at the top of the hill and chase the retreating knights.
2. The Normans pretended to run away tempting some of the English army to run after them from the top of the hill.

Whatever the reason the English shield wall started to crumble. Harold tried unsuccessfully to stop his troops from following the Norman retreat. Harold was exposed and soon killed, probably by an arrow in the eye.

Conclusions

William defeated Harold because he had better tactics and his army was more flexible. His army was experienced and disciplined and the archers and cavalry gave William's army more speed and power. William was also a very brave and skilful military leader.

William Establishes Control

Step 1 - From Hastings to London

- After the Battle of Hastings, the main English earls and lords did not surrender to William, so his fight to be crowned King of England was not over.
- Two weeks later, he went to Romney to punish the town for their role in killing Normans. Dover quickly surrendered, followed by Canterbury. William then took control of Winchester before heading to London.
- All of this scared the English nobles, so in December they travelled to Berkhamsted and swore oaths of loyalty to William
- On Christmas Day, William was crowned King of England at Westminster Abbey.

Step 2 - Dealing with the Powerful English Lords

- English lords who pledged loyalty to William were allowed to keep their land.
- William dealt harshly with those who had died at Hastings. He seized their land, disinherited their families and gave it to Norman's who had fought for him.

Step 3 - Dealing with Early Revolts

- Wherever they went, the Norman's built castles as secure bases from which to rule over the surrounding English.
- They started collecting taxes to pay for building castles and pay Norman soldiers.
- William realised that peaceful tactics were not working and he changed to more violent methods.
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Step 4 - The Harrying of the North

- In 1069 William decided to appoint a new earl to improve his control over the North. Earl Robert Cumin travelled North with an army numbering in the hundreds.
- He started a general uprising against the Normans. The Norman sheriff of York sent a message to William begging for help to avoid surrender.
- William acted quickly, put down the rebellion and built a second castle on York.
- This was not the end of the trouble. King Swein of Denmark landed in England with a fleet of 240 ships in late summer 1069. They were joined by leading English Lords and captured York in September 1069.
- William was in trouble! William offered generous terms (including money) if they left the country by the following spring and they agreed.
- William then proceeded to deal with the rest of the Northern rebels - with mass killings, burning of homes, animals and crops destroyed. This became known as the 'Harrying of the North'.

Step 5 - Dealing with the East Anglia (1070/1)

- The Danes joined with King Swein in May 1070 and with the support of local people took over Ely.
- They were joined by Hereward the Wake. William again offered a favourable peace to King Swein to return to Denmark.
- Hereward was joined by Earl Morcar. Both were quickly defeated. Morcar was jailed for the rest of his life. Herward was held for some time but eventually given his land back.
- William made an agreement with King Malcolm of Scotland in 1072. Malcolm agreed to see William as his superior.

Step 6 - Dealing with the Earls' Revolt, 1075

- William's last challenge to his power came from a Norman! Roger Earl of Hereford joined with Ralph de Gael, Earl of East Anglia to plot a rebellion.
- The revolt failed completely. Roger and Ralph lost all their land.

Castles

Wherever they went, the Normans built castles. Early castles were MOTTE and BAILEY castles built of wood.

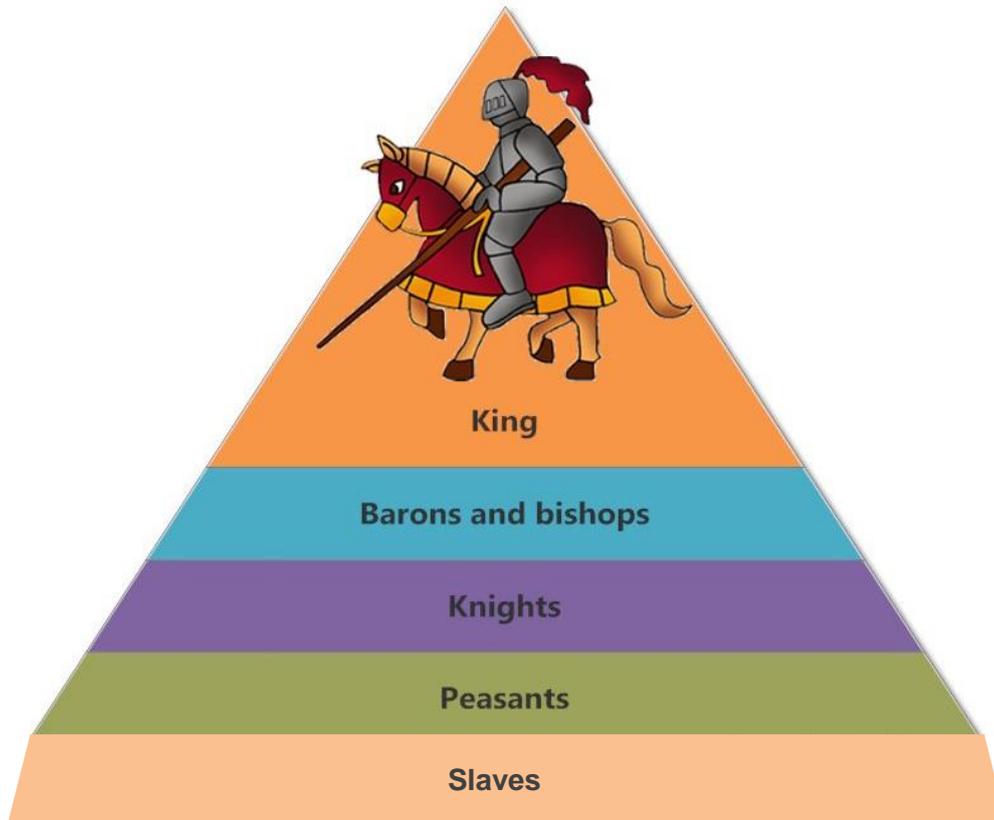
Motte and bailey castles could be built quickly but they could be burnt down by attackers. Later castles were built of stone.

Castles had two main functions:-

- (i) **STRATEGIC**
They housed soldiers who would put down any attempted rebellion in their area.
- (ii) **SYMBOLIC**
Castles were a permanent reminder to the English of who was now ruling the country.

Section 2 - Life under the Normans

Feature 1: The Feudal System



- William used the feudal system already in place in Anglo-Saxon England, but changed it in some important ways:-
 - (i) Normans replaced the Anglo-Saxons
 - (ii) The King had far more power
 - (iii) The peasants were more exploited
- In Anglo-Saxon England, about 4,000 English thegns held land. By 1086 only 4 English thegns held land.
- The Norman system was more FORMAL (more rules). For example, the Anglo-Saxon kings had raised armies from their tenants as they were needed. In the Norman system, knights had to guarantee a certain number of days service.
- The King began to assert more control over his tenants. For example, he charged fees when tenants died.
- Land holding became much more CONCENTRATED. In Anglo-Saxon times, Edward the Confessor had granted very large areas of land to his earls. They had got too powerful. William did not let any one person have too much land. Barons were granted smaller areas of land which made it harder for them to build a power base from which to challenge the King's position.

Feature 2: Military Control

- To rule over a country of 2 million people with only a small number of supporters, William needed a reliable supply of soldiers.
- This was achieved through the Feudal system. In return for land, barons and bishops had to supply a certain number of knights.
- Knights made an oath to their lord and had to carry out military service (usually at least 40 days per year).
- By 1100, the Norman king could call upon about 5,000 knights who were obliged to provide military service.

Wales and the Marcher Lords

- Wales was a problem for William. Several times he tried to take over north and west Wales but failed. The border area between England and Wales was constantly under threat of attack.
- William tried another tactic in this area. He granted larger areas of land to his most trusted followers such as the Earls of Chester, Shrewsbury and Hereford. These were known as Marcher Lords.
- Marchers Lords were given extra powers including making laws in their area, keeping their own armies and building castles without the King's permission.

Feature 3: National Government

The Role of the King

- Medieval kings were powerful rulers
- The king was the only one who could make laws for the whole country
- He alone could raise taxes across the whole country
- More serious legal cases were only heard by the king or in the king's courts

Patronage

- To encourage loyalty, the king would offer land and grant jobs such as Sherriffdoms
- Those who were not loyal would have their land taken off them

Government by Writ

A writ was a government order which was written down.

The Normans issued far more writs than in Anglo-Saxon England. William wanted the system to be more CENTRALISED.

Feature 4: Local Government

Under the Anglo-Saxons, England had been split into 134 shires. A sheriff was in charge of each shire. The Normans kept this system.

The sheriff's duties included making annual payments to the king presiding over the shire courts, collecting taxes and raising armies. They were a vital link between the king and local area.

The Legal System

- The Normans kept many features from Anglo-Saxon times but they tried to simplify the system and make it more consistent across the whole country.
- The most important courts were the king's court, the shire court and the hundred court.

How was the Law Enforced?

- There was no police force in the Norman times so the law was enforced by:
 - (i) **CONSTABLES**
They had the power to arrest people, break up fights and prevent fires. They held the keys to the STOCKS - the punishment for some minor offences.
 - (ii) **WATCHMEN**
Most towns had a watchman who tried to make sure that people kept to the CURFEW. They were there to prevent crime and to catch criminals.
 - (iii) **HUE AND CRY**
This was a system which meant that everyone had a duty to raise the alarm if they saw a crime taking place and everyone who heard the alarm had to help catch the suspect.
 - (iv) **TITHING**
This was a group of 10-12 freemen. They promised to prevent each other from committing a crime. If one of them did, they had to reveal the guilty one or risk the whole group being punished, usually by a fine.

How were Suspects Tried?

- The three main methods all brought a RELIGIOUS ELEMENT into the justice system:-
 - (i) **OATHS**
Witnesses and people who knew the accused were called to give evidence. To ensure they told the truth, they first had to swear an oath on a holy book or relic.
 - (ii) **TRIAL BY HOT IRON**
The accused would carry a red hot iron in their hand for three paces. Their hand would be bandaged and inspected three days later. If the wound was infected they were declared guilty. Trials were administered by priests in the belief that God would protect the innocent.

(iii) TRIAL BY BATTLE

This was introduced by the Normans. The battle took place between the accused and the accuser or they could use champions to fight on their behalf. The theory was again, that good would intervene to help the person in the right. If one person felt they were losing they could surrender but the punishment was often death for this, so battles did often mean a fight to the death.

Trial by battle was not often used as simply threatening to use it could lead someone to confess or settle their case in another way.

How were Suspects Punished?

If the accused was found innocent, the accuser was punished for a false claim - they would have to pay compensation to both the king and the accused.

If the accused was found guilty for less serious, they would pay compensation to the victim. For serious offences, such as murder, they were usually punished by hanging or physical mutilation.

The Normans gradually centralised the justice system and made things more consistent across the country. The system became increasingly under royal control.

Feature 5: The Domesday Survey

- In 1085 William asked his officials to conduct a survey of all property and resources in England. The survey showed exactly who owned what in virtually every part of the country.
- The Domesday Survey allowed the Normans to raise taxes efficiently.

Economic and Social Changes and Their Consequences

Economic Impact of the Norman Conquest

- TAXES - The Normans increased rent and taxes
- LAND - The Normans took away land from nearly all English land owners
- DESTRUCTION - The Normans destroyed large areas of Northern England in the Harrying of the North
- BUILDINGS - The Normans spent money on castle and cathedral building and warfare which provided a living for soldiers and craftsmen
- FREEDOM - The number of freemen declined rapidly as they could not afford the increased rents

The Normans strengthened links between England and mainland Europe which helped trade.

How were Villages Affected by the Norman Conquest?

- The population of villages generally increased
- Many wooden buildings were replaced by stone
- The peasants were charged higher rents. Many went back to being villains - effectively owned by the lord

- The lord spoke French.
- Working life was changed very little by the Norman Conquest.
- The rich had a far more varied diet than the poor, although it was less healthy.

How were Towns Affected by the Norman Conquest?

- Under the Normans, trade increased and the number and size of towns gradually increased too.
- Most towns were well protected by high walls or fences, gates or moats.
- Once a town became large and established, it could apply for a CHARTER from the lord or King to become independent and govern themselves. They still had to pay taxes to the lord and the king.

Section 3 - The Norman Church and Monasticism

The Effect of the Norman Conquest on the English Church

The Power of Religion

- Religion was a MATTER OF LIFE OR DEATH! For almost everyone. Heaven and Hell and judgement and what happened after you died, were major concerns.
- Religious leaders were as powerful as kings.
- The pope - the overall leader of the church based in Rome - was probably the most powerful individual in Europe.

The Wealth of the Church

- The church was the biggest single landowner in England.
- Everyone had to pay a tax to the church called a TITHE. Villagers had to give one tenth of what they produced to the church.
- People were taxed when they died and had to pay SURPLICE FEES to the priest for ceremonies such as marriages, baptisms and funerals.

How did William Reform (Change) the Church?

William appointed his friend Archbishop Lanfranc to be Archbishop of Canterbury to carry out his reforms. Their criticisms of the Anglo-Saxon church centred on the 3 things:-

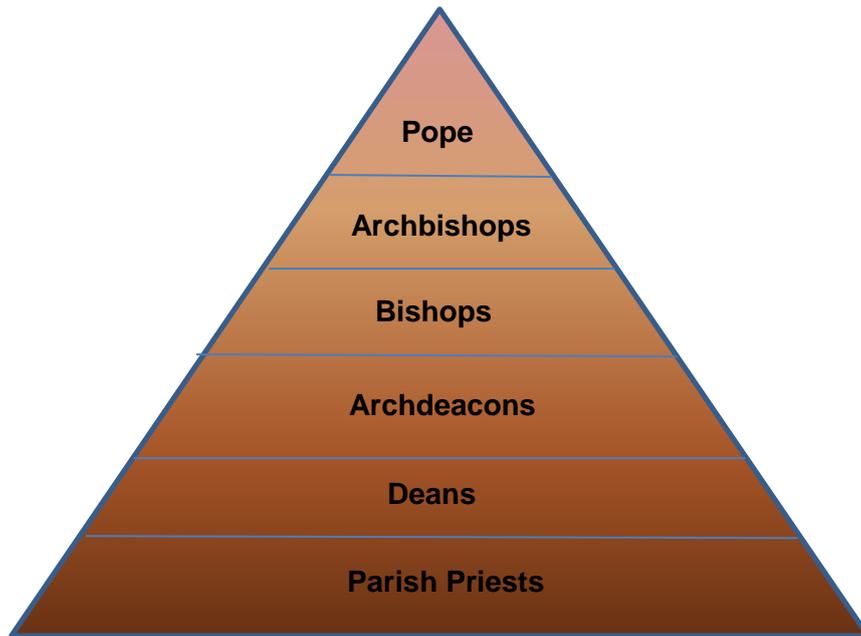
- There were a number of clergy who held more than one position.
- Positions in the church were often sold.
- Positions were often given to relatives or friends rather than the most suitable candidates.
- Many members of the clergy were married which went against the traditional vow of celibacy.

Lanfranc v Thomas (Archbishop of York)

Lanfranc had to establish himself as Head of the Church in England over his rival Thomas, Archbishop of York. William ordered Thomas to swear an oath of loyalty to Lanfranc.

Lanfranc's Reforms

- A New Church Hierarchy



This was a MORE CENTRALISED SYSTEM - each level answerable to the person above. Archdeacons and deans were new appointments. This new hierarchy greater control over their area. There were also far more parish priests than there had been previously.

Moving Cathedrals to Towns and Cities with Larger Populations

After the Norman Conquest, one third of bishops moved to more important towns and cities.

Establishing Synods

- SYNODS were church councils. Bishops were ordered to hold their own councils twice a year and spread the message of reform.
- The number of village churches doubled between 1070 and 1170.
- Officially ending marriage amongst the clergy.

Church and the Law Courts

- The church courts were established in 1076. Clergy (churchmen) were now to be tried in bishop's courts (synods) and not in normal court.
- Church courts were less severe in their punishments than normal courts.

How did William Change Church Buildings?

- Lanfranc and William set out a major building programme. By the early 1100s every major Anglo-Saxon cathedral and abbey (apart from Westminster Abbey) had been knocked down and rebuilt in the Normans favoured architectural style (mostly ROMANESQUE ARCHITECTURE).

- The religious buildings were a display of Norman power and prestige, intending to show that God favoured the Normans.

Why did William II Come to Conflict with the Church?

- William Rufus succeeded William in September 1087. Rufus was not as religious as his father and seemed only interested in making money from the church.
- In 1088 Rufus charged the Bishop of Saint-Calais with treason for refusing to help him fight a rebellion. Saint-Calais was tried in a normal court and found guilty. He was exiled and lost his job. Rufus was determined to control the church.
- In 1093 Rufus appointed Anselm as the new Archbishop of Canterbury but by 1097 Anselm had been exiled and fled to Rome after they argued over church reforms.

Relations with the Pope

- Under William I, relations between king and the pope were good. Both wanted to reform the English Church, eg. getting rid of incompetent and corrupt bishops.
- Under William, Rufus relations were not such a good because of his morals and because he used the church to raise money.
- Henry I - the investiture controversy (see notes).

Summary - Relations between Church and the King

Key points!

- THERE WAS A HUGE CROSS-OVER BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE - All three kings appointed people from their royal household to key positions in the church.
- UNDER WILLIAM I - relations with the church were quite good. He put Normans into positions of influence.
- UNDER WILLIAM II (RUFUS) - relations were not as good because he was not religious and his morals were an issue. He exploited the church for money.
- HENRY I - ended Rufus' policy of exploiting the church for money and agreed to many of Pope Gregory's reforms eg. banning marriage for clergy.

Monasticism and Language

Monastic Life

- A monastery is a religious house where monks live. In the eleventh century they were known as abbeys, priories or nunneries.
- Monks and nuns promised to devote their whole life to good. Many individuals decided to live apart from society by setting up communities where they could spend their life concentrating on religion.

Vows

- Poverty - they had to give up all their possessions.
- Chastity - they had to promise not to get married and remain celibate.

- Obedience - they had to promise to obey their abbot/abbess and obey all the rules of their monastery.

Why was there a Need for Reform (change)?

- Many clergymen were worried that there was too much SECULAR (non-religious) interface in the monasteries. Monasteries needed land so they would need support from the local lord but he would want influence in return.
- Reformers wanted to reduce the influence that the state and lords had over the monasteries.
- Some monks were not living by the strict rule. For example, some wore rich clothing and ignored rules about fasting. Reformers wanted to bring back more traditional practices.

The Norman Revival of Monasticism

- From 1066 to 1135, the number of monks and nuns increased from about 1,000 to between 4,000 and 5,000.
- The number of religious houses grew from about 60 to 250.
- The Normans brought in new MONASTIC ORDERS eg. The Cluniacs were a new order of monks.

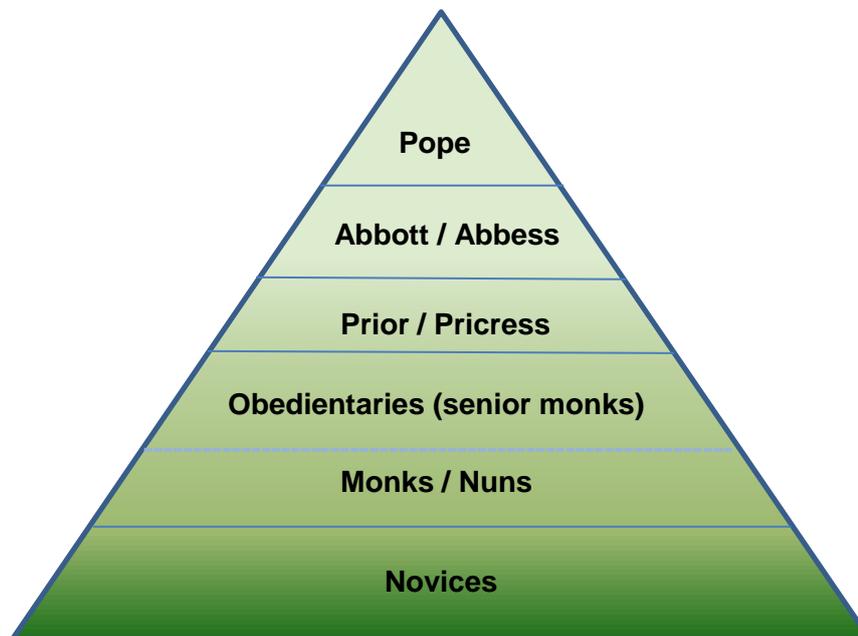
Cluniac Monasteries

- The first English Cluniac priory was founded in 1077. By 1135 there were 24 Cluniac monasteries in England.
- These new monasteries were the spiritual arm of the military conquest.

Change in Leadership of the Monasteries

- The Normans gradually changed the leaders of the monasteries in England from Anglo-Saxon to Norman.
- In 1075, when Lanfranc held a council in London, 13 of the 21 abbots were Anglo-Saxon. By 1086 only 3 Anglo-Saxon abbots remained.

Lanfranc's Reform of the Monasteries



- Lanfranc reformed the LITURGY (the words at the service) making it more like church services in the rest of Europe.
- He set up a clear HIERARCHY (see diagram).
- He made STRICT RULES about the creation of saints.
- He laid out a STRUCTURE FOR DOMESTIC LIFE in the monastery, regulating lives more strictly.
- Lanfranc's reforms made monasteries more like the rest of Europe and introduced MORE UNIFORM PRACTICE.

What Else did Monasteries do?

- Monasteries were self-sustaining communities. They grew their own food and carried out their own building.
- Most monasteries had an INFIRMARY (hospital). It was seen as part of their duty to care for the sick beyond the monastery.
- Monasteries were almost the only centres of SCHOLARSHIP and LEARNING. Monks copied texts as all books had to be handwritten.
- Monks were the HISTORIANS of their time. They wrote the history of the country.

Schools and Education

- Monasteries provided education, but this had to be paid for so it was out of reach for the peasants.
- Girls were excluded from education.
- Education was mainly focused on training pupils to become members of the church.
- The Normans began university education.

Norman Influence on Language

- Latin became the language of government and the church. It was used by merchants around Europe as a universal language.
- But most people spoke either Norman-French or English in everyday life.
- As Anglo-Saxon teachers were replaced by the Normans, Norman-French gradually became the language for the upper-class.
- The peasants still spoke English and they were the majority of the population.