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INVASION FLEET 878 YEARS BEFORE “D” DAY

The Bayeux Tapestry, an historical document unique in Europe and indeed in the world, is an early pictorial record of what Mr. Belloc calls one of the six acts essential to the remaking of Europe. We may be able to consider this week's crossing of the Chakinel by combining British, American, Polish and other Free Nation forces the seventh.

To descend from the sublime to the ridiculous the Bayeux Tapestry is one of the earliest examples of those “continuities” which have become familiar as serial comic strips.

The Tapestry Is a strip of embroidered linen 20 inches wide and 270 feet long, for centuries part of the decorations of (he Cathedral of Bayeux. William the Conqueror's half brother Odo, was bishop of Bayeux and may have been the author of the Tapestry, although it is popularly attributed to William's wife, the Duchess Matilda, and her needlewomen.

THERE have been four successful invasion crossings of the English Channel in two thousand years — Julius Caesar's, William the Conqueror's, Henry V's and Winston Churchill's.

It is yet only wishful thinking to write the fourth invasion “successful.” But we wish it, and think it, and pray to God that history will record it.

Below is a reproduction from the Bayeux Tapestry, showing the invasion fleet of William of Normandy from the moment the knights were aboard in France to the time twenty-four hours afterwards when they jumped their horses over the bulwarks on English ground.

The Battle of Hastings, which sealed the success of William's invasion, was fought sixteen days later. The Norman landing was unopposed, Saxon guardships having been disbanded after long watching, and one or two Norman fifth columnists being already established on the Sussex seacoast. Had Harold had fighting ships at sea the course of history might have been different.

INVASION REPORT

DUKE WILLIAM'S FLEET CROSSING THE CHANNEL, SEPT:

“700 SHIPS LESS 4” as Wace of old heard his father tell, took part in the invasion crossing of the English Channel in A.D. 1066, ferrying William the Conqueror's troops over from Normandy to fight the Battle of Hastings and wrest the sceptre of Britain from Harold, last of the Saxon kings.

4,000 WARSHIPS,

11, 000 WAR PLANES,

1,000 AIR TRANSPORTS

?000? thousands of surface craft, gliders, balloons and paratroopers. ferried the Allied forces across the same tossing, tide-torn waters last Monday night from England to Normandy, in a return engagement, nine hundred years later, to free Normandy and all Europe from the heel of the Hun. The figures are still approximations, based upon Mr. Churchill's purposely indefinite

information to the House of Commons next morning.

“What has all this to do with Schooner Days?” you may ask. It is a fair question and it is fairly answered: Nothing.

It just happened that, in the graveyard watch for the zero hour of D-Day, Schooner Days looked up these early invasion statistics and got a mental and visual picture of the great fleet of William the Conqueror, (“Magno Navigio,” the Latin calls it) crossing the Channel all night and next day, Sept. 27th and 28th, 1066.

The Bayeux Tapestry, which Hilaire Belloc considered the document unique in Europe, gives the picture, and, as it was embroidered while men who had seen the event were still alive to correct and criticize, it must be substantially correct.

In the Tapestry we can see the Norman knights, mail clad, riding down to the new fleet and going on board. We see the new fleet under sail, crammed with men, although the scale is such that two are company and three is a crowd. The figures need not be taken literally, but William’s flagship, the Mora, is shown packed from stem to stern with less than a dozen knights and their shields.

Four men are enough to fill some of the craft shown, and ten horses, with their bridled heads gnawing the gunwale, is the largest number to be seen in any transport. The figures shown are, of course, only suggested types and are not to the same pictorial or numerical scale as the ships. Multiply the numbers of men and horses by ten and we probably have an accurate gauge of the carrying capacity of armada, but the ships shown have to be multiplied by sixty-four to come up to the lowest recorded number. Only eleven of the 696 ships are portrayed, enough to indicate a large fleet. We can follow the fleet with flowing sails and periscope-like figureheads peering above the waves until they beach themselves at Pevensey, and the horses are hoisted overboard, the stripped masts being used as derricks, and the emptied hulls are hauled up high above tide mark.

Duke William’s total force may have been 14,000 soldiers, although Canadian fighting men marched along streets like this in modern Bayeux, first French town reported captured by the Allies in the invasion of Europe. Population of Bayeux is about 9,000. The spire in the background is of the town's cathedral.[Editor’s note: The Bayeux Tapestry an historical document unique in Europe and indeed in the world, is an early pictorial record of what Mr. Belloc calls one of the six acts essential to the remaking of Europe. We may be able to consider this week’s crossing of the Chakinel by combining British, American, Polish and other Free Nation forces the seventh.

Duke William’s vessels were modeled like the dragon ships of the Viking ancestors of the Normans, adorned with heads and tails of serpents, sea monsters, wolves and sea gods, their sides striped in red, blue, green, yellow and purple strakes and hung with shields, red, green, blue, white and yellow; few marked with heraldic bearings. They were kept small for two reasons. They had to be hauled to the sea after being built in the forest and they had to be beached on hostile shores with no wharfage or landing facilities.

Their sails were decorated and parti-colored, any hue but white, and spread b'y a yard crossing the mast, and in that like the square sails of the Viking ships. But the Tapestry shows them all triangular, or shaped like a horn or a trumpet, being tapered to the foot, so that there was less flapping canvas to beat about the heads of the horses and men at deck level.. I have seen

nuggets on the Nile and feluccas in the Mediterranean tilt their triangular lateen sails this way when running before the wind, but these sails were not lateen, but apparently square with two corners cut off, like the “3-cornered squaresail” Capt. Alex. Ure made for the schooner Reuben Dowd, wrecked off Toronto Island, 1906. Come to think of it, such a sail was used in a Scandinavian or Finnish training ship just before the present war. It was just the reverse of the sail popular with lake schooners, the raffee, said to be as old as the Apostle Paul and the good ship Castor and Pollux. The raffee was spread above the yard, its apex being uppermost, but the “diamond raffee” went both above and below the yard and was sharp at head and foot. Sails of English ships shown appear to have been more curtain shaped and wider in the foot.

The point in mentioning these pe-'culiar sails is that no oars are shown in the picture of William's armada, although they were undoubtedly used. Perhaps the Tapestry artist could not show the oars in use and the shields and the horses' heads at the same time. Oars and poles appear elsewhere in his work, and the oar ports are shown in the ships' hulls.

Contrast this bow-and-arrow armament and wind power transport with the four thousand large ships and thousands of small ones employed on June 6th, 1944, to place sixty thousand parachute troops and battalions of tanks and infantry, covered by eleven thousand warplanes, all in Normandy before the sun that rose on D-Day set.

It is a measure of the development of English-speaking might covering two hemispheres nine centuries after the last invader slew the last of the Saxon kings at Senlac.

(Caption) REPRODUCED FROM TAPESTRY

(Caption) DUKE WILLIAM'S FLEET CROSSING THE CHANNEL, SEPT. 27-28TH, 1066, IN THE MIDDLE THE FLAGSHIP "MORA," WITH A CROSS-MARKED BEACON ON HER MASTHEAD.

(Caption) HAROLD'S SHIPPING, when two years before he became king, he as Prime Minister of England crossed the English Channel.

(Caption) FIRST PICTURE OF THE TOWN OF BAYEUX, A.D. 1064.

(Caption) BAYEUX, six miles inland from the channel and older than France itself, was captured Wednesday. We hope the invaders thereby rescued that priceless monument of English history, the Tapestry. It was said to be "in safety" before the Huns occupied Normandy, but so 'twas said of the Maginot line. It was at Bayeux that William extorted the oath from the shipwrecked Harold in 1064 that led to the Battle of Hastings. The Tapestry depicts Bayeux ("Bagias") and the oath taken there.

(Caption) INVASION CRAFT TO-DAY

LCI - Landing craft infantry - carries troops to shore.

(Caption) Canadian fighting men marched along streets like this in modern Bayeux, first French town reported captured by the Allies in the invasion of Europe. Population of Bayeux is about 9,000. The spire in the background is of the town's cathedral.

(Caption) Nicknamed "duck" are amphibious trucks like this 2 1/2 ton one.

(Caption) LCT - Landing craft tank - lands a big Churchill tank.

[Editor's note: The attribution to Queen Matilda is a myth. Most experts now believe it was likely commissioned by William's half-brother, Bishop Odo, who, after the Conquest, became Earl of Kent and, when William was absent in Normandy, served as regent of England. If that is correct, it may have been designed and constructed in England by Anglo-Saxon artists.]