

Trevor Rowley, An Archaeological Study of the Bayeux Tapestry. The Landscapes, Buildings and Places, Barnsley, South Yorkshire (Pen & Sword Books.

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Trevor Rowley, An Archaeological Study of the Bayeux Tapestry. The Landscapes, Buildings, and Objects. 1st ed. num. col. + b/w ill., ISBN 978-1-7819-380-6, GBP 25,00.

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George T. Beech, Kalamazoo

In his introduction (p. X) the author, Trevor Rowley, explains his objective: »The main purpose of this book is to explore the landscape in which the tapestry is placed. Where did the momentous events portrayed actually take place in 11th century France and England?« Also in his introduction he explains that: »I have interpreted the tapestry so that his book is not archaeology as the term is usually understood, i. e. a study of material remains.«

In the first chapter Trevor Rowley summarizes existing beliefs as to the date and place of the tapestry. In this chapter questions come a summary of the structure, the materials and colors used, the types of buildings, boats, castles, etc. Also, references to the artistic and historical sources from which the author draws. Rowley believes to have been the importance of Roman sculpture surviving in the 11th century.

In chapters two through nine the author examines the successive episodes central to the tapestry and summarizes the various explanations made by modern scholars. In chapter 2 King Edward of England talked with Harold at the outset and the nature of the instruction given to Harold, praying before the church there, then his dining with his men in the building nearby. Chapter 3 explains why and how he happened to land in Ponthieux where he was captured by Count Guy. Harold was taken to a Norman castle presumably in Rouen.

Chapter 4: Castles and the Breton Campaign. Rowley has doubts about the authenticity of the tapestry's prelude to the battle of Hastings, is as spectacular as it is unbelievable, despite the detail in considerable detail, particularly the structure of the Breton castles portrayed – Dol, Rennes, etc. Despite his earlier reservations he concludes that they are significant visual representations of the tapestry's depiction of Mont-Saint-Michel and the abbey church at the beginning of the Breton campaign. Rowley visited personally with that site.

In chapter 5 Trevor Rowley looks into the scene where Harold is pictured swearing an oath to William, i. e. what did he swear to William, and where he takes it – in Bayeux cathedral? And what William, sailing back to England, then going to report to King Edward. What interests Rowley is the scene presumably in one of the royal palaces, and what Harold told King Edward, and how the king reacted.

After this consultation the tapestry passes, in reverse order, to the king's illness as he comes to Westminster for burial. In chapter 6 Trevor Rowley is interested in the tapestry's depiction of Harold's followers; was he naming Harold as his successor? After Edward's death and funeral the king's body being startled by the appearance of a strange star in the sky – the so-called »Halley's comet.« Harold's boat to Duke William's court in Normandy without naming, as Rowley points out, the king's death.

In chapter 7 the author discusses William of Normandy's preparations for an invasion of England. The detailed presentation of this in the tapestry, the felling of trees, making of planks, the loading of the ships with horses, weapons, and the Norman warriors. The invasion was unopposed at Pevensey, moving to Hastings nearby to prepare for a confrontation with the Vikings in northern England.

Trevor Rowley views the crossing over in chapter 8, the invasions, with particular attention. In the last section of the book Trevor Rowley analyses the last part of the tapestry dealing with the crossing of the battle fought, how did the two armies confront each other, what were their respective

Accompanying the book are a number of maps of regions of northern France and England, as well as pages of illuminated manuscripts and of modern photos of buildings and regions cited by the author. You can search for them page by page. Nor does the author give the numbers of the scenes he cites in the museum in Bayeux. And in at least one instance (p. 155) a photo of a medieval drawing is

More puzzling is the photo (p. 137) of an unnumbered scene (scene 24, Bayeux numeration) showing Duke William. But the author's labelling of the scene reads: »News of Harold's coronation at the time, p. 136–137. The two scenes of ships crossing the channel have been confused at the end of the book, and it may be trivial but I will point out that the names of two contemporary regions, Sylvette Lemagnen becomes Lemangen. More disconcerting is the fact that some of the contemporary authors and abbreviated titles which are not listed in the bibliography. For example Chapt. 1, note that the work of either author is cited in the bibliography. It is my impression (I have not attempted to check) that the bibliography is incomplete.

Trevor Rowley's purpose in this book is to see how accurately the tapestry portrays the physical details of the buildings. On the whole he concludes, »that the tapestry mostly ignores the physical setting and details of the landscape in which the events on the tapestry take place« (p. 13). Consequently, the Normans ... but we are given acceptable impressions of those places and landscapes.

Nonetheless he agrees that the tapestry is a magnificent work of art and »a unique historical examination has been worthwhile in detecting elements which enable at least a partial reconstruction of the understanding of the Bayeux Tapestry? Many of the landscape topics treated by him in this book on the tapestry quite like this one, and future historians may well find it useful.

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Trevor Rowley, An Archaeological Study of the Bayeux Tapestry. The Landscapes, Buildings and Places, Barnsley, South Yorkshire (Pen & Sword Books, the world is clear.

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an incredible complex of aggressiveness, the same position was justified by J.