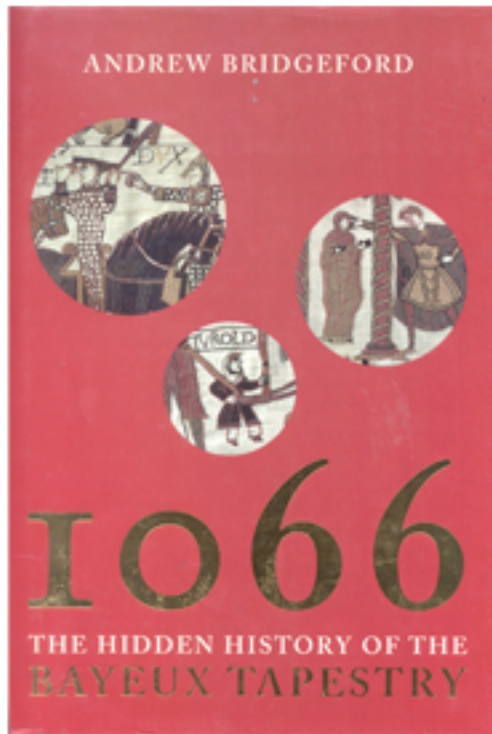


BOOK REVIEW



The Mystery of the Bayeux Tapestry, by David J. Bernstein. Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London, 1986. 272 pages; and **1066: The Hidden History of the Bayeux Tapestry**, by Andrew Bridgeford. Fourth Estate, London and New York, 2004. 354 pages. Reviewed by Janina Milisiewicz.

The Bayeux Tapestry is not actually a tapestry at all: it is a very long, narrow band of embroidered linen depicting, with great verve, episodes of the Battle of Hastings and of the victory over England by William the Conqueror. For lovers of history, especially those intrigued by how it is chronicled, these two books provide well-documented explorations of the conception and creation of this extraordinary textile-document. Each writer questions certain long standing interpretations of what is depicted, what might have been intended and who its designer(s) and creators may have been.

Bernstein's book is a formal, academic work. It is divided into three parts, each broken down into chapters on specific aspects of the subject. Written for the specialist or researcher, this is a detailed and extensively annotated examination of an enigmatic artifact.

Bridgeford's more in formal approach introduces the results of more recent investigations. Referring to Bernstein's work, especially his exploration of the "subversive symbolism" of the tapestry's motifs, Bridgefield suggests the possibility of even further interpretations of this enigma-in-textile. More suited perhaps to the lay reader, it is a fascinating study of a major icon, created to record an event that changed the course of European history.

Both books contain extensive end notes, indexes and illustrations.