



# THE CONQUERORS FORTRESS

1066 and William Duke of Normandy's victory at Hastings marks only the beginning of the Norman Conquest of England. It is not possible to win one battle in the south of England and win the whole country. William and his army had a lot more fighting in front of them before England could truly be considered conquered.

To aid him in the battles to come William sited motte and bailey castles at key strategic points around the country. One of which was constructed here at Warwick in the year 1068.

Warwick was an important site for William as it was in the centre of the country. It also gave him control of an important section of the Fosse Way; the longest Roman road in Britain. Such control enabled him to quickly and easily move troops to wherever they might be needed.

Nothing remains of the original motte and bailey castle at Warwick which would have been constructed in wood. However, the motte (known to us today as the Mound or Conqueror's Fortress), upon which once stood a wooden keep, does remain and is consequently the oldest part of Warwick Castle still standing today.

Although it is believed that many motte and bailey castles would have been constructed extremely quickly (often in a matter of weeks) using a flat pack design, it would not have been possible to build a motte in such a short space of time. It is estimated that it would have taken around ten months to construct a motte and then to also allow the structure to settle enough to build a wooden structure at its summit. It is estimated that a motte would need to settle for ten years before it was sufficiently stable to take the weight of a stone structure.

The motte at Warwick would have partly been built from soil excavated from the ditch which still surrounds today's fortress. As with all mottes, the example at Warwick would have been constructed using a layered design of shale and soil.

To have built only with soil would have caused the structure's collapse with the first heavy rains. The fact that the motte remains to this day, more than 950 years after its construction, is a marvellous testament to the skill of its Norman builders. As your students climb to the top of mound they will encounter information from which they will learn about the Norman Conquest and the origins of Warwick and its castle.

