Why did William win the Battle of Hastings? Exemplar 3

This writing will search into the possible reasons of why the Normans won the Battle of Hastings.

William was determined to conquer England because he crossed the Channel as soon as the wind changed with 3000 ships with horses included. He left his territory undefended while he fought for England. He was very brave because he lifted his helmet during battle. ‘Duke William pushed himself (William of Poitiers, The Deeds of William, about 1070). William built 2 castles whilst Harold was at Stamford Bridge. ‘He landed at Pevensey where he immediately built a castle. He hurried to Hastings where he built another castle.’(William of Jumieges, Deeds of the Dukes of Normandy, written in about1070). Harold’s soldiers were on foot. William had different sorts of soldiers. ‘All the English were on foot. The Normans had foot-soldiers, archers and cavalry with horses.’ (The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, eleventh century).

A mistake I thought Harold made was to come straight down from Yorkshire. ‘When Harold heard of William’s landing, he marched with great haste from York to London’. (Florence of Worcester, early twelfth century). If he had rested, he may have had more of a chance. William may have built more castles but Harold’s army would have been more formidable. The worst mistake possible was to break the shield wall when William’s men were pretending to retreat. Another mistake was to lose his best men at Stamford Bridge.

William was lucky that the wind changed while Harold was up in Yorkshire. ‘As he came towards York with thousands of good soldiers he met the Norwegians in battle at Stamford Bridge. He killed Harald Hardrada and most of his army. At this moment, King Harold was told that William had arrived with a huge army of men from all over France.’ (Florence of Worcester, early twelfth century). William was lucky that Harold broke the shield wall when he was pretending to retreat.

Harold was unlucky because he hadn’t yet established his full power which may have made a difference in Harald Hardraada’s and William’s decision to invade. As far as we know William and Harald weren’t working together so it was a terribly unlucky coincidence that two countries decided to invade at the same time. It was unlucky in the way that Harold’s army were on foot, because if they had horses, they would have got to Hastings quicker and stopped William building the castle.

My conclusion is that William won the Battle of Hastings on Harold’s misfortunes and his own luck. It may have something to do with having more men and more time to organise them.

*Excellent. Lots of points in your paragraphs about William’s skill and determination. You have supported well with sources too. Detailed, concise and clear. Excellent work Stuart.*