

THE BATTLE OF STAMFORD BRIDGE

25th SEPTEMBER 1066

This viewpoint overlooks the site of the Battle of Stamford Bridge, fought by King Harold of England against the invading Norse army of Hardraada.

After the death of Edward the Confessor in 1066, Harold Godwinson became King of England but there were two other rivals for the throne: Harold Hardraada of Norway and Duke William of Normandy. Tostig, Harold Godwinson's brother, supported Hardraada.

King Harold was awaiting the threatened Norman invasion in southern England when Hardraada and Tostig sailed up the Humber Estuary with an army. The nearest English forces were defeated at Fulford, outside York. Harold rushed north and arrived in Tadcaster on 24th September. Learning that the Norse army was at Stamford Bridge he attacked the next day.



Hardraada's army was caught by surprise, but it is said that one courageous Norse warrior single-handedly held the bridge over the River Derwent, until an English soldier floating in a tub stabbed him from underneath through a gap in the wooden planks. In the fierce fighting that followed both Hardraada and Tostig were killed and their army scattered. Only 24 of the once mighty fleet of 300 ships were needed to take the survivors home.



Soon after his victory Harold heard that William of Normandy had landed in the south of England. The tired and depleted English army marched back to Hastings where Harold was killed. William became the first Norman king of England. If Harold had not fought the battle of Stamford Bridge a few weeks earlier the outcome might have been very different.

