

## The Bayeux Tapestry\_BBC One

(video script by KISS)

This is the Bayeux Tapestry.

It was commissioned to celebrate William's conquest of England and it begins with the events that led up to it: the death of Edward the Confessor, king of England and the succession of a new king, Harold.

It's magical to be taken back a thousand years in this dark chamber to see history spelt out for you: 70 meters long right down to the end, right round and then back, and the story very vividly told.

But at the same time along the friezes<sup>1</sup> top and bottom, wonderfully vivid pictures, some of them have Aesop's fables, some little stories, some nobodies know what they are, little details of farming life, here, ploughing, sawing and a man killing birds with a sling<sup>2</sup>.

It's not strictly speaking a tapestry, it's actually needle work sewn with wool onto linen.

I suppose the story that we know best begins with the death of Edward the Confessor and his burial in Westminster Abbey. Westminster Abbey here with the hand of God, blessing<sup>3</sup> it, and here Harold receiving the crown, his sword and the scepter, people looking on, and then spies come across and explain to William in Normandy what's happened in England, that Harold seized<sup>4</sup> the crown. And here he orders ships to build for an invasion so ...the first thing start cutting the trees and building the ships, putting aboard suits of chain mail needing two men to carry them and spears, arrows and ...last stages to take the horses onboard these long ships very tricky and the did it particularly ... the boats set sail ... they cross over to Pevensey, land safely at Pevensey, go ashore and then the real task begins. But first, the army has to be fed... there's a terrine there being boiled, there is a sort of chicken kebab... they look like ...and here William feasting with his men and ...then they're preparing for war. They build a castle of wood at Hastings. William's followers set light<sup>5</sup> to some of the Anglo-Saxon houses. A woman leading her child away from her burning house and then... battle commences. Quite quietly to start with, with the cavalry's charges<sup>6</sup> against Harold's forces ... heads chopped off...hands chopped<sup>7</sup> off... and the battle rages all day long .

In the confusion of the battle, as swords and axes clang against the shields<sup>8</sup> , a dangerous rumor sweeps<sup>9</sup> William's army: that he has been killed. So what does he do? He turns around in his saddle<sup>10</sup>, lifts his helmet off and shows himself to his troops... and the battle goes on.

And then we came to the famous design of Harold with the arrow<sup>11</sup> in his eye - nobody quite knows whether<sup>12</sup> that is what happened - and here... slaughtered<sup>13</sup>.

I've seen this many times. Every time I see it, I have to say just... brings the whole story of William's invasion of England alive, you really feel here, because this was done by people living only a few year after

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<sup>1</sup> fregi

<sup>2</sup> fionda

<sup>3</sup> che la benedice

<sup>4</sup> si è impossessato

<sup>5</sup> danno fuoco

<sup>6</sup> cariche della cavalleria

<sup>7</sup> mozzate

<sup>8</sup> spade e asce che sbattono contro gli scudi

<sup>9</sup> una voce insidiosa sbaraglia l'esercito di...

<sup>10</sup> sella

<sup>11</sup> freccia

<sup>12</sup> se

<sup>13</sup> massacrato

the event... you really feel the power and the passion that went into it: it's a completely magical work of art.