

NORTHAM 1069 BATTLEFIELD WALK

THINGS TO BRING

Check the weather forecast and dress accordingly. Nearly the entire walk is on roads or pavements but you'll need comfortable walking shoes.

Binoculars may help you appreciate some aspects of the walk.

Bring bottled water if you think you'll need it. The walk takes about 90 minutes.

SAFETY

You will cross Myrtle Street and Churchill Way (several times). Do take care, especially crossing Churchill Way. It can be busy.

After leaving Appledore there is no pavement in Pitt Hill but the road is normally quiet.

There are two short uphill sections of the walk at Churchill Way and a 50 metre steep section from Myrtle Street up Pitt Hill. Please respect private land and gardens.

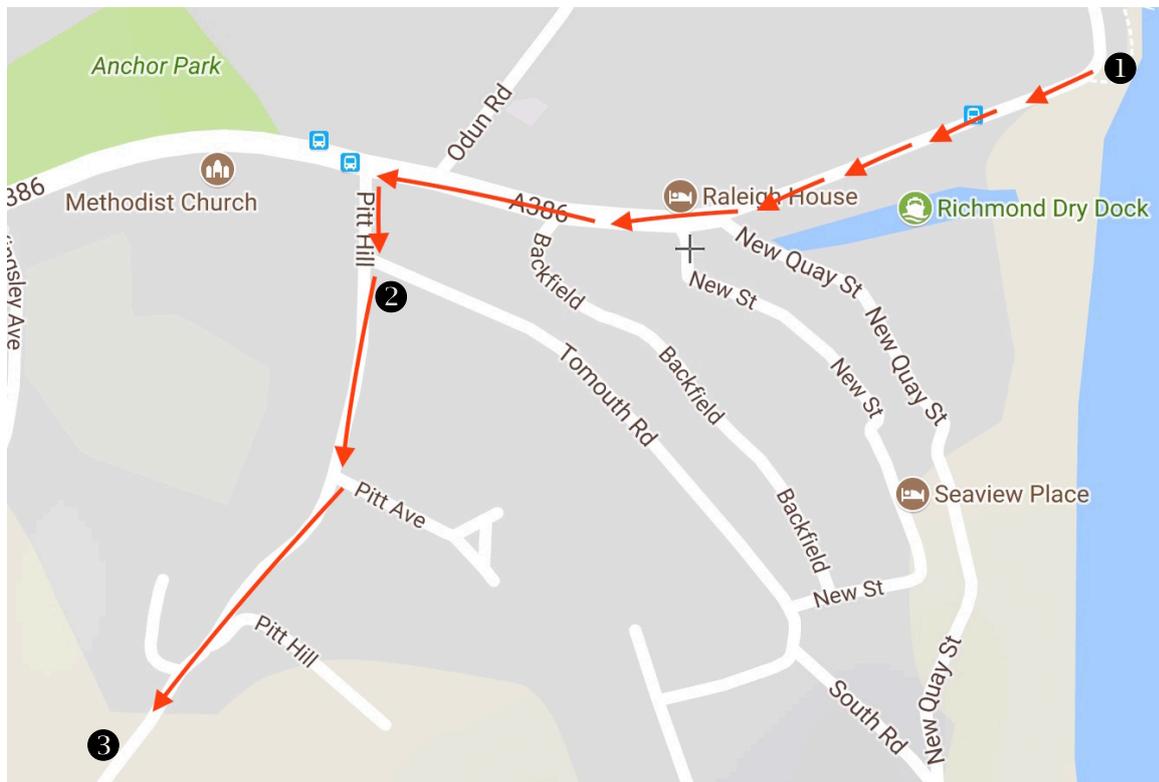
At all times beware of traffic and keep dogs on leads.

STOP 1: CORNER OF QUAY AND MARINE PARADE.

It's high tide 8.40 am on Friday 26th June 1069. The sons of Harold are beaching at least 64 ships. They look like Viking longships.

Stand with your back to the railings - the site of Richmond Dock is on your left. In 1069 it was the port of Tawmouth consisting of a triangular sandy bay. The lines of the houses have preserved the shape of the bay. The bay had firm sand suitable for beaching ships and the beach extended north along under the houses on the Quay.

Walk up Marine Parade and continue along Myrtle Street. Turn left into Pitt Hill.



2: TOMMOUTH ROAD-PITT HILL JUNCTION

The name 'Tommouth' derives from Tawmouth and the houses close to the junction with Myrtle Street represent the site of the settlement of Tawmouth. Until at least the 18th century Pitt Hill was the main route out of Appledore and *the army of Harold's sons headed this way after they landed.*

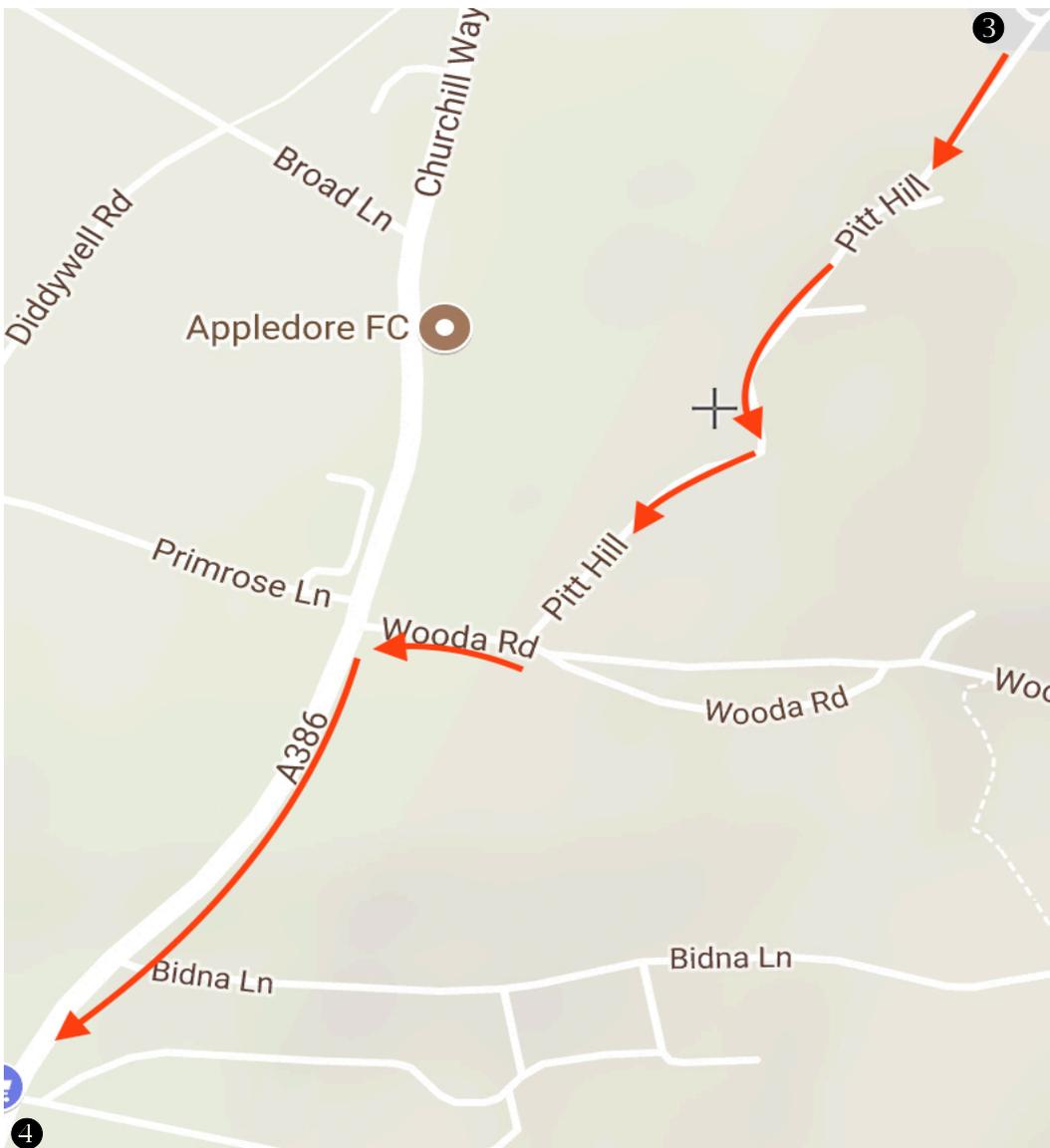
Continue up Pitt Hill to the edge of the village. Just beyond the last building on the right you will see a short grassy lane leading to a field gate.

3: TOP OF PITT HILL

From here the raiders can see the village of Northam around the present-day Church. But high ground stops them from seeing the Anglo-French army led by Brian of Brittany approaching from the south.

Take a look at the horizon beyond Northam – the furthest houses you can see mark the high ground stretching along Windmill Lane and then Bay View Road, and it blocks the view to the south. This explains why the raiders were taken by surprise.

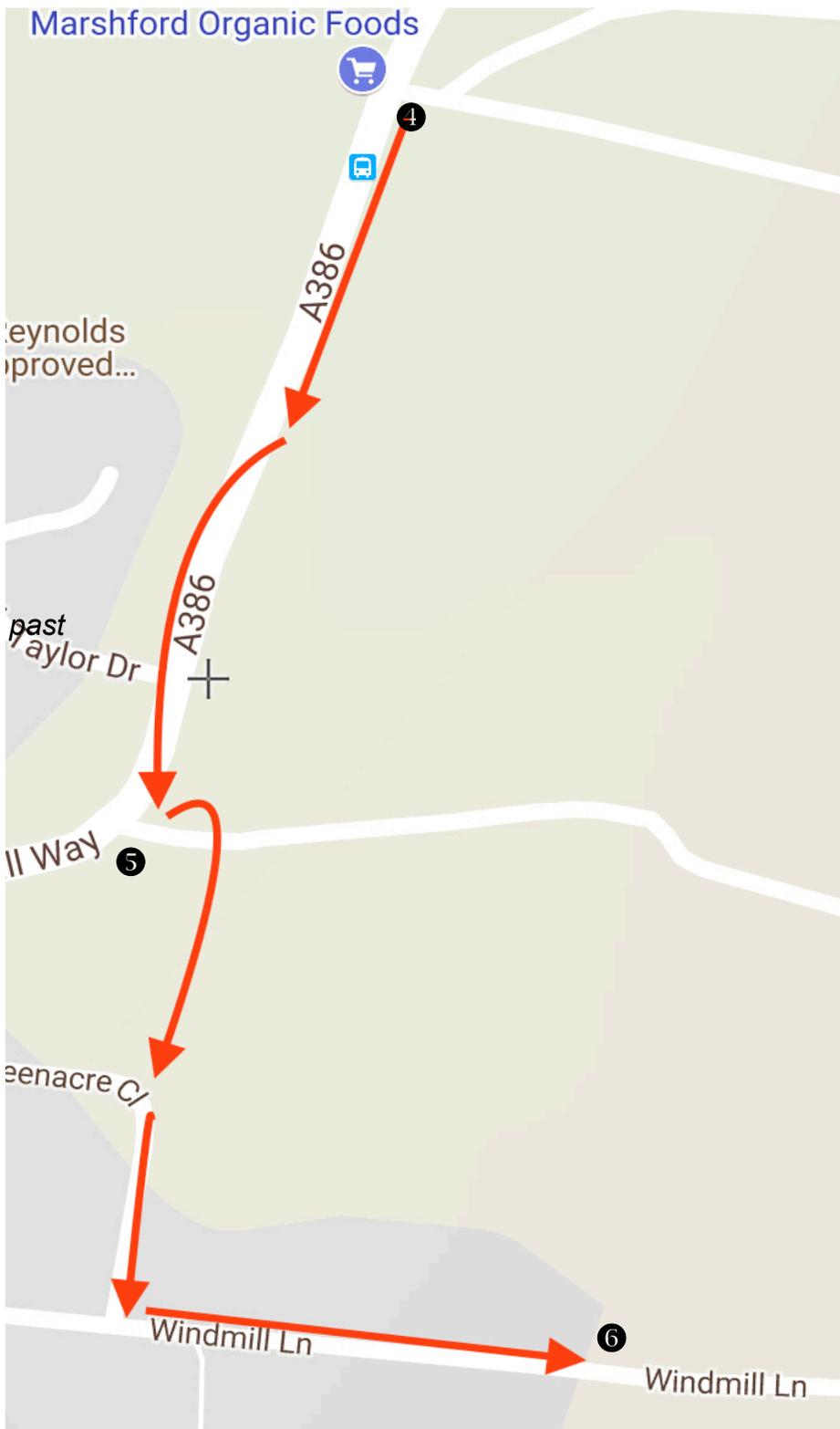
Continue along Pitt Hill, looking out for cars. At the junction with Wooda Road turn right and walk a few metres to the A386. Turn left and walk over the ridge.



STOP 4: VERGE OPPOSITE MARSHFORD ORGANIC FOODS

We've just deviated slightly from the medieval road to Northam – the original road followed the footpath opposite the junction with Wooda Road.

*It's now mid-morning and groups of raiders are plundering the local farms – there were five of them in 1069 but we don't know all their names. Almost certainly one is Diddywell, out of sight at the west end of the ridge you have just crossed – its Old English name means *Dudda's spring*.*



Walk to Bloody Corner - you will need to cross and then re-cross the A386 using the traffic islands.

STOP 5: BLOODY CORNER

The largest group of raiders head to Northam village and it's here that Brian's army launches a surprise attack. The raiders flee towards their ships where we are standing. We don't know if the name 'Bloody Corner' derives from the Battle of Northam but in 1906 human bones and coins were found under the road here. You can see a battle monument set into the wall. But there's a problem – it's the wrong battle. Victorian antiquarians thought a battle was fought here in 878 but the monument got the date and details of this mythical battle wrong!

Turn left onto footpath to the left of the monument, and immediately right up the footpath to Greenacre Close. Turn left into Greenacre Close and then left into Windmill Lane. Just beyond the last house on the left there's a field gate.

STOP 6: WINDMILL LANE

It's mid-day and the sons of Harold are trapped because the tide has stranded their ships. They look for a defensible position where they can make a stand until the tide comes in. It must be hard to outflank. In this landscape there's only one option.

Look over the gate: in 1069 the valley to the left of the main road was marsh at the watershed of two streams. The ridge we crossed earlier overlooks this natural bottleneck. In 1069 this slope was steeper as you can see by the cutting formed by the A386 as it crosses the ridge. *The raiders defend the ridge. The battle rages throughout the afternoon and into the evening. It looks like the Battle of Hastings as the mounted Norman knights charge the raiders' wall of shields. At least 7000 men are fighting for their lives and the air is filled with shouting and the clash of arms.*

Return to STOP 4

STOP 4: Verge Opposite MARSHFORD ORGANIC FOODS

It's after 9 pm – the raiders have held their ground for up to 9 hours. As it gets dark the survivors return to their ships but Brian's army doesn't give chase. Officially it's too dark but the truth is they're probably too tired. The ground around us is littered with perhaps 3000 corpses.

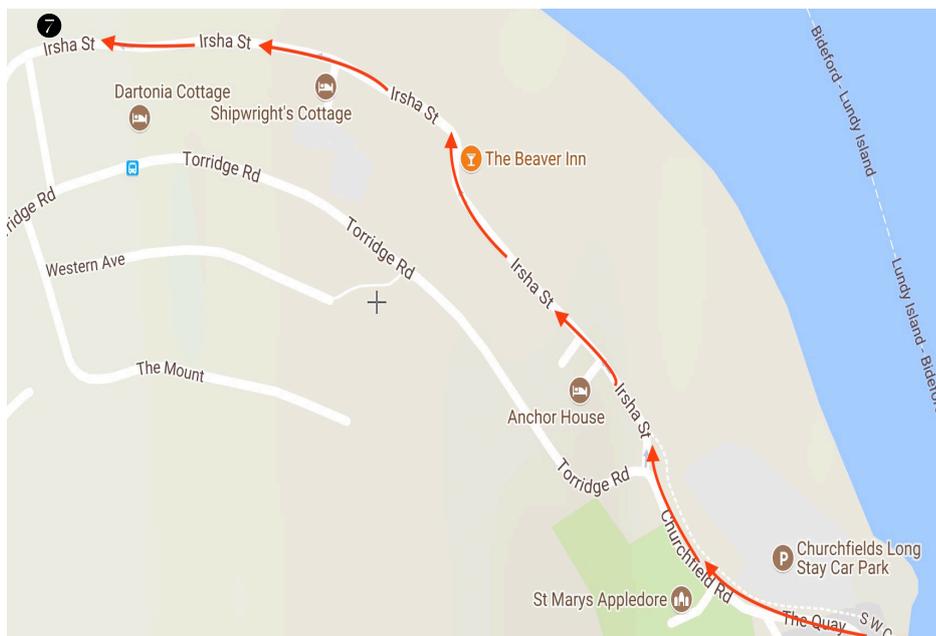
The Battle of Northam was around half the size of the Battle of Hastings, but it lasted just as long and proportionately more of the participants were killed. Perhaps it's no coincidence that the knoll by Northam Church is known as 'Bone Hill'.

Return to STOP 1

STOP 1: CORNER OF QUAY AND MARINE PARADE.

It's after 9.30 pm and the sons of Harold are sailing away. They're desperate enough to cross the highly dangerous Appledore sandbar after dark. Across the river to the left of Instow seafront you can see Instow Church, site of a medieval saint's cult that apparently started because of the battle.

OPTIONAL EXTENSION - return to Churchfields Car Park; continue along the length of Irsha Street until Hillcrest Terrace. On your right you will see a green space with a stone and seats.



OPTIONAL STOP 7: The stone commemorates Viking raids in 878, 893 and the Battle of Northam in 1069. All these raiders sailed past this spot, although in 878 and 893 they probably headed up the River Taw. You may see waves where the estuary meets the sea at the dangerous Appledore sandbar.