

Bayeux tapestry being loaned to Britain

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□ The Bayeux tapestry will be loaned to Britain after [Emmanuel Macron](#) agreed to let it leave France for the first time in 950 years.

The president is expected to announce at an Anglo-French summit on Thursday that the artefact depicting the Norman buildup to, and success in, the Battle of Hastings in 1066 will be loaned to the UK, probably in 2020.

The Bayeux tapestry

The [Bayeux tapestry](#) is a graphic depiction of the Norman buildup to, and success in, the Battle of Hastings in 1066. In a series of scenes told in 70m of coloured embroidery and Latin inscriptions, it shows how William the Conqueror crossed the Channel to seize the English crown from King Harold.

Commissioned by William's half-brother Odo, it is an early example of history being written, or in this case embroidered, by the victors. It shows vivid and often gory battle scenes between two sides clearly identifiable by their haircuts: the English with shoulder-length hair and moustaches fighting the clean-shaven Normans with short back and sides.

Highlights include an appearance in the sky of Halley's comet, seen as a bad omen for Harold, William's dragon-headed ships crossing the sea and the death of Harold after being shot through the eye with an arrow.

Theresa May will use the decision, which has involved lengthy talks between each country's respective culture departments, to highlight the strength in UK-French relations after Brexit.

An Elysée official said the loan was agreed in principle but would not happen for several years because work needed to be done on the tapestry to ensure it was safe to move it. "It's very symbolic for [France](#) and maybe even more for the UK," he said.

The date of the loan would probably be 2022 when, it is understood, the Bayeux Museum closes for refurbishment.

Why the Bayeux Tapestry's loan to Britain is a homecoming

One leading contender to show the tapestry would be the British Museum. Its director, Hartwig Fischer, said it would be “honoured and delighted” to display the tapestry.

“This would be a major loan, probably the most significant ever from France to the UK. It is a gesture of extraordinary generosity and proof of the deep ties that link our countries. The Bayeux tapestry is of huge importance, as it recounts a crucial moment in British and French history, 1066.”

He said the museum was the “UK’s most visited and internationally renowned institution” and added: “Here it would be seen by the widest UK and international audience in the context of a museum of world cultures.”

It is understood the museum has been in talks about a possible loan of the tapestry for several years, but there will be other contenders to host it.

If the tapestry does come to the UK, it raises the question of what reciprocal loan could be made to France, with the Rosetta Stone, originally in French hands until Britain defeated the French in Egypt in 1801.

The tapestry is thought to have been made shortly after the Battle of Hastings in the 11th century. Some historians argue it was made in Kent, a debate that is set to reignite following the announcement.