



This article comes from the Bayeux Tapestry Museum website: <http://www.tapiserie-bayeux.com>

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## Its mysterious origins

### What ? Who ? Where ?



The Bayeux Tapestry celebrates the Battle of Hastings on 14 October 1066, in which William Duke of Normandy defeated the English.

The Tapestry, inextricably linked to the town which gave it its name, is said to have been made in England, probably in Canterbury, in about 1070. The mysteries surrounding its creation have been the subject of much debate, and still are today.

### An 11th century embroidery

In spite of its name, the Tapestry, about 68.3m long and some 50cm wide, is in fact a work of embroidery. It is full of embroidered images and texts, made up of nine linen panels sewn together with fine seams.

### A narrative wall hanging

Narrative wall hangings, which, like the Bayeux Tapestry, were occasionally shown to all believers, were not only destined for church decoration.

They told a story to the many **illiterate** people of the time. A narrative tale similar to the stained glass windows, which is as much an **epic** poem as a moralising work.

The Tapestry also has its moral side: a man who has betrayed a sacred oath has committed a sin, and for that sin there is only one possible outcome: death!

### Who commissioned it ?

Contrary to popular belief, it was not Queen Matilda and her ladies who made it.

For the majority of historians, Odo, **Bishop** of Bayeux and half-brother of William the Conqueror, commissioned the embroidery to decorate the nave of the new Cathedral of Our Lady of Bayeux, consecrated on 14 July 1077.

### Where was it made ?

Most researchers agree on the English origin. However, their opinions differ as to the exact place. For some, the Tapestry was embroidered in St. Augustine's, Canterbury, for others it was in Winchester, or even Wilton.

The German historian Wolfgang Grape defends the Norman hypothesis. He believes that the Tapestry was made in Normandy, very probably in Bayeux.

A recent hypothesis by the American historian George Beech states that several clues show that the Bayeux Tapestry was probably made in the French Abbey of St Florent in Saumur.

### Was it a work of propaganda ?

The Tapestry appears to illustrate the Norman view of the events and is therefore a piece of pro-Norman propaganda to justify the conquest of England in 1066. However, a small number of researchers indicate the possibility that it was also a pro-English piece of work, subtly disguised.