SCANDANAVIANS AND SETTLEMENT IN THE EASTERN IRISH SEA REGION DURING THE VIKING AGE

A Dissertation

presented to

the Faculty of the Graduate School

at the University of Missouri-Columbia

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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by

RUSSELL GOODRICH

Dr. Lois Huneycutt, Dissertation Supervisor

MAY 2010

The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

SCANDANAVIANS AND SETTLEMENT IN THE EASTERN
IRISH SEA REGION DURING THE VIKING AGE

presented by Russell Goodrich,

a candidate for the degree of doctor of philosophy,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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Professor Lois Huneycutt

_____
Professor A. Mark Smith

_____
Professor Russ Zguta

_____
Professor Kerby Miller

_____
Professor Ralph Rowlett

to Katie

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge all who have been of help in the completion of this project. I must thank first my advisor, Lois Huneycutt, for her aid and advice over the years concerning this project and for her helpful suggestions. I would also like to thank Ralph Rowlett for the archaeological insights and for helping me to better understand the archaeological aspects of the Vikings and the North Germanic European Lowland culture. Besides Lois and Ralph, I would also like to acknowledge and thank the other members of my committee, Russ Zguta, Kerby Miller, and Mark Smith for their patience and for the helpful suggestions on my final draft. I would also like to acknowledge and thank numerous graduate students over the years with whom I have shared ideas and suggestions, and others with whom I have had the good fortune of studying. I must also thank Dolores Fisher and her staff at the Interlibrary Loan Office in Ellis Library here at the University of Missouri. Much of the research undertaken herein would scarcely have been possible without the help of this wonderful office.

I must also acknowledge and thank the members of the SMELT project with whom I spent a summer working in the north of England, particularly Dr. Tom Brunton who generously allowed me to view his research concerning the finished excavation of Structure 26. I would also like to thank the staff of Michigan Technical University for allowing me to join the dig. I acknowledge also a debt of thanks to Adam Parsons for keeping me in the loop regarding the Low Birker Site and for driving me to visit Gosforth while I was in England. I must further acknowledge the library at University College, London, for allowing me the use of the archives. I would also like to acknowledge all who made fieldwork possible, and any colleagues to whom I may have not made specific reference. Finally, I would also like to thank my students at Moberly Area Community College and the University of Missouri-Columbia for the inspiration to teach and to see this project through to a successful conclusion.

Special thanks go to my wife Katie, for encouragement, help and for putting up with me during the worst times of this process. I also would like to thank my mom and other family members for their continued support. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge my friend Richard Schmidt, who died too soon. He was very interested in the Vikings and would certainly have liked to have seen the completion of this project. Thanks go out as well to my other friends for their support and ideas.

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Intoduction: The Importance of the Vikings for Cumbria Today

The role of the Vikings in Britain is both one of great significance and great ambiguity. The written sources are frequently insufficient to provide answers to all questions that are asked of them, and in some cases, present historiographical issues that can lead researchers to still more questions.[1] They are nonetheless the best starting point in recreating the history of even a realm as thinly documented as northern Europe. The sources, combined with archaeological and numismatic evidence, establish beyond a doubt that the Vikings were indeed settlers in northern England and in Scotland. This is a point that is vitally important in both English and Scottish history, because the Vikings left an indelible stamp upon the language, culture, and genetic makeup of both countries that still exists today. If one were to ask a question such as "What does it mean to be English?" or similar questions concerning the antiquity of their country or aspects of genetic makeup, knowing about this influence is important. But the Scandinavian influence is of still more paramount importance. It served as the catalyst by which England and Scotland transformed themselves into early medieval and hence in time into modern nations. In the process, it added many different elements into the definition.

One recurring theme throughout this work will be a study and analysis of objects recovered and thought to be in some sense Viking. The material culture plays a unique and vital role in the study of the Scandinavians during this time period. The use and trade, and possibly production, of metals are all subjects that will be explored and they all are areas that have largely been neglected up until the present time. The importance of metal working generally is something that is sometimes thought sorely lacking in medieval people. Metal objects were

[1] A virtual revolution was begun by Peter Sawyer in his seminal work *The Age of the Vikings* regarding the evaluation and use of certain kinds of sources. Sawyer attacked those who would dismiss saga sources as late and inaccurate while accepting almost without limitation the Irish chronicles and English sources such as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.* Although this has led to a new scrutiny of all sources, it has also cast them firmly into doubt as to their authenticity and often their accuracy, especially of their details.

more rare among medieval people than among those in the Roman world or the modern one, but this in no way undercut their social importance. Because of this relative scarcity, prestige rose higher by those in the possession of metals. Further, there were many utilitarian things being made and produced in the early middle ages, including arms and armor, coins, building components, and tools of all kinds.[2] The perception that medieval metal workers were somehow backwards must be dispensed with; they were very much transitional agents in the transmission of this technology. The role of the Scandinavians in both the production of metals and in their transmission and trade of metals is notable.

The Vikings generally have received a very negative press, and this is an issue that will be addressed below. But in reality, they did little to stamp out indigenous cultures, nor was it their intention to do so. It has been postulated, for instance, that the Vikings were responsible for the demise of the Picts in Scotland, combining with the Scots in the ninth century to exterminate the Picts as a cultural group.[3] Genetics tell another story. The Picts derive from the same genetic mixture as do the "Celts" who were present elsewhere on the Isle, and this particular genetic form is still highly visible; it is in fact in a majority of the people of northern Britain.[4] This Pictish code is traced by DNA through the matrilineal line, and these same DNA tests show a high percentage of persons of Scandinavian descent, especially in the Orkney and Shetland islands, who are likewise traced through the matrilineal line. The known occurrence of female Scandinavian ancestors certainly does not suggest they are the products of raiders or pirates, but rather of settlers. While the Pictish territories were incorporated into the Scottish realms and the

[2] Robert Bork, with Scott Montgomery and others, "Introduction: The Middle Ages as Metal Ages," in *De Re Metallica*, ed. Robert Bork, Scott Montgomery, Carol Neuman de Vegvar, Ellen Shortell and Steven Walton (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2005), 1.
[3] Alfred P. Smyth, *Warlords and Holy Men* (London: Edward Arnold, 1984), 189-194.
[4] Bryan Sykes, *Saxons, Vikings and Celts* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 282.

culture submerged, it does not follow that the Picts were annihilated by the Vikings, or by the Scots, since their genetic bedrock is still very much in evidence.

The written sources make it clear that attacks by the Vikings during their period of expansion were not unknown. Despite these well-attributed acts of violence the Vikings were themselves following a pattern of colonization in an organized overseas expansion beginning in Scandinavia and including most of the north Atlantic. Exactly what this pattern was is not wholly clear today, and perhaps was slow in developing then, but it amounted to taking new lands where they were to be had (as in Iceland and Greenland) or assimilating themselves, adding their culture to the many others present, in areas that were already occupied, as in Britain, Ireland, Russia, and western Europe. This expansion was more than simply moving peoples from one region to another; it was a complete expansion that involved the exchange of goods and ideas, as well as linguistic and other elements. It is an early medieval example of what has been termed the Global Imperative--the process by which improving technology seems to make the world smaller, making known regions easier to reach and information and goods easier to exchange. The beginnings of this process date to the earliest humans.[5] In this respect, the Scandinavians were no different than their neighbors, except that for a period of a few hundred years they were more efficient owing to the growth of shipping technology in Scandinavia itself.

This process of assimilation can be seen in three ways. There was a political expansion, an economic expansion, and an influx of new settlers. The first was a military expansion that was effective enough to place the leading Scandinavian Vikings, a small, warrior aristocracy, in charge of key positions in certain realms, particularly in Scotland, Ireland, and eastern England, where they came to rule the Danelaw, made up of the former kingdom of Northumbria and centered on York. This was a take-over at the top of society, and probably affected the common

[5] Robert P. Clark, *The Global Imperative* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 16-19, 51-67.

people very little in most cases, excepting that they were often obliged to participate in the wars of these upper-class gentlemen, just as they had been under their prior masters. The economic expansion involved an enhanced role in local trade and probably manufacturing. Prior contacts existed before the arrival of these settlers, and the Scandinavians provided a strong stimulus for local economies. They are credited with the foundation of several cities, notably Dublin and others in Ireland, and the take-over and expansion of existing cities elsewhere, as in York.[6] The initial profits from such ventures went to these adventurers and their leaders, but in time the cities that they established, or those established as a defensive frontier against them, began to bring prosperity to the regions they were in. The least obvious form of expansion is the large influx of settlers to the British Isles that followed initial conquest or expansion into the new realms. These people have left few traces in the historical and archaeological records, but they can be seen in a dim light if they are looked for. Most knowledge concerning them comes from the study of names—names given to towns and villages, and also to bodies of water and fields of trees or open pastures. In most cases, this movement was reasonably peaceful and probably represented a steady trickle rather than a giant flood, and for these reasons it has escaped the watchful eyes of the medieval chroniclers. These people assimilated themselves to the local society relatively quickly and immersed themselves into local trades, even as they brought with them new ideas from their old homelands. Existence in the new lands was often a lot of give and take with the locals, and may have only been vaguely related to the reasons that the warrior elite had emigrated.

[6] They are also credited with the foundation of Russia, although this is a topic of controversy particularly among Slavic scholars. For the Vikings in the East, see Simon Franklin and Jonathan Shepard, *The Emergence of Rus 750-1200* (London and New York: Longman, 1996). For a thorough and balanced discussion of this controversy, see Excursis 2 in Mykhailo Hrushevsky, *History of Ukraine-Rus.* Vol. I (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1997), 472-492.

The Current Project

This paper will study the relationship of the Scandinavians during the so-called Viking Age with the inhabitants of Britain in a particular region. This region is one that I have dubbed the Eastern Irish Sea Region. Past studies[7] have long ago coined terms such as the "Irish Sea Province" about the area in which I am working, but these studies also include material drawn to a larger or smaller degree from Ireland and usually include much material from Scotland. The term "Province" likewise suggests a type of political hegemony that was not usually present. Ireland is not the area of focus in this study, and Irish material (except for a portion on Viking Dublin) will be minimal and seldom used except by way of comparison. The Eastern Irish Sea Region is one that is defined in modern parlance as consisting of the recent provinces of Cumberland (including modern Cumbria), Westmorland, Lancashire-North-of-the-Sands, Galloway and Dumfriesshire in southwestern Scotland, and the Isle of Man, which is clearly visible from the Cumbrian shoreline. In visualizing this region, it is necessary to rid oneself of the notion that the current political boundaries held any meaning to the peoples of earlier centuries. The concept of a border between England and Scotland is a more modern construct, not something that existed in any sense at all before the tenth century. To the people of the time, as will be demonstrated in chapter one, this region was a frontier zone, peripheral in some sense to the larger realms of England or Scotland, but distinct from them. The trouble with this variety of study is that most of the sources that are available to study relate to one of these larger regions. Accordingly, it will be necessary to call upon these sources as a way of illuminating the regions in the general vicinity, and suggesting that things may have been similar in one or more

[7] For instance, Leslie Alcock, "Was there an Irish Sea culture-province in the Dark Ages?" in *The Irish Sea Province in Archaeology and History*, ed. Donald Moore (Cardiff: Cambrian Archaeological Association, 1970), 55-65.

regions of the Eastern Irish Sea Region. It is not possible to try to write a comprehensive history that covers all parts of this region at all times simultaneously.

Nor is the focus on writing a comprehensive history of the region, but rather on establishing that the Scandinavians colonized the area, and did so more or less peacefully in most cases. By using a variety of avenues of inquiry, including toponymic evidence, archaeological materials, historical sources, comparative analysis, and geographical circumstance, it will be shown that the region of the Eastern Irish Sea was a vital link in a chain of trade that was located at the approximate half-way point between York and Dublin. It was an area that often served as a conduit for trade goods between the two regions and to the outside regions beyond. The local people, termed "Cumbrian" for lack of a better term, also had a vibrant although now mostly lost culture that was merged with that of the incoming Scandinavian settlers. These people had a unique language and probably are responsible, along with the Norwegian settlers, for the creation of several unique styles of artifacts that have no known parallels outside of this region. The two groups may also have partnered in another endeavor: that of smelting iron in a region of the Esk River valley and elsewhere, producing iron and selling or trading this iron for material gain. This could be seen as their contribution to the trading network that stretched between York and Dublin, and through them, to the outside world beyond.

Vikings: A Most Vile People?

> And in his days for the first time there came three ships of Northmen (to Portland) and then the reeve rode to them and wished to force them to the king's residence, for he did not know what they were; and they slew him. Those were the first ships of the Danish men which came to the land of the English.[8]

[8] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, edited and translated by Dorothy Whitelock (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1961), sub anno 789 (787 in another version of the original text).

This entry from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* might well be said to be the event that ushered in the Viking Age in England. It is unfortunate that it has served as the basis for historic writing concerning the Scandinavians since its own time. The Viking Age in the popular imagination today is an age where chaos ruled supreme, violence dotted the land unchecked, and life was terrifying and short. The Vikings themselves are perhaps thought of as violent psychopaths who were the bringers of terror wherever their ships were able to take them. This impression ultimately comes not from the more sober writers of the chronicles written throughout Western Europe as much as it does from less biased contemporary and later writers. The chronicler Æthelweard, for instance, described them as *plebs spurcissima* ("that very foul people") as well as by other pejorative, unflattering epithets.[9] Other writers, from Asser to William of Malmesbury, frequently amended these texts to vilify the Vikings or to add particularly lurid details to it, although some of these writers lived centuries later.[10] While acts of violence committed by Vikings are well-documented and beyond doubt, it is hardly reasonable to assume that they alone committed these acts, or even that their acts of violence were more frequent than those already seen in Christian Europe. Warfare was endemic in all regions, and piracy was a way to achieve a quick gain. Some of the richest pickings were the monasteries, storehouses of wealth that were poorly defended. The looting of these monasteries was well known before the Viking period, particularly in Ireland, where over thirty of these monastery sackings were

[9] R.I. Page, *'A Most Vile People': Early English Historians on the Vikings* (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1987), 3; *The Chronicle of Æthelweard*, ed. A. Campbell (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1962), 42.
[10] Page, 10-30.

recorded before the first Viking raid.[11] This is not something that many medieval writers chose to emphasize.[12]

Not surprisingly, in the Vikings' own records of themselves (where these exist) and later literature they do not portray themselves in this negative of a light. Their runic inscriptions, for example, seem to show that they believed themselves to be in some sense self-consciously heroic. Virtues praised are heroic ones: valor, endurance, liberality, loyalty and respect for honor. Deeds of shame are treachery to comrades or breach of trust.[13] One person's view of piracy might be seen by another as a voyage of merchants. In some ways this is a distinction without a difference. As the Belgian historian Henri Pirenne once wrote, "The Vikings, in fact, were pirates, and piracy is the first stage of commerce."[14] Some of this type of thinking can be seen in the Norse sources themselves. *Egil's Saga* states that "Bjorn Brynjolfsson was…a great seafarer. He divided his time between Viking raids and trading voyages."[15]

Historians like Pirenne and Georges Duby posited a more nuanced new role for the Vikings in the twentieth century. Duby suggested that the attacks by the Danes against targets in most regions of France were overstated, noting that most of the larger towns never fell to assault from the Danes. In fact, people brought their capital into the cities seeking refuge, and began massive construction projects of Church cathedrals and town defenses, creating a general economic boom. The Scandinavians, while destructive in the short term, actually served as a

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[11] David M. Wilson and Else Roesdahl, "What the Vikings Meant to Europe," in *The Source of Liberty: The Nordic Contribution to Europe,* ed. Svenlof Karlsson (Stockholm: The Nordic Council, 1992), 39-40.
[12] More recent writers, however, have studied these lootings. A.T. Lucas, "The Plundering and Burning of Churches in Ireland, 7th to 16th Century," in *North Munster Studies,* ed. Etienne Rynne (Limerick: The Thomond Archaeological Society, 1967), 172-229.
[13] Page, 4-5.
[14] Henri Pirenne, *Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1937), 22.
[15] *Egil's Saga,* translated by Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), 81.

catalyst for economic growth.[16] "In most regions it is doubtful" he continued, "whether these incursions caused by pagans caused much more material damage than was committed annually by continuing rivalries among Christian magnates."[17]

A balanced, synthesized approach is what is needed for the understanding of the Vikings. While the work of historians like Duby is admirable, there are still more recent trends that are incorporated in scholarly thought today, and these will be addressed to some degree in this work. Swedish archaeologist Björn Myhre has proposed an almost political agenda for the Viking expansion, while others, such as Richard Hodges, have found alternate causes for the Viking expansion that may be at least as valid as those proposed before.[18] This paper will incorporate a mixture of old and new scholarship, and will postulate that the reasons for the Viking expansion are more complex than has previously been assumed. The main focus of the paper, however, will be to postulate what may have taken place in the Eastern Irish Sea Region. Little is written about this time period and this region generally. This paper will postulate, based upon trade routes and parallel examples, how the region may have been colonized and controlled. It will also address the contributions of the Scandinavians to the regional economy. Their role may have been more than simply catalysts; they may have had a hand in production.

Methodology

It is first necessary to establish the terminology that will be used in this work. The term "Viking" is a somewhat misleading term, and it is one that carries with it a good deal of cultural baggage. It has been used up until this point in this study because it is such a culturally understood term in the world today, but its exact meaning and origin are the subject of much

[16] Georges Duby, *The Early Growth of the European Economy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), 114-116.
[17] Duby, 117.
[18] Both of these writers and their hypotheses will be addressed further in Chapter 2.

debate.[19] The use of the term is acceptable in this context providing that it is understood that the term really means a Scandinavian who participated in this settlement process, which includes raiders who settled down as well as immigrants who came peacefully. As a general rule, this paper will follow with the usage of the term "Scandinavian" except when a specific nationality or region is known and is under discussion. Similarly, the Eastern Irish Sea Region is meant to understand the modern regions of northwestern England, southwestern Scotland, and the Isle of Man. A more precise definition is given in the first chapter, but it should be understood that the region was in many respects a frontier that did not seem to have any borders, including coastline, that are today in any way obvious. Further, it did not exist in a vacuum of either space or time. It influenced and was influenced by the outside world, and can be expected to have changed over time. Just as the Viking Age is part of a larger Scandinavian and European history, the history of the Scandinavians in the Eastern Irish Sea Region is but one chapter of the larger history of the region.

The project is divided into five chapters. Each of these chapters is unique and can stand alone, but it is intended that they be seen together as a whole. Each details a different kind of study that is aimed at showing the trajectory of the whole. The first chapter deals with geography, but it addresses more than simply the land formations that are encountered in this region. The chapter poses a number of interesting questions, such as why Scandinavia during this period was different from the rest of Europe, and what type of hybrid culture developed with their arrival on the scene in Britain. How they arrived at all is dealt with, and there is persuasive evidence of a gradual progression from the north further into the Scottish Isles and finally into the region under discussion. Whenever possible, primary sources are referenced, helping to

[19] Angelo Forte, Richard Oram and Frederick Pedersen, *Viking Empires* (Cambridge: University Press, 2005), 3-4; F.J. Byrne, "The Viking Age," in *A New History of Ireland I: Prehistoric and Early Ireland*, ed. Dáibhi Ó Cróinin (Oxford: University Press, 2005), 618 (note).

show a contemporary view of the places encountered. The geography of the Scottish Isles is given by way of reference suggesting a common culture between the study area and the island dwellers. What this culture should be called is less clear. This region gave rise to a certain stock of people who are not Anglo-Saxon, Scandinavian, or Celtic but rather a mixture of all of these groups. They may be called Hiberno-Norse or *Gall-Gaidhil*, but it is best that they are simply termed "Cumbrian". In a later chapter the former terms are explored, and it is seen that they may not be entirely accurate. Cumbrian is a name that could refer to an inhabitant of northwestern England, southern Scotland, or even to Scottish Islanders and Manxmen, since all shared a similar maritime culture and climate and could move easily about the coastline.

The second chapter addresses a multitude of topics including migration theory and how it functioned in practice with the settlement of the *germani* in continental Europe and particularly on the British Isles. There are numerous historiographical issues associated with them generally and these are addressed to a degree in the chapter. It also introduces a model that I have created for migratory peoples. The latter portion of the chapter examines the causes of the Viking expansion and the Viking Age generally, but focuses on the north and northwest rather than on the better recorded events taking place in southern and eastern England. There is an examination of the York-Dublin axis, that is, the two Scandinavian kingdoms and their economic prowess in the north of Britain. While infrequently mentioned in the Wessex-based sources in any positive light, in reality these areas constituted kingdoms in their own right and for a time were joined together as one. The economic importance of the two, particularly Dublin and its lucrative slave-trade, is of great importance. Finally, the Eastern Irish Sea Region is brought into play and discussed in terms of its unique role as a middle area between these two kingdoms.

The third chapter examines the toponymic evidence that is often cited in establishing the presence of Scandinavians in the area. The chapter begins with a general discussion of how this study itself works, as well as its importance and pitfalls. Certain words that appear are typically associated with Scandinavian settlers, like *–by, -þorp, ðveit -staðir,* and *bolstaðir*. These words appear as parts of compounds and signify property. There is in addition a discussion of current issues of interpretation of this information, and the position assumed is one of caution, especially with regards to the dates and numbers that this information is meant to establish. The chapter also explores another inescapable fact for the north of England—the fact that the area was once an area that was inhabited and controlled by Celtic peoples, who have left a large stamp of influence upon the local place-names. The Celtic kingdom of Rheged is important, since it is located in the region and its own history is important for the understanding of the later, Anglo-Scandinavian history. The place-names that the Celts left are often found mixed with those of the Saxons and Scandinavians; they became a common hybrid in the area that suggests acculturation and changes in habitation patterns. The study of these place-names, along with a comparison of statuary, is used as a baseline for establishing that a similar culture existed for different areas of the Eastern Irish Sea region, although the boundary between England and Scotland was highly fluid. The chapter concludes with an examination of several charters that suggest incoming Scandinavians, if they were wealthy enough, they may have actually purchased land from the local lords rather than simply taking it by force. The study finds evidence of both a small military elite and a larger folk migration.

The fourth chapter examines the archaeological evidence available for the Scandinavian presence in northern Britain, particularly in the Eastern Irish Sea Region. Instead of a purely traditional view, it takes the approach that too much emphasis is usually placed on how

“Scandinavian” certain recovered objects appear in the record, and that this has distorted the overall picture of settlement. Scandinavian burials are usually associated with certain markers, such as burial mounds with certain types of grave goods. Scandinavian burials of the Viking Age have regional but unpredictable patterns, so why should Scandinavian graves in Britain appear in any standardized manner? There are many similar graves that are termed Anglo-Saxon, and in some cases these are not significantly different. Many records of old archaeological excavations are missing or otherwise of dubious value, and all of this leads to the suggestion that some particularly mundane graves have probably been misidentified or overlooked. This would in turn suggest that many of the common graves could be Scandinavian while they had in the past previously been assumed to have been Anglo-Saxon. Northern England has the most graves classified as Scandinavian, and these are viewed in some detail. The Isle of Man also provides ample burial evidence for this region, but southwestern Scotland is considerably lacking in physical burial remains. Galloway does have the excavated remains of the Whithorn monastic community, which shows some Scandinavian artifacts and evidence of trade. The study also incorporates evidence of a new major burial, at Cumwhitton, that was discovered in 2004. After the evidence found in burials, further evidence discovered in northwestern England is introduced, namely items that are stray finds that are generally associated with Scandinavian settlers and, in some cases, perhaps with the native Cumbrian culture that developed under Scandinavian influence, as in the case of the Flusco Pike and the “near Penrith” brooch, works of art that are so unusual as to defy explanation as to their actual use. Coin hoards are likewise given consideration, since many have been discovered in northern England and on the Isle of Man, including a discovery made just a few years ago at Glenfaba. It is a pity that the great Saxon hoard discovered in 2009 has not been fully published, nor is it

Scandinavian, since this would doubtless be of considerable interest to Scandinavian settlement studies.[20] There are a number of hoards of considerable size known, and two of these, the Halton and Cuerdale hoards, are the most important. The Cuerdale hoard is particularly large, and can be seen to be on a particularly advantageous route, sitting almost precisely on point between Scandinavian York and Dublin. Similar but smaller hoards on Man have also been found. Finally, the chapter details the unique sculpture of the region, which is Anglo-Saxon and Christian in form but thoroughly Scandinavian is style and motifs. The largest and most obvious example is the Gosforth Cross. But there are other examples of note, including the unique "hogback" monuments, which are mostly pagan Scandinavian in theme, and are not located to any extent outside of this particular region. They almost certainly show another expression of the form in which the two cultures merged to form a new, Cumbrian-Scandinavian culture in the region.

The fifth and final chapter establishes the use of iron during Scandinavia and Britain during the Iron Age. Although the technology of iron was known, it was nonetheless slower in arriving at the more under-populated and remote areas making up the Eastern Irish Sea Region. The Roman invasion of Britain, while it did little to conquer these northern reaches, nonetheless found that the region already possessed a series of fortresses (termed *oppida* on the continent) and already possessed the technology of iron smelting. Further, it establishes that smelting sites were known from the early centuries AD, even though it cannot establish any continuity of the sites.

A more controversial aspect of the chapter deals with a project called SMELT. SMELT was developed by an experimental archaeologist named Carl Blair with the intention of learning

[20] BBC News webpage, "Huge Anglo-Saxon gold hoard found." http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/staffordshire/8272058.stm (Accessed Septermber 24, 2009).

how Iron Age peoples built furnaces and smelted iron with them. Replica furnaces have successfully been reproduced and iron successfully produced by Blair and others. Related to SMELT is the project site of Low Birker, located in Eskdale, near the town of Boot, Cumbria. This is a project that was developed under the aegis of SMELT and one which showed considerable promise of uncovering a large, Viking Age smelting operation in the region. It is a project that this author too participated in during the 2002 field session, and believed would produce substantial evidence of a large presence of Scandinavians in the region, who possibly conquered the local society at the highest levels and then interacted with the locals to produce iron, probably assuming command of an existing operation. The shear volume postulated was far too great for local use, and would thus have been bartered or sold for economic gain. The project has not been completed and none of the data from it has been published. It is hasty to draw conclusions from this, but it does not now appear that the site can be completely substantiated, for reasons that will be more thoroughly discussed in the fifth chapter of this project. Nevertheless, there are a few things located on site which suggest both iron smelting and habitation. It is also strongly suspected, based upon place-name evidence, that the local lords who assumed command during the tenth century, at the latest, were probably of Scandinavian origin or heritage.

The smelting of iron in the region is historically documented, at least from the thirteenth century, and it is well known that the area of Furness, Cumbria, had a substantial output of iron during the Industrial Revolution. It is almost inconceivable that this was unknown in some way to people in the Viking period, since it was known both before and after. But the scale of the operations was probably small. Finally, the region of Cumbria was undoubtedly an area in transition, a frontier region that was likely in the process of incorporation into a larger realm in

the area, of which there were several competitors. It was most probably allied in a loose sense to the Irish Sea Norse and the Scandinavian Vikings of York. It did have and retained an independent spirit and seems to have resisted incorporation into any entity, until it was finally conquered by William Rufus in 1092. The chapter also examines, by way of analogy, the regions of Scania and Thy in Denmark that show some similarities with respect to incorporation into the kingdom of the Danes. The site at Low Birker and the surrounding region may have come to be controlled by the Danes or the Norwegians in a similar manner, although it did not come to be incorporated into any Scandinavian kingdom. The chapter concludes with a final evaluation of the evidence for iron smelting in the region, and postulates that such activity probably existed on a smaller scale than was envisioned by Blair. The evidence available today does not truly make a definitive conclusion possible.

Chapter One

The Function and Role of Geography

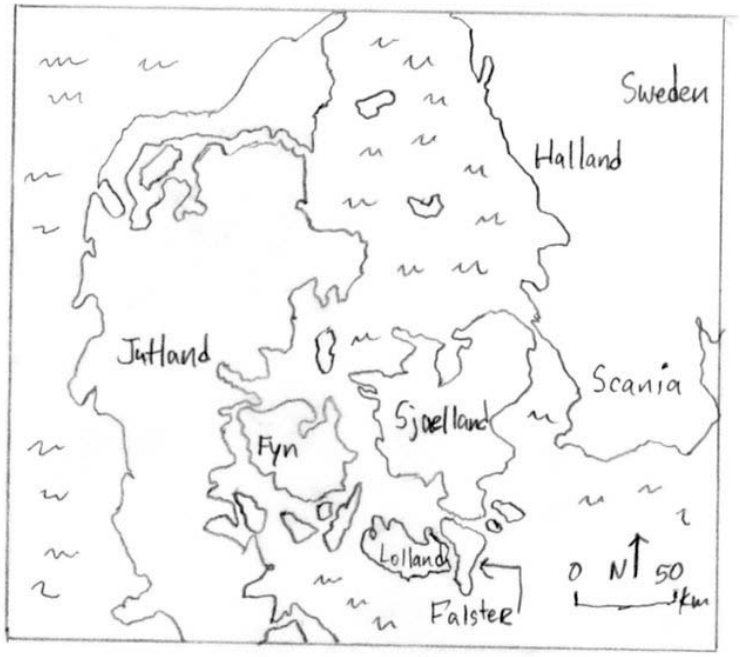
The Function and Role of Geography

The role of geography is of fundamental importance in understanding the Scandinavian experience and the role of the Scandinavians concerning the cultures with which they came into contact. The relationship between humans and geography is a symbiotic one, wherein each partner affects the other greatly. The landscape itself is continually influenced by the people, who organize and use the resources which may dominate the appearance of the landscape for centuries. But mankind is likewise influenced by the geology of the regions he inhabits—by the landforms, climate, hydrology, and soil conditions of the region. Scandinavia is a region of considerable diversity in this regard. The weather in the west of Scandinavia is wetter generally, but milder. In the east it is colder in the winter and hotter in the summer, with some areas, particularly in Denmark, much more arable than others. The sandy soil and preponderance of lakes make central and northern Sweden much more difficult to farm. All of this influences where people live, as well as what and how much they can grow, what types of trees are common in the region, and which animals are common to the area.[21]

Of particular importance to this study are the realms of Norway and Denmark, since the majority of the Scandinavian settlers in Britain came ultimately from one of these two regions. Norway has been gifted with a geomorphic coastline that is varied and unique in nature. Most spectacular is the long fjord coast with its protective archipelago and its numerous fjords, some of which cut deeply into the country. The outer fjords have a long tradition of fishing, while the central and inner parts of the fjord landscape have a long tradition of mixed farming—arable mixed with cattle, while the same is true of Vestlandet.[22] The landscape in fact bears a strong

[21] Ulf Sporrong, "The Scandinavian landscape and its resources," in *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia Vol. 1 Prehistory to 1520*, ed. Knut Helle (Cambridge: University Press, 2003), 38-42.
[22] Sporrong, 36.

resemblance to that of Shetland, Orkney and elsewhere—all areas that were colonized during the Viking Age.



Map 1. Iron Age Denmark. Drawing by Russ Goodrich.

Denmark is a realm of different makeup from that of Norway. Northwest Denmark, including Halland, has a coast characterized by sand dunes which in some places extend far inland. Neither farming nor animal husbandry amounts to much in these regions, but fishing is still important. Further south, the features of Denmark's west coast bear striking resemblance to the continental coasts of the south. Generally, the coasts of Denmark and neighboring Scania (Skåne) have accumulations of glacial deposits which produce flat coasts without archipelagos, while in the northwest, particularly around Jylland, navigation has always been perilous.[23] Denmark, however, is mainly a string of islands. Apart from the Jutland peninsula, it consists mainly of four large islands named Sjælland, Fyn, Lolland, and Falster, and some four hundred seventy smaller islands that form an archipelago. During the Viking Age and before, this region (sometimes called Old Denmark) included the provinces of Halland and Scania in southeastern

[23] Sporrong, 36-37.

Sweden, as well as the territory above the Eider River, including Schleswig-Holstein, now located in northern Germany.[24]

To understand the role of the Vikings in this process is to understand the Scandinavian maritime culture and expansion. Because of these islands, fjords, and other coastal features, their cultural milieu was one in which the sea was afforded prime importance. Throughout the Northern world, the sea was as much a means of transport and communication as it was a natural barrier. The realms of Scandinavia, the Scottish Isles, and northern Britain were controlled by a people whose outlook was primarily seaward rather than land-based. Control of the sea could mean control of the realms in it and beyond it, and with this would come wealth and political power. Just as the Scandinavians looked to the sea as a means of transport and expansion, they looked to the waters as a method of trade and communication. As a migratory and sea-going people, they could do no less.

Scandinavia was, from ancient times, relatively isolated from the bulk of mainland Europe. Most of the societies that grew up on mainland Europe were the heirs of the Roman Empire and its cultural and political structures, its system of roads, and its Christian heritage. But in the northern reaches of Britain and in Scandinavia, this cultural heritage was slower in arriving and in some places made up only a very thin veneer on the larger culture.[25] Being free from Roman domination if not completely from influence, Scandinavia developed in its own unique way, and this development was not uniform even within Scandinavia itself. Sweden was the slowest region to develop into a central monarchy, and its people generally tended to look eastward into what is now Ukraine, Russia, and beyond. The Danish kingdom, based on its

[24] Tina L. Thurston, "The Barren and the Fertile, Central and Local Intensification Strategies Across Variable Landscapes," in *Agricultural Strategies*, ed. Joyce Marcus and Charles Stanish (Los Angeles: Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, 2006), 137.

[25] These contacts, no matter how remote, existed from at least as early as the first century in Scandinavia. Angelo Forte, Richard Oram, and Frederik Pedersen, *Viking Empires* (Cambridge: University Press, 2005), 7-39.

islands, was faster to develop. The country of Norway, which literally means "North Way," was essentially a coastal plain that led to the northern hunting grounds. It was not united in any political sense before the time of Harald Fairhair (ruled *circa* 890-930). Further, to move by land east into Sweden was difficult owing to the presence of the Kjølen mountains which did and do form a significant barrier; one that was far greater than the ocean to the inhabitants of this country.[26] Both the Danes and Norwegians could easily reach Britain by boat. The latter group most likely did so first, and so it is with them that it is best to begin.

Island Hopping from Norway to Britain

From Norway, most of the Scottish islands were within easy reach. Of these islands, the Shetland chain arguably was of the greatest importance to the Viking voyager, if not to the settler. Shetland lies less than 500 km west of Bergen, and might be reached in twenty-four hours with a good wind and in good weather. From Shetland, it was possible to quickly reach the Orkneys, Hebrides, or the Scottish mainland. References in the *Orkneyinga Saga* frequently tell of people stopping over in Shetland while going to another place, or being forced to remain there due to inclement weather. Further, an approach waterway into Bergen, called Hjaltefjord (O.N. *Hjaltland*, "Shetland") demonstrates the prominence of this particular route.[27]

The prevailing winds were another important advantage when sailing west from Norway. In the springtime, the prevailing winds are the easterlies, so that those living to the east of Britain could sail west in the summer, then return home in the autumn with the prevailing westerly winds. That this contact took place before the formal beginning of the Viking Age is almost a certainty. There are two points of evidence to support this claim. First, there is the presence of

[26] The Norwegian heritage of boat-building and by implication water travel is very old. There are no less than thirty-six stone-age rock carvings depicting Norwegian boats, mostly in the north of Norway. A.W. Brøgger and Haakon Shetelig, *The Viking Ships: Their Ancestry and Evolution* (Oslo: Dreyers Forlag, 1951), 13-25.
[27] Barbara Crawford, *Scandinavian Scotland* (Leicester: University Press, 1987), 13.

Norwegian reindeer antler being made into combs by the Picts. The Picts preceded the Vikings as inhabitants of northern Scotland, and possessed a distinct style of comb which is clearly distinguishable from the Norwegian style.[28] The reindeer antler, however, is not native to Scotland but to northern Scandinavia, suggesting it may have been imported at some earlier date.[29] Second, there is evidence from the Shetland and Orkney islands that the Norwegians may have arrived as pirates and even settlers at a much earlier date than has generally been put forward. This evidence comes from Irish chronicles and from the study of Norwegian place-names that are present on Orkney and Shetland, and they can push the contact back as much as two centuries, to the late sixth century.[30] This date is not one accepted by everyone, although it is based on old Irish sources suggesting a raid on the island of Eigg in 617 in which Donnán of Eigg and many of his fellow monks were slain by sea-raiders. There are some historiographical problems with the story, and current thinking tends to attribute this rather to internecine warfare among the Celts in the west.[31] Even if the current interpretation is correct, given the Norwegian history of boat building and the trading of reindeer antler, it is still very probable that initial contact occurred at some date before the monastic chroniclers began to record mention of Viking raids. However, initial contact and settlement need not be synonymous.

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[28] James Graham-Campbell and Colleen E. Batey, *Vikings in Scotland, an Archaeological Survey* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1998), 8.
[29] Graham-Campbell and Batey, 23.
[30] Alf Sommerfelt, "On the Norse Form of the Name of the Picts and the Date of the First Norse Raids on Scotland," *Lochlann* 1 (1958): 219-222.
[31] James H. Barrett, "Culture Contact in Viking Age Scotland," in *Contact, Continuity and Collapse: The Norse Colonization of the North Atlantic*, ed. James H. Barrett (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2003), 75. This is a historiographical matter of no small dispute. Barrett explores this issue further, incorporating the research of specific scholars in various fields of linguistics and archaeology into his analysis, and uses it to show that contact may have been somewhat later. This complex series of studies leads to what he considers to be a reliable date, *circa* 825, that Scandinavian contact began, based mostly on linguistic grounds.

To the sailors who made these voyages, mankind's dependencies on the elements of wind and water were obvious, as is sometimes seen in the saga writings, such as this one from the *Orkneyinga Saga:*

> Earl Rognvald and his men came to the conclusion that they ought to wait until the spring tide coincided with an easterly wind, for in those conditions it is virtually impossible to go between Westray and Mainland, though with the wind easterly one can sail from Shetland to Westray.[32]

This wind factor provides further evidence that cultural contact between Britain and Norway in its earliest manifestation probably began from the east; since with these prevailing winds it was not necessary to winter in a strange territory. While the beginning date of these early contacts is in dispute, later sources suggest that they still happened occasionally although they were rare enough to be seen as unusual. One example comes from a written account of a Norwegian named Othere describing some of his voyages, including his trip south to visit King Alfred.[33] This demonstrates clearly that, at this time in the ninth-century, the Norwegians clearly had already mastered the art of sailing and were interested in venturing into other realms, both for the purposes of exploration and for profit.

Sea Routes to Britain

It is very probable that despite the ability of the navigators to sail without mechanical assistance they had set ideas of how to sail from one area to another.[34] When sailing south to Britain, it can be seen clearly that many of the areas and stopping points along the way were known to the Scandinavians based upon their place names, especially in Scotland. Many names

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[32] *Orkneyinga Saga,* translated by Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards (London: The Hogarth Press, 1978), 120-121.
[33] *Two Voyagers at the Court of King Alfred,* ed. Niels Lund (York: William Sessions Ltd., 1984).
[34] That the Scandinavian sailors were able to sail using dead reckoning has been well established, but seems reasonably certain that they also possessed devices which could aid in naviagation. These were marked wheels that would float in water and fluctuate with latitude. Physical evidence is somewhat fragmentary, but a nearly complete example was discovered in Poland in 2002. Blazej M. Stanislawski, "The wooden disc from Wolin." *Viking Heritage* 2 (2002): 10-11.

incorporate the Norse term -*skip* ("ship"). Some examples are Skippie Geo (O.N. *skipa-gjá* "ships' inlet") in Caithness and in Orkney; Skipness in Argyll; Skiport in Uist; Port Sgibinis in Tiree and Colonsay; and Loch Long in Argyll was called *Skipa-fjörđr* ("ship fjord" or "ship bay") by the Norwegians.[35] Some place names betray even greater detail, suggesting certain types of vessels. Snekkerem in Shetland can be likened to O.N. *snekkja* ("longship"), and there other examples of place names suggesting possible types of other boats with other uses, which run the gamut from small fishing vessels to larger merchant and transport vessels.[36]

From Norway, the Atlantic island chains are perhaps best thought of as stepping stones to the southern lands. Once the voyagers had reached Shetland, they could sail within sight of land south-west all the way to Ireland and the Irish Sea, which in turn opened up southern Scotland, northern England and the Midlands, and Wales. In turn, these regions could serve as starting points for voyages to western England, Francia, and continental Europe, and eventually the voyager could reach the Mediterranean Sea. This route in its earlier stages is the same route undertaken by *Odin's Raven*, a replica ship that set sail from Trondheim for the Isle of Man in 1979.[37] It would have been safer to sail down the western side of Shetland owing to the heavy and persistent sea-fogs of the eastern side, and the dangerous waters off the southern tip of Shetland known as the *dynrøst*, a type of whirlpool known from saga sources.[38] It is known from the *Orkneyinga Saga* that when Earl Erlend of Orkney and Swein Asleifsson were sailing from Shetland to Orkney that they ran into "dangerous tidal currents and fierce winds at Sumburgh Roost" which separated the ships.[39] Another source records that, in 1248, Harold

[35] Crawford, 14.
[36] John Stewart, "Shetland Farm Names," in *The Fourth Viking Congress*, ed. Alan Small (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), 262; Crawford, 14-15.
[37] Alan Binns, *Viking Voyagers, then and now* (London: Heinemann, 1980), 83.
[38] Crawford, 19.
[39] *Orkneyinga Saga*, 172.

Olafsson, King of Man, and his wife Cecilia were drowned sailing from Norway back to Man: "And it is the belief of most men that they were lost south of Shetland in *Dynrøst;* because wreckage of the ship was thrown up on Shetland from the south."[40]

An important island about midway between Shetland the northernmost of the Orkney range is the island known as Fair Isle, which is a useful navigational aid since its cliffs can be seen from both Shetland and from North Ronaldsay, and it also had an important beacon mentioned numerous times in *Orkneyinga Saga*. Orkney itself is an archipelago of islands which provide excellent routes for travel as well as cover; the Scapa Flow is an almost inland sea providing protection for fleets and opening into the Pentland Firth, the main shipping route around northern Britain. These islands became the strongest power center for the west Norse dynasties, and it is from their perspective that the Hebrides get their name of *Suđreyjar* (southern islands) and the earls' possessions on the mainland of Scotland beyond Caithness were called *Suđrland,* or Sutherland.[41] This is also the origin of the name Sodor in the diocesan title Sodor and Man.[42]

Map 2. Orkney Islands. Drawn by Russ Goodrich.

[40] *The Saga of Hacon, Hacon's Son,* translated by Sir G.W. Dasent. In *Icelandic Sagas and other Historical Documents relating to the Settlements and Descents of the Northmen on the British Isles,* IV (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1894), 267-268.
[41] This is an oft-repeated claim, that the northernmost portion of Scotland is called 'southern' from the perspective of Norway and the Orkney Isles, and it is still accepted today. For a current discussion, see Jonathan Clements, *A Brief History of the Vikings* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2006), 217.
[42] G.W.S. Barrow, *Kingship and Unity, Scotland 1000-1306* (London: Edward Arnold, 1981), 106.

The Pentland Firth divided the two halves of the Orkney Earls' dominions. It was named thus by the Scandinavians after the Picts who lived in the area, and its name may have be of considerable antiquity; possibly it was based on a name which predates the Viking exploration of this region, probably sometime between 600 and 800.[43] The *Historia Norwegie* of the twelfth-century also refers to this area, and spells out an explicit danger:

> At this period these islands were not called the Orkneys but rather Pentland, so that the sea which separates the islands from Scotland is still known by the natives as the Pentland Firth; here is the most gigantic of all whirlpools, which draws in and swallows the stoutest vessels at ebb-tide, and at high-tide spews up and disgorges their wreckage.[44]

This is the *Swelchie,* a word of unusual origin, very roughly related to Old Norse verb *svelgr* ("to swallow"), and located near the isle of Stroma. The sagas mention this area a number of times, including this one, wherein Earl Hakon of Lade was probably lost in 1029:

> He sailed finally, but the short and long of that voyage is that the ship went down with all on board. Some say that the ship had been seen in the evening north of Caithness in a bad storm, with the wind blowing out of the Pentland Firth. Those who believe this say that the ship probably got caught in the "Swelchie". So much is sure, that Earl Hakon was lost at sea with all aboard that ship.[45]

The Route to the Hebrides and beyond

Map 3. The Inner and Outer Hebrides.
Drawing by Russ Goodrich

From the Orkneys, the traveler wishing to reach the Hebrides and Ireland had two options. One was to sail west around Cape Wrath to reach the northern Hebrides, which required the traveler to brave an exposed and stormy patch of open ocean, with no relief at all from the

[43] Crawford, 21. On the earlier date, see above in note 10.
[44] *Historia Norwegie.* Edited by Inger Ekrem and Lars Boje Mortensen (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculum Press, 2003), 65.
[45] Snorri Sturluson, *St. Olaf's Saga* in *Heimskringla,* translated by Lee M. Hollander (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1964), 479-480.

strong Atlantic gales. To reach the southern Hebrides and Ireland much more directly, a better route was to sail down the east side of Caithness into the Moray Firth and thus to the Great Glen, a cleft which divides northern Scotland in two and which had provided relatively easy passage for man since prehistoric times.[46] The area of the Great Glen is also mentioned in Adomnan's *Life of Columba*, wherein the saint appears to utilize this very same route and the lochs of Lochy and Ness in his travels to visit Brude, the Pictish king. Adomnan's account also suggests the portaging of the boat, for which there is also ample evidence dating back several millennia.[47] This is evidence establishing that the portaging of boats was common practice in this region, even before the Vikings, who certainly would have also used this method of transport when it was useful for them to do so. A few short portages would then allow the voyager to sail out the Firth of Lorne and into the Irish Sea.

The portaging of ships can be seen to have been a relatively common occurrence, given the relatively light weight of many of the ships and boats. It can also be seen in toponymic and some saga evidence as well, particularly in regards to the Scottish Isles. Wherever the Old Norse element *eiđ* can be traced, it is certain evidence that the area was once used as a portage,[48] and the Gaelic equivalent is Tarbert (*tairm-bert* meaning "over bringing").[49] Likewise, it is recounted in *Orkneyinga Saga* that King Magnus Barelegs, when setting sail for Norway, sets out across a peninsula that "juts out from the west of Scotland, and the isthmus connecting it to the mainland is so narrow that ships are regularly hauled across."[50] Snorri relates a similar story in his *Saga of Magnus Barelegs*, where he relates that warships were often dragged across

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[46] Barrow, 105. See also Sir Lindsay Scott, "The colonisation of Scotland in the second millennium B.C." *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* New Series 17 (1951): 34.
[47] *Adomnan's Life of Columba* ed. Alan Orr Anderson and Marjorie Ogilvie Anderson (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1961), 82-83; Scott, 34.
[48] Crawford, 24.
[49] Crawford, 24.
[50] *Orkneyinga Saga*, 81.

Kintyre.[51] As a final piece of evidence, at a place called Tarbert, some sixty of King Hakon's warships in 1263 were hauled across to ravage Loch Lomondside, where they "wasted with fire and sword" and "wrought there the greatest mischief."[52]

From the Hebrides, there are a number of navigable routes to the south. One in particular is the sound between Islay and Jura, which is the route mentioned as being utilized by the semi-legendary figure Ragnar Loðbroc, as told in Book Nine of the works of Saxo Grammaticus.[53] While Saxo recounts the exploits of Ragnar more thoroughly than his geographic itinerary, this particular route is specifically mentioned in the same context as being the route taken by the Danish fleet in the twelfth-century Norse poem *Krákumál*.[54] Once in the Irish Sea, the traveler could then proceed to the southern Hebrides, to Ireland, or to the Isle of Man. From Man, Cumberland in northern England is clearly visible, and partially accessible via a number of waterways, such as the Liddell and Eden Rivers which are accessible from the Solway Firth and the Esk, Irt and other rivers immediately off the coast. Areas further south in England could be reached by proceeding along the same coastal path. From Cumberland, areas to the East such as York and other cities were largely landlocked. They were, however, far from inaccessible. There were a few routes through to the other side, although the mountainous nature of the countryside in general made communication and travel difficult. One of the best direct methods of travel between this area and Yorkshire proceeded through the broad, glacial depression in the Pennines on Stainmore, the route being that of the Roman road called High Street from Bowes and the Great North Road in Yorkshire to Brough and Appleby, and so to Penrith and Carlisle in

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[51] Snorri Sturluson, *Saga of Magnus Barelegs,* in *Heimskringla,* 677.
[52] *The Saga of Hacon, Hacon's Son,* 354-355.
[53] Saxo Grammaticus, *History of the Danes,* translated by Peter Fisher, edited by Hilda Ellis Davidson. (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1979), 279-297.
[54] Alfred P. Smyth, *Scandinavian Kings in the British Isles 850-880* (Oxford: University Press, 1977), 74.

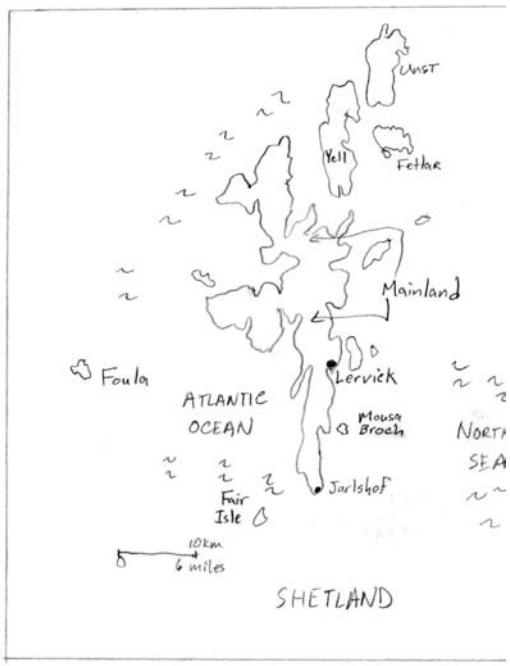
Cumberland.[55] It is probably this route that marked the end of life for the York king Erik Bloodaxe who, fleeing after his expulsion from York, was killed somewhere near Stainmore in 954. The Eastern Irish Sea Region is one of great geographic age and variety. A complete geographic analysis of Scotland, England or the Isles is beyond the scope of this study. It is a great human determinant in that it shows the great impact that the role of geography has upon the manner of living of the natives and settlers of the region. The inhabitants of these islands, as will be seen, are possessed of a very similar culture to that of the dwellers of the region, and all grew into a common, mutually understood culture group. What follows will be a brief description of the Shetland, Orkney and Hebrides islands as they relate to the Scandinavian Viking Age. Detailed analysis will commence with the discussion of the regions of the Eastern Irish Sea Region.

Shetland and Orkney

The Shetland Islands, while being an important navigational beacon, were and are the least habitable of the Scottish islands. Lovingly called "The Old Rock" by their inhabitants today, these islands are of very great antiquity. In geologic terms, these rocks are contemporaneous with the earliest known sedimentary rocks on the planet, and were in existence before the dawn of even microbial life. [56] Despite their age, they have been inhabited by humans for a comparatively short period of time. Recently found and dated skeletal remains push the date of the earliest known arrivals back to about 5200 years ago.[57] These Neolithic inhabitants, whoever they may have been, are associated with the building of the famous *brochs,* large stone defensive fortifications still in existence today that had fallen out of use by the Viking Age.

[55] A.H. Smith, *The Place-Names of Westmorland I* (Cambridge: University Press, 1967), xxvii-xxviii.
[56] Elizabeth Balneave, *The Windswept Isles: 'Shetland & Its People'* (London: John Gifford, 1977), 18.
[57] David W. Moore, *The Other British Isles* (Jefferson, NC and London: McFarland & Co Inc. Publishers, 2005), 7.

Shetland has one large island, termed Mainland, and a number of smaller islands, which seem to total about one hundred in number, though some are little more than sandbars. Only 3% of the land is arable, but 93% is suitable for rough grazing.[58] For this reason, Shetland is known for sheep, sheep dogs, and Shetland ponies, all of which thrive in its forbidding climate. It is also well suited for the digging of peat, which forms easily and naturally. An extension of the Gulf Stream moderates the conditions of this near Arctic region, such that Shetland (and Orkney) has usually mild weather. Without this current, however, the area would be as cold as Moscow.[59] Wind is and has always been a noteworthy feature. Winds in comparatively modern times have been measured in sustained gusts sometimes exceeding 90 miles (152 km) per hour—the equivalent of a strong Category 1 hurricane.[60] It will be recalled that the *dynrøst* of saga sources claimed several ships, and the phenomenon is still active and dangerous for small boats, along with the generally dangerous conditions prevalent in the North Sea to sailors.



Map 4. Shetland. Drawing by Russ Goodrich

There is a lot of evidence of Norse inhabitation at Shetland, including place names and archaeological discoveries. There is an ample supply of place-names of Norse derivation, not least the administrative center, Lerwick (O.N, *Leir-vik*). The most impressive of the archaeological sites is undoubtedly the site at Jarlshof, near Sumburgh Head, at the southernmost point on the main island of Shetland. This site is of a large dwelling

[58] Gordon Rae and Charles E. Brown, *A Geography of Scotland* (London: G. Bell and Sons Ltd, 1959), 194.
[59] Moore, 5.
[60] In fact, Shetland holds the all-time record for wind speed velocity in the UK, tracked at 194 mph on January 1, 1992. This is equivalent to a strong Category 5 hurricane, although hurricane conditions did not exist. Moore, 5.

site that existed in seven distinct phases during the Norse period, and from which about two thousand artifacts have been recovered.[61] This known archaeological site is also mentioned, during one of its later phases in *circa* 1150, in *Orkneyinga Saga,* wherein Earl Rognvald, after nearly being lost in the *dynrøst,* sought shelter at the dwelling there.[62]

The Orkney Islands are an independent archipelago blessed with generally mild climate. They are mentioned by the eighth-century historian Bede, who placed them "On the opposite side of Britain, which lies open to the boundless ocean."[63] He does not mention Shetland, and Orkney may well have been for him the edge of the known and important world. There are ninety or so of these Orkney Islands, but roughly seventeen are inhabited, with the majority living on Mainland, the largest of the islands.[64] Orkney shares with Shetland many climatic features, including temperature, similar yearly precipitation, approximate latitude, and wind gales.

Combined with the climate, the soils generally are favorable for farming and thus for settlers. Over half of Orkney today is arable, and much of the remainder is covered by vegetation in a semi-natural state, frequently by grass heath such as crowberry, thrift, and sea-plantain. Paleo-botanical evidence suggests that, prior to some 6000 years ago there were also wooded areas, which consisted mainly of birch.[65] Orkney is famous for its Neolithic monuments, including the famous site of Skara Brae, chambered tombs, and brochs similar to but more numerous than those on Shetland. The earliest known habitation sites on Orkney are as old as 5600 years before the present, making them older slightly than the earliest habitation of

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[61] J.R.C. Hamilton, *Excavations at Jarlshof, Shetland* (Edinburgh: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1956), 93-189.
[62] *Orkneyinga Saga,* 140-143.
[63] Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People,* translated by Leo Sherley-Price and revised by R.E. Latham (New York: Penguin Books, 1965), I.1, 44.
[64] Moore, 30.
[65] D.A. Davidson and R.L. Jones, "The Environment of Orkney," in *The Prehistory of Orkney,* ed. Colin Renfrew (Edinburgh: University Press, 1985), 15-17.

Shetland.[66] Habitation has been continuous. The evidence for a Scandinavian inhabitation is considerable, and it includes place-names, archaeological finds, and numerous references in the sagas, particularly the *Orkneyinga Saga,* which is centered on the Viking Era settlers of the islands and their descendants. Many or most of the names on the islands can be traced to Scandinavian roots, and more pagan Viking graves have been found here than anywhere in Scandinavian Scotland, including the boat-grave found at Scar, on the Isle of Sanday.

Finally, another feature that was doubtless seen as useful by the Norwegian settlers was the presence of the Scapa Flow, a large nearly inland sea. It is nearly surrounded by the four largest isles, providing shelter and cover to a naval fleet. A naval force could effectively exert control over most of the Orkney range through this position. There are numerous saga references to it in the *Orkneyinga Saga,* and it is also mentioned in the thirteenth-century saga of *Hakon Hakonasson.* This sea, combined with the low-lying beaches around the Isles, would certainly have been utilized by the Norwegians.

The Hebrides

The Hebrides are a series of unusually complex islands. Traditionally, they are thought of as the Inner and Outer Hebrides, with the "inner" islands those which are closest to mainland Scotland. To the Outer Hebrides must be assigned the islands of Lewis, Harris, Barra and the Uists. To the Inner Hebrides can be assigned Skye and its group (the "Small Isles"), Mull (which includes Tiree and Iona, the site of the famous monastery), and Islay (which includes Colonsay and Oronsay). In all, there are about five hundred fifty of these islands, of course depending upon how "island" is precisely defined.[67]

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[66] Moore, 32.
[67] W.H. Murray, *The Islands of Western Scotland* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1973), 23-25.

There is a long passage of about 500 km through these islands between Cape Wrath and the Mull of Kintyre in the South and this region as a whole is large enough to present considerable environmental variation. The following quotation presents the physical location in a succinct manner:

> The main body of the Hebrides takes clear shape as the two archipelagos lying parallel to the coast, the outer overlapping the inner for sixty miles. The Outer Hebrides, thirty-five to fifty miles from the mainland, form a compact link 130 miles long. The Inner Hebrides, bigger and more scattered in a double rank 142 miles long, lie close in to the coast. Together they shield the west coast against the full assault of the Atlantic seas. Skye and the Small Isles, at the north end of the Inner Hebrides, receives a like benefit, but south of this overlap, Tiree, Coll, Iona, the Ross of Mull, Colonsay, and Islay, are every bit as exposed as the outer isles, and like them are lined to the west by sandy beaches. Shell-sand is a natural resource of great importance to island agriculture and Skye pays for its protection by the lack of it.[68]

The two sets of Hebrides islands could scarcely be more different. The inner Hebrides are much newer rocks, and are far more arable. They have been inhabited since the end of the previous Ice Age, but the outer Hebrides are still largely devoid of life.[69] Similarly, the Hebrides are especially vulnerable to high winds. But unlike the Orkneys that are more sheltered, the Hebrides receive much moisture-laden wind directly from the Atlantic Ocean, which is unbroken from Labrador all the way to the Outer Hebrides. Defined as wind speeds of thirty-four knots or more, gales occur one day in six at the Butt of Lewis annually, and more frequently in the winter time.[70] At Barra Head, where there is no shallow water to break the gigantic storm-seas, small fish are sometimes blown over the 630-foot (219 m) cliff to the grass on top of it.[71] Given this type of wind, it is hardly surprising that for the Norwegian sailor, it was easier to sail around Caithness and go through the Great Glen route than to brave the Atlantic winds.

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[68] Murray, 23.
[69] Murray, 42, 66.
[70] Murray, 81.
[71] Murray, 79-82.

The barren landscape is relieved by a strip of windblown sand shell which lines the western littoral and provides a fertile and easily tilled soil, called *machair* in Gaelic.[72] This makes the western side of the Outer Hebrides and much of the Inner very attractive settlement areas. Although *machair* needs heavy fertilizers to maintain productivity and is vulnerable to wind erosion it has been tilled for fields of oats and barley for about 3000 years.[73] The clusters of Old Norse place-names cluttered around the areas of *machair* shows that it was evidently appreciated by the Scandinavians for its arable potential.[74] The Inner Hebrides, already more fertile, possess tracks of limestone which render much of them lush and green. They are also ideal for the raising of sheep and horses.

Since this era, the Hebrides have been continuously inhabited, and there is certainly evidence for a Scandinavian presence in the islands. Scandinavian place-names like *–borg* (fort), *-staðir* (farm) and several others trace these habitation patterns in the islands.[75] There are numerous archaeological finds of Scandinavian items in evidence, including the ship grave at Canna and the famous Lewis Chess men from the Isle of Lewis. There is ample evidence of Scandinavian habitation apart from the place-names and archaeological finds. The *Annals of Ulster* record a raid on Skye in 795, and Irish sources record other raids on Iona in the early ninth century.[76] Once they had fallen under heavy Norse occupation and influence, they were termed in Irish sources as *Innse Gall* or "Isles of the Foreigners" with their leader called *ri* (king).[77] That this took place in the early to mid-ninth century is suggested by an entry under the year 847 in the Frankish *Annals of St. Bertin:*

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[72] Crawford, 28.
[73] Moore, 61.
[74] Crawford, 28.
[75] Moore, 67.
[76] *Annals of Ulster*, edited and translated by William Hennessy (Dublin: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1887)., sub anno 795.
[77] Moore, 67-68.

> The Irish, who had been attacked by the Northmen for a number of years, were made into regular tribute-payers. The Northmen also got control of the islands all around Ireland, and stayed there without encountering any resistance from anyone.[78]

Further references to the Hebrides in medieval sources are somewhat rare. In comparing the farming in Orkney to that in Kintyre on the western coast of Scotland, an area blessed with fertile land, the *Orkneyinga Saga* claims that the latter area was "thought to be more valuable than best of the Hebridean Islands, though not as good as the Isle of Man."[79] In his *Saga of Magnus Barelegs,* Snorri repeats this claim.[80] Likewise, reference is made by the thirteenth-century chronicler of Man, who records that King Reginald gave to his brother Olaf the island of Lewis as his estate:

> Reginald gave his brother Olaf the Isle of Lewis, which is reputed to be larger than the other islands. It is sparsely populated, and because of its mountainous and rocky character it does not lend itself to cultivation. The inhabitants of the island for the most part live by hunting and fishing. Olaf, therefore, set out to take possession of this island, and there he lived leading the life of a pauper.[81]

Even today, less than 1% of neighboring Harris Island is cultivable, and the rest is largely given over to rock and peat. In certain places on some of the Outer and Inner Hebridean islands, more intensive settlement and cultivation has always been possible.[82] It would seem that, from the earliest times to the present, the islands are inhabitable provided that a few, select places are chosen to give the greatest chance of survival.

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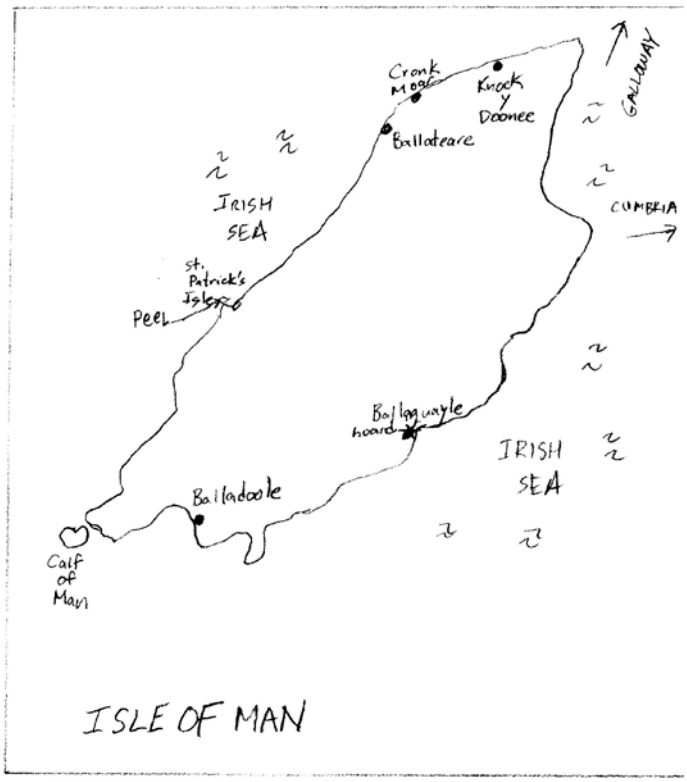
[78] *Annals of St.-Bertin,* translated by Janet L. Nelson (Manchester: University Press, 1991), sub anno 847.
[79] *Orkneyinga Saga,* 81.
[80] Sturluson, *Saga of Magnus Barelegs,* in *Heimskringla,* 677.
[81] *Chronicle of the Kings of Mann and the Isles,* translated by George Broderick (Edinburgh: George Broderick, 1973), 28.
[82] Graham-Campbell and Batey, 4.

The Isle of Man

Map 5. Isle of Man. Drawing by Russ Goodrich



The Isle of Man was a known destination in the Viking Age and before. It is located in the midst of the Irish Sea, almost halfway between Ireland and England, and is clearly visible from the hills of Cumbria on a clear day. The nearest landfall is Galloway, about 25km away; while England and Ireland are both about 40 km away with Liverpool and Dublin being about equidistant. The Isle itself is about 45 km long and up to 16 km wide at its broadest point.[83] Temperatures are moderate thanks to the warming Gulf Stream and predictable rainfalls, with an overall weather pattern that corresponds most closely with North Wales and Galloway.[84] Despite the Isle's relatively small size, its landscape is anything but uniform, although it has far less variation than that found in the Hebrides. The landscape is dominated by two upland massifs divided by a central valley, which crosses the Island from Douglas in the east to Peel in the west. The northern upland massif rises to a height of 621m while the southern massif rises to a height of 483m. On the north side of the Isle, the hills drop steeply into a lowland plain composed of glacial drift. This area was once home to extensive tracks of marshland, called the Curraghs. On

[83] David M. Wilson, *The Vikings in the Isle of Man* (Aarhus: University Press, 2008), 15.
[84] Paul Reilly, *Computer Analysis of an Archaeological Landscape.* BAR British Series 190 (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1988), 7.

the southern part of the island, there is an area of low-lying land of glacial sands covering a small basin of carboniferous rocks. This area, known as the plain of Malew, is very fertile. Overall, the island's soils can be classified into two separate zones. They are the upland zone, which is characterized by surface peat, and a lowland zone composed mostly of freely drained soils, except in the basins.[85]

The Isle of Man was certainly known to the Scandinavians and is occasionally mentioned in other early medieval writings as well. It was known to—although not dominated by—the Roman Empire, and was probably at the edge of the Latin speaking world, as can be attested to by the presence of Latin inscriptions on memorial stones.[86] It was certainly occupied from a far earlier time, the earliest human habitation finds are dated to about 10,000 years ago, when the Isle was still connected to Cumbria and Galloway by a land bridge.[87] Man was known to the Irish chroniclers and well known to Bede. In book two of his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Bede states that this island was in British hands in the early years of the seventh-century, when control was then assumed by the Anglo-Saxons under the Northumbrian high-king, Edwin. He also mentions that, while smaller and less fertile than the Isle of Anglesey, Man nonetheless was assessed at a value of three hundred hides.[88]

That the Isle of Man was important to the Anglo-Saxons and to the Scandinavians is also borne out in historical records. The most famous incident in the career of the English king Edgar was when, after his coronation, the other kings of Britain came to him in order to offer homage. One of the kings "of many isles" probably refers to the Hebrides and Man.[89] This information is

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[85] Wilson, 15-16; Reilly, 6-8.
[86] There is, however, some confusion about whether Roman sources mean the Isle of Man or to Angelsey (*Mon* in modern Welsh). Wilson, 18-19.
[87] Wilson, 17.
[88] Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, II.5, 111 and II.9, 118.
[89] This episode is dealt with much more thoroughly in Chapter 2.

based upon little more than lists of kings, but it is enough to suggest that some form of relations existed, and that Man may have played a geographically central role. Man is also mentioned by Snorri Sturluson on several occasions, most notably in the *Saga of Harald Fairhair,* wherein it is mentioned as being a target of a punitive raid by the king[90] and again in the *Saga of Olaf Tryggvason* when this king ravaged the British Isles.[91] In both cases the inhabitants of the Isle are mentioned, and seemingly have a sizeable Scandinavian element. Place-name evidence suggests that a type of Norse-Manx population evolved, and there is archaeological evidence that also supports this view. There are over two hundred carved stone cross-slabs, some with runic writing present.[92] There are both Scandinavian and mixed types of graves, including that of the so-called Pagan Lady of Peel, that suggest a type of intermixing.[93] Evidence of Scandinavian burial on the Isle is also present. Boat-graves at Knock y Doonee, Balladoole, and elsewhere dating from the ninth-century are excavated that seem to show the remains of warrior-farmers.[94]

Galloway and Dumfriesshire

Galloway, consisting of the entire modern counties of Wigtownshire and Kirkcudbrightshire, and neighboring Dumfriesshire, occupy the entire southwestern corner of Scotland. In general, the land is highest through the Lowther Hills near the border with Ayrshire, and it is at its lowest along the shore of the Solway Firth. The region has four different physical characteristics.[95]

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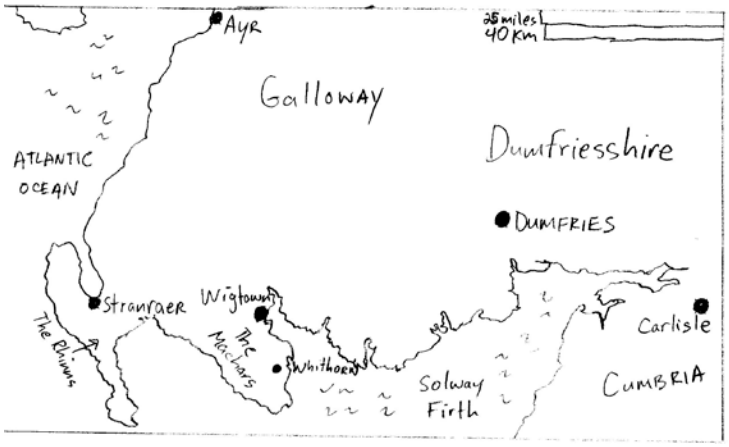
[90] Snorri Sturluson, *Saga of Harald Fairhair,* in *Heimskringla,* 77.
[91] Snorri Sturluson, *Saga of Olaf Tryggvason,* in *Heimskringla,* 169-170.
[92] Wilson, 58-86.
[93] Moore, 98-99.
[94] Wilson, 25-56. This will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 4.
[95] Rae and Brown, 170-171.



Map 6. Galloway and Dumfriesshire.
Drawing by Russ Goodrich

The first of these is the high moors of resistant granite in the north. This granite is of extreme age, much as is that of the Outer Hebrides. It is highlighted by the Kells Range of Kirkcudbright, which contains a cluster of high peaks, with Merrick the highest of all. Next are the coastal lowlands bordering the Solway Firth, covered by glacial deposits and having good quality soils. To the west, the Rhinns and Machers of Wigtown extend as low flats far out into the firth with Luce Bay and Loch Ryan separated by a narrow neck of level land. In Dumfriesshire, low and undulating land stretches along the narrowing firth to the border with England. The third feature is the dales of the rivers which flow southwards in roughly parallel courses to the firth. These are the Rivers Esk, Annan, Nith, Urr, Dee, Fleet, Cree and their tributaries. Finally, there is the Solway Firth, which is roughly triangular in shape, which tapers roughly to a point at the modern-day Scottish-English border. Its tides can rapidly race in, although at low tide it leaves a large expanse of sand stretching along the coast. Interspersed along the coastline are natural caves, which have historically served as havens for fleets of pirates, or even worse criminals, such as the semi-legendary cannibalistic clan of Sawney Bean during the sixteenth century.[96]

[96] Ian A. Morrison, "Galloway: Locality and Landscape Evolution," in *Galloway: Land and Lordship,* ed. R.D. Oram and G.P. Stell (Edinburgh: Scottish Society for Northern Studies, 1991), 15.

A quick glance at a map of Galloway will show that it consists of a great length of coastline along the Solway Firth, the Irish Sea and the North Channel, which gives the region a strong maritime character. Its sea links with Ireland, Man, western Scotland and northwest England are apparent. The area of the Rhinns of Galloway provides the shortest crossing (32 km) between Britain and Ireland. The area has many natural harbors, although it does not follow that these harbors are always particularly safe for traffic. While relatively sheltered, most Solway ports face the hazards of unusually high tides, strong currents and shifting sandbars. Those of the more exposed on the western coast of the Rhinns have on occasion felt the full wrath of the north Atlantic gales, much as can be seen in the Scottish islands. Ships can be occasionally lost, as was the case of the Stanraer-Larne ferry *Princess Victoria*, which went down killing 133 people early in 1953.[97] The danger to medieval shipping was doubtless even more pronounced.

The region has a long history of human habitation and of agriculture. The earliest evidence relates to itinerant communities of the Mesolithic, with camp sites traced to about 4800 BC.[98] Neolithic settlement followed, and these people's achievements are still mainly measurable in terms of their ritual and burial practices rather than by their homesteads or farms. Many examples of this handiwork remain, including the Torhousekie stone circle, and a large number of stone burial cairns. There has been continuous habitation since that time; the area was probably conquered by the Romans and at a later date was likely a part of the Celtic kingdom of Rheged in the sixth and seventh centuries. It was likewise invaded by the Anglo-Saxons and there is also evidence of a later Scandinavian presence in the area.

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[97] Geoffrey Stell, *Exploring Scotland's Heritage—Dumfries and Galloway* (Edinburgh: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, 1986), 15.
[98] Stell, 9.

This link to the Scandinavian Vikings has proven to be contentious. The area of Galloway is loosely identified with the people known as the *Gall-Gaedhil*, a people who themselves present a number of problems with regards to the interpretation of most of what is known about them. It was once believed without reservation that these people gave their name to the region of Galloway, although now it is not clear exactly when the term *Gall-Gaedhil* began to be used, thus casting doubt upon this view. It is generally accepted that these people operated in Galloway. The question that seems unanswerable at present is when they came to be associated with the very narrow area of land that is today south-west Scotland.[99] Historical evidence and archaeological evidence for Scandinavians in this region are both quite thin, but there is certainly place-name evidence that places a Scandinavian presence in the region, mostly along the coastline.

Cumberland and Westmorland

The area of Cumberland is not one in which precise definition is easily observed. Originally it denoted simply the territory of the *Cymry* (roughly meaning "British Countrymen") but was restructured in both the medieval and modern periods. A modern historian, writing about the partition into the current state of Cumbria in 1974, wrote that:

> The modern administrative area now known as Cumbria represents what can only be regarded as either a politically arrogant or an historically ignorant misappropriation by the English of a term that, on the one hand formerly included extensive regions along the northern Scottish side of the Solway Firth; and, on the other hand unambiguously excluded the areas of Kendal, Kirkby Lonsdale, and what used to be known as Lancashire-North-of-the-Sands which are currently embraced by it...One can only marvel at the evidently never-ending history of local administrative miscegenation[100]

There are a number of reasons for this ambiguity in borders, but much of it stems from the imprecise borders in the medieval period. The former county of Cumberland only came into

[99] Forte, Oram, and Pedersen, 96.
[100] Charles Phythian-Adams, *Land of the Cumbrians* (Aldershot, England: Scolar Press, 1996), 3.

being as late as 1176-7, well after the demise of the former kingdom of Cumbria, and was made up of several areas patched together.[101] It is better to think of this area, along with the former Northumbria, as border regions rather than as counties or provinces in the modern sense, with clear-cut lines that can be drawn on a map.[102] Cumberland's inclusive boundaries varied widely, and did for a time overlap with those of Northumbria. The border, however such may be defined, between English Cumbria and Scotland probably did not exist in any sense at all before the tenth-century.[103] So the idea that Cumberland was a unique and homogenous region next to an autonomous region of Dumfriesshire or Galloway must be dispensed with. During the Viking Age, there was most probably no border at all.

Research can be further hampered by the fact that the old administrative units of Cumberland and Westmorland are no longer in existence. The modern province of Cumbria includes most of the old Cumberland and some of Westmorland, while the latter province has mostly been absorbed in the province of Northumberland and somewhat into the counties of Durham and Yorkshire. Further, there is an association of Cumbria with the Lake District, although the two are in fact not synonymous. The Lake District is mostly located in Cumbria, although it does not occupy the whole province, nor is it limited to it, but extends southward into Lancashire as well. To attempt to do a geographic or historical survey of the area with any precision, this must be borne in mind.

The old county of Cumberland reaches the following approximate dimensions. It is bounded on the west by the Irish Sea and on the north by the Solway Firth as far as the Solway stretches inland, to the river Sark. The boundary then follows a series of rivers progressively to

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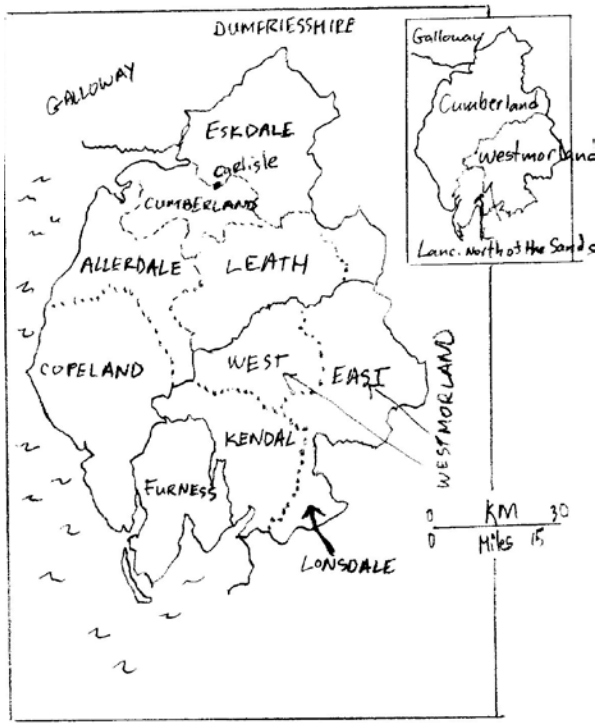
[101] Phythian-Adams, 3.
[102] David Rollason, *Northumbria, 500-1100* (Cambridge: University Press, 2003), 9-10, 20-23.
[103] P.A. Wilson, "On the use of the terms 'Strathclyde' and 'Cumbria'," *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* New Series 66 (1966): 57-92.

the northeast, following the Liddell up to the north-east angle of the county. The eastern boundary runs for the most part through wild fells, following the Irthing through the Haltwhistle Gap to the south-east angle of the county. The southern boundary runs up the headwaters of the Tees, then southwest to the Eden, down this river to the Eamont, further southwest very roughly towards the Duddon; following this roughly back to the Irish Sea. To the southeast lies Westmorland, while Lancashire sits to the southwest.

Cumberland can be divided into three main areas.[104] The first of these is the north-western half of the Cumbrian Dome, with its narrow coastal strip.



Map 7. Cumberland and Westmorland, with surrounding territory. The wards of Cumberland are also shown. Drawing by Russ Goodrich

Arability of land in this area is highly variable, ranging from a mere 2% in the central fell parishes to over 75% on the New Red Sandstone to the north along the coast, near St. Bees Head. The second is the Eden Lowland, together with the sheep pastures on the Carboniferous Limestone of the Pennine Slopes. The third region is the Carlisle Plain, together with pastoral slopes entered from the east by the Haltwhistle Gap. In the lowland areas the percentage of arable land varies from about thirty to over fifty, and farming is of mixed type.

[104] A.M. Armstrong, A. Mawer, F.M. Stenton & Bruce Dickins, *The Place-Names of Cumberland III* (Cambridge: University Press, 1952), xiii-xiv.

The former Westmorland is a small county about half the size of Cumberland with which it partly forms the Lake District in the north-west of England. The name of the province itself is interesting in that it possibly derives from the Old English *Westmoringa-land* (the land of the western moors), suggesting a possibly seventh-century date for Anglo-Saxon inhabitation.[105] The name is curious if viewed from a modern perspective, but if viewed from the Northumbrian perspective, it makes more sense, since it stretches in some sense to the west from this region. Westmorland is a name that could have been created at any time in the Anglo-Saxon period, but could also in fact be of Scandinavian origin. This is accounted for in the fact that the Middle English spelling, *Westmeringeland*, is possibly a mutated form of *Vestmøringa-lond*, the Old Norse version of the name.[106] The earliest mention to the area by name is in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* under the year of 966, when it is recorded that a certain Thored son of Gunnar ravaged the area.[107] Implication of Viking activity and the possibility of Scandinavian naming elements suggest that the name is possibly of an even later origin. It may have been so named by Scandinavian settlers, who probably approached the region from their settlements in the former kingdom of Northumbria.

Westmorland shares a border with Cumberland on the north and west, with Lancashire on the south and east, and it borders for a brief stretch Durham in the northeast. It was an oddly-shaped county, bordered generally by the Pennine hills in the east, and the Cumbrian mountains in the west. The former land had few clearly defined natural boundaries—the lakes of Windermere and Ullswater in the west, the rivers Eden and Crowdundle Beck in the north, the Tees in the northeast, and a short stretch of the Lune in the east. The rest were mostly ill-defined

[105] Smith, xxxvi-xxxvii.
[106] Smith, xxxvi-xxxvii.
[107] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, edited and translated by Dorothy Whitelock (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1961) sub anno 966.

watersheds; the Pennine boundary with the North Riding of Yorkshire was in fact the subject of a commission of inquiry in 1337.[108] Like Cumberland, it does not form a homogenous political unit, and probably came into being at the same time.[109]

The four northern counties, in contrast to those of the south, were further divided into wards. This fact is also useful in that it breaks down a larger area further, and that often single wards can show particular qualities useful in illustrating certain points, or can help to locate with precision certain areas. Cumberland was divided into Eskdale, Cumberland, Leath, Allerdale below Derwent and Allerdale above Derwent Wards. Westmorland was divided into East, West, Kendal and Kirkby Lonsdale Wards. These Westmorland wards, except for Kirkby Lonsdale Ward, were further subdivided into smaller administrative units. The East ward consisted of Appleby, Brough, Kirkby Stephen, Orton and Tebay. The West ward was divided into Askham, Bampton, Barton, Patterdale, Shap, and Yanwath. Kendal ward was further divided into Ambleside, Burton-in-Kendal, Grasmere, Grayrigg, Kentmere, Kendal and Windermere.

Cumberland and Westmorland are somewhat unique in England in that they have a different geological history from what may be expected as typical of southern England. A number of very thorough studies of the geology and its evolution in the region have been undertaken and provide a fascinating insight into the stages of development of the region and by implication, its human pre-history.[110] It is worth mentioning that geology plays a key roll in the formation of landforms, and for this reason, it also effects the floral and faunal development of a region and hence, the arrival and activities of human beings. It is well established that the British Isles have been overrun by at least three major glaciations within the last million or so

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[108] Smith, xvii.
[109] Phythian-Adams, 3.
[110] A useful synthesis and explanation of this material may be found in Nick Higham, *The Northern Counties to AD 1000* (London and New York: Longman, 1986), 5-30.

years. In Cumberland, as well as in the Scottish Highlands and the Scottish Isles, these glaciations and subsequent retreats of the ice are responsible for much of the appearance of the land, and for minerals deposited, its drainage and the types of vegetation that came to grow in the areas.

Human habitation of the region is very old, dating at least to the Upper Paleolithic, on the order of 12-13,000 years ago, a far earlier date than has been discussed in relation to the inhabitation of the Scottish Isles further north. Habitation has not always been continuous, however, and has varied with the retreat of glacial ice and the types of plants and animals present as a result of this movement. Continuous inhabitation and evidence of subsistence strategies are certainly traceable continuously from the latter part of the Mesolithic, approximately from 5000 to 3500 BC.[111]

There is likewise ample evidence of a substantial Scandinavian presence at a later date. Much of the archaeological evidence from this period comes in the form of pagan burials, often of warriors, and generally is thought to be amongst the earliest Scandinavians present in the region. Several coin hoard finds likewise suggest a mixed Scandinavian presence, although perhaps a presence passing through, as a transitory state, since this Cumbrian region was itself was not producing coins in the ninth-century.[112] Place-names likewise suggest a presence of Norwegian, Danish, and mixed Norse-Gaelic speakers present in the region.[113] Finally, there are the presence of several long-houses at Crosby Ravensworth and elsewhere in the region.

Probably because of its status as a border realm of less than certain boundaries, the province of Cumberland is mentioned very infrequently in Scandinavian or any other early medieval sources. The writings of Bede make indirect reference to the area, which to him clearly

[111] Higham, 19.
[112] Higham, 322-323. Burial evidence and coin hoards will be discussed in Chapter 4.
[113] This will be discussed in Chapter 3.

belonged in the realm of Northumbria, itself a frontier zone. Bede wrote in his account of a miracle worked by St. Cuthbert's relics that there was a monastery "which was in the course of construction near the river Dacre, from which it took its name."[114] This town, near Penrith, is indeed on the river mentioned, and near also to the lake Ullswater, which is further inland in Westmorland. Bede also wrote that King Edwin of Northumbria controlled the Islands of Man and Anglesey (mentioned earlier) and that King Egfrid of Northumbria launched an attack—apparently successfully, in the northern part of Ireland, in 685.[115] These episodes all suggest that the Northumbrian rulers were in control of the western coastline, in what is now Cumbria, since a water-borne military attack would be much more difficult from further inland without the benefit of a sea-coast. The northern boundary of this realm was, according to Bede, north of the Solway Firth. He states that Whithorn in Galloway was a bishop's see of British origin, implying that the Northumbrian realm stretched here as well.[116] Cumberland is mentioned twice by name in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, once for the year 973 and once for the year 1000. The contexts for both of these will be mentioned in the next chapter, along with that of other references found in other sources. Snorri Sturluson mentions Cumberland by name only once. In the *Saga of Olaf Tryggvason*, Snorri wrote that Olaf "sailed to Wales, harrying that land far and wide, and also the country called Cumberland."[117] This passage illustrates that, in his understanding at least, the regions of Cumberland and Wales were separate. On this count, Snorri has also included in his account a poem from an earlier age, by a skald named Hallfröth Vandræthaskáld, which further differentiates Olaf's victims. The poem differentiates clearly between English, Northumbrians, Scots, Irishmen and "Celtic soil…where dwelled…hordes of

[114] Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, IV.32, 264.
[115] Bede, IV.26, 254.
[116] Bede, III.4, 149.
[117] Snorri Sturluson, *Saga of Olaf Tryggvason*, in *Heimskringla*, 169.

Cymric peasants."[118] The same passage seems to imply the presence of a separate Manx group, although they are also termed "British islanders" as are the Cymry. Snorri mentions Wales in other places as well, usually as a place where raiding has taken place, and this sentiment is often echoed in *Orkneyinga Saga.* There is never a mention of Strathclyde or Galloway, nor is there ever a sense that these realms are in any way separate, except Snorri's declaration that Wales and Cumberland were separate. Scotland itself is sometimes mentioned, although often in a very general manner. There are several scattered references that suggest this region was attacked and plundered, not by Vikings, but by the Anglo-Saxon kings in about 945.[119] It is perhaps not too much a stretch to say that, when dealing with the inhabitants of Cumberland or Northumberland, one could just as easily be referring to a resident of southwestern Scotland, or even to an Islander. It was a widely spread culture, even before the Scandinavian arrival, which added to it another element. Although the geographic descriptions tend to list different groups in different areas, the region as a whole tends to be in a state of flux, thus defying further description and contributing to the low number of medieval authors who mention the regions at all, much less affording it a thorough treatment.

[118] Sturluson, 170.
[119] *Early Sources of Scottish History, Vol. 1 A.D. 500-1286*, ed. Alan Orr Anderson (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1922), 449.

Chapter Two
Immigration and the Historical Setting

Introduction: Mankind in Motion

A substantial portion of human history deals with mankind in motion. The natural state of humanity, it would seem, is to be on the move. The earliest legendary and historical writings suggest as much, and the present day sees a continuation of this activity. Ancient literature like the Greek *Odyssey* and the Roman *Aeneid* tell of armies of men who, for reasons often beyond their control, are constantly moving and sometimes settling down in new places. In the medieval era, after and even before the fall of Rome in 476, there are armies and entire tribes of Germanic "barbarians" overrunning the former Western Empire and creating early versions of the modern countries of Italy, Spain, France and Germany. In a continuation of this pattern, the Anglo-Saxons colonized England and the Scandinavian Viking Age followed on the heels of this "creation" of England. The further history of Western Europe and its New World colonization would also provide a plethora of examples of this movement, and in the modern United States and most European nations today, immigration into the country is still seen as an ongoing concern. But this restlessness and movement of peoples is not confined solely to the West. In ancient China, much of the early history is concerned with the conflicts between the civilization of the early dynasties, and incursions of the Xiongnu and other migratory, non-Chinese people.[120] A similar pattern emerges from Chinese antiquity, with Asiatic migratory groups like the Huns, Turks, and Mongols consistently constituting a threat to regional and even European stability.

The same phenomena is observable in the Eastern Irish Sea Region—that of Cumberland, Westmorland, and southwestern Scotland. The region saw in the early medieval period an influx of new, Germanic peoples. First came the Angles and Saxons, and at a later date beginning

[120] J.A.G. Roberts, *The Complete History of China* (Phoenix Mill, Gloucestershire, England: 2005), 51-54.

probably in the eighth century came Scandinavian settlers from Norway, Denmark, and the outlying areas settled by Scandinavians—Man, the Scottish Isles, and probably Ireland. The numbers of these Scandinavian settlers arriving to settle in this area were without doubt small in proportion to the numbers of settlers arriving in neighboring regions of Scotland or of England.[121] Further, these settlers are particularly difficult to study, since they mainly belong to a type of population movement that is seldom honored in literature and is omitted from traditional medieval historical records—that of the common people. In this region as in others, it is this group of people that comprises the vast majority of population increase due to migration, not the wealthy nobles and war leaders who are mentioned and usually vilified in the written sources of the time.

It is the aim of this chapter to place the peregrinations of the Scandinavian Vikings and their settlers in northern England and southwestern Scotland in their proper context within the larger Germanic world. This will of necessity involve a discussion of the migrations of the *germani* of the ancient world, and progress to the Anglo-Saxon invasion of Britain beginning in the fifth century. It will evolve to discuss the Scandinavian Viking Age in England, particularly in the Danelaw and the Kingdom of York, and will thoroughly discuss the Vikings in the Eastern Irish Sea region. With written sources for the region both scarce and relatively late, it becomes challenging to recreate the history of the region even in a cursory form, and still more so that of

[121] There are a number of excellent general works and regional surveys that can be called upon as background for these neighboring regions. There are several that I have found to be particularly useful. Many of these are also useful for the regions under consideration in northwestern England and southwestern Scotland as well as the Isle of Man, so for this reason I will give the full publication information now. Many of these will be referred to readily in coming discussion and in subsequent chapters. Barbara Crawford, *Scandinavian Scotland* (Leicester: University Press, 1987); James Graham-Campbell and Colleen E. Batey, *Vikings in Scotland: An Archaeological Survey* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1998); Alex Woolf, *From Pictland to Alba: 789-1070* (Edinburgh: University Press, 2007); Alfred P. Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin I-II* (Dublin: Templekieran Press, 1975-79); Clare Downham, *Viking Kings of Britain and Ireland* (Edinburgh: Dunedin, 2007); Julian D. Richards, *Viking Age England* (Stroud, Gloucestershire, England: Tempus, 2004-7); and Richard A. Hall, ed. *Aspects of Anglo-Scandinavian York* (York: Council for British Archaeology, 2004). A recent comprehensive work concerning most aspects of the Viking Age generally is Stefan Brink and Neil Price, eds. *The Viking World* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008).

the common settlers. As a starting point, the chapter will draw upon migration theory and develop a model to show how this settlement occurred. It will then apply the model to the Germanic tribes and finally to the Scandinavians, who are in many ways the last of the migrating Germanic tribes.

Towards a Model that Works

How to proceed with a study that incorporates the settlement of Germanic and Viking settlers into newer regions is a big question. The study of migration theory itself seems a good place to start, but such study is fraught with pitfalls and historiographical traps seemingly at every turn. The study of migration theory is itself problematic, coming into or out of vogue depending upon, among other things, the prevailing milieu in politics, national and international interests, and intellectual trends.[122] I have no desire to be drawn into most of these historiographical debates, such as which academic discipline is using the correct or the best approach, whether or not models should be employed to track probable movements of peoples and, if so, which model is best to use. I have little desire to be drawn into the misuse of migration theory for political agendas,[123] or of the supposed patterns of the ancient Germanic peoples as being the basis of territorial claims of modern states, an abuse which, as Patrick Geary tells us, is still an ongoing concern in Europe today.[124] It is enough at present to note that such controversies exist, and that with one or two possible exceptions I will try to steer clear of them.

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[122] Timothy Champion, "Migration Revived," *Journal of Danish Archaeology* 9 (1990): 215-216; Ruth and Vincent Megaw, "The Celts: the first Europeans?" *Antiquity* 66 (1992): 258-259.

[123] This is a topic that has been well covered already, and it seems of little use to point out once again that the abuse of history was undertaken by the Nazis as well as by other groups. There is much literature available on the subject. The following is a good example for Scandinavia during the war years: Michael Müller-Wille, "The political misuse of Scandinavian prehistory in the years 1933-1945," in Else Roesdahl and Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, eds. *The Waking of Angantyr* (Aarhus: University Press, 1996), 156-175. Similarly, Nordic history and imagery was used in pre-Nazi times in manners used to emphasize the glory of the "Nordic" past, in Scandinavia as well as in the rest of Europe. See for example Pål Hougen, "Kaiser Wilhelm II og Norges heroiske fortid," in idem, 147-155 and Gerd Wolfgang Weber, "Nordisk fortid some chiliastisk fremtid. Den "norrøne arv" og den cykliske historieopfattelse I Skandinavien og Tyskland omkring 1800—og senere," in idem, 72-119.

[124] Patrick J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations* (Princeton: University Press, 2002).

For this reason, I am adopting a very functionalist approach to migration and its mechanisms. I am postulating a model which, it is hoped, will be applicable to ancient and medieval peoples while steering clear of some of the pitfalls that seem to apply to models postulated for later periods of time.

The study of migration patterns has been in existence for over a century, and can be dated fundamentally to the works of E.G. Ravenstein.[125] Despite this established history of study, academic disciplines today are often at odds concerning how to frame questions, and how to proceed once the questions are framed. There is also a good deal of cognitive dissonance among scholars in different fields as to what model should be employed and which terminology should be used. Every discipline, in Kuhnian style, has developed its own paradigm from which it operates. The questions that are posed and thus the answers provided vary very much by discipline. Douglas Massey and his colleagues succinctly stated the problem when they wrote:

> Social scientists do not approach the study of immigration from a shared paradigm, but from a variety of competing theoretical viewpoints fragmented across disciplines, regions, and ideologies. As a result, research on the subject tends to be narrow, often inefficient, and characterized by duplication, miscommunication, reinvention, and bickering about fundamentals. Only when researchers accept common theories, concepts, tools, and standards will knowledge begin to accumulate.[126]

Similarly, another divide exists between scholars who take the "macro" or top-down approach, focusing on immigration policy or market forces, from those whose approach is "micro" or bottom-up, emphasizing individual or group experience.[127] Because of these differences and others—the list is hardly exhaustive—I have chosen instead to eschew discussion of many of the

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[125] Earnest George Ravenstein, "The Laws of Migration," *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* 48 (1885): 167-235.
[126] Douglas S. Massey, Joaquin Arango, Graeme Hugo, Ali Kovaouci, Adela Pellegrino and J. Edward Taylor, "An Evaluation of International Migration Theory: The North American Case," *Population and Development Review* 20 (1994): 700-701.
[127] Caroline B. Brettell and James F. Hollifield, "Introduction," in idem, eds. *Migration Theory* (New York and London: Routledge, 2000), 2.

models used, opting instead to create my own, more generalized model that should serve well for the early period.

The Structure of Migrations: A Functionalist Approach

The urge to pick oneself up and to relocate is of considerable antiquity, and probably is as old as mankind. But it is not something that happens automatically or instinctively. There are reasons people migrate, and factors that contribute to whether or not this migration will occur, to where it will lead, and to the length of the movement, whether permanent or temporary. There are four main types of migration, some having sub-categories, but only one, cross-community migration, that falls in a range belonging solely to humans.[128] It is this particular form of migration that is necessary to understand the movements of the Germanic tribes and the Scandinavian settlers, so it is here that it would be wise to begin an examination of the process. Before that it is necessary to discuss the preliminary conditions necessary to migrate in the first place, and some reasons why this occurs at all.

The causes of migration are numerous and can be quite complex. In the case of ancient and medieval migrations, it is probable that the proximate causes of migration are now lost to modern researchers, who can do little more than postulate what they may have been. Traditional scholarly discourse on the matter of migration revolves around the concept of "push" and "pull" factors, which are identified as factors that tend to influence whether or not a potential migrant is likely to leave his or her homeland.[129] The following is a table that I have created to illustrate

[128] Patrick Manning, *Migration in World History* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005), 4-7.
[129] This particular scholarly paradigm is one of great antiquity, dating to at least the 1930s and possibly even earlier. It was developed by German scholars who were interested in demography and cultural shift. It has been used in numerous studies of different cultures world-wide over the years, and has undergone transformations through the years as it was adapted to newer theories of migration. For a good overview of the theory as it operated in the east German countryside, see Rudolf Heberle, "The Causes of Rural-Urban Migration: A Survey of German Theories," *American Journal of Sociology* 43 (1938): 932-950.

many of the most common elements that can reasonably be expected to fall into one of the two categories:

Table 1: Push and Pull Factors of Migration

PUSH Factors	**PULL Factors**
Overpopulation	Available Land or Underpopulation
Bad Harvests	Better Climate or Better Harvests
Lack of opportunity to improve status	More opportunities to improve status
Political Persecution/Outlawry	Political freedom and opportunity
Religious Persecution	Religious freedom
Environmental Damage	Untouched or undamaged environment

This model postulates that there are factors which "push" people from their homes into new areas and conversely, other factors which lull or "pull" people towards new areas. Neither list in the table is necessarily exhaustive. Each "push" or "pull" factor will be different for each individual person, and will be dependent upon socio-economic position. If the potential migrant recognizes that positive "pull" factors outweigh those of staying home, he is likely to make the decision to migrate. Likewise, the reverse is also true; if the positive factors influencing a person to remain home outweigh the "pull" factors leading him to migrate then he is likely to stay put. Finally, intimately connected with this decision are such things as distance involved, cost, and probability of the person being able to make the trip successfully. With these conditions in place, already there are fewer people who are physically, financially or psychologically capable of making such a journey. The typical potential migrant, except in the case of disaster, such as forcible and immediate expulsion from home, must have at least some capital, some knowledge

of the destination, a strong belief of correctness in pursuing the decision, be of a position in society to do so freely, and be in good health (and therefore, probably young). In most cases, the impetus behind such a move is the perceived prospect of gain, whether this is a material or a social gain. Thus, migration is not a random act. It is well thought out and often organized in advance. Even so, with a plethora of individual reasons for migration available, it must be noted that there is not a single profile of a typical migrant. Often "push" and "pull" factors operate simultaneously, both for individuals and for groups. What may be valid for some may not hold true for others.

In discussing causal factors of migration, my focus has thus far been on economic impetus as the main determinant. My model has thus far been taken only to the level of the individual and the perhaps to the level of a household, and this is a recognized limitation. In order to rectify this shortcoming, it seems necessarily to clarify a number of things. First, there are often other, larger forces at work that cannot be explained away but that do not fit neatly into the model, and there are other models that have been developed because of this fact.[130] While it is clear that the purveyors of these theories are more interested in modern than early migration, it does not follow that they would be wholly inapplicable to the early medieval period. These models may be grouped together into what has been called the historical-structuralist approach, which emphasizes larger or "macro" forces that are outside of the individual's ability to control.[131] This approach draws broadly on Marxist thought—framing migration in the context

[130] Any work involving the world-systems approach could be used as an example here. For instance, Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Politics of the World Economy* (Cambridge: University Press, 1984). Wallerstein is almost synonymous with this model, but there are other scholars who adopt this approach in their thinking. Danish historian Klavs Randsborg takes a similar approach. He sees interconnection between the origins of the Danish attacks on the Frankish kingdom and southern England and a corresponding growth of the Danish kingdom as being related to the exhaustion of the silver mines in what is today Tajikistan. Klavs Randsborg, *The Viking Age in Denmark* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982).

[131] Caroline B. Brettell, "Theorizing Migration in Anthropology," in Brettell and Hollifield, eds. *Migration Theory* (New York and London: Routledge, 2000), 102-103.

of a global economy, core-periphery relations, and the development of the underdeveloped.[132] To place this in the context of my model, it is perhaps better to phrase in it another way, since Marxism and global economies are concepts that are scarcely applicable to the early medieval world. Suffice to say that the world economy is larger than the local economy. Even if individuals might not be aware of what is going on outside of their area, they are still capable of being affected by it. Consider a hypothetical example of several Roman legions on the move, setting out to "pacify" a rebellious region in Gaul. Such movement would be costly in monetary terms as well as potentially in human lives. It would certainly impact the Roman economy, the effect of which might be a decreased ability to import luxury goods from the eastern provinces. Merchants in those regions may be completely uninvolved in the conflict, but would still feel the pinch in economic terms. Likewise, anyone would feel a food shortage, if such were a consequence of this military movement.

Another concept that requires addressing is a theoretical model that has been called transnationalism.[133] In an early medieval context, it is wise to eschew any concept that involves "nationalism" because such is a comparatively modern concept and there is little evidence for it in any region of the early medieval world. However, the core principles are still applicable on a smaller scale. The theory holds that immigrants maintain their ties to their country of origin, mentally merging the two communities into a single entity. From this perspective, migrants are no longer simply removed from their homelands, but rather are free to cross back and forth across regional boundaries and between different cultures and social systems. They develop an

[132] Brettell, 103.
[133] Brettell, 104.

identity that spans regions and borders.[134] This is an aspect that is well known about migration, and that must be acknowledged even though it has no clear place in a model operating from a mainly "push/pull" paradigm. To return to an example from my first chapter, consider the North Sea trade between the Scandinavians and Picts in what is now Scotland, wherein reindeer antler is imported to certain regions from Scandinavia, where it was crafted into a distinctive type of combs.[135] Scandinavians made voyages and intended to return to their homelands during and before the Viking Age, but a good deal of local interaction took place, and these combs became a part of the indigenous culture. Other accounts are known of certain Vikings, such as Sigurd of Orkney and Thorstein the Red, who immigrated to northern Britain (later called "Scotland") and began thinking of themselves in some sense as natives, while never totally relinquishing their identities as Norwegians.[136] The view from a transnationalist or transregional perspective would see these new immigrants not as responsible for societal deterioration, but as necessary for the growth of both societies. The exchange of culture is seen as developmental for both cultures, even given that a good deal of violence had initially occurred,[137] and that many of the Scandinavians were not permanent immigrants.

All of these causal factors focus primarily on economic factors on either a smaller or larger scale. It is well to consider also the role of ideology in movement. Certainly, this is clearly seen in the twentieth century, but it is also likely to have been a factor at least occasionally in the ancient and medieval worlds. It might be hypothesized that among societies in which male statuses and roles were largely determined by success in war, and in which young

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[134] Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc-Szanton, "Towards a Definition of Transnationalism: Introductory Remarks and Research Questions," in idem, eds. *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration: Race, Class, Ethnicity, and Nationalism Reconsidered* (New York: The New York Academy of Sciences, 1992), ix.
[135] See Chapter 1.
[136] *Orkneyinga Saga*, translated by Hermann Palsson and Paul Edwards (London: Penguin Books, 1978), 26-27.
[137] The same source narrates several examples of violence between the newcomers and the indigenous Scots, for example in Chapters 5 and 10, pages 27-8 and 35-6, respectively.

males therefore actively sought opportunities for conflict, the cumulative effects of sustained glory-seeking might lead to a significant outward migration.[138] One example of just such a migratory pattern is described by Julius Caesar in *De Bello Gallico* concerning the migration of the tribe of the Helvetii in 58 BC from their homelands in western Switzerland to a region in Gaul.[139] It was an operation involving perhaps as many as 300,000 or more people and one that was occurring as Caesar watched.[140] He knew the names of their leaders (Orgetorix, Casticus, Dumnorix, Daviciacus, and others) who had made the decision to migrate and was familiar with the discussion about doing it. He described their reasons for migrating as being that their territory was high, remote, and bounded on all sides and therefore restricted their ability to make war on their neighbors (ideological motive), and that considering both the size of their population (economic motive) and their reputation for war and bravery (ideological motive) they felt that they had too small a territory.[141] Caesar also ascribes to them a certain sense of greed in seizing the kingship of their respective nations, another ideological motive and possibly an economic one as well.[142] They burned their twelve fortified towns and about four hundred villages,[143] migrated across a largely hostile Gaul in defiance of a watching Roman army, partially for economic gain but partially also because it was a glorious thing to do.[144] It was, in short, a mass migration that took place for multiple reasons.

Migration, as I have shown, is a complex matter. The reason to migrate for most people is economic in nature, but can also be ideological, or can be a combination of the two. There are

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[138] David W. Anthony, "Migration in Archaeology: The Baby and the Bathwater," *American Anthropologist* 92 (1990): 898.
[139] Julius Caesar, *De Bello Gallico,* translated by Carolyn Harrington (Oxford: University Press, 1996, Book 1.2-20), 3-14.
[140] Timothy Champion, "Mass Migration in Later Prehistoric Europe," in Per Sörbom, ed. *Transport Technology and Social Change* (Stockholm: Tekniska Museet, 1980), 40.
[141] Anthony, 899.
[142] Caesar, 1.2-3, 3-5.
[143] Caesar, 1.5, 5.
[144] Anthony, 899.

outside forces that must also be taken into consideration, such as developments in the larger, world economy and a special consideration, transnationalism, that postulates return migration and cultural exchange. One more factor needs to be mentioned, and that is that migration does not always occur born of the free will of the individual. Sometimes the decision to migrate is made by group leaders, as in the example of the Helvetii. Children are often forced to accept the decisions of their parents to migrate (again visible in the Helvetii example). Others might be impressed into military service (possibly seen in the Roman legions example), expelled from their homeland (losers of conflicts), or taken into slavery (often losers of conflicts). With the additional consideration of these factors, most if not all migration factors are accounted for. All of these examples together begin to illustrate what was happening in time of the Germanic Migration era and in the later Scandinavian Viking Age.

Migration Patterns, Migrant Norms and Assimilation

Cross-community migrants are usually rather small in numbers, at least from the outset, in proportion to that of their home society.[145] Most tend to be young adults, with the majority of these being young males.[146] Aside from this youthful tendency there is no profile of what might be called the typical migrant. But there are different broad categories that individuals might fit into, and I offer a simple typology of five commonly used terms to describe most of such migrants: settlers, colonists, sojourners, itinerants, and invaders.[147] These may be briefly

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[145] Manning, 8.

[146] Frank Thistlethwaite, "Migration from Europe Overseas in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," in *Population Movements in Modern European History*, ed. Herbert Möller (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964), 90. A study conducted by examining the records of Norwegian immigrants into the United States during the nineteenth century confirmed the youthful nature of the immigrants. The study found that between 86 and 95% of the immigrants into the United States during the period for which records are available were under the age of 40. This of course only applies to the statistics available from immigration officials and ship registers. It cannot account for those who may not have been recorded, but the percentages of youthful immigrants in the available records are strikingly high. There is no way to compare these statistics with ancient or medieval statistics, since none of these exist, but there is nothing to suggest any differences in demographic behavior during the early medieval period.

[147] Modified from Manning, 8.

defined as follows: Settlers are those who move to join an existing community that is different from their own, with the intent of remaining with the new group. Colonists are similar to settlers, except that they are settling in an act of colonization of a new territory by their original home community. Sojourners are those moving to a new community for a specific purpose, with the intention of eventually returning to their original homeland. Itinerants move from community to community, but have no single home to which they expect to return. Invaders arrive as a group in a specific community with the intention of seizing control rather than simply joining the group.[148]

There is enough information available to suggest that there are general patterns or rules in determining the characteristics of migrants.[149] This is true regardless of which of the five categories the migrants would fall into under the typology above. The following table is one that I have created that shows what these primary characteristics are and the discussion that follows will clarify these characteristics further:

Table 2: Regular patterns of Migration

1. There are many reasons to migrate, but these are usually focused on the improvement of the economic or social position of the migrant.
2. Primary migration is more likely to be done by young adult males.
3. Migration occurs in informational stages.
4. Choice of migration often depends on previously settled kin or friends.
5. Some return migration almost always occurs.
6. Migration encourages further subsequent moves by the migrant.
7. Migration continues even after initial favorable conditions are no longer present.
8. The culture does not migrate, its people migrate and often absorb the new, local culture.

These trends cover different facets of observable behavior in migrating peoples. Several of these characteristic migratory trends, particularly the first two, have been discussed already in

[148] Manning, 8-9.
[149] David Anthony, "Prehistoric Migration as a Social Process," in J. Chapman and H. Hamerow, eds. *Migrations and Invasions in Archaeological Explanations* (London: BAR International Series 664, 1997), 22.

the preceding paragraphs. The importance of the third point cannot be overstated, and that is the ongoing importance of information in this process.[150] Pioneers, merchants, or other adventurers often make the first steps into new areas, and relay the information back upon their return. It follows that these accounts can play a vital role in developing the "pull" factors that can lead to immigration. Such persons who begin this process are often the first in a link that is sometimes called "chain" migration, which will cause others to migrate to the same areas that are being described, sometimes "leapfrogging" over areas that are in between.[151] This in turn leads to the creation of cross-community networks, which often involve movement into regions inhabited by friends and relatives who intend to help the potential new migrants in moving to the area.[152] If the settlers can send word that they are safe and prosperous, others will likely follow.

Migration is seldom if ever a straight shot, permanent move from one locale to another. There is frequently a tendency to continue moving once the process of moving has begun. The best predicator of migration is another migratory move within the last year; that is to say, migration often begets migration.[153] The process of reverse migration is one that must also be acknowledged—the tendency of migrants to return to their place of origin. Some amount of reverse migration always occurs, frequently a number as high as one-third or even more.[154] While this tends to suggest fewer people arriving at a settlement site, it can also serve as a stimulus, since these returning people can give reports to further stimulate others to consider migration. This type of continual movement can also be a powerful method of spreading, for example, culture and language, and may potentially have a tremendous effect on the place-names

[150] Anthony, "Migration in Archaeology," 902-903.
[151] Anthony, "Prehistoric Migration," 26.
[152] Manning, 9.
[153] Anthony, "Prehistoric Migration," 26.
[154] Thistlethwaite, 74; Imre Ferenczi, "An Historical Study of Migration Statistics," *International Labour Review* XX (1929): 374-375; Anthony, "Migration in Archaeology," 897-898.

of the new region. Finally, it must be pointed out that most people who emigrate are not typical of their homelands in general. They tend to be young, and may be seen as "excess people" in some sense. Although they take their culture with them, the statement that culture does not migrate is a true one.[155] It is only a specific segment of the population that will migrate, and these people tend to operate with one proverbial foot in each culture, adapting as they continue to move along. These emigrants into the new land are often neither capable of nor interested in maintaining their old culture, language, and religion. This can be clearly seen in the case of death rituals and burial customs—these are frequently modified to fit the new homeland by the younger members of immigrant groups.[156]

The lands that migrants enter are not likely to be empty. The act of migration affects more than just the migrant community; it affects those already living in the new homeland. The migrants must always make efforts to learn the new customs and sometimes the language. Even after learning to communicate adequately, the migrant must still undergo a social initiation, joining and finding a place in the new community. This process of assimilation, variously known as "seasoning," "socialization," or "acculturation," is an essential step in the successful completion of any migration.[157] The way a person learns to fit in will be largely determined by personal beliefs and attitudes, as well as by those of the new hosts. Just as there is no profile of a typical migrant, there is no model that is able to predict all aspects of assimilation.[158] It may generally be assumed that relations will be better or worse based upon the attitude of the original inhabitants towards newcomers, the newcomers' attitude towards the native dwellers, and the

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[155] Anthony, "Migration in Archaeology," 908.
[156] See Chapter 4.
[157] Manning, 8.
[158] Charles Price, "The study of assimilation," in *Migration*, ed. J.A. Jackson (Cambridge: University Press, 1969), 235.

overall size of the immigrant population.[159] It would seem to follow that smaller groups are more likely to be persecuted, but also that they are easier to assimilate. Large groups are often viewed as a threat and are thus harder to assimilate, at least *en masse.*

Other factors may impact individual migrants on a personal level. One factor is the person's occupation—how well does this fit in? What is their attitude? Are they likeable or not? Are they social or not? How do they spend leisure time? What are their religious affiliations, if any? How strong are the migrant's cultural affinities to the old homeland? How well can he/she speak the new language, if it is different? All of these and other similar factors would all play a role in acceptance or rejection in the new homeland. The greater the two cultures are in similarity to begin with, the higher the chance of success. In the case of the Scandinavians in Anglo-Saxon England, the differences were not terribly pronounced in most cases, so accommodation probably took place quickly.[160] Assimilation, however, was slower owing to the large number of immigrants, but probably varied by region. In the Eastern Irish Sea Region, there were relatively few Scandinavian settlers, but there were also relatively few natives to the region, suggesting that the overall pattern may have held fairly evenly with the rest of England.

In summary, the proposed model is a very functionalist model that draws from the "push/pull" paradigm and is thus able to incorporate many things. It has as its prime mover economic considerations on the part of the migrants, but takes into account the larger, outside economic and ideological forces. While there is no profile of a typical migrant, there are a number of characteristics that are typical, including most of all youth, and a preponderance of the male gender in the earliest stage of migration. There are five types of cross-cultural migration, and there are a number of predictable characteristics of any type of move. The model accounts

[159] Price, 185-188.
[160] On linguistic differences and comparison, see Chapter 3. On burial customs, see Chapter 4.

for these as being normative and ongoing, since reverse migration is also a known occurrence. Finally, assimilation or cultural negotitation must take place once the migrants have arrived (regardless of method) in order to complete a successful migration. How this is done is highly variable, but is dependent largely upon the attitudes of the migrants as well as the natives of the new lands, and also on the numbers of immigrants into the region.

The Germanic Migration Period

The Scandinavian Viking expansion is the last phase of the outward movement of the Germanic peoples during the Germanic Migration Period. This period is itself is lengthy, dating hundreds if not thousands of years prior to the arrival of the Vikings on the scene in Europe. It is as a whole a period that neither is easily definable, nor is there present a plethora of reliable contemporary written evidence. As a result, there have been many scholarly opinions over the last two centuries of study of the period, and these have often been defined by nationalism and in terms of nationalist rhetoric.[161] The hard facts, however, are rare and tend to remain elusive. Who were these people, called *germani* by Roman writers? Why do they migrate? How did they see themselves? Even questions as basic as these are difficult to answer without inviting controversy, to say nothing of more difficult questions, such as what their society was like, what trades routes were used and exactly how they related to their neighbors.

To attempt to say much of anything about the *germani*, it is necessary to begin with their discovery by the ancient writers. The Celts and other peoples were known already in antiquity prior to the arrival of knowledge concerning another group, the Germanic, relative latecomers on the scene, into the written record. The first Mediterranean observer with any claim to the discovery of this new people was a Greek named Pytheas of Massilia, who sailed around Britain

[161] See Geary's study, already cited above.

and along the coast, possibly rounding Jutland and sailing into the Baltic, in about 320 BC.[162] He is the first whose writings are known to make a distinction between Celts and Germans. After Pytheas, there was a virtual blank for more than a century, until a Syrian Greek philosopher, Poseidonius, distinguished the two groups from one another, but did so without saying anything specific about the Germanic peoples.[163] Following this, there is again another large gap in time that is not filled until the time of Caesar, who wrote about at least a certain segment of the Germanic groups during his conquest of Gaul. His account must be accepted as the earliest coherent picture existing of their society, although it is not a complete picture, dealing as it does with only a small part of the Germanic regions. It has also been demonstrated that in some instances, Caesar was working from second-hand information, and did not always know or understand what he was writing about.[164] His motives for writing have also received a lot of scholarly scrutiny, but certainly did not include dispassionate ethnographic study.[165] Caesar's information is limited to what he saw himself in the Rhine valley and immediately to the east of it, and he knew of only a few certain tribes, the Suebi, Tencteri, Usipetes, Ubii and Menapii, all of whom were in the immediate region.[166] The largest and most powerful of these, the Suebi, led by Ariovistus, had been establishing themselves west of the Rhine, and indeed this was the pretext Caesar used to begin intervening in Gaulish affairs.[167] The image that Caesar creates of the Germanic peoples is not a positive one. He emphasized that the Rhine valley was

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[162] Pytheas described a journey to a land of natural phenomena; the midnight sun, late sunsets, frozen seas, tidal waters, and amber freely lying around on the beaches. His stories were scarcely believable in his own day. Barry Cunliffe, *The Extraordinary Voyage of Pytheas the Greek* (London: Penguin Books, 2001).
[163] The works of Poseidonius are now lost, being mentioned only in the works of other writers. They have, however, been collected into a modern edition. See L. Edelstein and I.G. Kidd, eds. *Posidonius, The Fragments* (Cambridge: University Press, 1972).
[164]Peter S. Wells, "The Iron Age," in *European Prehistory: A Survey*, ed. Sarunas Milisauskas (New York: Kluwer Academic, 2002), 363-364.
[165] Malcolm Todd, *The Early Germans*, 2nd edition. (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 3.
[166] Caesar, 4.1-5, 69-72. Caesar refers casually to the "Germans" throughout his work, and sometimes mentions some details. There is not a single book or chapter that includes all of this information.
[167] Caesar, 4.16, 77.

the boundary between the *germani* and Gauls. He also claimed the two were greatly different from one another, with the Gauls being violent and warlike but amenable to civilized life, while the Germans appear as primitive and savage, and worse, numerous and strong enough to invade the Roman provinces and perhaps Italy itself. This provided a powerful weapon for him to use in his justification of the invasion of Gaul.

There are a few more records mentioning them in passing before the *Germania* of Tacitus was published in 98 AD.[168] This treatise is the most complete ethnographic study of the Germanic peoples surviving from antiquity. Although not everything written by Tacitus has survived a thorough historiographical study, it is the best surviving account, and it seems clear that he was mostly well-informed in his writing. The *Germania* does have certain faults, for instance, it relies on old information, while saying nothing of the forty or so years of relations between Rome and the *germani* prior to its publication.[169] But its time frame refers only to the earlier part of the first century, and there are further gaps lasting centuries. There is some information from the fourth century from Ammianus Marcellinus, particularly concerning the Alamanni and the Franks, but Ammianus was writing primarily of the *germani* as enemies of Rome.[170] There is little else of note appearing to fill in the gaps before Jordanes in the sixth century.

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[168] Most notable is Strabo's *Geography*, which mentions the realm of Germania in greater detail than does Caesar. *Geography of Strabo*, translated by Horace Leonard Jones. Loeb Classical Library, Vol. 1-8 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916-1932). There is also a lost work of Pliny the Elder, the *Bella Germaniae*, written by Pliny during the wars in the time of Augustus, which doubtless contained much ethnographic information that would be valuable. Most important is Cornelius Tacitus, *The Agricola and the Germania*, translated by H. Mattingly and revised by S. A. Handford (London: Penguin Books, 1970).

[169] Todd, 6-7. This refers to the first edition of his monograph; he does not discuss the point in his second edition.

[170] For a detailed study, see John Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 306-332; Ammianus Marcellinus, *History*, translated by John C. Rolfe. Loeb Classical Library, Vol. 1-3 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950-58).

Jordanes for his part offered some ethnographic information for his people, the Goths, as well as others of the time. Perhaps most significantly is that he wrote of the origins of his people, or what he believed them to be at any rate, and that of other tribes:

> Now from this island of Scandza, as from a hive of races or a womb of nations, the Goths are said to have come forth a long time ago under their king, Berig by name. As soon as they disembarked from their ships and set foot on the land, they straightway gave their name to the place. And even today it is said to be called Gothiscandza.[171]

The island of Scandza certainly seems to be the origin of the name Scandinavia and Jordanes lists a number of tribes, some otherwise unknown, that he said had their origins in that part of northern Europe. He claims that the Danes drove the Heruls from their homes, and claims further that there were (or had been) many other tribes, including the Grannii, Augandzi, Eunixi, Taetel, Rugi, Arochi, and Ranii all in the same general area.[172]

With a survey of the written sources, the presence of these peoples has been verified from antiquity, although as peoples they doubtless preceded notice by the earliest writers. Who exactly they were and what defined a member of the *germani* is still a matter that is hotly debated. There is no evidence that they called themselves "Germani" or their lands "Germania"; these were terms coined by Mediterranean writers and can be applied with no certainty further back than the time of Poseidonius.[173] The linguistic meanings of the word "Germanus" as well as its origin are unknown, but it does not seem to have been in use among the peoples themselves, and it is not even clear which language supplied the name—Germanic, Celtic, Latin and Illyrian are all possibilities.[174] Tacitus suggests that the first groups of these people to cross into Gaul were called *Tungri* and also *Germani*, and that the name of this single tribe, "not the

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[171] Jordanes, *The Origin and Deeds of the Goths*, translated by Charles C. Mierow (Princeton: University Press, 1908), 4.25, 7-8.
[172] Jordanes, 3.24, 7.
[173] Todd, 8.
[174] Todd, 9.

entire race", came into general use to describe them all.[175] It can reasonably be assumed that a member of any of these groups, if questioned, would identify himself in terms of his tribe rather than by using the term "Germanus", in much the same way as modern American Indian tribes describe themselves today as being of a specific tribe rather than simply "Indians" or "Native Americans".

Traditionally, a linguistic basis has been given as the common denominator among the *germani*. Commonality of language was what set the Germanic tribes apart from tribes that might be differently categorized. This is, however, a contentious issue, and there are scholars on either side of it.[176] Opposing the mainstream is Herwig Wolfram, who has challenged this view based on the inconclusive nature of some ancient writers.[177] He also challenges those who would follow in the footsteps of older, nationalistic thinkers such as the philologist/archaeologist Gustaf Kossinna, who claimed generally to be able to find sharply distinct areas of artifacts that corresponded with tribes known from the ancient writers.[178] Wolfram argues that, based on book two of Tacitus, the Germanic people could not agree on all of the lines of descent of the gods Tuisto and Mannus, from whom they claimed descent, and thus did not constitute a united group of people.[179] He claims also that ethnographers had to drop language as a consideration at all as a criterion of ethnic classification, since in the case of nomads, the people themselves are

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[175] Tacitus, *Germania,* 2, 102-3.

[176] From those supporting the idea may be found scholars of German/Austrian, French, and English extraction. Reinhard Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung* (Köln: Verlag Böhlau, 1961), 152; Kurt F. Reinhardt, *Germany: 2000 Years.* Vol. 1 (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co, 1971), 3; Lucien Musset, *Les Invasions: Les Vagues Germaniques* (Paris: Presses Universitaires De France, 1965), 48; Malcolm Todd, 11-13.

[177] Herwig Wolfram, *The Roman Empire and its Germanic Peoples* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), 3-7.

[178] Gustaf Kossinna, *Ursprung und Verbreitung der Germanen in vor- und frühgeschichtlicher Zeit.* 2nd edition (Leipzig: Curt Kabitzsch, 1927), 297. Kossinna believed and wrote many times that cultural remains that occurred in sharply delineated areas marked the boundaries of the ancient Germanic tribes, which could then be matched up with tribes known from the historical sources. On this basis, he was also prepared to make territorial claims in his own time. For a recent discussion of Kossinna, his methodology and criticism, see Peter Heather, "Ethnicity, Group Identity and Social Status," in *Franks, Northmen and Slavs,* ed. Ildar Garipzanov, Patrick Geary, and Przemyslaw Urbanczyk (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2008), 22-26.

[179] Tacitus, *Germania,* 2, 102.

confusingly polyglot. Calling upon Ammianus Marcellinus once again, he concluded that scholars had to count on customs, weapons, and way of life when establishing classification.[180] The crux of his argument is that the term "Germanus" was highly variable and very much a Roman-based idea. It was taken over from the conquered Gauls and applied to the Alamanni and Franks, the dominant tribes of the region, and then in turn to others, making those to the east of the Rhine and north of the Danube into Germans. Later groups such as the Goths and Vandals were differentiated from the Germans and often given other names. The Scandinavians under this classification were not considered Germans, although they were considered close relatives.[181] While Wolfram's argument holds some merit, in the end it is no more provable than those that he seeks to challenge. The claim of Tacitus that the *germani* did not share the same creation story is hardly surprising for so large a group as he was attempting to describe, and it need not subtract much from the concept of a distinct people. The same passage implies that this was a known and accepted difference. Wolfram's use of Marcellinus is perhaps worse, since Marcellinus had never seen the peoples of central Asia, and he proceeded to accuse them of cannibalism and wearing the skins of victims and claiming that they "feed like wild beasts."[182] It cannot be assumed that cultural bias towards a group deemed less civilized than one's own can be taken out of the equation. Even if the theory of the term "Germanus" spreading to peoples once they are known to Rome is true, or the claim that the *germani* are a polyglot group including speakers of non-Germanic languages is true, it does little more than add some nuances to the argument. Wolfram seems overly enchanted by the value of Roman sources, suggesting that the Germanic peoples had little volition or will of their own save barbarism for its own sake

[180] Wolfram, 3-4; Ammianus Marcellinus XXI, 2.17, 391. It should be pointed out that the peoples being described in this passage are Asiatic, not Germanic, although nomadism might be expected to be similar.
[181] Wolfram, 5.
[182] Ammianus Marcellinus, XXXI, 2.12-25, 386-395.

(and even the Roman sources do not go this far), which is a dubious position that flies in the face of common sense. While he attempts to argue away language as a unifying force, he does not postulate another unifying force for them prior to Roman contact. Language had to have been the largest unifying factor among these tribes. Modern theories suggest that human communities are always differentiated by language groupings, regardless of the region in which they are present.[183]

What this language or series of languages may have been precisely remains a mystery. It is now widely considered that they fall into a category called Indo-European languages, which also includes Greek, Thracian, Phrygian, Armenian, Tocharian, Indo-Iranian, Anatolian, Slavic, Baltic, Celtic, Italic, Venetic, Messapic and Illyrian, as well as their descendents.[184] These languages all date to a common ancestor, called Indo-European, which is no longer extant and cannot be recreated with any degree of certainty, while the languages themselves in the group are dissimilar because they all are of different ages and at different stages of development. Germanic, for instance, was one of the last to develop, with its northern branch including Scandinavian speech not really recorded fully until the twelfth century.[185] It is not possible to locate the original speakers of the Indo-European tongue with precision, nor is it completely necessary to do this. How this language would spread is also not clear, and it is probably better to see proto-Germanic languages as a linguistic complex rather than a single language. This linguistic complex has left only traces today, but many tribes have been identified or postulated based on linguistic evidence, and it is clear that many of these groups are now long lost and some

[183] Manning, 3-4.
[184] J.P. Mallory, *In Search of the Indo-Europeans* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1989), 15.
[185] Todd, 13.

perhaps were even in the time of Jordanes.[186] In a recent study it has been concluded that linguistically there is some connection between the island of Götland, its ancient inhabitants, the *gutar*, and probably the later Goths.[187] What this connection might be is not totally clear but it should not be seen as proof that the island is a Gothic homeland.

Based on linguistic evidence and archaeological finds, it is probably safe to accept that the ancestors of the *germani* in the written sources can be traced back to the mid-first millennium BC.[188] This region was home to the North European Lowland culture area, an area that gave rise to many sub-Areal variants, including the Jastorf, Harpstedt, Pomeranian and similar cultures that encompassed Scandinavia and the northern German and the Frisian lowlands.[189] There is a general impression of cultural stability in northern Germany and southern Scandinavia from the late Neolithic onward, but this is very problematic as an indicator of an ethnic continuum. These cultures arose from the collapse of the Northern Bronze Culture that had previously existed in the region, although the use of bronze implements was not at once abandoned.[190] An economic collapse suggests a social upheaval likely occurred, and this may possibly be related to the beginnings of the folk migration. However, the two are not necessarily related, and it is best not to try to push the beginnings of this proto-culture back further than can be reasonably inferred, nor is it wise to make generalizations about proto-Germanic culture or homelands based on assumptions.

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[186] For a thorough look at the prehistoric peoples specifically of Scandinavia identified linguistically, see Stefan Brink, "People and land in Scandinavia," in *Franks, Northmen and Slavs*, ed. Ildar H. Garipzanov, Patrick J. Geary and Prezemyslaw Urbanczyk (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2008), 90.
[187] Brink, 90.
[188] Mallory, 86-87; Todd, 11.
[189] Ralph M. Rowlett, "The Iron Age North of the Alps," *Science* (12 July 1968): 131.
[190] Rowlett, 130.

Migration Causes and Accommodation

What was it that caused these people to abandon their home lands and in many cases accompanied by their livestock and all their movable possessions, to look for new homes? Ultimately, Lucien Musset concluded, "we shall probably never know."[191] In keeping with the model that I have created, it follows that there are a number of factors or motives that can be seen at work. There are a number of factors that could be potential "pull" factors leading these peoples to spread out into a veritable diaspora covering most of Europe.[192] There were known internal weaknesses of the Roman Empire and, even in its heyday, it was probably not possible to close off the borders completely. The prospects of raiding for goods or settling in the warm Mediterranean climate may have been factors drawing the *germani* forward. Potentially, lust for adventure or ambition by warlike leaders bent on expansion could provide ideological motives, and some of this can be seen in the writings of Caesar that have already been referenced. Expansion could also be peaceful, as petitioners to settle in Roman territory sometimes asked rather than invaded.[193] Overpopulation in the northern realms could have worked as a "push" factor, if this in fact occurred. Another probable "push" factor is the western migrations of the Alans and later the Huns, and the subsequent defeat of the Germanic tribes of the east by these forces in battles for territory.[194] Still another possible motive could have been sociological; the *germani* were supposed to have had the custom of *ver sacrum,* which obliged all of the young

[191] Musset, 50; idem *The Germanic Invasions,* 8.
[192] The idea of diaspora is an interesting one. It is widely held to be a modern concept, applying specifically to the Jews of the Old Testament Era and their external relationships throughout time. There are, however, multiple forms of diasporas that can occur. See Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997).
[193] Wolfram, 43-4.
[194] Wolfram, 79-87. The population pressure that occurred as a result of the Hunnic migration can be seen in Peter Heather, "The Huns and the end of the Roman Empire in western Europe," *English Historical Review* 110 (1995): 4-41.

men of a certain generation to go forth and seek their fortunes by force of arms.[195] This custom, however, was as much necessity as tradition, since the barbarian economy was so inefficient and poor that arable land was not used properly, and thus it became necessary to continually search out new lands. There is one final factor that may have constituted a kind of "push", and that is that the *germani* were usually in a state of war. The enemy was not necessarily someone who lived on another side of a border, but could be much closer to home—the people in another tribe or even a rival clan or family.[196] Hunger and starvation were thus possible and perhaps usually nearby, without resorting to speculation about bad harvests and overpopulation. This idea of a people constantly at war also would explain a good deal of movement by armies or individuals seeking some advantage. It is probable that there were "push" and "pull" factors working together here, perhaps nuanced by individual and tribal or clan will. At its root, the causes of the expansion can be plausibly postulated, but no more.

While it is possible to trace the movements of the Germanic Migration Period with some detail and to link the Germanic peoples in some sense with the fall of the Western Empire, it is not my focus or intention to do this here. There is a good deal of discussion about the techniques and methods of accommodation of these migrants in the Empire during its latter years, as well as afterwards in the discussion of the process of nation forming in the early medieval period.[197] While this subject is important, it is outside of the scope of this project. To this point, the discussion has dealt with the origins of the *germani* and historiographical issues associated with this discovery, the linguistic basis on which they are identified and the associated problem with

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[195] Wolfram, 7.
[196] Wolfram, 7-8.
[197] Walter Goffart, *Barbarians and Romans, A.D. 418-584: the techniques of accommodations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980); see also generally Walter Pohl, ed. *Kingdoms of the Empire* (Leiden: Brill, 1997) and more recently Hans-Werner Goetz, Jörg Jarnut and Walter Pohl, eds. *Regna and Gentes: The Relationship between Late Antique and Early Medieval Peoples and Kingdoms in the Transformation of the Roman World* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

this approach, and has given some possible reasons for the migration of these peoples into what had been Roman territory on the continent. There is no doubt that these people existed as a distinct and identifiable group. But it is not with the continent that this study is chiefly concerned; it is with the British Isles and the last group of Germanic peoples to reach it, the Vikings. The Vikings were not, however, the first Germanic peoples to arrive in Britain. They were preceded by some close relatives, those who for the sake of convenience are often called simply the Anglo-Saxons.

The Anglo-Saxon Conquest and Settlement of Britain

The conquest and settlement of Britain is full of controversy concerning most every issue and ranging in scope from macro to micro history. But it is a topic worth examining, since the England that the Scandinavian Vikings would encounter was itself a mixture of cultures, with a Romano-British element but also with a much older element, and also a culture coming from the Germanic peoples, including some from Scandinavia before the accepted beginning of the Viking Age.

Traditionally, England is believed to have been conquered and colonized by three main Germanic tribes, the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes. According to Bede, this was a fairly straightforward matter, and he placed them as follows:

> These new-comers were from the three most formidable races of Germany, the Saxons, Angles and Jutes. From the Jutes are descended the people of Kent and the Isle of Wight and those in the province of the West Saxons opposite the Isle of Wight who are called Jutes to this day. From the Saxons—that is, the country now known as the land of the Old Saxons—came the East, South, and West Saxons. And from the Angles—that is, the country known as Angulus, which lies between the provinces of the Jutes and Saxons and is said to remain unpopulated to this day—are descended the East and Middle Angles, the Mercians, all of the Northumbrian stock (that is, those people living north of the river Humber), and the other English peoples. Their first chieftains are said to have been the brothers Hengist and Horsa. The latter was subsequently killed in battle against the

> Britons, and was buried in east Kent, where the monument bearing his name still stands.[198]

There were very probably other peoples involved in this process too, most notably the Frisians.[199] Bede suggests this in another passage, claiming that the Angles and Saxons derive their common origin from other tribes of Germania, including the Frisians, Rugians, Danes, Huns, Old Saxons, and Boructuars, besides "many other races in that region who still observe pagan rites."[200] Taking this statement at face value for the moment, it raises the question of whether or not archaeology can be of any help in verifying any of these claims. Archaeology seems on the whole to confirm Bede's variety, and even to suggest that it perhaps does not go far enough, as more evidence has turned up. There were bodies discovered in Kent dressed as Franks, and after some controversy, it now seems likely that those bodies dressed as Franks were really in fact Franks, not Jutes that had somehow assumed Frankish identity.[201] The north German cremation ritual was introduced into eastern England, along with a number of artifacts originating from the same area.[202] Jutes of the sixth century used a type of pottery similar to that found in Jutland, but not elsewhere. Even more surprisingly, there were women in eastern and northern England buried wearing wrist-clasps of a type that is otherwise known only in

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[198] Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, translated by Leo Sherley-Price and revised by R. E. Latham (London: Penguin Books, 1968), I.15, 63.

[199] The evidence for the Frisians migrating *en masse* to Britain is virtually non-existent, although some Frisian presence is likely. For a review of the evidence, see Rolf H. Bremmer Jr. "The Nature of the Evidence for a Frisian Participation in the *Adventus Saxonum*," in *Britain 400-600: Language and History*, ed. Alfred Bammesberger and Aflred Wollmann, (Heidelberg: Universitätesverlag, 1990), 353-371.

[200] Bede, V.9, 278.

[201] There are a lot of problems associated with using archaeology to determine the extent and nature of settlement in this period; many are related to the social structure of the region. This involves interpretation, with one theory suggesting that newcomers adjust to the area they live in by adopting native dress, while the other tends to look for specific artifacts associated with specific cultures as an indicator of settlement. Under this theory, Franks could be expected to dress as Franks wherever they are found. Edward James, *Britain in the First Millennium* (London: Arnold, 2001), 108.

[202] Guy Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West, 376-568* (Cambridge: University Press, 2007), 387.

Norway.[203] Probably, these were a relic of a migration across the North Sea in the latter fifth century that had gone entirely unrecorded. And most spectacularly, at least one military leader and his followers possibly came to East Anglia from Sweden. The Uppland region of Sweden had a custom of ship burial under mounds in the earth that was common in this region but virtually unknown anywhere else. One such burial was discovered at Sutton Hoo in Suffolk, wherein were found numerous items including a Swedish helmet and shield.[204] The Sutton Hoo burial could mean a number of things—migration, raiding or trade, or possibly a dynastic link between East Anglia and a tribe from the region of Uppland. My purpose here is not to discuss this find at length, but rather to suggest a possible connection between the Anglo-Saxons and their possible contemporaries in southeastern Sweden, which would strengthen an argument already made, namely that the Scandinavians and Anglo-Saxons were not unknown to one another before the advent of the Viking Age.

The evidence for some of these groups is fairly minimal. There is but a single word from Bede on the Rugians. A few Norwegian wrist-clasps and the Sutton Hoo burial do not necessarily indicate migration, and certainly not mass migration. Yet they are there, serving perhaps as hints of elements of migration. Taken together all of the evidence is enough to suggest a large migration from the Continent in the fifth and sixth centuries. The reasons for and the nature of this migration are less well understood. The migration might be viewed in terms of the sending areas and the receiving area, Britain, but doing so is to proceed without the benefit of context. The correct context is that the North Sea was not really a barrier, but rather a conduit, that allowed access between many of these areas for easy movement and migration. It is also wrong to assume that Britain was the sole area receiving Saxon immigrants. Saxons also

[203] John Hines, "The becoming of the English: identity, material culture and language in early Anglo-Saxon England," *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 7 (1994): 52-53.
[204] Angela Care Evans, *The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial* (London: British Museum Press), 1994.

migrated into Gaul and elsewhere on the continent.[205] Even with Saxon movement established it remains to ask, why migrate to Britain? Like most areas, Britain already had people living in it, and migration to areas on land would still have been easier than a sea voyage to Britain.

There were both "push" and "pull" factors that led to a mass migration to Britain. The role of the Huns has already been mentioned generally in the westward movement of the *germani* although there is no evidence that the Hunnic push had anything directly to do with the settlement of Britain.[206] The primary factor pushing the migrants out was probably some kind of rupture or break in the Saxon confederacy. It has been suggested that an immediate cause for this rupture was a breakdown of Roman Imperial authority along the border regions, the *limes*, to which many of the Germanic tribes were intimately linked via trade for luxury status goods.[207] The crisis occurred not for the Franks who were nearest the border, but for the critical mass of tribes behind them, that could no longer receive enough gold and other goods upon which political authority rested. Such destabilization may have been relatively minor, but perhaps was enough to precipitate the crisis, in the event sending some Saxons to Britain while others colonized elsewhere on the continent. A final factor that bears mentioning is that there may have been a geophysical consideration as well: Scandinavia was rising while north Germany was sinking, leading to the condition that, by the late Roman period, there seems to have been frequent and severe flooding of the North Sea coastal areas from which the Angles and the Saxons came.[208] Salt water from this flooding would naturally be damaging to any crops that

[205] Halsall, 387-388; Edwards, 110.
[206] In fact, based on the passage in Bede, the Huns do not appear at all as enemies of the Saxons or others in their confederacy, but rather seem to be a part of it.
[207] Halsall, 389. This explanation is as good as any, although the basis of it is little more than speculation. Halsall, like Wolfram, seems to place a very high value on the proximity of Romans to the growth of understandable civilization.
[208] Edwards, 109. Halsall counters, page 388, that similar conditions may be found in England and that this was thus not a real factor. To that I would counter that conditions in England would not have been as well known, nor are they likely to have seemed as desperate as conditions closer to home.

were planted, as well as to animal life in the region. Bede's claim that the area of Angulus remained uninhabited seems to take on a new life in this context. There are several dozen cemeteries between the Elbe and the Weser from the fourth and fifth centuries that have parallels in fifth century East Anglia, but these all seem to have been abandoned in the fifth century. Abandonment did not happen in either Saxony or Jutland, where settlements continued into the early medieval period.[209] All of this tends to confirm Bede's point: the Angles came over in such numbers as to depopulate their homeland. Exactly how large these numbers were is another matter, although they seem hardly able to account for all of the population growth in Britain during the fifth century. But it is for this tribe and not the Saxons or the Jutes that the country of England is named.

While these were factors providing impetus to the Saxon and Angle migration, there were also factors that combined to "pull" or draw them towards England.[210] One of these is the vacuum created in Britain with the withdrawal of the Roman forces and the subsequent shift in

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[209] Edwards, 109.

[210] It seems clear that the Angles, Saxons and Jutes were the prime movers in the settlement of England, even though the presence of Frisians, Norwegians, *et. al.* have been mentioned as being likely present as well. The Jutes are the most problematic of the three, but were probably numerous and culturally similar to the former two tribes. The group is distinct from the others in the writings of Bede, but has very few documentary references elsewhere. Archaeologically, it is also not terribly distinct, as the example of being misidentified with the Franks has already shown. It is possible that they were Jutes from Jutland as suggested in their name, thus making them a Danish people presumably distinct from the 'Danes' mentioned elsewhere. They would thus be speakers of a North Germanic dialect, but no traces of this have been found in Kent to suggest a linguistic element was introduced of this variety. It is possible that the colonists to whom Bede refers were a West Germanic people who merely borrowed the name of the Jutes; and it is also possible that the term "Jutes" could refer in a generic sense to any north Germanic raiders, just as the term "Danes" frequently was used at a later date to refer to any group of Vikings, not necessarily one from Denmark. It is possible that the name "Jute" may have been used to describe some sort of hybrid Franco-Saxon culture, yet the distinctive features found in Kent are not found in either of the other areas identified by Bede as inhabited by Jutes, the Isle of Wight and Hampshire. It seems on balance that Bede knew little of the Jutes except their name and where they settled. But they were probably similar to the Saxons and Angles in many respects. Gildas suggests that Hengist and Horsa were the sons of Jutes, making leaders of the early coalition of colonists Jutes. For a good discussion of this point and the Jutes in general, see Geoffrey Hindley, *A Brief History of the Anglo-Saxons* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2006), 14-16. A fascinating study of the evidence for the origins of all three groups can be found in Don Henson, *The Origin of the Anglo-Saxons* (Norfolk, England: Anglo-Saxon Books, 2006). Older but also valuable is Musset, especially pages 96-100 of the English translation. Also interesting is Edwards, 110-111, concerning their possible links to Scandinavian design and Frankish overlordship.

political control. An equally important "pull" factor is the fact that, in contradiction to what Bede thought, Saxon warriors and settlers had been arriving in England for some years already. Much of the evidence for this claim comes from the time of Gildas in the earlier fifth century, a time of great crisis in early Britain.[211] It may have been at this time that Saxon mercenaries were originally introduced into Britain, in order to shore up the island's defenses in the absence of the usurper/ruler Marcus Maximus. While it is true that little is known about the drama leading to the collapse of central Roman authority in Britain, a bit more is known about the final throes, thanks in large part to the Byzantine historian Zosimus. According to this writer, this ending came during the period of 406-10, wherein a usurper named Marcus Maximus was set up to rule in Britain.[212] Marcus was soon murdered, and followed by another usurper called Gratian, who was killed by his own troops, and then a third called Constantine III. On the last day of 406, the Vandals, Alans, and Sueves had crossed the frozen Rhine and broke loose into Gaul. Constantine, then in Gaul, stemmed the tide briefly and for a while extended his authority into Spain, but in 411 was executed as a usurper by the Emperor Honorius. In the meantime, Britain was attacked by a larger force of invaders, possibly Picts. According to Zosimus:

> They reduced the inhabitants of Britain and some of the Gallic peoples to such straits that they revolted from the Roman Empire, no longer submitted to Roman law, and reverted to their native customs. The Britons, therefore, armed themselves and ran many risks to ensure their own safety and free their cities from the attacking barbarians. The whole of Armorica and other Gallic provinces, in imitation of the Britons, freed themselves in the same way, by expelling the Roman magistrates and establishing the government they wanted.[213]

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[211] Gildas, *The Ruin of Britain and other works,* edited and translated by Michael Winterbottom (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1978).
[212] Zosimus, *New History,* translated by Ronald T. Ridley (Sydney: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1982), VI, 127-131.
[213] Zosimus, VI, 128-129.

This probably took place in 408 or 409. Zosimus adds that in 410, Honorius wrote to the cities of Britain telling them to take responsibility for their own defense.[214] A thorough discussion of this passage and its implications is outside the scope of this paper, but it serves as evidence of instability and a breakdown of imperial authority.

The arrival of the first Saxon mercenaries can be plausibly placed in this general time frame. This argument depends on the identification of the "proud tyrant" mentioned by Gildas as referring to Maximus, rather than to the semi-legendary character called "Vortigern" in Bede.[215] Archaeology places the arrival of the Saxons to about 430. However, it is assumed that the arrivals of at least some of them earlier, as *foederati*, occurred, since this was a standard practice at all points within the Empire; that is, the drafting of native levies into the legions either as regular or irregular units. Such persons placed in Britain were likely to adapt to an extent the local dress and customs, and thus would not necessarily appear as "Saxon" in the burial record.[216] So, it would appear that the first members of this group were invited, perhaps even ordered, to go into Britain and to set themselves up there.

For those following, it would appear that opportunism was the order of the day. The collapse of centralized authority in Britain created opportunities for settlement and perhaps political power that had ceased to exist on the Continent. The initial settlers of this group were aware of their fellows that had arrived as *foederati* and may have been relatives who were tempted to join their kinsmen in being a major force in Britain. There is also evidence at a point in time of some sort of rebellion led against the British noble leaders, and of their overthrow by

[214] Zosimus, VI.8, 130.
[215] Gildas, 23, 26; Bede I.15, 62, Hindley 14-16; Halsall, 197-9. The term "Vortigern" is likely an invention, so goes the argument, and identification with Maximus instead provides a more plausible case in lieu of the reorganization of defenses and the activities of the Imperial army on the Continent. Bede, in the same place, gives a date of 449 for the arrival of "Vortigern" into Britain.
[216] Halsall, 198.

the new arrivals. The story of the Anglo-Saxon conquest can be found in Bede, Gildas, and Nennius, with differing details and with some things being suspect, including "Vortigern's" invitation to the Saxons to come and help with defense, and this same leader's lustful desires for Hengist's young daughter.[217] Around this time, there were further troubles in the form of raiders termed Picts and "Irish" in Gildas, and it is here that Gildas gives a very rare chronological time frame of reference, since he says there was a letter sent to Flavius Aëtius in Gaul, begging for intervention against these raiders.[218] Aëtius had his hands full in Gaul, and was killed in 453, before he could come to the rescue of the Britons.[219] The majority of the settlers, including family units, would logically have followed after the time when this conquest had been completed, and this is exactly the time period when the majority of cemetery evidence suggests that the migration had taken place.

The conquest of Britain was in no sense peaceful, nor was the immediately subsequent settlement period likely to have been more peaceful.[220] All of the evidence suggests that, from the time of the revolt against the native authorities, the conquest was one of considerable violence. The Saxons had a reputation for warlike activities, as evidenced by the existence of the so-called Saxon Shore (*litus Saxonicum*), a system of defensive naval works rigged against them along the coasts of both Gaul and Britain. It had generally been successful; it had not been breached until 364, and was still holding out at the time of the *Notitia Dignitatum* in the early

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[217] Nennius, *British History and the Welsh Annals*, edited and translated by John Morris (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1980); *British History* 37-38, pages 28-29.

[218] Gildas, 20-21; pages 23-25. There may have been more than one appeal, estimated between the years of 446 and 453. See Halsall, 312. One version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* claims the year 443 for this appeal.

[219] For a general outline of the career and death of Aëtius, see Halsall, 236-255. It is certainly possible that Aëtius may not have had either the power or the inclination to help, even had he been given the chance to do so. There is also the question of the Huns, who were frequently employed by Aëtius, being willing and able to transport their horses across the channel and use them effectively in new terrain. His interference in Britain might alternatively have resulted in a different kind of conquest of the country, and probably this would have created another situation of which Gildas doubtless would not have approved.

[220] For an alternative view, see Wolfram, 240-247, who argues that the conquest took place within the context of Roman constitutional law. His chapter title is 'Britain Too Was Not Conquered', and he states plainly, page 240, that he believes the changes coming from Germanic settlers were largely peaceful throughout the Roman territories.

fifth century.[221] But by then, the Saxons gained a foothold at the major rivers in Gaul from the Seine to the Loire, and it is from here that many probably came to Britain, with others coming from the North Sea.[222] Further evidence of the ferocity of the Saxons is attested to in the writings of the poet Sidonius Apollinaris, who made a number of germane observations about both the Saxons and their boats. In a letter amongst his *Epistles*, Sidonius mentions their ferocity in language reminiscent of that used later in the Viking Age:

> That enemy surpasses all other enemies in brutality. He attacks unforeseen, and when foreseen he slips away; he despises those who bar his way, he destroys those whom he catches unawares; if he pursues, he intercepts; if he flees, he escapes. Moreover, shipwreck, far from terrifying them, is their training. With the perils of the sea they are not merely acquainted—they are familiarly acquainted; for since a storm, whenever it occurs lulls into security the object of their attack and prevents the coming attack from being observed by victims, they gladly endure dangers amid billows and jagged rocks, in the hope of achieving a surprise. Moreover…on the eve of their departure, they are accustomed to kill one in ten of their prisoners by drowning or crucifixion…the perpetrators of that unhallowed slaughter think it a religious duty to exact torture rather than ransom from a prisoner.[223]

Besides the documented ferocity of the Saxons, there is other evidence that the takeover may have been an unpleasant matter. There is evidence, postulated by genetic theorists based on genetic research but with an eye on documentary and archaeological material, that suggests the conquest by the Anglo-Saxons may have been "apartheid-like" in its relationship with the natives.[224] Their argument is based on early law codes of the Anglo-Saxons, but its crux is that there are a considerable number of people with a continental Y-chromosome in their genetic makeup. Many Anglo-Saxonists[225] currently believe that there existed a small, military elite

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[221] James Campbell, ed. *The Anglo-Saxons* (London: Penguin Books, 1982), 14-18.
[222] Wolfram, 244. Here he acknowledges the existence of these defenses, but seems to downplay their importance and the violence with which many Saxons arrived.
[223] Sidonius Apollinaris, *Carmina et Epistolae,* translated by W.B. Anderson. Loeb Classical Library,.Vol. 1-2 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936-1965), VIII, 7, 15-16, 431-433.
[224] Mark G. Thomas, Michael P.H. Stumpf and Heinrich Härke, "Evidence for an apartheid-like social structure in early Anglo-Saxon England," *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 273 (no. 1601) Oct. 22, 2006.
[225] Catherine Hills, *Origins of the English* (London: Duckworth, 2003), 36-39.

who achieved ascendancy and led from the top down rather than a mass migration, and this genetic argument is evidence that can support that assertion, possibly to a degree not imagined before.

The genetic argument is fairly complex, but it involves the comparison of Y-chromosome distribution patterns for central England, Wales, southern Denmark, north Germany and Norway. The study of Y-chromosome variation has indicated a substantial migration of Anglo-Saxon men into central England, with a striking similarity of Y-chromosome haplotypes in central England and Friesland, but dissimilarity between central England and north Wales. Using population-genetic models that incorporate both continuous gene flow and mass migration, they conclude that the data is best interpreted by suggesting a mass in-migration of Anglo-Saxon men into central England, but that this migration reached insignificantly into Wales. The mean of all estimates of introgression into England was over 50%, and sometimes well over, for males at the time period.

Explaining a high percentage such as this in terms of migration from the Continent alone would require migration on a mass scale, one-half million or more, which is between five and ten times the *highest* accepted estimates for England.[226] The argument put forward is that an "apartheid-like" situation came into existence, wherein the newcomers were completely dominant over the indigenous peoples, even though they were greatly outnumbered by them. Being of higher economic and social status granted a much higher likelihood of reproductive success, especially if it could be maintained over a number of generations.[227] It is postulated that

[226] See below.

[227] Supporting evidence can be found for other, similar situations. For instance, there were laws that forbid intermarriage between a dominant immigrant culture in both Visigothic France and Spain in the fifth and sixth centuries. Hagith Sivan, "The Appropriation of Roman Law in Barbarian Hands: 'Roman-Barbarian' Marriage in Visigothic Gaul and Spain," in *Strategies of Distinction*, Walter Pohl and Helmut Reimitz (Leiden: Brill, 1998, 192-203). Further, the Normans in eleventh and twelfth century England operated in a conquest society in which the native English and Welsh were afforded a lower legal status than the Normans, and intermarriage, where it

this lasted for fifteen generations, until the system began to break down in the seventh century. Outward manifestations of the system may have been found in the law codes of Ine of Wessex and Ethelbert of Kent, which spell out different legal statuses for natives and Saxons, and much higher rates of *wergild* that must be paid for injured Saxons than for "Welsh" or natives, although these were in the majority and presumably living side by side in most cases.[228]

The numbers involved in this migration into Britain are not known with absolute certainly, but are certainly an important consideration when talking of the conquest. Strictly speaking, the number of graves identified as "Anglo-Saxon" is quite small—on the order of 30,000 excavated graves with about 35,000 individuals present over a period of some three centuries.[229] Some debate has centered on the number of graves, which is undoubtedly quite large, that have not survived or have not been discovered.[230] This debate amounts to little more than trying to guess what cannot be known. Estimates for the total numbers coming to Britain during the fifth century typically range from 10,000 to 100,000, while numbers towards the lower end seem to be the most in vogue.[231] Since it has logically also been called into question[232] whether or not the "Anglo-Saxon" graves are in fact exclusively those of Anglo-Saxons, this number could be even smaller. In contrast, the population of Britain during the same time period is much larger, being estimated at around four million, at least at its height.[233]

There are many unresolved questions that bear mentioning if not further discussion in this paper. The evidence does not add up. The archaeological material does not equal the genetic

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happened, was usually between Norman men and English women. George Garnett, "*Franci et Angli:* the Legal Distinctions Between Peoples After the Conquest," *Anglo-Norman Studies* VIII (1985): 109-137.

[228] The law codes of Ine and Ethelbert can be located in Dorothy Whitelock, ed. *English Historical Documents I c. 500-1042*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 357-359, 364-372.

[229] Michael E. Jones, *The End of Roman Britain* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 26.

[230] Jones, 27.

[231] Edwards, 114.

[232] For a summary, see Edwards, 114.

[233] Edwards, 114.

spread. There is, of course, the great variable in the equation of un-discovered or unrecoverable grave materials. Finally, there is the issue of language. It is the Anglo-Saxon language that came to dominate England, not the indigenous Celtic languages or, ultimately, the Latin of the Romano-Britons. The fact that seemingly so few could dictate the spoken language to so many is striking, and is possibly worth more as evidence than the material culture. In this sense, the impact of the Saxon invasions on southern Britain was more profound than that of the Romans, Vikings, or Normans, none of whom were able to impose their own language on the natives in any permanent way.[234] Perhaps the question of language serves as further evidence of an apartheid-like social structure being created from the top down.

Regardless of the answers to the above questions, the arrivals of the Germanic peoples in Britain proved to be a continuation of the pattern of cultural melding that was already occurring in the Isles. In about the year 400, apart from the officers and men of the Roman military (itself a multi-ethnic force), and a few associated with this force, the inhabitants of Britain south of Hadrian's Wall could broadly be divided into two ethnic groups.[235] The largest could claim descent from the Iron Age peoples found living on the Isle at the time of the Roman invasion and who still constituted the bulk of the population.[236] The smaller group was a mixed group of Romano-British people, the result of intermarriage that constituted the ruling class. These people called themselves Romans and probably understood Latin as either a primary or secondary language. The distinction was of course really a civic rather than an ethnic one. Into this mixture came the Angles, Saxons and Jutes of Bede, as well as others, for whom there is

[234] The issue of language and its survival is a complex one. Each of these groups left linguistic elements that have transferred into modern English. The Normans, for instance, brought in a great deal of legal terminology and an elite, courtly language of Norman French. This language was not adopted by the native population, although it has left many loan words and place-names throughout England.
[235] Hindley, xxxiii-xxxiv.
[236] These were not the original inhabitants of the Island, but were for all intents and purposes natives by the time that the Romans first arrived in Britain.

considerable evidence. Regardless of the harshness of the conquest, the situation did not last forever, nor did native customs and language completely disappear. The native language has left many traces in the northern realms, and certainly in the Eastern Irish Sea Region that is the primary subject of this study.[237] There were forces at work on the Continent that caused these groups to arrive in Britain. The result was an admixture of cultures in the south and east of Britain that created a newer culture whose members came to see themselves as a distinct Anglo-Saxon or perhaps "English" culture in the two centuries prior to the arrival of the Vikings.

Introduction to the Viking Age

Following the shock of the Anglo-Saxon conquest of Britain was a period of prolonged settlement in Britain and of relative peace, excepting the struggles for power among the Anglo-Saxon chiefs who sought to extend their personal power over one another. If the earliest records of the raids by the Scandinavians into Britain and Ireland could be believed, it would appear that the Scandinavian raids began suddenly and hit the now mostly land-lubbing natives as a severe shock. Traditionally, the Viking Age in England is said to begin with the earliest recorded raids in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.* These are as follows:

> [789] And in his days for the first time there came three ships of Northmen (to Portland) and then the reeve rode to them and wished to force them to the king's residence, for he did not know what they were; and they slew him. Those were the first ships of the Danish men which came to the land of the English.[238]

And again:

> [793] In this year dire portents appeared over Northumbria, and sorely frightened the people. They consisted of immense whirlwinds and flashes of lightning, and fiery dragons were seen flying in the air. A great famine immediately followed those signs,

[237] See Chapter 3 for a study of language and toponymic evidence.
[238] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* edited and translated by Dorothy Whitelock (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1961), sub anno 789 (787 in another version of the original text).

> and a little after that in the same year, on 8 June, the ravages of heathen men miserably destroyed God's church at Lindisfarne, with plunder and slaughter.[239]

Leaving aside for the moment the idea of peaceful settlement, this interpretation is both too simplistic and somewhat inconclusive. Raiding seems to have been an extension of trade, but leaving that aside for the moment the dire portents of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* miss an important point: there is evidence that Scandinavians were present as raiders even before this time. This is hinted at by a charter of 792 in which King Offa confirmed the privileges of the churches of Kent, which, as they had been under other kings, were to be excused from royal levies except in the case of providing military assistance against "marauding pagans in roving ships", suggesting that for some time these people had been known at least in Kent and Mercia.[240] Scandinavian raiders were known even earlier on the Continent. The Danish (or Geatish) king Chlochilaich (Hygelac, of *Beowulf* fame) famously raided Frisia and the Rhine area in *circa* 528 and, although he was defeated, made such an impression that his raid was recorded in numerous sources, including book three of the *History of the Franks* of Gregory of Tours.[241] The feigned surprise of the chroniclers must be put aside. Whatever else Scandinavian raiders may have been, they were not unknown in the western world when the first raids were recorded in England.

The "Vikings" probably arrived somewhat earlier than the eighth century in Britain, but in fact the Scandinavian seafarers traveled much further abroad rather than simply arriving in Britain. They made inroads into continental Europe and the Mediterranean Sea region, and dispersed themselves far to the East, into the future kingdoms of Russia and Ukraine, and

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[239] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, sub anno 793.
[240] *contra paganos marinos cum classis migrantibus.* Walter de Gray Birch, ed. *Cartularium Saxonicum* II, Appendix IX 'Synod at Clofeshog', no. 848 (London: Whiting & Company, 1887).
[241] Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, translated by Lewis Thorpe (London and New York: Penguin Books, 1974), 3.3, 163.

traversed the wild, eastern rivers as far as Constantinople and further to the Islamic Caliphate, perhaps reaching Baghdad in the ninth century. The discovery of a bronze Buddha from northern India at Helgö attests to the distant contacts of the western Vikings.[242] The westward expansion, primarily by Norwegians, saw the colonization of Iceland, Greenland, the Atlantic islands, and even Newfoundland, as well as that of Britain and Ireland.

Causes of the Viking Expansion

The causes of the Scandinavian expansion are imperfectly understood and often somewhat contentious. A common assumption, dating ultimately from the early medieval period itself,[243] is that there was increasing population because the polygamous Scandinavians had no more land to grab in their own homelands.[244] Population pressure, then, served to "push" many away. That may have been at least partially true of western Norway, where there were few reserves of land to be exploited--the earliest Scandinavian colonists were the Norwegians who began to settle in Orkney, Shetland and the Hebrides at the end of the eighth century, or perhaps earlier. So too were the Norwegians the first to venture further west, to settle Iceland and the Faroes. In other parts of Scandinavia, however, there is no hint of population pressure in or

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[242] James Graham-Campbell, ed. *Cultural Atlas of the Viking World* (New York: Facts of File, 1994), 32-33. The Buddha was a very tiny figurine, probably made in the late sixth century, and seems to have been worn as an amulet by the Scandinavian with whom it was buried.

[243] An alternative medieval theory for the Viking invasions is divine punishment, directed by the Vikings at the behest of God towards the sinful peoples of England. This is well expounded in the letters of the churchman Alcuin of York, the following of which should serve as an example of this type of thinking. In a lengthy letter to the king of Northumbria, Alcuin chastised the king for being responsible for the moral failings of his people, even at the ecclesiastical level, and on the subject of punishment, wrote 'Lo, it is nearly 350 years that we and our fathers have inhabited this most lovely land, and never before has such terror appeared in Britain as we now suffer from a pagan race, nor was it thought that such an inroad from the sea could be made. Behold, the church of St. Cuthbert spattered with the blood of the priests of God, despoiled of all its ornaments; a place more venerable than all in Britain is given prey to pagan peoples. And where first, the departure of St. Paulinus from York, the Christian religion in our race took its rise, there misery and calamity have begun.' He goes on to say 'Behold, judgment has begun, with great terror, at the house of God, in which rest such lights the whole of Britain. What should be expected for other places, when the divine judgment has not spared this holy place?' See Whitelock, ed. *English Historical Documents*, no. 193, 775-777.

[244] Edwards, 217. This theory may be more fully expounded upon in older works, for example Gwyn Jones, *A History of the Vikings*, Revised edition (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 196-198.

before the Viking period. The population density in the whole Scandinavian peninsula during the early Viking Age has been estimated at only one or two people per square kilometer.[245] While this is little more than an educated guess, it does not support the theory of over-population as the main cause of the expansion. The first people to leave Scandinavia seem to have been concerned with raiding, trading, and amassing wealth rather than with settlement.[246] Throughout the whole period one of their main purposes was to acquire treasure in the form of gold, silver, gems, precious objects or coins, which they obtained either directly as plunder or tribute or indirectly by ransoming captives of high rank or selling slaves.[247] In the East their purpose was to obtain fur and slaves to sell, and they were also successful traders of silver, and thus some profited as merchants and traders.[248] In some cases, successful Vikings could also hope to gain a reputation for courage and skill as warriors or seamen who could then hire themselves out, while some of their leaders, especially those who were political exiles, also hoped to attract sufficiently large retinues of warriors to enable them to win power in Scandinavia, or abroad as conquerors.

Establishing the truth of the matter requires an argument that is much more nuanced than simple overpopulation. The real reasons probably had much more to do with economic and political concerns, mostly within Scandinavia itself. The prospect of economic benefit probably provided more impetus as a "pull" factor of these two, while political considerations likely served as a strong "push" for many people, who were often the losers in power struggles at the top, and their retinues of followers who went with them. Economics and politics were, of course, interrelated, just as they are today.

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[245] Carl Löfving, "Government in Scandinavia around 1000 AD." *Viking Heritage* 4 (2001): 27.
[246] Peter H. Sawyer, "The Causes of the Viking Age," in *The Vikings*, ed. R.T. Farrell (London and Chichester: Phillimore, 1982), 1-2; idem, "The Age of the Vikings, and Before," in idem, ed. *History of the Vikings* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 3-8.
[247] Peter Sawyer, "The Viking Expansion," in *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia Vol. 1 Prehistory to 1520*, ed. Knut Helle (Cambridge: University Press, 2003), 106.
[248] Simon Franklin and Jonathan Shepard, *The Emergence of Rus 750-1200* (London and New York: Longman, 1996), 3-71.

A key factor in the eventual outburst of piracy was the general commercial expansion in northwest Europe that began towards the end of the seventh century when there was a significant increase in trade between the Continent and England.[249] This led to the development of several relatively large trading places: Dorestad on the Rhine, Quentovic (near Boulogne), and in England, Hamwic (the precursor of Southampton), Fordwich (the port of Canterbury), London, Ipswich and York. Others, accessible by water included Ribe (Denmark), Hedeby (north Germany), Kaupang (Norway), Birka (Sweden) and Staraja Ladoga (Russia). This trade grew even faster after about 700 when the Frisians obtained a very large supply of silver from an unidentified source, possibly in the Harz mountains, enabling them to produce a huge amount of coins that were quickly spread on the Continent and in England.[250]

The Scandinavian and Baltic contribution to this international trade development included furs, which were highly prized in Western Europe. Merchants could sail into the Baltic in the summer and buy furs and other products, such as beaver and otter skins, amber, eiderdown and good-quality whetstones, in the trading places that were established there during the eighth century. Most of the furs were gathered as tribute from the Sami, Finns and Balts who inhabited the best fur-producing areas. Northern Russia, which was the main source of high-quality furs in medieval Europe, was already being exploited in the eighth century by Finns, Slavs, Balts and Svear.[251] This northern trade may have served as the impetus for the establishment of permanent northern trading bases, like Staraja Ladoga, in regions that had previously seen mostly seasonal trade. A few certain men emerged in Scandinavia who were especially well-positioned to benefit from this trade through the collection of tribute or from taxation. In the *Royal Frankish Annals* there is mention of a Danish king called Godfred who removed merchants from Reric (exact

[249] Ian Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms 450-751* (London and New York: Longman, 1994), 293-303.
[250] Sawyer, "The Viking Expansion," 107.
[251] Sawyer, "The Viking Expansion," 107.

location unknown, but certainly eastern) to Hedeby in 808, suggesting that royal control was exerted over at least some trading activities.[252] If such control were all-encompassing or even extensive, then the kings and perhaps a few others would be making the majority of the wealth. Given this situation, it is perhaps not surprising that piracy would develop, led by those who had been cut out of the profits. With wealth in Western Europe apparent and little chance of accessing it, newcomers seeking to enrich themselves would have little other choice than to cut in on the older, established order.

Piracy as economics is not the only possible explanation. Closer studies of the historical and archaeological evidence, especially coin hoards, shows a striking pattern. The earliest Viking period towns in Scandinavia itself appear to have been flourishing during the first thirty to forty years of the ninth century, and then to have gone in decline afterwards. Meanwhile, written evidence for raiding activities appears to steadily increase during the 830s and 840s, which is supported by large quantities of Frankish and Anglo-Saxon silver coins found in Scandinavian hoards from precisely this time period.[253] What this would seem to show is that, with some internal economic problems, the Scandinavians took to overseas piracy. Trade was superseded by raiding in the ninth century, suggesting that the traditional idea of pirates becoming progressively tamer as they grew to know Christian Europe is not the correct view. It would appear that they knew Europe and knew it well and only this time of crisis caused them to turn to piracy. This internal crisis, whatever it was, may not have been confined to Scandinavia. Archaeological evidence from Continental areas, such as Dorestad, and insular areas like Hamwic, Lundenwic and Eoforwic in England all seem to show similar periods of decline.[254]

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[252] *Royal Frankish Annals,* in *Carolingian Chronicles,* translated by Bernhard Walter Scholz with Barbara Rogers (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1970), sub anno 808.
[253] Richard Hodges, *Goodbye to the Vikings?* (London: Duckworth, 2006), 158.
[254] Hodges, 159-162.

Coinage was often debased to a lesser or greater extent. It was during these trying times in many cases that the Vikings moved in to raid these settlements. For them, it was simply opportunism, of the same type that can be seen elsewhere, such as the colonization of Iceland by Norwegians and the joining of the Byzantine army as highly prized mercenaries by others. For some, it would simply seem to be taking advantage of certain skills and economic opportunities as they are presented; what might be called something like market positioning in modern parlance.

With the economic overtones in place, it is also likely that political developments within Scandinavia itself probably played some role in Scandinavian emigration.[255] Traditionally, Norwegian history is said to begin with the consolidation of Norway into a single kingdom under Harald Fairhair (ruled *circa* 890-930).[256] With Harald's campaigns, the sagas tell also of some losers in the struggles, many of whom take to the seas to try their fortunes elsewhere. These sagas are not above question, since they usually contain a mix of authentic history and conditions that were more current to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when they were actually written down.[257] There are other pitfalls, including the fact that Harald's dynasty ended with his death, while the real consolidation of Norway occurred years later under other kings, including Olaf Tryggvason (ruled 995-1000) and Harald Hardrada (ruled 1045-1066), who is probably the real

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[255] Sweden will not be considered much in this discussion, since the kingdom developed later and the thrusts of the Swedish Vikings were to the East far more than to the West. For a good overview of the early development of the Swedish kingdom, see Thomas Lindkvist, "Kings and provinces in Sweden," in *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia Vol. I Prehistory to 1520* ed. Knut Helle (Cambridge: University Press, 2003), 221-236 and idem, "The Emergence of Sweden," in Brink and Price, eds. 668-674.

[256] Snorri Sturluson, *The Saga of Harald Fairhair,* in *Heimskringla.* Translated by Lee M. Hollander. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964). Snorri's version is one of several saga sources that tell of this conquest. His history, unlike most of the other sagas, focuses on Harald rather than figures who lived afterwards.

[257] It is an almost inescapable fact that the present time that one lives in colors one's vision of the past, and this is certainly true in early medieval Iceland just as it is true in the present time. In Iceland, the country was engaged in a struggle for primacy with Norway, and the primary known saga author, Snorri Sturluson (1179-1241) lived precisely during this time; it is almost inconceivable to think he would have been entirely unaffected by contemporary events. The Icelanders finally lost their independence in 1262, and did not regain it until 1944. For more information, see Jón R. Hjálmarsson, *History of Iceland* (Reykjavik: Iceland Review, 1993), 50-67.

founder of the dynasty.[258] The foundation of Denmark is also clouded in obscurity, but what is known about it suggests that the Danes were responding to the massive political changes taking place on the Continent, as the Frankish rulers from Charles Martel (ruled 714-741) onwards continually extended their powers outwards from their home bases in north-east Gaul, leading to friction with the Danes once the Saxons in Germany had been conquered. Evidence for this comes from the term "Denmark" itself, which means Danish march, or border, from the Frankish perspective.[259] Further, when Denmark enters the historical record, it is already a fully-developed kingdom with overseas holdings stretching into various regions of Scandinavia, including western Sweden and a region of Norway called Viken, or Oslo fjord, suggesting a wide ranging type of influence.[260] One of the earliest known acts of a Danish king was the building of a large defensive wall across the base of Jutland—the Danevirke, presumably in response to Frankish aggression. Dendrochronology dates the beginning phases of this construction to 737, with the trees seemingly having been expressly cut down for this construction.[261] The *Royal Frankish Annals* devote several lines each year from about 800 onwards concerning the relations between the Franks and Danes.

Another theory for the advent of Viking piracy on the part of the seaborne Scandinavians lies in a particular political milieu rather than in an economic one. According to this theory, the Vikings knew already of England and the Continent as places of trade, and there is considerable

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[258] Claus Krag, "The early unification of Norway," in *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia Volume I Prehistory to 1520*, ed. Knut Helle (Cambridge: University Press, 2003), 185.
[259] Inge Skovgaard-Petersen, "The making of the Danish kingdom," in *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia Vol I Prehistory to 1520*, ed. Knut Helle (Cambridge: University Press, 2003), 168-169. On the growth of Denmark as a kingdom generally, see Else Roesdahl, "The Emergence of Denmark and the reign of Harald Bluetooth," in Brink and Price, eds., 652-664.
[260] Skovgaard-Petersen, 169.
[261] Edwards, 218.

archaeological evidence for this trade having taken place at an early date.[262] The changeover into violence happened as a response to the growing expansionism and bellicosity of Charlemagne.[263] Björn Myhre was the first to break from other scholars in claiming that the raids on Lindisfarne and Iona were not simply about looting, but rather were ideological, prompted by a perceived threat to Scandinavian social and political order by other, Christian polities with aggressive designs on Scandinavia and its culture. This theory is given additional credence if King Offa's charter is once again brought into consideration, leading to the suggestion that Lindisfarne and Iona were in fact not the first raids. This could at least open the possibility that such raids were retaliatory. With this interpretation, the raids were not simply by bands of ignorant pirates looking for someone to rough up; they were deliberately planned and executed by persons knowing full well what they were doing and what they were up against. There is ample evidence for this. It is clear that from about 772 onward, Charlemagne began a concerted effort not only of political but also of religious conquest against the neighboring Saxons. During this year he marched and deliberately destroyed the pagan sanctuaries at Demiel and Irmensul.[264] The same source states clearly that he intended to make war upon the Saxons "until they were either defeated and forced to accept the Christian religion or entirely exterminated."[265] His biographer Einhard was perhaps even more explicit. He wrote that the Saxons, after being massacred and forceably relocated, were forced to accept terms offered by the king, which were "renunciation of their national religious customs and the worship of devils,

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[262] Evidence for the bone combs has already been mentioned. There are other examples of eighth century British artifacts that have been found in Scandinavian graves, including an Irish reliquary and a book mount that had been adapted to become a brooch. These have been posited to have found their way to Scandinavia in the ninth century, but it is equally likely they arrived there as contemporary artifacts. James Graham-Campbell and Dafydd Kidd, *The Vikings* (London: British Museum, 1980), 34-35.
[263] Björn Myhre, "The beginning of the Viking Age—some current archaeological problems," in *Viking Revaluations*, ed. Anthony Faulkes and Richard Perkins (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1993), 188-199.
[264] *Royal Frankish Annals*, sub anno 772.
[265] *Royal Frankish Annals*, sub anno 775.

acceptance of the sacraments of the Christian faith and religion, and union with the Franks to form one people."[266] The calls for annihilation and forced conversion coupled with the Saxon wars can hardly have been missed by the Danes. It is very likely that these actions caused an acceleration towards nationhood as a defense mechanism, and also suggests a reason why Scandinavians may have targeted monasteries, apart from the prospect of easy booty.

The possible reasons for the Viking expansion are thus numerous, but not all of the evidence is unanimous in suggesting a common cause. The old idea of overpopulation ought to be consigned to the past; it is probably little more than propaganda on the part of monastic chroniclers aimed against a people they disliked and of whom they had little real knowledge or understanding. But the expansion itself was real enough, and it seems that a combination of events served to "push" people out, including consolidation of royal authority in Denmark and Norway, and to "pull" people away, which in some form or another involved economic gain. There may have been a combination of these factors at work for some or many. But in no case were the Scandinavians unknown in England or on the Continent and the impression given in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* of shock and awe must be seen as an exaggeration. It should probably be seen only as shock on the parts of these monastic chroniclers that they were often the targets of these raids, which would probably come as a surprise, requiring (to them) an explanation. Reactions against Charlemagne's aggression would probably not be deemed significant.

Viking Settlement in Northern England

Such an invasion of England, if indeed it was, must itself be placed in its correct historiographical context. The idea of a violent and massive incursion of foreigners derives ultimately from the churchmen who were the authors of the written chronicles that describe

[266] Einhard, *Life of Charlemagne*. Translated by Samuel Epes Turner. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 32.

them. However, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* largely glosses over most of England especially in its chronologically earliest entries; it is mainly concerned with Wessex and the lower regions of England, while Northumbria, Cumberland, and Scotland are given secondary consideration, owing to a relative lack of information and secondary (at best) importance in the estimation of the writers because of the regional distance from Wessex and the Wessex kings. This is not to suggest that the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is not a useful source, only that the focus is towards the south. My intention here, however, is not to examine greatly the activities of the Vikings in southern England or on the Continent, but rather to examine their experience in dealing with the north, the area that I have dubbed the Eastern Irish Sea Region. In the south of England, the Viking Age is rather different than in the north, and it is possible to track the movements of armies in the various Irish, Continental, and English chronicles. This type of study is both interesting and worthwhile, but has been done many times already. My study will begin with the arrival of the Vikings as a given, and with the foundation of the Danelaw and the Viking kingdom of York, which are in some ways related to the colonization of the Eastern Irish Sea region. This region itself will be briefly detailed, as much as possible, within current boundaries of historical knowledge.

In 865 a fleet landed in East Anglia, later to be joined by several others, and was termed by a chronicler as *micel hirð,* or the Great Army. These armies were led by six kings, but ultimately came to be identified with two of them, Ivar and Halfdan, the sons of the semi-legendary Ragnar Loðbrók. Five years later this army had conquered three kingdoms, Northumbria, East Anglia, and Merica, and controlled much of eastern England, from London to York. Between 876 and 880, its leaders began to grant estates to their principal followers who in turn began to grant lands to their own supporters who wished to settle. The *Anglo-Saxon*

Chronicle notes for the year 876 that "they proceeded to plough and support themselves."[267] These colonists and those who followed in the region had a profound effect on the place-names of the areas in which they settled; their influence on farming and field names confirms that many were, in fact, farmers.[268] The densest Scandinavian areas of settlement are determined by the areas of the densest concentration of Scandinavian place-names of the ninth century which are areas in which, significantly, most ornamental metalwork of the tenth and eleventh centuries of Scandinavian style have been located.[269] The period of activity of the Great Army coincides with a surge in Scandinavian population movement, for it is at about this time, *circa* 870, that Norwegians began the settlement, largely peacefully, of Iceland. Others began to push, more violently, into Scotland and Ireland.[270] While at least some of the initial thrusts of the Scandinavians were of considerable violence, it is clear that the presence of a larger population of farmers and others that followed and would develop into a class of artisans are not necessarily the trademarks of a violent, warrior culture. While it is not explicitly stated in the sources, it is clear that what happened is predicted in the model developed earlier. The first Scandinavians on the scene had been traders and explorers, followed by raiders, and this larger group then arrived as colonists, based upon reports that they had heard from earlier Scandinavian visitors, although the reasons for each person or family doing so might have been different or complex. As the visitors kept arriving and others returned to their homes via reverse migrations, so too did new reports reach Scandinavians about the conditions they would find if they were to immigrate to

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[267] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, sub anno 876/877.
[268] Sawyer, "The Viking Expansion," 112.
[269] Sawyer, "The Viking Expansion," 112.
[270] Iceland and some of the outlying Scottish isles were thinly or unpopulated and consist of much land that must be considered marginal. The initial exploratory raids and colonization efforts of Ireland were quite violent, as were the internecine wars among Irish and/or Scandinavian groups present on the island. For a good summary of these movements, see F.J. Byrne, "The Viking age," in *A New History of Ireland I: Prehistoric and Early Ireland*, ed. Daibhi O Croinin (Oxford: University Press, 2005), 609-617. For Scotland, see Alfred P. Smyth, *Warlords and Holy Men: Scotland AD 80-1000* (London: Edward Arnold, 1984), 141-174. Smyth goes so far as to claim that the Viking age in Scotland was an unmitigated disaster for the Scots.

England. The perception of the chroniclers of these Scandinavians as social parasites is not correct, since many set up shop immediately and began working to support themselves. From a transnationalist or transregional perspective, it would seem that these new immigrants would be instrumental in the growth of English society, as well as Danish, since many would return home armed with fresh information and ideas they had learned abroad.

The Great Army was also responsible, in some sense, for the establishment of the Danelaw in what was once Mercia. The army had set up puppet kings, notably Ceolwulf in Mercia (ruled 874-*circa* 881) and Egbert in York (ruled *circa* 867-872), with the understanding that their sovereignty existed at the will and for the purposes of the Danish kings. The army then split up, having failed to conquer Wessex, although certainly other attempts were made to undertake this task. In the end, negotiation and accommodation realized more gains for both the Great Army and for Alfred of Wessex (ruled 871-899) than did constant warring. The ultimate result was a treaty made at Wedmore in Somerset, where the Danish leader Guthrum was baptized. He then led his army into East Anglia, where they shared out the land.[271] A subsequent treaty between the two kings, made sometime after Alfred's seizure of London in 886 but before Guthrum's death in 890, established the boundary between their kingdoms as follows: "Up the Thames, then up the Lea, and along the Lea to its source, then in a strait line up to Bedford, then up the Ouse to Watling Street."[272]

The Danelaw itself is a large swath of land, but it is another area of scholarly contention. Nearly every aspect of the region itself—including its size, location, and composition has been

[271] Cyril Hart, *The Danelaw* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1992), 7.
[272] F.L. Attenborough, *The Laws of the Earliest English Kings* (Cambridge: University Press), 1922, 99.

scrutinized, and not every question has been satisfactorily resolved.[273] The Danelaw neither kept this treaty boundary permanently, nor for long, nor was it ever a unified entity in any sense. It consisted of five divisions that arose largely from the circumstances of Danish settlement. Some areas had either more or less Danish residents and there still were many English people living in some of its areas. In this region called the Danelaw, local control was to be established by local custom, with the area falling largely outside royal control, and free from royal taxation. It followed the laws common in Denmark, where royal control was less well established, and no continuous tradition of native coinage had yet been established. Some have credited the Danelaw with giving rise to the English shire system and to having some influence on English law, although it is not clear precisely how this happened, since largely no records survive from the Danelaw itself.[274] It has also been argued that the Danelaw, rather than being a haven for those used to Danish law, was rather a tool used for integrating the settlers and their descendents into English society.[275] Finally, there is little evidence to support the idea that the Danelaw may have been used as a base of attack on southern England from Scandinavian Vikings that had newly arrived.[276] While this may have been a fear of the Wessex kings, there is little evidence for it, and tends to support the idea of a peacefully assimilating society. While raids from Vikings may have occasionally come from this direction, it is at least as likely to have been due to remoteness and ease of movement as any sort of ethnic loyalties on the part of its residents.

After Alfred's death in 899, the English began a systematic effort to re-conquer the Danelaw. This effort was led by Edward the Elder (ruled 899-924) and began to be realized by

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[273] Katherine Holman, "Defining the Danelaw," in *Vikings and the Danelaw: Select Papers from the Proceedings of the Thirteenth Viking Congress*, ed. James Graham-Campbell, Richard Hall, Judith Jesch and David N. Parsons (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2001), 1-12.
[274] Hart, 3-6.
[275] Matthew Innes, "Danelaw identities: ethnicity, regionalism and political allegiance," in*Cultures in Contact: Scandinavian Settlement in England in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries*, ed. Dawn M. Hadley and Julian D. Richards (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2000), 72-77.
[276] Dawn M. Hadley, "The Creation of the Danelaw," in Stefan Brink and Neil Price, 377.

the simple act of chasing a rebel into the Danish fens in 903. Edward likely realized Danish weakness, and began in earnest in 909 with his attempt to re-take Northumbria.[277] He completed the entire conquest, save for the kingdom of York, in just seven years. The reason for this is simple: the Danes were mainly farmers and settlers who had no wish to campaign for months on end, and the English system of *burghs* could be used to consolidate gains made on the ground. Those settlers who had been in the Great Army would have been either quite aged or dead, and the warriors who were there had lost their main advantage over the English: their mobility. This action might be thought of in terms of "re-conquest" but in reality amounted to a Wessex conquest of England. Not all of the English approved of this liberation by Edward, and some fought with the Danes against him. But although the Danes had lost most of a political entity that was relatively short-lived, the Danelaw lived on in importance and influence. King Edgar (ruled 959-975), in 970, confirmed that the Danish areas should be governed by such laws as they themselves thought best, although he did make some laws that were common to all the land. Much of this law can be seen in the *Law of Northumbrian Priests*, although this particular compilation might possibly be from a somewhat later date.[278] And it is not until a compilation of laws in 1008 that the term *Deone lage* was first used to describe the area as it is thought of today, wherein it is contrasted with *Engla lage*, or English law.[279] This evidence suggests strongly that the Danelaw may have been conquered politically, but that it was not gone and its influence was still considerable. It further illustrates the likely fluidity of the border regions, and suggests that the differences between the Danes and English were fewer than might be supposed, although these differences were likely substantial in the early years after contact. Language and custom

[277] The action may be followed in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.
[278] Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, no. 53, 434-439.
[279] Hart, 3.

were different, but not terribly so, and tended to fuse together when the population began to merge together. In essence, the Danes had been accommodated if not completely assimilated.

Viking York and the Dublin Connection

Immediately to the north of the Danelaw is the region of Northumbria, with its vibrant capital city of York, an area that had a long history of being coveted by outside powers. The beginnings of Viking York are well documented and contemporary with the beginnings of the Danelaw. The city was captured by the Great Army after two battles in 866/7. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* details the actual event:

> In this year the army went from East Anglia to Northumbria, across the Humber estuary to the city of York. And there was a great civil strife going on in that people, and they had deposed their king Osbert and taken a king with no hereditary right, Aella. And not until late in the year did they unite sufficiently to proceed to fight the raiding army; and nevertheless they collected a large army and attacked the enemy in York, and broke into the city; and some of them got inside, and an immense slaughter was made of the Northumbrians, some inside and some outside, and both kings were killed, and the survivors made peace with the enemy.[280]

The Vikings and their descendants were recognized as kings more often than not in the following decades, while Æthelstan (ruled Wessex 924-939) conquered the city for Wessex and he and his successors ruled, sometimes indirectly, from 927 to 939. Following his death, however, the

[280] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* sub anno 867. This somewhat convoluted passage refers to the second battle for York and the Northumbrian attempt to dislodge the Danes from the city, while the English sources are mostly quiet concerning the first battle for York. This initial conquest was evidently rapid, as the Norse employed one of their favorite stratagems-the attack during a Christian liturgical event. In this case, the attack occurred on the feast of All Saints, November 1. Along with the advantage of surprise against a mostly unarmed populace, the markets held in conjunction with such an event, as well as a large number of potential slaves, would be a tempting target. An additional factor is the state of civil disturbance taking place then, another event that the Norse would be quick to exploit. It may not have been until much later that the Northumbrians were able to put together any sort of army to resist this. Roger of Wendover and Simeon of Durham place the attack against the Danish positions at a similar time, in late March. The Danish army would thus have nearly five full months in York before meeting any sort of further resistance, and this would be ample time to fortify the city. Simeon of Durham, *History of the Church of Durham,* translated by Joseph Stevenson (London: Seeley's, 1855), 164, 654, and Roger of Wendover, *Flowers of History Volume I,* translated by J.A. Giles (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1849), 654. On a ruse used by the Vikings in this conquest see Asser, *Life of King Alfred,* translated by Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge (New York: Penguin Books, 1983), 78. On a similar Viking stratagem used at Reading, see Asser, 76.

Northumbrians chose as their king Olaf Guthfrithson (ruled Dublin 934-941) from Dublin.[281] This set up a period of some fifteen years or so where others continually vied for political control of the region, including the Hiberno-Norse Vikings from Dublin, who had an economic relationship with York, and the exiled Norwegian prince, Erik Bloodaxe (ruled Norway *circa* 930-936, King of York 948-954). Only with Erik's final expulsion in 952 or 954 was Wessex left in control, albeit occasionally challenged, of a united kingdom of England that included this Anglo-Scandinavian city. The real power was not the Wessex kings, however, but the earls that were placed in charge of Northumbria, and the powerful archbishops of York. The city retained its Scandinavian character, as seen in the place-names of its streets, up until the time of the Norman Conquest and after. It survived the violent invasion by Swein Forkbeard (ruled 987-1014) of Denmark unscathed, for it held many supporters and sympathizers of the Danish cause at the time of the early eleventh century.

While the historical chronology of Viking and Anglo-Scandinavian York is extremely difficult to establish, the importance of the city itself is evident.[282] It is likely, but by no means certain, that York served as a capital city; as a seat of royal government. No royal structure has been found, and there are only a few hints in historical records that this may have been the case. The *Chronicle of Æthelweard* describes how, in 894, an envoy from King Alfred named Æthelnoth "contacted the enemy" in York, suggesting that the leader resided there.[283] Likewise

[281] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, sub anno 941.
[282] The chronology can de derived from multiple sources, although some are late and many are suspect to some degree. Few are illustrative of the same events or even time periods, so at best snapshots of the history can be established. Archaeological and numismatic evidence is equally tricky, since it holds information that is often from different time periods than the historical sources cover. For example, there are at least two 'kings', Siefred and Cnut, whose whole existence is known only through coins baring their names minted at York; they do not appear in any historical sources. Earls and Archbishops sometimes likewise mint their own coins, further muddying the waters. David Rollason, "Anglo-Scandinavian York: The Evidence of Historical Sources," in R.A. Hall, 305-324. On coinage of the city, see Mark Blackburn, "The Coinage of Scandinavian York," in ibid, 325-349. On the street names of York, see Gillian Fellows-Jensen, "The Anglo-Scandinavian Street-Names of York," in ibid, 357-371.
[283] *Chronicle of Æthelweard*, edited by A. Campbell (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1962), 51.

Egil's Saga tells that Egil went to York to visit his enemy King Erik Bloodaxe.[284] Beyond this there is little mention of the area as a royal stronghold; it is possible that the man called "king" was little more than the leader of the army stationed in York. The rulers had little stability and probably not much government apparatus. Before 954 the Wessex kings, when they were capable of ruling, did so mostly by means of direct military intervention. Two passages from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* illustrate this practice:

> [909] And that same year King Edward sent an army both from the West Saxons and from the Mercians, and it ravaged very severely the territory of the northern army, both men and all kinds of cattle, and they killed many men of those Danes, and were five weeks there.

And again:

> [948] In this year King Eadred[285] ravaged all Northumbria, because they had accepted Eric as their king; and in that ravaging the glorious minster at Ripon, which St. Wilfrid had built, was burnt down. And when the king was on his way home, the army which was in York overtook the king's army at Castleford, and they made a great slaughter there. Then the king became so angry that he wished to march back into the land and destroy it utterly. When the councilors of the Northumbrians understood that, they deserted Eric and paid to King Eadred compensation for their act.

The entry of 948 is illustrative of several other things as well, including Eadred's willingness to ravage monastic centers in what he regarded as his own territory. The 'counsilors' were nobles capable of acting independently, and their power was such that it extended to having the ability to attack and defeat a king's army in the field. They probably held the real power, along with the archbishops, within Northumbria and York, and knuckled under only at the prospect of a larger-scale invasion. Precisely who these aristocratic nobles were remains a mystery, since the names have not survived, but it is probable that they consisted of a mixture of native Northumbrians and incoming Scandinavians. It is certain that both existed, since both Old English and Old Norse

[284] *Egil's Saga*, translated by Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards (New York and London: Penguin Books, 1976), 151-163.
[285] King Eadred ruled 946-955.

terms are used to describe its status in *The Law of the North People*.[286] Where these people lived or in what proportion one group was to the other is a matter of speculation.

The archbishops played an important role in the governance of the city. Particularly illustrative is the archiepiscopate of Wulfstan I (d. 955), who was archbishop of York from 930/1 until being deposed in the early 950s.[287] Wulfstan, a man of Danish extraction, worked in alliance with the Scandinavians, including the openly pagan Olaf Guthfrithson. The two men were together when they were besieged by King Edmund of Wessex (ruled 939-946) inside of Leicester, following a sack of Tamworth.[288] In 947, Wulfstan is named specifically among the counsilors of the Northumbrians in pledging loyalty to King Eadred who, as the *Chronicle* entry for 948 has shown, they subsequently reneged upon by accepting Erik Bloodaxe as king.[289] Wulfstan was finally arrested by Eadred in 952 and imprisoned, because "accusations had been made to the king against him."[290] The fact that he was repeatedly into and out of favor suggests his importance, since he was placed back in his former position. After the final defeat of Erik and the resumption of Wessex control, the earls again became the prime movers of York and Northumbria prior to the Norman Conquest.[291]

York also had a prominent place as a commercial center. From 866 until 1066, York was a growing center of consumers and producers and an important focus for regional and international exchange. Raw materials brought into the city were traded or made into manufactured goods. Silk, ultimately from China but probably directly traded via Byzantium,

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[286] Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, no. 52, 432-433.
[287] For a brief summary of Wulfstan's career, see Rollason, 313.
[288] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, sub anno 943.
[289] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, sub anno 947.
[290] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, sub anno 952.
[291] Oswulf I (954-66), Oslac (966-76), Thored (975x979-992/3), Ælfhelm (992/3-1006), Uhtred (1006-16), Eric of Hlathir (1016x23-1033), Siward (1023x1033-55), Tostig (1055-65), Morcar (1065-7).

was the most exotic import, and a woman's silk cap was found in York.[292] Amber was imported from the Baltic regions. Ores, ingots and charcoal used in the production of various metals were imported from various locations within the British Isles. Stone was obtained locally and brought in, while lava quern stones were imported from the Rhineland. Soapstone, schist and phyllite were imported from Scotland and southern Scandinavia; raw materials for the production of woolen and linen cloth were available in the region, while jet was obtained from the North Yorkshire moors and coast.[293] After the Viking conquest of York, the city and surrounding areas resurrected an old tradition--the minting of coins. These would continue to be minted until Erik's final expulsion from the city.

Many of these raw materials were made into useful items that could be traded or sold in York. Much of the evidence for this comes from the excavations of the 1970s and 1980s at 16-22 Coppergate, but it is now known that there was also considerable if sporadic activity outside of this core zone within the city. There was a distinctive style of pottery, Torksey-ware, produced in York. In addition, there is a lot of slag indicative of iron working within the city, and there is evidence also of the working of non-ferrous metals including gold, silver, a range of copper alloys, lead, tin, and pewter all being worked from the late ninth century onwards. There is also evidence of craftsmen who worked in wood, leather, bone and antler, amber, jet, glass, and textiles.[294] Such things as absolute chronology, continuity, or even whether or not all of these things were present concurrently cannot be satisfactorily established. It seems clear, however, that York was a center of some importance, particularly for northern Britain. It seems on the whole to have been (possibly) a royal center, religious center, trade center, and a center of

[292] Helen Clarke and Björn Ambrosiani, *Towns in the Viking Age* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 97.
[293] Ailsa Mainman and Nicola Rogers, "Craft and Economy in Anglo-Scandinavian York," in Hall, ed. *Aspects of Anglo-Scandinavian York*, 460.
[294] Mainman and Rogers, 464-474.

production. It seems to have operated most often beyond the reach of the self-styled "English" kings of Wessex, and to have held an important position in a pan-European trade network that was used and partially controlled by Scandinavians.

But York did not stand alone. It had political and economic ties to Ireland, and particularly with the Norse rulers of Dublin. The Scandinavian connection to Ireland is of considerable antiquity, and it is similar to that of England in that the first recorded contacts involved raids, while settlement followed in the footsteps of these raids. The *Annals of Ulster* and other Irish monastic chronicles record their sudden arrival and the ensuing devastation, in terms somewhat reminiscent of those quoted above from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.* The first recorded attack on Ireland was in 792, when it is reported simply that "Rachrynn was burnt by the Danes."[295] This marks the beginning of a turbulent period in the history of Ireland, which featured much violence of many kinds, including Scandinavian against Irish, Scandinavian against Scandinavian, Irish against Irish, and Scandinavian-Irish mixtures fighting one another. It also featured, eventually, a significant number of Scandinavian settlers in Ireland proper, where they usually established themselves in cities and seem primarily to have begun working as merchants, and eventually to becoming assimilated in the larger Irish society.

The Irish seem to have been unaware of the concept of cities prior to the arrival of the Scandinavians. Dublin appears to have been founded, on two different occasions, by the Vikings. The earliest founding appears to have been when the Vikings erected a structure called by the Irish a *longphort* in about the year 840, as the *Annals of Ulster* record for that year.[296] This particular structure is a type of permanent military fort, which could serve as either a place

[295] *Annals of Clonmacnoise,* translated by Conell Mageoghagan and edited by Denis Murphy (Dublin: University Pres, 1896) sub anno 792.
[296] *Annals of Ulster,* edited and translated by William M. Hennessy (Dublin: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1887).

of refuge or as a pirate base.[297] This construction was not too unusual; this type of dwelling was built repeatedly in Ireland, some of which are identified in the annals and others perhaps overlooked by the annalists have been found by archaeologists.[298] This particular Dublin *longphort*, of which no signs remain today,[299] was probably abandoned when the Vikings of Dublin were expelled in 902 by a particularly successful alliance of Irish rulers, led by Mael Finnia.[300] The city was re-founded in 917, when a Viking leader named Sigtrygg (also called Sihtric Cáech, ruled 917-921) and his brother Ragnall arrived to re-establish Norse control over the area.[301] This time, however, Dublin was founded as a defended town rather than simply a fort, while its rulers took steps to ensure that it was a place of commerce and of some importance. Other Irish cities were likewise founded as places of trade and have been examined archaeologically to the extent currently possible. Waterford appears to have been founded in about 914, while Wexford and Limerick probably date from the tenth century, and Cork perhaps from the mid-ninth.[302] Although raiding and piracy are very much in evidence, particularly in the ninth century, the Viking settlements gradually assumed the characteristics of towns that soon became important commercial centers which were used and occasionally plundered by the natives. A number of merchants' graves were discovered in the ninth century cemetery at Islandbridge/Kilmainham, which included weights, balances, and scales, which serves to

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[297] The etymology of this word is interesting. It is a compound of two older Irish words, borrowed even earlier from Latin. It was a new word describing something new—new to the Irish as well as to the Scandinavians. See Byrne, 620-621.

[298] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Ireland, Wales, Man and the Hebrides," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Vikings*, ed. Peter Sawyer (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 88. On *longphorts* as they appear archaeologically, see Eamonn P. Kelly and Edmond O'Donovan, "A Viking *longphort* near Athlunkard, Co. Clare," *Archaeology Ireland* 12 (1998): 13-16.

[299] There are several possible reasons for this, but its location has not been found. Consequently, its exact size and shape are unknown. It seems on the whole likely to have been of a design familiar to Scandinavians, such as an open port allowing ships to arrive, but possessing a fortified citadel as well, perhaps similar to several examples existing from Scandinavia.

[300] *Annals of Ulster*, sub anno 901/2.

[301] Angelo Forte, Richard Oram and Frederik Pedersen. *Viking Empires* (Cambridge: University Press, 2005), 102-103. This section provides a good narrative and gives lists of dates, movements, and kings killed.

[302] Patrick F. Wallace, "The Archaeology of Ireland's Viking-age towns," in Ó Croinin, 817-818.

underscore the role of Scandinavian merchants, even at this early a date in Scandinavian-Irish relations.[303] By the late eleventh and twelfth centuries, after the Vikings no longer presented a serious threat, Irish kings proved anxious to gain control of the towns for the purpose of exploiting their wealth while the later Ua Briain kings even took up residence in Limerick.[304]

It is Dublin, however, about which the most is known from written sources as well as from archaeology. There are archaeologically many things that have been discovered from the earliest time period. Wood was a medium used by many craftsmen, including ship-builders, and comb making (of deer antler) was extremely common. Blacksmiths were probably very numerous and skillful, as much evidence of their craft has come to light, as weapon makers, makers of nails, and other iron objects. There were further specialists who worked in non-ferrous metals, as at York, with many personal and ornamental objects having been recovered. There was a large textile industry, although much of the material has not survived. There were still others who worked amber, and a number of people who made glass beads and glass vessels. Hundreds of leather objects have been recovered, although these do not show much evidence of a leatherworking craft.[305] Dublin was also notable for the importance of its hinterland to production. The area around the town produced timber, wattles, straw, and other building materials, as well as other raw materials used in production, including the antler, and most cereal grains, and many other foodstuffs also arrived from the hinterland.

Trade probably occurred on a massive scale, although the exact nature of the trade is difficult to trace with certainty. Imports ranged from finished articles such as cloth, glass, pottery (Ireland appears to have been aceramic until the Anglo-Norman period), soapstone

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[303] Elizabeth O'Brien, "The Location and Context of Viking Burials at Kilmainham and Islandbridge, Dublin," in *Ireland and Scandinavia in the Early Viking Age*, ed. Howard B. Clarke, Máire Ní Mhaonaigh and Ragnall Ó Floinn, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998), 203-221. See also Wallace, 836.
[304] Byrne, 619, Wallace, 818.
[305] Wallace, 833-834.

vessels and walrus pieces, to the unfinished materials like amber and lignite, which is especially prevalent, being imported in order to be made into a finished product.[306] The wealth of the city is apparent when a few exotic items are examined, as well as written sources concerning the city. Some high quality fabrics have been recovered, including some with diamond twills that could be woven, silk from Byzantium or the Islamic world, patterned compound silks from Byzantium or Persia, and gold braids, possibly from central Asia.[307] It is written that the city gave to Brian Boru in 999 after the battle of Glenn Mama "the greatest quantities of gold and silver and bronze, and precious stones, and carbuncle-gems, and buffalo horns, and beautiful goblets" as well as "various vestures of all colors."[308] The city is supposed to have paid an enormous ransom in gold, silver, cattle, and Welsh horses in return for the release of King Olaf in 1023. It also imported wine in considerable quantities, and a levy of 150 vats per year had to be paid to Brian Boru, who also claimed thirty-two gallons per day from Limerick.[309] In the twelfth century, Gerald of Wales wrote that "Poitou out of its superabundance sends plenty of wine" in exchange for which the Irish send "the hides of animals and the skins of flocks and wild beasts."[310] Finally, Scandinavian sources make occasional mention of the city and its commercial importance. Snorri, in *Heimskringla,* wrote "This man Earl Hakon sent west across the sea, bidding him to undertake a trading journey to Dublin, which at that time was done by many"[311] and there are other occasional references as well, including at least two which appear in the (older) skaldic poetry that is then passed along in the sagas of the Icelanders.[312] *Orkneyinga Saga* relates an

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[306] Wallace, 835.
[307] Wallace, 835.
[308] *Cogadh Gaedhel Re Gallaibh,* edited and translated by James Henthorn Todd (London: Longmans, Green, Reader and Dyer, 1867), 114-115.
[309] Wallace, 836.
[310] Gerald of Wales, *The History and Topography of Ireland,* translated by John J. O' Meara (New York and London: Penguin Books, 1982), 35.
[311] Snorri Sturluson, *The Saga of Olaf Tryggvasson,* in *Heimskringla,* 188.
[312] Snorri Sturlsuon, *Saint Olaf's Saga,* in *Heimskringla,* 362; *Orkneyinga Saga,* 75.

incident involving two ships from Dublin which contained "a very valuable cargo of English broadcloth."[313]

These sources offer hints that the city may have been fabulously wealthy. To date, over a hundred silver hoards and one hundred forty single finds of silver have been found in Ireland.[314] Taken together with the great gold hoard from Hare Island, County Westmeath, and the Cuerdale hoard, discovered in Lancashire but thought to have been assembled in Ireland, it is clear that there were enormous quantities of wealth in Ireland in the ninth, tenth, and early eleventh centuries.[315] The presence of weights and measures, as well as silver ingots, gold-plated wire rings and the odd-piece of gold jewelry also suggest the presence of a sizeable merchant class, of which it would appear that the Scandinavians were the facilitators. One reason that this is so is that many of these objects are not in appearance native Irish, but rather seem to have come from elsewhere. For instance, many of the coins are actually Anglo-Saxon; it appears that neither Dublin nor indeed Ireland minted any coins whatsoever prior to 997, when the first mint was officially opened.[316] Prior to this time, the large number of coins filtering through the economic region there were minted elsewhere, but apparently were used freely by those doing business in Dublin.

One form of business that seems to have been related particularly to Dublin is slavery and the slave trade. Alfred Smyth has written a brief, if controversial, chapter on this subject.[317]

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[313] *Orkneyinga Saga,* 215.
[314] Wallace, 836.
[315] Wallace, 836-837.
[316] Wallace, 837.
[317] Alfred P. Smyth, *Scandinavian Kings in the British Isles 850-880* (Oxford: University Press, 1977), 154-168. For a more thorough study of the phenomenon, see Poul Holm, "The Slave-trade of Dublin, Ninth to Twelfth Centuries," *Peritia* 6 (1986): 317-345. Smyth does not really address the subject of why this occurred, except perhaps as a form of commerce. Holm does not deny that ransom (i.e. profit) was an important motive, but he takes this further. He argues that the taking of slaves was a marginal aspect of raiding, but rather that slave-raiding became an integral part of warfare of the Dublin kings of the ninth and early tenth century, both as retaliation and as a means of showing potential rivals the power that these kings possessed. The slave-trade actually peaked during

While many of the Scandinavians, including the Icelanders, practiced slavery, it does not follow that all of the slaves ended up in Scandinavia. It might follow that this destination would seem a logical assumption, although it could not be possible given that many still believe overpopulation was the reason why the Viking expansion began. If Scandinavian conditions are serving to "push" excess people out, then how can it be justified that more people would be brought in? I have already argued that population increase is probably a minimal reason for the expansion, but it still does not follow that the Scandinavian homeland could absorb too many of these (mostly Irish) slaves. Smyth, using Arabic sources, claims that many of the slaves were bound for the Iberian Peninsula and ultimately for the Islamic regions, whose leaders had a preference for white slaves.[318] It should also be noted that there were other slave markets, presumably indicating a demand, in Christian Europe, including the British Isles.[319] Slavery was a widespread practice that was certainly not limited to the Scandinavians. The Irish themselves also seem to have adopted the practice. After a battle near Limerick in 968, the victorious Irish collected all the captives "on the hills of Saingel. Every one of them that was fit for war was killed, and every one that was fit for a slave was enslaved." These included "their soft, youthful, bright, matchless girls; their blossoming silk-clad young women; and their active, large, and well-formed boys."[320] It would appear that Scandinavians played the roles of both slave merchant and trader, as they had chains of communication that stretched to the Arab world, and ships to make the voyage. But the *Annals of Ulster* make it quite clear that some Scandinavians

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the late tenth through the twelfth centuries—much post Viking-Age in Ireland, as a result of the Irish overkings' struggles for supremacy.

[318] Smyth, 160.

[319] Smyth, 160.

[320] *Cogadh Gaedhel Re Gallaibh*, 79-81. Smyth claims (page 156) that the Irish learned this from the Scandinavians, turned the tables on them to an extent, and the Irish aristocracy took to the idea by the eleventh century at the latest. It seems to me, however, a bit naïve to believe that most of the world (except the Irish) knew of this practice. In any case, the passage quoted seems to show the Irish looting their own town, which would contain persons of Scandinavian as well as Irish descent. It goes on to say that the town was looted and fired, after which, a poem was composed to commemorate the event, and shares of booty were handed out by the leader, Mathgamhain.

had roles as slavers, that is, people who captured slaves for sale. In 871 it is recorded that "Olaf and Ivarr came again to Dublin from northern Britain, with two hundred ships, and a great multitude of men, English, Britons and Picts were brought by them to Ireland into captivity."[321] This account not only establishes evidence of a slave trade, it suggests that Dublin was a type of clearinghouse for the trade. It is also significant that it included people from all corners of the British Isles, a type of all-inclusive slavery. A reading of the *Annals* gives the impression that the taking of slaves was a regular occurrence. Some raids were particularly large, such as this one in 951:

> Gothfrith Sigtryggson with the Foreigners of Dublin plundered Kells, Donaghmore, Ardbracken, Dulane, Kilskyre, and other churches. They were all plundered from Kells. On this occasion, three thousand men or more were captured together with a great booty of cows and horses, of gold and silver.[322]

Even men of religious orders were not exempt. The late ninth-century Irish recluse Fintan of Rheinau was captured by these raiders and taken into slavery, before escaping in the Orkneys and being given shelter by a Scottish bishop.[323] One saga source confirms this trade. The *Laxdæla Saga* tells the story of an Irish slave woman named Melkorka, of noble or royal blood, and her earliest experience in slavery.[324] More interesting than the story is the picture drawn of the slave trader, who is called "Gilli the Russian" and who was reputed to be the "wealthiest man the guild of merchants had ever known."[325] The same source says that he wore a Russian hat, set up shop in a fine tent, and did so at the trading center at Brenneyjar, off the coast of Sweden, during a triennial meeting of Scandinavian kings. The location thus was ideal for commerce in an area that was frequented by both Norwegian and Swedish merchants. The man's name, Gilli,

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[321] *Annals of Ulster*, sub anno 870.
[322] *Annals of Ulster*, sub anno 950.
[323] David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints.* 5th edition (Oxford: University Press, 2003), 197.
[324] *Laxdæla Saga*, translated by Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson. (New York: Penguin Books, 1969), 63-69.
[325] *Laxdæla Saga*, 64.

is neither Slavic nor Scandinavian nor Irish but rather another form of Gaelic.[326] This would make him a man presumably of Hiberno-Norse extraction, possibly from Scotland or even from northwestern England, although clearly he was familiar with both Ireland and Russia, suggesting that he knew the spots in between as well and likely had numerous contacts along the way. The man who bought Melkorka paid for her three marks of silver, a very high price, and had come from Iceland, adding further range to the trade contacts.

Dublin and York can be seen to be linked together by geography, culture, and economic interests. But they are different in a number of respects. Dublin seems to have been the greater commercial center, while York produced coinage and sometimes provided official support for the operations. The area around York provided more territory for settlement, while territorial procurement for Scandinavian settlers in Ireland was extremely limited beyond the walls of the cities. Politically, the two entities were linked to a certain extent, but not always. The origins of this link, the creation of the axis between the two cities, is traceable to 857 when a Danish ruler called Imhar (Ivarr) first appears in the Irish annals as an ally of the Norwegian ruler Olaf of Dublin.[327] From this point forward, the dynasty established by Ivarr would contend for power in both regions, and would occasionally be successful in uniting both regions under a single crown, as, for example, under the rule of Olaf Cuarán (Olaf Guthfrithson). The year 941 stands as a type of watershed for the region around the Irish Sea, for it was the first year that Olaf ruled as king of both Dublin and York. His intermittent reign at Dublin lasted until 980, and witnessed

[326] Smyth, 164-165.
[327] Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin I*, 16. Ivarr was probably a relative, either a brother or cousin of Olaf. Olaf, known as Olaf the White and also Olaf Guthfrithsson, is supposed to have come from Scotland, and this marks an interesting new group in Scandinavian Dublin, the so-called Scottish Vikings that had arrived from this region rather than direct from Scandinavia. Sometimes called Hiberno-Norse or Gall-Gaedhil, this is a group of mixed heritage and will be discussed below.

the consolidation of the Norse colonies around the Irish Sea.[328] The reasons for the ultimate failure of the York-Dublin axis can be traced ultimately to one: ambition. At least some of the rulers of York were related by blood to those who ruled in Dublin, and they often felt justified in attempting to join the crowns together if one had died. There were usually rival contenders when this happened, and the desires of the locals, led by men such as Archbishop Wulfstan in York, played a large role. Further, the aggressive and ambitious kings of Wessex were often bent on interfering with this process, although they were usually unable to prevent succession from taking place, with the ultimate goal of conquering northern England and incorporating it into their realms. Finally, the northern rulers of Strathclyde and Alba had an interest in keeping their own independence from both the rulers of the York-Dublin axis and the kings of Wessex. They had incentive to keep this powerful east-west alliance from remaining stable and growing into a strong, viable kingdom or political entity. The careers of men like Olaf Cuarán and Erik Bloodaxe were entirely dependent upon the support they could gather among the locals. Both men were expelled from power more than once, usually with the collusion of the local leaders and often rival factions, only to be recalled by the same people when their own position appeared weak. Erik was ultimately murdered at Stainmore, probably while trying to escape to the north in order to gain more support. Many of these battles for supremacy probably took place in the Eastern Irish Sea region—the middle realms of Cumberland, Westmorland, and southwestern Scotland. This was an area of transit, but could also be one of refuge.

Cumberland, Galloway, and Man: The Viking Years

The regions of Cumberland, Galloway/Strathclyde and Man present an enigma of epic proportions, both in their medieval and earlier boundaries, and also in their ethnic makeup and

[328] A good recent summary of the career of Olaf Cuarán is Benjamin Hudson, *Viking Pirates and Christian Princes* (Oxford: University Press, 2005).

political alliances. It is impossible to create a complete, narrative history of the region owing to a lack of written evidence. It is sometimes said that this region falls inside the influence of Scandinavian York, although one expert has said that its laws and customs were outside those of the Danelaw.[329] The southern border of Strathclyde is a controversial topic about which there is little consensus, but it is nevertheless important to address, owing to the joint history of the region with what might be termed "Cumbrian" history. The regions of Galloway and Man are quite similar to that of Cumberland proper, but neither has much in the way of written evidence concerning its history. It is known, nonetheless, that both were used by the Scandinavians as bases and were to some extent settled by them. What will follow will be an attempt to sort much of this out in a coherent fashion that will hopefully provide a reasonably complete and useful chronology of historical events for the Eastern Irish Sea Region.

The region of Cumbria is often thought of as an extension of the region of Strathclyde, since more is known of the latter region. If this question is approached from the other direction, it will be found that the only lasting evidence of geological association of Cumbrians with areas outside the wider Solway basin are two islands in the broad estuary of the Clyde, while the term "Cumberland" contains the term "Cumbrian" as its root, and an area called Cummersdale ("the dale of the Cumbrians") is located in a broad plain near Carlisle.[330] There is little consensus, however, as to whether Strathclyde and Cumbria were separate entities, or whether Cumbria was a controlled part of Strathclyde or indeed, if each were true for a time.[331] That the area existed as one or more political entities is not in doubt. The first Viking Era reference to the area occurs in 870 and confirms that the area was an independent political entity. This event is the siege and

[329] Hart, 8.
[330] Charles Phythian-Adams. *Land of the Cumbrians* (Aldershot, England: Scolar Press, 1996), 110.
[331] Phythian-Adams argues for separate identities. Downham believes the two to be the same, 160 note 143, while Woolf 153-154 seems to take a non-committal view.

capture by the Norsemen of Dumbarton Rock, a citadel of the local Strathclyde British tribe, which may have spelled doom for the independence of Strathclyde. The event reads as follows:

> In this year the Norwegian kings besieged Srath Cluada in Britain, campaigning against them for four months; finally, having subdued the people inside by hunger and thirst—the well that they had inside having dried up in a remarkable way—they attacked them. First they took all the goods that were inside. A great host was taken out into captivity.[332]

This report does not stand alone, it is also mentioned in the *Annals of Ulster,* which identifies the kings as Amlaib and Imar (Olaf and Ivarr, of Dublin fame) and again in the Welsh Annals.[333] Indeed it was no small feat, given the length of the siege and the great number led afterwards into slavery.[334] The motivation for this attack is uncertain and is never mentioned in the sources, but the attack certainly opened the door to Scandinavian domination of the Clyde estuary and opened up nearly unrestricted access to the center of Scotland. Precisely what happened next to these Strathclyde Britons and their border after this incident is another debatable question. It is possible that the center of the kingdom simply moved, and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* records that Halfdan, the brother of Ivarr, led further attacks against Strathclyde in 875/6, suggesting that the region as an entity was not gone.[335] Other individuals at later dates were described as persons or kings of Strathclyde that were involved in English, Scottish, or Viking alliances.[336] There can be little doubt, however, that the blow was a grievous one and that it sent Strathclyde into serious decline. The year following the loss of Dumbarton, the Strathclyde king was murdered "at the instigation of Constantin Cinaed's son."[337] This event seems to have set in motion the wheels of final disintegration, and with the death of the ruler Eochaid in 889, the native line had died out, and by 890 many of the aristocrats had been forced to migrate to

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[332] *Fragmentary Annals of Ireland,* edited by Joan Newlon Radner (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1978), 142-143.
[333] *Annals of Ulster,* sub anno 870, *Welsh Annals,* sub anno 870.
[334] *Annals of Ulster,* sub anno 870. These slaves arrived in Dublin, as described above.
[335] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* sub anno 875/6.
[336] Downham, 163-170.
[337] *Annals of Ulster,* sub anno 872.

Gwynedd.[338] Strathclyde may be regarded to have effectively been annexed by Donald II of Scotland after this date.[339]

Prior to Strathclyde's disappearance, the southeastern border of the region was still an important subject for the defining of Cumbrian territory. Estimations of its extent vary widely. It is fairly clear that, by the second quarter of the tenth century, its borders ran south to include at least the northern part of Cumberland.[340] One estimate claims that it included even modern Lancashire.[341] The tenth century *Life of Catroe* claims the border between Strathclyde (identified as Cumbrian) and Viking Northumbria was at Leeds.[342] Smyth contends that a copying scribe of the *Vita* made a mistake and probably really meant Carlisle.[343] Finally, based on Cumbric and Scandinavian linguistic evidence, it is contended that the border ran along the Eden Valley and then south to Stainmore, which view has also been challenged.[344] As this expansion took place at Northumbrian expense, it would seem to follow that it occurred in the later ninth century, after the Vikings had taken control of York. It is clear that there is no consensus, but it also seems to indicate a great fluidity of the border. Since Scandinavian elements were present in all areas, it is perhaps less important to discover a concrete border, if indeed there was one at all, but such is unsatisfactory if a strictly Cumbrian historical era is to be established. It may be seen as an important clue that King Æthelstan, in July of 927, selected the area of Eamont for his famous conference of northern kings after ascending the throne of

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[338] Smyth, *Warlords and Holy Men,* 215-218.
[339] Phythian-Adams, 114.
[340] Downham, 160.
[341] William E. Kapelle. *The Norman Conquest of the North* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 10.
[342] Alan Orr Anderson, ed. *Early Sources of Scottish History AD 500-1286* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1922), 441.
[343] Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin II,* 181, 189. This argument is not as simplistic as it sounds. The text actually reads *usque Loidam Civitatem.* He contends that the term *Loidam* is a clerical error based on a corrupt form of an early name for Carlisle, of which there are several including *Luel, Lugubalia, Cair Ligualid,* and *Caerleoli,* which he finds particularly able for a continental scribe to confuse with *Loidis,* or Leeds.
[344] Kenneth Jackson, "Angles and Britons in Northumbria and Cumbria," in *Angles and Britons, O'Donnell Lectures,* ed. Henry Lewis. (Cardiff: 1963, 72-83). Downham, 161.

Northumbria.[345] This area (located in the modern province of Cumbria) may have been the border between Cumbria and Northumbria or, alternatively, a place of easy access for all involved in the very southern portion of Scotland. It has also been postulated, however, that Cumbria at this time comprised a number of territories, including Dumfriesshire, that are in present day Scotland as well as the area comprising the area later called Cumberland.[346] The border is thus a very slippery matter, and no consensus exists as to where this would have been, if indeed a border can be said to have existed at all. It is important to discuss, however, since the vast majority of references to the area are from this perspective—as a border region where potentates and kings meet.

In the year 973 there is recorded an event of some import for all of the regions under discussion. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* records it thus:

> In this year the atheling Edgar was consecrated king at Bath on the day of Pentecost, on 11 May, in the thirtieth year after he succeeded to the kingdom, and he was but one year off thirty. And immediately after that the king took his whole naval force to Chester, and six kings came to meet him, and all gave them pledges that they would be his allies on sea and on land.[347]

Several other sources add to this.[348] The *Vita of St. Swithin* is an early, independent reference to this episode.[349] Later writers of the twelfth century add more detail, giving the names of these kings and increasing their numbers from six to eight. William of Malmesbury and John of Worcester both give detailed accounts of those present. John names them: *Kynath rex Scottorum, Malcolm rex Cumbrorum, Maccus plurimarum rex insularum,* and the others, *Dufnal, Siferth, Huwal, Iacob,* and *Iuchil.* William's list is similar, mostly having spelling variations, but then adds that the last five kings were termed *reges Walensium,* or kings of Wales. He also

[345] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* sub anno 927.
[346] Woolf, 155.
[347] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* sub anno 973.
[348] This is an incident in need of historiographic examination.
[349] Whitelock, *English Historical Documents,* no. 239, 853.

refers to Maccus as *archipiratam Mascusiam,* or the arch-pirate Mascusius.[350] If these later sources can be accepted as accurate, then it sheds light on the local rulers of the area at this time period, although other questions remain, including their relationships to one another as well as their relative and combined power in relation to the Wessex king, who can of course be expected to appear as the most powerful in these later sources.

Beginning in about the year 1000, it becomes easier to see the relationship between Cumbria, Strathclyde, Scotland, and England. There is a reference in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for the year 1000 that mentions Cumberland specifically. It reads:

> In this year the king went into Cumberland and ravaged very nearly all of it; and his ships went out around Chester and should have come to meet him, but they could not. They then ravaged the Isle of Man. And the enemy fleet had gone to Richard's kingdom that summer.[351]

This passage is interesting for a number of reasons. First, it mentions Cumberland specifically although it very possibly means a raid into southern Scotland as well as just "Cumberland" whatever its exact geographic definition. Also noteworthy is the mention of Chester, which appeared also in the entry of 973 as a meeting place of importance, albeit one that was unquestionably inside of England. The fleet being unable to meet the king implies they ran into resistance, likely from a Viking fleet stationed perhaps in Man, and ravaged the Isle accordingly in retaliation. Finally, the entry shows that much of the fleet left that summer to visit Normandy, showing that there still were contacts at the highest levels between the Dukes of Normandy and the leaders of the Manx/Norwegian fleet.

Besides this specific reference, there are other indications that the region was one of great contention. In England was a king called Æðelred the Unready (ruled 978-1016) who faced a

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[350] *The Chronicle of John of Worcester,* ed. Patrick McGurk and others (Oxford: 1995, II, 424-425); William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum,* ed. R.A.B Mynors, R.M. Thomson, and M. Winterbottom (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), I, 238-241.
[351] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* sub anno 1000.

famous and strong threat to his kingdom in the form of Swein Forkbeard, King of Denmark.[352] In addition to the contests with Swein and other Viking leaders, Æðelred faced a threat from the aggressively expansionist Scottish king, Máel Coluim mac Cinaeda (Malcolm II, ruled 1005-1034). This Scottish king sparred frequently with Earl Uhtred of Northumbria beginning in 1006, so much so that Æðelred added the dominion of York to that of Northumbria following the assassination of the previous earl, thus giving Uhtred two earldoms, as well as the king's daughter as his wife.[353] Æðelred's actions suggest that the king was attempting to cement the loyalty of the earl and create closer ties to the region for the defense of his kingdom. Since Swein's armies became more destabilizing in England, Æðelred relied more on the support of his northern earl against the threat from the North. Swein's son and successor, Canute (ruled 1016-1035), had no such use for a powerful earl, and had Uhtred executed in 1016 and replaced by his own man.[354] Simeon of Durham records that this execution may have been a result of Uhtred's refusal to help during Canute's invasion of England.[355] The ensuing upheaval and destabilization allowed Máel Coluim and his probable vassal, Ywain, son of Dyfnwal, king of Strathclyde (or Cumbria),[356] to crush a Northumbrian army on the Tweed. This event allowed the secession to the Scots of the area north of the river. Simeon suggests weakness on the part of the local ruler, Eadulf, suggesting that the area (which he calls Lothian) was simply given

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[352] For a full account, see Ian Howard, *Swein Forkbeard's Invasions and the Danish Conquest of England, 991-1017* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2003).
[353] *Annals of Ulster,* sub anno 1005 (1006); *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* sub anno 1006.
[354] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* sub anno 1016.
[355] Simeon of Durham. *Symeonis monachi opera omnia,* Vol. 1. ed. T. Arnold (London: Longman & Co., 1882), 218. This would also add credence to the idea mentioned earlier, namely that there were people in the north, many centered at York, who were sympathetic to the Danish cause and who preferred the rule of the Danes to that of the Wessex kings.
[356] Phythian-Adams, 112. The author examines this man in depth, insisting that he is one of three known and unequivocally 'Cumbrian' kings of the tenth century. He is sometimes called Owain and on at least one other occasion is referred to as Eugenius. For a thorough analysis, see Phythian-Adams, 112-3. For a good overview of the kings of Strathclyde/Cumbria generally and some of the problems associated with them, see Alan Macquarrie, "The Kings of Strathclyde, c. 400-1018," in *Medieval Scotland: Crown, Lordship and Community,* ed. Alexander Grant and Keith J. Stringer (Edinburgh: University Press, 1993), 1-20.

away.[357] The death of Ywain saw the consolidation of Scottish power over Strathclyde and the beginning of the absorption of the western Southern Upland zone into the kingdom of the Scots—a process that would not be complete until the reign of David I over a century later.[358] Until the early 1030s, Canute was in no position to try to redress this balance of power in the north. He may have been more worried about containing the threats to his authority in Norway than worrying about the territorial ambitions of the Scottish king.[359] But his campaign of 1031 achieved the submissions of Máel Coluim and several Scottish earls and reaffirmed his control over the northwest.[360] He was also busy undertaking military campaigns in Dublin, and he tried to install earl Hakon as a king of the Hebrides, although the latter's drowning (see chapter one) in 1030 hindered this plan. By all appearances, Canute's campaign of 1031 was highly successful, and appears to have won for him the region of Cumbria and Strathclyde, although the general peace settlement that followed only held until the deaths of Máel Coluim and of Canute himself in 1035. Successive generations then renewed the struggle over this contested region.

Following Canute's death, the most important figure in the region became Siward, earl of York. Installed by Canute in 1033, and ruling until his death in 1055, Siward dominated the territories north of the Humber, creating Northumbrian hegemony over Cumbria and the Southern Uplands. He appears to have extended his power past the limits of his old earldom at the expense of the king of Scots, with the eventual result that he retained some part of Macbethad's former territories, most likely in Cumberland.[361]

Documentation of Siward's movements is minimal at best, and the outcomes of any engagements are little more than speculation. Related in some way to these movements is a

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[357] *totum Lodoneium ob satisfactionem et firmam concordiam eis donavit.* Simeon, ed. Arnold, 218.
[358] Forte, Oram and Pedersen, 201.
[359] Benjamin Hudson, "Knutr and Viking Dublin," *Scandinavian Studies* 66 (1994): 319-335.
[360] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* sub anno 1031.
[361] Forte, Oram, and Pedersen, 203.

document called "Gospatric's Writ" which was issued almost certainly after Siward's death. The writ appears to grant land that had seemingly been lost previously and then retaken in Siward's campaign. The writ was issued by Gospatric, a young Northumbrian nobleman, probably in about 1055. The writ clearly favored Thorfynn mac Thore concerning land grants in Allerdale, and concerns land that had been Cumbrian.[362]

The fact that this writ exists suggests that the land that had been Cumbrian had somehow become detached from Cumbrian control in the years prior to Siward's actions and Gospatric's writ. It is certainly possible that it may have involved military movements on the part of the Scottish king, or of Siward himself, or of other nobles in the area, including the "kings" or their successors of Strathclyde/Cumbria or others mentioned in the events concerning the year 973. It is also possible that this land had become detached in some other way, perhaps as a property transaction that may or may not have been related to a dynastic conflict in Scotland sometime after 1040.[363] It might alternatively have been given away, in formal recognition of a military seizure of the land that had already occurred. There is very little evidence for any of these possibilities, but it does seem that the land had become detached at some point from its Cumbrian ownership. Siward's death and his lack of suitable heirs ensured that this Northumbrian hegemony would not long last, and his replacement as earl, Tostig, did not have the Scottish contacts to resurrect any sort of alliance outside of his own earldom. Of course, Tostig had his eyes on a bigger prize, and he played a role in the well-known and transformative actions that occurred in 1066.

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[362] The earliest known copy of the writ is a slightly corrupt version dating from the thirteenth century. It does little to shed light on who, exactly, Gospatric was and on his relationship to Siward or to anyone else, except to some vague allusions to his relatives. It is also noteworthy in that it mixes Celtic and Scandinavian words, which would seem to codify an existing difference in ethnic identities in the region. It also does little to describe areas "that were Cumbrian" although it mentions these as explicitly in existence and grants them to a man of uncertain relationship to Gospatric. For the best commentary as well as a copy of the text and original text, see Florence E. Harmer, *Anglo-Saxon Writs* (Manchester: University Press, 1952), 419-424. See also Phythian-Adams, 173.
[363] Forte, Oram, and Pedersen, 204.

Apart from the wars of the kings and their challengers, there is evidence that there was also a popular movement from Scandinavia into the region of Cumbria. The focus of this chapter is not this movement; it is detailed more fully in chapter three. Colonization seems to have come from both the Irish Sea and overland from Yorkshire. In the former case, the colonists were primarily Norwegian or of Norse/Gaelic heritage, while in the latter case, there is a sizeable Danish element that served as settlers in Westmorland and in western Cumbria proper, as well as southern Scotland. This will be developed in greater depth in the following chapter.

While I am not attempting to trace the history of the northern reaches past the Norman Conquest, in the particular case of Cumbria, it is necessary to examine briefly the actions that followed this radical realignment of English, Scandinavian, and Continental power. It was because of this event that the region in question came to be in some larger sense English, although the Celtic inhabitants still clung to their own identities, even accepting that these identities included a sizeable Scandinavian element that had been partially assimilated. In the north of England after the Norman Conquest, there was a troubled history of resistance to William and his kingship. His base of support in the north was not strong, and he had to rely on the sometimes fickle loyalties of the native rulers, such as Gospatric, to represent him as king in their own regions. The first rebellion came late in 1068, and involved Edgar Æðeling in collusion with the northern powers, including Gospatric and several other earls, and seems also to have involved some foreign powers, including some Irish and even King Swein Estrithson of Denmark (ruled 1046-1074).[364] Svein's invasion of 1069 was cause for numerous other rebellions, and a large group against William came into being, probably led by Malcolm, king of

[364] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, sub anno 1068, 1069.

Scots.[365] Eventually, this led to William's campaign of total war against the north, which saw the wasting of Yorkshire and the subjection of most other realms in the north. The peasants, who had no shelter from William once the Danes had left, suffered the brunt of William's attacks.[366] The area of Cumberland was probably also hit, but its lack of population seems to have prevented any extensive depredations from William's army. William Rufus, marching northward in 1092, attacked Carlisle and drove out Dolfin, the local noble, and re-founded Carlisle as an English borough.[367] This restoration of the town and subsequent colonial efforts brought the realms of Cumberland and Westmorland into the English kingdom and perhaps in some sense restored an older boundary with Strathclyde. The basis for the modern border with Scotland dates from this Norman era. All of this is worth mentioning since it added another nuanced layer to the history of northern England and Cumberland in particular. Just as the residents of the region had managed to avoid most of the Scandinavian Viking armies, so too did circumstances conspire to keep the Normans from their territory for long stays. But incorporation into England brought with it another group of settlers, who would serve to enrich the area but also to make the era of the Scandinavians more difficult to research.

The historical development of Galloway and the Isle of Man are even more obscure than that of Cumbria. There are no reliable written sources for the early period of either area. Archaeology and toponymic evidence are the most reliable way of chronicling the early history of these areas, although there are a few more written sources for later time periods. Most of the archaeological evidence and place-name studies will be dealt with in the next two chapters. The following section will develop a brief outline of the most probable history of the region.

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[365] David C. Douglas, *William the Conqueror* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1964), 219.
[366] Kapelle, 118-119.
[367] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, sub anno 1092.

As with Cumbria, the name of Galloway and its area are causes of scholarly debate. The name of Galloway is derivative of the Gaelic term *Gall-Gaedhil*, which literally means "Gaelic speaking Gaill (foreigner)."[368] The irregular form of the name might be explained by its first having passed through the mouths of Brythonic speakers, perhaps from the region of Strathclyde or of Galloway itself, who might render it *Gallwyddel*, which in turn would be Anglicized to Galloway.[369] This would seem to indicate that at one time the inhabitants of the region were seen to be of mixed Scandinavian and Gaelic descent, and thus the polity of Galloway can be seen to date from the Viking Age although, as is known, it was inhabited well prior to this time.[370] How the region became mixed in this manner is a much more contentious issue. But it did in time come to be recognized as a separate region, for in 1034, the *Annals of Ulster* record the death of Suibne mac Cinaeda, who is styled "King of Galloway."[371]

It might be expected that the region suffered from piratical raiding by the Scandinavians, followed by settlement, as can be seen elsewhere in England and Ireland. In fact, written records are almost non-existent from the earliest time periods, and there are no recorded raids on the monastery at Whithorn or anywhere else on the Galloway coast.[372] This of course does not mean that no attacks occurred, especially given that there are recorded raids elsewhere in the region of Scotland which is, admittedly, a large region that was widely colonized by the Scandinavians. A few hints suggest possible raiding. Badulf, the fourth and last Anglo-Saxon bishop at Whithorn, was consecrated in 791 and disappears from the record in 803, a date that corresponds well with Viking attacks elsewhere in the British Isles.[373] Moreover, the monastery was partially destroyed

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[368] Woolf, 295.
[369] Downham, 172.
[370] See Chapter 1.
[371] *Annals of Ulster*, sub anno 1034/5.
[372] Edward J. Cowan, "The Vikings in Galloway: A Review of the Evidence," in *Galloway: Land and Lordship*, ed. Richard D. Oram and Geoffrey P. Stell (Edinburgh: Scottish Society for Northern Studies, 1991), 63-64.
[373] Cowan, 65.

by fire in the 840s, although the cause of this is unknown.[374] This evidence suggests possible attacks, but does not come close to proving them, as in either case there are other explanations that are at least as likely. It is also worth pointing out that Scandinavians were not always bent on the destruction of monasteries. One possible explanation for how many monasteries survived repeated attack is the simple payment of extortion or protection money, not unlike the Danegeld that was collected by the kings of England and paid as necessary. In the *Vita of Blathmac*, it is seen that St. Blathmac achieved his desire for martyrdom on Iona in 825 for one simple reason: he refused to reveal the hiding place of the metals and sacred bones of St. Columba. The source suggests that had he parted with this treasure, he and his monastery would have been spared, even though the other monks had already been slain.[375] It follows that many monastic victims, when faced with a similar choice, might have given up their treasure and kept their lives and monasteries intact. Galloway is not mentioned at all in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, or in other chronicles, except for a few references in the *Chronicle of the Kings of Man and the Isles*, which suggest that the area was for a time under control of King Magnus Barelegs of Norway (ruled 1095-1103). In 1098, for instance, this chronicle records that:

> …he subdued the people of Galloway to such an extent that he compelled them to cut timber and take it to shore for the construction of his defensive positions.[376]

The evidence presented thus far, plus two supposed saga references to the area, have caused historians of the last few centuries to postulate an elaborate, if largely fabricated, history of the region; one which many people commonly believe today.[377] *Orkneyinga Saga* states that

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[374] Peter H. Hill, "Whithorn: The Missing Years," in Oram and Stell, 33. This will be discussed more fully in Chapter 4.
[375] Alan Orr Anderson, ed. *Early Sources of Scottish History*, 263-265.
[376] *Chronicle of the Kings of Man and the Isles*, translated by George Broderick and Brian Stowell. (Edinburgh: George Broderick, 1973), 8.
[377] Cowan, 66-67.

Earl Thorfinn stayed for awhile in Galloway, "where England and Scotland meet."[378] Over the years, this has been stretched to mean that Thorfinn stayed for a long time; that he ruled Galloway from there, that administration was entrusted to Earl Malcolm; and that there were several fortresses on the coast constructed by Viking builders.[379] This is quite a series of assumptions from one line of a text. Further, it is taken out of context. What the saga actually says is that he laid anchor off the coast of Galloway, and that he sent some men to raid in England, since the locals had removed all of their livestock from his reach. Clearly it seems he was viewed more as a pirate than as any sort of ruler. *Njal's Saga* relates how, after the battle of Clontari, Kari Solmundarrson visited Beruvik and Hvitsborg, where he and his men stayed with Earl Melkorfr (Malcolm).[380] Some historians have interpreted this to mean that Beruvik is located in Galloway, while Hvitsborg is really Whithorn.[381] While this latter bit is a good assumption, it is to an extent unwarranted. Hvitsborg literally means "white fortress" which does little to clarify its location. Even the passage mentioned above in the *Chronicle of the Kings of Man and the Isles* can and has been interpreted to mean that the Vikings ruled Galloway, although in fact it says no such thing. I mention all of this because it serves as a reminder of how little is known of this area based on documentary evidence, and how vague this evidence really is. In general I am not a minimalist, but there is much to be said for care with sources. Much of the "history" of Galloway seems to revolve around the taking of a few sentences, and from them constructing an entire universe. More recently, the case for Scandinavian overlordship of the realm has been made.[382] The law of probability suggests that Scandinavian fleets would likely

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[378] *Orkneyinga Saga,* 61.
[379] Cowan, 66.
[380] *Njal's Saga,* translated by Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson (London: Penguin Books, 1960), 338-339.
[381] Cowan, 65, 70.
[382] Hudson, *Viking Pirates and Christian Prices,* 200-202.

have made substantial use of the Rhinns peninsula, but no contemporary written sources make this claim.

While Galloway is scarcely mentioned, its supposed inhabitants, the *Gall-Gaedhil*, are discussed with more regularity. These people, whoever they were, have become strongly associated with southwest Scotland, despite the fact that there currently is very little known about their origins and activities. They are inaccurately seen as Norse-Gaelic hybrids with a reputation for savagery and violent paganism. This view doubtless arises from the one surviving description of them, which is of late twelfth-century derivation:

> …they were men who had forsaken their baptism, and they used to be called Norsemen, for they had the customs of the Norse, and had been fostered by them, and though the original Norsemen were evil to the churches, these were much worse, these people, wherever in Ireland they were.[383]

The few earlier records of them tend not to support this view, and also do little to clarify who they were or where their origins may be. The *Annals of Ulster* recorded them as being active in Ireland in the ninth century, in alliance with a king of Mide against pagans, in conflict with a king of Ailech, and as being routed fighting against Olaf and Ivarr in Munster.[384] In the last episode, they are seen as being led by Caittil Find, and it is often assumed that this person is none other than Ketil Flatnose of saga fame, although there are any number of objections that can be raised in regards to this identification.[385] The description given in the *Annals* suggests that Ireland was likely not their place of origin, unless they were somehow associated with the first *longphorts* built in Dublin or elsewhere. Their association with Ketil would presumably give them a Hebridean base if it is in fact an accurate association. There are certainly other possibilities. Northwest England saw a substantial influx of people of Hebridean or Irish Sea

[383] *Fragmentary Annals of Ireland*, 104-105.
[384] *Annals of Ulster*, sub anno 856, 856, 857.
[385] Woolf, 295-297.

Norse extraction, at least in the tenth century. Alfred Smyth called attention to the Gall-Gaedhil nature of Cumbrian society, which he termed as "half-pagan, half Christian in religion; and ethnically…half-Norse, half-Celtic."[386] He states in the same place that the Gall-Gaedhil themselves were not from Cumbria, but possessed a similar culture, which can be seen well in the Gosforth Cross and other stone monuments. He and others have noted that similar conditions are apparent for the southwest of Scotland. Higham also noted the Gaelic character of the region.[387] But both men are studying a later era—the tenth century, while it is known that the origins of this group must be earlier. It is difficult to say where they may have originated, or precisely when. To a certain extent, it becomes a circular question. It is known that they were present in Galloway by the eleventh century, because we know they are there. How and why they came to have this association is another matter. It is one for which no source gives any clues.

It is at present clear that the area became a new political entity in time. It was separate from Scotland, England, Ireland, Man, and Cumbria, and yet was intimately linked to each in either a cultural or a linguistic sense, or perhaps both. That the area was called *Gall-goidal* is striking. It is, in its very name, an admission of a mixed, hybrid culture. It is possible that the hybrid identity might have been adopted to distinguish the rulers from their Scottish and Cumbrian neighbors.[388] Place-names suggest that Scandinavian settlers had influence far greater than their proportion in numbers.[389] It seems that they took over the highest social stratum, indicating perhaps that the newcomers instituted a take-over at the top. As for the rest of the

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[386] Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin II*, 265.
[387] Nick Higham, "The Scandinavians in north Cumbria: raids and settlement in the later ninth to mid-tenth centuries," in *The Scandinavians in Cumbria*, ed. J.R. Baldwin and I.D. Whyte (Edinburgh: Scottish Society for Northern Studies, 1985), 37-51.
[388] Downham, 174.
[389] Richard D. Oram, "Scandinavian Settlement in south-west Scotland," in *Scandinavian Settlement in Northern Britain*, ed. Barbara Crawford (London and New York: Leicester University Press, 1995, 140).

settlers, I prefer an explanation that might in modern parlance be called balkanization. The area was already a mixture of different ethnicities prior to the arrival of the Scandinavians. Place-names reveal that the area already had Anglo-Saxon elements (mostly by rivers and waterways) and a sizeable mixture of Gaelic and Irish elements, which tended to be in the lands between.[390] The society may well have been fragmented, which would tend to produce few strong leaders—the types that would be noticed by chroniclers.

Compared to what is known about the Scandinavian settlement of Man, there is a plethora of knowledge concerning Galloway. Written sources for the period are markedly later than those in surrounding areas, and earlier references are few. Many I have mentioned already in connection with Cumbria or Galloway. The Isle of Man is often seen as being related to the Dublin and Irish Vikings, as well as to the northwest coast of England, and, fundamentally, to the Scottish Isles. For the earliest records of settlement, it is necessary to turn to archaeology. There are four Viking Age burial mounds that have been excavated, at Ballateare, Cronk Moar, Ballachrink, and Knock y Doonee, as well as possibly a fifth, at Balladoole, that make up the earliest evidence of Viking inhabitation of the Isle.[391] These are all male graves, associated with warriors, and date to the earliest period in inhabitation in *circa* 900, with the first colonists arriving at perhaps the end of the ninth century.[392]

Given that the beginnings of the so-called Viking Age are known because of the dated raids that occurred in England, Ireland, and elsewhere in the late eighth century, it is perhaps surprising that the "Viking Age" would begin at such a later date on the Isle of Man. After all, the York-Dublin axis had already been established, and there were Scandinavian settlements all throughout the Isles, so it would be inconceivable that an island like Man, visible from the shores

[390] Downham, 174.
[391] A much more full description of these and other sites on Man will be detailed in Chapter 4.
[392] David M. Wilson, *The Vikings in the Isle of Man* (Aarhus: University Press, 2008), 25, 52.

of England and of strategic importance, would be somehow missed in the various movements of ships traversing between the Isles and the regions of Scotland, England and Ireland. No written sources mention any raids on Man in this early period, and no archaeological evidence of any raids has been found. Nonetheless, it is probable that a few raids occurred, as there was at least one known, if minor, trading establishment at Ronaldsway.[393] It is known that the Isle was inhabited, but if the poverty of the Christian culture in existence before the Viking Age is any indication, then it may be that the Isle was so poor that it was not really worth raiding. Lack of easy booty would not be appealing to the Scandinavians of the earliest migration period, since they were, as mentioned above, mostly interested in quick profits as opposed to extended settlement.

But in time the settlers would come, for reasons that are less than entirely clear. The reasons for arrival are complicated, and seem to be related to the movements of peoples in Scotland, Ireland, and Cumbria. Written sources are few and of little help, but do show the growth of a type of overlordship of Man. The earliest possibly-reliable written reference for the period has already been mentioned above in the person of Maccus, or Mascusius the arch-pirate. Maccus is possibly a garbled form of Magnus, a Norwegian name, who is presented as a king of the isles. Although it is not obvious who this Magnus may have been, there exists a tentative possible identification with Magnus Haraldsson, who was probably linked to the Hebridean earls and who was active in this area at this time.[394] Maccus or Magnus may thus be seen to potentially be a type of overlord of Man and the Isles, active in *circa* 975. He may or may not have been stationed in Man. Further evidence of this overlordship can be seen in other Irish annals that note a tradition of a battle for Dublin involving the Islanders, and in one version the

[393] A very old site, Ronaldsway has been in existence since the Bronze Age. It was not, however, mentioned in any written records before the thirteenth century. See Wilson, 117-118.
[394] Forte, Oram, and Pedersen, 218.

Danes are driven off with heavy casualties, and their leader Godfrey was killed.[395] This battle seems to have occurred in the later 980s, but who this Godfrey was is not immediately clear. He may possibly have been a relative of Maccus or Magnus. The use of the term *Inis-gall* is evidence of a substantial tie to the islands, and perhaps to the Orkney rulers. There is some evidence that the area was not ignored completely by the Norwegian crown; it was raided (along with Cumberland and Wales) by Olaf Trygvasson at some point probably early in the 990s.[396] Finally, there is mention of the Isle being raided by the forces of Wessex in 1000, which has been quoted above in full. Æðelred seems to have been orchestrating a major offensive against the Scandinavians of the Solway region, but it seems likely that this failed, possibly owing to help from the Manx fleet, and leading to a raid by the English against Man instead.

The settlement of Man was probably not undertaken by a large number of people and, as will be discussed in chapter four, the settlers were mostly men. The reasons for the "pull" towards Man are few, and related to the growth of lordship there and the upheaval in the surrounding areas. There were by this time simply more people looking for land than in the previous century, but any absolute numbers are unknown. If the above-mentioned military campaign from the year 1000 is taken into consideration, it would seem that the strategic location of the Isle is apparent. Economic prosperity is another motive, and the Isle had some connections to the Scandinavians settled in Ireland.[397] Finally, the movements of people and general upheaval must be taken into account. From about 870 onwards, the Dublin Vikings were active in Scotland, and those of York were involved in northern England and Northumbria.

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[395] *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, sub anno 982 claims a king of the Inis-gall (Islanders) was killed; *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland* by the Four Masters, ed. John O'Donovan, II (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1966), sub anno 988/9; *Annals of Inisfallen*, ed. Sean Mar Airt (Dublin: The Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1951), sub anno 982, 988. These annals seem to associate this raid with Man; *Annals of Ulster*, sub anno 986.
[396] Snorri Sturluson, *Saga of Olaf Tryggvason*, in *Heimskringla*, 169-170.
[397] Wilson, 120.

These movements created some displacement, as noted, for example, in the conquest of Dumbarton Rock. Another form of displacement occurred in 902, when the Scandinavians of Dublin were expelled, leading to an influx of people into Scotland and north-west England. In the short voyage over, the Isle of Man was well situated to receive at least a few of those displaced.

The later history of Man is better attested, and it serves to show also the strategic position occupied by the Isle. Among the first things recorded in the native *Chronicle of the Kings of Man and the Isles* is the ascension of King Godred Crovan who conquered the island in 1079.[398] This chronicle then proceeds to narrate Manx history from about this time forward, with the Manx sometimes in a position of power and sometimes not in the turbulent Irish Sea region during the eleventh century. Crovan himself was related to the Norse dynasties of Dublin and also to those of the western Isles, and he used these connections to actually conquer Dublin and Leinster, although he was ejected from these important places on the Irish mainland in 1094.[399] The action of Magnus Barelegs in 1098 in connection with Galloway and Man has already been mentioned. With this later activity in mind, it seems fairly clear that Man was a central player in the region, and it probably became fairly rich in its association with Dublin.

Conclusion

The so-called Viking Age is an era that belongs firmly within the last phases of the Germanic Migration period. It is an era that saw the Scandinavians begin to leave their native lands and seek their fortunes and lands elsewhere. The migrations into Western Europe have, for the most part, been deliberately minimized in the preceeding discussion as have the much more

[398] *Chronicle of the Kings of Man and the Isles,* sub anno 1079.
[399] *Chronicle of the Kings of Man and the Isles,* sub anno 1094. For a brief overview of the career of Godred Crovan, see Wilson, 120-121.

well-known actions of the Vikings in Wessex and southern England. Rather, attention has turned to the actions in the north of England, which were centered on the Danelaw and York, and to the foundation of Dublin, the second part of this northern axis. It is from this basis that the actions of the Scandinavians in the Eastern Irish Sea Region are largely deduced, since the sum total of written sources concerning the area is quite small. That the area was settled is beyond doubt, and that the immigrants possessed a similar, if slightly different, cultural affinity from the Danes of York and the Dublin Norse is reasonably certain. In addition, I have postulated a model that reasonably shows how this migration probably occurred, and postulated the causes of its beginning. The Eastern Irish Sea Region is certainly the periphery when dealing with the Scandinavian settlers of the time. The larger, core regions were southern England, northern Scotland and the Isles, Dublin and a few other cities in Ireland, and the northern English regions of Northumbria and York. These areas certainly saw more activity, and it is through this lens that the settlers of Cumberland and Man, Westmorland and Galloway, should be viewed. Nevertheless, the culture that developed in these regions is distinctive, since it represented a great deal of cultural mixing, and allowed, as rural areas often do, the chance to develop reasonably independently of the larger outside world.

Chapter Three
Place-Names and Scandinavian Settlement

Introduction to Place-Names and Language

The study of place-names in northern England and southern Scotland provides the largest single body of evidence for the presence and influence of Scandinavian settlers. These names are numerous and frequently occur in regions where no archaeological evidence has been found. Throughout the history of the modern period of Viking research, their use in the understanding of Scandinavian settlement has been and remains contentious. Virtually nobody believes that place-names are wholly without value but, generally speaking, scholars can be split into two groups: those who expound the merits of place-name research, and those who believe that it has very little to offer to scholarly discourse.[400] Ultimately, this division stems from a single issue—that of accepting the presence of Scandinavian place-names as being directly related to the presence of Scandinavian settlers or its opposite—that they are not. Place-names are often called upon to attempt to answer any number of basic questions. When (and in how many stages) did the Scandinavian settlement take place? Where did they settle? How many were there? Where had they come from? What kind of land was taken—prime estates previously belonging to Anglo-Saxon lords or uncolonized areas? Were these peasant farmers, or aristocratic warlords? What proportion were they by gender? This list of questions is hardly exhaustive.[401] The reason that these questions are so controversial is that different scholars often look at the same data and derive completely different conclusions from it. Historians and archaeologists seem on the whole to favor a small influx of Scandinavians who assumed control at the top, while place-

[400] Gillian Fellows-Jensen is an example of the former. Her entire career has revolved around the systematic study of place-names in differing regions of the British Isles and the interpretation of these names. Many of her works will be sighted later in this study. Nick Higham is an example of a scholar leaning towards the latter view, preferring instead a much more cautious approach. Nicholas Higham, "Viking-age Settlement in the North-western Countryside: Lifting the Veil?" in *Land, Sea and Home,* ed. John Hines, Alan Lane and Mark Redknap (Leeds: Maney, 2004), 298-308.

[401] Lesley Abrams and David N. Parsons, "Place-Names and the History of Scandinavian Settlement in England," in *Land, Sea and Home,* ed. John Hines, Alan Lane and Mark Redknap (Leeds: Maney, 2004), 380-381.

name specialists tend to favor a mass folk-migration. A modern archaeologist sums up this problem neatly:

> According to whom you believe, immigration was confined to a small group of elite land-takers, or it was a secondary mass migration in the wake of the raiding parties. Part of the problem is that the different categories of evidence do not describe a coherent story, and so each discipline has taken a different perspective.[402]

Since questions such as those posed above are not addressed by historical sources, place-name experts are often called upon for aid, leading Eric Christiansen to write "What actually happened in Northumbria, Mercia, and East Anglia during the first phase of Nordic occupation is unknown, and it has been the misfortune of place-name students that so many historians have expected them to find out."[403] This declaration may be applied generally to the Eastern Irish Sea region as well. The study of place-names can shed light on these questions, but it should be approached with caution for a number of reasons that will become clear as this chapter progresses.

The study of place-names (often called toponymic or onomastic studies) is an avenue of inquiry that is at once very simple and highly complex. In its simplest form, it is the process of examining a place-name and determining both its origin and its original meaning. While certainly not without pitfalls, if it is used in conjunction with historical sources and known archaeological finds when this is possible, it can provide reliable corroborating evidence in determining the settlement patterns of the early medieval ethnic groups of early medieval Britain. However, interpretation of this information can quickly become complex and differences can arise over virtually any detail. In many cases the specifics of how and when a topographical feature or settlement name appeared in spoken form will never be known. The only absolute

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[402] Julian D. Richards, *The Vikings: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: University Press, 2005), 64.
[403] Eric Christiansen, *The Norsemen in the Viking Age* (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 229. Christiansen is another scholar who is skeptical of the value of this type of study.

certainty is that Scandinavian influenced place-names could not exist without speakers of a Scandinavian language being present.[404] This simple fact must replace any 'names equals settlers' paradigm and its derived arguments (and the gainsaying thereof) in order to better understand the settlement process and how particular names came to be preserved in their current forms today. Direct translation of the place-names into coherent settlement information is frequently not possible. The names in the same areas or regions are not always of equal age, the same cultural origin, or unchanged from their original forms to their current forms. Some forms were produced at a later date but in an earlier style. Finally, the presence of multiple cultural groups is a known factor, and hybrids are numerous. Place-names are a cultural resource born of interaction between groups and not governed by time but rather by particular social pressures at a particular time. The approach of this project will be to cautiously accept the positivist viewpoint, that is, that the presence of place-names is probably indicative of either settlers or influence of Scandinavian origin. It must also recognize, however, that their creation and recording are results of interactions between two distinct languages, and that the Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian languages survived as two distinct languages spoken by two different language communities.

Identification of Scandinavian Influenced Place-Names

Before surviving forms of Scandinavian place-names can be discussed, it is important to establish the type of linguistic environment must have existed when they were formed. Anglo-Saxon sources confirm that Scandinavian settlers in England in fact spoke Old Scandinavian, which may be self-evident, but nonetheless establishes that it was a separate language being

[404] Matthew Townend, "Viking Age England as a Bilingual Society," in *Cultures in Contact: Scandinavian Settlement in England in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries,* ed. Dawn M. Hadley and Julian D. Richards (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2000), 89-105.

spoken by a separate group of people.[405] The acknowledgment of this fact may be taken further by examining Æthelweard's account of the burial of the Ealdorman Æthelwulf in 871.[406] This source gives the name of the burial place as *Norðorþig* (O.E "northern enclosure") but included the name by which it was known in the Danish language, Derby (from Old Scandinavian *diurby* or *diuraby* meaning "deer park") plus –*by* (a Scandinavian habitative).[407] The account states clearly that the Danes referred to the area as Derby while the Anglo-Saxon name for the same place was Northworthy. This acknowledgement of difference and Scandinavian application of a different name is historical evidence of a bilingual society in the late tenth century in northern England. There are a few other, similar examples, such as Bleasby and Normanby by Spital.[408]

Philological research indicates also that the Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon languages were considered to be of equal prestige, with neither exhibiting an overabundance of non-vital loan words from the other.[409] Over time the Scandinavian language ceased to be spoken, but not before many loan words and grammatical forms had passed into English and continue to be used today, that is to say, adopted by speakers even in the south and west of England, beyond places of traditional Scandinavian settlement.[410] The general picture seems to be one in which two separate languages, albeit two that may have been at least partially mutually intelligible, were spoken concurrently before Scandinavian eventually began to die out as the populations began to merge.[411] This would seem to mean that the Scandinavian population did not immediately assimilate into the larger society in every respect, as has been traditionally assumed.

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[405] Matthew Townend, *Language and History in Viking Age England* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2002), 110-138.
[406] *Chronicle of Æthelweard,* ed. A. Campbell (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1962), 37.
[407] Townend, "Viking Age England," 93; Abrams and Parsons, 393, n. 76.
[408] Kenneth Cameron, "Scandinavian Settlement in the Territory of the Five Boroughs: The Place-Name Evidence," in *Place-Name Evidence for Anglo-Saxon Invasion and Scandinavian Settlements,* ed. Kenneth Cameron and Margaret Gelling (Nottingham: English Place-Name Society, 1977), 117.
[409] Townend, "Viking Age England," 96.
[410] Such as they, them, their and words beginning with sk-; sky, ski, skull, etc.
[411] On similarity, see Townend, *Language and History,* 19-26.

Theories and Problems of Toponymic Evidence

The theory behind place-names comes from the idea of identifying the origin and meaning of the names. But the interpretation of the evidence provided by place-names in this way is not always as clear and decipherable as one might wish. The similarities of the languages and the dates of deposition are two of the greatest sticking points in place-name studies. Consider first the languages and the problems they present in interpretation, leaving aside the British Celtic element for later discussion. Many words are nearly identical in meaning and form. Some ninety-five years ago, a place-name scholar put together a list of words that is still useful today which shows the similarities between these two languages:

Old English	Old Norse[412]
æcer	akr
beorh	berg
birce	bjork
brad	breiðr
brycg	bryggja
burh	borg
cald	kaldr
cirice	kirkja
dæl	dalr
hlið	hlið
hop	hop
hus	hus
fenn	fen
land	land
mor	mor
raw	ra
tun	tun
þorn	þorn
þorp	þorp

[412] This is a shortened version of his list, and should serve to show that there is a great deal of similarity between these two languages, at least in their base forms. The Old English is typical of Wessex English while the Old Norse is typical of saga Icelandic. Two languages side by side would probably show even more similarity. W.J. Sedgefield, *The Place-Names of Cumberland and Westmorland* (Manchester: University Press, 1915), xvi.

While this list serves to show the similarities between the languages, it is also possible to see potential seeds of confusion here, among not only modern scholars but among the contemporary speakers themselves. Place-names were often altered and adapted, and it can never be assumed that we have a perfect understanding of the extant written forms today. Consider the example of the city of York. York, or *Jorvík*, to a Norwegian who had never seen it, might conjure up images of pigs gathered around a coastal creek or fjord, while *Eoforwīc,* from which the former term is directly derived, would certainly have sounded to an Anglo-Saxon like a combination of the Old English *eofor* ("wild boar") and *wīc* ("farm"). Yet behind both words lies *Eburācon,* a Celtic name that may have meant something like "place abounding in yew-trees."[413] And who can say what lies behind this British name, or what was the original name of this location? All place-names are given to refashioning and reinvention during all periods from when they were first "coined" until the present time.

There is no iron-clad rule that can be used with a place-name that is never wrong in its interpretation. But as a general guideline, where the first component of a place-name is the name of a person, it is usually assumed that if this personal name is Scandinavian, then the second component may likewise be so regarded.[414] For example, the first element of Angerton, Cumberland, is the Scandinavian personal name Arngeirr, so it is logical to conclude that the second element derives from the Scandinavian *tún* rather than the Old English *tūn,* but in either case is translated as "Arngeirr's place/village."[415] A logical conclusion is that the name was given by a Scandinavian settler rather than by a Saxon, although it is also possible that the name derives from someone else, perhaps from a Saxon neighbor who provided the name of his own neighbor's farm. Or perhaps in reference to the example above, it was given by the followers of

[413] Abrams and Parsons, 393.
[414] Sedgefield, xvii.
[415] Sedgefield, 5.

Arngeirr to signify a type of meeting place. In either case, this is evidence of Scandinavian presence.

The example of Angerton is useful for another reason too. This is to illustrate the tentative nature of these conclusions. While the interpretation of this example as given is certainly valid, it is also possible that the same location signifies something else entirely. According to the *Place-Names of Cumberland* series, the term Angerton, which exists today as Angerton Bank, is no more than a field name. It may be the amalgamation of Old English *-anger* ("grass land") and *tūn,* making the term a Saxon one and pushing the Scandinavians out of this equation.[416] This is not fully provable, since it could still have been a Saxon area inhabited by Scandinavians, and given the similarities in language, it could still signify Scandinavian presence. It could potentially be a hybrid term. In any case, it is certainly not unambiguous. A stronger example showing Scandinavian presence definitively is Orton, which literally is *Orri's tún*, with Orri being a known Scandinavian name.[417] Angerton, however, is useful in showing that the same area, using the same evidence, can yield radically different conclusions.

The examples of York and Angerton are useful for illustration of certain pitfalls, and another type of error can be seen in the example of Aslackby, Lincolnshire. As it stands this is a

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[416] *The Place Names of Cumberland II*, 292. This is an excellent series of works done over a period of years by English scholars and it covers most areas of England thoroughly. It is still used by place-name scholars today. Several Scottish realms have undertaken similar studies that have been undertaken independently of the English Place-Name Society. Following is the full publication information for those of the series that I have used in this research, apart from that of Sedgefield, which has already been given. A.M. Armstrong, A. Mawer, F.M. Stenton and Bruce Dickens, *The Place Names of Cumberland I-III* (Cambridge: University Press, 1950-52); A.H. Smith, *The Place Names of Westmorland I-II* (Cambridge: University Press, 1967); Eilert Ekwall, *The Place-Names of Lancashire* (Manchester: University Press, 1922); Eilert Ekwall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names* 4th edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960); Sir Herbert Maxwell, *The Place Names of Galloway* (Glasgow: Jackson, Wylie and Co, 1930); Colonel Sir Edward Johnson-Ferguson, *The Place Names of Dumfriesshire* (Dumfries, Scotland: Courier Press, 1935). There are several similar studies for the Isle of Man. The first of these studies is J.J. Kneen, *Place-Names of the Isle of Man* (Douglas, Man: Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh, 1925), and Carl J.S. Marstrander, "Det Norske Landnåm På Man" in *Norsk Tidsskrift for Sprogvidenskap* VI (1932): 40-355; and idem, "Remarks on the Place-Names of the Isle of Man" in *Norsk Tidsskrift for Sprogvidenskap* VII (1934): 287-349.

[417] *The Place Names of Cumberland I*, 144.

compound of the Old Norse personal name *Aslákr* with the habitative element *–by* meaning "settlement". It is not a great philological stretch to suppose that this might conceivably represent the remodeling of an Old English *Oslāc(es)-byrig*, containing the cognate Old English personal name *Oslāc*, compounded with *byri*g, an oblique form of *burh* ("stronghold").[418] This is a hypothetical example, and there is no evidence to suggest this was ever done in the case of Aslackby, but there is evidence elsewhere for both types of substitution, of a Norse personal name for the English equivalent, and of *byrig* for *–by*, which sounds similar.[419] There is little doubt in this case that anything other than "Aslak's settlement" ought to be construed from this place-name. Nonetheless, it is only a strong probability and not an established fact that a man named Aslak lived in or owned the place, as can also be seen with the example of Angerton directly above. In principal, this type of argument might apply to any place-name, whether the underlying form can be ascertained or not. What prevents utter chaos in the study of place-names is context. Sometimes topography or another feature can supply a clue, and in the case of Aslackby, there are over seventy similar examples in the same general area.[420] So, while any one could be suspect, the preponderance of having many together makes a strong case for Scandinavian settlement.

One of the biggest sticking points of the use of toponymic evidence is establishing when this contact between languages and hence settlement is supposed to have begun, and how many waves of settlement are supposed to have occurred. Unfortunately, there is no absolute date at which these settlements can be definitively said to have begun, although a relative chronology has been postulated and examined for the appearance of the various Scandinavian words that

[418] Abrams and Parsons, 393-394.
[419] Abrams and Parsons, 394.
[420] Abrams and Parsons, 394.

generally denote a forest clearance.[421] This particular model postulates that settlement occurred in waves or patterns, with the habitative elements *-by* and *-þorp* (which will be described below) indicating a first group, other terms denoting secondary clearance appearing next, and finally hybrids, suggesting cultural mixing.[422] This model, while perhaps workable as a base model, has proven far too simplistic and unreliable to be useful in determining a dating chronology.[423]

In seeking the beginnings of settlement, written sources are the best place to start looking, but they do not definitively say too much. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* states unequivocally that such settlement began to take place, but gives no idea of scope, or necessarily of the absolute beginning of settlement. It records three partitions of land between the Danes and the English in the 870s and 880s. In 876 it is recorded that Halfdan "shared out the land of the Northumbrians, and they proceeded to plough and to support themselves." The next year, another part of the army went to Mercia "and shared out some of it, and gave some to Ceolwulf." And in 880, part of the army "went from Cirencester into East Anglia, and settled there and shared out the land."[424] Asser provides a little more information for 876: "Halfdan, king of one part of the Northumbrians, shared out the whole province between himself and his men, and together with his army cultivated the land."[425] Apart from these dates, there is little recorded evidence that provides a date as an absolute starting point for this migratory settlement.

From these sources, the earliest recorded settlement might be said to be the year 876. Discussion in an earlier chapter suggests, however, that the Scandinavians probably began

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[421] Gillian Fellows-Jensen, "Scandinavian settlement in Yorkshire-through the rear-view mirror," in *Scandinavian Settlement in Northern Britain*, ed. Barbara Crawford (London and New York: Leicester University Press, 1995), 170-186.
[422] Gillian Fellows-Jensen, *Scandinavian Settlement Names of the North-West* (Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzels Forlag, 1985), 328-336.
[423] Abrams and Parsons, 381, 399-401.
[424] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. Dorothy Whitelock (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1961), sub anno 876, 877, 880.
[425] Asser, *Life of King Alfred*, translated by Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge (New York: Penguin Books, 1983), 83.

settling further north in Scotland and in the Isles before this date. Again there are no firm dates, but the use of Irish sources allowed at least one theory to develop suggesting an earliest possible date of around 600, while more recent scholars have rejected this view and argued instead for an early period of settlement that is around about the year 825.[426] The debate about the number of settlers is also one of great contention. When the settlers arrived, they naturally gave names to settlements and to topographical features. That the Old Norse element of the place nomenclature is extremely heavy in certain areas indicates that linguistic influence was heavy and this in turn implies that settlement itself was heavy, although this matter has been hotly disputed.[427] There is no doubt, however, that a large number of Anglo-Saxon words have been Scandinavianized. On balance, this seems to be evidence of a large number of immigrants rather than the influence of only a few elites.[428]

Common Scandinavian Habitative Place-names and Hybrids

The most common Scandinavian habitative element in northern England is the term *–by*. This is a very general term that indicates settlement.[429] The specifics can be in Scandinavian or Anglo-Saxon form, and can include anthroponymics, adjectives, or appellatives (which can refer to people as well as toponymic features). Some examples include Eppleby made up of the O.E. appellative *æpple* (apple) plus the Scandinavian *–by* (settlement); Wetherby made up of the Scandinavian appellative *veðr* (whether) plus *–by*; Thormanby made up of the Scandinavian personal name *þormoðr* plus *–by* (Thormode's settlement).[430] It will never be known when each

[426] See Chapter 2.
[427] Townend, *Language and History in Viking Age England*, 47.
[428] Townend, *Language and History in Viking Age England*, 47-48. For a list of Scandinavianized place-names, see Townend, in the same work, 69-87.
[429] Gillian Fellows-Jensen, "In the steps of the Vikings," in *Vikings and the Danelaw: Select Papers from the Proceedings of the Thirteenth Viking Congress*, ed. James Graham-Campbell, Richard Hall, Judith Jesch and David N. Parsons (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2001), 282.
[430] *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names*, 167,510, 467.

of these terms was first used but it is safe to assume that their roots lie amongst Scandinavian speaking communities of the Viking Age. It is possible to assume that these terms were coined, that is to say, forced upon a resident community, but it is more likely that they came about due to interaction and amalgamation of a bi-lingual community during a period of assimilation, and the preservation of some purely Scandinavian forms, such as Thormanby indicates that they were adopted into common use.

The generic *–by* is represented in many forms, depending upon whether it is ultimately of Danish or Norwegian extraction. It has been the subject of much discussion, and its exact meaning even within Scandinavia has been discussed and disputed by linguistic scholars. Its original meaning was "dwelling-place" and the generic later came to mean almost any kind of settlement. In Denmark, it could mean anything from a prosperous farm to a dependent secondary settlement, while in Norway it was most commonly used of single farmsteads, although here too it had multiple meanings.[431] The Norwegians took the term with them to their Atlantic colonies, although it is comparatively rare in Iceland, where a very similar role is played instead by *–staðir*. The term is sometimes mutated in form in the islands, and is often spelled in a different manner in the realms of Scotland, frequently as *–bi* or *–bie*. Likewise, the Danes took the form *–by* into their new settlements, and it is by far the most common occurring generic in the Danelaw, and seems to have been used for any conceivable types of settlement. It is particularly common throughout eastern England, whether used for thriving communities like Derby or for any number or size of villages (such as Eppleby, for instance), ranging all the way

[431] Fellows-Jensen, *Scandinavian Settlement Names in the North-West*, 10-11.

from villages and towns to farmsteads long deserted and forgotten by the time of the Domesday Survey.[432]

The term is present although less common in the Eastern Irish Sea region. Gillian Fellows-Jensen cites one survey that totals the *–bys* of the northwest, which for her also includes Cheshire and Lancashire-North-of-the-Sands, and finds that there are about 151 recorded examples of *-by* that were recorded before *circa* 1500.[433] Of these recorded instances, about 34% contain a personal name as their specific, and this name is sometimes (27%) of Scandinavian derivation. The largest percentage (54%) of samples is either French or continental in origin.[434] This means that in all likelihood these were introduced at a later date by the Normans and their continental allies, illustrating that the names of an earlier style and form were frequently introduced at a later date.

Fully half of these regional generics contain a specific appellative. Those referring to humans sometimes show national designations. For example, there is the Scandinavian term *Bretar* ("Britons") which is found in the village of Birkby, of which there are three, including two in Cumberland. There is a Scandinavian *Denar* and Old English *Dene* ("Danes") present in Denbie, Dumfriesshire; *Flemingjar* ("Flemings") in Flimby, Cumberland; *Irar* (Irishmen; Norwegians from Ireland) in Irby, Cumberland; and *Skottar* (Scottish Gaels) in Scotby, Cumberland.[435] These seem likely to be reflections of enclaves of a small group residing in an

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[432] Fellows-Jensen, *Scandinavian Settlement Names,* 11. It is worth pointing out that many place-names were recorded for the first time in the Domesday survey, and this relative lateness of recording is another factor that can make interpretation of these names problematic. Further, the survey did not cover all regions equally, for example, the majority of northwest England including Cumberland and Westmorland was not covered. It goes without saying that the survey also provides no information about the realms of southwestern Scotland, which were not conquered by William.

[433] When they came into use is, of course, another matter that will likely never be known. Fellows-Jensen, *Scandinavian Settlement Names,* 13 and map, xiv.

[434] As one example, Aglionby, Cumberland, is a Norman-French name, traceable to a Lawrence, son of Agyllion, who held land there in the twelfth century. Fellows-Jensen, *Scandinavian Settlement Names,* 13, 25.

[435] Fellows-Jensen, *Scandinavian Settlement Names,* 16.

area surrounded by settlements of another group, possibly English or Scandinavian, except in instances like Denbie where the settlers can be seen to be in the minority group. Early references denoting occupations are descriptive, as in *bondi* ("farmer") in Bombie, Dumfriesshire, and Bomby, Westmorland, or *farmann* ("merchant") in Farmanby, Cumberland.[436] Still others denote trees or other land features.

Besides *–by*, another common habitative term is *-þorp* ("dependent secondary settlement"), although this term is much more rare in the northwest than in the Danelaw. This word was once a Danish test-word, but its use in advocating Scandinavian presence or influence is muddied by the fact that it is a common term in use throughout all of the Germanic languages and so its appearance in an English place-name could be the result of either a Scandinavian or an Anglo-Saxon speaking community, or from both.[437] Examples include Milnthorpe (O.E *miln* "mill") and *-þorp* and Crackenthorpe (O.E. *cracian* "to crack") and *-þorp,* and Copmanthorpe (Yorkshire), which contains the Scandinavian appellative *kaupmann* ("buyer/merchant") and *-þorp*.[438] By and large, these settlements tend to be on poorer, less profitable land, and today many have shrunk or have become deserted and lost. There are a few exceptions, such as Fridaythorpe in Yorkshire, which has been postulated to have become profitable because of successful sheep farming.[439] Such may have happened elsewhere as well.

While *þorp* is somewhat rare in the northwest of England, the generic *þveit* ("clearing") is quite common. It occurs forty-six times in Cumberland, and eighteen more immediately to the south in Lancashire, twenty times in Westmorland, and ten in Dumfriesshire.[440] Some

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[436] Fellows-Jensen, *Scandinavian Settlement Names*, 17.
[437] Fellows-Jensen, "Scandinavian Settlement in Yorkshire," 180.
[438] *The Place-Names of Westmorland I*, 95; *The Place-Names of Westmorland II*, 101; *Oxford Concise Dictionary of English Place-Names*, 121.
[439] Fellows-Jensen, "Scandinavian Settlement in Yorkshire," 180.
[440] Fellows-Jensen, *Scandinavian Settlement Names*, 90-1.

occurrences are descriptive, as in Easthwaite or Longthwaite, while others relate to humans or to trees or other features. One particularly useful example is Ormanthwaite, Cumberland that is derived from Northmen, or Norwegians.[441] Other generics generally relating to clearings include *–dalr* ("valley"), as in Dalwhat, Dumfriesshire; and *–garðr* ("enclosure"), which in the northwest seemed to be borne by enclosures, although eventually the settlements that arose tended to take the names as well. There are two Westgarths in Cumberland, and others that denote enclosures for crops, such as Applegarth, Dumfriesshire, and Grassgarth, Cumberland.[442]

Grimston Hybrids and Regional Variations

Another important factor in sorting out the details of place-name evidence is the noted presence of hybrid terms. The most numerous of these is the Grimston hybrid, wherein a Scandinavian personal name is compounded with *–tūn,* an Old English term for village or town.[443] These settlements are sometimes situated on prime land, leading some to suggest that these had been areas of Anglo-Saxon control that had been taken over by Scandinavians who then coined the new name for the place. Another view is that some of these names have manorial significance, some of which relate to the transfer of land in the eleventh century from Cnut or his sons to men with Scandinavian names.[444] They may have also been carried at a later date by colonists into other regions, southeastern Scotland for instance, suggesting the planting of earlier style names in newer regions.[445] There are thus no absolute rules regarding Grimston hybrids and therefore it is best to proceed with caution. Grimston hybrids may indicate a Scandinavian take-over of certain lands, but the idea of a large scale take-over is too general; it

[441] *The Place-Names of Cumberland III*, 486.
[442] Fellows-Jensen, *Scandinavian Settlement Names*, 48.
[443] Fellows-Jensen, "In the Steps of the Vikings," 285-286.
[444] Fellows-Jensen, "Scandinavian Settlement in Yorkshire," 172-175; idem, "In the Steps of the Vikings," 286.
[445] W.F.H. Nicolaisen, "Scottish Place-Names: 29 Scandinavian Personal Names in the Place-Names of South-East Scotland," *Scottish Studies* 11 (1967), 234.

may apply in some places and in certain times, but it cannot be used to cover every instance in which a hybrid of this type is examined. It may be claimed with absolute certainty only that Grimston hybrids developed in a bi-lingual community, as did other place-names.[446] There are many examples of Grimston hybrids from northern Britain, including Aikton (O.N *eik* "oak") plus *–tūn*; Brayton, near Asptaria in Cumberland, from O.N. *breiðr* meaning broad and Beckton, Dumfriesshire, from *bekkr* meaning brook or stream.[447]

Another common hybrid is the Inversion compound, which shows evidence of Scandinavian and Celtic cultural mixing. With very few exceptions, these are confined in England to the counties of Cumberland, Westmorland, and Lancashire. They are frequent in Scotland, and appear consistently although less frequently in the Scottish Isles.[448] The word order tends to be Gaelic, but both words might be Scandinavian, or perhaps one word is Scandinavian while the other word is Gaelic, showing clearly an example of multi-lingual communities. Some contain the element *–kirkja* ("church"). In the region of the northwest, there are fourteen habitative place-names using this *-kirkja* element. They clearly reflect Celtic influence, given that thirteen of them are named directly after Irish saints, and all of them reflect Celtic word order, for example Kirkpatrick and Kirkbride.[449] A detailed study of the many *Kirk*-names in Galloway has established that the Gaelic language was long-established in the region prior to the Scandinavian arrival but also that at least some of these compounds represent partial scandinavianizations of older Gaelic compounds.[450] The generic *kirk*- is a Scandinavian form of

[446] Townend, "Viking Age England," 99.
[447] *The Place-Names of Cumberland I*, 118, 262; Fellows-Jensen, *Scandinavian Settlement Names of the North-West*, 185.
[448] Eilert Ekwall,"Scandinavians and Celts in the North-West of England," in *Festskrift utgiven av Lunds Universitet* (Lund, Sweden: Gleerup, 1918), 55-60.
[449] Fellows-Jensen, *Scandinavian Settlement Names*, 45.
[450] John MacQueen, "Kirk- and Kil- in Galloway Place-Names," *Archivum Linguisticum* 8 (1956), 145-146.

the older Gaelic compound *Cill-* ("church, cell").[451] Some examples include Kirkdale (*kirk* and *dalr,* or "church valley") in Lancashire and Bridekirk, Cumberland, made up of the Irish St. Bride and *–kirk,* or church.[452] These may be plausibly explained in terms of a partial scandinavianization of the prior existing terms. Those named after the Irish saints show clear and obvious Celtic influence, while the odd example, not being derived from an Irish saint's name, is Ormskirk in north Lancashire. Its specific, rather than an Irish saint is the Scandinavian man's name *Ormr*. It is possible that this man, unknown in any historical record, was an early church proprietor—there are similar examples of this in England and on the continent.[453] In a similar way, the word *kross* ("cross") entered the English language via contact with the Hiberno-Norse. There are many examples throughout the northwest, and they tend to show elements of the same admixture. Crosby Ravensworth (Westmorland) is made up of the Hiberno-Norse *kross* and the generic *-by,* while Ravensworth is the man's name *Hrafn* and the Scandinavian appellative *vað* ("ford"), perhaps meaning 'Cross settlement at Raven's ford'; Crosby (several, including one in Eskdale, Cumberland) is simply *kross* and *-by*; while Crosscanonby is *kross, -by* and *canon,* added in a later period to designate a gift to the canons of Carlisle.[454] Those *–kirk* and *-kross* names show a Scandinavian influence on a Celtic term that is common throughout the region. Again, all that can be said for certain is that these names arose in a multi-lingual context.

There is a final major hybrid form in this region that occurs primarily to the west of the Pennine mountain range. These are the words that generally denote a shieling, or summer pasture, and they occur in both Scandinavian and Gaelic forms. The term *–sætr* (shieling) and –

[451] The same scholar elsewhere makes a fine distinction concerning this point. Certain Gaelic speakers arrived in Galloway at about the same time as the Norse speakers, but an earlier form of speech was already established by that time. It was established by 400 AD, and was really not Gaelic but British, which is much more akin to modern Welsh. John MacQueen, "The Gaelic speakers of Galloway and Carrick," *Scottish Studies* 17 (1973), 17.
[452] *The Place-Names of Lancashire,* 116; *The Place-Names of Cumberland I,* 272.
[453] Fellows-Jensen, *Scandinavian Settlement Names,* 46.
[454] *The Place-Names of Westmorland II,* 154, 36; *The Place-Names of Cumberland I,* 76, 282.

skáli (shieling hut) have many applications in the northwest of England, and often are seen as indicative of Norwegian influence.[455] The association with Norway is mainly because of the rarity of these terms in Denmark, which has little need for terms denoting upland grazing, since it is primarily a flat plain. The other term for shieling is *ærgi*, a loan word from the Gaelic *áirge,* of which there are thirty-eight known examples from across the northwest, eleven containing Scandinavian personal names and three Gaelic personal names.[456] Examples also occur in great frequency in southwestern Scotland.[457] Although clearly a Gaelic term, it is in no way connected to the Irish language.[458] It is a generic which probably represents the adoption of a Manx or Hebridean Gaelic term used by incoming settlers, and it has a widespread distribution throughout Galloway, Man, and Cumbria, where the common link would appear to be some degree of Hiberno-Norse settlement from primary colonies in the Hebrides.[459] Research into the relative positions in the landscape containing references to shielings show that the Scandinavian terms seem to refer to upland positions, while *áirge* is used in comparatively low lands.[460] The absence of the Scandinavian term in both Man and Galloway suggests that the newcomers probably found a fully developed summer-grazing system and adopted the existing terminology. This would mean that the Scandinavians had been later arrivals in the area, and would seem to have been the people who cleared the wilder lands in order to set up farms there. In Cumbria, the situation is somewhat different, as both *sætr* and forms of *áirge* are to be found in the region.

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[455] Gillian Fellows-Jensen, "Scandinavian Settlement in Cumbria and Dumfriesshire: The Place-Name Evidence," in *The Scandinavians in Cumbria,* ed. John R. Baldwin and Ian D. Whyte (Edinburgh: Scottish Society for Northern Studies, 1985), 68.
[456] Fellows-Jensen, *Scandinavian Settlement Names,* 48.
[457] Richard D. Oram, "Scandinavian Settlement in south-west Scotland," in *Scandinavian Settlement of Northern Britain,* ed. Barbara Crawford, 133.
[458] Gillian Fellows-Jensen, "Scandinavian Place-Names of the Irish Sea Province," in *Viking Treasure from the North-West: the Cuerdale Hoard in its Context,* ed. James Graham-Campbell (Liverpool: National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside, 1992), 38.
[459] Oram, 134.
[460] Fellows-Jensen, "In the Steps of the Vikings," 285; idem, "Scandinavian Settlement in Cumbria and Dumfriesshire," 73-75.

The scandinavianized form of the latter word, *–ærgi*, is one that presents more problems in interpretation. This term is known to be the result of links between colonies in the entire northwest; Cumberland, Galloway, and the Isles. It has been argued that areas named with this term differed in some way from those shielings that contained the Scandinavian term.[461] There is perhaps a clue in Irish literature, where one possible meaning of the term *–airigh* is associated with cattle rearing, suggesting that this term may have been an earlier use of lands with an Irish generic.[462] Many of them are on good quality land, at low elevation, and consist of a Scandinavian personal name plus *–ærgi*. This might suggest a takeover of an already established farm by Scandinavian arrivals, which may have included cattle rearing as well as farming. Cattle-rearing was one way in which the nobility of the northwest had traditionally supported itself.[463] This interpretation if accurate would suggest that some of the Scandinavians may have come in and perhaps displaced some of the locals at the upper rungs of society, establishing themselves as the leaders of already existing institutions and structures. Of course, this is not completely certain, and all that is known for certain is that the names arose as a result of the mingling of speakers of different languages being present in the same area.

Rheged and the Celtic Past

The lingering presence of Celtic place-names is another important factor in the settlement history of the region. This has already been outlined to an extent in the preceding section, and before progressing to the inhabitation phase of the Scandinavians, it is necessary to discuss the earlier known history of the region. The Celtic place-names attest to both the antiquity and the tenacity of this older Celtic tradition, and also help to give some indication of its geographic size

[461] Gillian Fellows-Jensen, "Common Gaelic *airge*, Old Scandinavian *ærgi* or *erg*?" *Nomina* 4 (1980), 68-69. See also note 8, page 72 of this article, which traces the development back to Old Irish literature.
[462] Mary C. Higham, "Scandinavian settlement in north-west England, with a special study of *Ireby* names," in *Scandinavian Settlement in Northern Britain*, ed. Barbara Crawford, 198.
[463] M.C. Higham, 198.

prior to the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons and later the Scandinavians in the Eastern Irish Sea region.

The region, called the Kingdom of Rheged, existed as an independent polity prior to the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons and the subsequent conquest by and incorporation into the kingdom of Northumbria. Owing to the paucity of sources, the chronology and exact boundaries of this kingdom are far from certain. What follows is not an attempt to sort this out, but rather serves as a general guideline that should make a larger point: the Celtic language and heritage was still very much in evidence at the time of the Scandinavian arrival. Even today, the region is dotted with names and compounds that betray this Celtic heritage.

The Kingdom of Rheged at its largest extent was seemingly wide-ranging. It is associated with lands west of the Pennines, and is centered on Cumberland but including Westmorland, north Lancashire, south-west Scotland (including specifically Galloway and Dumfriesshire) and perhaps including northwest Yorkshire as far as Catterick and Elmet.[464] It was bordered on the north by the realm of Strathclyde, and to the northeast by the Celtic kingdom of Gododdin, with which it had relations, although the nature of these relations is murky at best. To the south and east lay Northumbria, an expanding Anglo-Saxon power that would eventually absorb Rheged.

The leading known figure associated with this kingdom is Urien, described by the Welsh poet Taliesin as the British prince or ruler of Rheged, who flourished from about 570-90. It seems likely that the center of Urien's kingdom was at Carlisle and included the Eden Valley and coastal Cumberland and Galloway as well as Dumfriesshire; but that the kingdom's greatest extent lay already in the past, at the time of his predecessors.[465] The rulers of Rheged likely

[464] *The Place-Names of Westmorland I*, xxxv.
[465] Alfred P.Smyth, *Warlords and Holy Men* (London: Edward Arnold, 1984), 20-21.

occupied a royal estate at Catterick[466] in the pre-Roman period, and its evident strategic importance is indicated by the magnitude of its loss in the Old Scottish (or Welsh) poem, *The Gododdin* of Anierin, composed in about the year 600.[467] The poem tells of an ill-fated British attack upon the Anglo-Saxons at Catterick, and the loss of most of the finest Celtic warriors, in an attempt to re-take this land from the English Northumbrians. The force left from the court of Mynyddog of Gododdin, who ruled his people from a place called *Din Eidyn* (now usually identified with Edinburgh)[468] and included a geographically inclusive British force in an attempt to dislodge the Saxons. Other sources for Urien's dynasty were composed in his own court, and survive in fragments in the *Historia Brittonum* of Nennius and in the poems of Taliesin. The former source tells of Urien's wars with Theodric (572-9) and Hussa (585-92), the latter of which resulted in his death by treachery.[469] His death likely marked the beginning of the end for Rheged, although he was succeeded by his sons Owen (or Owein) and Rhun, the latter of whom is credited with bringing Christianity to Northumbria by being responsible for the baptism of King Edwin and that of his royal daughter, Eanfled.[470]

It is this conversion that serves as a type of watershed, signaling the mixing of the two cultures and the beginning of the real Northumbrian takeover. There are two possibilities concerning this takeover. One is that there was peaceful assimilation based on marriage alliances derived from this religious conversion. This theory holds that conversion made the Northumbrians more acceptable and that Rheged eventually passed away as a dowry, although

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[466] Identified on the basis of its Welsh or Cumbric name, *Catraeth.* Kenneth H. Jackson, *The Gododdin: the Oldest Scottish Poem* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1969), 83-84.
[467] Smyth, *Warlords,* 21. For the poem, see Thomas Owen Clancy, ed. *The Triumph Tree: Scotland's Earliest Poetry AD 550-1350* (Edinburgh: Canongate Classics, 1998), 46-78.
[468] But see David Rollason, *Northumbria 500-1100* (Cambridge: University Press, 2003), 89.
[469] *Historia Brittonum,* in *Nennius, British History and the Welsh Annals,* ed. John Morris (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield, 1980), 37-38. The poems of Taliesin can be found in Clancy, *The Triumph Tree,* 79-93.
[470] This is based on Nennius' *British History,* which claims that the "whole nation of the Thugs" was baptized by Rhun at that time. See *Nennius, British History and the Welsh Annals,* 38.

not a scrap of evidence exists that anything similar was ever done in British or Celtic tradition.[471] The other view holds that the conquest of Rheged was anything but peaceful, despite the marriage alliances and other forms of negotiation, which may have been under duress. A comment in Eddius Stephanus' *Life of Wilfrid* concerning the foundation of the church of Ripon (in the period of 671-8) has Wilfrid standing before an altar and reading aloud a list of places which kings had given him and also "a list of the consecrated places in various parts which the British clergy had deserted when fleeing from the hostile sword wielded by the warriors in our own nation."[472] Three of the places listed are west of the Pennines in Rheged. It has been suggested by Alfred Smyth that this may be related to a previously mysterious series of entries in the Irish *Annals of Ulster* in which the annalist introduces suddenly roving bands of British warriors which are active along a 160-mile stretch of the east coast of Ireland from 682 until 709.[473] These warriors first appear as raiders and eventually become involved as mercenaries in Irish affairs before their defeat at Wicklow in 709.[474] He posits that these warriors are the remnants of the old kingdom of Rheged, and that their presence in Ireland is a result of their defeat and expulsion from their homeland. There seems to be a missing period or a delay in the recording of 5-10 years, but if Smyth is correct, this provides some context for an event recorded by Bede:

> In the year of Our Lord 684 King Egfrid of the Northumbrians sent an army into Ireland under the command of Bert, which brutally harassed an inoffensive people who had always been friendly to the English, sparing neither churches nor monasteries from the ravages of war. The islanders resisted force by force as well as they could, and implored the merciful aid of God, praying Heaven long and earnestly to avenge them.[475]

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[471] Edward James, *Britain in the First Millennium* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 134.
[472] *Life of Wilfrid,* in *English Historical Documents I c. 500-1042,* ed. Dorothy Whitelock (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 693.
[473] Smyth, *Warlords,* 25-26. He also suggests an approximate time for the fall of Rheged as being *circa* 670-685 as an approximate date.
[474] *Annals of Ulster,* ed. William Hennessey (Dublin: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1887), sub anno 709.
[475] Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People,* translated by Leo-Sherley-Price and revised by R.A. Lantham (London: Penguin Classics, 1968), IV.26, 254.

Bede continues on in his denunciation and castigation of the Northumbrians for this deed, seeing their defeat the following year at the hands of the Picts (after invading their country as well) as divine retribution for their attack upon Ireland. Another idea is that the Northumbrians, in light of Smyth's raiders, were attempting to find and punish these raiders and that their own raiders perhaps lost control. It is possible that they were intentionally sent there to inflict a punitive strike upon the Irish, either as revenge for their helping of the raiders, or as a warning not to help them in their attempts to recover Rheged. Either can provide context for Bede's remark.

There is much more evidence to suggest that a hostile takeover is likely, but the disappearance of Rheged does not signal the annihilation of its former British inhabitants. The area south of the Solway may have been incorporated quickly into Northumbria, but Anglo-Saxon forces moved much more slowly into Galloway. It was not until 731 that a bishopric was established there, at Whithorn, and a scarcity of Anglo-Saxon place names in the region suggests strongly that the conquest was not followed up by much settlement.[476] The area still held strong ties to its British past. The evidence for this is to be seen in the place names that are today still remaining there from this period. In Cumberland, many of the river names, including most of the major ones, are Celtic or partially Celtic in origin. These include Cairn Beck, Calder, Cam Beck, Derwent, Eden, Ellen, both of the Esks, Glencoyne, Hether Burn, Irt, Irthing, Lyne, Mite, and the Nent, among others.[477] Celtic elements signifying 'rock' or some other prominent topographical feature are common in pre-English names, just as they are in Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian names. Some examples include terms like *carn, carrecc,* and *creic* (different terms meaning "rock") and others correspond to modern Welsh *blaen* (top), *cadair* (chair), *coed*

[476] Peter H. Hill "Whithorn: The Missing Years," in *Galloway: Land and Lordship,* ed. Richard D. Oram and Geoffrey P. Stells (Edinburgh: Scottish Society for Northern Studies, 1991), 28; James, 135.
[477] Some of these distinguish themselves as inversion compounds with the use of the Scandinavian term "beck" while a few others are probably pre-Celtic. *The Place-Names of Cumberland III*, xix.

(wood), *drum* (ridge), *glyn* (valley), *pen* (head), *rhyd* (ford), and *tor* (peak), which are found in Cumbrian place-names such as Blencogo, Catterlen, Clesketts, Dundraw, Glencoyne, Penrith, Redmain and Torpenhow.[478] If river-names are taken out of the equation, Celtic place-names are particularly evidenced in three main areas—Eskdale Ward, Leath Ward, and Allerdale below Derwent Ward.[479] A similar but less distinguished pattern can be observed in Westmorland, where of the eighteen largest rivers, only seven or eight have names that are of Celtic origin.[480] Distribution of words of Celtic origin in this region follows a similar pattern, with smaller clusters appearing in fewer areas.

The Scandinavian Settlement of North-West England

The settlement of the northwest is anything but a straightforward matter, due to lack of written sources and the controversy surrounding many of the place-name elements. Based on the written source material, Scandinavian settlement of the region of Cumberland and northwest England cannot definitively be placed before the last quarter of the ninth century. Cumberland and northern England began to receive numerous immigrants from about 900 on into the eleventh century, although it is possible that some Norwegian settlers came earlier. Danish colonization occurred separately and likely began by 875. An entry from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* strongly suggests as much:

> [875] In this year the army left Repton: Healfdene went with part of the army into Northumbria and took up winter quarters by the river Tyne. And the army conquered the land and often ravaged among the Picts and Strathclyde Britons.[481]

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[478] *The Place Names of Cumberland III*, xx.
[479] *The Place-Names of Cumberland III*, xx.
[480] *The Place Names of Westmorland I*, xxxiii.
[481] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, sub anno 875. It has also been postulated that a Danish army came through the area some five years prior, in 870, led by Ivarr the Boneless to meet up with Olaf for the siege of Dumbarton Rock in Strathclyde. See Alfred Smyth, *Scandinavian Kings in the British Isles 850-880* (Oxford: University Press, 1977), 229-236 and especially the map on page 232. It is possible that these two campaigns may have been related.

This was evidently an event of some importance. It is mentioned in most of the chronicles of the time, which nonetheless add little detail. Æthelweard, for instance, adds that they "ravaged the country all around and made war quite often."[482] The *Annals of Ulster* mention this attack of the Picts in the same year, and note that he (Healfdene) killed Eystein, son of Olaf, King of Dublin.[483] The evidence points circumstantially to a wide-scale raid and perhaps to a wasting of Carlisle and other areas, which is a claim that is sometimes made although no source states this explicitly.[484] It will be recalled that the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* stated that he and his men shared out the land in the entry for the very next year. This is the first written indication of Danish (or any) settlement, although both Norwegian and Hiberno-Norse peoples from Ireland and the Gaelic lands of northern Britain also settled the area. These groups of settlers must be examined separately, and it is with the Norwegians, who are perhaps the earliest and most problematic, that it is expedient to begin.

Evidence for Norwegian settlers arriving in the area is obscure. It is related to the growth of centralized power in Norway, as told in the sagas of Snorri Sturluson and others.[485] These tell of Harald Fairhair's push for the consolidation of power in the hands of a single king, and of the other chieftains' resentment of this. Those who were the losers in this struggle would often be forced to flee and move on to Iceland or to the British Isles. This struggle culminated eventually in the battle of Hafrsfjord, where Harald won dominion over Norway. Afterwards, says Snorri:

> During the times of warfare when King Harald brought Norway under his dominion, foreign lands such as the Faroes and Iceland were settled [by Norwegians]. There was a great exodus to the Shetlands, and many of the nobility fled King Harald as outlaws and

[482] *Chronicle of Æthelweard,* 41.
[483] *Annals of Ulster,* sub anno 875.
[484] Examples include both earlier scholars and some more modern ones. Sedgefield, xi, claims the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* states this (it does not) and William Rollinson, *A History of Cumberland and Westmorland* (London and Chichester: Phillimore, 1996), 35 also states that Carlisle was ravaged.
[485] Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla,* translated by Lee M. Hollander (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1964). See particularly his *Saga of Harald Fairhair,* 59-95.

> went on Viking expeditions to the west, staying in the Orkneys and the Hebrides in winter, but in summer harrying in Norway where they inflicted great damage.[486]

Some of the family sagas offer a little more information, and introduce Ketil Flat-nose of Orkney fame as one of Harald's henchmen. One source mentions that Harald's power was so great that "neither provincial kings nor other men of stature could prosper in Norway or retain their rank and title without his sanction."[487] Small wonder that many of the disaffected came back to raid Harald's lands in acts of revenge. Harald (and his successors) naturally would retaliate, creating wars that would culminate in the foundation of the Orkney Earldom. Snorri relates that Ivar, son of Earl Rognvald of Møre, fell during the course of these wars, and that Harald then granted Rognvald dominion over the Orkneys and Shetlands to compensate for his loss.[488] Rognvald then promptly gave the lands to his brother Sigurd, apparently to return with the king and then to raid more extensively in Scotland, but to keep these lands in his family possession.

The Norwegian situation relates to the northwest of England indirectly, but in an interesting way. Extensive campaigns against the islanders would probably create a flood of refugees. Snorri suggests as much:

> But when he [Harald] arrived south, in Man, the population there had heard what depredations he had made in those lands, and all the people fled to Scotland, so that the land was altogether void of people, and all chattels had been removed, too. So that when King Harald and his men went on land, they found no booty.[489]

These settlers, Norwegian followers of the Earls fighting against Harald, would then head progressively further south, while those of Man, Snorri says, fled to "Scotland." Scotland need not be taken to mean the boundaries of the modern nation, since the border of the tenth century

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[486] Snorri Sturluson, *Saga of Harald Fairhair,* in *Heimskringla,* 76.
[487] *Laxdæla Saga,* translated by Magnus Mangnusson and Hermann Pálsson (New York: Penguin Books, 1969), 48.
[488] Snorri Sturluson, *Saga of Harald Fairhair,* 80-85.
[489] Snorri Sturluson, *Saga of Harald Fairhair,* 77.

was highly fluid and in the ninth, probably non-existent.[490] Snorri was reasonably accurate since his use of the term "Scotland" was consistent with a general rather than a specific region. But he was probably in reality referring to Cumberland, which is clearly visible from the Isle of Man, while in the modern sense, "Scotland" is not. Others who had sought shelter a little further to the north, in the regions of what is today southwest Scotland, namely Galloway and Dumfriesshire, are likewise not far away from Man or Cumberland. The first documented Norwegian residents in northwest England thus arrived there fleeing Harald. Rather than colonists in the strictest sense, these Norwegians are in a sense refugees from the wrath of the king of Norway.

Very closely related to Norwegian settlers were other settlers termed Hiberno-Norse. These were persons of Norwegian (and sometimes Danish) extraction who had spent time living in other areas and commingling with the local Celtic peoples. For this group there is considerable evidence. A group traditionally associated with the settlement of northwest England is the Dublin Vikings, who sailed on after being expelled from that city in 902—a date that fits in well with the approximate beginning of the mass colonization of this region.[491]

There is scant evidence in any of the sources describing the great Norwegian or Hiberno-Norse migration into the northwest of England in the beginning decades of the tenth century. There are two anecdotes recorded in the *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto* that suggest instability on the western side of the Pennines, which place-name evidence associates with the arrival of Scandinavian settlers in large numbers. The first is that of Tilred, abbot of Heversham, who bought estates on the eastern side of the Pennines at South Eden, and granted these to the monasteries of Chester-le-Street and Norham in preparation for his becoming a brother and an

[490] P.A. Wilson, "On the Use of the terms 'Strathclyde' and 'Cumbria,'" *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* New Series 66 (1966): 57-92.
[491] *Annals of Ulster*, sub anno 902.

abbot in each house, respectively.[492] Also at this time, but before *circa* 914, a certain Elfred son of Brihtwulf "fleeing from pirates, came from beyond the mountains towards the west and sought the mercy of St. Cuthbert and Bishop Cutheard so that they might present him with some land."[493] Following the re-conquest of the southern Danelaw by Edward and Æthelflaed of Mercia from 911 to 918, an elaborate line of Mercian defenses was put into place against Norwegians arriving from the west, who were clearly in large enough numbers to pose a threat to the English king.[494] Simeon of Durham records numerous instances of this practice in immediate succession. The following entry should illustrate this practice nicely:

> [A.D. 913] On the second nones of May, Egelfleda, lady of the Mercians, came with an army to the place called Sceargete, and there built a fortified castle; after that she built another, on the west side of the river Severn, at the place called Brige.[495]

Place-name evidence for the countryside west of the Pennines supports the idea of a significant presence. There is a high density of place-names generally in this region from Cheshire to the Solway Firth of distinctly Scandinavian form; but there are others, such as *Thingwall* near Liverpool that speak to the character of this colonization movement, in this case suggesting a full-scale settlement served by its own assembly, or *þing*.[496] There are in addition other place-names in the region that are generally identified with Norwegian settlement. Strong evidence for Norwegian colonization occurs in the frequent appearance of the Scandinavian term *–bekkr* ("stream") in combination with words of distinct Scandinavian origin that occur throughout Cumberland, Westmorland and southwest Scotland. This particular word for stream is hardly ever found in the place-names in Iceland, but was in common use in Norway before the

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[492] *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto,* in *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omni,* ed. Thomas Arnold (London: Longman & Co, 1882), Ch. 21, 208.
[493] *fugiens piratas venit ultra montes versus occidentem et quaesivit misericordiam sancti Cuthberti, et episcopi Cutheardi, ut praestarent sibi aliquas terras. Historia de Sancto Cuthberto,* Ch. 22, 208.
[494] Alfred P. Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin I* (Dublin: Templekieran Press, 1975), 74.
[495] Simeon of Durham, *History of the Kings,* translated by Joseph Stevenson (London: Seeley's, 1855), 501.
[496] Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin I,* 78.

colonization of Iceland from Norway took place. This date derives ultimately from *Landnamabók* and is usually placed at about the year 870.[497] This is an approximate date of course, but fits in well with the idea of a folk movement of Norwegian settlers arriving in the general area of northwestern England. There is in addition another Scandinavian habitative term, *þveit* (-thwaite) which denote a settlement established in a clearing of trees or scrub.[498] Although it does occur occasionally in Denmark, it is frequent in Norway, and appears in considerably greater frequency west of the Pennines than to the east of this range.[499] Examples include Laithwaite (several in Lancashire) made up of the Scandinavian *hlaða* ("barn") plus - *þveit* ("clearing"), Longthwaite (several in Cumberland and Westmorland) consisting of -*long* and -*þveit*; Lounthwaite (Cumberland) from -*laun* ("secrecy") and -*þveit* (meaning "secret clearing") and Waberthwaite (Cumberland) made up of the Scandinavian *veiði-búð* ("hunting booth") and -*þveit*.[500]

Apart from the naming evidence and the first two events described, there are two other known incidents which point to a Norwegian/Hiberno-Norse occupation of the area. The first is the invasion by Ingimund of the Wirral in 911; and the second, the capture of York by Ragnall of Dublin in *circa* 919. The first event derives ultimately from the third of the *Fragments* of Irish history, and involves an invasion force led by Ingimund from Dublin, whose force had been expelled from there and had vigorously tried and failed to win a foothold in Wales.[501] This force then invaded the Wirral in Cheshire and expended a great deal of effort in trying to wrest Chester from its ruler, named Queen Æthelflæd. Eventually in the source, the two sides come to terms

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[497] Jón Hjálmarsson, *History of Iceland* (Reykjavik: Iceland Review, 1993), 14.
[498] Fellows-Jensen, "In the Steps of the Vikings," 284.
[499] Fellows-Jensen, "In the Steps of the Vikings," 284.
[500] *The Place-Names of Lancashire*, 167, 104; *The Place-Names of Cumberland II*, 334; *The Place-Names of Westmorland II*, 121; *Place-Names of Cumberland II*, 439-440.
[501] Frank T. Wainwright, "Ingimund's Invasion," in *Scandinavian England*, ed. H.P.R. Finberg (Chichester: Phillimore & Co Ltd, 1975), 131-133; *Fragmentary Annals of Ireland*, ed. Joan Newlon Radner (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1978), 168-173.

and Ingimund is granted some lands in this area, which show evidence of Scandinavian naming. Ingimund, however, does not seem to have been more than a minor chieftain or earl among the Dublin leaders, and his settlement is likely of little more than local significance.

More informative is the account of Ragnall as told in the *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto.* This account supports the idea that seizure of land was the first step to a successful invader of the early tenth century. The account tells of the seizure of the lands of the monastic community by Ragnall and his Hiberno-Scandinavian army active in northern England in *circa* 918. The *Historia* states that Ragnall had seized certain lands and granted two large tracts of land to his followers Scula and Onalafball. After the victorious battle of Corbridge, Ragnall seized two further estates that the community had leased to Eadred, who had been killed in the battle.[502] Further, the account claims that sometime before, the community had purchased land from the Danish king Guthred and also "from the Danish army under him which had divided the land among themselves."[503] This purchased land had presumably once belonged to other monastic communities and may have been seized by Guthred or by Healfdene before him before being sold to the only surviving ecclesiastical power in this region. Ecclesiastical lands were not the only ones seized; the account claims that Ragnall also seized the land of Ealdred, a favorite of King Alfred and presumably a native, and drove him into exile.[504]

It is likely that settlement, as recorded in the entries of 876, 877, and 880 in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* meant more or less immediate seizure of land. What happened thereafter is not known, but must have varied based on the value of the estates, with some being granted or sold to native holders for various reasons, and the rest subdivided among the individual war leaders of

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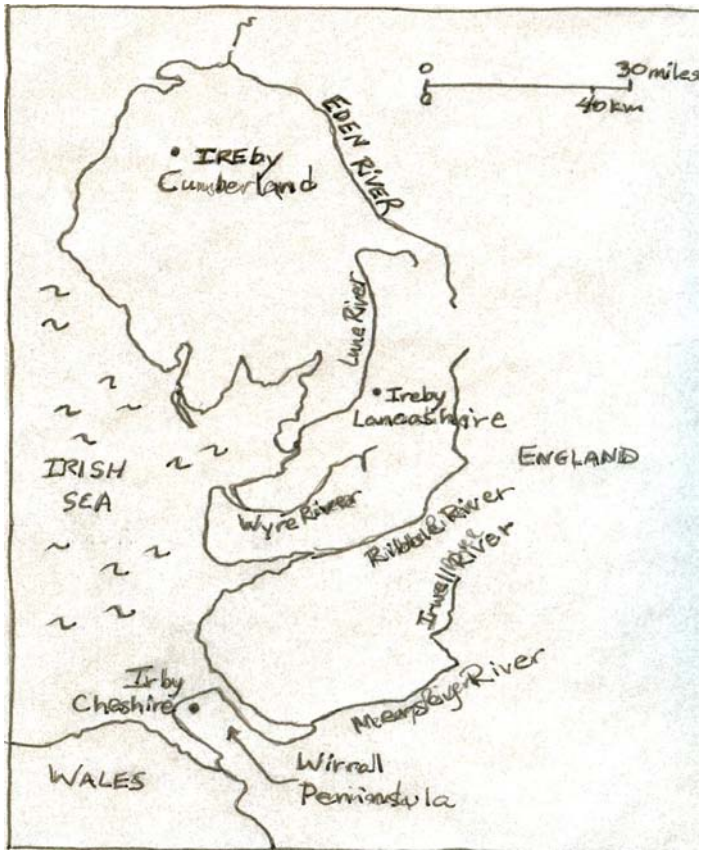
[502] *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto,* Ch. 23-24, 209-210.
[503] *Ethred supradictus abbasemit a praefato rege Guthred, et a Danorum exercitu qui sibi sub eo terram diviserant.* These are then listed: Seletun, Horetun, the two Geodenes, Holum, Hotun, Twilingatun. *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto,* Ch. 19, 207.
[504] *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto,* Ch. 22, 208-209.



Map 8. Ireby names in northwest Britain. Drawn by Russ Goodrich.

the military force as rewards. It has sometimes been suggested (see above) that many of the names ending in *-by* date from this period of primary settlement created by this fragmentation of estates, suggesting a type of a takeover at the top of society.

Events such as the peregrinations of Ingimund and Ragnall probably did serve as an impetus to larger scale colonization, and there is certainly evidence of a Hiberno-Norse presence in the north-west of England. Apart from these known historical events, there is certain linguistic evidence of an "Irish" presence. There is certainly the presence of the place-name of Ireby, of which there are three. Ireby, as can be seen in its name is *–by* (dwelling) of the Irishmen.[505] The furthest south of these, Irby, Cheshire, is within the lands apparently granted to Ingimund and his followers in the early years of the tenth century by Æthelflæd of Mercia. These lands are believed to have been in the Wirral peninsula, and nearby place-names such as Raby ("village at the boundary") possibly indicate the border of a Scandinavian enclave with a larger, native area.

[505] *The Place-Names of Cumberland II*, 299-300.

It is quite likely that Irby ("village of the Norwegians from Ireland") is related to the lands granted Ingimund.[506] Ireby in Lancashire is the second of these. A common feature of its history is its subdivisions and detachment from larger administrative units. A local farm-name, Amens (from O.N *af-nam,* "land detached from an estate") in its immediate area is perhaps a commemoration of this development.[507] Finally, there is an Ireby in Cumberland. It is situated to the northeast of Bassenthwaite Lake in the northern foothills of the Cumbrian Fells, in the ancient territorial division of Allerdale, another of the territorial divisions of the northwest that bears a Scandinavian name. In the medieval period, there is evidence of a market present in the town and its subsidiaries, and apparently it had a weekly market and a yearly fair by 1236.[508] It has nearby several settlements in *–thweit,* suggesting a strong Scandinavian presence in the area. Ireby likely was the original settlement, and an area of it even today exhibits features which suggest it may have developed from a dependent shieling site.[509] Despite this undoubted evidence of Scandinavian-Irish settlers, it is not from Ireland that most of the settlers had come. The majority arrived from the Gaelic speaking areas of Scotland.

There is a marked Goedelic element in the place-names of Cumberland. This is differentiated from the Irish by the fact that the Scandinavians and Irish in Ireland seemed to live in separate cultural spheres, and Scandinavian place-names in Ireland have been handed down through the English and not the Irish language, as the natives almost always continued to use the Irish name of the place.[510] Few inversion compounds with Scandinavian components exist in Ireland, and most of those that do should be seen as Irish formations coined at a time when

[506] M.C. Higham, 201.
[507] M.C. Higham, 202-204.
[508] M.C. Higham, 201.
[509] M.C. Higham, 201-202.
[510] Fellows-Jensen, "Scandinavian Settlement in Cumbria and Dumfriesshire," 72.

Scandinavian personal names had come into vogue amongst the Irish.[511] It follows that Ireland is not the place to look for the majority of linguistic influences in northern England. Most Gaelic influence has come from elsewhere--Scotland and the Isles.

There is little doubt that the place-names of Cumberland and southwestern Scotland are culturally related. This has mostly been ascertained by studying distribution patterns of the names, which shows a complex pattern of relationship between Cumberland and Dumfriesshire. Of those names in common, six of the twenty-five in Cumberland show an affinity to those in Galloway, suggesting some similarity in origin.[512] All that can be said for certain is that the names evolved in the same cultural milieu. It is not clear to what extent that they may have influenced one another, or in which direction settlement is more likely to have originated from.

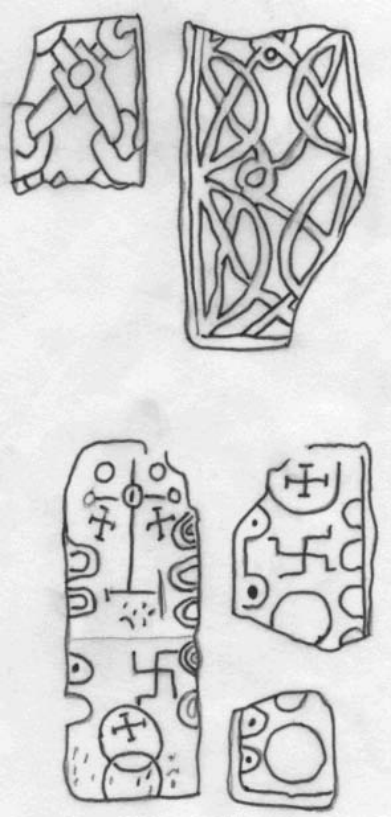


Figure 1. Comparisons of sculpture.
Top: Millom (left) and Craiglemine.
Bottom: Craignarget (left) and Aspatria.
Drawings based on Richard N. Bailey (1980) and W.G. Collingwood (1901).
Re-drawn by Russ Goodrich.

[511] Magne Oftedal, "Scandinavian place-names in Ireland," in *Proceedings of the Seventh Viking Congress,* ed. Bo Almqvist and David Greene (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1976), 125-133.
[512] Fellows-Jensen, "Scandinavian Settlement in Cumbria and Dumfriesshire," 73.

The question of which part of the region developed first and influenced the other is not as important as establishing the fact that the regions of northwest England and southwest Scotland shared a common culture during this time period. Corroborating evidence comes in a comparison of the sculptured stones of Cumberland and southern Scotland. A comparison of two stones in Cumbria and two from the Galloway region show clear evidence of this relation. One of the Cumbrian carvings is now built into the outside wall of the isolated church of the Holy Trinity at Millom.

This knotwork pattern on the visible side is simple but unusual—it is lightly incised and there is an unusually large area of uncarved or unused background.[513] This could be viewed as an aberration or an unfinished work, if not for another piece of work, carved in an almost identical style, with the same style of knot, on a cross-slab from Craiglemine in Galloway. A logical conclusion to be drawn from this is that this is a unique style, or the partial remains of one. Similarly, a relationship probably exists between the other two stones at Aspatria, Cumberland, and Craignarget. Both stones show a unique synchronicity not found anywhere else of unusual motifs like semi-circle borders, incised swastikas and crosslets set in circles.[514] These are not the only examples available, and there are other parallels of stone work between the two regions. The patterns of distribution of these sculptures also tie neatly together with the distribution patterns of place-names, and suggest some sort of sea link across the Solway Firth. The intervening area, consisting of Dumfriesshire and the Carlisle plain, is characterized by a large proportion of *-by* names, while Cumbria south of the River Ellen exhibits a much more Gaelic-Norse nomenclature.[515] This nomenclature is not precisely the same as that of

[513] Richard N. Bailey, *Viking Age Sculpture in Northern England* (London: William Collins and Sons), 1980, 223.
[514] Bailey, 223.
[515] Fellows-Jensen, "Scandinavian Settlement in Cumbria and Dumfriesshire," 74.

Galloway,[516] but it is similar and it does seem as though Galloway exerted some influence on the names given in Cumbria.

The evidence of the Hiberno-Norse as being the primary settlers of particularly the western part of this region is thus considerable. In sheer numbers, the Goedelic elements present in the place-names of the region greatly outnumber those of the Irish. Irish presence is to an extent notable, but it seems clear that the majority of the Scandinavian settlers to settle in northwestern England had spent time in the western Isles or in the northern part of Scotland. This Scottish background should be expected in Cumbria, for it is here rather than Ireland that the majority of the excess Norse settlers seem to have gone in the early tenth century. In both Ireland and Scandinavia a certain portion of these settlers were known as the *Gall-Gaedhil* or the *Gaddgedlar*, meaning something akin to the "Scottish Vikings."[517] Western Scotland had become a jumping off point for excess people of Scandinavian extraction seeking lands elsewhere in the British Isles. Many of the family sagas, as well as *Landnamabók*, suggest that whole districts of western Iceland were settled by secondary migration of settlers who had spent time in Scotland; some were one or more generations removed from their Norwegian homelands.[518]

These immigrants naturally preferred to settle and some to begin farming and raising animals in the area. With Ireland effectively closed to mass immigration—and even Dublin being closed off to Scandinavians between 902 and 917, this was perhaps an enticing prospect for many. The evidence available concerning the terms *–sætr* and *-ærgi* suggest that the area had become bicultural and bilingual, and that for many, cooperation with the previous inhabitants

[516] W.F.H. Nicolaisen, "Norse Place-Names in South-West Scotland," *Scottish Studies* 4 (1960): 49-68. This is the preeminent study of these differences.
[517] They are discussed more fully in Chapter 2.
[518] Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin I*, 82.

was the preferred method of survival. This included the adoption of many local customs but also the scandinavianization of many words, resulting in many changing place-names. Snorri was aware of this process in earlier centuries:

> Northumberland was settled by Norwegians, chiefly after the sons of Lothbrók had conquered the land. Danes and Norwegians often harried there after they had lost control of the country. Many place names in that land have Scandinavian forms, such as Grimsby, Hauksfljót, and many others.[519]

The knowledge that this change had occurred, which began to be studied only in the nineteenth century, was thus not unknown when Snorri wrote, in *circa* 1210. Perhaps this was a known feature of primarily oral cultures that was still better remembered at that time, or one that Snorri chose to record for posterity in the written age. The account also suggests that there was a large and extensive Scandinavian presence in northern England. It can be inferred too that, once the best lands there were claimed for farming, other lands would need to be searched out elsewhere in England.

Of all of the Scandinavian settlers, it is the Danish group that is the most elusive and poorly documented. It is this group under Healfdene that is first mentioned in the written sources, but they appear only sporadically and in diverse locations thereafter. Danish presence is traceable mainly through the preponderance in place-names ending in *–by* and by their distributions as they appear to spread from the Danelaw westward into the northwest of England and southern Scotland. With the terminal *–by* signifying mainly a Danish element, it would seem to follow that its presence would signify a type of Danish influence, and it reveals a marked penetration of Danish settlers across the Pennines, especially along the Eden valley. One scholar has written that the Danes, having reached Carlisle, began to move northwards into Dumfriesshire while others continued to move in a westerly and southerly direction, settling into

[519] Snorri Sturluson, *Saga of Hakon the Good,* in *Heimskringla,* 98.

the coastal plain of Cumberland.[520] From there, some of these Danish settlers made their way across the Irish Sea to Man, Wirral, and southwestern Lancashire, while others followed more direct routes into Lancashire from the Danelaw along the Lune, the Ribble, and the Calder.[521] They gave names ending in *–by* to older settlements, including Appleby and the two Kirkbys in the Eden valley, Crosby in the Carlisle plain, Bombie and Sorbie in Dumfriesshire, Birkby and Crosby in the coastal plain of Cumberland, Crosby and Surby on the Isle of Man, the western part of Kirby and Raby in Wirral, and Roby and Crosby in southwest Lancashire.[522] This renaming of lands has been established in the Danelaw and seems on the whole to have been likely in some areas of the Eastern Irish Sea Region. It has, however, proven to be contentious, since it is now known that a number of place-names ending in *-by* in the Carlisle plain are in fact not Danish, but were named in this fashion by the Normans sometime after 1092.[523]

It is extremely difficult to date this westward Danish movement but it would certainly seem to have begun in the ninth century, perhaps with Healfdene and his sharing out of the land as recorded in the *Chronicle.* There is some corroborating evidence that may help to serve as a guideline. There are a number of Scandinavian burials from the pagan period along the routes followed by settlers entering Cumbria from the Danelaw and in the coastal plain of Cumberland, and this has been interpreted as an indication that this settlement must have begun at a comparatively early date.[524] Northern Cumberland was re-conquered by the Strathclyde Britons sometime before 927, and that the region of Amounderness had passed into the possession of

[520] Fellows-Jensen, *Scandinavian Settlement Names in the North-West,* 411.
[521] Fellows-Jensen, *Scandinavian Settlement Names in the North-West,* 411.
[522] Fellows-Jensen, *Scandinavian Settlement Names in the North-West,* 413.
[523] B.K. Roberts, "Late *-by* names in the Eden Valley, Cumberland," *Nomina* 13 (1989-1990), 25-40; Townend, "Viking Age England," 98.
[524] David M. Wilson, “The Scandinavians in England,” in *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England,* ed. David M. Wilson (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1976), 396-397.

King Athelstan by 934.[525] These dates suggest that the Scandinavian settlement names probably date before this time, and would also suggest a considerable Scandinavian presence remaining in the area.

Fellows-Jensen noted a marked pattern occurring west of the Pennines following the same distribution patterns involving *-by*. In Cumberland and Dumfriesshire the names in *-by* frequently incorporate a personal name as they do in eastern England, but to the south in Cheshire, Lancashire and Westmorland, this is much less common. She explained this chronologically, suggesting that since Lancashire and Cheshire were quickly "recovered" by the English and Westmorland by the Strathclyde Britons, that fragmentation of the estates as implied by the *-by* names had not yet had time to occur, while further north, where Scandinavians remained in control much longer, estates were fragmented as they had been in the east.[526] Frequently in the Vale of York and elsewhere, this is characterized by the appearance of settlements consisting of Scandinavian personal names plus *–by*. Detailed work on these names suggests that most must have been coined while the Scandinavian community still retained its own national naming custom.[527] The Danes on the whole seem to have been located in eastern and central Cumberland and Westmorland, while the Norwegians and Hiberno-Norse were in the western and central regions, with some overlap. The confusing mass of data and its interpretation, however, allow only a tentative conclusion to be made concerning the origins of the settlers.

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[525] Angelo Forte, Richard Oram, and Frederick Pedersen, *Viking Empires* (Cambridge: University Press, 2005), 92-93.
[526] Fellows-Jensen, *Scandinavian Settlement Names in the North-West*, 21, 413-414; Gillian Fellows-Jensen, "Anthroponymical specifics in place-names in *-by* in the British Isles," *Studia Anthroponymica Scandinavica* 1 (1983), 54-55.
[527] Fellows-Jensen, *Scandinavian Settlement Names in the North-West*, 413-414.

The Scandinavian Settlers in Galloway and Man

The region of Galloway, immediately across the Solway Firth from northern Cumbria, is another area in the same cultural sphere that has often been suggested as being an area heavily populated by persons of Scandinavian descent.[528] Of the strategic value of the region's shores there can be no doubt, and this fact would certainly have not been lost on nomadic and sea-faring Norsemen. The region probably derives its name from the *Gall-Gaedhil,* those persons of Norse-Gaelic extraction known from Irish chroniclers.[529] While this issue is not terribly certain, archaeology and place-name studies have provided evidence of a presence, albeit a smaller presence than was once supposed.

The place-names are scattered the length of the coastline, and very few names except of topographical nature are found on the interior, and those of the coast fall into two distinct grouping clusters, around the Machars peninsula and the other around Kirkcudbright. The extent of this coastal distribution points to a type of secondary colonization from earlier Norse settlements, probably from Man and the Hebrides, and generally shows signs of contact with the Norse west.[530] At the far eastern end of the Solway, there is evidence of a Danish presence as mentioned above, showing a Danish push to the northwest from York into Carlisle and Dumfriesshire, although this presence is not seen definitively in Galloway.

Both topographical and habitative names are recognizable in Galloway. Coastal features with Old Norse nomenclature are well represented, including *nes* ("coastal promontory") as in Almorness, Borness, and others; *holmr* ("island") as in Estholm, and *bryggia* ("bridge, landing

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[528] This claim, particularly about numbers, is no longer accepted. Edward J. Cowan, "The Vikings in Galloway: A Review of the Evidence," in *Galloway: Land and Lordship,* ed. Richard D. Oram and Geoffrey P. Stell (Edinburgh: Scottish Society for Northern Studies, 1991), 63-75.
[529] For more about this group, see Chapter 2.
[530] Oram, *Scandinavian Settlement in south-west Scotland,* 128.

place") as in Lybrack, formerly Lybrig.[531] The other Norse terms, including *bekkr, dalr, þveit,* and others are similarly present, but in less numbers than in Dumfriesshire, suggesting less influence. As with other regions discussed so far, these terms developed in a multi-lingual context and are of little use in establishing any type of chronology.

While terms of this general nature are common, the habitative terms that serve as evidence of widespread Scandinavian population settlement are rare. Evidence for significant settlement sites in terms such as *–staðir, -sætr,* and *–bostaðir* common throughout the rest of Scotland and northern England are wholly absent in this region, while in Dumfriesshire there is a marked lessening of the presence of these terms. Other than two sites with *–borg* ("stronghold") in the region, the only identifiable presence markers derive from the suffix *–byr* ("settlement") or *–boer* ("farm") and appear as *–by* or *–bie,* as in Bagbie, Bysbie, or Sorbie. Only seven such names are to be found in Galloway. As with northern England, there is a geographic and probable linguistic divide. Those in the east such as Mabie, on the western side of the Nith estuary, seem likely derived from the Danish *–by* and might mark a boundary of sorts in the western limit of the Danish colonizing movement; those on the other side would seem to indicate Norwegian or Hiberno-Norse arrivals by sea and perhaps would mark the boundary of Norse influence.[532]

There are other factors as well that can explain the general scarcity of Scandinavian names now present. The place-name map of the area was highly fluid until the sixteenth century, and it can be seen that many names recorded in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries disappeared in the course of the fourteenth century only to be replaced in the fifteenth century with an

[531] Oram, 128.
[532] Oram, 130.

entirely new name form.[533] A known example is that of the Brythonic parish and settlement of Trevercarcou, which vanished as a result of the social dislocation that followed the army of Robert I into the region in the early fourteenth century. When it reappears in the fifteenth century, it had been colonized from elsewhere within Galloway and had been renamed in the Gaelic fashion as Balmaclellan.[534] Although this example is extreme, involving as it does the whole-scale wiping out of a region, it does serve to illustrate that terms with ancient usage can disappear almost without a trace, and that many less fully documented cases have probably done just that. It is certainly also the possible fate of many early Scandinavian settlement names, which may well have been renamed in this fashion by later, non-Scandinavian owners during the dramatic Gaelicization of Galloway during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Another possibility is that incoming Scandinavian arrivals may have taken over an area and kept the original name of the place. There is some evidence that this happened at some places in eastern Galloway and Dumfriesshire. At Glasserton, there is evidence that a Saxon estate may have been partitioned by an important Scandinavian or Hiberno-Norse settler to form holdings for his dependents. This anonymous settler may have come in and been recognized as having demesne rights at Bysbie, sometime during the tenth century, in a period when the bishopric of Whithorn was either empty or had failed completely before its re-founding in the twelfth century.[535] This is tantalizing evidence of at least some settlement presence, but all that remains for sure today is a scattering names that remain in *–bie*. These are possibly the only remnants of what was once a larger settlement.

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[533] Oram, 130.
[534] Daphne Brooke, "The Glenkens 1275-1485: Snapshots of a medieval country-side," *Transactions of the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society* 59 (1984), 41-43.
[535] Oram, 138. There is some evidence that the monastery never did completely fail. See Chapter 4 for a more thorough discussion of this monastery.

The Isle of Man is another region in the immediate area that shows signs of Scandinavian colonization. It bears a strong resemblance to Cumberland in its Scandinavian burials and its system of naming summer pastures. Its place-names show both Danish and Norse habitation patterns, and it shares with the other regions a marked difficulty in dating the first and subsequent arrivals.

On Man there are many areas with Scandinavian topographical names. They appear to have a fairly general distribution excepting the high ground, the marshy ground of Lezayre and the hinterland of Peel. Of the Scandinavian names born by Manx treens in the sixteenth century, no less than 58% are topographical, and many are terms that are held in common with the place-names in Iceland.[536] Some of the most frequent in Manx locales are *vik* (28), *dalr* (22), *fell* (15), *á* (10), *nes, holl, höfði* (6), and *eyrr,* a form of *eyri* (3).[537] Although these names are present and certainly show a Scandinavian element in naming, they do little to date the progression of the settlement. There are other terms that tend to suggest secondary settlement, such as cognates of *–bær,* like *kirkja-bær,* which suggests that a church was found by the newcomers upon their arrival. There is one instance of this term on Man, at Kirby in Braddan. This need not necessarily imply Christianity on the part of those naming the site; there is evidence of pagan graves in the island and one place-name thought to be of a pagan Norse origin, Aust.[538]

There are about a dozen names on Man in *–staðir* (a regional variation with the same essential function as *-by*) and most of these lie on the north of the island. The documentation for

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[536] Gillian Fellows-Jensen, "Scandinavian Settlement in Man and the North-West of England: the place-name evidence," in *The Viking Age in the Isle of Man: Select Papers from the Ninth Viking Congress, Isle of Man,* ed. Christine Fell, Peter Foote, James Graham-Campbell, and Robert Thomsen (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1983), 40.
[537] Fellows-Jensen, "Scandinavian Settlement in Man and the North-West," 40.
[538] Fellows-Jensen, "Scandinavian Settlement in Man and the North-West," 40. The etymology of Aust is quite obscure, but it may have developed from an original form like *hof-staðir* (temple/dwelling) which is of common occurrence in Iceland. It is possible that the king or leader's residence may once have been located near this place, as is sometimes found in Iceland. On the graves, see Chapter 4.

these is as poor as that of Aust, but they do tend to lie in a low-lying and well-watered area.[539] Interpretation of this is less than clear. They may represent, as elsewhere in the northern Isles and Norway, an early but secondary settlement unit separated from a larger administrative unit, perhaps given by a person of high status to followers.

There is evidence of a Danish as well as this Norwegian element present in the settlers of Man. An obvious assumption is that this settlement was mostly the work of Norwegians, since it is a logical progression of islands in a seaward push to the south from Norway and since Snorri mentions the island several times. There are no Manx words that make a distinction between Danes and Norwegians although the Irish chroniclers sometimes distinguish between them as Black and White foreigners. Onomastic evidence agrees with the theory of a mainly Norwegian enterprise, suggesting a number of topographical terms not found in Danish place-names, and the nasalization of words from the era in modern Manx is more akin to the Norwegian to the Danish.[540] There is also some evidence as well of a Danish presence. Most notable is the presence of terms ending in *–by*. While this admittedly occurs also in Norwegian colonization, it is fairly rare in the northern and western Isles. It is much more common in the Danelaw and it seems probable that the Danish migration from York across Cumberland and Dumfriesshire may well have reached Man, as discussed earlier. The names themselves appear in clusters in areas that would seem to have been filled in, perhaps in the tenth century. There are interesting parallels between the Manx names in *–by* and those of England. Of the twenty-eight of these on Man, thirteen have exact parallels in England, and all of these parallels are found in northwest England or in north Yorkshire.[541] The names Crosby, Raby or Rheaby, Surby and Sulby are of frequent occurrence in the northwest of England. It is certainly a plausible argument that these

[539] Fellows-Jensen, "Scandinavian Settlement in Man and the North-West," 40-42.
[540] Fellows-Jensen, “Scandinavian Settlement in Man and the North-West,” 45-46.
[541] Fellows-Jensen, "Scandinavian Settlement in Man and the North-West," 48.

settlers brought this nomenclature with them from the Danelaw, and they may well have supplanted earlier topographic names or others perhaps in *–staðir* that had earlier been introduced by Norwegians or Hiberno-Norse settlers from the Isles. As has been seen already in regards to Galloway, such whole scale change of names and naming patterns is certainly possible. Finally, there is some evidence to suggest that influence may have come from Man back to the mainland, as well as from the mainland to Man. Much of this is based on the loan word *–ærgi,* the known scandinavianization of the Gaelic *áirigh,* which often turns up in the Wirral and is thought to have arrived on shore via Man.[542] It is to be expected that a mobile culture with access to water transport would show just this tendency. One area of the Eastern Irish Sea region is compatible with other areas within the same region, and it can be expected that they would resemble one another in terms of their linguistic names and structures.

Colonization or Conquest?

The interpretation of the distribution of these sites is important in the sense of place-name studies as cogent modifiers of living arrangements. There is evidence of both a take-over at the top of society and also of a mass folk-migration. The fragmentation of the estates, as seen in the *-by* and similar names as well as the references in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* the *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto* and the Icelandic sagas and other sources suggest that the new arrivals were intent upon gaining lands and titles for themselves, and as a consequence displaced many of the native elites. But the question of whether the Scandinavians arrived as conquerors or as peaceful colonists is not a question that suggests an easy, straightforward answer. Most of the written sources are concerned mainly with the affairs of kings and nobles and with their machinations against one another, and thus with the movement of armies and of other warlike activities. This

[542] Fellows-Jensen, "Scandinavian Settlement in Man and the North-West," 48-50.

evidence cannot be ignored, but it cannot tell the whole story of a folk migration. It certainly does not even tell the whole story of the movements of the kings and of their conquests.

Most of the historical evidence suggests that the initial contact was probably violent, and that this period of raiding, differing in length from area to area, was followed by a popular movement of people into these areas that were, to them, newly discovered or opened. How the Scandinavians interacted with the natives from then on seems to have varied from place to place. In this cultural region, beginning in Yorkshire with the Danish place-names ending in *–by*, there seems to be a pattern of a political conquest of the top echelons of Anglo-Saxon society, but a marked indifference by the majority of current residents to these events and to their new Scandinavian neighbors. A similar pattern can also be seen in the northwest of England and, in more obscure form, in southern Scotland.

Conquest, or at the very least a strong influence, is seen in the fact that many of the old English establishments in eastern England had been taken over together with their administrative institutions. Many of these had names that have survived unchanged, suggesting that the Danes largely ignored the common settlements, while others show signs of Scandinavian linguistic adaptation. Still others show signs of having been renamed, and sometimes in the formation of hybrids. In the northwest of England and southern Scotland, there is evidence of a similar type that has been seen in the Danelaw. Here too it seems that Scandinavians had settled in pre-existing villages, and sometimes gave new names to places, sometimes ending in *–by*, as in Appleby, Crosby, and other places, and showing again a type of Danish influence. West of the Pennines, these are more likely to end in *þorp*, which more likely indicates Norwegian influence.

At some point in time it is clear that Scandinavians began to break up old estates into smaller and more independent agricultural units. In the northwest, this was more frequently seen

in the presence of the generic *–þveit*, meaning clearing, which is in evidence over a wide swath of lands. The greater frequency of these settlement names that denote topographical features also points to an increase in exploitation of lands by Scandinavian settlers. The use of the Goedelic term for summer pasture in areas of Galloway suggests either that Scandinavian settlers arrived in sufficient numbers to simply take over the operations, or that only a few assumed control of the operations. In either case, they continued to use the existing terminology, although it was, to them, in a foreign language. The presence of both *–ærgi* and *–sætr* in Cumberland suggests that either pastures were shared out between the two groups in some manner, or that Scandinavians were not numerous enough to conduct a wholesale takeover of these summer pastures. It also suggests that there were cultural contacts at a level that allowed the Scandinavian peoples to learn enough of the native languages to continue to use the existing terminologies, as they had done in Galloway.

At the highest level, there is much evidence of cultural contact. As in Scandinavia and elsewhere, on Man there is evidence of Viking settlers with Scandinavian names being buried in Christian churchyards, possibly after conversion. There are inscriptions on crosses showing that a Viking might give his son a Gaelic name, and other evidence showing a native Manxman might adopt a Scandinavian one.[543] There is some linguistic evidence also showing a mixing of names, for example, the prefixing of the Gaelic *Mac* to Scandinavian personal names.[544]

Although it seems certain some lands were taken over, it also is clear that some were not. Many shieling names point to Scandinavian settlement on lands that had been previously unoccupied, although not necessarily unknown or unexploited by the locals.[545] There was a beginning of a move into more marginal lands, especially in the Lake District. The element –

[543] David M. Wilson, *The Vikings in the Isle of Man* (Aarhus: University Press, 2008), 57-86.
[544] Fellows-Jensen, "Scandinavian Settlement in Man and the North-West," 43; Wilson, 100-102.
[545] Fellows-Jensen, *Scandinavian Settlement Names in the North-West*, 416.

þveit is seen to occur frequently there and also to spread into areas of Dumfriesshire, and this shows another example of movement in to inhabit unoccupied land, although there is but one possible instance in Galloway, suggesting a short, non-permanent occupation of some sort.[546]

Besides evidence that marginal land was frequently exploited, there is evidence that the Scandinavians were buying and selling lands. It has been argued that the Vikings used silver, possibly amassed from raiding, to purchase lands upon which to settle.[547] There is some corroborating documentary evidence to show that, whatever the medium used, there were transactions of this nature periodically taking place. There are a few tenth-century charters recording sales of lands by the Vikings for money to the English in Derbyshire, Bedfordshire, and Lancashire.[548] One charter records that King Athelstan granted Amounderness to Archbishop Wulfstan and the church of York, wherein it is stated that the king had bought the land "with no little money of my own" presumably although not explicitly stated from a Scandinavian.[549] There is another from the eleventh century in which King Æthelred sold six hides of land in Oxfordshire to a Dane called Toti for a pound of gold that the king needed in order to pay the next installment of the Danegeld.[550] The charters do not give any indication that such purchases were unusual.

None of these documents explicitly point to a trade or sale of lands in the northwest of England or anywhere in Scotland. But they establish this idea as a valid form of commerce elsewhere in England. In the northwest, there are a few place-names that suggest this as an occurrence. These areas have as their root the Scandinavian *kaupaland* ("bought land"). There

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[546] Gillian Fellows-Jensen, "Scandinavians in Southern Scotland?" *Nomina* 14 (1989-90), 45.
[547] Peter Sawyer, *Age of the Vikings*, 2nd edition (London: Edward Arnold, 1971), 100-101.
[548] Whitelock, ed. *English Historical Documents I*, 503-508; Walter de Gray Birch, *Cartularium Saxonicum II 840-947* (London: Whiting & Company, 1887), 333-336.
[549] Whitelock, 505-506.
[550] Cyril R. Hart, *The Early Charters of Eastern England* (Leicester: University Press, 1966), 190-193.

are only a few known examples of this; there are the Copeland Islands off Belfast, a Coupland manor in Westmorland, and Coupland hamlet, Kirkcudbrightshire.[551] The largest example is the territory of Copeland, Cumberland. This is an area of considerable size, and seems to have retained its boundaries as a medieval Barony, a tract of land between Duddon and Derwent, comprising what would later be the Eskdale Ward.[552] Both its size and its name appear to be unusual, it seems to have been named "Bought Land" by the purchaser, or purchasers, rather than following the usual practice of naming after an important person. It has been postulated that this purchase was a reflection of political reality, and probably was once part of a treaty, rather than a fine legal distinction.[553] What this might mean is that the area was one of considerable Norwegian colonization. The area, on the western coast of Cumberland, is one that is well represented in Hiberno-Norse names today. It is also an area with a rich archaeological tradition, in which is located, for instance, the famous Gosforth cross and churchyard.[554]

The balance of the evidence suggests that most Scandinavian colonization was usually, if not always, relatively peaceful. There was certainly trouble from time to time, as is always the case when a foreign population attempts to move in on an established one. The place-names suggest that the majority of the settlers were interested in finding good lands on which to settle their sheep and to farm, scratching out a living as agriculturalists rather than as full-time warriors or as occupiers of a foreign land. On the other hand, it is clear that there were enough of the settlers to cause considerable displacement of at least some of the local population. This type of influx, even if peaceful, still caused the loss at the top levels of sheep rearing operations,

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[551] *The Place-names of Westmorland II*, 83; *The Place-Names of Cumberland I*, 37; *The Place-Names of Dumfriesshire*, 52.
[552] M.G. Copeland, "Copeland: A lost Viking Treaty?" *Cumbria* (June 1983): 168.
[553] Copeland, 171.
[554] See Chapter 4.

farmland, and the extinction of the Cumbric language.[555] It was such that the languages of the Scandinavians, Anglo-Saxons, and Goedelic speakers merged for a considerable time and in a considerable area. They gave to the region a unique linguistic and cultural blend.

[555] This was a local, unique language that arose as a result of the mixture of the Scandinavian, Anglo-Saxon, and native Celtic tongues in the region of Cumberland and possibly Strathclyde. There are only three known remaining Cumbric terms, written in a later Latin legal text, perhaps a handful of proper names, and the so-called Cumbric Score, which is preserved in children's nursery rhymes and is or was once perhaps used for counting sheep, that constitute the remnants of this language. This surviving evidence suggests that it was closely related to Welsh. Glanville Price, "Cumbric," in *Languages in Britain and Ireland*, ed. Glanville Price (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 121-125.

Chapter Four
Anglo-Scandinavian Archaeological Material

Introduction: A New Approach to Old Material

One of the strongest tools in the researcher's repertoire for dealing with the study of Scandinavian Viking habitation patterns is archaeology. When considering the archaeological material for the Scandinavian impact upon the realms of the Cumbrians and others of the Eastern Irish Sea region, there are a number of different avenues to pursue. One of these is the burial evidence—graves or stray finds seemingly indicative of burial; another is the evidence provided by numismatic studies of coin hoards, and finally there is the evidence of stone work and stone carving, which is often funerary in nature. All of these will be dealt with in some detail in this chapter. But simply an examination of the physical remains of the Scandinavians, as has been traditionally undertaken, is not enough. There are two problems with this approach. One is a noticeable paucity of materials that are identified as being Scandinavian. The other, perhaps more insidious problem revolves around assumptions that are typically made in examining the material. This is that a lot of emphasis is placed on, for lack of a better term, the *scandinavian-ness* of objects known and recovered. Identification is based on whether or not something is "Scandinavian" in either production or known comparison with other similar sites. On this basis alone, determinations are made concerning the types and numbers of Scandinavian settlers in the region.

This emphasis is logical if somewhat misplaced. More penetrating questions need to be asked of these materials than simply "how Scandinavian is this"? For example, many of the objects identified as Scandinavian are not too different from similar objects of similar age and make that may be described as, for instance, Anglo-Saxon. How is it known which is which? Have some been misidentified or overlooked? In most cases, as will be seen, the identification of said artifacts rests on what it was originally called by the excavator, often quite long ago. If

the excavator declared the item Viking, it is considered Viking, and if not, then it is considered something else—a sobering state of affairs. This creates an obstacle in research, but one that is not impossible to overcome.

This chapter will answer this question, and several ancillary questions that relate to it. How are Scandinavian burial practices in Britain different from known Scandinavian sites in their homelands? Scandinavians buried in Britain might reasonably be expected to resemble those buried at home. What do burial practices show about integration into the Anglo-Saxon society? Is it really important to establish how "Scandinavian" some object is? To answer questions such as these satisfactorily is to suggest that there is more evidence for Scandinavian settlement present in the archaeological record than is sometimes believed, and that the evidence shows a clear pattern of Scandinavian burial practices in its early stages, followed by a more confusing mass of information that suggests a transformation of the society into one consisting of both Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon elements. This is true in northwest England generally but seems less true for southwest Scotland, owing mainly to a lack of evidence. On Man, there is a similar merging, although it is of Scandinavian and native Manx cultures. The problematic distinction of "Anglo-Saxon" or "Scandinavian" becomes less important as a type of hybrid culture begins to develop. Eventually there is little distinction, as the two elements almost completely merge into a new element properly termed Anglo-Scandinavian, while on Man and in Scotland a more accurate name is Gaelic-Norse, because Anglo-Saxon elements are rare, particularly on Man.

Ironically, the Scandinavian settlers are able to suggest at least as much about their culture in death as they are in any written sources. To understand this properly requires some understanding of the death rituals associated with Scandinavians of this period, so the chapter

will begin with a general discussion of this type. There will first be a discussion of religion in general and the death ritual in particular as seen in Scandinavia. This information is useful in helping to understand and interpret the materials recovered from grave sites. Then, there will follow a discussion of Scandinavian burials within their own homelands, followed by a much more thorough discussion of similar materials in the northwestern England, southwestern Scotland, and the Isle of Man. After the burial evidence has been examined, other evidence will be evaluated, including stone sculpture, coin hoards, and items unique to the Cumbrian region showing probable Scandinavian influence. It will conclude with a discussion of settlement based upon this information. Where possible, this discussion will proceed regionally. But when undertaking this methodological study, there is one point that cannot be overstated: most of these Viking graves were excavated long ago, and now unfortunately many of the materials have been lost. Since the people of the time had little sense of urgency to preserve these items and a great desire to appropriate them if they happened to be valuable, it is not surprising that much of this material is now lost. While a few items exist today, we are mostly left to rely on excavation reports, and drawings and descriptions in secondary sources.

Many of these Scandinavian graves and burial mounds in both Britain and Scandinavia were discovered in the nineteenth century or even earlier, well before anything resembling scientific archaeology came into being.[556] Given the natural human desire to hunt for treasure, a

[556] It would appear that the knowledge of burial mounds is of great antiquity. A thankfully recorded story appears in Roger of Wendover's *Chronicle*, for the year 1178, that relates that the monks of St. Albans undertook an excavation to search for the bones of St. Amphibalus. The monks excavated ten bodies, one of whom they believed to be the Saint, while the others were companions or "martyrs" and they recorded the layout of the graves, complete with spear heads and metal knives, all of which are suggestive of the Anglo-Saxon period. This lends credence to the idea that the practice of mound excavation is quite old, but it still does little to suggest an answer concerning the number of these mounds that have gone looted and unrecorded. Sam Lucy, *The Anglo-Saxon Way of Death* (Stroud, Gloucester, England: Sutton Publishing, 2000), 5. See also Audrey L. Meaney, *A Gazetteer of Early Anglo-Saxon Burial Sites* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1964), 104-105; Roger of Wendover, *Chronicle,* Vol. II, translated by J.A. Giles (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1849), 42-43.

cynic might say that it is surprising that anything at all of it still exists today.[557] But there is enough surviving to build a general picture, if an incomplete one, of the burial records of these people.

Framework of Religious Belief Systems

In order to understand the burial record of the Scandinavians in the British Isles, it is informative to gain an understanding of the burial practices of the Scandinavians in their homelands. In order to do this, it is also helpful to have a good understanding of belief systems generally and how they worked in Scandinavia, to see how the systems and burial patterns began to change.

Religion, however such term may be understood, is closely and permanently linked to the society in which it is practiced. Evidence of rituals preserved in rock carvings and sacrificial deposits place a very old and seemingly powerful fertility cult in Scandinavia that dates at least to the Bronze Age.[558] There is also evidence of an old sun cult as well.[559] An early feature in Scandinavia but particularly in Denmark was the bog-sacrifice, and there are many well

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[557] One particularly galling example of how this typically works comes to mind. Two Scandinavian drinking horns were discovered near the village of Gallehus, Denmark; the first of these in July of 1639; the second in 1734, and both were handed over to the Crown as required by law. These particular horns were diagramed, studied, and even used as actual drinking horns, leading modern researchers to speculate that based on the runic language used on the horns, they may date from the Germanic Era to *circa* 425. They were displayed in Copenhagen, and were the subject of much debate until they were stolen on the night of May 5, 1802 by a professional thief. It happens that the thief was known (a rare fact, but a fortunate one in this case) and he was caught one year later by the police. By that time, all that could be recovered was the melted down remnants of one of the horns. In many other cases, objects have vanished almost without a trace and with no chance of recovery. The Gallehus horns were reasonably well-diagramed and successful replicas of the second horn have appeared, but many other artifacts have not been so lucky. The point here is that archaeological artifacts are in great danger once they are excavated. Apart from out and out theft, many other objects have disappeared because of carelessness and neglect; still others have been destroyed, lost, or simply thrown away. Much was poorly recorded. None of this makes researching these objects today an easier task. It is a fair question to ask how many objects, coin hoards and other discoveries may have been discovered prior to 1900 and not recorded at all, simply fading away into oblivion and now lost to history and to science. For the story of the Gallehus horns, see Eric Oxenstierna, *The World of the Norsemen* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1967), 76-77.

[558] Anne-Sofie Gräslund, "The Material Culture of Old Norse Religion," in *The Viking World,* ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 249.

[559] Anne-Sofie Gräslund, "Religion, Art, and Runes," in *Vikings: The North Atlantic Saga,* ed. William W. Fitzhugh and Elisabeth I. Ward, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000), 55-56.

preserved objects and bodies that have been recovered in bogs and wells that date generally from the second to the sixth centuries. After this time, it would appear that religious ceremonies tended to move onto drier land and into the halls of the greater chieftains, and began to operate on a regional or even larger level. This change implies some social change towards centralization of power, although religious practice was still highly regional in nature, and this regionalism never completely vanished.

Religion is such a slippery and undefined topic that there is in fact no word in the Old Norse language for it. The closest parallel is the word *siðr*, which translates roughly to "custom", showing how closely religious views were integrated into everyday life.[560] It is indeed probable that knowledge of what constituted religion exactly was in the mind of each individual person. During the Viking Age in Scandinavia, society itself and religious structures, such as they were, underwent profound changes, as clan-owned areas of land were incorporated into larger areas ruled by kings or other potentates, such as Harald Bluetooth, Harald Fairhair, and Olof Skötkonung, who were supported by the new, state-sponsored cult of Christianity.[561]

Religion in traditional, farming based areas was and is largely the prerogative of the elders of the community, whose responsibility it is to perform the religious rituals and see to it that these practices are passed on to younger generations. In these societies, there is no specialized priesthood—this priesthood and accompanying written dogma only arises with the development of city-states, which make it possible for large areas to adopt a single faith, and allow for religious and civil authority to merge together, becoming intricately intertwined in a given society.[562] Agricultural societies frequently show a strong tendency towards ancestor

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[560] Gräslund, "Material Culture," 249.
[561] Else Roesdahl, *The Vikings* (London and New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 73-77.
[562] Colin Murray Parkes, Pittu Laungani and Bill Young, "Culture and Religion," in *Death and Bereavement Across Cultures,* ed. Colin Murray Parkes, Pittu Laungani and Bill Young (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 16.

worship, which establishes relationships between the living and the dead, and cements relationships within communities. Ancestor veneration can clearly be seen in the Viking world, and is sometimes recorded in the sagas.[563] Snorri records for example that at the Yule celebration, Earl Sigurd led his men in toasting to the gods and "also in memory of departed kinsfolk."[564] This is not a type of religious expression well-understood or practiced by many people in the west today, but in older societies it seems to have been an important function.[565]

Some of the most important religious rituals in any culture are those pertaining to death and burial. The rituals observed and the details of the practices dealing with the corpse are highly variable between cultures. In earlier centuries, death was doubtless less institutionalized than in the modern Western world, and still is in many cultures around the world. In Hinduism, for instance, the person is not regarded as truly dead until the soul exits the body through the cranium, the breakage of which takes place during cremation.[566] The cremation ritual may take days to complete after death has occurred in the scientific sense.

Changes in practice to such rituals as this do not usually occur because of any inherent changes in religious belief. Rather, these changes are cultural and social; they are changes in what is perceived to be normal or acceptable. Such change is not usually linked to religion; rather it is a gradual change in what society wishes to do. It is a changing perception of normalcy which is frequently driven by changes in technology or in the material culture. While this leads to the changing or ending of older rituals, it is not among natives of a certain culture

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[563] Thomas A. DuBois, *Nordic Religions of the Viking Age* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 46-47.
[564] Snorri Sturluson, *Saga of Magnus the Good,* in *Heimskringla,* translated by Lee M. Hollander (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964), 107.
[565] It does play a role in many Eastern religions today. For example, see Robert J. Smith, *Ancestor Worship in Contemporary Japan* (Stanford, CA: University Press, 1974).
[566] Pittu Laungani, "Death in a Hindu Family," in *Death and Bereavement Across Cultures,* ed. Colin Murray Parkes, Pittu Laungani, and Bill Young,(London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 61.

that the most rapid change comes. The most rapid discarding of rituals often is carried out by immigrants, by newcomers into a society.

The earlier-cited study by Laungani is useful in understanding this process. It illustrates the cultural stripping of certain aspects of the burial ritual in Hindu communities by comparing some of those taking place in India to some taking place in England. The study suggests rapid change for a number of reasons. Large parts of the ceremony are excluded and others are shortened, sometimes greatly. The changes are not religious in nature, but rather they are indicative of assimilation into the burial practices of modern Britain, great distance of physical removal from their homelands, and proportionally fewer members of the elder generations who are generally more observant of rituals and cultural practices.[567] With this frame of reference as a context, it is best to think of the Scandinavian Viking settlers in England, who were themselves an immigrant population, and who were few in numbers, at least at the beginning of the migration. These people had arrived from a foreign land that was in many ways in a state of flux.[568] They became participants in a newer and perhaps different culture, where they were mostly trying to fit in.

Scandinavian Social Context

Before proceeding to Scandinavian burials and views of the afterlife, it is necessary first to ascertain the context from which these views would spring. In Scandinavia, the basic unit was that of the family. The family was a large unit, and included many generations of cousins, while it extended usually some four or five generations. Originally descent was probably from solely the male line, but it became common in the early period to extend matrilineal equality to

[567] Paul C. Rosenblatt, "Grief in small-scale societies," in *Death and Bereavement Across Cultures*, ed. Colin Murray Parkes, Pittu Laungani, and Bill Young (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 38; Laungani in idem, 68-69.
[568] See Chapter 2.

marriage connections. Women were considered to be more or less equal in the eyes of the law, and could own and inherit land although they had no political rights. Land, profit, honor and shame were shared equally by all family members.[569] Feuds between kin-groups could happen, but there were methods worked out to end these feuds, and in similar connections were used by clans to form lasting friendships.[570] The predominant economic activity in Scandinavia, as elsewhere in Europe, was farming. But with the growth of trade, the Viking Age saw the growth of town-like settlements in Scandinavia (although not in Iceland) and trade and crafts became specialist occupations.[571] Society consisted of three social classes: the aristocracy, the free, and the unfree, although further differentiation existed within each group.[572] Many if not most of Scandinavians were freemen who had certain common rights: the right to have a voice in public affairs, the right to bear arms, and the right to full benefit of the law.[573] Most people lived on farms, either as owners or as dependent workers, and some were quite large. A town excavated at Vorbasse in Jylland contained a large cluster of buildings together, with a main building being some 30m in length and able to house 20-30 cattle.[574] The larger farms were not simply single family homes, but included a large extended family unit, which extended to foster-children and servants and thralls.[575]

The society within the Scandinavian homelands was predominantly made up of farming communities comprised of kin groups. In this type of society, the religion is carried out and

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[569] Peter Foote and David M. Wilson, *The Viking Achievement* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1980), 4-5, 108-111.
[570] Kevin Crossley-Holland, *The Norse Myths* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), xviii.
[571] Else Roesdahl and Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, "Viking Culture," in *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia Vol. I: Prehistory to 1520*, ed. Knut Helle (Cambridge: University Press, 2003), 126.
[572] There is a poem, the *Rígsþula*, which describes each of these three classes. It must be used with caution, however, since it is a mythical allegory and possibly of late derivation. A prose re-telling is in Crossley-Holland, 18-25. Snorri Sturluson, *The Poetic Edda*, translated by Lee M. Hollander (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1962), 120-128.
[573] Foote and Wilson, 82. Of course, this need not imply actual equality.
[574] Roesdahl and Sørensen, 127-128.
[575] Lars Jørgensen, "Political Organization and Social Life," in *Vikings: The North Atlantic Saga*, ed. William W. Fitzhugh and Elisabeth I. Ward (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000), 82.

perpetuated by the people themselves, not by the state. The most basic and fundamental forms of worship were carried out at home and incorporated elements of ancestor worship and personal spirits of the home, which were sometimes represented by bronze figurines.[576] One fairly common theme running throughout the written sources is the idea of the living dead, wherein the deceased actually 'lives' within his or her tomb or burial mound, and is still able to eat, sleep and so on, but could also aid or injure the living, and so had to be placated and cared for.[577] Accordingly, there were a number of spirits, most female but some represented as animals that were called upon as protection for the home. These included the *fylgja, fylgjur,* and the *dísir*. This latter class, for example, was more generalized than the former two, which were often attached to a specific person or place, and were called upon for the protection or good fortune of a specific place.[578]

A formal class of priests also existed. The *goði* (sometimes translated as "priests" or alternatively as "chieftain-priests") were members of society who were responsible for organizing the rituals dedicated to the Vanir, and were further responsible for the temple upkeep of the gods, where worship took place at a community level.[579] One modern scholar has suggested that these priests were highly influential in the manner which their tenants were to worship their particular god, and this was to become increasingly obvious with the arrival of Christianity, which concentrated on the conversion of the elite members of society, and also upon the ownership of churches on their estates. There is evidence that these same priests may

[576] E.O.G. Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion of the North* (New York and Chicago: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1964), 269-270; Gräslund, "Material Culture," 252-255.
[577] Turville-Petre, 269.
[578] Catharina Raudvere, "Popular Religion in the Viking Age," in *The Viking World,* ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 239-240.
[579] DuBois, 65-67.

have become priests of this new religion, and retained or increased all of their former power and influence.[580]

Numerous communal temples such as this one are known or suspected in various locations including Borg in Östergötland, Sanda in Uppland, Uppåkra in Skåne and most famously, Old Uppsala.[581] The remains of the Old Uppsala temple today are located in the foundation of a modern church on the same spot. Adam of Bremen is primarily the source for the activities taking place at this temple, and it would seem that the temple played host to a number of communities' spiritual needs, especially on significant holy days.[582] The temple was principally dedicated to Thor, although Odin and Freyr were also worshipped at the temple and held there positions of honor. Adam records that every nine years a major ceremony took place at this temple that was attended by everyone from the king on down the social ladder.

Traditional Scandinavian religion, then, was polytheistic in outlook, and was very hard to define even while it was being practiced. It was both very personal and somewhat hierarchical, taking place at the home, at the chief's estate at a community level, and on some occasions at least in Sweden taking place at a larger temple on a regional level. While not strictly institutionalized, except perhaps in a few centers like Uppsala, this religion did nonetheless need practitioners at every level of society in order to perpetuate its own survival. It was thus an informal and somewhat delicate system, and if practitioners moved away from it at any level, it would begin to fragment. Most dangerous of all would be breaks at the very top of society, and it was for this reason that Christianity was often targeted at the top echelons of pagan, non-

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[580] Jesse Byock, *Viking Age Iceland* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001), 94, 303.
[581] Gräslund, "Material Culture," 249-250.
[582] Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*, translated by Francis J. Tschan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 207. Adam discusses the Swedes generally and some of their practices in Book 4 of his work.

Christian societies, and were usually successful at bringing about mass conversions and breaking up the former religions in large part.[583]

When a Scandinavian would leave the homeland to settle in what was another part of Europe—Christian Europe--these bonds would be further strained and sometimes broken. Probably missing his immediate family, the immigrant would further lose touch with his traditional religion if he intermarried with someone of the Christian faith. A model for immigrants has already been postulated in Chapter Two. But in brief review, the immigrants were not likely to be representative of their old culture as a whole, and almost certainly would not count as elderly. The typical immigrant would not be a person who was particularly able to keep his religious beliefs, assuming he were desirous of doing so in the first place. There is no profile of a "typical immigrant" but many would have shared common characteristics, and these would tend to suggest a younger person, and one probably with little to lose by leaving home. Very likely, this was some sort of person that could not reasonably expect to profit overly much by remaining home, and had set out elsewhere to seek his own fortune.[584] Fitting into a new culture would thus often seem more desirable than maintaining one's own religion alone in a foreign land.

Written accounts of Viking Burials

> You go and cast into the earth the people whom you both love and honor most among men. Then the earth, creeping things, and worms devour them. We, however, let them burn for an instant, and accordingly he enters paradise at once in that very hour.
>
> --Rus man to Ibn Fadlan[585]

[583] Of course, conviction of conversion is another matter, particularly to an unknown faith. Many simply converted because their social betters ordered it and, in many cases, actually murdered the leading practitioners of the older faith.
[584] The majority of the settlers, especially in the earliest phases, were male.
[585] Richard N. Frye, *Ibn Fadlan's Journey to Russia* (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 2005), 70.

This quotation is unique in its description of the eschatological beliefs of the Scandinavians. On the subject of death and burial, there are few surviving accounts with the exception of that given by Ibn Fadlan. That particular ritual involved the death of a warrior chieftain in Russia, *circa* 922, and demonstrated that large numbers of people took part in the ritual. This was quite possibly a ceremony of dedication to Odin, given that the deceased was a chieftain. This lurid account, which involves human sacrifice, ritual copulation, and ultimately the cremation of an entire ship is a clue concerning the type of ceremony likely to befall a noble. There are a few words of caution, of course, namely that it may only apply to this particular band and that it may have been influenced by native or other tradition observed in Russia. Finally there is the fact that some of it revolves around testimony rather than actual observation. Besides Ibn Fadlan, few other accounts of burial exist, and it would seem safe to assume that normally the responsibility for burial lay with the deceased's immediate family. There are a few scattered references to mound burial in the saga sources, and these also mention the deposition of grave goods. Hrolf Kraki and Egil Skalagrimsson are both said to have been buried with swords, and Egil while wearing fine clothes.[586] In the mythological *Ynglinga Saga* of Snorri Sturluson, there is probably a grain of truth preserved in terms of ritual. Odin declared that all those dying should be marked with a spear at the point of death and that after death should be cremated and the ashes scattered or buried.[587] His son, Freyr in this story, was later inhumed in a burial mound.[588] This shows that both inhumation and cremation were known and arguably being practiced. It was also seem to indicate that Snorri wanted to reconcile two traditions, one of an older fertility

[586] *Laxdæla Saga,* translated by Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson (New York: Penguin Books, 1969), 239; *Egil's Saga,* translated by Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), 237.
[587] Snorri Sturluson, *Saga of the Ynglings,* in *Heimskringla,* 11-13.
[588] Snorri Sturluson, *Saga of the Ynglings,* in *Heimskringla,* 14.

cult, and another ruled by warrior gods led by Odin. This he does in a circumspect manner, however, since both Odin and Freyr are mortal men in this story.

From the analysis so far, one thing is very clear. The burial of any Scandinavian within his or her homeland was a function of his or her social status and that ultimately his or her closest family members or sometimes followers would be responsible for disposing of his or her remains. Written sources provide no evidence for poorer folk, and often very little for those of other classes. Likewise, archaeology is not able to determine what would be considered a base or mainline style of burial. There is no "standard" type of Viking burial that exists anywhere within Scandinavia, only a series of what be called common or perhaps regional types, each of which was doubtless modified by the people performing the actual ritual. Nor is it reasonable to assume that all Scandinavian burial types are of equal age. We should not expect to find much uniformity in Scandinavian burials in Britain, since there is little in Scandinavia.

Burial Practice in Viking Age Scandinavia

With an understanding of religious belief systems and social organization within Scandinavia in place, we can now turn to the burial remains in Scandinavia. There is a large body of archaeological material to turn to, but not all of the material can be examined in great detail. The material is much more numerous than that found in northern England and is in many ways similar, and so shows promise of what might be expected to be discovered in England. It is beyond the scope of this present work to attempt to analyze all of these burials across Scandinavia, of which exist a very great number. It is hoped that the material will be sufficient to show parallels that exist in the British Isles and in particular, the region of the Eastern Irish Sea region.

There is a considerable diversity in the variety of evidence available for burials. Scandinavians of the pre-Christian era practiced cremation, inhumation, chamber burials, and burial by ship or boat. Many people, perhaps as many as half or even more were not accorded a grave at all.[589] This large group, which probably consisted of the very poor and perhaps slaves, were probably simply discarded or buried quickly in dirt, and they are much harder to trace in the archaeological record. They may have perhaps been cremated and their ashes spread, which is unlikely to be noticed, but there is little evidence for what happened to them in any case. For those given burial, cremation was the most common, with the ashes either deposited in unmarked graves or placed under mounds, sometimes with a burial pit to accommodate the ashes. In many cases, the bones of the people (and sometimes accompanying animals) have been retrieved post-cremation, sorted and cleaned, and then placed back on top of the charred remains of the pyre, either directly or in a bag or other medium that would hold them.[590] These graves might have contained grave goods that have likewise been burned. Inhumation was overall less common, but occurred across Scandinavia. In the later Viking Age, it has been argued that some graves represent transitional Christian graves, although this is a matter of some discussion.[591] Generally, bodies are laid in rectangular grave cuts, on textiles or mats of bark (in northern Norway), in shrouds or in coffins of various kinds, including cargo bodies of wagons. They are typically laid prone or sideways, as if sleeping, and occasional bedding has been found to reinforce this idea.[592]

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[589] Neil Price, "Dying and the Dead: Viking Age Mortuary Behaviour," in *The Viking World*, ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 259.
[590] Price, 259-260.
[591] Anne-Sofie Gräslund, "The Material Culture of the Christianisation," in *The Viking World*, ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 639.
[592] Price, 261-262.

Chamber graves and ship graves are forms of high-status inhumation that are found throughout Scandinavia. Chamber graves feature a corpse not buried in a coffin but rather in a dug-out chamber, sometimes the size of a small room, constructed as square or rectangular pits with wooden walls and a raftered roof, over which a mound is typically raised. The deceased is often found sitting, in a chair or similar item, in this type of burial. *Njal's Saga* mentions such a burial as belonging to Gunnar Hamundarson, who is buried in a mound sitting up.[593] This form of burial is known from the Roman Iron Age and Migration Periods, but it reached its peak in the ninth and tenth centuries.[594] It is associated particularly with the eastern and southern Viking worlds. In Sweden, there are 111 examples at Birka alone, while another 60 are known from Denmark and northern Germany, clustered around Hedeby. These are also found in areas of Scandinavian settlement or influence in the east, especially in Russia and Ukraine, where these have been found at Chernigov and other sites.[595] They seem on the whole likely to have been associated with urbanism in Scandinavia and elsewhere. Boat-burial is the most elaborate of all, and probably was reserved for the highest social status. Examples come from all over Scandinavia, and are also found in the British Isles, especially in the Orkneys and Hebrides.[596] There is one known ship burial in the Continent, on the Île de Groix off the coast of Brittany.[597] The exact meaning of burial by ship is not certain, but most speculation revolves around a symbolic journey to the afterlife, as well as a show of wealth and status of the deceased and his

[593] *Njal's Saga*, translated by Magnus Magnuson and Hermann Pálsson (New York and London: Penguin Books, 1960), 172-173. The saga also mentions that Gunnar is living within his mound, and is seen singing and reciting poetry. This adds further evidence of the belief that the dead 'lived' in their burial mounds.
[594] Price, 263. More modest graves of this general sort, perhaps dug out for a coffin, can be found in Norway.
[595] Price, 263.
[596] James Graham-Campbell and Colleen E. Batey, *Vikings in Scotland: An Archaeological Survey* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1998), 135-140.
[597] Price, 265.

or her relatives.[598] Following will be a region by region survey of burial practices briefly outlined, and this section will include more on ship burial where applicable.

Denmark: Viking Age burial in Denmark is regional in orientation. Predominantly, the type of burial practiced in Denmark was inhumation, with the deceased being placed in a flat grave, or sometimes in a mound.[599] Generally, where a Viking grave has been identified in a mound, it has been a secondary burial, involving the use of a Bronze Age burial mound.[600] Stone settings of various shapes were also used to mark flat graves, and also are especially visible on Bornholm. Some are of exceptional size, including a ring of stones shaped as a ship that is some 170m in length.[601]

Many graves from the Viking period are relatively simple, having perhaps a wooden coffin for the deceased, or more likely, with the dead being laid directly in the ground.[602] Grave goods as a rule are minimal, with weapons and tools occurring rarely in comparison to Norway and Sweden during this period. Female graves were far more likely to contain grave goods than male graves, and most often these goods were items of jewelry. In western Denmark there are a series of female graves where the incumbent was placed upon a wagon, but these seem to be limited to this general geographic area.[603] Exceptions to the rule of poorly adorned male graves occur during the tenth century but are again limited in geographical scope, being confined to Jylland, Fyn, and Langeland.[604] These inhumation graves are accompanied by weapons, horses, and riding gear. They tend to be but are not always secondary burials in either Neolithic or

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[598] Price, 265.
[599] Klavs Randsborg, *The Viking Age in Denmark* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980), 122; Johannes Brønsted, "Danish Inhumation Graves of the Viking Age. A Survey," *Acta Archaeologica* VII (1936): 215.
[600] Brønsted, 215
[601] Price, 261.
[602] Brønsted, 215.
[603] Randsborg, 125-126.
[604] Anne Pedersen, "Weapons and riding gear in burials—evidence of military and social rank in 10th century Denmark?" In Anne Nørgård Jørgensen and Birthe L. Clausen, eds. *Military Aspects of Scandinavian Society in a European Perspective, A.D. 1-1300* (Copenhagen: Publications of the National Museum, 1997), 124-127.

Bronze Age burial mounds. Plain weapon burials sometimes occur in cemeteries, with the ax being the most common weapon found. Besides the horses, there is sometimes evidence of other animals being sent along as a food offering. These graves can be interpreted as being of differing social classes based upon the type and number of grave goods, plus the use of cemeteries or burial mounds as opposed to simply being interred in the ground.[605]

Cremation is comparatively rare in Denmark, and is mostly confined to the Jylland area before the tenth century.[606] Most survive as areas of bones and charcoal covered by a small barrow of a regular shape that is often surrounded by stones. A few cremations have been found in urns in areas of southwest Jylland, and cremations may be either primary or secondary in nature. Some are covered with stones, while others are not. Like the inhumation burials, traces of grave goods are quite rare.

Boat graves, which sometimes include coffins made of boat timbers, are relatively common. They are especially visible at the churchyard in Sebbersund, north Jylland. The most elaborate ship burial in Denmark was found in a barrow in the small cemetery at Ladby, and dates to the mid-tenth century. The burial contained eleven small horses and the skeletons of multiple dogs, and there were partial remains of several bridles that seem to have accompanied the horses. A large iron anchor, extremely rare at this time, was found intact. There were numerous other objects found, mostly in pieces, including a bucket, some arrows, bits, a spur, strap buckles and tin buttons.[607] It also contained items of bronze and silver, including a silver eighth-century Frankish belt-buckle. Several fabrics survived, but no human remains. There were a further dozen graves at an associated cemetery found at the site.[608] Another ship grave

[605] Pedersen, 126-127.
[606] Randsborg, 121.
[607] Knud Thorvildsen, *The Viking Ship at Ladby* (Copenhagen: National Museum of Denmark, 1975), 8-12.
[608] Thorvildsen, 37-42.

was recovered from Hedeby that contained the rich burial of a man and two armed male retainers, dating to about 850.[609] Each man was accompanied by a horse and weapons.

Finally, the two large mounds in the churchyard at Jelling, Jutland, were excavated in the early nineteenth century and re-examined in the twentieth. The excavators hoped to recover the remains of the last pagan king and queen of Denmark, Gorm and Thyra. A rune stone, erected by their son Harald Bluetooth, marks the site. A church built on the site, possibly the original one, survives and have yielded one skeleton, thought by some to be King Gorm.[610] Little else has been recovered from the site, apart from two runestones. It has been suggested and strongly argued that Gorm, at least, was removed from the mound by Harald and re-interred in the churchyard at some later date.[611] However, this may or may not be the skeleton of the king.

Norway: The main type of burial in Norway during the Viking age was cremation, although inhumation and ship burial were also practiced. As with Denmark, there is evidence that funeral practice was regional, with different regions showing different preferences for different burial styles. During the Viking period from the eighth-century onwards, more effort seems to have been placed into mortuary ritual, and burials began to include more artifacts.[612] Such goods were relatively rare in earlier centuries, but seem to have been a cultural part of the Viking age. The reason for this is uncertain, but it certainly implies a change in cultural or religious views.

In general terms, there is no standard Norwegian Iron Age or Viking Age burial. Typically, the burials are found beneath mounds or cairns, and are usually without containers, the bones found mixed with charcoal, apparently left where they fell with the funeral pyre. In

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[609] Jørgensen, 76-77.
[610] Gwyn Jones, *A History of the Vikings* (Oxford: University Press, 1984), 114-117; Roesdahl, 31, 162-164.
[611] Knud J. Krogh, "The Royal Viking-Age Monuments at Jelling in the Light of Recent Archaeological Excavations," *Acta Archaeologica* 53 (1983): 183-216.
[612] Haakon Shetelig, "Traces of the Custom of 'Suttee' in Norway During the Viking Age," *Saga Book of the Viking Club* 6 (1910), 195.

some places, such as cremations at Liten and Naterstad, remains had been partially collected and left in a soapstone bowl.[613] A similar set of cremations in western Norway are also known, and it has been argued that this custom was slightly more apparent in female graves.[614] In some cases, grave goods were put on the pyre or intentionally damaged.[615] Inhumations could be laid directly into the ground, placed in a stone coffin, or placed in a boat. In both inhumation and cremation burials, there is a very high percentage of male graves containing weapons, along with iron tools and even boatbuilder's tools, weights and scales, weaving implements, whetstones, combs, iron cooking pans and soapstone vessels. There are some instances of double burials occurring in both inhumation and cremation contexts.[616]

Norway has a rich history of boat burials, and some of the most significant and impressive of all ship-burials were recovered from Norwegian soil. The Gokstad ship has already been mentioned in the opening chapter but there are further examples to be seen, including the Tune ship and that found at Oseberg, as well as several smaller examples.[617] The Oseberg ship-burial in particular contains some outstanding finds. The mound contained a ship which carried the bodies of a noblewoman and another woman who was possibly a slave,[618] a highly decorative wagon, four sledges, at least twelve horses, five beds, a chair, chests, tents, buckets, kitchen utensils and many other things, including food and sumptuous textiles. This is

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[613] Shetelig, 197-200.
[614] Liv Helga Dommasnes, "Late Iron Age in Western Norway. Female Roles and Ranks as Deduced from an Analysis of Burial Customs," *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 15 (1982), 80.
[615] Dommasnes, 71.
[616] Shetelig, 203-208; Dommasnes, 73-77.
[617] For a very good overview of these ships, see A.W. Brøgger and Haakon Shetelig, *The Viking Ships: Their Ancestry and Evolution* (Oslo: Dreyers Forlag, 1951).
[618] Recent tests of tooth-root translucency and DNA extracted from the tooth of the slave woman have revealed that the traditional interpretation may be incorrect. They show that the supposed slave woman, who was thought to be much younger than her mistress, was in fact only slightly younger. Further, the DNA test concluded that she came from the Middle East, most likely the region of modern day Iran. Both had a similar diet and died at around the same time. Price, 266.

in fact the richest boat burial ever found, and this fact has significant implications for the status of women, at least wealthy ones, within this society.

Sweden: The study of Sweden is perhaps less relevant directly to the British Isles, since most evidence suggests that the majority of the Vikings coming to said Isles were of Danish or Norwegian extraction. Nonetheless it is known there was a Swedish presence, and the Swedes had a noteworthy burial regimen within their own homelands. As in Norway, the more predominant form of burial in Sweden was cremation.[619] There are a number of places, most notably Birka, where inhumations occurred along with cremation. Finally, there is a firm tradition of boat burial and mound building that took place immediately before the dawn of the Viking Age.

The latest graves at the Helgö complex date to the mid-ninth century and incorporate twelve firmly dated cremations. They consist of small turf mounds over circular or oval stone-settings.[620] The cremations were apparently done with the person already in the grave, with some grave goods showing evidence of fire damage, although two particular graves show evidence of the burned bones having been collected and placed in urns. Eleven of the graves contained animal or bird bones, especially the dog, which was recovered from eight. Male burials seem to be associated with horse bones, while three female graves were found with stone funerary globes. Grave goods are generally quite limited, often consisting solely of pieces of pottery or iron or small bits of jewelry.[621]

Birka offers seven cemeteries with which a tremendous amount of comparative research can be done. Both cremation and inhumation are represented, each with over five hundred

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[619] Neil S. Price, "The Scandinavian Landscape," in *Vikings: The North Atlantic Saga,* ed. William W. Fitzhugh and Elisabeth I. Ward (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000), 39.
[620] Wilhelm Holmqvist, ed. *Excavations at Helgö. Report for 1960-64* (Stockholm: Kunlig Vetterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien, 1970), 218-222.
[621] Holmqvist, 168-197.

excavated examples.[622] The majority were covered by mound or stone settings of various shapes. Inhumations are of three types, coffined, coffin-less and chamber graves into which the deceased were placed directly. Most of these types of chamber graves that are associated with Sweden are found at Birka.[623] The only animal bones found at Birka with inhumation burials were those of horses. The vast majority of cremations at Birka seem to have been carried out *in situ*, just as those at Helgö tended to be, but over two-thirds of them had been placed in urns. Commonly associated with these urn-cremations were rings with Thor's hammer pendants and un-cremated poultry bones and eggs. Some of the cremations followed the Swedish tradition of placing the remains of a funeral pyre in a pit.[624] Few cremation graves seem to have contained any grave goods that had been left unburned, suggesting that in Sweden cremation was rather more the norm with these burial goods.

Sweden has a long tradition of mound and boat burial, as seen at places like Uppsala, Vendel, and Valsgärde. The tradition of mound building seems to have begun before the advent of the Viking Age, and to have carried on perhaps to the eleventh century at least in the region of Vendel, before inhumation in a churchyard (signaling a cultural change, possibly conversion to Christianity) became the norm. There are numerous other examples of mounds being erected, with the largest of these being the burials of chieftains, in the general vicinity of Lake Malären in east-central Sweden. The tradition of boat burial in Sweden is also noteworthy, and seems to have been widely practiced from the sixth century onwards until the end of the Viking Age. This practice seems to have also been regional, but the number of surviving examples is so large that one excavator wrote that "A veritable armada lay anchored in the Uppland earth, never to sail

[622] The largest, Hemlanden, has 1600 visible graves. Anne-Sofie Gräslund, *Birka IV: The Burial Customs* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1980), 5-6.
[623] Gräslund, 34. There are several others of this general make located in Denmark.
[624] Gräslund, 54-58.

again in its rightful element."[625] There are, for instance, fourteen boat-burials recovered at Vendel, which are oriented with the prows facing towards the outgoing rivers, as if going out to sea. The boats are clinker built and contain numerous grave goods, suggestive of a warrior aristocracy.[626] In addition to weapons and helmets found in some graves, the dead were accompanied by many other items including drinking horns, gaming pieces, roasting spits, and food. Partial shields were found, as well as small fragments of chain or ring mail armor. In some cases, there were elaborate horse bridles, and a couple of boats contained the bones of horses and hunting dogs, likely greyhounds.[627] There are a further fifteen of these boat graves at Valsgärde. Each boat was of similar size as those at Vendel, typically about 10m in length.[628] The finds were in many ways similar to those at Vendel and they indicate a burial ground for the warrior aristocracy. Generally, many of the objects in the burial were old, mended, or incomplete when they were buried, suggesting that the dead may have been given offerings, but that the newest and most useful items remained among the living.[629] The location of the grave goods is also noteworthy. Most of the equipment in the ship was laid out in a way indicative of a sea voyage, while the deceased was placed in the stern of the ship with his weapons, on a bed of cushions covered by wool, linen, or ox hides. Horses sacrificed for the voyage were in the pit beside the boats. Each horse was equipped with an ice-nail in every hoof, as if for a winter journey.[630]

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[625] Oxenstierna, 113.
[626] Hjalmar Stolpe and T.J. Arne, *La Nécropole de Vendel* (Stockholm: Kunlig Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitetsakademien), 1-64. The excavators note that in the tenth century grave IX at Vendel, the person was buried sitting up, perhaps in a variation of the chamber grave burials.
[627] Il Öhman, "The Merovingian dogs from the boat-graves at Vendel," in *Vendel Period Studies,* ed. J.P. Lamm and H. Å Nordström (Stockholm: Statens Historiska Museum, 1983), 172-174. The presence of dogs is a common feature in Scandinavian graves generally. It is possible that their meaning was more than simply companions taken into the next world, they may have been viewed as transformative from living to death and in leading the souls to the afterlife. Gräslund, "Material Culture," 255.
[628] Sune Lindqvist, "Vendel-Time Finds from Valsgärde in the Neighborhood of Old Uppsala," *Acta Archaeologica* 3 (1932), 24.
[629] Greta Arwidsson, "Valsgärde," in *Vendel Period Studies,* ed. Lamm and Nordström (Stockholm: Statens Historiska Museum, 1983), 72.
[630] Arwidsson, 73-76.

The boat-graves at Vendel and Valsgärde are perhaps best known for the highly decorated and stylized helmets. Many possessed an impressed bronze strip of metal circling the base of the helmet. These typically show warriors equipped in contemporary style and also scenes from Scandinavian mythology. The helmet found in Vendel I was an iron helmet with a bronze crest, and a nosepiece with a bearded figure at the base, as well as watching eyes at the top. The eyebrows are complete, as are the goggles, and the eyebrows branch off into two bird-like figures. The excavators interpreted this as Odin and his ravens, Hugin and Munin.[631]

Scandinavian burial practices within their homelands was thus of considerable variety, and it varied by both region and time. It occurred within a largely individualized religious framework, which nonetheless had some hierarchy. How does this pattern transfer to the burial patterns of northern England? Since there is no conclusively "typical" Scandinavian burial in Scandinavia, is it reasonable to expect one in England? At best it is logical to look for characteristics of certain regions in England, even though these forms themselves are not uniform in Scandinavia, for example, inhumation versus cremation or ship burial versus chamber grave burial. All of these things can be seen in the British Isles. So is it logical to look simply for ship burials in the British Isles as an indication of Scandinavian settlement? If this were the only criterion, there would be a small number of samples for certain. But the Scandinavian graves have other characteristics, and show a larger presence in Britain generally. Still, they are not terribly different from other graves not so identified by archaeologists. This places all the burial material in a tenuous light, but would seem to be indicative of a larger Scandinavian burial presence than is generally thought.

[631] Stolpe and Arne, 13.

Views of Scandinavian Burial Evidence in Northern England

To begin with a study of Scandinavian burial patterns is to begin by looking at the grave sites typically identified as Scandinavian. However, these burials are not nearly as numerous or as complete as one might hope for. Archaeologist Julian Richards succinctly states this problem: "It is one of the most remarkable aspects of Viking Age England that despite several centuries of Viking settlement there are very few Viking graves."[632] A little more information has been uncovered since Richards wrote this statement, but not enough to change the overall picture that the Scandinavian burials are sorely lacking in overall numbers. This is particularly true in comparison to the thousands of graves showing Germanic, Anglo-Saxon influence from the fifth and sixth centuries.[633] Scandinavian burials are normally identified on the basis of evidence showing cremation or inhumation with grave goods, with a significant number of these appearing in church graveyards, which may or may not have added significance. Altogether, these burials currently stand at only about thirty sites in all of England. There are other more numerous and sometimes spectacular examples from other areas in the immediate region—Scotland, Ireland, and the Isle of Man, but England itself seems to be sorely lacking in burial evidence from the Viking Age. The most recent monograph dealing with the subject exclusively in the northwest of England identified about nine burials for the entire region, including several in present day Lancashire.[634] An older survey found that about half of the burials found in England were located in the northwest, making this area the closest to a concentration available anywhere in

[632] Julian D. Richards, *Viking Age England*, 2nd edition (Stroud, Gloucestershire, UK: Tempus, 2004-7), 189.
[633] Sam Lucy, *The Anglo-Saxon Way of Death* (Stroud, Gloucestershire, England: Sutton Publishing, 2000), 65-122. Some of these burials are also alluded to in Chapter 2.
[634] B.J.N. Edwards, *Vikings in North West England* (Lancaster: Centre for North-West Regional Studies, 1998), 8-24.

England.[635] Since the appearance of that article, a considerable amount of material has been added to the corpus of artifacts, but the overall conclusion must remain the same: between forty and fifty percent of Viking burials that have been located in England occurred in the northwest. This is perhaps not surprising, because settlement since the Viking Age has been in much smaller numbers in this region than in others in England, suggesting perhaps that more has survived the centuries.

The Major Burials of Northwestern England

Map 9. Approximate locations of the grave finds in northwestern England. Key:
1) Cambois, 2) Carlisle, 3) Cumwhitton, 4) Hesket-in-the-Forest, 5) Ormside, 6) Penrith, 7) Witherslack, 8) Aspatria, 9) West Seaton, 10) Brigham, 11) Eaglesfield, 12) Rampside, 13) Heysham, 14) Inskip, 15) Blackrod, 16) Claughton Hall, 17) Billington. Drawn by Russ Goodrich.

There are five major burials discovered in northern England that serve as benchmarks for analysis. The first of these and the earliest known, recorded burial from Cumbria is the burial at Beacon Hill near Aspatria. There are some problems associated with this burial, one being its excavation in the late 1700s and its subsequent second-hand documentation. The man who owned the land issued an order that the site was to be leveled, and the mound yielded a skeleton,

[635] David M. Wilson, "The Vikings' Relationship with Christianity in Northern England," *The Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 3rd series 30 (1967), 43-44.

a number of large stones, and some grave goods. Hayman Rooke was then called upon to draw the contents of the tomb, possibly without having seen them himself, and he published these drawings in 1792.[636] The skeleton, as it was reported, was seven feet long from head to ankle bone and it was accompanied by several items of iron. One was a sword, said to have been five feet in length but highly corroded, that did not have grip or pommel and apparently had a guard with silver engravings said to resemble flowers. Also present was a small knife or dagger, with silver inlaid on the handle, an ax head, a horse's bit, and a spur. The burial mound also contained a number of unusual objects. The first two were a strap-end and a buckle, reportedly made of gold, but possibly being gold-plated. The existence of gold was "proven" by virtue of the fact that the owner dumped *aquafortis* (probably nitric acid) on it.[637] These "gold" items are more likely to have been bronze, but they may have been gold, possibly coming from Carolingian Europe. The most unusual feature of the cist is that two of the stones making it up were decorated with sets of concentric circles usually associated with the Bronze Age.[638]

[636] Edwards, 8-9. This example shows the methodology commonly used at this time. By excavating in this manner, there is no way of ordering or even properly recording the objects appearing in the tomb. A similar lack of care was often shown to the artifacts after their excavation.
[637] Edwards, 8-9. It is hardly surprising that nothing from this burial still survives. The report that the man was a giant with a giant sword is also highly suspect, as it may have had more to do with Victorian imagination than with scientific fact.
[638] Edwards, 9.

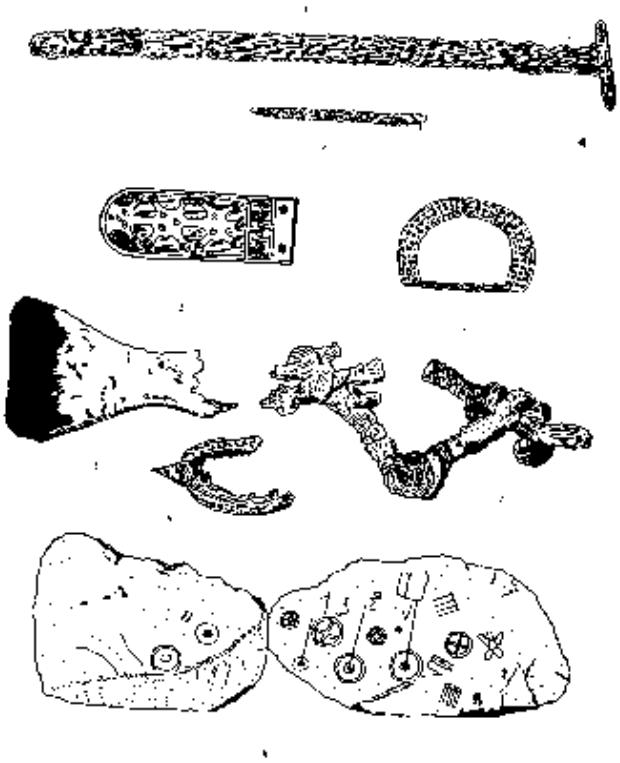

Figure 2. The Aspatria find, as drawn by H. Rooke in 1792. Items are a sword (top), spearhead (below sword), Carolingian style strap-end and "gold" buckle (second row), ax head, spur, and bridle (third row) and marked Bronze Age stones (bottom).

This decoration initially caused some confusion in modern minds, but it is easily explainable in that the builders of the tomb probably found them nearby and used them, possibly without even seeing the circles, in the tomb of their comrade. If not a secondary burial, it is perhaps a partial one. Such custom, as explained above, was not uncommon in Scandinavia. More recently, the site of Aspatria was re-examined by archaeologists. The tumulus had been so thoroughly leveled that it could not be located with perfect certainty, and it appears that two smaller graves, possibly associated with it, were discovered at this time that had been overlooked in the earlier excavation. Found in these graves were fragments of human shin bones, a part of a copper pin, and the partial remains of at least twenty items made of iron. The style of the pin

was particularly popular between the years 920 and 975, while the other objects were also of tenth century date.[639]

The second site is a burial at Hesket-in-the-Forest in Cumbria, discovered in 1822. It was a large stone cairn that was being moved for the purpose of road construction. The mound consisted of a series of large stones covered by a number of smaller ones. The removal of the stones yielded a layer of charcoal, bones, and ashes, with many of these objects clearly having been damaged by fire. Beneath this layer was another layer of very dry, fine sand. No skeleton was found at the site, but it may have perished in the fire or dissolved in the acidic sand.[640] Objects found include a sword, an ax, two spear-heads, and a shield boss, a bit and pair of spurs, a sickle and whetstone, a comb complete with case, and two other buckles.[641]

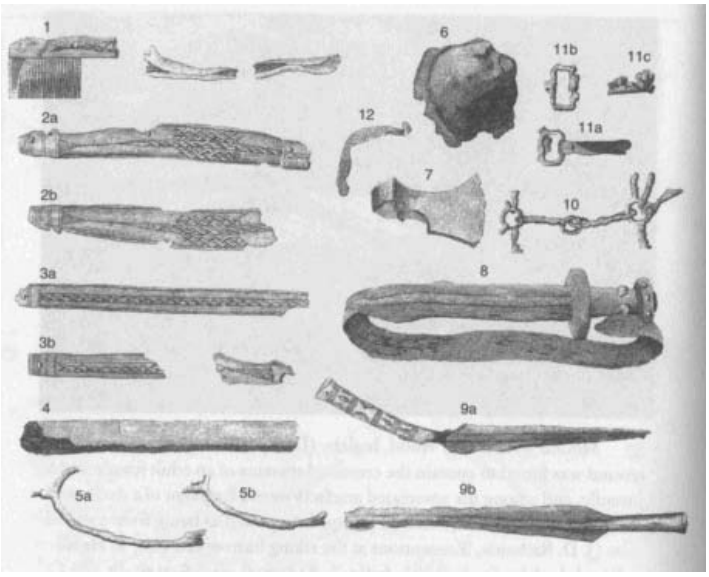

Figure 3. Grave goods excavated from Hesket-in-the-Forest, Cumberland, as drawn in 1832 by C. Hodgson. The illustration depicts fragments of antler combs (#1-3), a whetstone (4), spurs (5), shield boss (6), an ax head (7), a ritually "killed" sword (8), spearheads (9), a bridle (10), buckles (11) and an iron fragment (12).

The most notable object in the tomb is the sword. It is now in two pieces, having been broken upon retrieval, but it had been found unbroken except for the extreme tip. It had also

[639] Philip Abramson, "A re-examination of a Viking Age burial at Beacon Hill, Aspatria," *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* New Series 100 (2000), 81-88.
[640] Edwards, 11.
[641] J.D. Cowen, "A Catalogue of Objects of the Viking Period in the Tullie House Museum, Carlisle," *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* New Series 34 (1934), 175.

been bent nearly flat, once across the middle of the blade and again once by the point.[642] Much of the blade is damaged by either fire or corrosion, and the silver has suffered especially from the effects of heat, mostly melting away into tiny globules. The silver-plated guard is not common among Viking swords.[643] The man buried at Hesket was almost certainly an aristocratic noble who rode horses and wielded weapons. Other objects, simple piece of whetstone as well as the bone comb, are not particularly suggestive of war, although they may perhaps imply a type of nobility, especially if taken in conjunction with the silver in the sword. These items may be suggestive of a type of settlement, since they are all associated with household goods. The implication of this burial is that here, as at Aspatria, there is the burial of a person of some status within this society.

Discovered the same year as Hesket was a third major burial, that at Claughton, Lancashire. In this event, a small mound of sand was removed that contained a wooden burial tomb, in which a number of objects were found buried inside the wooden structure inside the mound. One was a pot of cremated bones, broken (probably intentionally) and lost at the time of discovery. The others were a small stone ax-hammer, a pair of gilt-bronze oval brooches, a sword, a spearhead, an ax-head, a hammer head, and a brooch converted from a decorated piece of Carolingian silverwork.[644] A number of these finds stand out, particularly the stone ax hammer, the oval brooches, and the converted brooch, as well as the wooden burial structure itself. The stone ax hammer is possibly the most curious, since it is of a type frequently associated with the Bronze Age. The hammer is also the symbol of the god Thor, and was

[642] This indicates that the weapon had been ritually killed. It also serves another function: making the weapon useless to would be grave robbers.
[643] Cowen, 176.
[644] B.J.N Edwards, "The Vikings in North-West England: the Archaeological Evidence," in *Viking Treasure from the North West: The Cuerdale Hoard in its Context,* ed. James Graham-Campbell (Liverpool: National Museums & Galleries on Merseyside, 1992), 46; idem, *Vikings in North West England: The Artifacts,* 14-17.

probably found by this Viking or his comrades who would have then used it as a symbol of Thor. Further, the presence of the other objects, and particularly the wooden structure and Carolingian artwork would argue against a Bronze Age burial. It is not even likely that the body was buried in an older, Bronze Age grave, since the placement of the wooden structure, not unknown in other Scandinavian burials, would have been difficult at best if the tumulus was already in existence. The dig would have been as labor intensive as if a new mound were built from scratch. The two oval brooches are objects of considerable interest, since the brooch was an item associated with the female, while the other objects are associated with the male. The two brooches were buried facing each other and contained two beads (one red, one blue) and a human molar tooth, and were probably wrapped in cloth.[645] A likely explanation is that it is a memento of some sort, belonging to a wife or other female relative. The Carolingian object appears to have been a baldric mount made of silver, and later converted to a brooch.

A fourth major burial was discovered in a churchyard, at Ormside, Westmorland. The cause of this particular discovery was that another burial was occurring on the same spot in 1898, and because of this it was not possible to follow up on the discovery of the older grave find. There was found a skeleton with a sword and a shield boss and a piece of bronze that appears suitable for binding the edge of the shield, and a small knife. It is not clear what else may have been there, and frequent disturbances of the cemetery would more or less ruin the context completely. Another object of great interest, however, was found in the same churchyard sometime prior to 1823. This is the famous Ormside Cup, although it is not now known where in the cemetery this object was found and whether it was related to the burial discovered in 1898. It is possible that it came at an earlier date from this same gravesite, but is equally possible that it may have come from some other burial in the churchyard. The Ormside Cup is itself enigmatic

[645] Edwards, *Vikings in North-West England*, 15; idem, in *Viking Treasure from the North West*, 46.

in its origins and means of construction, and it is often thought of as Celtic rather than Scandinavian, although it is always associated with Scandinavians because of its proximity to the Viking burial in Ormside churchyard.[646]

Figure 4. The Ormside Cup, as illustrated by W.G. Collingwood in 1899.

This is evidence tentatively suggesting acculturation and mixing. A person of Scandinavian extraction (or two or more different ones) being buried in the church cemetery is certainly suggestive of something—perhaps of conversion or perhaps of closer personal contacts that had developed between these newcomers and the Anglo-Saxon residents of the area.

The above mentioned grave finds are all of great antiquity, and no Viking graves as such were discovered in northern England for more than a century. This changed in 2004, when a burial was discovered near the town of Cumwhitton, Cumbria. The actual discovery occurred almost by chance, when metal-detector enthusiast Peter Adams discovered the first of two

[646] Edwards, *Vikings in North-West England*, 39-41. He also mentions here some earlier studies of the origins of the Cup.

brooches. The project was then turned over to a professional Cumbrian team, who determined that the two brooches had come from a female Viking grave.[647] The red sandy soil had preserved little of the woman's bones, but the grave also contained an iron knife, a bead, and at its feet a wooden chest with a weaving baton. A fragment of a trefoil brooch was found nearby in the topsoil, and this was almost certainly disturbed from the grave by ploughing. A few meters away, five further graves were discovered. The grave of a second female contained a jet bracelet and a belt fitting. Nearby were a set of latch keys, thought to be from the second female grave. These were a symbol of marriage, and a similar pair had been found in a grave in Yorkshire the previous year.[648] Since that time, it has been ascertained that one of the male burials contained an iron knife, a copper pin and a spearhead; the second male grave contained a shield boss, sword, copper pin and spearhead; a third grave contained a sword, beads, an iron knife and a strike-a-light; and the final male grave was accompanied by a sword, spurs, a spearhead, a strike-a-light and possibly by the remains of a bridle.[649] One man (called skeleton 24) was buried with three silver rings. On the basis of these grave goods of copper and silver, it may be concluded that the buried individuals were quite wealthy. There are a few other features about the cemetery that are noteworthy. One is that there were six graves in near vicinity to one another, and that they were all individual, inhumation graves. This is a first anywhere in England. The people buried together were probably related in some way. Also, the graves are in sight of the village of Cumwhitton, and it has been said that if the dead were able to stand up in their graves, they could easily see the village.[650] On the basis of this, it may be inferred that they

[647] Mike Pitts, "Cumbrian Heritage," *British Archaeology* 79 (November 2004), 29.
[648] Pitts, 30.
[649] Dawn M. Hadley, *The Vikings in England* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2006), 244.
[650] Pitts, 31.

lived in the village, even though the village itself is not Scandinavian based upon its name.[651] The site was dated to the beginning of the tenth century, and since grave goods were present, the people may have been recent immigrants, Scandinavians who had come to the region to live for some purpose.

Minor and Peripheral Grave Finds in northwest England

In addition to the major grave sites in northern England, there are eleven others in the northwest, plus one borrowed from Northumbria, that bear mentioning in the context of this cultural area. I have termed these sites minor not to relegate them to the status of lesser importance, but rather to stress their unique importance and also their severe limitations. These sites add information to the corpus already available, but they are limited in a number of ways. Frequently, they are smaller finds and they often suffer even more than the major finds from poor recording, speculation, and items or context being lost. Individually, any one of them is suspect, but taken together they make intriguing evidence of Scandinavian settlement. The most "major" of these minor finds occur in Lancashire, and it is with these that it is best to begin before proceeding regionally to Cumbria, Westmorland and Northumbria.

Blackrod: This site is the oldest of the minor sites and shows the most potential to be a major site. It is, however, extremely problematic both as a result of its age and its recording. Discovered near Wigan in 1770, its exact location is no longer known. The excavator, a certain Rev. John Whitaker, believed a bit of local folklore, suggesting that one of Arthur's battles had been fought there and that one of his generals was buried on the spot. The only thing known by Whitaker's time was that it had been marked by a large mound that had been leveled in 1770.

[651] A.M. Armstrong, A. Mawer, F.M. Stenton, and Bruce Dickens, eds. *The Place Names of Cumberland I* (Cambridge: University Press, 1950), 78. The name itself seems to be a combination of the Welsh *cwm* 'valley' and the Anglo-Saxon place name *Hwitingtun* 'Hwita's tun'. It may be that the village was originally Cumbrian or Welsh and had been overtaken during the Anglo-Saxon invasions of a few centuries earlier. The new, aristocratic Scandinavian settlers may have in turn represented a challenge to this order.

The find consisted of a vast bed of tiny stones from the nearby Douglas River. When these were removed, there were found “fragments of iron” which Whitaker assumed to be the remains of the weapons that the British heroes had deposited with their dead after the battle.[652] Under the mound, Whitaker found a cavern filled with a blackish earth which he believed were the mortal remains of this British officer. No bodies or bones were found, but the blackish earth seems suggestive of cremation. From the description given, this grave is far more likely to have been Anglo-Saxon or Scandinavian than it is to have been “British”. Whether the evidence, or lack thereof, points to a Viking grave is dubious, but certainly possible.

Inskip: This burial is another potential major burial, but so little of it remains that it is difficult to classify it as such. Unearthed in 1889, the immediate occasion of its discovery was gravel digging. The artifacts found were three in number--a sword, a so-called dagger (or perhaps a spear head or even a portion of the sword), and a burial urn. The "dagger" has subsequently disappeared, although the sword is described as being of Norse type and has not been lost. The urn would seem to be the most important of the three, but it was destroyed in the course of searching for items of value. It is not clear that it held bones or burned remains, although this is probable but not stated explicitly.[653] The whole layout and situation at Inskip is certainly suggestive of a Scandinavian burial, and the fact that the site lies within five miles of Claughton seems significant. It seems likely what was discovered is the partial remains of a burial.

[652] Edwards, 18-19.
[653] Edwards, 20.

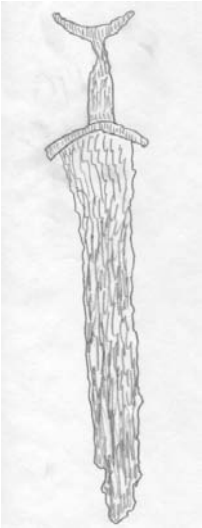

Figure 5. The Inskip Sword. Re-drawn from Edwards (1998) by Russ Goodrich.

Heysham: The object found in 1977-8 is one of considerable interest, but also one on which there rests a certain ambiguity as to its exact origin and function. There is evidence of a pagan burial discovered during the excavation of St. Patrick's Church. The grave in question is that of a woman and yielded a single object—a bone comb typical of Scandinavian burials. Rather atypically is the fact that this comb is constructed of cow bone rather than the usual antler.

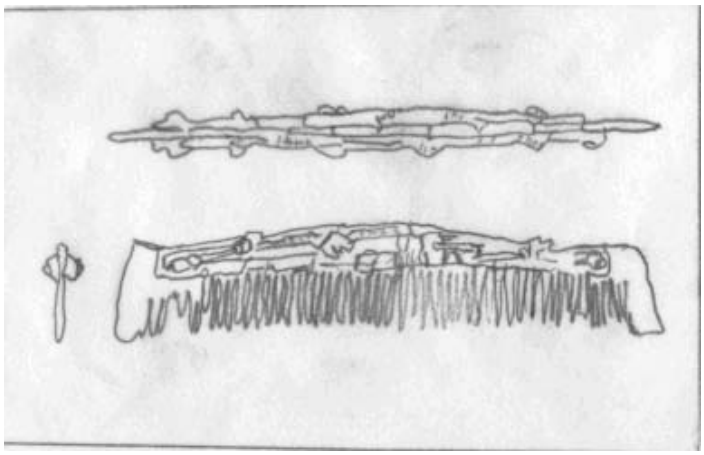

Figure 6. The Heysham bone comb. Top view, side view, and front view. Re-drawn from T.W. Potter and R.D. Andrews (1994) by Russ Goodrich.

The skeleton was buried just outside the churchyard with arms crossed—often associated with Christian burials, but buried with the comb, an act frequently associated with paganism. A

Viking 'hogback' burial monument was discovered at this same church in circa 1800.[654] Its relation to the grave, if any, is unknown. Two Scandinavian objects at the same site are significant, however.

Rampside: At Rampside a sword was discovered on March 4, 1909, at a depth of 76cm buried in a church cemetery. The reason for its discovery, like that at Ormside, was the digging of a modern grave. The site had been disturbed greatly already, and the excavator seems to imply that either the construction or destruction (or probably both) of a wall in the nineteenth century was responsible for ruining the context. The same cemetery had, some sixty years earlier, yielded a large metal knife or dagger. The pommel, grip, guard, and a section of the sword measuring 41cm are all that survive from the sword. Evidence also found at the site suggests that it once had a wooden scabbard. Possibly the most intriguing aspect of this sword is the fact that the original excavator, Harper Gaythorpe, had it analyzed to determine the nature of the metal in the blade. In the lengthy report of its analysis, it is noted that the sword was made from "steely iron", or iron made with carbon. The report states that the material had not been made from modern processes, and that it was delivered from the furnace in the form of semi-globules agglomerated together that were subsequently welded by hammering into form.[655] This is certainly suggestive of a Scandinavian burial, provided that the context has not been totally ruined, and again the presence in a churchyard may be significant.

Billington: In 1836 a farmer removed a large mound of earth. In it he found what was described as a "Kist-vaen, formed of rude-stones, containing some large human bones and the rusty

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[654] P.T. Potter and R.D. Andrews, "Excavation and Survey at St. Patrick's Church, Heysham, Lancashire, 1977-8," *Antiquaries Journal* 74 (1994), 55-134; Edwards, 92-95.

[655] Harper Gaythorpe, "The Rampside Sword; with Notes on the Church and Churchyard of Rampside in Furness," *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* New Series 10 (1910), 298-306; Edwards in *Viking Treasure of the North-West*, 49.

remains of some spearheads of iron. The whole crumbled to dust on exposure to air."[656] If it is assumed that this description means what it says and that "iron" is indeed correct, then it may tentatively be admitted this sounds as though it is a Viking grave. Additionally, the area of the find is in Brockhill Eases, an area between rivers, and linguistically has been linked to Old Norse word usage, which would add extra credence to the claim if it is true.[657] Once again, this is intriguing but not verified.

Eaglesfield: Leaving Lancashire and moving on to Cumbria, the site at Eaglesfield near Cockermouth is one in which there is some ambiguity. There are for example a number of items that come from this site, although there are also possibly a number of burials at this site and the items are therefore scrambled. There was found in 1814 at a hill called Endlay or Tendley a sword, an item originally termed a halberd, a skeleton, and another metal item termed a fibula, all of which are now lost. The halberd was said to be eleven inches in length, and was in all probability a spearhead. Both the halberd and sword were said to have inlaid silver decoration and to be much rusted, and so were likely made of iron. The fibula was possibly made of bronze. The description of the ring is not unlike that found at Brigham, and its description led to comparisons with similar fibulae found in Norway.[658]

Brigham: This site in Cumbria is speculative as a burial site. At some time around 1864, a bronze-headed ring pin turned up in the foundations of the tower of the Brigham church. The classification of such items was famously deemed by "Norwegian scholars" as proof of a Viking burial.[659] Although the item undoubtedly came there from the church cemetery, how it came to be in the ground in the first place is far from clear. It may be that the item is from a Viking

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[656] Edwards, *Viking Treasure in the North-west*, 48.
[657] Edwards, *Vikings in the North West*, 19.
[658] Edwards, *Vikings in the North West*, 19.
[659] Cowan, 74.

burial, and there is some corroborating evidence in the form of Scandinavian statuary found in the same church. This is, however, of dissimilar age.[660] At present, all that can be said for certain is that this fibula is most likely a Viking object. It may well represent a burial, but there is not enough context to make this determination for sure.

West Seaton: The West Seaton, Cumbria, find is a sword discovered during the winter of 1902-3 in a gravel bank variously described as being 67 yards southeast of West Seaton Vicarage or 80 yards north of the river Derwent. The sword was bent when recovered, and this was interpreted as meaning ceremonially bent and therefore as coming from a grave. It was once thought to have been lost, but has since resurfaced in a private collection, and there is also evidence to suggest that some seven years prior, a skeleton may have been discovered nearby.[661] This is very probably from a grave, although its exact location is not known.

Penrith: The Cumbrian parish churchyard in Penrith is best known as being the home of the so-called "Giant's Grave", the rectangular arrangement of four pieces of hogback stones and two Viking period crosses. The pieces had been moved several times before their appearance in the written records of the seventeenth century, and excavation in the nineteenth century showed the site to be much disturbed. A folk tale exists telling of its opening, and tells of an inhumation grave accompanied by a sword. The tale, of unknown age but possibly from the seventeenth century, seems to suggest a grave of a single individual only.[662] This grave also bears the mark of possible Scandinavian burial.

Carlisle: This is a site that will likely someday warrant consideration as a major find, but I cannot currently classify it as such due to a relative lack of information. Digging carried out

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[660] Edwards, 20.
[661] B.J.N. Edwards, "The West Seaton Viking Sword," *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* Third Series 4 (2004), 123-131.
[662] Edwards, *Vikings in the North West*, 96.

outside the west end of Carlisle cathedral revealed the remains of forty-one inhumed individuals, representing at least three phases of burial. An impressive group of artifacts were likewise recovered from the cemetery, including buckles, strap-ends, and a silver pendant whetstone.[663] Most were of tenth century date, although earlier origins for the cemetery are suggested by a ninth-century strap-end and a radiocarbon date of 750 +/- 70 years performed on a skeleton excavated from the same cemetery in 1985.[664] This cemetery was originally called Anglo-Saxon, but it may as easily have been Scandinavian.[665] Since it represented multiple phases, it may have been both. The excavation is neither complete nor fully published. It is in the process of publication, and the earliest results suggest an Anglo-Scandinavian cemetery.[666]

Witherslack: There was a sword found (sometime before 1901) in a bed of sandy gravel, allegedly at a depth of eight feet. Because of the bed of gravel and the record that the site continually floods in the winter, it is possible to suggest a spot for this find—the site of Whitbarrow Scar in Cumbria, as was originally suggested in 1901. The sword is known as the Witherslack sword since it was once kept at Witherslack hall, Westmorland.[667] While it is undoubtedly a sword of Scandinavian type, there is less evidence to suggest that it came from a burial, although such is certainly probable. The location of its supposed deposition is also open to interpretation. While certainly Scandinavian, it less clearly came from a Scandinavian burial.

Cambois: This site, located near Bedlington, Northumbria, is useful as analogy with the northwest of England. Discovered in 1859, it was a cist burial containing three bodies, an

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[663] David W.V. Weston. *Carlisle Cathedral History* (Carlisle: Bookcase, 2000), 7. The author concludes, rather inconclusively, that this is evidence that the site was destroyed by Viking raiders.
[664] David R.M. Gaimster, Sue Margeson and Terry Barry "Medieval Britain and Ireland in 1988," *Medieval Archaeology* 33 (1989), 174.
[665] Julian D. Richards, "The case of the missing Vikings: Scandinavian burial in the Danelaw," in *Burial in Early England and Wales,* ed. Sam Lucy and Andrew Reynolds (London: The Society for Medieval Archaeology, 2002), 160-161.
[666] Graham Keevil, Ian Caruana and David Weston, eds. "Excavations at Carlisle Cathedral in 1985," *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* 3rd Series 8 (2008), 37-61.
[667] Edwards, 21.

enameled disc-brooch and a bone comb.[668] The skeletons were stretched out at full length and facing to the east, with the further distinction of being encased in clay. Of the skeletons, only the skulls remain today. Examination has revealed that one may have been a woman aged 45-60, while the other two were probably males, one in his 20s and the other in his 40s. The brooch is of copper-alloy, containing one raised central champlevé enamel surrounding a bird with something in its beak, most likely a twig. The details of the bird are picked out by rows of bunched dots. While the design is not clear, it is possibly some creature with fish-like heads and gaping eyes. The bone comb is smallish, being only about 10cm long, and is somewhat badly damaged. The tooth-plates are of iron, equal length, and all survive, as do many of the teeth. These items are probably indicative of a higher class burial, but one of civilians. These are very likely settlers who had been living in the region, likely peacefully among their neighbors. Although not in the Eastern Irish Sea region proper, this example is illustrative for the purposes of comparison. Below is a table that I have created showing the evidence of the major burials discussed for the region, including those of the minor burials that there is enough evidence for.

Table 3: Comparison of Major and some Minor Graves in northwestern England

Site	Cremation	Inhumation	Chamber	Cemetery	Goods	Secondary
Aspatria		X			X	X
Hesket	X				X	Possible
Claughton	X		X		X	
Ormside		X		X	X	
Cumwhitton		X		X	X	
Blackrod	X		X		X	
Inskip	X				X	
Billington		X	Possible		X	Unknown
Carlisle		X		X	X	
Cambois		X	X		X	

[668] M.L. Alexander, "A 'Viking-Age' Grave from Cambois, Bedlington, Northumberland," *Medieval Archaeology* 31 (1987), 101-105.

The chart shows that inhumations outnumber cremations by a small margin, chamber graves are sometimes in evidence, all have grave goods as would be expected of Scandinavian burials, and finally that at least one was a secondary burial—a trait that was fairly common in Scandinavia, especially in Denmark.

Burial and other Archaeological Evidence for Southwestern Scotland

The material discovered in the southwestern Scotland concerning the Vikings and their control and inhabitation of the area is both minimal and problematic, although it bears mentioning that what remains shows signs of Scandinavian presence. There was a supposed ship burial recovered from Galloway. In 1684 a certain Andrew Symson reported the discovery at Stanraer of a ship burial. His informants told him that the ship was "pretty large" and that "the boards were not joyn'd together after the usual fashion of our present ships or barks, as also that it had nails of copper."[669] If such a boat can be accepted as having existed, and if copper is indeed correct, then this boat is not likely to have been Scandinavian since there is no evidence of copper being used in ship construction at any time. It would have to have originated somewhere else, probably in the Mediterranean and would be of unknown date. Another man believed he had found a possible boat grave at a farm near Graitney Means at the head of the Solway. This is even more problematic, since it is based on nothing more than the 1851 speculation of one Daniel Wilson, who was working from an oral report about a large oval mound that had been demolished a few years earlier, with no trace or recording of its contents (if

[669] Edward J. Cowan, "The Vikings in Galloway: A Review of the Evidence," in *Galloway: Land and Lordship*, ed. Richard D. Oram and Geoffrey P. Stell (Edinburgh: Society for Northern Studies, 1991), 63.

any).[670] While both of these cases are intriguing as to exactly what they are, the first is clearly not Scandinavian, while the second is extremely problematic at best.

Apart from these supposed boat burials, the evidence of early Scandinavian burials for this region is quite slim, with only a couple of probable graves on record. In most cases, the objects found were closer in context to stray finds rather than to actual graves. A sword, ring-headed pin and a bead were found under unknown circumstances and at some unknown time (prior to 1925) in St. Cuthbert's churchyard in Kirkcudbrightshire. The sword is double-edged and made of iron, while the pin is identified as a bronze pennanular brooch, and the bead is made of jet or some similar material.[671] An even more problematic burial was found during the eighteenth century, also in Kirkcudbrightshire. It was written at the time of its donation to the Society of Antiquaries in Scotland:

> A parcel of burnt human bones, among which are several teeth, found in the heart of a cairn, in the lands of Blackerne, and parish of Crossmichael, when the stones were taken to enclose a plantation in the year 1756. In the middle of the bottom of this cairn was found a coffin, composed of flat whin stones.[672]

In this same find were also a silver arm-ring and an amber bead, and there is no doubt that the arm-ring is of Viking-period type, as is the bead.[673] But there are other problems with this account, including the missing contents of the coffin and the "burnt human bones" outside of it. There are a number of possibilities here, and each is about equally likely. One is that of a Scandinavian burial, while another is the possibility of a Scandinavian burial inside of an existing burial mound; a secondary burial as is sometimes seen. A third is a possible stashing of

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[670] James Graham-Campbell, "The Early Viking Age in the Irish Sea Area," in *Ireland and Scandinavia in the Early Viking Age*, ed. Howard B. Clarke, Máire Ní Mhaonaigh and Raghnall Ó Floinn (Dublin and Portland: Four Courts Press, 1998), 121.
[671] Sigurd Grieg, "Viking Antiquities in Scotland," in *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland*, ed. Haakon Shetelig, Part II (Oslo: H. Aschehoug & Co. Ltd., 1940), 13-15.
[672] James Graham-Campbell and Colleen E. Batey, eds. *Vikings in Scotland: An Archaeological Survey* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1998), 108.
[673] Graham-Campbell and Batey, 108-109.

precious goods in a known place that happens to be a grave, and a fourth is a garbled or incomplete account from the eighteenth century that raises more questions than it answers. There is also, of course, a remote possibility of an Anglo-Saxon or some other type of grave.

A ninth-century Anglo-Saxon or Scandinavian (it is not clear which) sword was found near Ecclefechan, Dumfriesshire. It was discovered in 1913 near the top of a mound, but no other objects were found in the mound. It shows evidence of being perhaps more elaborate than normal for swords of its type, but the lower end is broken off and the whole is rusted.[674] There are other finds with a nearly-complete lack of context for interpretation, including chance-finds of a gold finger ring from Tundergarth, Dumfriesshire, a plain silver arm ring which was dropped in Solway Firth near Gretna, presumably accidentally during a crossing, a glass linen smoother from Kirkcudbright, identified as a Scandinavian object, and another from Dalvadie in Galloway.[675] These objects point clearly towards some Scandinavian contact with the region, although the scale of such contact is unknown based upon these artifacts. They certainly need not imply any sort of dominion over the locals.

There is one coin hoard and one stray find of a coin from this region. The hoard was found at Talnotrie, as a result of peat-cutting in May and June of 1912. Only some of the objects were spotted in the actual peat-moss, while others were retrieved from the peat were being broken up for burning, and a few were even pulled from the ashes of the fire. Most of that recovered is lost today, but a few items of interest remain. There are two pins and a strap-end of Anglo-Saxon origin, a gold-finger ring, a globular pin-head of bronze, some scrap metal, a lead weight capped with a decorative bronze mount, a cake of wax, a rough agate, a perforated disc of jet of lignite and three claystone spindle-whorls. In addition, there are the remains of fourteen

[674] Grieg, 14-15.
[675] Graham-Campbell and Batey, 109. See also J.G. Scott, "A Note on the Viking Settlement of Galloway," *Transactions of the Galloway and Dumfriesshire Natural History and Antiquarian Society* 58 (1983), 52.

coins, which date its deposition to the early or mid 870s. The majority of these coins are Anglo-Saxon, but amongst the fragments are a denier of Louis the Pious and two Arabic dirhams.[676] Interpretation of this fragmentary hoard is quite difficult and problematic; it has been suggested rather speculatively that it may have been the property of a native metalworker.[677] They could also be interpreted as buried loot—as something hidden intentionally and then left. The international nature of the find would be consistent with a Scandinavian merchant or trader. However it is explained, the foreign coins and the lead weight suggest at least some contact with Scandinavian traders of the region. Equally intriguing is the discovery, in *circa* 1900, of a Hiberno-Norse coin near Whithorn. This coin, identified as a penny, is evidently an imitation of a *crux* penny of Æthelræd II, and has been dated fairly reliably to *circa* 995.[678] It is tentatively identified with Dublin rather than with a local coin-maker, which does little to reduce its importance. Although it does not suggest any type of Scandinavian settlement, it does seem evidence that the area saw some trade.

The above paragraphs constitute the totality of artifacts that are even potentially Scandinavian from this region that were located in burials or as stray finds. It is not a large collection. It is, however consistent with the historical and place-name sources for this region in showing a definite, although limited, presence in the region. The supposed ship burials must be discarded as evidence except of the very slimmest sort, while the burial is on slightly firmer ground. It is probably a Scandinavian burial in an earlier mound although such a grave could also be Anglo-Saxon. The other finds speak for themselves, but such speech is indeed ambiguous, as it does little more than offer hints as to its bearers or its origin. This evidence

[676] Graham-Campbell and Batey, 109.
[677] Graham-Campbell and Batey, 109.
[678] R.H.M. Dolley and W.F. Cormack, "A Hiberno-Norse Penny of Dublin Found in Wigtownshire," *Transactions of the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society* 44 (1967), 122-125.

does, in short, much mirror that of Cumbria to the immediate south, although it appears to have been a much smaller scale habitation.

Whithorn Monastery and Monastic Town

The excavations at Whithorn provide the most complete evidence for Scandinavian settlement in Galloway. The monastery at Whithorn is older than the period of the Scandinavian migration, and it has been excavated as a part of a recent and exhaustive undertaking. One concern of historians and archaeologists has been to try to establish a chronology for the site from its earliest days to the modern era. This has not proven possible with the slim written records from the earliest eras, and there is quite a large gap spanning several hundred years that follows a fire at the site. This gap lasts from the early ninth century until the time of William of Malmesbury, who calls Whithorn *Candida Casa*, and who observed in the early twelfth century that:

> There, late in Bede's life, the first to be made bishop was Pehthelm…He was followed by Frithowald, Pehtwine, Æthelberht, and Beadwulf. I do not find any others anywhere, for the bishopric soon came to an end; it is, as I said, at the very edge of England, and liable to be plundered by Picts or Scots.[679]

From the time of William forward, this passage has served as evidence that the monastery at Whithorn was destroyed, with this period of darkness lasting until the supposed refounding of the bishopric in about 1128, under a new bishop, Gilla-Aldan, who is the next name known on a list of bishops.[680] The period in question borders on the earliest era of the Viking raids, and it is also implicit in this assumption that they may have played a part in the demise of Whithorn. Archaeology does not support this view. Although there is evidence of destruction by fire, there

[679] William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum* Vol. I, edited and translated by M. Winterbottom and R.M. Thomson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 390-391.
[680] Peter Hill, *Whithorn and St. Ninian* (Phoenix Mill, Gloucestershire, UK: Sutton Publishing, 1997), 40.

is no evidence of the site having been abandoned. The fire itself may be the result of any number of things; an unrecorded Viking raid, Scottish military actions of Alpín or his son Cinéad, or a hypothetical Northumbrian civil war.[681] It may equally well have been the result of an accident of some sort.

The period right after the fire is what excavator Peter Hill regards as Period III, which runs from *circa* 845 to about 1000 or 1050. This is a long period consists of three principal phases of activity, each of which is divided into several sub-periods, with the whole consisting of two hundred years or so of development for this monastic community.[682] The period has produced only a small number of artifacts, and these show a brief continuation of contacts with Northumbria after the fire that had seemingly destroyed the monastery at the end of Period II. Further, there was evidence of both iron working and especially of antler working, which produced ample amounts of debris, and several partial antler combs dating to the ninth century. Specifically Scandinavian objects comprise a tenth century needle case, a fragment of a steatite bowl, an ornamental weight, a fishing weight of tenth/eleventh century type, a piece of silver ring money from the latter tenth century, and a copper alloy strip with Ringerike-style decoration of the mid-eleventh century.[683] Still other objects suggest Anglo-Scandinavian origin, while purely Irish objects and those suggesting Irish-Norse admixture are comparatively rare and late in the record. The artifacts suggest a rebuilding of the monastery after its burning, and a continued occupation of the site. Further, they suggest an image of evolving rather than static or non-existent cultural contacts. Very loosely, it would seem that the alliance and patronage of the Whithorn monastic town drifted from Northumbrian, to Scandinavian, and finally to Irish or Hiberno-Norse in the eleventh century, which Hill assigns as Period IV. The general impression

[681] Hill, 21-22.
[682] Hill, 48.
[683] Hill, 50-51.

is one of peace for this general area. Stone sculpture was produced in the area. A piece of ring money and a coin of Eadgar show that Whithorn participated in the bullion economy of the region. There is little if any un-retrieved bullion in the area, suggesting the area may have been a haven of peace or perhaps an area considered to be neutral, whereas such un-retrieved bullion is reasonably common in Ireland, Scotland and England. Whithorn may well have escaped violent trouble, or nearly so. There are a few hints of trouble; one of these is the burial of the Talnotrie hoard already mentioned, while another is the possible burning of a few buildings at Whithorn near the end of Phase 1.4. Still these are hints, not definitive signs of trouble or mass destruction.

Isle of Man and Burial Evidence

The situation of the burials on the Isle of Man is in some ways reminiscent of that in Cumbria and northern England. There are many burials, especially for an island of the size of Man. The Isle contains no fewer than five major graves, and many more minor sites. The area was once claimed to hold as many as twenty-four burials[684] from the early pagan or semi-pagan period of immigration, but just as in England and Scotland, there is the problem of early excavation techniques and records. All are inhumation burials, and they form two main groups: single burials in mounds, and flat burials, sometimes in pre-existing Christian cemeteries. This section will discuss these known burials and not focus as much on what I have elsewhere termed "minor" burials, since in the case of these island burials, in most cases the information is extremely old and cryptic, so much so that it calls into question their status even as burials.

Ballateare: The large burial mound at Ballateare is perhaps the most revealing, since it was the best preserved and held a wide-variety of goods, providing also evidence of an elaborate ritual.

[684] David M. Wilson, *The Viking Age in the Isle of Man* (Odense: University Press, 1974), 18. This does not include the known Scandinavian graves excavated in association with St. Patrick's Church of the Isle of Peel.

The mound was significant size, coastally located, and marked at the top by a wooden post. It covered a pit in which a man had been buried in a wooden coffin or wooden burial chamber. He had apparently been interred in a cloak, secured at the chest by a bronze fibula. His knife and throwing spear were in his coffin, as was his ninth-century sword in the remains of its wood and leather scabbard. Three spear-heads were in the mound, the smallest of which contained silver wire decorations, not unlike those at Hesket in Cumbria. Like many swords appearing in mounds, this one had been ritually broken. Remains of a leather baldric were found inside the coffin, and it was the bronze strap-ends and strap-distributor that survived. At the bottom of the grave pit were traces of a shield—an iron boss showing evidence of two heavy blows, and fragments of wood and leather bearing traces of paint.[685] Near the top of the mound was a cremated layer of animal bones—cattle, horse, sheep and dog. This serves as a reliable indicator that the man's livestock was sacrificed and taken with him. Also in this layer, partly covered by it, was the skull and partial skeleton of a young woman. The back of the skull had been hacked away with a sharp object. This was interpreted as being a ritual sacrifice.[686] The skull of the female is thought to have come from an individual between 20 and 30 years old, while the most recent study of the male skeleton suggests his age was between 18 and 30 years.[687] His cause of death is unknown.

A study of the objects interred with the man allows a good view of the cultural dynamics of the region at that time. The sword and one of the spearheads were undoubtedly of Norwegian type and probably were made there; the two other spearheads were of Irish design and have parallels found near Dublin, the shield boss was of Scandinavian type, while the scabbard and

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[685] Gerhard Bersu and David M. Wilson, *Three Viking Graves in the Isle of Man* (London: Society for Medieval Archaeology, 1966), 46-62.
[686] Bersu and Wilson, 47.
[687] Dorothy A. Lunt, "The age of the Viking from Ballateare, Jurby, report on dentition," *Proceedings of the Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society* 10:1 (1989-91), 162-163.

baldric have parallels in the Anglo-Saxon world. All of these objects, together with an Irish pin, reflect a lively cultural and population mix in the region during the ninth century.[688] It was the layout of the grave that was most Scandinavian of all, from the dress of the man to the fact that the burial pit was dug while the body was laid in it in a coffin or a cist. After depositing the grave goods, the pit was filled with sand, then several layers of turf, before a layer containing the burned animal bones and the skeleton of the woman. A layer of earth and sod presumably covered this, while a pole was raised as a final stage.[689]

The most interesting facet of the burial is the idea of human sacrifice, if such is actually what had taken place. It is known from the story of Ibn Fadlan that such sacrifice occurred, although infrequently, in the Viking world. The presence of human sacrifice on Man is the only known example in the British Isles. Gerhard Bersu and David M. Wilson postulated this during the excavation, and Wilson in his recent reevaluation (just cited) has stood by this conclusion. It may very well be the case, but it need not necessarily be so. The woman's skull indeed received a tremendous blow, and there is no doubt that this would have been fatal--if she were still alive when it occurred. Her arms were above her head, suggesting that rigor mortis had set in and that she had been dead between twelve and seventy-two hours prior to her burial. Since she was thrown in coffin-less with the animals, it follows that she was held in little regard, and probably a slave.[690] While a sacrifice is possible, it is also possible that the woman may have been killed at a much later date and simply interred in a known and local mound. Secondary burials such as this are common in the Viking world. If she were a sacrifice, she would seem to have been in dissimilar circumstances to those known as possible sacrifices discovered in Norway, wherein

[688] David M. Wilson, *The Vikings in the Isle of Man* (Aarhus: University Press, 2008), 30-31.
[689] Wilson, 32.
[690] Wilson, 32-33.

the deceased were buried together.[691] This could possibly mean that she was not a sacrifice but rather a murder victim from a different era.

Cronk Moar: A very similar site, 1.5 km from Ballateare, is the site of Cronk Moar, which was another burial pit which contained a wooden grave chamber that enclosed the remains of a Viking burial.[692] The man was buried wearing a shaggy woolen cloak called a *roggvarfeldr*, of type that was frequently produced in Iceland.[693] Found in the grave were an iron sword of Scandinavian type with the remains of a scabbard, the guard inlaid with a copper or silver alloy in a similar manner to that found at Ballateare, an iron spear head, an iron shield boss, an iron knife with scabbard, and a few iron nails. The similarities with Ballateare are striking, in the form of coffin used, grave goods, the presence of sacrificed animals, and ritually damaged sword. The mounds were of similar size and probably of very similar date.

Balladoole: Bersu excavated a Viking burial placed on the most prominent part of an earlier Christian cemetery (itself set within a prehistoric enclosure) was excavated in the 1940s.[694] This was a boat burial of a man set within a kerb of stones and covered with a mound of earth. The burial disturbed of number of older lintel-graves which formed a part of a pre-existing Christian cemetery on the same site. The earlier cemetery complicates the interpretation of this grave, as the remains of at least three individuals were found in the grave. There is little doubt that the boat grave was a male grave, and his skeleton was recovered. The disruption of the earlier graves possibly accounts for the extra bones, but it is possible that this was a double burial. There were, however, no grave goods associated with females present. Bersu and Wilson

[691] Shetelig, 180-208.
[692] Bersu and Wilson, 63-83.
[693] Wilson, *Viking Age in the Isle of Man*, 27.
[694] Bersu and Wilson, 1-44.

expected that one of the others was another sacrifice based on the location of the body, but Wilson has now backed away from this, saying only that it is a conceivable possibility.[695]

No weapons were found in this grave, although it did have fragments of a shield, of the type commonly found in the Western Isles and Ireland.[696] The interred wore a ring-headed pin of Irish type, and traces of linen were likewise found. Other finds included an iron cauldron handle, a flint strike-a-light, a small stone hoe, a shield and two iron knives. His riding gear included an elaborate horse harness decorated with bronze strap ends, as well as iron stirrups and spurs, and the partial remains of a saddle. These are indicative of some wealth, as horses were expensive and all evidence suggests they were quite rare on Man. His riding gear was probably made in Dublin, but has parallels elsewhere in the Irish Sea region, while his spurs and silverwork came possibly from England or even from the Carolingian empire.[697] These items are somewhat rare in British contexts, but are similar to those found in other graves in northwestern England, including the Claughton and Aspatria burials. The lack of much of Scandinavian origin in his grave is significant,[698] and it probably means that he, like those in the other elaborate burials on Man, had lived in the region as settlers for some time.

Another remarkable feature of this burial is the fact that obviously pagan boat burial was positioned directly on top of the Christian cemetery, and it was marked by a wooden marker as had been Ballateare. It is clear from the disturbance that this cemetery predated the pagan burial by a short time, even having feet and hands from the Christian graves that had been disturbed

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[695] Bersu and Wilson, 5-7; Wilson, *The Vikings in the Isle of Man*, 39.
[696] Stephen H. Harrison, "The Millhill burial in context. Artifact, Culture, and Chronology in the 'Viking West'," *Acta Archaeologica* 71 (2000), 65-78.
[697] Wilson, 43. Graves with riding gear occur throughout Scandinavia, with some forty-eight in Denmark alone. See the study by Anne Pedersen, already cited above.
[698] Scandinavian items in these Scandinavian graves are usually common even in the British Isles. It is not, however, uncommon for imported British items of insular origin to appear in graves in Norway or elsewhere in Scandinavia. Egon Wamers, *Insularer Metallschmuck in wikingerzeithlichen Gräbern Nordeuropas* (Neumünster: Karl Wachholtz Verlag), 1985, 85-88.

while still articulated, and the stone slabs had been in some cases removed in order to make room for the pagan burial. Exactly why this mound was constructed in this manner is not known. It has been suggested that this was perhaps a deliberate slight to the Christian community.[699] The man in the mound, who was apparently a first-generation settler, probably lived in this area for some time and represented one of the wealthiest members of the old order, at a time when pagan ways were under attack. His burial site, at the top of a hill in a Christian cemetery, might be seen as a powerful point of propaganda for the old gods, aggressively placed in the old landscape. The partial destruction of the lower graves, however, is equally likely to have been accidental since, if such destruction had been wished, it could probably have been carried out on a larger scale. It is also possible that he preferred a view of the sea--a practice not uncommon in Scandinavia.

Knock y Doonee: This mound, of considerable size, was somewhat clumsily excavated by P.M.C. Kermode in the late 1920s.[700] A series of iron nails found in the base of the mound suggest burial by boat, although such was not immediately obvious to the excavator. In the grave were a sword of Scandinavian type, a spearhead, a fragment of a shield boss, knife, smith's tools, a lead-fishing line sinker and other items, including some horse harness, and a horse.[701] There was a smaller grave of a dog some distance away. Perhaps fancifully, the excavator interpreted the knife and a bowl next to it as sacrificial, claiming that the horse was a last sacrifice to Odin.

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[699] Marshall Cubbon, "The archaeology of the Vikings in the Isle of Man," in *The Viking Age in the Isle of Man: Select Papers from the Ninth Viking Congress*, ed. Christine Fell, Peter Foote, James Graham-Campbell and Robert Thomson (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1983), 18; Sarah Tarlow, "The dread of something after death, violation and desecration in the Isle of Man in the tenth century," in *Material Harm. Archaeological Studies of war and violence*, ed. John Carman (Glasgow: Cruithne Press, 1997), 133-142.

[700] P.M.C. Kermode, "Ship-burial in the Isle of Man," *Antiquaries Journal* 10 (1930), 126-133.

[701] Horse burial with ships is well-known in the Viking world, as at the Gokstad and Oseberg ships, although it is quite rare in the British Isles.

There are numerous other sites on the Isle with some claim to being Viking burials. All are intriguing, but unfortunately most records are unclear and excavated evidence lost. An intriguing case is that of the Jurby churchyard, less than 1km from Cronk Moar, which cannot be excavated since a modern cemetery sits on top of it. Viking burials in a number of churchyards are likely based on the fact that weapons have been turned up at them in the past, but this is little more than a possibility at present. Another intriguing possibility of a mound burial is that of Cronk yn How, a site that is now so scrambled as to be difficult to interpret. At the lowest level is a cemetery made up of lintel graves, which was buried over by a layer of burned earth and the remains of a mound. The mound, which was of considerable size, seems to later have been cut into by a corner of a large building, probably a church. In the layer above the lintel graves are artifacts of Scandinavian type, including hinges and about sixty nails and roves which presumably formed part of a substantial wooden strong box. Also found was a glass bead, a spindle-whorl and a sickle, likely from a woman's grave.[702]

Peel Castle: Recent excavation of the large Christian cist cemetery at Peel recovered seven accompanied burials from the Viking period.[703] Most of the skeletons were so badly damaged that little is known about them, including their gender. Most of these graves were either lintel graves or coffin burial, and two of them were children. One of the children was accompanied by a copper-alloy or bronze bell and a necklace of glass and amber beads, while the other contained a silver halfpenny from the reign of Eadred (946-55) that had been deliberately placed in his or her mouth.[704]

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[702] Wilson, 38.
[703] David Freke, *Excavations on St. Patrick's Isle, Peel, Isle of Man 1982-88: Prehistoric, Viking, Medieval and Later* (Liverpool: University Press, 2002), 66-73.
[704] Freke, 71.

The first of the adult graves was that of a female, and it commands the greatest attention of all the graves in this group. This belonged to the so-called 'Pagan Lady of Peel', a woman of high status who was buried in a lintel grave, fully clothed and with a full complement of grave goods that had been neatly laid out in the lintel with her. The Pagan Lady is also the skeleton that has survived the best and thus has yielded the best information. The woman lay on her back with her arms to the sides, although the skeleton is badly damaged by decay, and her right leg was crushed by the collapse of the lintel. She was wearing a necklace of exceptional quality, consisting of seventy-one glass, amber, and jet beads of Scandinavian, Mediterranean (or eastern), and Anglo-Saxon origin. She wore no brooches typical of Scandinavian women, but had an elaborate belt ornamented with a few amber beads and an ammonite fossil or charm. Her head was resting on a down filled pillow, beside which was a pouch containing a pair of needles. She also had a distinctive type of Anglo-Scandinavian knife ornamented with silver, a cooking spit, a goose wing and a bunch of herbs, a pair of shears and a comb, which possibly hung from her belt. Finally, near the knee was found a cup-shaped naturally bored stone, an item of unknown function but possibly a symbolic offering.[705]

The second adult was buried with a ring-headed pin, eighteen silver wire balls, a copper-alloy buckle and strap end, and a coin of Edmund (dated 939-946). The silver wires may have been the edging of a cloak—such items were known from Norway at the time and similar items of clothing and decoration were recovered from the cemetery at Repton.[706] The third adult was found with four similar spheres, possibly decorating a sleeve or other garment; the fourth adult was found with a ring-headed pin, a strap end and a buckle, a comb, and an iron awl. The fifth

[705] Freke, 66-69; Graham-Campbell, "The Early Viking Age," 119. See also the specialist report by the same author in Freke (2002), 83-98.
[706] Martin Biddle and Birthe Kjølbye-Biddle, "Repton and the 'great heathen army', 873-4," in *Vikings and the Danelaw: Select Papers from the Thirteenth Viking Congress, Nottingham and York*, ed. James Graham-Campbell, Richard Hall, Judith Jesch and David N. Parsons (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2001), 85-86.

adult had been buried with a knife in a scabbard decorated by a glass ball, copper alloy buckle and strap end, and some other fragments of copper or bronze, and an amber bead and glass bead came from the same grave fill.[707]

The Pagan Lady of Peel is unique because all of the other high status burials on the Isle were male. She was certainly buried in pagan fashion, albeit in a Christian context. This suggests that she, and perhaps those others from this early time period, were probably incomers. The woman may possibly also have been a Christian who had been buried in that fashion by pagan relatives, and there are of course other possibilities: she may have been the Celtic wife of a Scandinavian immigrant; it is also possible that she was a Hiberno-Norse woman married to a Christian native, who carried out her wishes in a Christian cemetery. But she is clearly not an aristocratic warrior, and only two other graves of women buried in a pagan fashion have been found on the Island, and neither was as elaborate.[708] This excavation is ongoing, and of course that leaves open the possibility that more might be found at a later date. Her grave seems to be a bit confused, and that would be expected in a grave conversion period grave. Persons buried with goods need not be considered necessarily pagan, nor should it be assumed that graves without goods were necessarily Christian. The Pagan Lady probably represents a person of first or second generation in settlement, and seems to be dated to around the second quarter of the tenth century.[709] She seems certainly also to have been a person of high-status, as the beads from the necklace suggest someone with great wealth, although any or all of these beads could likely have been obtained in Viking York.

[707] Freke, 70-71.
[708] Wilson, 50. One of these has already been mentioned, in connection with Cronk yn How.
[709] Wilson, 49.

Scandinavians and Anglo-Saxons in the local cultural milieu

The above discussion generally describes many of the graves and artifacts from this cultural region that are traditionally referenced as 'Viking'. While the evidence from the Isle of Man is more conclusive, the Cumbrian and Gallowegian evidence is less clear than is often supposed. It is, for instance, fairly similar to artifact and burial evidence that is termed generally Anglo-Saxon. The similarities make differentiation rather difficult, and identification as being in one group or another is largely determined by the antiquarian who published the results of the early findings. Discussion of the burial evidence of Scandinavian settlers has thus always revolved around the unspoken premise that the material was archaeologically distinguishable from that of the Anglo-Saxons, because the Scandinavians practiced burial rituals no longer used in Saxon England, namely cremation and the deposition of grave goods, and the use of burial mounds in which to bury their dead.[710] These would presumably represent a type of outside, intrusive presence in the burial practices of the Anglo-Saxons. These Saxon burials are often thought to be of a relatively uniform pattern by the eighth century; namely that the dead were buried in churchyards; that the graves were oriented west to east with the head being the western edge, and that burial was without grave goods.[711] The traditional view can be challenged. While burial practices were by this time no longer as elaborate as they had been, burials from the eighth to the eleventh centuries still exhibit considerable diversity. A brief review of this evidence is instructive, as it sheds new light on the Scandinavian burials and suggests that they may not have been as distinctive as once believed. The same is true of the Anglo-Saxon burials, many of which draw surprising parallels to graves of Scandinavians.

[710] Hadley, 246.
[711] Hadley, 246.

In the fifth century new burial practices started to appear particularly in the eastern half of Britain. These different methods of burial included the cremation of the deceased on a funeral pyre, rather than placing them straight into the ground, as had been the usual practice for around two centuries in the preceding Roman period in Britain.[712] The cremated ashes were collected off the pyre and placed inside a pottery urn which was then deposited in a pit, often with grave offerings including combs and other cosmetic items and occasionally the remains of the clothing that the deceased had been wearing while cremated. The prior existing methods of burial were not entirely replaced. Burial of the dead unburned was the most common mode of burial by the sixth century. In these cases, the dead were often buried fully clothed and sometimes with metal work, weapons, shields, pottery, joints of meat and other food items.

What brought about the change in these burial rites? It has been identified, or at least assumed, that this represents a mass influx from the Continent during the Germanic Migration Age.[713] The graves in these regions of England thus developed differently than had been the usual practice, and they were also markedly different than the traditional graves in the north and west of England. There are some areas of northern England with few or no graves discovered. This has sometimes been explained by reference to the building of later church yards on top of earlier cemeteries, thus completely obliterating the evidence. It can also be taken rather as an indigenous and possibly Christian influence on the burial traditions of the local settlers.[714] There is an implicit assumption that from the eighth century forward, unaccompanied churchyard burial was the norm, following the Anglo-Saxons' conversion to Christianity. There is also a small hitch, the supposed "Final Phase" of burial, wherein persons were once again inhumed with a

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[712] Lucy, 1.
[713] Lucy, 3-4. I have given a brief account of this movement in Chapter 2 of the present work.
[714] Dawn M Hadley, "Burial Practices in Northern England in the Later Anglo-Saxon Period," in *Burial Practices in Early Medieval England and Wales,* ed. Sam Lucy and Andrew Reynolds (London: Society for Medieval Archaeology, 2002), 209.

small number of grave goods.[715] This represents a final stage of pagan burial before the "norm" is finally reached.

In northern England there is no doubt that the inhabitants of religious communities, as well as kings and bishops, were buried in churches themselves or churchyards from the mid-seventh century. This is documented at York, Ripon, Whitby, and Lastingham (all North Yorkshire), Lindisfarne, some areas of Lincolnshire, and Repton, Derbyshire, among other places.[716] The aristocracy also may have sought to bury their dead in similar places.[717] In addition, there is architectural evidence for crypts and mausolea, as at Repton; sarcophagi and shrines in Derbyshire and Lincolnshire, name stones near York, and perhaps also crosses. These crosses are commemorative inscriptions of the eighth to ninth centuries, and include two in Cumbria, at Carlisle and Urswick.[718] So, while burials themselves may have not been elaborate, there is still evidence that, at least for the wealthy, graves could still be marked, and in some cases were marked in an elaborate fashion.

There is also evidence for much less elaborate burials in or near barrows or other prehistoric monuments which date to the seventh and eighth centuries that suggest that the practice of burial by these structures was not necessarily restricted to elite burial. Most of these come from the East Riding of Yorkshire, with others more spread about. At Thwing, there is a cemetery located within a series of Bronze Age enclosures containing west-east aligned burials and no grave goods, some using coffins and grave markers, which may have been used as late as the ninth and tenth centuries.[719] In Cheshire at Southworth Hall Farm about eight-hundred

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[715] Lucy, 4-5.
[716] Hadley, "Burial Practices," 210.
[717] Bede says as much, suggesting that nobles were buried at Whitby. Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, translated by Sherley Leo-Price and revised by R.E. Latham (London: Penguin Books, 1968), III.24, 184.
[718] Hadley, 211.
[719] Hadley, 212.

graves have been excavated from a cemetery based on the location of a Bronze Age barrow. There is little evidence available for dating purposes, but the west-east alignments, organization of the cemetery and the presence of stones placed around the head of one individual suggest the site was in use during the later Anglo-Saxon period.[720] There are still other examples from Cumbria, which will be discussed below. So, while burial near a church was becoming the norm for at least a segment of society, for many others burial at sites previously used for such a purpose continued to be practiced. What these sites demonstrate is that the old assumption of static, normalized burial practices by the eighth century is a false one, since churchyard burial has proven to be transient, and more traditional burials seem to have continued unabated.

Despite the trend towards growth of churchyard burial, there are many sites in England that are not associated in any way with churchyard burials, coming from all phases of the later Anglo-Saxon period. These are almost always oriented west to east, unaccompanied by any grave goods or by small knives, occasionally containing some evidence of coffins, and sometimes occurring in small groups. Especially interesting are a number of graves in Lincolnshire. At Fillingham, there are over twenty skeletons that have been excavated that were aligned west-east without grave goods and aligned with rough, hewn stones, also of comparatively late date. Other examples, albeit not from the north of England, are even more dramatic, including one from Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Here a stone castle, built in 1168, was preceded by a cemetery of over six hundred sixty burials of Anglo-Saxon varieties, and with no obvious connection to a nearby church.[721] To claim that Anglo-Saxon burial was solely associated with churchyards in the eighth century or at any time thereafter is clearly erroneous. There are many examples of such graves not located in churchyards, and some evidence that the

[720] D.J. Freke and A.T. Thacker, "The inhumation cemetery at Southworth Hall Farm, Winwick," *Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society* 70 (1987-8), 31-38; Hadley, 212.
[721] Hadley, 222.

later Scandinavian settlers in some instances began to follow the same patterns, as for example at Repton.[722]

Scandinavian Burials?

The assumption that the burial practices of the Anglo-Saxon period are mostly static is clearly not the case. With this in mind, it remains to be seen how much this may affect the assumptions about Scandinavian settlement in England. Most of the burial evidence discussed already under northern England can be examined in this new light. One the one hand, since assumptions about Scandinavian burials are just that, the nature of some or all of these 'Viking' burials can be questioned. On the other hand, graves traditionally assumed to be Anglo-Saxon can also be questioned, and some of these could clearly be from Scandinavian or Anglo-Scandinavian peoples. Many of the Scandinavian graves at Aspatria, Hesket-in-the-Forest and elsewhere can be seen to have characteristics that are clearly less Scandinavian than is sometimes supposed. It is no longer possible to claim, for instance, that these are Scandinavian simply because of location—in churchyards, outside churchyards, or under mounds, because all of these practices had been established before the Scandinavian migration. While the act of cremation at these sites is very probably Scandinavian, cremation was still practiced, albeit on a very limited scale, in eighth-century England. The placement of funerary goods with the dead is also notable with Scandinavian graves, but such custom was also known among Anglo-Saxons.

Scandinavian burial in the Scandinavian homelands exhibited considerable diversity, so it should not be expected that similar graves in England would display less diversity. Likewise, Anglo-Saxon burial practices have been shown to show considerable diversity and are not made up of a static pattern at any time. There is evidence to suggest that there is a great deal of

[722] Richards, "The Case of the Missing Vikings," 165-169.

overlap between these two different groups. There is, for instance, the Heysham burial that has been mentioned already, and identified as Scandinavian based on its bone comb. Yet there are other burials from Ripon that also contained bone combs and were assigned Christian contexts, where it was claimed that they were the graves of priests. The burials at York Minster containing coins, jewelry and gold costume ornaments do not appear to be significantly different from some grave deposits at Repton, but only those at Repton are posited as being in any way Scandinavian. Burials of only iron knives or jewelry are found over most of the Anglo-Saxon world, but only a very few are considered to be Scandinavian. When the possibility of crossover is taken into account, it seems that there is a rather nuanced set of data to study. Instead of limited information on Scandinavian settlements, there is rather an emphasis on how much new evidence could potentially exist, as well as evidence that could be interpreted as Anglo-Scandinavian, such as the monumental stone works and other items, rather than as being seen as strictly one or the other. It also becomes more obvious that most of the settlers even of the first generations were not buried in elaborate mounds, as at Hesket, but had simpler graves, just as they did in Scandinavia. There is not a scarcity of evidence, but rather it seems to be abundant, although perhaps less clear than might be hoped.

An area that shows this trend to a very large degree is Lincolnshire. Although it is not a county being specifically included in this study, it is useful here as an illustration of the argument that Scandinavian settlement is probably often overlooked. Not a single burial in Lincolnshire has ever been attributed to Scandinavian settlement, although there are a considerable number of excavated graves, which show a wide variety of burial practices.[723] Yet none are considered Scandinavian despite the fact that Lincolnshire is widely regarded as one of the more heavily Scandinavianized counties if other avenues of inquiry, including place-name studies, are

[723] Hadley, *Vikings in England*, 250.

followed. Place names in the region are heavily Scandinavian, and there is further much distinctive Scandinavian jewelry that has come from the region.[724]

Cumbria is another area that suggests that certain of the named Anglo-Saxon graves may have in fact been Scandinavian. Of these known and excavated graves, the original accounts from antiquarians still exist, and these are the only records available to study these sites. In no case has any of the archaeological material survived. Going from the documents and drawings available, it is clear that any of these graves, save Crosby Garrett,[725] cannot definitively be assigned to Anglo-Saxons.[726] Because of the nature of these antiquarian recordings, it is not even clear how many Anglo-Saxon graves are supposed to have been discovered in Cumbria, but there are at least three that could have been Scandinavian graves. The first of these is Asby, which is so poorly documented that it is not even clear when or by whom the site was discovered or if it is even a single site or if it is more than one site. Multiple antiquarian authors discussed the site, each adding new information without corroborating or even noting each other's work, leaving an impression of one (or more) burials discovered by unknown persons at some time between 1780 and 1877. This discovery contained some human remains and probably was covered by a mound, while the person discovered had an iron knife or sword, or alternatively that there were two burials, one with knife and one with sword.[727] The accounts are so vague that nothing can truly be ruled out, including the original interpretation of an Anglo-Saxon grave, or multiple graves. It may equally likely have been a Viking grave, since a short knife was a common item found, and one was found at Ormside, while a larger knife or a sword was found at

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[724] Kevin Leahy, "Detecting the Vikings in Lincolnshire," *Current Archaeology* 190 (2004), 462-468.
[725] Attempts are currently underway to locate this site and to re-examine it as well. A number of human teeth have been discovered in this process. T. Clare, H. O'Regan and D.M. Wilkinson, "Greenwell's Lost Barrow 'CLXXIV' in Crosby Garrett Parish," *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* 3rd Series 8 (2008), 1-17.
[726] Deirdre O'Sullivan, "A Group of Pagan Burials from Cumbria?" *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 9 (1996), 15-17.
[727] O'Sullivan, 17-18.

Aspatria. The so-called Viking graves of the northwest tended to be more richly adorned than these finds, unless of course other grave goods have gone unrecorded by the original antiquarian accounts. However, it is by no means necessary to have a rich grave to be an indication of Scandinavian burial.

At Brigg Flat, Westmorland, a spearhead was discovered (probably in the 1850s) in a mound or tumulus that also contained deer bones and perhaps other objects, including a bronze ferrule. The socket of the spear is open at one side, appearing essentially as an upside down V, and was identified as Anglo-Saxon because of this. Most Saxon spearheads do have this split shaft, but 'Viking' examples of this are not unknown, dating typically from the eleventh century. While this type of spear head is not typical of Viking spears as a whole, it is not unknown.[728] This site accordingly could be Scandinavian.

At Warcop, near Eden and in the vicinity of Carlisle, there were once two (or possibly three) burial mounds located along the old Roman road. The earliest of these was excavated beginning in 1776, while the others were excavated at later dates and all records have been subsequently lost. Of the earliest, it is known that some grave goods (although no human remains) were found, and all accounts suggest that most of the material was severely rusted in 1776. One item discovered was a sword, while another was possibly a spear or ax head, and possibly a piece of a shield was recovered. Possibly other metal objects were also recovered, with one antiquarian claiming that some pieces of a helmet were present. There was a ceramic pot buried further in the mound, but little was recorded concerning this.[729] This is almost certainly unconnected to the metal gear found. It is a bit speculative to draw any conclusion from this. It may well mean that the urn represented an older cremation burial that is in fact the

[728] O'Sullivan, 18. Viking spear heads typically lack this V, instead being solid metal all across the base.
[729] O'Sullivan, 19-20.

primary burial in the mound, while the metal objects represent someone who was interred later. There is some evidence to suggest that Cumbria, like Ireland, in the early medieval period may have been aceramic,[730] and if this is true, then the original burial would have been much older, dating from sometime in the prehistoric period. The metal objects would be a result of a secondary burial, either of an Anglo-Saxon or a Scandinavian. Little preference can be given to either over the other, with the possible exception of the helmet, if it were present, which is quite rare in Saxon contexts and thus would likely indicate a Scandinavian. Nothing but pure speculation can now come of the two other remaining mounds. This illustrates further the difficulties in interpreting these accounts, but serves as evidence that the assumption of Anglo-Saxon burial may be premature. It is not the intention here to suggest that since this information is technical and uncertain, it is somehow irrelevant to understanding burial and migration patterns in this region. But automatic acceptance of this material as it was presented years ago by antiquarians is premature.

Miscellaneous Presumed Scandinavian Items

Apart from the finds in graves, there are other objects that have been discovered in Cumbria that qualify as items of interest in studying the material remains of the Scandinavians. There are, for example, five spearheads not associated with grave sites that have been discovered in a time period running from 1942 until 1976.[731] Two are from Kentmere, while another is from Esthwaite Water. The fourth is on Nan Bield Pass in the Lake District, and the fifth and most impressive is the Lancaster spearhead. This spearhead is nearly two feet in length, and may have had other objects found with it although no formal excavation ever took place. There is in

[730] This is hard to demonstrate for certain, but no pottery from this era is known from any recent excavations. See for example the settlement at Bryant's Gill, Kentmere. Steve Dickinson, "Bryant's Gill, Kentmere: another 'Viking-Period' Ribblehead?" in *The Scandinavians in Cumbria*, ed. J.R. Baldwin and I.D. Whyte (Edinburgh: Society for Northern Studies, 1985), 83-88.
[731] Edwards, *Vikings in North West England: The Artifacts*, 25-28.

addition a chape,[732] called the Chatburn chape, discovered in 1994. This particular chape is only the second discovered in Britain, the first being at York, and is thought to have as an origin the island of Götland. This particular chape falls into Class II, which is notable for decoration with animals, and is associated with chapes of Swedish origin and manufacture.[733]

There are a number of stylized brooches that have been found in the area. The Orton Scar brooch, discovered in 1847, is perhaps the most famous. With it was discovered a small silver torque, which probably belonged to a woman. The brooch itself is of a common kind, called a Bossed Penannular Brooch that is well known from this period. The brooch has eight uniquely appearing animals, but is more interesting for two other reasons. First, the decorations on it are specifically Scandinavian, but many or most brooches of this style were made in Ireland. This again suggests a cultural awareness and admixing between Scandinavian and Irish. Finally, the pin of the Orton brooch is of considerable size, with the pin being over eleven inches in length. Even considering that it was probably meant to pierce through thick woolen garments, this pin is excessively large and probably quite unwieldy.[734] Another brooch, called the Casterton brooch, seems to have been a plainer brooch, far less decorative and perhaps more utilitarian than the Orton Scar brooch. There was also another silver brooch, located in the eighteenth century discovered at Brayton near Aspatria that has been lost.[735] All of these brooches seem a bit too large, even though only the Orton Scar brooch has the lengthy pin.

While the pin of the Orton Scar brooch is by any standards large, it pales in comparison to the two giant brooches discovered in the region of Penrith. These two brooches, called the Flusco (or Fluskew) pike and the 'near Penrith' brooch are both over eight inches in diameter

[732] A chape is the metallic outer covering of a scabbard. It is frequently small and often stylized, and often holds the ring that connects the scabbard to the baldric.
[733] Edwards, 29.
[734] Edwards, 31-32.
[735] Edwards, 32.

and at least twenty inches in length. The first was discovered in 1785 and the second in 1830, both in similar location to the west of Penrith.[736] They were located in an area that was called the Silver Fields, suggesting that perhaps further back in antiquity further finds had been made in the region.[737]

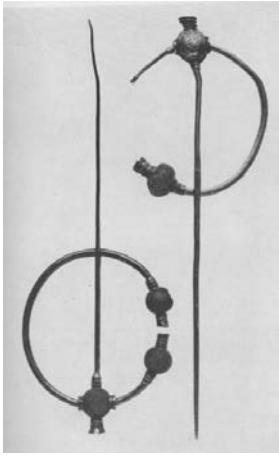

Figure 7. The Flusco Pike (left) and the 'near Penrith' brooch (right). The picture gives no idea of scale. The original photo of the two giant brooches together dates to 1906.

In all respects except size, they more resemble the plainer Casterton brooch than the more finely decorated Orton Scar brooch. Both are of silver, and possibly from the same hoard, given their unique nature and similar areas of discovery. They are not, however, exact replicas and in fact appear to be different, nor are they the same exact size. A part of the 'near Penrith' brooch has been broken off, making it shorter, but the length of this piece is not now known. These giant brooches stand as unique; they have no parallels in Scandinavia or in Ireland. It is almost certain that they were manufactured locally under Scandinavian influence or by Scandinavian craftsmen. Their function is also enigmatic. They are too large to use, sharp enough to be dangerous, and too valuable to be used as hack-silver or other forms of money. In 1989, the area of their discovery, the Silver Fields, yielded a further six silver brooches of different types (all

[736] Edwards, 33.
[737] Anathon Bjørn and Haakon Shetelig, "Viking Antiquities in England," in *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland,* Pt. IV., ed. Haakon Shetelig (Oslo: H. Aschehoug & Co., 1940), 46-50.

smaller than the two giant brooches), some fragmentary remains that could have come from any of the others, and the head of an ax, similar to one found in York in 1902.[738]

There are a few other objects discovered that bear mentioning. First, there are a number of ring-headed pins, far less glamorous than the spectacular Penrith brooches, but much more suitable for everyday use. Several have been discovered in connection with burials already mentioned, as at Eaglesfield and Brigham. A few more have been discovered, including a group or cluster probably from the Wirral, located in the 1860s.[739] A recently recognized addition to the list of probable Scandinavian adornment from Cumbria comes in the form of a gold arm-ring, located near Gretna apparently during the 1970s.[740] There was, additionally, a decorative object known simply as the Ribchester Boss, although this object was far too small to be a shield boss, and was lost during a bomb attack in 1941.[741]

There are two more objects that count generally as luxury objects. The first is the so-called Furness Head which is of gilt-bronze and probably once had precious stones for eyes. It is very small, and was later converted to a weight.[742] The other object has already been mentioned in connection with the Ormside burial, and this is the famous Ormside Cup (or Bowl). There is no aspect of this object that suggests it would be usable as a cup, although it is large enough at the top to serve as a small bowl. It is not, however, deep enough to hold much. It is highly decorated with ornate animal patterns.[743] The Cup is of unknown age and workmanship, but it is sometimes assumed to be of Celtic manufacture, although what assumption this rests upon is not

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[738] Edwards, 34-35.
[739] Edwards, 37.
[740] James Graham-Campbell, *The Viking Age gold and silver of Scotland* (Edinburgh: National Museums of Scotland, 1995), 35.
[741] Edwards, 38.
[742] Edwards, 38-39.
[743] These animal patterns were the subject of a relatively recent study. Brunsdon Yapp, "The animals of the Ormside Cup," *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* New Series 90 (1990), 147-161.

entirely clear.[744] It could as easily have been Scandinavian or even a local Cumbrian product. There are no similar artifacts anywhere in England to which it might be compared.

Coin Hoards

There is a bit of old folklore, current in the early nineteenth century (and probably earlier), that claimed that anyone overlooking the Ribble from Walton Hill was overlooking the richest treasure in all of England.[745] It happens that a great treasure, the Cuerdale hoard, was subsequently discovered in the area. It is very likely that this is also an allusion to other hoards, likely lost, that once were buried in the general area.[746] But many hoards have been found in the general region as well. There have been discovered a relatively large number of coin hoards in the general area under study, including the Isle of Man. Much of this material has now vanished. There are only written accounts of most of these items left, and in one instance, a composite drawing of some of the coins found. A few coins are known to exist still, since they were bequeathed to a museum at an early date. Even the massive Cuerdale hoard is now mostly gone. A hoard can be large or small, and it also may contain items other than coins, with the largest hoards frequently being in this category. Finally, with only three exceptions, these hoards were not found in Cumbria or Westmorland but rather seem to be heavily located immediately to the south, in Lancashire or in Chester. There is an extreme paucity in southwestern Scotland and a great number on Man. The southern areas are not immediate areas of study, but they are immediately adjacent to it, and still fall in a more or less direct line between York and Dublin.

There are several of these finds that stand out as worthy of further attention. The Harkirke hoard is illustrative of what probably happened to many of these hoards. It is the first

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[744] Yapp, 155.
[745] Charles R. Beard. *The Romance of Treasure Trove* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Co, Ltd., 1933), 222.
[746] We should keep looking. In July of 2009, the largest coin and gold hoard from the Anglo-Saxon period ever found was discovered in Staffordhsire. BBC News webpage, "Huge Anglo-Saxon gold hoard found." http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/staffordshire/8272058.stm (Accessed September 24, 2009).

discovered, or at least the first on record. There are likely many others before and since that have been simply looted and gone unrecovered. Discovered in 1611, this hoard was actually drawn, in part, by the landowner where it had been accidentally discovered, and notes were taken which survive. They were shipped off in 1642 for safekeeping to Wrexham, and never seen again. There is some evidence that they were melted down, with at least some of them becoming a chalice in a local Catholic church.[747] At this early date, it is incredible that this record exists. Most of those discovered later were published, somewhat poorly, and the coins dispersed, distributed, and subsequently lost.

The Halton hoard is of great importance because of its immense size. There were 860 coins recovered, six embossed gold discs, a torque of plaited silver wire and a silver gilt cup—the Halton Cup. Of the 359 coins which were detailed and recorded, the vast majority were from the reign of Canute and seem to have been minted at York, and hence the deposition date is given to be about 1030.[748] The most fascinating object is the Cup. Its size and shape place it as similar to others found in Sweden and Germany.[749]

[747] Edwards, 42-45.
[748] Edwards, 47-49.
[749] Edwards, 49-50.

Figure 8. The illustrations of the Halton Cup, as drawn by James Basire for Taylor Combe in 1815.

The decoration consists of plant scrolling and two animals, one feline and one bovine, probably a bull, with other animal heads appearing at the ends of the plant scrolling. It is by all appearances an alien cultural object, and it is as difficult to parallel as is the Ormside Cup. It is currently thought to be continental, perhaps Italian or Carolingian.[750] This is little more than speculation. But its presence in the hoard suggests something of great value being moved, together with the torque and gold plates. They were probably placed in the ground for safety, but the owners never were able to return.

Largest of all was the Cuerdale hoard.[751] This particular treasure, discovered May 15, 1840, was one of great size in terms of both coinage and other objects, particularly bullion, recovered from the site. Although exact records are now lost, it would appear that a hoard of the

[750] Edwards, 51.
[751] There are certain parallels with this hoard that can be seen in the Drogheda hoard, discovered in Ireland in 1846. It also had a fine mixture of coins and may have been of similar size and may have been of similar or slightly later date. R.H.M. Dolley, *The Hiberno-Norse Coins in the British Museum* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1966), 26.

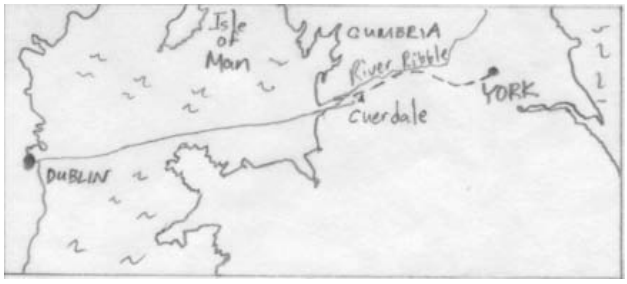
size of about 7000 to 7500 silver coins was located and as many as 1100 items of bullion.[752] These were all found together in a lead, or lead-lined, container. The majority of the coins, some 5000, were Viking issue coins from Northumbria and East Anglia, including many from York. In addition, there were over 1000 Anglo-Saxon coins, mostly from the time of Alfred the Great but a few from that of Edward the Elder. The remaining 1000+ coins were continental, and were for the most part Frankish and Italian issues, possibly acquired on raids in the Loire valley in the mid-890s and a bit later on the Rhine-Maas delta in *circa* 902. There are also about fifty Kufic coins, ranging from Cordova in Spain to the Hindu Kush, one Byzantine coin and four from the Danish town of Hedeby.[753]

The largest recognizable component of the Cuerdale bullion consists of 350 ingots and ingot fragments, representing a third of those available for study. Hoards containing ingots, along with coins and hacksilver, located in England and Wales are of northern character and are often interpreted as being of Scandinavian character. Although not culturally diagnostic, it is likely that these ingots are in fact Scandinavian, given the context of other burial items and the presence of Hiberno-Norse arm rings. The more culturally diverse material can be divided into six major classifications—Baltic, Scandinavian, Pictish, Anglo-Saxon, Carolingian, and Irish/Hiberno-Norse.[754] There are as many as forty fragments of spiral-rings originating in the Baltic, only two items each from the Pictish and Anglo-Saxon realms, a few complete neck-rings and arm-rings of plaited, twisted rods from Scandinavia, and a few pieces of Carolingian silverwork. One item found was a Thor's hammer, presumably from Scandinavia.[755] There are

[752] Edwards, 58.
[753] James Graham-Campbell, "The Cuerdale Hoard: a Viking and Victorian Treasure," in *Viking Treasure from the North West: The Cuerdale Hoard in its Context*, ed. James Graham-Campbell (Liverpool: National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside, 1992), 10.
[754] Graham-Campbell, 10-11.
[755] Gareth Williams, "Kingship, Christianity and Coinage," in *Silver Economy in the Viking Age*, ed. James Graham-Campbell and Gareth Williams (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2007), 198.

about forty fragments of Irish Bossed, Penannular and thistle brooches in the hoard, as well as several Hiberno-Norse copies. The majority of this particular Hiberno-Norse diagnostic type consists of complete and fragmentary examples of arm-rings of the "Hiberno-Viking broad band" type, which were made by hammering out ingots.[756] As a curiosity, the hoard contained four bone pins and a bone needle. The needle is not datable, but three of the pins date to the Roman Era while the fourth is much newer.[757] It seems that these probably came from York, where such objects might have been available.

While the above paragraphs give an overview of what was found, as has been studied many times already, interpretation of the hoard is much more difficult. It was once supposed that the hoard was hidden by a group of the Dublin Vikings after their expulsion from Dublin in 902. Indeed, a glance at a map shows that this is an area that lies in a more or less straight line between Dublin and York.



Map 10. The location of Cuerdale can be seen on the Ribble neatly on the route between York and Dublin. Map drawn by Russ Goodrich.

The hoard lies at the western end of the trans-Pennine Ribble-Aire gap, an area that was vital to men of both Dublin and York. Many of the coins and silver bullion are exactly the sorts of things that would be expected to be portable, and thus easy to carry away, from Dublin. However, this interpretation ignores the fact that a large majority of coins, about 5000 of them, are from York and many appear as though they had been recently minted.[758] And this says

[756] Graham-Campbell, 11.
[757] Edwards, 66.
[758] James Graham-Campbell, "The Northern Hoards: From Cuerdale to Bossall/Flaxton," in *Edward the Elder 899-924*, ed. N.J. Higham and D.H. Hill (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 220.

nothing of the Kufic and other coins in the hoard, which could in truth have come from anywhere. What this is in fact is a mixed hoard, with many elements showing signs of Irish or Hiberno-Norse influence, but also a large number of coins recently minted in York. It therefore seems probable that the hoard dates from a slightly later time than 902, perhaps in the range of 903-905. In fact, because of a certain type of coin found, a *terminus post quem* for the hoard is 905.[759] It seems to suggest the beginnings of the amassing of funding for someone to make an attempt on Dublin, to re-establish control of the city and one which was, judging by the discovery of this hoard, never completed. It does not take much imagination to postulate that a man such as Æthelwold or Cnut, styled kings of York, to send out such a mission or to help in the procuring of funds for it, although there is no direct evidence, of course, that this was ever done.

The following table is one that I have created, showing all of the known hoards from northwestern England. They have not all been described above, but are presented here for easy reference. The details of the finds and their significance vary widely, but all are from published reports that are still available. It is probable, of course, that the largest of most obvious hoards were discovered at times that were then near contemporary or at least medieval and have subsequently been looted and lost. Certainly, it is likely that many were discovered well before 1611 and those that follow are what is left to study.

[759] Brita Malmer, "South Scandinavian Coinage in the Ninth Century," in *Silver Economy in the Viking Age,* ed. James Graham-Campbell and Gareth Williams (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2007), 19.

Table 4: Comparison of Coin Hoards from northwest England

Find Site	Number of Coins	Deposition Date (Approx)	Date Found	Province
Harkirke	80-300	910	1611	Lancashire
Lancashire	28	915	1734	Lancashire
Dean	31	915	1790	Cumberland
Kirkoswald	542	c. 865	1808	Westmorland
Halton Moor	860	c. 1030-1040	1815	Lancashire
Cuerdale	7000-7500	c. 902-905	1840	Lancashire
Manchester	?	c. 1030	1849	Lancashire
Scotby	100	935-940	1855	Cumberland
Chester I	80	970	1857	Cheshire
Chester II	40	917	1862	Cheshire
Chester III	122	980	1914	Cheshire
Chester IV	520+	c. 965	1950-1975	Cheshire

Along with coinage from northern England there are further coin hoards and objects discovered from the Isle of Man. There are a few noticeable differences in the Manx hoards. The first is sheer numbers: there are currently twenty-two known coin hoards from the Isle as well as four non-coin hoards, accounting for all of the known finds of the past 250 years.[760] The hoards are, however, generally smaller than those of northern England and for the most part have completely vanished. Many were discovered in the antiquarian centuries, and now little survives even of the record. There are at least two that count as unprovenanced, meaning only a record exists, with no dates or places of discovery currently known. Another difference is in the dates of deposition. While many of the northern English hoards are tenth century, there are only a few from this era on Man. Most of the Manx hoards are dated to later in the eleventh century, and some are post-Viking age coin hoards that nonetheless precede the minting of native Manx

[760] Wilson, 105. An oddity here worth mentioning is a gold *solidus* of the Emperor Louis the Pious (814-840), discovered in the Maughold churchyard in 1884. See Mark Blackburn, "Gold in England During the 'Age of Silver' (Eighth-Eleventh Centuries)," in *Silver Economy in the Viking Age*, ed. James Graham-Campbell and Gareth Williams (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2007), 81.

coins.[761] Some of these native Manx coins have been found in Scotland, just outside the area being brought under study. The majority of the coins known to have been found in the hoards are Anglo-Saxon coins, and some are from the Scandinavian Danelaw. There are only a few continental coins, and after *circa* 997 there begins to appear a few minted on the Anglo-Saxon model by the Scandinavian rulers of Dublin.[762] The hoards of Man have been located all over the Isle, and include some from Peel and smaller isles nearby. They are not relegated to or concentrated in any specific area of the Isle.

A few of these hoards are worthy of further study. One of these is the Ballaquayle hoard, which is more commonly called the Douglas hoard. It is a hoard consisting of both coinage and silver objects, most of which disappeared after it was discovered in 1894. The coinage, which was silver, may have been as many as 370 coins.[763] There were additionally some six silver and one gold object discovered with the hoard, and these have thankfully been preserved in the British and Manx museums. It is in some sense a classic hoard, since it contains coins, ingots, complete ornaments and hack-silver. The coins seem to come primarily from England, from the mints of Æthelstan, Eadmund, Eadred, Eadwig, and especially Eadgar, with a number of Viking coins struck at York, including at least one of Erik Bloodaxe.[764] The hoard also contained other objects, twenty-one in all, although some of these are fragmentary. It contained much hack-silver, a technical term to describe pieces of silver that could be cut and divided to be used as money. Fragments include three portions of the ball-type brooch, including a complete pin head

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[761] Wilson, 108-109.
[762] Wilson, 108.
[763] Hugh Pagan, "The 1894 Ballaquayle Hoard: Five Further Parcels of Coins Æthelstan-Eadgar," *The British Numismatic Journal* 50 (1980), 12-19. This is the most recent study of the coinage in this hoard. The number of coins that were once in this hoard is assumed to be larger than the 370 or so that are now known to have existed for certain. Today only 7 survive. Estimates range up to 1000. See Wilson, 113.
[764] James Graham-Campbell, "Viking Age Silver Hoards in Man," in *The Viking Age in the Isle of Man: Select Papers from teh Ninth Viking Congress*, ed. Christine Fell, Peter Foote, James Graham-Campbell and Robert Thomson (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1983), 57; Pagan, 18-19.

of ‘thistle brooch’ in form paralleled at the Skaill site in the Orkneys.[765] They are also not dissimilar to the Flusco Pike and Penrith brooches of Cumbria, although they are somewhat smaller. Among the complete objects are a finger-ring and two arm-rings. All of these objects are silver, save one, a gold arm-ring made of two twisted rods. Gold is reasonably rare in Viking hoards, but it appears periodically on Man.

A more recent site that may rival the Douglas hoard is the site of Glenfaba, which contained a sizeable number of coins as well as bullion represented by ingots. The hoard, discovered in March of 2003, contained 464 coins of various points of origin, with most coming from Dublin, thus suggesting a later hoard.[766] It additionally contained twenty-five ingots, of which thirteen are cut fragments. It is dated to *circa* 1030.

This is a very brief survey of both the coinage itself and the finds in general, particularly on Man. It is somewhat more difficult to ascertain the meanings of the finds. It seems that this show of treasure, combined with the burial customs of the first settlers and the subsequent take-off of stone carving, would show that this was not a poor community, at least as far as the elites were concerned. It would seem to show that at least a certain portion of the population, for a time, lived at a higher standard than did the lower classes. It would also seem to show evidence of trade and commerce, with the Anglo-Saxon realms, the Danelaw and York, and the Dublin Norse. Bullion, ingots and jewelry all have been found cut up, indicating that it was divisible as a medium of exchange. Likewise, some coins were bent or nicked up, presumably by those wishing to check the purity of them. The hoards were laid down between the 960s and the 1070s, with many more towards the latter end, and with a noticeable gap between the 990s and

[765] Wilson, 113.
[766] Allison Fox and Kristin Bornholdt Collins, "A Viking-Age Silver Hoard from Glenfaba, Isle of Man," *Viking Heritage Magazine* 1/04 (2004), 3-5.

the 1030s.[767] There are a number of early deposits, which suggest tentatively that the hoardings may have started soon after the expansion of the Dublin trade and coinciding with an adventurous phase of the Scandinavian settlers of the island. In the latter period, it is clear that Dublin was fairly influential.

Sculptural Evidence

One of the significant and known avenues of exploration into the Scandinavian habitation of the region is the study of stone sculpture. While valuable as evidence, this nonetheless creates problems of interpretation. We are far removed from the mindset of either the stone masons themselves or from their patrons who commissioned the works to be created. There are different schools of thought about exactly how Scandinavian these works really are. There is an older generation that enthusiastically embraced certain items, such as the Gosforth Cross, as being largely Scandinavian in cultural origin and pagan in character.[768]

Figure 9. The Gosforth Cross. Photo by Russ Goodrich.

[767] Wilson, 108-110.
[768] W.S. Calverley, "The sculptured cross at Gosforth, W. Cumberland," *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* First Series 6 (1883), 373-404.

There is today a reaction from this view to a position that believes all or most of this work is primarily Christian in character. Richard Bailey, for instance, once claimed that most of these are truly Christian and that the ones that clearly are not—several pieces displayed at Gosforth, are really making a Christian point and that Gosforth's art "is only pagan in a most Christian manner."[769] While this interpretation is not sustainable, it does allude to another position, namely that what the iconic sculptures found in northern England really represent is a merging of cultures. That this merging was a mixture of native and immigrant art forms and iconography will be seen to be quite likely. This art combines Anglo-Saxon and Christian imagery with Scandinavian styles and motifs, and is also influenced by Irish styles of art.[770] It would seem to show not only evidence of contacts between York and Dublin, but also evidence of a widespread, shared culture covering much of the region in between.

There is a significant history of stone monuments particularly in the northwest of England and the Isle of Man, and a smaller tradition in Scotland. There is on the whole too much of this material to be described in detail, with there being some 170 catalogued objects in Galloway alone,[771] but several particular sites—Gosforth in Cumbria, for instance, stand out as of greater importance and are worthy of extra attention. There are a few pieces of stonework in southwest Scotland that perhaps offer some cryptic hints of settlement, and a rich tradition of stone carving on Man. Stone carving can generally is meant to mean stone crosses, which may or may not be indicative of burial, as well as other forms of monuments, most specifically the so-called hogback monument, which will be discussed below.

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[769] Richard N. Bailey, "Aspects of Viking-Age Sculpture in Cumbria," in *The Scandinavians in Cumbria,* ed. John R. Baldwin and Ian D. Whyte (Edinburgh: Scottish Society for Northern Studies, 1985), 61.
[770] Hadley, 261.
[771] Derek J. Craig, "Pre-Norman Sculpture in Galloway: Some Territorial Implications," in *Galloway: Land and Lordship,* ed. Richard D. Oram and Geoffrey P. Stell (Edinburgh: Scottish Society for Northern Studies, 1991), 45. Unfortunately, the Galwegian stones come from only two main areas, and almost all of them seem to have been catalogued as a part of something else; in other words, they had been gathered from their original positions and used in secondary constructions, often of more modern churches.

The tradition of stone carving in northern England is clearly one that was in existence prior to the arrival of the Vikings, and one that was of a clearly defined, monastic tradition. Since these crosses were limited mostly to monastic institutions, they were regulated in numbers, design, and production, and as such held a consistent and high standard of quality.[772] In Scandinavia, there was no tradition of stone sculpture prior to the Viking period, except on the Swedish isle of Götland, and this seems to have been a dissimilar style.[773] It seems clear that the Scandinavians adopted this practice, but began to produce it at a much more prolific pace. In modern Cumbria today, there are a few sites containing at most twenty-nine monuments or fragments of Anglo-Saxon workmanship, while there are at least thirty-six sites containing about one hundred and sixteen pieces of Scandinavian sculpture.[774] Similar figures can be quoted from elsewhere in heavily Scandinavianized northern England.[775] Another change is the movement away from strict monastic settings to a more secular-driven market, with stone sculpture being found in open church settings rather than closed monastic ones.[776] In economic terms, the sheer time, effort and money involved in quarrying, transport, or purchase of stone would have been considerable. Similarly, the money required to pay a craftsman to form said piece of stone into an art form would likely have been prohibitive to most people. It follows, therefore, that this form of commemoration was probably the prerogative of the wealthy, not of the common settlers. This is clearly seen by the limited numbers that appear in cemeteries, although there are some exceptions due to particular economic circumstances, linked directly to enclaves of

[772] Richard N. Bailey. *Viking Age Sculpture in Northern England* (London: William Collins & Sons, 1980), 79-84.
[773] Bailey, 76.
[774] Rosemary Cramp and Richard N. Bailey. *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Sculpture in England II: Cumberland, Westmorland, and Lancashire North-of-the-Sands* (Oxford: The British Academy, 1988), 27.
[775] Cramp and Bailey, 27.
[776] Bailey, 55.

wealthy merchants in northern towns.[777] There was thus continuity in the medium being used, although the symbolism was to become altered to an extent under the new, secular patrons who had arrived without any tradition in carving in stone.

The stone sculpture can also be seen to be related regionally. Certain regional groupings can be ascertained from styles of decoration or forms. In some cases such groupings are clear, such as in the appearance of ring-headed crosses on the north-west coastal plain, or the presence of round shafts in the Peak District of Derbyshire, or the type of scroll work found in the Wharf valley of Yorkshire.[778] In other cases, these links are less clear. At a regional level, these items can be seen to have originated in Ireland, and arrived in the northwest via the monastic communities of the Western Isles.[779] Distribution suggests a reasonable cultural association in the lands west of the Pennines, and this is reinforced by the archaeological discoveries of, for example, the giant brooches from Penrith, and many of the discovered coin hoards. Further, the widespread use of figures in the Viking era can be used to pinpoint regional styles.

The depictions on many of the stone carvings are what invite the most interpretation, since there is the appearance of figures from Scandinavian mythology carved on items of Christian affiliation. Such juxtaposition could mean the coexistence of the two faiths. There is, however, another view that bears examining. The existence of illustrations on crosses showing the story of Sigurd and the dragon appear regularly across the north of England. It can be seen on carvings from York, Ripon, Halton and Kirby Hill. This is also a common motif in the Isle of Man, and all of these sculptures seem to concentrate on two episodes from the Volsung narrative: the slaying of the dragon and the moment when, in roasting the dragon's heart, Sigurd

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[777] David Stocker, "Monuments and Merchants: Irregularities in the Distribution of Stone Sculpture in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire in the Tenth Century," in *Cultures in Contact: Scandinavian Settlement in England in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries*, ed. Dawn M. Hadley and Julian D. Richards (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2000), 179-212.
[778] Bailey, 185-189.
[779] Bailey, 177-182.

inadvertently absorbs its juices via his burned thumb and is thus able to understand the speech of birds, who warn him of the treachery of his brother Reginn.[780] While this was a well known story in Scandinavia and would seem to indicate influence, it does not follow that the story was unknown in England prior to the arrival of the Scandinavians, since the Saxons were, of course, of similar related stock. That the story was known in some form is clear, since Sigemund, the father of Sigurd, in the poem *Beowulf* is compared to the main character and shown to have slain a dragon.[781] The appearance of Sigurd as an iconic representation to both immigrant and resident is an important sign of acculturation. The fact that it appears on monumental sculpture, unknown in Scandinavia, is probably more indicative of cultural negotiations of sorts taking place, which is a necessary step in the allowance of successful assimilation. This cultural fusion was not, of course, a one-way process in which settlers played only a passive, receptive role. The tastes of the new patrons were also represented in the zoomorphic forms that had been developed in their homelands and often are in appearance in other media--wood, metal work, and fabrics.[782] So, there is a marriage of traditions--the crosses themselves are a Christian tradition with forms imported ultimately from Ireland, while the ring headed crosses are a Hiberno-Norse tradition from the Islands, and much of the zoomorphic forms are developed from Scandinavian models.

The most important example of all of this stonework comes from the cemetery of the parish church in Gosforth, Cumbria. At this location can be seen some of the most unquestionably Scandinavian ornamentation which nevertheless shows evidence of cultural adaptation. At Gosforth there are seven surviving sculptures, and all of these but one can be

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[780] Richard N. Bailey, *England's Earliest Sculptures* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute for Mediaeval Studies, 1996), 92.
[781] This is in part XIII of the poem, lines 874-900. *Beowulf,* translated by John Porter (Norfolk, England: Anglo-Saxon Books, 1991), 60-63; Bailey, *Viking Age Sculpture,* 116.
[782] Bailey, *England's Earliest Sculptors,* 84.

reasonably attributed to a single stone mason who has been termed the Gosforth Master.[783] The six sculptures appear to represent at least four separate monuments, and they stand apart from the work in the rest of the area both by the quality of the carving and the originality of the iconography. Within the area there is no trace of other works by the hands of this master, so it would seem that he worked solely for a local patron at Gosforth. The identity of neither is known.

There are four crosses at Gosforth, but it is the largest that merits the most discussion.[784] In addition, there are two hogback monuments, the so-called Saint's and Warrior's Tombs, and an unusual object called the Fishing Stone, which is currently attached to the inner wall of the church. The Fishing Stone is an artifact of unquestionably pagan characteristics. The top of the stone is typical of a technique designed to artistically take up space (frequently used in much of this stonework), seemingly showing a carving of a knotted up snake, with its triangular head appearing below its belly, in the Borre style.[785] The lower portion has long been recognized as a representation of the story of Thor's fishing expedition where he, with the giant Hymir, fish for the world serpent.

[783] Cramp and Bailey, 33.
[784] The other three, as is very common with stone carvings in general, are part of the walls of the church. It seems that many pieces of stone work such as these, in England and Scotland as well, were re-used from earlier times to create the walls of the modern day churches. Some also tend to be quite worn. In this case, these three have been stylistically linked to the Gosforth Master.
[785] Cramp and Bailey, 108.

Figure 10. The Fishing Stone, Gosforth. The story of Thor and the Serpent is represented in the lower portion. From W.G. Collingwood (1901).

This story dates from at least the ninth century, and has different variations, including the use of an ox head as bait, which is clearly seen in this stone. The scene does not appear elsewhere in Britain, but is known from carvings in Denmark and Sweden.[786] Its interpretation must be considered to be a mostly pagan story, although one that was likely well known.

The Gosforth Cross is one of the most remarkable surviving objects from the Viking Age. It is unique in its size, complete survival, quality of carving and iconographic imagery. It has been studied for over a century, and aspects of this study have naturally changed throughout the years. It is exactly 442 cm in height and to all appearances has never been moved from its present location. Its base and the lower portion of the cross are fairly unremarkable, but the artistic representation of the upper portion is outstanding in its content, and it is topped by a wheel-headed cross, of a non-Celtic shape. It was once described, perhaps inadequately, as "Northumbrian art under strong Norse influences."[787]

Each of the four sides of the cross is ornately carved and appears to tell a part of a story. There are human and animal figures intertwined with serpent or dragon forms that are often

[786] Cramp and Bailey, 108-109; Bailey, 132.
[787] W.G. Collingwood, *Northumbrian Crosses of the Pre-Norman Age* (London: Faber and Gwyer, 1927), 157.

interpreted as showing scenes from Norse mythology. At least three of the scenes on the cross are associated with Ragnarök, albeit with some minor inconsistencies. One explanation is that by beginning on the south side at the foot of the shaft and going down the sides alternatively, there is a remarkable parallel to the chief events told in the *Voluspá* as told by Snorri Sturluson.[788]

Figure 11. The inscription on the left depicts the story of Loki and Sigun, while that on the right depicts Heimdall with a strange, two-headed version of the Midgard Serpent. Illustrated by W.G. Collingwood (1901).

[788] Snorri Sturluson, *The Poetic Edda*, 1-13.

On the south face, there appears to be the creation by Odin, and Eikthynir the Hart; to the west: the wars of the gods and giants and the three pledges of Heimdal, Odin and Baldur, with the last bit showing Loki's punishment for taking Baldur's life (shown in the illustration above).

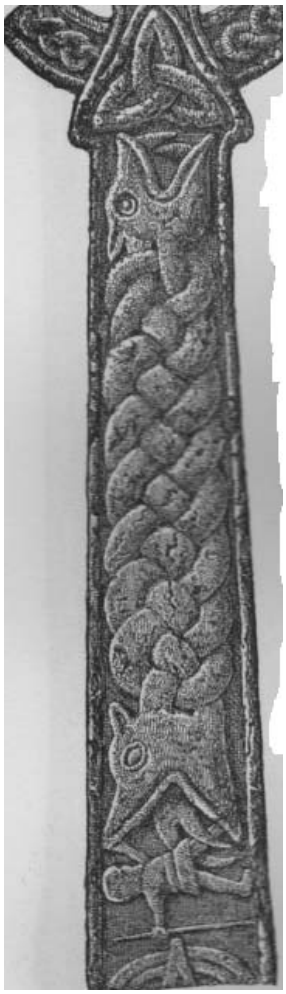

Figure 12. Viðarr slays the Midgard Serpent. Illustrated by W.G. Collingwood (1901).

To the north is the battle of giants and gods at Ragnarök, and to the east is the new world, with Viðarr slaying Fenris and the promise of the rebirth of Baldur, here identified with Christ.[789] It is this last scene, on the East panel, that is the most controversial. This is the only clearly Christian iconography that appears at the scene, seemingly of the Crucifixion although lacking the cross. The soldier holding a spear towards Christ is often identified as Longinus, but precisely whom the female figure facing him might be is not entirely clear, but she is certainly not a Biblical

[789] Collingwood, 156-157; Cramp and Bailey, 100-104.

figure. She appears to be a Valkyrie, but has sometimes been called Mary Magdalene.[790] It is possible that the figure of Viðarr, one of the few to actually survive Ragnarök, is being identified in some way with Christ, perhaps symbolizing a new birth of faith, or of the merging of the two faiths.

Figure 13. The Crucifixion Scene from the Gosforth Cross. Illustrated by W.G. Collingwood (1901).

Arguably the most important, symbolic representation of Viking period sculpture is a type of stone structure commonly called a hogback. The distribution of the hogback monuments is limited. They are confined to northern England and central Scotland, with Ireland and Wales having but a single example each. There are a few later kindred monuments in Orkney, but none of these are found on Man despite its strong tradition of stone working. Iceland lacks them completely, while the other Scandinavian countries have a similar but later tradition of

[790] Richards. *Viking Age England*, 218.

Romanesque that seems to have developed from the earlier-- British style.[791] The inspiration for the creation of these carvings is a matter of great debate, and probably cannot ever be convincingly answered beyond any reasonable doubt.[792]

Essentially, the hogback is a large stone monument which strongly resembles an overturned boat in its shape. They are often over a meter in length and, while they show regional diversity, their particularly Scandinavian design places them firmly in the Viking period.[793] Unlike contemporary crosses, there is no doubt that these monuments were contemporary grave markers, evidence for this function being found in the archaeological record at Heysham, Brigham, and Penrith, Cumbria. Also unlike the crosses, most of the hogbacks lack the appearance of obvious Christian iconography.[794] Out of an enormous variety of hogbacks, only a very few, including the so-called Saint's Tomb inside Gosforth church (crucifixion scene), contain any Christian iconography.[795] There is at least one instance of a possible crucifixion scene on a hogback forming part of the Giant's Grave at Penrith, but the inscription is no longer discernable.[796] It is possible there may be a few others, since there are some examples that are badly worn. But the overall impression is that Christian iconography is quite rare.

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[791] James T. Lang, "The Hogback: A Viking Colonial Monument," *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 3 (1984), 87. The absence of such structures on Man is perhaps surprising, given the tradition of stone crosses and Scandinavian settlement on the Isle. It has been suggested that the geology of the Isle is rather different from that of northern England. Their absence is better explained by the fact that the slate stone of Man is ill-suited to the production of these large, three dimensional monuments, rather than that the Isle of Man was somehow isolated from the rest of the region. See Richard N. Bailey, "Aspects of Viking-Age Sculpture in Cumbria," 55.
[792] Lang, 90-1; Bailey, *Viking Age Sculpture*, 93-95.
[793] Bailey, 90.
[794] Lang, 110.
[795] Cramp and Bailey, 108-109.
[796] Cramp and Bailey, 139.

Figure 14. The Warrior's Tomb (top) and the Saint's Tomb, from Gosforth. Illustrated by W.G. Collingwood (1901).

Over fifty of the hogbacks have bear-like animals gripping the gable ends, some of which, like those at Brompton, are very naturalistic in their depiction, while others survive in a more stylized form.[797] Others seem to show episodes from the Sigurd or Wayland stories. In Lancashire there is an example of a monument showing a hunting scene, complete with stags, a pack of hounds and four huntsmen. This tableau has been associated with Ragnarök and the triumph of Viðarr, here equated with Christ and the deer, the divine hart. It is of course possible that this is simply a scene of the hunt. West of the Pennines depictions of men battling serpents are a common motif, as at Penrith and the Saint's Tomb at Gosforth.[798] These could on occasion incorporate elements of both Christian and non-Christian iconography. The Saint's Tomb, as

[797] Lang, 106.
[798] Cramp and Bailey, 108-109; Lang, 110.

already mentioned, contains a crucifixion scene at either end, but also depicts two warriors battling a serpent, possibly a variation of the story of Thor and the Midgard Serpent. Others show martial scenes. The Warrior's Tomb, Gosforth, shows vying bands of warriors as does the Lowther hogback in Westmorland, and these show a further continuance in several Gotlandish stones.[799] Other figures can sometimes appear on hogback stones in almost portrait form, for instance the cloaked man from Cross Canonby (Cumbria) and also possibly from the Warrior's Tomb, which has a very faint impression of a man bearing an ax just visible.[800]

The unique nature of the hogback and its firm dating to the Viking period make it an especially valuable tool for understanding the cultural interaction and negotiation being carried out in the regions where it is found. The use of the hogback tombstones is not native to either the immigrant or the receiving population. It would seem that it could be seen as an extremely visible, iconographic representation of the assimilation of the two communities in the context of a cult practice that was in use at the time.[801] Unlike graves, which may or may not be in a known location, these monuments were highly visible and were probably meant to be permanent, and they were not inexpensive. It follows that there were patrons who were well-placed in society to commission the buildings of these monuments, and that there were sculptors skilled enough to carve them who also had knowledge of Scandinavian motifs and styles. It seems further to be a necessity that the local populace, including Church officials, would give consent, since many were erected in sacred space.

[799] Cramp and Bailey, 105-106, 130; Lang, 110.
[800] Cramp and Bailey, 89-90, 105-106; Lang, 110.
[801] Richards, "The Case of the Missing Vikings," 165.

Conclusions

Archaeology is thus a highly useful tool to the understanding of Scandinavian presence in the Eastern Irish Sea Region. The understanding of death rituals is a small part of what is necessary to attempt to interpret these burials. Scandinavian burials are highly complex, showing great regional diversity in Scandinavia itself. It follows that this would also be the case in areas to which they emigrated, and it is the case in the Eastern Irish Sea region. It has not, however, always been recognized as such. It was once common to assume that Viking artifacts and burial styles were markedly different from those of the Anglo-Saxons. While this is sometimes true, I have shown that it need not always be so, and this results in a lot of new, albeit more nuanced, evidence for settlement by Scandinavians and Anglo-Scandinavians in the region. Besides the evidence given in burials, there is evidence also in the forms of miscellaneous items discovered over the years, which may or may not have been associated with burials, and the evidence provided by coin hoards. With coin hoards, we may assume that they are also associated with death, since they were valuable, especially if they were of great size, and they were never reclaimed, lying in the earth for centuries. Wilson has attempted to show with the Isle of Man that the deposition of the hoards is linked to periods of raiding and of peace, and this may be the case.[802] But there are too many variables for this to be certain, such as those hoards currently undiscovered, and those hoards, probably quite numerous, that were discovered and looted before any records were kept. But by a careful study of the coins and items themselves, it can be seen that they are representative of multiple locations, suggesting that they saw a considerable amount of overland movement. This is in turn suggestive of trade routes, and the multinational nature of some hoards, like that at Cuerdale,

[802] Wilson, 108-110.

suggests the range and extent of contacts and interests. It may be postulated, if not proven, that those areas with coins represented in the Cuerdale hoard may have had an interest in the success of the mission, whatever that may have been.

Most telling of all is the use and distribution of many types of stone sculpture that are found in the region. While the names of the patrons are not known, it is clear that the Scandinavians were the catalysts in some sense for this phenomenon of mortuary stone carving. They were also the catalysts for the boom in production as well as the move away from a strictly ecclesiastical cultural milieu. The adoption of stone sculpture as a commemorative venture by an incoming group and the introduction of new motifs, combined with a continuation in tradition of those already present combined to form a new and hybrid set of cultural assets, one that was produced by the merging of two cultural traditions. There are examples of this all over the cultural region, with the ultimate example perhaps being the Gosforth Cross, a unique masterpiece that clearly shows elements of both pagan and Christian influence. Most unique of all is the hogback, whatever the origin of its inspiration. It is an enduring, physical legacy of the interaction taking place between the Scandinavian and more native Anglo-Saxon groups during the process of assimilation. Clearly this was a complex arrangement, but it is very striking that the majority of these structures bear no identifiable Christian influences whatsoever, but that many of them stood in Christian graveyards.

Chapter Five
The Low Birker Site, Cumbria

Introduction: Research Parameters

The Iron Age is a period of considerable diversity and importance. Like much else discussed so far in other chapters, its parameters and date ranges are a matter of considerable scholarly debate. The term was coined in the nineteenth century to describe the time period when iron objects overtook those of bronze in the archaeological record. This change was gradual, however, and items of bronze were not replaced by those of iron overnight. Further, this change did not occur everywhere simultaneously throughout Europe, nor did the concept of iron smelting originate in Europe. There is a good deal known about this time period today, which can be gleaned from studying the patterns of change found throughout the different eras of this age. This knowledge encompasses such things as economy and trade, warfare, growth of agriculture, the rise of economic and political centers, coinage, migration, and religious rituals.[803] Ultimately, the goal here is not to try to untangle all of the aspects of the Iron Age in Europe, of which there are a great many. Rather, it is to examine the production of iron in the Eastern Irish Sea region, and to try to establish both its production and trade during the Viking period. Since there are no written records from the time period and region that discuss such activity or even trade in general, it will be necessary to proceed from archaeological evidence. Accordingly, this chapter will begin with a discussion of the Iron Age generally and its chronology, and establish that, by the Viking period, the production of iron was known in both Scandinavia and in England, suggesting that certainly it would be possible that iron might be produced in the Eastern Irish Sea region. Then, it is necessary to discuss the evidence of what is currently known on the subject. The chapter will discuss some field research done by the author and others on a project called SMELT/Low Birker in Cumbria, and the results of this study,

[803] Peter S. Wells, "The Iron Age," in *European Prehistory: A Survey*, ed. Sarunas Milisauskas (New York: Kluwer Academic, 2002), 335-384; Jørgen Jensen, *The Prehistory of Denmark* (London and New York: Methuen), 1982.

though inconclusive, deserve a thorough analysis. There is little evidence with which to compare these findings elsewhere in the north of England, and only a small amount in the neighboring regions of Galloway and Dumfriesshire, and none whatsoever on the Isle of Man. There is some evidence that can be used as analogy from elsewhere in England and the British Isles, and some from Denmark that may help to serve as a theoretical example of what may have been going on at the Low Birker site, where the research for the SMELT project was taking place. The SMELT project itself is not limited to Low Birker, it is rather a project of experimental archaeology, and requires a certain amount of explanation in its own right.

A knowledge of the Iron Age generally and its relationship with northern England is the first variable to address. Following this, it is imperative that the SMELT project be explained thoroughly and related back to the project at Low Birker. The project was never completed and there are a number of reasons why this never happened, but as such it makes drawing any conclusions to the validity of the research very suspect. It is therefore reasonable to use an analogy, and to compare this material to some research taking place in the Scania portion of Denmark that seems to have been reasonably comparable to that at Low Birker. Even so, this does not lend itself to easy interpretation or to iron clad conclusions about the Low Birker site in Cumbria.

The Iron Age

The chronology of the Iron Age is a question of periodization that has undergone revisions over the years. It is different from the preceding Bronze Age in that, towards its latter phases, the peoples of the Iron Age in Europe came into contact with literate societies, namely those of Greece and Rome. Because of this, there is much more information about these peoples, some of whom are described in great detail, including the names of tribes and regional

groupings.[804] Discussion of these peoples and their material culture, including their historical references, might be understood as the jumping off point for discussion of the Iron Age. This term might best be defined as that period of time that began when iron replaced bronze as the principal material for tools and weapons and ended with the conquest of much of Europe by Rome, at roughly the time of Christ.[805] But because of the gradual nature of the process and the fact that it was not uniform everywhere, any exact date is difficult to pin down. A further nuance is that Rome was itself an Iron Age culture, and the fact of the Roman conquest did little to stop the production of iron as a medium of exchange and use among the Celts or the *germani*, or among the Romans themselves.[806] The Iron Age, as will be seen, can realistically be continued for centuries after the time of Christ, as people in Britain, Scandinavia, and continental Europe continued to produce iron for their own consumption and use well into historical times.

Although iron technology is often associated with central Europe, it did not originate in this region. Ironworking technology seems to have been gradually acquired north of the Alps from about 1000-700 BC. Experimentation with iron had a long history in Anatolia, and a prototype iron sword was even buried near Troy as early as 2500 BC.[807] By 700 BC, the southern half of continental woodland Europe had a majority of basic cutting tools made of iron. The territory occupied by these people is termed the Hallstatt Culture, so named after the place of its first discovery, a prosperous salt mining center in Austria.[808] In due course, this continental culture was replaced by another widespread European culture, named La Tène, after

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[804] Recall from an earlier chapter my points concerning Julius Caesar and his observations of certain of the Celtic and Germanic tribes. Caesar is not the only example available when discussing these written sources; there are others from Poseidonius to Pliny to Tacitus and others who have reported on these people.
[805] Wells, 335.
[806] On the use of iron in the Roman Empire, see Henry Cleery, "Iron making in a Roman furnace," *Britannia* 2 (1971), 203-217; Carl Blair, "The Iron Men of Rome," in *Life of the Average Roman, A Symposium*, ed. Mary R. DeMaine and Rabun M. Taylor (White Bear Lake, MN: PZA Publishing, 1999), 52-54 and 59-64.
[807] Ralph M. Rowlett, "The Iron Age North of the Alps," *Science* 161 (12 July 1968): 123.
[808] Rowlett, 123.

a site discovered in western Switzerland at Lake Neuchâtel.[809] Both periods of the Iron Age are further subdivided into more specific phases, which represent changes in artifact distribution and styles. A modern schematic chart of this time period might appear as follows:[810]

Hallstatt C c. 800-600 BC
Hallstatt D c. 600-450 BC
La Tène A c. 500-400 BC
La Tène B c. 400-275 BC
La Tène C c. 275-150 BC
La Tène D c. 150 BC-Roman Conquest

The regions of Scandinavia and the British Isles do not quite conform to this generally accepted paradigm. In Scandinavia, it has long been accepted that the Iron Age came later than in continental Europe, and may have had, temporarily at least, a negative impact on the economy of the region.[811] In the British Isles (including Ireland), it has long been held that these islands developed separately, and more or less independently, due to the barrier posed by the sea. They are accordingly seen in some sense as peripheral to the core of continental Europe. Further, it is assumed by many that certain regions of Britain, namely the south and east, served as a sort of local core, from which the continental and Mediterranean goods were distributed to other peripheral areas.[812] In this view, technology filtered more slowly into the more remote regions of Britain.

The Scandinavian Iron Age does not fit neatly into a scheme of Hallstatt and La Tène cultural groups, although there is some overlap. Swedish archaeologist Oscar Montelius first proposed a system to fit the age in these regions, and his system, with some modifications, is still

[809] Wells, 336.
[810] Wells, 338.
[811] Rowlett, 130.
[812] J.D. Hill, "The Pre-Roman Iron Age in Britain and Ireland (ca. 800 B.C. to A.D. 100): An Overview," *Journal of World Prehistory* 9:1 (1995): 49.

in use today.[813] The Iron Age may be broken down as follows for Scandinavia, as typified by Denmark:[814]

Early pre-Roman Iron Age c. 500-300 BC
Late pre-Roman Iron Age c. 300-50 BC
Early Roman Iron Age c. 50 BC-200 AD
Late Roman Iron Age c. 200-400 AD
Early Germanic Iron Age c. 400-600 AD
Late Germanic Iron Age c. 600-800 AD
Viking Age c. 800-1050 AD

This simplified model can be further subdivided, and has been into more than twenty phases, which are more or less well-defined.[815] It must not be assumed to mean that the production of iron ends after this date, since it is still produced today. It is not, unfortunately, necessarily interchangeable all throughout Scandinavia or with continental materials or British Isles typology. In Sweden, the Late Germanic Iron Age phase is called the Vendel phase, while the same era in Norway and on the continent is termed Merovingian. In other cases, it is possible to roughly equate these phases with the better known Hallstatt or La Tène cultural phases from the continent. For ease of use, however, it is best to refer to the phases of the Scandinavian Iron Age as those terms commonly used to recognize the age.

The situation on the British Isles is once again different. Its insular nature did little to halt the spread of trade in the Iron Age. Certain groups in southeastern England were part of a cultural group that extended to France, and from there had links to the Mediterranean. Probably ties of trade were maintained by respective kinship groups in both areas.[816] Transfer of goods to the more remote areas of Britain, when it happened, is understood to have this southeastern

[813] On Montelius and his chronology, see Lotte Hedeager, *Iron-Age Societies* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), 6-8.
[814] Mads Ravn, *Death Ritual and Germanic Social Structure (c. AD 200-600).* BAR International Series 1164 (Oxford: Archeopress, 2003), 22.
[815] Ravn, 22.
[816] Hill, 80-82.

portion as a base. Ireland, peripheral even to Britain, is considered to be still further behind, due again to distance from continental Europe.[817] A chronology of Britain (excluding Ireland) might appear as follows:

Early pre-Roman Iron Age, c. 700-450 BC
Middle pre-Roman Iron Age, c. 450-100 BC
Late pre-Roman Iron Age, c. 100 BC-43/86 AD
Roman Iron Age 86-410 AD
Germanic Iron Age, c. 410-789 AD
Viking Age, c. 789-1066 AD

As with the Iron Age in Scandinavia, there are many variables in certain regions, and the production of iron does not end with the Viking Age.

Although it has been established that iron technology entered Britain at a reasonably early date, it does not follow that this technology reached all areas of the British Isles simultaneously. Hill has argued that the core-periphery model is not as workable as was once believed, but his hypothesis does not extend into every nook and cranny of the British Isles.[818] The northern reaches of Britain, for example, seem to have been slower in adapting this technology. Particularly remote areas, such as the one under study, seem to have benefited last and least from it. In all probability, this has to do with factors such as climate. The climate and remote nature of this region led to a relatively low population in comparison with the rest of Britain. It would stand to reason that technology would reach a small number of isolated people

[817] Ireland had a thriving, even still developing Bronze Age culture when iron was first used in Europe. This only implies backwardness to a small degree, however, since Ireland developed an unparalleled mastery of working in bronze and in gold, thus keeping on the cutting edge of European technology. The Irish were, however, slow in adopting the new medium of iron, and although it was not unknown to them, it still has not been established that it was adopted in any way before the middle of the last millennium before Christ. Barry Raftery, "Iron-Age Ireland," in *A New History of Ireland I: Prehistoric and Early Ireland*, ed. Daibhi Ó Cróinin (Oxford: University Press, 2005), 134-137. It has also been demonstrated that items of Hallstatt design and influence were not unknown, as examples of each have been found in both Britain and in Ireland. See Barry Raftery, *Pagan Celtic Ireland: The Enigma of the Irish Iron Age.* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 26-32.
[818] Hill, 89.

much more slowly than it would reach a thriving population that was continually in contact with the continent and its inherent technologies and culture.

This is not to say that the Eastern Irish Sea region was uninhabited or completely ignorant of the groups outside of the immediate region. On the contrary, occupation sites from the early stages of the Iron Age have been discovered in Cumberland, Westmorland, and southwestern Scotland, just as they have been in Yorkshire and elsewhere in the region. There is not much doubt that relatively poor climate contributes to the overall paucity of these sites in the northwest, and to points further north in Scotland. Climatic conditions probably served to keep large numbers of people from settling the region year round. The growing season exceeds 300 days in lowland Cornwall and along the south coast and lay between 250 and 300 days throughout lowland England. Throughout the north it did not attain 250 days, and in the uplands hovered around, or below, 200 days.[819] Further, there is a significant gradient in rainfall from south and east, northwards and westwards, and a reverse gradient in the summer to the point where, even in summer, rainfall exceeds transpiration. The result is leaching throughout the year, acidity, exclusion of oxygen in the soils and low fertility. The growing season is reduced by 15-20 days for every 100 meter increase in altitude, and the grazing season, of great importance in the north, is necessarily shorter than the growing season.[820] It is clear that, per capita, the carrying capacity was far lower in the north than in the south. It is logical to argue that the population density was smaller, and on the eve of Roman contact, that the population was both poorer and more thinly distributed than the regions further to the south. It is conceivable that the social elites of the north and west may not have had the resources necessary

[819] Nick Higham, "Roman and native in England north of the Tees: Acculturation and its limitations," in *Barbarians and Romans in North-West Europe,* ed. John C. Barrett, Andrew P. Fitzpatrick, and Lesley Macinnes. BAR International Series 471 (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1989), 155-158.
[820] Higham, 158.

for the adoption of a villa or other fortified dwelling as was seen elsewhere, even if assimilation into the larger Roman world with all of its trappings may have been advantageous for them.

These fortified dwellings may take a number of forms, but that most often associated with the Iron Age is the hill fort. These are large sites enclosed by earthen or stone walls, often sitting atop hilltops. Hill forts seem to have been fortress residences of the elite, centers of craft production and exchange, and a focal point for the agricultural regimes of the area. They are not, however, without controversy in their interpretation.[821] There are some sites such as these located throughout England and associated with the Iron Age. But in the northwest, there are relatively few sites that could be considered to be in this class. Hill forts were seemingly not a major component of Iron Age settlement in the northwest. Only the site of Carrock Fell (Cumberland) stands out as the potential site of a regional *oppidum.* At over two hectares in size, it is large enough to have stood as a defensive or major tribal center, and the breaks of the walls may have been a deliberate slight by Roman forces.[822] But its height, 650 meters, combined with its exposed location and lack of any surviving traces of habitation lead to the likelihood that the place was not permanently occupied.[823] Rather, it would seem that it was occupied only occasionally, and probably served as a defensive structure. Below Carrock Fell in the heart of Inglewood Forest is a second site which is a more likely candidate for permanent occupation, Dobcross Hall. It has a scarp top, univallate enclosure of approximately three hectares and appears, from aerial photographs, to be the hub of several radial ditches. Where

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[821] Hill, 66-70. For one thing, the idea that they are all Iron Age structures is open to debate. Some are clearly older, and they are not as evenly distributed as might be expected. Further, similar sites on the continent are termed *oppida*, and these are often seen as the first urban settlements, with some being the basis for later Roman settlements. In Britain, these hill forts may or may not be expected to hold the same function. For a discussion of the *oppida* and the Romans in action, see Barry Cunliffe, "The impact of Rome on Barbarian Society, 140 BC-AD 300," in *Prehistoric Europe, An Illustrated History*, ed. Barry Cunliffe (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 414-421.

[822] There are, however, a fairly large number of Roman forts in the general area. Each is assumed to have had a certain Notional *territoria* and regional market zones. For a map of locations, see Higham, 163.

[823] D.W. Harding, *The Iron Age in Northern Britain* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 50.

explored, the perimeter ditch is about three meters deep and 4.2 meters wide, with a near-vertical inner face. The center of the enclosure shows evidence of a rectangular homestead of the second or third century AD.[824] There are certain other sites, such as Crosby Garrett and Crosby Ravensworth (Westmorland) that are in regions that are long-inhabited, making precise determinations of Iron Age culture difficult at best to assess. What seems to be the most problematic is the age of the structures, placing them in pre- or post-Roman periods, although in both cases these are also known from Anglo-Saxon era contexts.[825] There are also a number of artifacts of metal, glass, and other material that have been found in Cumbria over the years and have been assigned an Anglo-Saxon date.[826] Most of these are lacking context, but if they are in reality of Anglo-Saxon origin, then it can reasonably be inferred that a type of continuity existed in the region.

Southwestern Scotland too shows evidence of settlement from this period. There are a number of Later Iron Age Hill Forts in the region of Galloway that tend to show a type of continuity with regions to the immediate south. Sites in Scotland are often called Crannogs and are sometimes associated with lochs. These are particularly abundant in the Dumfries and Galloway horizon, and radio carbon dates show that some are prehistoric, while others date to the early historic period.[827] Two of particular note are Buiston Crannog and Lochlee, which are located a close distance from one another in Ayrshire, Galloway. Buiston is one structure that shows evidence of continuous periods of habitation, from about the second century AD, and it is supported by numerous artifacts that have been recovered and radiocarbon dated. Lochlee, on

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[824] Nick Higham, *The Northern Counties to AD 1000* (London and New York: Longman, 1986), 129-130.
[825] Harding, 50-53. For a discussion of Crosby Garrett, see Deirdre O'Sullivan, "A group of pagan burials from Cumbria?" *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 9 (1996): 15-17.
[826] Deirdre O'Sullivan, "Sub-Roman and Anglo-Saxon finds in Cumbria," *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* New Series 93 (1993): 25-42.
[827] Harding, 211.

the other hand, may have its origins in the Roman Iron Age, but it appears that it may have been abandoned at some point, and re-inhabited in the ninth century. These two sites are certainly not major for their types, as they are greatly smaller than similar sites that have been located in Ireland.[828] It may mean that they represent in some fashion a secondary settlement, and the re-inhabitation of Lochlee, if it occurred, probably indicates that it was a necessity for them to have done so, such as an external threat. Possibly this originated with the Anglo-Saxon arrival in the region, or possibly even that of the Scandinavians. It is known, then, that the entire Eastern Irish Sea region has been susceptible to at least periodic times of settlement and inhabitation from the earliest times of the Iron Age.

Many of these sites have also yielded iron artifacts. This fact does not prove that these artifacts were forged at these locations, however. The use and production of iron are markedly different. There is some evidence from Wales suggesting that habitation and the process of iron smelting were done at the same spot simultaneously. There are two sites, at Crawcwellt and Bryn y Castell that seem to suggest long-standing dwellings together with iron smelting operations of considerable size.[829] While only a few other objects were found at the site, the quantity of the remains of furnaces was considerable enough that it has been postulated that this iron was being produced for export.[830] The evidence in northwestern England and southwestern Scotland is again different. As will be seen, the number of smelting locations is greater, although their size is generally smaller. By analogy it would seem to be possible that at least some permanent settlement and smelting sites could be at least theoretically possible in other nearby regions.

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[828] Harding, 211-212.
[829] Peter Crew, "Excavations at Crawcwellt West, Merioneth, 1986-1989," *Archaeology in Wales* 29 (1989): 11-16.
[830] Crew, 16.

The Regional Iron Smelting Industry

Northwestern England had a prolific iron industry during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. During this time, the region of Furness, Cumberland, was a noteworthy member of the iron-producing regions of Britain.[831] But how much further back can it be established that iron was produced in the region? The importance of iron has certainly been demonstrated to be of great antiquity. The earliest known evidence for the exploitation of iron in the region is provided by a pair of Neolithic polished stone axes, one of them stained with hematite, that were discovered beside another hematite artifact. Hematite seems to have been widely used in the Neolithic as a pigment, probably for cosmetic and also possibly symbolic body paint.[832] The very pure ore found at Furness, for instance, would have been highly prized. In the historical period, there is a reference concerning iron which, while not specifically naming this region, is nonetheless useful in illustrating its importance in the Anglo-Saxon Period. There is a charter that mentions that, as early as 689 AD, an iron mine near Lyminge, Kent, was granted by King Oswy of Kent to Adrian, Abbot of St. Peter's, Canterbury.[833] That ore-mining in Furness had begun before 1086 is suggested by the mention of the name "Orgrave" in Domesday Book, which has been tentatively identified with mining.[834] Terms like "Grave" or "Grove" are names that were frequently used in connection with sites of metallic ore extraction in the north of England.[835] There are a few references to mining activities or iron processing in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. For example, Furness Abbey seems to have secured for itself the sole right to make iron in the district by 1273. There is, however, little suggestion that this was sold

[831] Mark Bowden, ed. *Furness Iron: The Physical Remains of the Iron Industry and Related Woodland Industries of Furness and Southern Lakeland* (Swindon, England: English Heritage, 2000), 7-11.
[832] Bowden, 6.
[833] Walter De Gray Birch, *Cartularium Saxonicum* I (London: Whiting and Company, 1885), 107.
[834] Alfred Fell, *The Early Iron Industry of Furness and District* (Ulverston: Hume Kitchin, 1908. Reprint New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1968), 13.
[835] Bowden, 6.

or exported, the implication being that they produced it only for their own use and for that of their tenants.[836] It has also been suggested that ironworks provided a substantial portion of the abbey's income in the late thirteenth century, although it is probably a lesser portion than that provided by sheep rearing in the life of the abbey.[837] There was also a significant iron producing site at Coupland, Cumberland, which produced an estimated 29 kg of iron in about 1240.[838] Some woodland was being coppiced by at latest the fourteenth century, both for charcoal burning and for a full range of other woodland industries--bark peeling, potash production, swill basket making, turning, and joinery.[839] But does this indicate smelting in the region?

In fact, there is ample evidence for medieval iron smelting in both northwest England and southwest Scotland. Some of this comes from earlier dates than the thirteenth century. The evidence, however, is not dated as securely as one might hope, and its relationship to the overall political and social structures of the region is unclear. A recent article catalogues all of the iron mines, smelting and re-smelting sites and related sites known in Cumbria today.[840] Many of these have been destroyed, or are built over or otherwise inaccessible. Some are of Iron Age date, many are much more recent, and many more are transcribed as "medieval." Unfortunately, this medieval classification is not terribly helpful, since it is only taken to mean that the site was working until *circa* 1590-1620 AD. This is an ending date; the date of the beginning of operations is rarely known. One particular bloomery site is Scale Field Taw Ho, and this site is

[836] Fell, 14-31, 162-174.
[837] W.G. Collingwood, "The Ancient Ironworks of Coniston Lake," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* 53 (1902): 5-6; Bowden, 6.
[838] R.F. Tylecote, *The Prehistory of Metallurgy in the British Isles* (London: The Institute of Metals, 1986), 206.
[839] Bowden, 6.
[840] Mike Davies-Shiel, "First Definitive List of Cumbrian Sites of Iron Mines and Smelt Sites January 1997," *The Cumbrian Industrialist* 1 (1998): 45-49.

associated, in a general way, with Norse shielings.[841] Most of the other material, an impressive list, is associated with the Industrial Revolution and later times, up to the present day.

In like manner, Galloway and Dumfriesshire have yielded a number of iron smelting sites in the past. Some are quite minimal; for instance, the site of Capel Rig has yielded a single bloom, and is thought to have been possibly from the eleventh century.[842] Does this mean that iron was smelted, exactly once, on this spot? Or is there some other explanation? Other sites from Dumfriesshire include Blacketlees and Tynron Doon, with dates ranging from the fifth to seventh centuries. Still others are medieval or later. In Galloway, there is the site of Sweetheart Abbey, where a single bloom was discovered, associated with marvered glass beads, and assigned a "Dark Age" date.[843] In Glasgow there exists a written record describing several other finds which were assigned dates of 850-900 in Wigtownshire, Galloway.[844] These finds have apparently been lost. The evidence of iron smelting is there, even if it is minimal and in fragmentary form. Based on what has been found to this date, it would perhaps be wise to postulate that iron smelting took place, albeit on a limited, perhaps local scale during the Anglo-Saxon and Viking periods of the Iron Age. This scale is to be expected, given an area with a reasonably small population.

The Scandinavian Contribution

A significant portion of this project revolves around the settlement of Scandinavian peoples in the Eastern Irish Sea region. Since settlement occurred during the so-called Viking Age in Europe, it is a logical question to ask whether or not the Scandinavians had a significant knowledge of iron production, or whether this simply was an aspect of culture borrowed from the

[841] Davies-Shiel, 46.
[842] James Williams, "A Medieval Iron Smelting site at Millhill, New Abbey," *Transactions of the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society* 44 (1967): 129.
[843] Williams, 130.
[844] Williams, 131.

native Saxon and Cumbrian peoples in the region of settlement. In fact, as demonstrated earlier, the production of iron in Scandinavia was a well-known aspect of technology long before the advent of the Viking Age. Production of iron is demonstrable in most areas of the Scandinavian world including Sweden, Iceland, and even North America.[845] The two largest groups of Scandinavian settlers for England, the Danes and Norwegians, are also well-established in the production of iron. Danish evidence, however, tends to be rather fragmentary while that of Norway is more abundant.

Evidence of the Iron Age in Denmark is scattered. There is a considerable amount of evidence for the earlier period, *circa* 100-700 AD, and for the later medieval era than there is for the Viking Age and early medieval period. The reason for this is not known, but it is credited to the fact that these furnace types have not had the same survival possibilities in an area that is as heavily cultivated as Denmark.[846] The overall impression given is one of scattered and small-scale production from the earliest times through the medieval era. Production was seemingly moderate in comparison to many other parts of Europe. The remains of Danish furnaces and hearths give the impression of skilled craftsmanship carried out in the late summer, in the weeks prior to the collection of the harvest.[847] At some point during the sixth century, there seems to

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[845] The fact that iron objects are frequently found in Viking Age graves suggests that its production was taking place, even if it is not known precisely where. For various aspects of Swedish iron production and associated problems, see Lena Grandin and Eva Hjärthner-Holdar, "Early Iron Production in the Red Earth Area, South Central Sweden," in *Prehistoric and Medieval Direct Iron Smelting,* ed. Lars Christian Nørbach (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2003), 33-36. For an older but more thorough study of the region, see Helen Clarke, ed. *Iron and Man in Prehistoric Sweden* (Stockholm: Jernkontoret, 1979). For Iceland, there is good evidence of smelting with over 120 sites known. The most important and most closely studied site is at Háls, which was an iron production complex in western Iceland that shows considerable continuity and a reconstructed furnace that is typical of others found throughout Scandinavia and Europe. Kevin P. Smith, "Iron Production in Viking Age and Early Medieval Iceland," in *De Re Metallica,* ed. Robert Bork, with Scott Montgomery and others (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), 183-206. For North America, see Smith, 184 and Birgitta Linderoth Wallace, "L'Anse aux Meadows: Gateway to Vinland," *Acta Archaeologica* 61 (1991): 185-186.

[846] V.F. Buchwald and Olfert Voss, "Iron Production in Denmark in Viking and Medieval Times," in *Bloomery Ironmaking During 2000 Years,* ed. Arne Espelund, Vol. II (Trondheim: Budalseminaret, 1992), 31-43.

[847] Henriette Lynstrøm, "Farmers, Smelters and Smiths," in *Prehistoric and Medieval Direct Iron Smelting,* ed. Lars Christian Nørbach (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2003), 21.

have been a change in the relationship between the farmers who smelted in the late summer and the professional blacksmiths. This is traceable through the production of knives, which begin to show combinations of local and imported iron, as well as a change in the composition of the knives and a similarity to those produced elsewhere in Europe.[848] This is perhaps suggestive of a growth in political unity and may involve better knowledge of the European mainland, but it in no way changed the ability of the farmers to produce their own knives.

The situation in Norway is better known. Although there is much that can be debated, it seems that medieval iron production in Norway was concentrated in a crescent-shaped area running across the southern part of the country, from the border with Sweden to the valley of Setesdal in the west of the country.[849] Production of iron was not uniform throughout the region and there is evidence that it may have been a part-time occupation among peasant farmers. At the beginning of the Viking period there seems to have been a lull in production, but by *circa* 950 there seems to have been once again a general boom in the industry.[850] Several sites stand out as exceptional for the Viking period. One of these is Møsstrond, where there are nineteen excavated sites that date through the Viking and early medieval periods to *circa* 1150, with perhaps as many as half from the earliest phase.[851] This site seems to have begun production with a bowl furnace before graduating to a more efficient low-shaft furnace, and there is some evidence of continuous production. Work was probably confined to the actual production, and further processing took place elsewhere. Production may likewise have been related to

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[848] Lynstrøm, 23-24.
[849] Lars Erik Narmo, "Relations Between Settlement Pattern, Social Structure and Medieval Iron Production," in *Prehistoric and Medieval Direct Iron Smelting,* ed. Lars Christian Nørbach (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2003), 27.
[850] Narmo, 27-28.
[851] Irmelin Martens, "Iron in Southeastern Norway in the Medieval Period. Recent Investigations and Some Current Problems," in *Bloomery Ironmaking During 2000 Years,* ed. Arne Espelund, Vol. II (Trondheim: Budalseminaret, 1992), 58-60.

settlement.[852] Another extraction region was at Dokkfløy, a region that may produce as many as one hundred or more individual extraction sites as well as charcoal pits and other associated materials.[853] This area has shaft furnaces in evidence from about the first century to the medieval period and has some evidence for the production of iron during the years 800-1000. This is interesting in that it appears that iron production had fallen briefly out of use, but when production resumed, there had come into being the use of a new type of furnace, a shaft furnace with a slag outlet. These furnaces have an inner diameter of 0.5 meters or so and are set within a circle of upright, oblong stones and have slag outlets with a drainage ditch.[854] Overall, evidence for the production of iron in Norway and elsewhere in Scandinavia is reasonably plentiful, even without a plentitude of documentation. So, it seems reasonably certain that the settlers in the region came armed not only with iron objects, but with some knowledge of their use and manufacture.

SMELT *and Experimental Iron Working*

There have been relatively few modern attempts to understand how iron was produced in the Iron Age. Such attempts have, however, born fruit, as iron has been successfully smelted using furnaces that have been recreated following their discovery by archaeologists. There are a number of different types of furnaces that have been discovered archaeologically. While there is no true typology, there are three main types with a variety of variations that have been located throughout Europe. These are the simple bowl furnace, the domed or pot furnace, and the shaft

[852] Irmelin Martens, "Recent Investigations of Iron Production in Viking Age Norway," *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 15 (1-2) (1982), 33-34, 37-40.
[853] Jan Henning Larsen, "Iron Production at Dokkfløy in Oppland, Norway," in *Bloomery Ironmaking During 2000 Years*, ed. Arne Espelund, Vol. II (Trondheim: Budalseminaret, 1992), 69.
[854] Larsen, 70-71.

furnace.[855] A variation of the shaft furnace is the slag pit furnace, which has a deep pit under it, into which the slag was encouraged to move towards at the end of the smelt.[856]

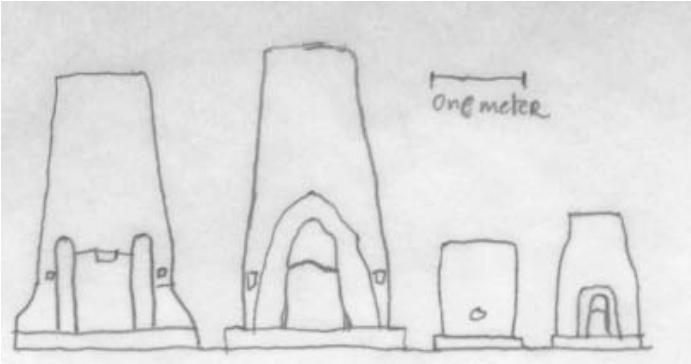

Figure 15. Tall and Low Shaft Furnaces. Re-drawn from Blair (1999) by Russ Goodrich.

Learning to recreate the process by which iron was smelted was the impetus for the creation of the SMELT project. The inchoate form of this project dates to 1989.[857] Its focus has evolved since that time, but the primary object of the research is the creation and use of replica furnaces of the tall shaft and slag pit varieties. This experimental procedure is based upon the bases of these furnaces that have been uncovered archaeologically and has yielded valuable information concerning the heights of the furnaces, temperatures necessary, output, manpower required, and many other related areas. What follows is a summarized version of these findings including the processes of iron smelting, furnace construction, and furnace operations.

There are three varieties of iron ore that are found in the British Isles; these are carbonate, hematite, and limonite ores. Of these, the former is by far the most common, while the second, hematite, occurred mainly in West Cumberland and in the Furness district of Lancashire (now Cumbria).[858] There is likewise a process of smelting that has undergone change throughout time,

[855] Henry F. Cleere, "The Classification of Early Iron-Smelting Furnaces," *Antiquaries Journal* 52 (1972): 8.
[856] Tylecote, 136.
[857] Carl Blair, "SMELT: Economies of Scale," in *Experimental Archaeology*, ed. James R. Mathieu. BAR International Series 1035 (Oxford: Archeopress, 2002), 127.
[858] Tylecote, 124. This particular variety of iron ore was exhausted in the region during the Industrial Revolution.

and there are variations on this process.[859] The method that is used by the SMELT project is called direct process smelting. In this process the iron oxides in the ores are reduced by a very hot, high energy, high carbon monoxide environment. The resulting product is a nearly pure form of metallic iron. No form is ever totally pure, and with the metal comes various other oxides, including silicon oxides (sand) and other elements that have to be removed or slagged out for the process to occur properly. The most common slag product is faylite, which has a lower melting point than iron, 1140 degrees vs. 1540 degrees Celsius, so a typical furnace is run at 1250-1350 degrees Celsius.[860] Faylite will thus become a liquid before iron does, and some of it will drain away while some remains trapped in and around the iron particles. When it cools, this mix of iron and slag is known as bloom, which is the desired end of smelting.[861] Bloom, in turn, can be worked by a smith who coaxes out the remaining slag, hammers the iron into iron bars, and from there, makes the bars into whatever objects are desired.

The process of smelting is seldom as simple as described above; it is rather a combination of complex chemical and physical reactions. For this reason, the shape and structure of the furnace are of primary importance. Most European furnaces capable of direct process iron smelting resemble an inverted and shortened cone. They are top charging, meaning that the charge (fuel and ore) are added from the top and work their way gradually down the furnace. The gasses that make up the blast enter through tuyure holes (air holes) near the base and gradually work their way up the furnace. The majority of furnaces were largely built of a clay mixture (frequently mixed with other materials such as sand, chaff, charcoal dust, and others) in an effort create a material more resistant to thermal shock.[862] Some had stone reinforced bases,

[859] Tylecote, 128-131.
[860] Blair, 129.
[861] Blair, 129.
[862] Blair, 129.

while others might be partially dug into the ground.[863] More recently, there have been discovered in England new types of furnaces, thought to be from the Roman period that differed from the norm in significant ways. At Laxton and Byfield, Northamptonshire, were discovered furnaces with extremely large bases, between double and triple the maximum normal size, which means that the method of working them must have been significantly different than that used to handle the regular sized, tall shaft furnaces.[864] The site of Laxton had an associated settlement site and a cemetery. The furnaces, some of which had been dug into the ground, may last have been fired in the mid-second century, and the earliest layers of the settlement site date to a similar time period. It is also known that this site is near another smelting site, active in the medieval period.[865] That at Byfield also showed multiple phases of activity.[866] A more recent re-examination of the Laxton site revealed the presence of another large furnace, and based on its analysis, a considerable amount of iron was probably produced at this particular furnace. [867]

In the experiments of SMELT, it was discovered that the construction of the furnace is of primary importance in the reduction process. There are many variables involving numerous details that must be produced fairly precisely in order to achieve the desired results. Two furnaces appearing superficially to be very similar may not actually yield the same results if they are constructed in different manners. One of these variables is the construction of the walls. It is the single most important feature, and the success of the project or the complete lack thereof may be tied to the thickness of the walls.[868] In general, these need to be about 30 cm in thickness at

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[863] Peter Crew, "The Experimental Production of Prehistoric Bar Iron," *Historical Metallurgy* 25 (1) (1991): 21; Tylecote, 132-142.
[864] D.A. Jackson and R.F. Tylecote, "Two New Romano-British Iron-working Sites in Northamptonshire-A new type of Furnace?" *Britannia* 19 (1988): 275.
[865] Jackson and Tylecote, 279-288.
[866] Jackson and Tylecote, 290-292.
[867] Peter Crew, "Laxton Revisited: a first report on the 1998 excavations," *Historical Metallurgy* 32 (2) (1999): 51-52.
[868] Crew, "Experimental Production," 22.

the base. The advantages of these thicker walls include strength and durability, better thermal insulation, and better control over the flow of gas.

Gas flow is nearly as important as the wall construction. In smelting, there are two competing and opposing gasses whose presence and movement are of primary importance. The first is oxygen, which needs to be present in sufficient quantity to allow for the combustion of the charcoal, resulting in the presence of carbon monoxide and the heat/energy that will drive the chemical reactions. The second is a need for oxygen-free and carbon monoxide-rich environments within the reduction zone, above the combustion zone, so that these basic reduction reactions may take place.[869] If there is free oxygen about the hot ore/bloom mix in the reduction zone, re-oxidation of the ore may take place, resulting in the formation of an artificial iron oxide (rust).[870] This entire procedure is very detailed. According to Blair, the remainder of the process occurs as follows:

> Initially it may seem as if separating these two gasses will not be a problem as the oxygen primarily enters through the tuyere holes near the base of the furnace. The combustion that takes place above and in front of the tuyere(s) produces hot CO and uses up the oxygen. The exhaust gasses of the combustion then rise to the reduction zone above. However, the situation is in actuality more complex. Great care needs to be taken to ensure that enough, but not too much, oxygen enters the furnace through the tuyere(s) and only through the tuyere(s). If this is not done properly so that just enough oxygen enters to ensure that only partial combustion takes place in the furnace, complete combustion that produces CO2 may occur. It is even possible that so much oxygen might enter that not all will be consumed in combustion and free oxygen will be mixed with the exhaust gases. The thickness of the walls of the experimental furnace is of great importance when attempting to control the entry, and exit, of gasses in the furnace. All furnace walls crack—dried clay does not expand well. When a furnace is heated to the necessary 1300-1400 degrees centigrade, cracking is certain to take place. However, thick furnace walls will have fewer cracks that extend throughout the entire thickness of the wall through which excess, uncontrolled oxygen may enter, or needed exhaust gasses exit. Another problem relating to the gas mix comes with the physical movement of the burden, the partially formed bloom and/or partially reduced ore, within the furnace. In the upper reduction zone, there is naturally no difficulty, with plentiful CO and no free oxygen present, assuming that a properly controlled blast is entering the furnace. However, as

[869] Blair, 130.
[870] Blair, 130.

> the burden moves down the furnace to the final gathering point for the blooms, just below the tuyere levels the hot burden passes through the race and combustion zones where there is plentiful free oxygen but little CO. It is in these areas that the true value of slag becomes apparent. The slag that does not drain away on its own tends to coat the iron and so protect if from being re-oxidized.[871]

Thickness of the walls and control of the gasses are not the only obstacles that must be overcome. Fuel, primarily charcoal, must be available and of a consistent quality. If it is not, it could potentially crash the bed, thus ending the smelt cycle. Further, the furnaces themselves must be constructed according to certain strict guidelines. The furnaces are built upon thick, 15-20 cm pads of clay with either straight or slightly inwardly sloping walls.[872] The walls had to be carefully constructed, and where excavations have permitted it, it can be seen that there were post molds and even wooden poles used to support the furnace during construction. The clay is supported by a mixed substance called fabric, and another substance, termed lute in antiquity, was used to repair breaks in the inner furnace during periods when it was not in use.[873] Furnace construction itself could be time consuming, especially for the tall shaft furnaces. SMELT crews discovered that, even in the best of conditions, it was unwise if not impossible to add more than 50 cm of wall height per day, lest the walls slump and deform. To add even this much requires a crew of four workers and eight hours. The construction of the base pad will take about one day for a low shaft furnace and up to three days for a tall shaft. The walls, in ideal conditions, will take about three days for a low shaft furnace and up to eight for a tall shaft. If the process is rushed, wall slumping will be a problem.[874] Wooden scaffolding, if used, would add still more construction time. Even given that the members of the SMELT crew were not experts in

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[871] Blair, 130.
[872] Crew, "Laxton Revisited," 51.
[873] Blair, 130-131. The exact recipe for lute was apparently re-discovered by Peter Crew in *circa* 1992. It is a mix of charcoal dust and slurry of standard furnace fabric. When dry, it forms a smooth, hard, and somewhat brittle surface.
[874] Blair, 131.

comparison to those who did this professionally in antiquity, it seems clear that the production of one or more furnaces would be an undertaking of considerable effort and importance.

Besides the construction of furnaces, the SMELT team has added valuable information concerning their operation. For small and mid-size furnaces, only one furnace master is typically needed, along with one or occasionally more assistants. The tall shaft furnaces are considerably more labor intensive, and sometimes require four or more assistants.[875] The furnace master is in charge of seeing that all the relevant tasks around the furnace are taken care of, including lighting the furnace, adding and tending the charge, making repairs as needed, rodding the charge periodically, and eventually, removing the bloom or blooms. The assistants are tasked with helping to make these things happen, and in the case of tall shaft furnaces, this too can be a demanding job. The Iron Age furnaces, as opposed to modern ones, would have also required a crew to handle the bellows, that is, to manually pump air on the charcoal in order to get the furnace hotter.[876] The bellows operators would effectively double the crew needed.

None of these tasks has proven to be easy to accomplish. Even a task such as lighting the furnace must be done in a methodical, meticulous way. In lighting the furnace, the fuel has to be stacked in a certain manner and at a certain height. The fire must not be allowed to heat the furnace more than about 400 degrees Celsius per hour—a difficult task once the fire begins to burn. Faster heating causes the walls to crack.[877] While wind speed and air temperature do not noticeably impact the burn, a high relative humidity will make managing the fire more complicated.[878] The ratio of ore to fuel must remain within certain parameters. Finally, the

[875] Blair, 132-133.
[876] Modern reconstructions can use electrical units to do this, if they so choose. Medieval production, however, had no such luxury.
[877] Blair, 132-133.
[878] Blair, 133.

removal of the bloom is a complicated matter, not least because of the extreme temperatures, but also because of inaccessibility and potential damage to the furnace.

There is nothing about the smelting or extraction of iron in Blair's report that would count as routinely easy, even using some modern equipment. It follows accordingly that, in Iron Age cultures, such activity would require a good deal of organization and discipline wherever it was undertaken. A single smelt would require considerable time and manpower. Apart from the considerable set up and construction time, it would take perhaps three hours to reach the required temperature and eight or nine hours to complete a full charge of a tall shaft furnace with 150 kg of fuel added, and perhaps as much as 8-14 hours until the main cycle is finished.[879] Then there is a lengthy cool down period, followed by slag and bloom removal. All of this may require as many as sixteen people working at once, and the SMELT crews often had other people in order to work in shifts. One cycle might require twenty-four hours or even more, and the furnace would have to be watched meticulously in that time, meaning multiple crews would need to be on hand to see the entire process through. So, even when iron was being smelted in remote regions, it would require a considerable temporary or permanent population base in order to complete the work, gather the wood, and associated activities. This in turn implies some effective political authority to make this all happen, as well probably as capital to invest in the project. Most of the processes described above relate the production of a *single* batch of iron, which in turn would be reasonably small and thus could likely not produce an enormous number of iron goods in any quick period of time.

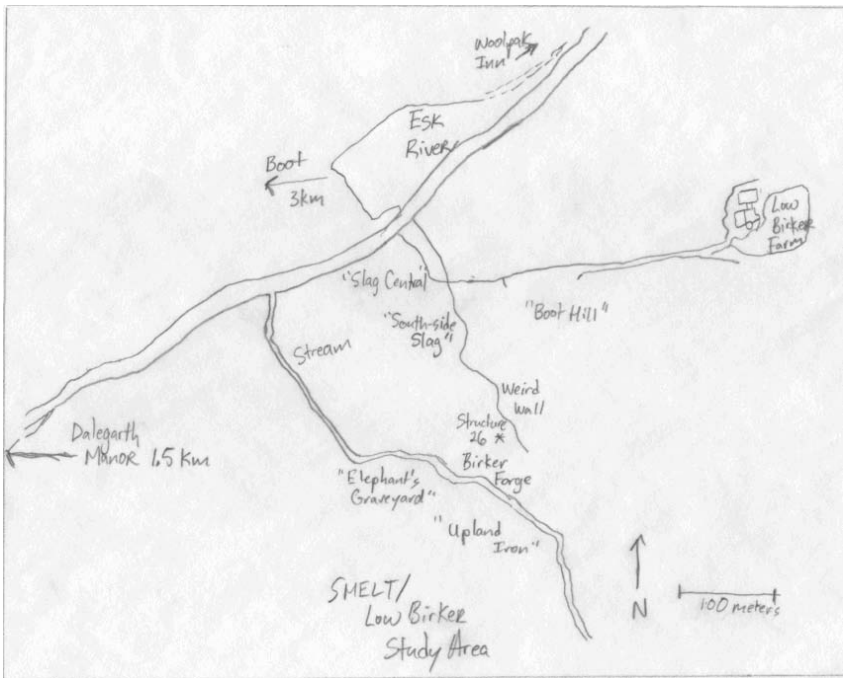
[879] Blair, 132-134.

The Site of Low Birker, Cumbria

Under the umbrella of SMELT, Blair began looking for evidence of iron smelting of the early medieval period in the region of Low Birker Farm, Cumbria. In 1993, a program of field walking and record searches was begun which resulted in the Esk Valley and Low Birker being chosen as the primary possibility for a field research site in 1996. Field trials were begun soon after, and the first full field session occurred in 1998, the first of what Blair believed would be "at least another 20-25 years of work."[880] Blair also claimed that the site was not early medieval as he had anticipated, nor was it the mid-scale operation that he had envisioned; but it was rather specifically Norse (of the Viking Age) and a very large scale operation.[881] There are some good reasons for his dating scheme. The site presumably does not date to the Romano-British period since no Roman artifacts were found. The known evidence of the pre-Roman Iron Age in northern Britain does not indicate any production of this scale, nor is there evidence for this size of furnace. The post-Roman period can be ruled out for the same reason. The Viking Age is considered to be likely since there are known Scandinavian furnaces from the period of the same general design and there was a strong Scandinavian presence in the area at the time. The earliest portions of Dalegarth Hall, the local manor, date to about 980 and it is a possible indication, along with the stone crosses in the region, that significant economic resources were available in the area at that time. The conflict surrounding the Norman Conquest and associated troubles in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries rules out that time period and by the thirteenth century, documented history exists for the area which does not mention large scale iron production in Eskdale (see below). The land was purchased by the Stanley family in the

[880] Carl Blair, personal communication.
[881] Carl Blair, "SMELT/Low Birker project handout," Haughton, MI: Michigan Technical University, Department of Social Sciences, 2002, 2. Photocopy.

fifteenth century and their records indicate that no iron production occurred at Low Birker. Blair concluded on these grounds that the ninth and tenth centuries are the most likely time period for this production to have occurred. One reference to the furnace gives a C-14 date for the furnace of about 1050 AD, but calibration and other information from Blair is not available at this time.[882] In some four years of fieldwork, a significant quantity of data was recovered that can conveniently be placed into four categories: iron smelting data, iron associated materials data, settlement data, and data from wider contexts.[883] The evidence for the fourth category is so slim that it will not be given consideration in this survey. What will follow is a brief summary of Blair's findings drawn heavily from his project handout. Unless otherwise noted, it can be assumed that the information derives from this source.



Map 11. Low Birker site, Cumbria. Map drawn by Russ Goodrich.

Of these types three sets of data, it is the iron smelting data that is the most numerous and important. It falls into three categories: slags, furnaces and structures. The given estimate was

[882] Thomas F. Brunton, "Social Organization of Labor: Iron Production at Low Birker" (PhD dissertation, SUNY Buffalo, 2005), 186.
[883] Blair, "Project handout," 4.

that as much as three thousand tons of primary smelting slags are still present in the immediate vicinity of Low Birker while perhaps as much as two thousand additional tons have been washed down the Esk in the intervening centuries since the end of production. As of late 2002, only eight tons of slag had been excavated and processed, a small percentage of this total and yet in practical terms a considerable amount of material. Most of this material comes from a particular location, termed EU 3, which is located in a slag heap. Some forty-five percent of this slag is tap slag, meaning that it was tapped out of the furnace while molten. Most pieces are quite small, weighing 150-250 grams while significant amounts are less than 10 grams in weight. Other than slag and charcoal dust, there is very little in this heap that would suggest seasonal or longer pauses.

The furnace data seems to indicate a large-scale operation. Blair claimed that a total of twenty-one furnace locations were identified, with fourteen in one setting and the other seven in a different location about three hundred meters to the south. Although many of these furnaces are fragmentary, others are in many ways typical, if slightly larger than normal, bases for tall shaft furnaces. The fabric from which these remains were built is a mix of clay and sand, with the center further protected from the wear and tear of operations with a layer of ore and slag fines embedded into the clay fabric. Numerous examples of furnaces such as these exist all throughout western Europe, although most come from pre-Roman or early Roman Age contexts. Only in Scandinavia were furnaces of the general size and shape found during the medieval periods of iron production.[884] While those at Low Birker may be similar to those of the Scandinavian models, there are two aspects of them that make them very distinct if not totally unique. The first of these is spatial arrangements of the furnaces, while the second is

[884] See references to Irmelin Martens and Jan Henning Larsen, above. Although these are not exactly the same as those at Low Birker, they are of similar size and shape.

extraordinarily thin clay bases. Spatially, the furnaces at the specific location are grouped in sets of four furnaces each (referred to as bands) and each of these bands has a backing of stone. What is odd is not the presence of bands, but rather the fact that each is stepped back, 20-35 cm, from the previous, lower bands. Generally, just the opposite occurs, with furnaces being stepped forward from a previous location, so that the newer furnace would be able to incorporate elements of the back wall of the previous furnace into the back wall of the newer furnace, providing a stronger, more stable construction.[885] The second unusual aspect lies in the length of the pads. Most furnaces that have been thoroughly investigated have base pads of 20-30 cm in thickness. Those at Low Birker have pads of only 3-5 cm thickness. Why this is so is not known for certain, but it may be that the extremely rocky soil of the region precludes the need for thicker bases and impedes in the building of them. Altogether, Blair concluded that there were an enormous number of furnaces present—21 rows of 14-16 furnaces per row. They were also very neatly organized, with each of the rows in the areas examined being about 4.5 meters distant from the next row. The earliest of these would be the north row, which is the lowest row located just above the flood plane of the Esk.

Along with the remains of the furnaces, other associated remains have been found in this general area. Most of these are associated with charcoal production and iron mining. Charcoal is the single most important part of the smelting process, and each tall-shaft furnace may have burned on the order of 450-500 kg of this material per day of use. While many thousands of pieces have been recovered, most are too small to say much about. There are a few hundred larger pieces showing cross sections of the wood, being about 3-5 cm in diameter and some with about twenty annual rings showing. Most are oak and birch. Producing enough charcoal to run an operation of this size would doubtless be beyond the ability of the immediate region to

[885] Blair, "Project handout," 5-6.

support, but nonetheless the discovery of some charcoal reduction rings (CCR's) have been located in the immediate vicinity of the Farm. Finally, there are some structures in the vicinity which Blair claimed to have identified as iron mines. Approximately two dozen or so of these structures have been identified, some in clusters while others are alone. These are largely not investigated. There is in addition some unused ore that has been found on site. Some of these were probably rejects—too small to use, while others may have been lost during the charging process itself, since they were of ideal size for use.

The third group of data is settlement data. There are some three dozen sets of remains which Blair believed to be foundation bases. Most of these are ring shaped; others are rectangular or irregularly shaped. They range is size from 5-12 meters in diameter, but shapes make any average size difficult to determine.[886] They may have been the bases of buildings, or possibly used as charcoal burning platforms. Some research in western Scotland suggests that similar structures were used as buildings as well as possible charcoal burning platforms. About half of the Scottish examples were used for charcoal burning, and averaged 7-10 meters in diameter.[887]

The initial fieldwork included a number of structures for examination that were thought to be buildings. One of these is known as Structure 26, and it was chosen for excavation in 1999 and completed in 2002. It was chosen for excavation because it was a clearly defined platform at the surface.[888] The author participated in the 2002 dig, and recalls that, at the time, the structure was being discussed as a possible house or storage shed of some type. What follows is a summary of the information as derived from the dig, and ultimately lies with the field notes of

[886] Blair, "Project handout," 6.
[887] Elizabeth B. Rennie, *The Recessed Platforms of Argyll, Bute, and Inverness.* BAR British Series 253 (Oxford: Tempus Reparatum, 1997), 125.
[888] Brunton, 191.

Tom Brunton. There were three levels excavated in all, and they seem to show much evidence of disturbance from tree growth and rodents. There were a number of post holes found, as well as evidence of a door, albeit one located in a position that was somewhat unusual for such structures.[889] There was ample evidence of a hearth at one time being present, as a considerable amount of charcoal was present in each of the layers, seemingly indicating that it had been burned in the area. Two pieces of slag, two more of clay, and numerous shards of red and green pottery were found in the course of this excavation. Most were found on or very near the surface, leading to the presumption of an early post-medieval date. The lowest level, however, contained a piece of black glazed red ware, which is presumed to be of an older date.[890] The second level contained a large amount of charcoal, and the excavators began to encounter cobbles. The third level contained more of these cobbles, and some were quite large, being 30 cm or so in size and leaving deep holes in the floor of the unit, and the presence of roots was a tremendous obstacle.[891] The excavators also located one of the walls of the structure, the northern portion of which consisted of a double line of large foundation stones, 40 cm or more in diameter, sometimes in-filled with smaller stones. The southern section of the wall was mostly made of much smaller stones, about 10 cm in diameter. There were several stone courses on the southwest curve consisting of small rocks probably covering the foundation stones. There were a couple of empty spaces and in another area there was evidence of a wall collapse.[892] Post holes on the structure were clay lined, and typically not deep.

[889] Brunton, 198-199.
[890] Brunton, 195.
[891] Brunton, 196.
[892] Brunton, 197-198.

Figure 16. Excavation of Structure 26, facing southeast. Photo by Russ Goodrich.

In the immediate area was another feature, termed the Weird Wall, which runs in a north-south line to the west of Structure 26. It was dubbed the Weird Wall because the stones are not set up the way current dry stone walls are, instead there are large stones set vertically in the earth, a fact brought to light by a local landlord. Because of this technique it would be hard to build it tall enough to contain most livestock. Cart paths cut through the wall in two places. There are also some large stones in the modern south boundary wall which may be continuation of the Weird Wall. This wall probably predates the settlement since it separates similar recessed platforms, which are possibly round houses.[893]

Structure 26 is clearly a house. From the remains of the wall and collapse, it probably had a one meter thick stone foundational wall that was about one meter tall. Reconstructed buildings show that these were sometimes topped off with layers of turf or set with high, conical roofs. The ring of postholes substantiates this interpretation.[894] There are a few other structures that have been examined in a cursory way. Structure 29 was also probably a house as remnants of a wall and living floor were discovered, though no posthole features were exposed. Structure 66 showed no evidence of walls or living space, only a central posthole.[895] This and neighboring platforms on the steep slopes of an area called Ash Howe were presumably constructed as

[893] Brunton, 203-204.
[894] Brunton, 211.
[895] Brunton, 212.

charcoal storage pits. Runoff from upslope and the bogs on top of the fells doubtless disturbed much of the study area especially during particularly heavy rains. Unbaked clay from the furnaces would certainly have been affected as well as any perishable or easily transportable materials.[896]

Finally, there is the presence of what Blair believed may have been a cemetery used by the people working the site. It is located just to the east of the possible houses, in what Blair claimed would probably be the most likely place for such a structure in the pagan Scandinavian period. He further claimed that the remains of three dozen cairns had been identified, while saying little about what if anything was actually identified.[897] The presence of a Norse (or any) cemetery on the site is perhaps the most controversial aspect of the research. It is, however, one avenue to explore that may help to answer the question of who, exactly, was doing the work at a site such as this. The size of the Low Birker operation, as proposed by Blair, was such that it would be logical to expect that many individuals from outside the immediate area of the Esk Valley would be attracted to the area to work. Even if locals were obligated in some way to work, under the orders of a powerful chieftain, for instance, they would have had other full-time duties related to their own survival and thus would not be able to work full time on an operation such as this one. An operation this large and time consuming could not survive solely on the efforts of the local population, regardless of determination or management of the project.

Research on a nearby expanse of hillside presented a possible cemetery site.[898] Regardless of how the site may have been managed, it seems logical to assume that people would occasionally die at the site, probably far from their homes. Identification of burials, or

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[896] Brunton, 212.
[897] Blair, "Project handout," 9.
[898] Deborah Shepherd, "Perspectives on Norse Industrial and Burial Activity," http://employees.csbsju.edu/dshepherd/prelim_report.htm (accessed October 21, 2002), Printout, 5.

remains, or even what they might be expected to look like, is very problematic, as has been demonstrated in Chapter Four. Burial in the Scandinavian homelands took many forms, and were in some ways similar to Anglo-Saxon burials in England. So it is not surprising to find a lack of continuity in British/Scandinavian burials, with some showing predictable Scandinavian style, while in the case of other burials it is not clear entirely of whom they are supposed to come from.

Archaeologists Deborah Shepherd and Carl Blair began to postulate the existence of this cemetery based on an analogy. Many Scandinavian groups, particularly those in the east of their homelands, had contacts with the Finns. The nature of such contact could be either peaceful or violent, with evidence suggesting that goods were exchanged between the two cultures. Shepherd has studied Finnish burial patterns, and suggested that this contact with the Scandinavians resulted in significant sharing of ritual and religious belief.[899] That these cultural similarities existed at an early time period is well documented, both with respect to the Finns and to the Sámi.[900] There were linguistic contacts among the Scandinavians, Finns and Sámi even before the Migration Period in the region.[901] Finnish burial sites, like those of the Scandinavians, are far from uniform in any sense. Iron Age Finns, for instance, practiced cremations side by side with inhumation burials. In the earlier Iron Age, they developed the custom of burial in cairns or mounds. This dominated the most inhabited areas and remained common throughout the Migration Period (commonly 400-550 AD in Finland). These mounds

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[899] Deborah J. Shepherd, *Funerary Ritual and Symbolism.* BAR International Series 808 (Oxford: John and Erica Hedges, 1999), 69.

[900] Neil S. Price, *The Viking Way, Religion and War in Late Iron Age Scandinavia* (Uppsala: University of Uppsala Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, 2002), 233-278; Neil S. Price, "Shamanism and the Vikings?" in *Vikings: The North Atlantic Saga,* ed. William W. Fitzhugh and Elisabeth I. Ward. (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000), 70-71.

[901] Inger Zachrisson, "The Sámi and their interaction with the Nordic peoples," in *The Viking World*, ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 32-39; Tryggve Sköld, "The Earliest Linguistic Contacts Between Lapps and Scandinavians," *Ugrica Suecana* 2 (1979): 105-106.

were distinctive by having a large central stone, or "eye", and a ring of stones might be placed around the periphery. By the Merovingian Age (550-800 AD) these mounds remained common, but tended to move further inland rather than on the shore, and could congregate in large mound-cemeteries. This in turn implies a type of settlement. It was also at this approximate time that the custom of cremation burial began. Cremations tended to be placed on flat fields, without mounds. By the Viking Era, these cremations were common and occurred alongside the mound burials, which showed greater and longer use in the areas they were encountered.[902]

Shepherd speculated that a cemetery at the site of Low Birker has been discovered based on this analogy with material from Finland. She claimed that Finnish landscape is generally lower than that in Scandinavia, and that, therefore, the higher ground is often sought as a location for burial. Scandinavians do not seem to have preferred higher ground burials; most of these burials within Scandinavia proper are of flat land varieties—mounds, ship or boat burials seem to be more the norm. She postulated, however, that due to the stony, Cumbrian landscape, some modifications may have been in order. The cemetery is defined by its distinctive stone ring formations, and is found mid-way up the fell-side slope, just to the right of the modern farm.[903] There are no other recognizable remains from the site apart from the as-yet unidentified burnt material from these graves.[904] The stones at Low Birker's hillside are, by this hypothesis, the remains of cairns covering cremations. Finnish burial cairns often have a pattern of concentric or spiraling rings or stones at the base. It was postulated that similar, although distorted, surface features of the same stone likenesses exist at Low Birker in the cemetery area surface as well as in a two-by-one meter pit. The surface is now covered by a dense, quickly rejuvenating undergrowth of moss and bracken. Additionally, the Low Birker site has suffered three major

[902] Shepherd, *Funerary Ritual and Symbolism*, 21-22.
[903] Shepherd, "Perspectives on Norse Industrial and Burial Activity," 7-8.
[904] Shepherd, "Perspectives," 8.

types of disturbance leading to a distortion of the stone features. First, removal of stones by human agency to construct medieval huts, tracks, and later stone walls on property lines; second subsidence of soil and stones downhill because the site is on a pronounced slope; and third, relentless subsoil movement caused by tree growth. The site has additionally been used as a coppice, or managed woodland. The subsurface stones, she contended, are neither natural nor from habitation structures. No visible habitation or occupational layer has been found within the stone features.[905] The sand is rocky and acidic, meaning that any items found in the archaeological record are likely to be badly decayed, if visible at all.

Settlement in the Study Area

There are some problems with interpretation that present themselves with this data, most notably with the cemetery. The author's work on Structure 26 deserves a closer look, and the other areas at the site need to be analyzed as to their probable origins. To place this structure in context, this section will first briefly review house styles and settlement patterns in Scandinavia and Anglo-Saxon England as a background for comparison to the roundhouse styles of Britain and the study area.

Scandinavian houses from this time are often called longhouses, and they differ substantially from the rounder houses at Low Birker. They are rectangular and usually have internal partitions. Often they have a central hearth, and tend to be smoky when fired.[906] Orientation of houses that are found in Scandinavia or colonized lands is either north-south or

[905] Shepherd, "Perspectives," 8-9.
[906] The author can attest to this personally, having visited a re-created house of this sort in Norway. There is a very low door for egress and ingress as well as for ventilation, and a smaller hole atop the roof above the hearth from which the smoke is supposed to be released. While the building felt warm, the smoke did not dissipate well.

east-west, with no known reason why this is so.[907] There are few excavated in Britain outside of Scotland, but they seem to follow the traditional Norwegian style.[908] There are also examples showing cultural admixture, as in the Hebrides.[909] These are to be distinguished from Anglo-Saxon dwellings, which are generally built square or rectangular houses with associated outbuildings, often sunken feature buildings. They come in three main types: those with opposed doorways and internal partitions, those with opposed doorways and no partitions and those with a single doorway. Some of these buildings were used domestically, for crafting and as animal stalls.[910]

The Celtic populace tended to live in buildings that were greatly dissimilar in appearance. Once characterized as crude huts, British roundhouses are now known to have been sophisticated structures that say much about those who lived in them.[911] One study of roundhouses shows that they vary in a patterned way through space and time based on the peoples' response to economic and political pressures. Within one specific time period, the houses tend to maintain the same interior proportions even when they are much different in size.[912] Other studies indicate that roundhouses in Britain often show axial symmetry based on the entry way and usually have a southeast or eastern entry.[913] Ethnographic examples suggest that interior areas in this kind of house are usually zoned for different kinds of people and activities. Architectural details and

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[907] Helen.Smith, Peter Marshall, and Michael Parker Pearson, "Reconstructing House Activity Areas," in *Environmental Archaeology: Meaning and Purpose,* ed. U. Albarella (Boston and Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 2001), 250-252.
[908] Barbara Crawford, *Scandinavian Scotland* (Leicester: University Press, 1987), 136-143.
[909] H. Smith, P. Marshall, and M. Parker Pearson, 252.
[910] C.J. Arnold, *An Archaeology of the Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 39-41.
[911] H.J.M Green, "The origins and development of cruck construction in eastern England," in *Structural Reconstruction: Approaches to the interpretation of the excavated remains of buildings,* ed. P.J. Drury, 87-99. BAR British Series 110 (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1982).
[912] Malcolm L. Reid, "An Examination of Round Houses in Northern Britain," *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 8 (1989): 17-26.
[913] Graeme Guilbert, "Post-ring symmetry in roundhouses at Moel y Gaer and some other sites in prehistoric Britain," in *Structural Reconstruction: Approaches to the interpretation of the excavated remains of buildings,* ed. P.J. Drury, 67-86. BAR British Series 110 (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1982).

archaeological features may reveal the remains of these zones. Central hearths and various storage pits are common interior features.[914] Four possible round houses have been discovered by survey on the fells near Eskdale. They are in an environment probably never suited for cultivation and are assumed to be from the Bronze Age.[915] There is one excavated, purely Scandinavian site in Cumberland. This is Bryant's Gill, a possible shieling site, wherein a 10x5 meter building was excavated, a house aligned NW-SE with the entrance on the southeast. The site contained numerous iron implements and iron slag.[916]

The Low Birker study area is part of the estate of Dalegarth, most of which lies between sixty and one hundred meters above sea level.[917] It is on a slope at the base of steep sided Birker Fell. It is fortunate that, in the case of Dalegarth and of the ward of Eskdale, there is some help from the written record in the study of the reconstruction of this particular landscape. Although there is no direct evidence from the Viking period, it would appear that the local Scandinavian lords probably took over existing estates with their ancient boundaries. The freehold of Austhwaite, later called Dalegarth, was probably carved out of the forest in about the year 1200.[918] It was given to the Stanley family by the Duke of Northumbria because the Austhwaite family had no heirs. A document in the *Register of the Priory of St. Bees* lists this transaction.[919] This took place in about 1210 and also established the boundary between the civil parishes of

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[914] Green, 98.
[915] R.H. Leech, "Settlements and Groups of Small Cairns on Birkby and Birker Fells, Eskdale, Cumbria. Survey undertaken in 1982," *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Association* New Series 83 (1983), 15-23.
[916] Steve Dickinson, " Bryant's Gill, Kentmere: Another 'Viking-Period' Ribblehead?" in *The Scandinavians in Cumbria,* ed. John R. Baldwin and Ian D. Whyte (Edinburgh: Scottish Society for Northern Studies, 1985), 83-88.
[917] Brunton, 174.
[918] Angus Winchester, *Landscape and Society in Medieval Cumbria* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, Ltd., 1987), 20.
[919] *...ego Willelmus filius Henrici filii Arturi, concessi et hac presenti carta mea confirmavi Benedicto filio Ketelli...Auestwait...*The text of the entire transaction may be found in the *Register of the Priory of St. Bees,* ed. James Wilson (Durham: Andrews & Co. for the *Surtees Society* 126, 1915), 541.

Eskdale and Muncaster.[920] The etymology of many of these words is also interesting. Both of the terms Austhwaite and Dalegarth show Scandinavian elements, as does the region being examined, Low Birker. The term *–dale* comes from Norwegian and means "valley" so Eskdale is literally "the valley of the Esk." Austhwaite is likely a personal name plus *–þveit*, seemingly this would indicate a clearing or shieling belonging to someone with a Scandinavian name. Dalegarth is also Scandinavian, translating to "garth of the valley" and probably signals a transfer of power from one group to another, with both having Scandinavian background. The term *–birker* means birches or birch trees in Scandinavian, while "Low" is purely English. Low Birker has been so named since 1657, but was previously named Birkerthwaite, or "birch tree shieling settlement" in Scandinavian.[921] During the ninth and tenth centuries, it is not clear exactly where Cumbria fit into the scheme of warring potentates, but it is very probable that it was in the process of being, in some sense, incorporated into one of the larger regions of the area.

A Comparative example from Denmark

A similar process seen in Denmark has analogies with what most likely was taking place in Cumbria. Throughout the period of state-building in Denmark (roughly 500-1200 AD) rural settlement was characterized by waves of village foundations and episodes of colonization, and the adoption of new farming technology and crop rotations.[922] This is not the result of population increase or pressure, but rather, it is a result of the redistribution of population, through changes in patterns of nucleation and dispersion. Changes in rural settlement patterns were ultimately engendered by political and economic strategies of an increasingly powerful centralized government and changing relationships between different classes, the rulers and the

[920] Winchester, 13.
[921] A.M. Armstrong, A. Mawer, F.M. Stenton & Bruce Dickens, *The Place Names of Cumberland* II (Cambridge: University Press, 1950), 342.
[922] Tina L. Thurston, "The knowable, the doable and the undiscussed: tradition, submission, and the 'becoming' of rural landscapes in Denmark's Iron Age," *Antiquity* 73 (1999): 661.

ruled (who were mainly farmers).[923] Professor Tina Thurston has worked in two areas of Denmark, Scania and Thy, that seem to be both alike and different. Both had been foci of earlier, Migration Era groups, and their distinct regional identities were fiercely upheld. Both areas were reluctant to be incorporated into the state, and elites and commoners alike seemingly resorted to protest and ultimately to uprisings in efforts to forestall the growing power of the central core state.[924] Evidence shows that both areas responded quite differently to the slow-moving growth of political power of a centralized monarchy.

As seen in the second chapter of this work, Denmark appeared in the historical record as a fully emerged state. The process by which it became a state is poorly understood and virtually unrecorded. The Danish state emerged coalesced from numerous allied but autonomous groups, and also emerged from a corporate society where labor, food production, social groups and even rulership may have been controlled through very broad methods.[925] The source of ultimate power had traditionally rested with the farmers of the various regions. Tacitus relates that this community had certain power even over elected war leaders, and a gathering of free men was often called to confirm the wishes of the chieftain.[926] Even though elites received tribute and the prestige[927] items were controlled by them, they were reasonably powerless without support of the majority of the regular people, and these had great say at the popular assemblies.[928] In extraordinary times, leaders who were effective could be elected and given long term and extraordinary powers, as for example in the case of their conflicts of the eighth and ninth

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[923] Thurston, 661.
[924] Tina L. Thurston, "Infields, Outfields, and Broken lands: Agricultural intensification and the ordering of space during Danish state formation," in *Seeking a Richer Harvest,* ed. Tina L. Thurston and Christopher T. Fisher. (New York: Springer, 2007), 159.
[925] Thurston, "The knowable," 663.
[926] See for example chapters 7, 11, and 12 in *Germania*. Tacitus, *The Agricola and the Germania,* translated by H. Mattingly and S.A. Handford (London: Penguin Books, 1970).
[927] The Hoby Find, for instance. Angelo Forte, Richard Oram and Frederick Pedersen, *Viking Empires* (Cambridge: University Press, 2005), 25-26.
[928] Thurston, "Infields," 162.

centuries against the Franks, which has been postulated in an earlier chapter to have been a possible catalyst for the creation of a Danish state. Normally, despotism was probably discouraged in favor of a group-based, egalitarian type rule, and it probably met with severe repurcussions for anyone who would try it. Despite misgivings, this type of arrangement, formed of necessity, did eventually open the doorway for institutionalized kingship. Between the fifth and eighth centuries, a faction from Fyn dominated the region[929] and by the eighth century men from Fyn called kings in the Frankish texts led Danish armies.[930] These leaders and those who brought them to power may not have realized that a fundamental shift in power had occurred. Once the enemy has been deterred, as happened with the Franks after the decline of the Carolingian regime, it could prove nearly impossible for once autonomous farmers, or even the local elites who had elected the leaders, to remove these kings.[931]

The type of resistance that would be met in these regions to centralized authority can clearly be seen in the anonymous *Knytlinga Saga*.[932] The Scanians in the text appear to have loosely acknowledged the overlordship of the king of the Danes but were not integrated into the state and were relatively disconnected from central authority. Why they were desired by the central monarchy is an important question. These regions were populous and much more productive agriculturally through prehistoric and into historic times.[933] The German priest Adam of Bremen knew of the legendary productivity of the region, and compared it favorably to the region of Jutland. Adam wrote that the area was "well provided with men, opulent of crops, rich

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[929] Klavs Randsborg, *The Viking Age in Denmark* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), 32.
[930] Any number of examples could be used here, since the *Royal Frankish Annals* refer to 'Danes' and their 'kings' with fair regularity. *Royal Frankish Annals* in *Carolingian Chronicles*, translated by Bernhard Walter Scholz with Barbara Rogers (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1972).
[931] Thurston, "Infields," 163.
[932] King Knut in about the year 1080 went into these regions and had to answer to the farmers at the general assemblies then present. Adhering strictly to their perception of the law, the king acted deceitfully in order to secure better rights for himself, and did so carefully in order to avoid being murdered. *Knytlinga Saga*, translated by Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards (Odense: University Press, 1986), 55-56.
[933] Thurston, "Infields," 164-165.

in merchandise" in comparison to "frightful" Jutland which is "a salt land and vast wilderness" where "scarcely a place is fit for human habitation."[934] The process of integration into the larger kingdom was greatly slowed by the Scanians' concerns for their indigenous identity and stubborn adherence to the older, corporate Iron Age political organization. Those rural farmers who were thriving had little incentive to share wealth or alter traditions when their power was great. In this peripheral region, it would have been difficult to enforce royal decrees, and yet the region was incorporated into the Danish kingdom in time, with force used only rarely.

A great deal of pressure was applied to the Scanians by the central core and by their own local elites. Starting in the mid 800s, the state attempted to build up an infrastructure in Scania. This centralized polity set up an area of seasonal export centers whereby they were better able to collect agricultural products and perhaps taxes in the form of silver, but it was a somewhat feeble attempt since it did nothing to change pre-existing political organization and regional institutions.[935] Then, in a short period beginning in about 980, a rapid transformation took place. Four evenly spaced administrative towns were created in Scania, and the Scanian chiefly centers were abandoned. Also, beginning in the 980s, six large centrally controlled fortresses (the most famous of which is Trelleborg) were constructed around Denmark, and two were in Scania. All of this had taken no more than twenty years.[936] There is evidence for a state sponsored move towards dispersed settlement, and forced political reorganization. There is evidence of many new villages whose suffixes ended exclusively in the suffix *–torp* ('settlement dependent upon an older village'). At the same time, older villages were reorganized and contracted as much as

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[934] Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*, translated by Francis J. Tschan (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 191, 187.
[935] Tina L. Thurston, "The Barren and the Fertile, Central and Local Intensification Strategies Across Variable Landscapes," in *Agricultural Strategies*, ed. Joyce Marcus and Charles Stanish (Los Angeles: Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, 2006), 145.
[936] Thurston, "The Barren and the Fertile," 146.

sixty percent, with excess population likely moving to the newer *-torps*. This process involved the razing of many villages, each of which had existed in the same general location for five centuries. Haphazardly nucleated farms were now placed in rows along a village street. The destruction and rebuilding of villages is a strange phenomenon that has occurred for many centuries and always has a very disruptive effect.[937] While this occurred, Danish kings seem to have imposed new laws and taxes as well as demands for naval manpower. In the twelfth century, the Church imposed a tithe on the farmers.[938] At some time in the 1080s, the Scanians met with the Danish king at the traditional assembly to insist that ancient entitlements be restored, and the king responded by executing the loudest protesters.[939] It was not until the 1180s that they again demanded that these foreign (meaning Danish rather than specifically Scanian) kings would be resisted and the taxes be repealed. Following the Scanian Uprisings, a war was fought with the result that Scania was conquered and incorporated into the central kingdom.[940]

Thy, in northern Jutland, was also coveted by the central core power of Denmark. It is 18-20 km across at its widest expanse, separating the Atlantic from the Limfjord, an important inland seaway. It does not have much arable land.[941] As with Scania, the region was home to pre-state autonomous polities, having the same social and political ideology. There were clear limits on elite power and broad authority was in the hands of the farmers. At about the same time that the Scanians were making initial demands for a return to their old rights, the north Jutlanders also rejected the new taxes and laws of the Danish king.[942] The difference was that

[937] Thurston, "The Barren and the Fertile," 148.
[938] Thurston, "The knowable," 665.
[939] *Knytlinga Saga*, 54-57.
[940] Thurston, "The Barren," 151.
[941] Thurston, "Infields," 165.
[942] Thurston, "The Barren," 150.

the Jutlanders actually invaded the core area with an army and killed the king and his entourage of relatives and supporters.[943] They were clearly dissatisfied with what they viewed as infringements on their traditional rights. This was a century before the Scanian Uprising. The northerners then put their support behind the king's brother, who declined to take vengeance as was later done in Scania. Assimilation nonetheless followed closely on the heels of this event.

It would appear that the benefits of such a merger outweighed the potential costs, which included profitability through trade. Thy is well-placed along the Limfjord, which was a known trading outpost that connected Denmark with Norway and with the Baltic reaches. It is known that during the Viking Age a large fort called Aggersborg was built, with royal patronage, for protection.[944] The residents were less well off than the Scanians, and it may be that they found state protection and wealth attractive. The decision to assimilate to the central core, with its pros and cons, was thus very likely made by the local elites and certainly took place in degrees, and unlike in Scania, showed few signs of military conquest.

An Eastern Irish Sea regional parallel

Denmark is an area that is much larger in terms of population than anywhere in the Eastern Irish Sea Region. There are certain parallels that are interesting and may relate to state building, incorporating these regions into larger nearby realms, during if not before the Viking presence in the region. Much as in Thy, Cumbria and the Eastern Irish Sea region generally suffer from a notable paucity of arable lands. Much of the soil is sandy and rocky and difficult to farm. The region is excellent, however, for the rearing of sheep and other resources, such as fish from the lakes and nearby Irish Sea, are plentiful. The climatic and weather patterns, which keep the population low and do little to improve agriculture, also contribute to the isolation of the

[943] *Knytlinga Saga*, 69-94.
[944] Thurston, "The Barren," 151.

region. These same factors are also deterrents to invaders, meaning that the poverty of the area has often largely protected it from raiders, just as it has protected the region from most notice in the historical chronicles. Certainly, the presence of Roman roads and the presence of several military forts suggest that the Romans knew, and perhaps conquered, the area during their time in Britain. Of course, the indigenous people of the region at that time were certainly few.

The natives of the region seem to have developed a strong sense of local pride and a spirit of resistance to invaders. The area had once been a thriving native British kingdom called Rheged, with the height of its fame being reached in the sixth century, as detailed in the third chapter of this work. The kingdom was probably centered on Carlisle, and it would ultimately lose its war with the expansionist Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Northumbria. Many Celtic place names or Celtic compounds dot the area, particularly in the northern part of the current county, and seem to greatly outnumber the Anglo-Saxon elements.[945] This seems to reflect that there was a known political conquest, and yet a reasonably low intrusive settlement in this particular region, which may have been in marked contrast to Saxon settlement elsewhere in England.[946] This could be due to any number of things, including lack of desire to settle the region. More likely, however, is that it reflects a type of cultural negotiation occurring, much as was seen in the Danish examples, where the local elites carefully weighed the benefits of merging with the newcomers, who were powerful but not too numerous. This likely involved the occasional use of force, since the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and other sources make occasional mention of punitive raids into the area by the Anglo-Saxons, mostly from Wessex or elsewhere in southern

[945] Deirdre O'Sullivan, "Cumbria before the Vikings: A Review of Some 'Dark Age' Problems in North-West England," in *The Scandinavians in Cumbria*, ed. John R. Baldwin and Ian D. Whyte (Edinburgh: Scottish Society for Northern Studies, 1985), 26-29.
[946] See Chapter 2.

England, suggesting that these powers to the south had designs on the region, just as the larger polities in the immediate area did.

The arrival of the Scandinavians, as well as their Norse-Gaelic and Norse-Irish cohorts, adds another layer to the cultural landscape. The evidence once again points to small numbers of warriors taking the elite positions at the top of society, but this time with a large number of secondary settlers coming some years later. Most of the obvious graves, both on Man and in northwestern England, seem to have belonged to aristocratic warriors. Who these men were is an open question. They may have come from Denmark or Norway, they may have become permanent residents, or they could be conquerors coming once again from Northumbria, in this case, the Danes at York. The Yorkish push for control was probably felt by the people in this region, since an overland route to the Irish Sea, Man and Dublin was highly preferable to sailing all the way around Britain in either direction. There are certainly many place names in the region, particularly in Cumberland, that show a Norwegian influence, while those of Dumfriesshire show a stronger Danish element. Finally, the presence of the Cuerdale and other coin hoards as well as the retrieval of weapons and other objects suggests that, at the very least, the area was one of Scandinavian transit. Many of the local lords were doubtless of Scandinavian extraction, and the presence of the mixed pagan and Christian stone monuments attests to a strong sort of cultural negotiation going on among the two groups. Still, it does not always follow that the locals were prepared to meet all of the demands of the Scandinavian lords. The death of Erik Bloodaxe at Stainmore can attest to that, although who his killers were remains a mystery.

The area was so remote that it was largely missed by the Norman Conquest. William's armies probably never entered Cumberland, even during the infamous wasting of the north, even

though Scotland was invaded from the east by William in the early 1070s.[947] Cumberland was eventually conquered by the Norman kings under William Rufus, who seems to have done this as a stratagem to get back at Malcolm, king of Scots, for incursions into what Rufus regarded at Norman-English territory. This conquest did not occur until 1092, and Rufus found the area so desolate that Carlisle was refortified and the castle rebuilt.[948] Galloway was not conquered by the Normans but rather by the Scots. But it seems to have been harried by kings of England as late as the reign of Henry I.[949]

In the region of Low Birker, it is clear that the inhabitants of the manor were in charge of the local area. Was the family Scandinavian or of Scandinavian extraction? In all probability, they were by the late tenth century, if not earlier. But how did they relate to the natives in Eskdale? How did they manage economic enterprises? Were they in charge of trade, taxation, or both? To whom did their allegiance as local elites lie? And how did anything get accomplished in the region?

All of these questions are important, but there are not any records that survive from this period that might provide answers. By analogy with the Danish material, it would seem that these chieftains were roughly equivalent to their counterparts in Scandinavia, that is to say, fiercely independent and strong believers in traditional Iron Age rights as opposed to the growth of the power of kings and the state. They likely mobilized their power base through kinship connections and through patron-client relationships. The rulers could certainly compel the locals to work as a part of a patron-client relationship. In Viking Age Cumbria there has not been much evidence for specialization except for evidence for stone carving, as discussed in earlier

[947] William E. Kapelle, *The Norman Conquest of the North* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 125-126.
[948] Kapelle, 150.
[949] Kapelle, 206-207.

chapters of this work. The evidence for large scale production in an area with very low population density, such as it is, seems to imply a fairly stable political power, since evidence indicates this situation existed for some time. The residents, at least the elite and merchants, probably had access to regional markets and larger, multi-regional markets, such as York and Dublin. There is no evidence that this area existed as a state, except when some of it was partially and briefly recaptured by the Strathclyde Britons, but rather it was probably integrated in some way into a regional alliance with the Irish Sea Norse and the Scandinavian kingdom of York. It is these regional elites who were the source of power in this region, and it is likely the same rulers who invited in other settlers, possibly displacing some native leaders and others in the process. But there are many others that came of their own accord and did so peacefully, as evidenced by the multitude of Scandinavian place-names in the region that would indicate that much marginal land was brought into use by the settlers.[950]

Regional elites and traders probably had regular contact with people and places outside the local area. While there is evidence of at least some iron smelting occurring at Low Birker, there is no evidence that smithing occurred on site or anywhere in the area.[951] Perhaps there simply has not been anything found, since it would make sense to develop this profession because the trade of finished objects would probably be more prestigious and almost certainly more profitable than simply dealing in raw materials or in iron bars. It is quite possible that the leader of the area was not a major lord, and was simply in charge of production and low-grade dealings of raw materials. While not prestigious, it needs to get done, and probably a low-level chief would prefer this activity to being completely left out of the profits.

[950] For example the *-sæter* and *-áirgh* compounds discussed in Chapter 3, which show mutual co-habitation.
[951] Brunton, 222.

Final Thoughts on Low Birker

What then is to be made of the Low Birker data? It is extremely difficult to make any broad statements about the level of activity at the site since its examination is far from complete. The evidence uncovered provides only hints, and fairly ambiguous ones, at the economic activity within this area. Even if the Low Birker data is discounted in its entirety, there is still a case to be made for the importance of the region. The local, Cumbrian culture seems to have been a unique and rich one, although most of it is now gone. The Eastern Irish Sea Region is itself on a major trade route between York and Dublin, and with the use of the sea could have had extensive contacts indeed, even if these were somewhat indirect. Numerous goods probably moved through the area to be traded, and there are tantalizing hints of evidence that suggest Cumbria may have had its own cultural artifacts to trade. Certain items seem to be unique to the region, including the large brooches, such as the 'near Penrith' brooch and its counterparts. No similar items have been unearthed anywhere else. Made of silver and much too large to use, what function could they have besides portable wealth? Who is to say what has yet to be recovered? The great unknown is what has already been lost and will never be recovered. There is no reason to believe that a commodity like iron would not have been traded too, whether produced in York, Scandinavia, or the local area. There is absolutely no logical reason that this would not be a legitimate trade item. But the evidence for it is not very complete.

Although the term "Dark Ages" is one that is generally to be disparaged, in the case of the Eastern Irish Sea Region, it is a term that is certainly very apt. The evidence that is available to be examined, even for a Scandinavian presence in the area, is reasonably limited and especially thin in Galloway. Determining the economic output of the region has proven to be a difficult task given the limited amount of information available to use. It is certainly true that

more evidence is sometimes discovered, but there has not yet been enough to greatly increase the general knowledge of the region during its earlier historic and prehistoric phases. The Scandinavian Viking Age sits right on the cusp of these two eras and has the benefits of historical records and archaeological discoveries, as well as the limitations of each, and a relative paucity of either.

To be sure, there is no lack of interest in the Viking Age generally in England or in the Scandinavian countries. The archaeological discoveries of the past 175 years or so, those that are still extant at any rate, seem to hold for many a strong fascination. Some scholars and enthusiasts take a hands-on approach and attempt to duplicate many of the finds, thus resulting in a greater knowledge than was possessed earlier. An obvious example is the recreation and use of Viking ships, such as that found at Gokstad or those at Skuldelev, an activity that has occurred since the 1890s and still occurs to this day, if recent newspaper reports are taken into account. The most recent report to make the news involves a ship crew full of Danes who set out to cross the North Sea and to arrive in Dublin.[952] This is particularly useful to this project, since it has been established that Dublin was a haven for the traders of slaves and other goods, and seems to have had opulent wealth. The fact that it can be done today in a replica ship by people who are probably worse sailors than their Viking predecessors only serves to prove the point that such a journey was not only possible but probably fairly commonplace.

Another experimental program that has proven to be relevant to this project is the experimental production of iron using Iron Age techniques. The work of men such as Peter Crew and Carl Blair has been valuable in recreating this process and learning how this complicated process worked. In fact, it has given to this study a unique angle to pursue in the search for Vikings and their economic motives in the Eastern Irish Sea Region. It is here,

[952] *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver), 28 May 2007 and again 7 July, 2007.

however, that it is necessary to interject considerable caution. Many elements of Low Birker are extremely problematic, and it is not wise to make any macro, sweeping claims about the site based on what have been, thus far, very meager findings.

Blair's claims as to the scope of the Low Birker project would, if substantiated, prove to be evidence of a massive operation of iron production in a region that had a very small population. The region is known to have produced iron as early as the medieval period, and Blair's reasoning on the dates of the furnaces seems solid. There are those, however, who do not agree with his date or his number of the furnaces, including some in the British Forest Service.[953] But these people have not, to my knowledge, produced an alternative. It is the scope of the operation that seems far more problematic, since operations this large have not been found anywhere in Britain, and certainly not in a place that could not supply an adequate work force. This author can say for certain that one dug out pit was seen during the field session, and even that raised questions, since a large rock was protruding through what was supposed to have once been the base of the furnace wall.

The other main problem with the site is that the cemetery was never found, even though it was claimed that it existed. Further, the trial trench for the second cemetery based on the analogy with the Finnish material detailed in Chapter Five of this work turned out not to exist either. Shepherd mentioned numerous potential problems with this site, including the fact that the surface is now covered by a dense, quickly rejuvenating undergrowth of moss and bracken; it is greatly disturbed by weather and human agency as well as by subsoil movement on a tremendous scale, caused by tree roots. The sandy acidic soils do little to aid in the preservation of human remains or objects buried there. Any or all of these factors may have played a role in

[953] Adam Parsons, personal communication.

the search, but in the end, nothing remotely resembling a burial ground of any type was found.[954] It may never have existed. A lack of burial grounds of any type would again suggest an operation taking place on a much smaller scale than one requiring villages and masses of workers.

For all these legitimate questions, it is nonetheless clear that *something* was found at the site. The slag heaps were real enough and this product only results from the smelting of iron. The structures of the area that have been identified are mostly not excavated, but some, such as Structure 26, provide the best evidence at the site. Structure 26 is similar to comparable buildings in southern Scotland and northeast England, and shows far greater affinity to British style huts than to Scandinavian or Anglo-Saxon dwellings.[955] This suggests that these workers were local Cumbrians or people who chose to live in or otherwise were influenced by the local style. Structure 26 does not have any artifacts recovered that are easily datable, and the pottery shards are presumed to be from a bit later than the period in question, although these were close to surface finds, and there is certainly the possibility that the structure could have been used for a long period of time. Who the workers at the site may have been is not known, but it seems likely they were working under the direction of the local elites, not to mention the master smelters who understood how the craft worked. They could easily have been a mix of semi-dependent tenants and cottagers which are both reported in this area from a slightly later period.[956] They may have been Scandinavian workers, or natives, but very likely they thought of themselves as Cumbrians.

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[954] Tom Brunton, personal communication.
[955] Tom Brunton, "The Social Organization of Labor: Iron Production and Settlement at the Low Birker site" (PhD dissertation, SUNY-Buffalo, 2005), 145-146, 191-212.
[956] Angus Winchester, *Landscape and Society in Medieval Cumbria* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd, 1987), 62-68.

Conclusion

Conclusion

The study of the Vikings is a study which has proven to be fraught with historiographical difficulties at almost every turn. But it is not a subject about which the final word has been written. There are new discoveries being made, including a very recent one, that make knowledge of the Viking Era an ongoing study.[957] This study, while favoring a regional approach and seeking to avoid a study of the Scandinavian Vikings generally, has nonetheless run into some of these troubles in many places, and has sought to note the evidence for the various positions more often than it has sought to establish the truth of many of these matters. It has sought, in more specific terms, to establish the presence of Scandinavian settlers in a certain region, which has been dubbed the Eastern Irish Sea Region. This region is a region that has been named artificially, since there was no concept at the time of separate entities that were thought of as England and Scotland; rather the border of these two realms was quite fluid prior to perhaps the tenth century. But there was a common culture in the turbulent northern seas, and it was a culture that the Scandinavians added much to.

The study began necessarily with an examination of the physical landscape of the region. The introductory chapter addresses the geography of Scandinavia and of the northern British Isles, including Shetland, the Orkneys, the Hebrides, and the Isle of Man, and northwestern England and southern Scotland. But it addresses more than the land formations that are encountered in this region. The chapter posits a number of interesting points, including the fact that the knowledge by people in Britain of the Scandinavians predated the Viking Age by a considerable chronological period of time, and that there are examples of trade items that have

[957] CNN.com "Beheaded Vikings found at Olympic site." http://www.cnn.com/2010/TECH/science/03/12/viking.olympics/index.html (Accessed March 12, 2010). This report notes that there were 51 young men, all beheaded, who were found in a mass grave near London at some time in 2009. It reports that they are believed to be Swedes, and all had been executed.

been found in what is today Scotland that date from this earlier period. Much care is taken to use not only modern geographic information, but contemporary descriptions, including many from the Icelandic sagas themselves, that describe this world and how the Scandinavians might have seen it. It is also posited that the Scandinavian sailors made contact first with those island ranges closest to Norway, and then spread progressively further until finally reaching the area in question, consisting of the modern areas of Galloway and some of Dumfriesshire in Scotland, Cumberland and Westmorland and Lancashire North-of-the-Sands in England, and the Isle of Man, which is clearly visible from the shore of Cumbria today. This region gave rise to a certain stock of people who are not Anglo-Saxon, Scandinavian, or Celtic but rather a mixture of all of these groups. They have sometimes been called Hiberno-Norse or *Gall-Gaidhil*, but it is best that they are simply termed "Cumbrian." In a later chapter the former terms are examined more closely, and it is seen that they are not entirely accurate. "Cumbrian" is a name that could refer to an inhabitant of northwestern England, southern Scotland, or even to Scottish Islanders and Manxmen, since all shared a similar maritime culture and climate and could move easily about the coastline.

The region has historically been thinly populated. How the original people came to be there is not something that is explored in great detail, although a model postulated in the second chapter for the *germani* and migration generally may perhaps be referenced in answering this question. The model of migration that is proposed is designed as a functionalist model, rather than a type of model that is designed to study migration from a comparative position between academic disciplines. It postulates a number of factors, called "push/pull" factors, that influence and encourage migration of individuals, while it also acknowledges the role of political ideology in this migration among peoples, which can sometimes be seen in written sources. The

Scandinavian peoples are considered to be numbered among the *germani*, so it this group to which the theoretical model is applied. There are numerous historiographical issues associated with the *germani* generally and these are addressed to a degree in the second chapter. Particularly of note are those tribes the immigrated to the British Isles and colonized them, so it is important to establish those who dwelled on the British Isles at the advent of the Viking Age. Rather than examining the Viking Age in great detail, the chapter postulates some reasons why it may have happened, and discusses how it unfolded in northern England and in the Eastern Irish Sea Region in particular. A relatively new position has been embraced, namely that overpopulation and divine punishment are not valid causes of the Scandinavian raids and settlement, but rather that there was a generalized economic crisis in northwestern Europe,[958] and also that the raids probably had a political element to them, specifically retaliation on the part of the Danes for what might be called militant and aggressive Christianity, as personified by Charlemagne.[959]

An extremely important element for the region under study is the York-Dublin axis. These two cities, captured and Scandinavianized in the former case, and very probably founded in the latter case, set up a rival kingdoms that sometimes cooperated with one another in the northern portion of the Isles, and often operated against the kings of Wessex and others in the south of England. The two kingdoms shared Scandinavian overlordship and were sometimes joined together; more importantly, the two cities constituted an economic center of considerable size. York was known as both a production center for goods and an area that minted coins, while Dublin seems to have been more of a commercial merchant center, which grew fabulously wealthy by means of trade. Located on a nearly straight line between these two cities is the

[958] Richard Hodges, *Goodbye to the Vikings?* (London: Duckworth, 2006), 159-162.
[959] For a good recent summary, see Robert Ferguson, *The Vikings: A History*. (New York: Viking Press, 2009), 48-57.

Eastern Irish Sea Region, which unfortunately has a noted paucity of historical sources but does have a fair number of archaeological finds. Its position was clearly a middle point between the two cities and, as is argued later in the paper, had a noted material contribution of its own.

Another class of evidence that is of considerable importance is the toponymic, or place-name evidence that is often cited in establishing the presence of Scandinavians in the area. Earlier generations of scholars took this as reasonably self-evident; if the names in question were Scandinavian in origin, then this could be seen as positive evidence of Scandinavian presence. Recent scholarship has done much to undermine this, although it cannot then explain how the Scandinavian names arrived in the area. This study takes a cautious view, in realizing that the older view is probably correct in some sense while admitting that some recent studies also have validity. If certain names can be proven to be Norman or other late additions, then they must be accepted as such. But those who claim only a minimal number of Scandinavian inhabitants are not in the right. There are simply too many names for them to explain away, even if some individually are questionable. The evidence points to a mass folk migration, and the evidence suggests that this probably lasted for decades if not longer and contributed an enormous amount of Scandinavian loan-words into the English language--another fact that the modern minimalists cannot explain away. Although the Scandinavian language was somewhat similar to Old English and ultimately ceased to be spoken, its influence is considerable, as it added elements into the English language that became standard even in areas where Scandinavian settlement and presence were much smaller.[960] Modern studies have followed involving the study of genetics in attempting to establish whether or not a large number or a small number of Scandinavians were

[960] Matthew Townend, "Viking Age England as a Bilingual Society," in *Cultures in Contact: Scandinavian Settlement in England in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries,* ed. Dawn M. Hadley and Julian D. Richards (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2000), 89-105.

migrants into the British Isles.[961] This evidence also suggests a very strong Scandinavian presence, particularly in areas where Scandinavian place-names have largely overwhelmed the earlier names, as for example in the northern Scottish Isles. Although the proportion of place-names to DNA genetic markers is not exact, they are not completely dissimilar and tend to support the theory of a large folk migration entering the region rather than simply an aristocratic warrior elite taking over the area, even though it is reasonably clear that this also happened. But this takeover simply does not account for all of the place-names of Scandinavian origin. Finally, a word is in order about the indigenous Celtic names, which are quite numerous still today in the north of England and in Scotland.[962] These word forms suggest a reasonably large native population, and word form hybrids between the Celtic and Scandinavian tongues suggest a type of cultural admixture was taking place. The place-names that the Celts left are often found mixed with those of the Saxons and Scandinavians; they became a common hybrid in the area that suggests acculturation and changes in habitation patterns. The study of these place-names, along with a comparison of statuary, is used as a baseline for establishing that a similar culture existed for different areas of the Eastern Irish Sea Region, despite the highly fluid borders. The chapter concludes with an examination of several charters that suggest incoming Scandinavians, if they were wealthy enough, may have actually purchased land from the local lords rather than simply taking it by force.

Material remains are a very important avenue to pursue in the quest to locate Scandinavian presence in the area. The northwest of England and the Isle of Man together are rich in burials, statuary, and coin hoards that are officially classified as Scandinavian. Instead of

[961] Bryan Sykes, *Saxons, Vikings, and Celts.* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2006); Julian Richards, *Blood of the Vikings.* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2001).
[962] DNA evidence is likewise present for the Celts, and suggests a high survival rate for them. Genetically, they are still the bedrock of the northern realms. Sykes, 281-282.

a purely traditional view, this study takes the approach that too much emphasis is usually placed on how "Scandinavian" certain recovered objects appear in the record, and that this has distorted the overall picture of settlement. Scandinavian burials are usually associated with particular markers, such as burial mounds with certain types of grave goods. Scandinavian burials of the Viking Age in Scandinavia have regional but unpredictable patterns, so why should Scandinavian graves in Britain appear in any standardized manner? There are many similar graves that are termed Anglo-Saxon, and in some cases these are not significantly different in either appearance or in the artifacts they contain. Some specific items discovered in Lincolnshire and Cumbria fit this criteria, and these are duly noted in the study. Many records of old archaeological excavations are missing or otherwise of dubious value, and all of this leads to the suggestion that some particularly mundane graves have probably been misidentified or overlooked. This would in turn suggest that many of the common graves could be Scandinavian while they had in the past previously been assumed to have been Anglo-Saxon. The Scandinavian graves of northern England are categorized as either major or minor, and these are described in some detail. The Isle of Man also provides ample burial evidence for this region, and the greatest finds are examined, but southwestern Scotland is considerably lacking in physical burial remains. Galloway does have the excavated remains of the Whithorn monastic community, which shows some Scandinavian artifacts and evidence of trade. The study also incorporates evidence of a new major burial, at Cumwhitton, that was discovered in 2004. After the evidence found in burials, further evidence discovered in northwestern England is introduced, namely items that are stray finds that are generally associated with Scandinavian settlers and, in some cases, perhaps with the native Cumbrian culture that developed under Scandinavian influence, as in the case of the Flusco Pike and the "near Penrith" brooch, works of art that are so

unusual as to defy explanation as to their actual use. Coin hoards are likewise given consideration, since many have been discovered in northern England and on the Isle of Man, including a discovery made just a few years ago at Glenfaba. It is a pity that the great Saxon hoard discovered in 2009 has not been fully published, nor is it Scandinavian, since this would doubtless be of considerable interest to Scandinavian settlement studies.[963] It does, however, provide proof that archaeologists need to keep looking. There are possibly any number of other, similar hoards out there, the discovery of which could greatly enhance the study of Anglo-Saxon England and possibly of the Viking Age. There are a number of Viking hoards of considerable size known, and two of these, the Halton and Cuerdale hoards, are the most important. The Cuerdale hoard is particularly large, and can be seen to be on a particularly advantageous route, sitting almost precisely on point between Scandinavian York and Dublin and within the Eastern Irish Sea Region. Similar but smaller hoards on Man have also been found. Finally, the chapter details the unique sculpture of the region, which is Anglo-Saxon and Christian in form but thoroughly Scandinavian is style and motifs. The largest and most obvious example is the Gosforth Cross. But there are other examples of note, including the unique "hogback" monuments, which are mostly pagan Scandinavian in theme, and are not located to any extent outside of this particular region. They almost certainly show another expression of the form in which the two cultures merged to form a new, Cumbrian-Scandinavian culture in the region.

The last and most unique chapter of the study formulates the idea that iron may have been smelted in the Eastern Irish Sea Region during the Viking Age. It incorporates some unique research, but this is based upon some controversial research done under the auspices of a project called SMELT. This project was developed by an experimental archaeologist named Carl Blair

[963] BBC News webpage, "Huge Anglo-Saxon gold hoard found." http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/staffordshire/8272058.stm (Accessed September 24, 2009).

with the intention of learning how Iron Age peoples built furnaces and smelted iron with them, which has led to a revolution in understanding how iron was made by ancient and medieval peoples prior to the introduction of the blast furnace into Britain sometime during the fifteenth century.[964] Replica furnaces have successfully been reproduced and iron successfully produced by Blair and others. The use of iron smelting and dwellings of iron age type are traced early in the chapter, suggesting that this medium was not unknown in either England or Scandinavia from the early centuries AD and even earlier, so there are no theoretical barriers to the production and use of iron in the region.

The area at which the specific study took place is the project site of Low Birker, located in Eskdale, near the small village of Boot, Cumbria. This is a project that was developed under the aegis of SMELT and one which showed considerable promise of uncovering a large, Viking Age smelting operation in the region. The author of this study participated in this project during the 2002 field session, and believed that it would produce substantial evidence of a large presence of Scandinavians in the region. These Scandinavians might possibly have conquered the local society at the highest levels and then interacted with the locals to produce iron, probably assuming command of an existing operation. The shear volume postulated was far too great for local use, and would thus have been bartered or sold for economic gain. The project has not been completed and none of the data from it has been published. It is hasty to draw conclusions from this, but it does not now appear that the site can be completely substantiated, nor does it appear likely that excavation will resume in the immediate future. Nevertheless, there are a few things located on site which suggest both iron smelting and habitation. It is also

[964] Mark Bowden, ed. *Furness Iron: The Physical Remains of the Iron Industry and Related Woodland Industries of Furness and Southern Lakeland* (Swindon, England: English Heritage, 2000), 3.

strongly suspected, based upon place-name evidence, that the local lords who assumed command during the tenth century, at the latest, were probably of Scandinavian origin or heritage.

The smelting of iron in the region is historically documented, at least from the thirteenth century, and it is well known that the area of Furness, Cumbria, had a substantial output of iron during the Industrial Revolution. It is almost inconceivable that this was unknown in some way to people in the Viking period, since it was known both before and after in the same region. But to claim its existence is not to claim that it necessarily occurred on a very large scale in the region. This region was almost certainly an area in transition; a frontier region that was likely in the process of incorporation into a larger realm in the area, of which there were several competitors. It was most probably allied in a loose sense to the Irish Sea Norse and the Scandinavian Vikings of York. It did have and retained an independent spirit and seems to have resisted incorporation into any entity, until it was finally conquered by William Rufus in 1092 and incorporated into Norman England. It is instructive to look to the regions of Scania and Thy in Denmark as an analogy, since they show some similarities with respect to incorporation into the kingdom of the Danes, which was developing a centralized monarchy since, as seems likely, it saw itself threatened by its Frankish neighbors. Could the site at Low Birker or the entire area have been pressured to become incorporated into another realm as a response to an external threat? If so, which one? It probably came to be controlled by the Danes or the Norwegians much as did the regions in the Danish analogy come to be incorporated into the Danish kingdom. The difference is that this "kingdom" was not centralized and was in a precarious position, whether it was Dublin, York, or the Scottish kingdom of Strathclyde.

If the data were verifiable, the Low Birker project would prove to be evidence of a massive operation of iron production in a region that had a very small population. But many of

Blair's claims are not verifiable. Although his dating of the furnaces seems solid, there is reason to doubt the numbers he claimed to have discovered. Further, there was no evidence whatsoever of the cemeteries and iron mines he claimed were on site. But Structure 26 and several other structures examined archaeologically suggest some evidence of housing and of storage units, of a multi-cultural type, showing far greater affinity to British style huts than to Scandinavian or Anglo-Saxon dwellings.[965] This would suggest a local work force, or perhaps one of mixed cultural heritage. While many of Blair's claims could be safely thrown out, the fact remains that *something* has been discovered at this site. The scope of the operation is what seems to be at issue here, since there is no evidence of massive habitation at any time in the history of this region. The slag heaps are interesting, since the total volume was reasonably high, and this can only come from the production of iron. It is possible that this may be the result of a long period of small scale smelting. It could easily be of later or earlier date, or there could be another explanation altogether for its presence.

Contrary to the perception of this period in history as a "Dark Age," it is a period of Scandinavian exploration and settlement of northern Britain that is of great interest. While the evidence of what happened in the region is extremely limited at present, it is nonetheless possible to gain some understanding, even in a region as poorly documented as the Eastern Irish Sea Region. This study has aimed to do just that--postulating a reasonably large Scandinavian presence as tracked through place-name evidence, archaeological finds, and genetic studies. The nature of the occupation is naturally one of great contention, and the study has shown that the majority of the place-name evidence and many archaeological finds support the hypothesis that the folk migration into this realm was largely peaceful, and for some, probably was seen as a

[965] Tom Brunton, "The Social Organization of Labor: Iron Production and Settlement at the Low Birker site" (PhD dissertation, SUNY-Buffalo, 2005), 145-146, 191-212.

new opportunity for material gain. Of course, the atrocities of the Viking leaders and war bands do not fit in this general model, and it was never the intention to portray these men as anything other than violent pirates and conquerors. But what is frequently missing is the context. While the Scandinavian war leaders and Vikings were capable of acts of extreme violence, it does not follow that all Scandinavians behaved in this manner, or even that most of them did. They were known in Europe and the British Isles before the dire portents ushered in by the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. What was new to the writers in the British Isles was the violence. The traditional interpretation of the Vikings as violent thugs dates generally to the writers of the centuries following the events, and it has historically been the view that is most common concerning these people.[966] But this conveniently avoids the argument for the general state of violence already existent in the world at that time, as if the Vikings were the only group who killed, fought, or plundered monasteries. Some of the acts of Charlemagne were at least equal in barbarity to even the worst Scandinavian atrocities, such as his planned genocidal campaign carried out against the Saxons. In the most infamous event of this campaign, Charles "the Great" had 4,500 people forcibly baptized and then subsequently beheaded--in a single day.[967] Yet this is portrayed in historical sources as a semi-glorious event, while the Saxons' worst crime was the acceptance of pagan gods and the refusal to be intimidated into accepting the Christian God of Charlemagne. Likewise, in written sources the Vikings are vilified far more for their paganism than they are for any acts of violence or piracy that they commit.[968] So it is a matter of perspective, and it is mainly the victims of the attacks that are writing the history of them, while in the case of the Saxons, it is the same people, now the aggressors, who are doing the writing. It is little wonder

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[966] R.I. Page, *'A Most Vile People': Early English Historians on the Vikings* (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1987), 3, 10-30.
[967] *Royal Frankish Annals*, in *Carolingian Chronicles*, translated by Bernhard Walter Scholz with Barbara Rogers (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1970), sub anno 792.
[968] Page, 10-30.

that the Scandinavians would react to this with violence themselves. But what is really occurring, at its most basic level, is power politics. The leaders of the Scandinavian armies and kings of the inchoate forms of their respective countries are vying for control of a region possessed of finite resources with the Anglo-Saxon, Frankish, and other magnates. What scholars have today are written sources from the Christian churchmen who witnessed--perhaps--some of this struggle. What is missing is the Scandinavian side of the story, since the people were largely illiterate at the time in question. Just the realization of this fact alone places the entire age of the Vikings in an entirely new light, and it is hoped that this study successfully demonstrated this through the use of a variety of types of evidence.

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VITA

Russ Goodrich is a student of Medieval and Ancient history, particularly of England and Scandinavia. He has studied and travelled abroad, as well as participated in an archaeological, Viking-age dig in northern England. Russ received his BA and MA degrees from Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colorado, and has recently completed his PhD at the University of Missouri-Columbia. He currently teaches at Moberly Area Community College in Mexico, Missouri.