

# Inspector Rex's History Snippet #26



**Attribution:** [Yair Davidiy](#)

Bible Studies and Historical Researches

## Who are some famous Brits of Jewish origin?

One figure of importance to British and World History.

**William the Conqueror (1028- 1087).**



In the early 900s CE a group of Vikings mainly from Norway but also from Denmark and led by Rollo settled in Normandy in northwest France. They intermixed with the Bretons of the neighboring province of Brittany. These became the Normans. William of Normandy, known as the Conqueror conquered England in 1066.

Before the Norman Conquest about 20% of the population of England had the status of slaves. William freed the slaves and outlawed slavery. He introduced Norman Civilization which in many ways was more rational and advanced than that which it replaced.

The father of William, had been Robert-1, Duke of Normandy (reigned 1027-1035).

The mother of William, Hereleva, is usually reported as having been the daughter of a tanner who worked in animal skins. In those days the dung of dogs was used to treat leather. Consequently tanners had a low social status.

William (1028- 1087) had been born out of wedlock.

When William laid siege to the anti-Norman, pro-Anjou commune of Alencon, the Alenconians mocked his tanner-origins by hanging animal hides from the city walls. William's riposte, after Alencon surrendered, was to have the jokers' hands and feet cut off. He was sensitive about his mother. See: [Oy Roi! | Joshua Gelernter | Standpoint](#)  
In those days there were many Jews in the area. Possibly as much as 20% of the population of Rouen, the capital of Normandy, were Jewish. Many worked in the leather trade and as tanners.

Later reports indicate that the family of Hereleva, the mother of William, were not of low status. Hereleva herself later married an important noble and bore him two sons who also become prominent nobles. If both accounts are correct, i.e. they had been tanners, and their status had been upgraded, then the family of Hereleva were probably Jewish who had converted. As Jews they would already have obtained the social connections, business acumen, educational literacy, etc, necessary to successfully carry off the transformation. Instead of low-class people coming up they would have been high-class ones who had previously been kept down. Indications exist that the Nobility of that time and place may have been less prejudiced towards a Christian of Jewish descent than they were in regard to a fellow Gentile from the lower classes.

William was also referred to as "William the Bastard." He was after all technically illegitimate so what else could they call him? Nevertheless we find the term "Bastard" applied in Jewish and Christian writings not as a legal term but rather as pejorative one for the son of a Gentile father and a Jewish woman.

Cf.

# According to the 19th-century historian Edward Freeman, William the Conqueror, who was also known as William the Bastard, was sometimes known as "William the Mamzer." ... Mamzer is a Hebrew pejorative meaning the child of an illegitimate sexual relationship, such as adultery or incest. In Europe, it may have entered the vernacular as a pejorative for the offspring of a particular type of illegitimate relationship, one between a Christian man and a Jewish woman. . . . [Furthermore], in medieval Europe, tanners were frequently Jews. [Did William the Conqueror Have a Jewish Mother?](#)

When William conquered England he brought Jews with him from Rouen.

From the children of William his son Robert became Duke of Normandy (reigned 1087-1106). Two of the other brothers, William and Henry, became Kings of England.

**Robert in Normandy** persecuted the Jews leading a pogrom against them in 1096. Following this event William-2 of England, brother of Robert, took control of Normandy from him and Robert went off on a crusade to the Holy Land.



Source: [The Death of William II](#)

**William Rufus** who became King William-2 of England (1087-1100) had been the favorite son of William the Conqueror. He was good to the Jews in England protecting them from those who wished them harm. He even threatened his own clergy that he might consider becoming Jewish. William Rufus was assassinated and succeeded by his brother Henry.

**Henry-I** (c. 1068 – 1135),

#... retained Jews at court and continued the favourable Norman policy toward the Jews, issuing a formal charter reiterating their royal protection, and special privileges of liberty which fostered a 35 year period of Jewish prosperity and growth extending further out into the provinces. # [The History of the Medieval Jews of England](#)

### **Comment by Inspector Rex**

The Jews were expelled from England by Edward I by the *Edict of Expulsion 1290*.

Historians commonly date Jewish Emancipation to either 1829 or 1858.

History of the Jews in England

([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_the\\_Jews\\_in\\_England](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_England))