

1066



A Matrix Game of a troubled year in English History by John Armatys

This edition especially prepared for the
Wargame Developments website.

© 2026 by John Armatys.

John Armatys has asserted his right under the Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1986 to be identified as the author of this work.

All rights reserved. No part of this document can be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission from the author in writing except for the use of brief quotations in a review or scholarly journal.

Permission is given to print copies of this document for personal use. Printed copies must not be sold.

Do not upload this file to the Internet - instead post a link to the Wargame Developments web site <https://wargamedevelopments.org/> where it is available as a free download.

The illustrations are based on the Bayeux Tapestry

Wargame Developments (WD) is a loose association of like-minded wargamers who are dedicated to developing wargames of any type whatsoever. Its aims are:

- ◆ to provide a forum for the exchange of new ideas and concepts.
- ◆ to develop both new and existing methods of recreating military conflicts.

You can find out more about Wargame Developments by visiting <https://wargamedevelopments.org/>

1066

A Matrix Game of a troubled year in English History by John Armatys

The first version of this game was written as an introduction for players new to the matrix game format - hence the uncomplicated map, the simple objectives, and the potentially rather slow start for the main protagonists. The game was run at Wargame Developments' Conference of Wargamers 2000 and was published in Nugget 148 and in the May 2002 edition of Wargames Illustrated. The original game has been updated to modern standards and adapted to be played online.

If you are not familiar with matrix games there is a good guide in the Wargame Developments Handbook which can be downloaded free from <https://wargamedevelopments.org/about/>

In addition to this document you will need the accompanying game board to play the game. It is available in MS Powerpoint format from <https://wargamedevelopments.org/rules/>

The game board has the map and counters for each of the characters and their forces, a castle and a comet.



Additional counters are provided for things which players in previous games have argued for and there are a couple of spare counters which can be labelled as necessary.

If more counters are needed they can be made by copying and pasting as necessary.

The Map



The game was designed to be played on Zoom (or a similar video conferencing service) with the umpire screen sharing the game board so that all the participants can see it. If playing face to face a projector could be used to allow the players to look at the umpire's copy of the board, or you can print a copy of the map and counters,

All the players should be provided with a copy of the rules and their personal briefing in advance of the game.

A Bit of History

- 1016 Canute, a Dane, becomes King of England. He marries Emma, widow of his predecessor Ethelred the Unready and daughter of Duke Richard II of Normandy. Ethelred's sons, Alfred and Edward are in exile in Normandy. Godwin, Earl of Wessex, owes his position to Canute.
- 1035 Canute dies. Harold Harefoot, son of Canute's mistress Aelfgifu, usurps the throne from Harthacnut, son of Emma. For a time there are two kings, Harold Harefoot ruling the North, and Harthacnut, in Denmark, recognised as king in the South. The ensuing struggle between the two half brothers ends only with the death of Harold Harefoot. Godwin backs Harthacnut.
- 1036 Alfred and Edward attempt to seize power. Godwin captures Alfred and gives him to King Harold Harefoot's men, who put his eyes out (a blind man cannot be king). He dies shortly after.
- 1038 Harthacnut signs a treaty with Magnus, King of Denmark, that when one of them dies the other will inherit his kingdom,
- 1040 Harold Harefoot dies, and is succeeded by Harthacnut, who leaves the control of the realm to his mother and Godwin
- 1042 King Harthacnut dies, and is succeeded by Edward (known as "the Confessor"), son of Ethelred the Unready. Magnus writes to Edward waiving his claim to the throne of England for Edward's lifetime.
- 104? Edward nominates Svein Estvithson, King of Denmark, as his successor.
- 1045 King Edward marries Edith, daughter of Godwin, by now the most powerful of the earls.
- 1051 Robert of Jumièges, a Norman, is appointed to the see of Canterbury. Count Eustace of Boulogne is involved in a fracas at Dover on his return from visiting King Edward. Godwin is provoked by the King to rebel. Edward the Confessor, backed by the Earls of Mercia and Northumbria, outlaws the Godwin family. King Edward promises the throne to William, Duke of Normandy, on his death.
- 1052 The Godwins return to England with an army, and the family is restored to its positions and estates. Edward the Confessor is compelled to dismiss some of his advisers. Leading Normans, including Archbishop Robert of Jumièges, flee. Stigand, worldly and avaricious, becomes Archbishop of Canterbury, holding the see in plurality with (= at the same time as) the see of Winchester in breach of canon law - he is excommunicated by five successive Popes.
- 1053 Godwin dies, and is succeeded as Earl of Wessex by his son Harold. Duke William marries Matilda, daughter of Baldwin V, count of Flanders and a descendant of King Alfred the Great, thereby strengthening his claim to the crown of England
- 1055 Tostig, another son of Godwin, becomes Earl of Northumbria.
- 1057 Edward the Confessor decides that the throne should go to Edward the Atheling (Atheling = "throne worthy"), son of Edmund Ironside, who returns to England and dies, leaving his infant son Edgar the Atheling the legitimate heir.
- 1058 Harold becomes "sub regulus" - deputy king.
- 1063 Harold and Tostig invade Wales.
- 1064 Harold is shipwrecked on the coast of Normandy. He swears an oath to support Duke William's claim to the English throne.
- 1065 The Northumbrians rebel against Tostig, and compel King Edward to accept the election of Morcar, brother of Edwin, Earl of Mercia, in his place and to banish

- Tostig. Harold earns Tostig's enmity by not supporting him.
- 1066 Edward the Confessor dies without a direct heir on 5th. January. On his deathbed he names Harold as his successor. Harold is elected by the Witan in preference to the immature Edgar the Atheling, and is crowned the next day.



Characters and Order of Play in Round 1

1. Tostig Godwinson, outlawed former Earl of Northumbria, brother of King Harold.
2. Edwin, Earl of Mercia, brother of Morcar
3. Harald Hardrada ("hard ruler"), King of Norway
4. Morcar, Earl of Northumbria, brother of Edwin
5. William, Duke of Normandy
6. Harold Godwinson, King of England and Earl of Wessex.

If less than six players are available the game is modified as follows:

- With five players - merge the roles of Edwin and Morcar. The "Northern Earls" player declares after Harald Hardrada
- With four players - merge the roles of Edwin and Morcar as above, and merge the roles of Tostig and Harald Hardrada. The order of play becomes "Vikings", Northern Earls, William of Normandy, King Harold.

Game Duration and Notes

The game begins in January 1066 and lasts until a conclusion is reached, subject to a maximum of 10 turns. Each turn is about a month. A comet appears in turn 4.

The game is a matrix game with the following variations:

1. Each turn each player may either
 - a) make an argument (stating an ACTION, a RESULT, and **up to** three REASONS WHY); or
 - b) support **or** oppose an argument put forward by another character (which requires no reasons, support or opposition will give +1 or -1 to the dice roll). Players may support or oppose the argument of a character whose go is later in the turn (without necessarily knowing what they will do...); or
 - c) pass.
2. Order of play after the first round will take into account success in the preceding round, with players who passed going last.

3. During the game participants can communicate with each other via the Zoom chat function, which the umpire will not be reading.

All arguments are resolved at the end of each turn using two six sided dice, the score required being decided by the umpire's opinion of the chance of success:

Description	Chance	Dice Roll
Remote chance	3%	12
Highly unlikely	8%	11
Highly unlikely	17%	10
Unlikely	28%	9
Realistic possibility	42%	8
Likely or probably	58%	7
Likely or probably	72%	6
Highly likely	83%	5
Highly likely	92%	4
Almost certain	97%	3
Certain	100%	2

The counters with men on them represent the leaders (with their retinues), or sizeable units of troops. A ship counter is required to move a unit by sea.

Players can create additional events, persons, places and things by successful arguments. The Umpire will add these by producing additional counters or amending the map.

Combat

Combat is resolved using Tim Price's SCRUD system (Simple Combat Resolution Using Dice). Roll a D6 for each counter in combat (different coloured dice are needed if a combat involves a leader or troops which have a modifier), add any modifiers, then line up each side's dice in order from highest to lowest, and match the two top dice of each combatant - the higher dice is the winner, a draw is no effect. Then match the next highest pair of dice, and so on until no pairs are left. Three losses results in the loss of a unit or death of a leader. Personal markers have a combat value the same as other units, but with a +1 modifier. English and Norse leaders should fight in any battles, William of Normandy may fight if he wishes. If a leader's marker suffers a loss in combat roll a D6 - a "6" and the leader has been killed. Harold's Housecarls have a +2 modifier. Other modifiers may be introduced at the umpires discretion, possibly as a result of arguments introduced by the players. Modifiers may not increase a dice roll to more than 6 or reduce it to less than 1.

Final Note

The frame of the Bayeux Tapestry showing the coronation of King Harold (see the front cover) has Archbishop Stigand standing on the King's left hand side. In fact Stigand was not at the coronation, the tapestry is Norman propaganda, designed to undermine Harold's right to the throne by suggesting that he had been crowned by an excommunicated clergyman. It just goes to show that history is what someone chooses to say.

Personal Briefings

Tostig Godwinson, outlawed former Earl of Northumbria, brother of King Harold.



Courageous, inclined to see things in black and white, inflexible and strong willed, you acquired a reputation as a tyrant in Northumbria for attempting to reduce lawlessness and increasing traditionally low taxes to something approaching those paid in the rest of England.

You are in Flanders, where your brother in law Count Baldwin V can help you to raise one unit of followers and the ships to carry them.

Objectives:

- Regain the Earldom of Northumbria
- Lead Norse raids against England.

Edwin, Earl of Mercia, brother of Morcar



You and your brother favour the idea of an independent Northumbria.

You are in Mercia, and you can raise up to two units of fyrd in the area.

Objectives:

- Remain Earl of Mercia

- Defend Mercia

- Support your brother Morcar, Earl of Northumbria

- Avoid fighting Normans.

Special Rule - The Fyrd - should only be raised for 40 days at a time of national emergency. If the fyrd is raised and does not see action roll a dice for each unit at the end of each turn - a 5 or 6 and the unit goes home.

Harald Hardrada, King of Norway



Greedy, ruthless, with a legendary lust for loot, you are six feet six inches tall and a composer of sagas.

Your claim to the throne of England comes from your wife's kinship to Canute. In addition you inherited rights to succeed from the 1038 pact between Magnus, King of Norway and Harthacnut. But you don't really care about the legality of the situation.

You are in Norway and can raise up to four units of Vikings with the ships to carry them.

Objectives:

- Obtain loot.
- Conquer England.

Morcar, Earl of Northumbria, brother of Edwin



You and your brother favour the idea of an independent Northumbria.

You are in Northumbria, and you can raise up to two units of fyrd in the area.

You might wish to speak with a Geordie accent.

Objectives:

- Remain Earl of Northumbria
- Defend Northumbria
- Support your brother Edwin, Earl of Mercia
- Avoid fighting Normans.

Special Rule - The Fyrd - should only be raised for 40 days at a time of national emergency. If the fyrd is raised and does not see action roll a dice for each unit at the end of the turn - a 5 or 6 and the unit goes home.

William, Duke of Normandy



Schooled in war since childhood, and too relentless to care that the world might hate you, you are the illegitimate son of Robert I, the sixth duke (who was married to a daughter of Canute).

Your claim to the throne of England is based on your relationship with Edward the Confessor (first cousin once removed), his nomination of you in 1051, and your wife, Matilda, being a descendant of Alfred the Great..

You are in Normandy with one unit of Normans. You can raise one other unit from each of Normandy, Flanders, Brittany and France. Your shipyards can build enough ships every turn to carry one unit.

Objectives:

- Obtain Papal support
- Seize the throne of England.

Harold, King of England and Earl of Wessex



Pious, humble and friendly to all good living men, and the enemy of evil doers, you start the game in Wessex, with one unit of Housecarls (elite troops, + 2 to combat dice rolls), and control the English fleet, which is based on the south coast. Each of the three great earldoms can raise up to two units of fyrd.

Objectives:

Remain King of England

Defend England, and particularly Wessex (where your estates are).

Special Rules:

The English Fleet - once the English Fleet is brought into play a dice is rolled at the end of each turn. On Turn One a 6 means that the fleet returns to port to be refitted and re-supplied. On Turn Two a 5 or 6, Turn Three 4, 5 or 6, and so on.

The Fyrd - should only be raised for 40 days at a time of national emergency. If the fyrd is raised and does not see action roll a dice for each unit at the end of each turn - a 5 or 6 and the unit goes home.