

# SCANDINAVIANS AND SETTLEMENT IN THE EASTERN IRISH SEA REGION DURING THE VIKING AGE

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## ABSTRACT

The Viking Age in England has long been a source of intellectual curiosity that has often been shrouded in obscurity. Although it is a known fact that the Viking Age (ca. 800-1100) included much activity in England, there is a great deal of debate concerning the nature of the interactions of the Scandinavians with the "native" Anglo-Saxons of England.

In the northwest of England and southwest of Scotland is an area that is rich in Scandinavian artifacts and place-names, suggesting a substantial presence in the region. This is termed the Eastern Irish Sea Region, and it includes the more recent territorial designations of Cumberland, Westmorland and northern Lancashire in England, and the regions of Galloway and Dumfriesshire in Scotland, and the Isle of Man. This region make up a more or less uniform cultural area of the time period in question and is the focus of this study. It is almost certain that the region was small in importance compared to the larger and better known Scandinavian regions of York and Dublin, but it is nonetheless important, both as a transit point between them and as an economic producer in its own right.

In addition to a considerable analysis of artifacts, the study incorporates a new element, namely the smelting and production of iron in the region, and particularly at the site of the Low Birker, Cumbria, where the author did some field research. Although the Low Birker Project has not been completed, it suggests a possible new chapter of Scandinavian inhabitation of the region, as well as a potential means of economic production.