

The Tower of London

So, at last I had secured the crown of England. I was truly William the Conqueror.

But winning the Battle of Hastings was not enough. I had known that all along. So I didn't even spend time burying the dead at Battle. I sped on towards London, where I knew the Saxons were going to oppose me. They blocked the bridge across the river, and we couldn't march straight into the city. So I had to make a wide detour and come back into London from the north. The final blow to them was when I ordered the fields and crops to be burned. Then the Londoners were rightly terrified, and they gave way.

But it is uncomfortable being among so many hostile people, so I needed to defend my position. The Romans had built a fort at London a thousand years before, though it had fallen into ruin and the Saxons had built their city to the west, around Westminster Abbey. And that meant I could use a corner of the Roman walls in the east.

I commanded my men to build a simple wooden castle just to give us temporary protection. But when I had more power, I wanted to rebuild it as a stone castle, and a permanent symbol of my royal power. But where could the stone come from? I thought of the limestone back home in France. But France was a long way from London. Transporting the stone would be more trouble than it was worth. There had to be an easier way.

I sent my men out to look for limestone near London, and they found some in Kent. They loaded the stone onto boats and sailed to London along the River Medway. All they then had to do was to cross the river and unload the stone on the bank – right where the castle was being rebuilt. It glimmered in the sunshine, which is why we all talk of it as the White Tower.

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Understanding words:

- a Write the sentence in which you found the word 'crown'.
- b From that sentence, suggest what 'crown' means.
- c Write a new sentence using the word 'crown'.
- d Use a dictionary to find words with a similar meaning (synonyms) to 'crown'.
- e Draw a small picture showing what you think 'crown' means.

Sequencing: Write these sentences in the correct order, so they make sense:

The Saxons in London had blocked our way into the town, so we went the long way round.

When I had more power, I ordered the castle to be re-built in white limestone.

I used an old Roman fort to build defences.

I had won the Battle of Hastings, but it was not enough, so I sped on to London.

I had won the Battle of Hastings, and now wanted to take control of the kingdom.

My men built a simple wooden castle for temporary protection.

I ordered my men to burn the crops and fields.

The Londoners surrendered.

Get to the facts:

- 1 What had William the Conqueror secured?
- 2 Who opposed him at London?
- 3 Who had built a fort in London years before?
- 4 Where did William's men find limestone?
- 5 Which river did the men transport stone along?

Make a story...

Transporting stone

I was on one of the boats on the River Medway. The boats were full of limestone, and they were heading back to London. I kept a close eye on the banks of the river, but I didn't see the men until too late. One of them fired an arrow which thudded into the side of the boat right next to me. It was an ambush!... (now complete the story)