



Vikings in Britain

The Vikings have a long history of invading or settling in countries across Europe and the rest of the world. They first invaded Britain in 793 CE. The last invasion was in 1066 CE, just as William the Conqueror was taking the throne after the Battle of Hastings.

At first, the Vikings stuck close to the sea where they were at their strongest. The first attack was on a monastery at Lindisfarne, in the northeast of England. The monks who lived there were either killed or taken away to work as slaves for the Vikings. Over the next few years, the Vikings attacked coastal villages and towns across the British Isles.

Eventually, the Vikings made it to York. They named the city Jorvik. It was the second biggest city in England after London. Most of the Vikings' homeland didn't provide very good farming. One of the best things about England was that it did. They were also on the lookout for treasures that could be traded to make them rich!

The Vikings didn't take over England without a fight. The Anglo-Saxons fought back over the years and stopped the Vikings conquering them. In the 9th century, the English king was a man named Alfred the Great. He agreed to a deal with the Vikings in exchange for peace. He gave them large parts of the north and east of England. The land became known as Danelaw.

When Alfred died, his sons took over. They gradually took land away from the Vikings through a series of battles. Eventually, the Anglo-Saxons controlled all of England again. In 954 CE, the last Viking king of Jorvik was driven out of the country. When he died, the Vikings agreed to be ruled by the English king.

Kings of that time were expected to be strong and lead their country in battle. Ethelred the Unready was neither of these things when he became King of England. He tried to stop the Vikings from taking back Danelaw, but he failed. In 1002 CE, Ethelred invaded the Vikings and killed many of their families. This angered the King of Denmark. He was a man named King Sweyn, and he



retaliated by invading England. Ethelred had to flee to France. England fell under the rule of the Vikings.

When Sweyn's son Cnut (he was also known as Canute) took over the throne, England became part of the Viking empire. It remained in the hands of the Vikings until 1042 when Edward the Confessor became king. He was the son of Ethelred and held the throne until 1066. It was his death that led to the Battle of Hastings and the reign of William the Conqueror. It was the end of the Anglo-Saxon and Viking kings of England.

SUMMARY FOCUS

1. What happened to end the line of Viking and Anglo-Saxon kings?
2. Why might the Vikings have wanted to invade England?
3. What happened before the Vikings agreed to be ruled by the King of England?
4. Why did King Sweyn invade England?
5. Why do think Ethelred might have been nicknamed the 'Unready'?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

- R** What was the name of the land that the Vikings controlled?
- R** When did the last Viking king leave England for the first time?
- V** Find and copy a word that means King Sweyn got his own back.
- I** Find the phrase "The Vikings didn't take over England without a fight". What does this tell you about the Anglo-Saxons?
- R** What was the name of Ethelred's son?