Else Roesdahl. The Vikings. pp. 233-261.

ENGLAND

England came to be one of the Vikings' best sources of income, and here more than anywhere they gained honour and prestige. They looted, extorted tribute (Danegeld) and acted as mercenaries and traders. They also settled, cultivated the land and had a significant impact on the development of towns. This was the one place where they conquered well-established kingdoms and assumed the title of king – in several of the minor realms which existed in the ninth century, as well as over the whole of England in the early eleventh century. From 1018 to 1042 (apart from a period of five years) England and Denmark were ruled jointly by one king. The deep Scandinavian involvement in England throughout most of the Viking Age was of the greatest importance both there and in Scandinavia.

The source material is exceptionally rich and extensive: many written sources (the most important of which are the various versions of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle), archaeological finds from many parts of the country, innumerable place-names, as well as personal names and other linguistic evidence. This explains why so much interdisciplinary research has been carried out into the English Viking Age.

EXPLOITATION, CONQUEST AND SETTLEMENT

Apart from the attack in southern England and the precautions taken against pirates there shortly before the year 800 (see p. 192), and the plunder of Lindisfarne monastery in 793, the only record of Vikings in England before 835 concerns the plundering of the monastery *Donemuthan* in the kingdom of Northumbria

in 794. This monastery was presumably situated near the mouth of the river Don, in south Yorkshire, or may have been Tynemouth monastery; it is unlikely to have been the famous monastery of Jarrow. These Viking bands are thought to have come from Norway and during the following years they may have found better opportunities in Scotland and Ireland.

In 835 the Viking expeditions really got under way on the Continent and were escalating in Ireland. That year the Vikings resumed their activities in England, and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle tersely notes: 'In this year heathen men ravaged Sheppey.' This was the real beginning of more than two centuries of heavy Scandinavian involvement, in which the Danes were particularly active. The course of military events can be followed almost year by year in the Chronicle, but there are also other written sources, such as Asser's history of King Alfred the Great of Wessex.

In the first years it was particularly southern and eastern England which suffered, including the great towns of Hamwih (Southampton) and London. England at this time was divided into several kingdoms: Northumbria north of the Humber, Mercia in the centre, East Anglia to the east and Wessex in the south. They were not unified until 927 and again in 954. Celtic-speaking Wales remained an independent realm until well into the Middle Ages. There were flourishing towns (though not yet very many) and the nobles owned great wealth, so, as on the Continent, it was not only monasteries that were plundered.

To begin with, Viking involvement followed the same pattern as elsewhere: quick raids on islands and various coastal regions from bases on the Continent, from Ireland or directly from the homelands. The first mention of them overwintering in England is 850–1, when they camped on the island of Thanet on the east coast of Kent. A few years later they made their first winter camp on Sheppey, at the mouth of the Thames. Reports of expeditions inland soon followed and in 865 an army encamped on Thanet and made peace with the people of Kent in return for money. This was the first of many English payments of Danegeld.

Then things started to gather momentum. In 865 a 'great heathen army' came to England. Its size has been much debated, but it is thought to have numbered 2–3,000 men. They took up winter quarters in East Anglia, obtained horses and made

England. The bases and winter quarters of the great Viking army during the years 865–79 are marked with black symbols. The dates indicate the year the army shared out land and settled in each of the kingdoms.

peace with the people. The following year the army moved to Northumbria (where a civil war was in progress), captured the capital, York, on 1 November, made peace with the Northumbrians, placed a puppet king on the throne and wintered there. It was probably also about this time that Whitby monastery, on the east coast, was plundered and destroyed. A number of mounts have been found there which were probably torn off ecclesi-

astical objects during the destruction, and place-names in the district indicate that church lands were taken over by Vikings. In 867 the army went to Mercia, took up winter quarters in Nottingham and made peace with this realm. In 868 it returned to York and stayed there for a year. In 869 it rode through Mercia to East Anglia, established winter quarters in Thetford, conquered the whole of East Anglia and killed King Edmund, who was soon venerated as a saint and martyr. In 870 it was the turn of Wessex. The army made its base in Reading and in 871, according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, nine great battles were fought, as well as many minor engagements, and nine Danish earls and a king were killed. Wessex made peace with the Vikings and that year Alfred the Great ascended the throne.

This pattern of changing their winter quarters and making many peace agreements continued for a time. In 871–2 there was a camp in London, the following year in Torksey in Mercia and in both years Mercia made peace with the army. But in 873–4 the Vikings took up winter quarters in Repton, drove out the king of Mercia, and put a renegade on the throne.

Repton proved to be a turning point. In 874 the great army divided. Halfdan went with part of it to Northumbria, made his winter quarters by the river Tyne, conquered the country the following year and plundered to the west and north. According to tradition the monastic community of St Cuthbert on Lindisfarne departed from their exposed island in 875 to seek safety on the mainland. They moved from place to place for some years, with the relics of St Cuthbert and others, and apparently without coming to any harm, although Northumbria was teeming with Vikings. In 876 the Chronicle contains the statement: 'And that year Halfdan shared out the land of the Northumbrians, and they proceeded to plough and to support themselves.' The Vikings had taken land to settle on. Halfdan himself probably died the following year.

The other part of the army left Repton in 874 under the leadership of the kings Guthrum, Oscetel and Anwend, and went to Cambridge where they remained for a year. Then the army moved into Wessex, the last independent kingdom, and King Alfred had to make peace. In 875–6 they encamped in Wareham and the following year in Exeter. During the harvest of 877, 'the

army went away into Mercia and they shared out some of it and gave some to Ceolwulf' (the Vikings' puppet king). But not all settled. There was a base in Gloucester and just after the New Year the army returned to Wessex, to Chippenham, and took charge of most of the realm. King Alfred fled with a small company into the marshes and entrenched himself in Athelney. During the spring of 878, however, he succeeded in gathering an army together and won a decisive victory over the Vikings at Edington. When peace was concluded the Vikings promised to leave Wessex and their leader Guthrum agreed to be baptized. King Alfred acted as godfather for Guthrum, and he and thirty nobles were given many baptismal gifts and courteous treatment. In 878–9 the army took up winter quarters in Cirencester and then went on to East Anglia. For the year 880 the Chronicle records that the army settled and shared out the land, although a group of Vikings sailed to Ghent, in present-day Belgium, and there were many raids there in the following years.

After fifteen years of roaming England the army had now conquered three of the four kingdoms and had got land to live on and to cultivate. Guthrum soon broke his treaty with King Alfred, but made another, the text of which survives, in 886 or soon afterwards. This established the border between Alfred's and Guthrum's realms (the borders with the other Viking realms are not mentioned) and set down a number of rules for peaceful relations between the two peoples. The border followed the river Lea from where it joins the Thames (a little east of London, which
Alfred, but made another, the text of which survives, in 886 or soon afterwards. This established the border between Alfred's and
the old Roman road between London and Chester.

Until the army finally settled in England the population around the bases and winter camps was no doubt obliged to feed the soldiers (and was probably only able to do this for a year at a time). The many 'peace agreements' presumably involved handing over treasure, supplying provisions and perhaps winter quarters for the army, exchanging hostages, swearing oaths and other special agreements. The meaning of the term for 'peace', *friðr*, must however have been closer to 'make agreement' than to 'make peace'.

A number of silver hoards from these years are evidence of the troubled times and the army's passage around England. One of

the many valuable objects that the Vikings captured in the ninth century can be identified with certainty. This is a magnificent illuminated manuscript of the gospels in Latin, the *Codex Aureus*, made in Kent in the eighth century. In the margin of the gold-ornamented page where the Gospel according to St Matthew begins its account of the birth of Christ, a note in Old English records that the ealdorman Ælfred (he was probably from Surrey) and his wife Werburg bought the book from a heathen army in return for gold, so that it should not remain in heathen hands, and that they donated it to Christ Church (presumably Canterbury Cathedral). Ironically, by a tortuous route this book ended up among Scandinavians: in the seventeenth century it was purchased for the Royal Library in Stockholm.

But the most dramatic evidence of the conquering army comes from excavations of the winter camp of 873–4 in Repton, where several kings of Mercia had been buried in the eighth century. The army fortified an area of about 1.5 hectares in an elevated position by the river Trent with a semicircular ditch terminating at each end of the church of St Wystan, thus making the church into a kind of gate tower. Several Viking graves have been found near the church, and the grave-goods include coins, a sword and a Thor's hammer.

A little outside the defensive ditch are some burial mounds, one of which was erected over a man's grave surrounded by huge numbers of human skeletal remains, which had clearly first been buried elsewhere. Unfortunately the mound was 'excavated' in the 1680s and the central grave no longer exists; according to a description of 1727 it contained a giant, nine feet long, in a stone cist! The other bones belong to at least 249 people, of whom about 80 per cent were men: robust persons whose bones in only a few instances carry traces of unhealed wounds, so most of them were apparently not killed in battle. This burial also contained coins and it may well be that they were members of the Viking army who had died elsewhere in previous years, and in Repton during the winter from epidemics, and were individually buried, subsequently exhumed and reburied together around the dead chieftain. His identity can only be guessed at, but he was buried in the dilapidated remains of a very grand, rectangular building. The floor level was a little lower than the surrounding ground

and the low mound which covered it was almost rectangular, not circular, as was the norm.

If this interpretation of the excavations is correct, it is likely that a winter of misery and the death of a great chieftain contributed to the Vikings tiring of their nomadic life. We know that they began to settle down two years later in England. They do not seem to have considered returning to Scandinavia in any numbers and no significant amount of English ninth-century objects has been found in Denmark. In Norway there are more but they mostly came from Northumbria and are not necessarily connected with the plundering of this particular army.

On the Continent, however, many were still employed in traditional Viking fashion. But times became hard and in 892 'the great Danish army' came from Boulogne to England, and Hasting came with his army from the Loire (p. 202). They brought everything with them and were apparently ready to settle, like their fortunate colleagues before them. The army was given support from the Viking realms in England, but King Alfred had organized effective defences with inland fortifications, armies which could be called out at any time, and ships which had been specially constructed for fighting against Viking ships. When the Danish army sought refuge in Chester in 893, King Alfred's army destroyed everything edible in the surrounding area, and when it took up a fortified position two years later by the river Lea, Alfred timed his arrival to coincide with the harvest to prevent the enemy laying its hands on the grain. He was the victor of many battles, and epidemics ravaged the country, resulting in the death of many animals and people. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle paints a gloomy picture of this roaming Viking army and in 896 it gave up. Some Vikings went to Northumbria, others to East Anglia, and 'those that were moneyless got themselves ships and went south across the sea to the Seine'.

THE SCANDINAVIANS IN ENGLAND

Alfred the Great died in 899 and was succeeded by equally competent children and grandchildren. The Vikings continued to be a problem on the Continent, in Ireland and in England, but

Wessex gradually extended its power northwards and consolidated it by means of a network of fortified towns and fortresses, *burhs*. By 917–18 King Edward (899–924) had conquered the whole of the region south of the Humber and in 920 he was formally accepted as supreme lord of Northumbria. This, however, did not last; power in the area alternated between English and Viking kings right up to 954.

Northumbria and York had English puppet kings until about 880; they were followed by a series of kings of Scandinavian origin but with vastly different backgrounds. From the second decade of the tenth century kings of the Danish dynasty in Ireland played a particularly prominent role and justified their title to the throne by their descent from the fabled Ívar, who had come to Dublin in 853, died in 873, and was said to be the brother of Halfdan. One grandson, Sigtrygg, married a daughter of King Edward, but died soon afterwards in 927. Olaf Godfredsson, who died in 941 after one or two periods as King of York, was a great-grandson of Ívar. He and his Scottish allies were defeated in 937 by King Edward's son Athelstan (924–39) at the great battle of *Brunanburh* (the place has not been identified). Many kings and earls were killed and the battle became famous in both English and Scandinavian literature. Olaf survived and went back to Dublin, only to return in 939. The last Viking king was Erik Bloodaxe, who had been exiled from Norway. He came to York for two brief periods before he was exiled by the Northumbrians in 954 and was killed at Stainmore. The English king Eadred then became the ruler of all England.

Very little is known about the political development in the Viking realms, but, as in the English realms, power was based on fortified towns and fortresses, *burhs*, new as well as old. There were two kingdoms, East Anglia and Northumbria, while the region in between, which included the Five Boroughs (Lincoln, Nottingham, Derby, Leicester and Stamford), had a different structure. The Scandinavians are often mentioned as armies associated with certain *burhs*.

The Danelaw, which today is often used as a blanket term for the whole region, never became a political entity. The word simply means 'the law of the Danes'. After the English kings gained power over the Viking realms, they let the Scandinavian

England

part of the population decide their own laws, which were undoubtedly influenced by Danish, or rather Scandinavian, ones. The term 'Danelaw' applied to specific geographic areas is first known from eleventh-century documents. The areas which these and later documents mention as observing Danish law correspond quite well with those which are known to have been dominated by Vikings and with the distribution of Scandinavian place-

names. But it is also very likely that some legal peculiarities in these areas, bounded to the south by the ancient Watling Street, though thought to be Danish in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, might in fact have had a completely different background.

The Vikings came to have a great impact, both direct and indirect, on the development of towns in England. Many of the fortifications which King Alfred and his successors established against the Vikings developed into towns, as they quickly acquired additional functions. In some places, such as the ancient Roman town of Winchester, there were already churches and a royal residence; now the walls were repaired and a new town plan laid out. Nearly all the Viking *burhs* also developed into towns. As well as the Five Boroughs mentioned above, there were Cambridge, Bedford, Northampton and others. Most of these localities had some centralized functions when the Vikings arrived, such as an important church or a lord's residence, and many presumably only became towns after the English assumed power. However, excavations have demonstrated that important urban structures in the two largest towns of the Danelaw, Lincoln and York, came into being during the Scandinavian period.

The development of Lincoln gathered force around the year 900, when a new network of streets and a new settlement were created within the old Roman walls. At the same time trading connections were established with all England and with the Rhineland and even more distant regions. Finds include Oriental silk as well as remains of the town's own crafts and industries. Many street names with the suffix *-gate* (street), for example Flaxengate, where large excavations have been carried out, bear witness to the Scandinavian period, as does the lay-out of the town.

York was also founded by the Romans. The many large stone buildings and the town walls fell into disrepair after the Roman withdrawal from England in the fifth century, but an Anglo-Saxon royal residence was soon built there. When the king of Northumbria adopted Christianity in the seventh century a church was built. When the Vikings captured the town in 866 York had developed into a flourishing trading centre, but this probably lay outside the Roman walls to the south-east, on the other side of the river Foss. However, the Roman town-plan, fortifications and military head-quarters have influenced the city's lay-out until this day.

The Vikings called the town Jorvík instead of the Anglo-Saxon Eoforwic. Under their rule the trading settlement was re-established on the promontory where the Ouse and Foss joined, which was protected partly by the rivers and partly by the old Roman ramparts and walls. These were now repaired and the old town-plan was revised to meet new needs. As in Lincoln, many streets were given new names with the Scandinavian suffix *-gate*, street. The excavations in Coppergate, which probably means the street of the cup- and bowl-makers, give a particularly vivid insight into the development, the life and culture of Viking Age York, which acquired a marked Scandinavian stamp – it became Anglo-Scandinavian, just as Dublin became Hiberno-Norse.

The Coppergate area had been abandoned since the Roman period but came into use again at the time of the arrival of the Vikings. Around 935 it was parcelled out into long, narrow, typical urban plots, divided by wattle fencing, which remained the same right up to modern times. On the plots houses were built of wattle on a framework of posts, with their gables facing the street. The gable-ends and the street lie below present-day Coppergate and could therefore not be excavated. The houses were on average about 4.4 m wide and more than 6.8 m long.

In the four properties which were excavated, many kinds of metalwork were carried out. Lead, iron, bronze, silver and gold were worked and lots of everyday objects were produced, such as knives and jewellery, which imitated the grand fashions of the time in cheap materials. Iron dies for the striking of coins and lead die-trials were also found, which means that these were either scrap metal or that coins were minted in Coppergate itself, or that the craftsmen manufactured the dies there and tested them before delivery.

There is nothing that marks the year 954, when the last Scandinavian king was ousted, but who could have known that this year was to be the end of a political era? The balance of power had changed so often before and the unity of England was far from consolidated. York continued to have a strong Scandinavian character. Around 975 a new type of house was introduced in Coppergate. These buildings had basements with timber walls. On two of the plots there was another building a couple of metres behind the main houses. The finds indicate that the

latter were workshops, while the buildings, which still had a gable projecting beyond the excavated area on to the street, were used as dwellings and no doubt also as shops. The craftsmen of this period mainly produced amber jewellery and turned wooden objects, including bowls, which may be how the street came to have its name.

The Coppergate excavation also showed that York was a centre for international as well as regional trade; apart from objects produced in England, there were things from Scandinavia, Ireland and Scotland, from many parts of north-west Europe (such as wine), from Byzantium (silk) and from the Middle East (a small decorative cowry shell only found in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden). It distributed luxury goods from all over the world, all sorts of objects produced in the town itself, and no doubt many products from the surrounding area as well. Life in Coppergate, however, was not luxurious. The craftsmen lived in surroundings which were normal for towns of the period: they were infested with fleas and lice and analyses of the contents of cesspits have shown that virtually everybody had intestinal worms (Plate 5).

The nobles about whom we read – Halfdan, the Dublin kings, Erik from Norway and the later earls with their families and men – must have lived much more grandly. Aristocratic residences have not yet been excavated, but place-names indicate that the Scandinavian kings lived in or near the eastern gate of the Roman fort, not far from Coppergate, and later just outside the western town wall. Later on the earls probably lived there too and Earl Sigvard, who died in 1055, had a church built here, dedicated to St Olaf.

The Viking kings' interest in trade led to their minting of coins. Guthrum of East Anglia, for example, had coins minted in his short reign from 880 to 890, using the coinage of Wessex as a model. Shortly before 900 coins were also minted in the Five Boroughs and in York, and many coins from the first half of the tenth century, especially those from York, carry unique pictorial representations such as a sword, a banner, a bird or Thor's hammer.

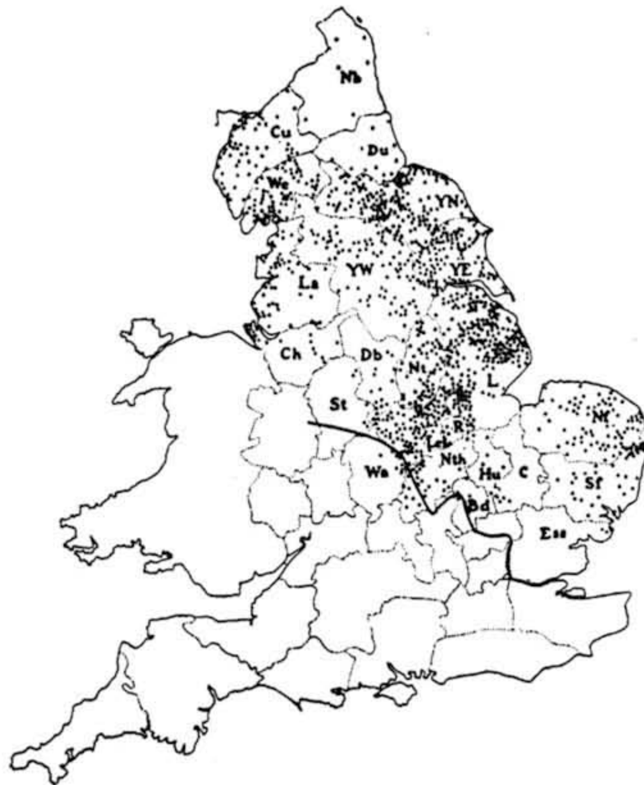
A town like York, which is estimated to have had well over 10,000 inhabitants in 1066, required large supplies of foodstuffs as well as raw materials for its crafts. The rural population and

the aristocracy would come here to acquire manufactured articles for everyday use and luxury goods. Very little is known about the life of the Scandinavians in rural areas, and so far it is uncertain whether Scandinavians or Anglo-Saxons lived in the Viking Age farms excavated in Yorkshire: Ribblehead, Wharram Percy and Simy Folds.

The strong Scandinavian influence on the English language and the many Scandinavian place-names imply that the settlers arrived in considerable numbers. This must have been partly due to continued links with Scandinavia and with the other Viking settlements on the British Isles and because immigrants continued to arrive from there after the armies of 865 and 892 had settled.

There are around 600 loan-words thought to be of Scandinavian origin in modern English, most of which are everyday words, such as 'cast', 'knife', 'take', 'window', 'egg', 'ill', 'die' (Old Norse *kasta, knífr, taka, vind-auga, egg, íllr, deyja*). In addition a number of important grammatical elements, such as the plurals 'they', 'them', 'their' (from Scandinavian *þeir, þeim, þeirra*) were introduced. English dialects contained thousands of Scandinavian loan-words, including many relating to agriculture, for example, 'lathe' (Old Norse *hlaða*, barn), 'quee' (*kvíga*, heifer) and 'lea' (*lé*, scythe), but they are now disappearing together with the dialects. The strong linguistic influence resulted from the similarity of many Old English and Old Norse words, so from the beginning the two languages were intelligible to some extent, and a mixed dialect may soon have arisen in the Danelaw. The linguistic evidence also shows that many Scandinavians cultivated their own land and tended their own animals, unlike the Norman conquerors after 1066. The many Scandinavian loan-words relating to seafaring, which were quickly adopted, presumably reflect the Vikings' technical superiority in this field.

In many parts of eastern and north-western England the number of Scandinavian place-names is immense and their distribution gives us a good impression of where the Vikings settled. There are several hundred place-names with the Scandinavian suffix *-by*, which was given to many different types of settlement – for example, Derby, Holtby, Swainby, Slingsby and Ormesby – and many have the suffix *-thorp* – for example, Towthorpe, which has the Scandinavian man's name Tove as a prefix, and



Parish names of Scandinavian origin in England. Their distribution gives a good impression of where the Scandinavian settlements were most dense. The border of the Danelaw is marked with a thick line. Physical features such as uninhabitable marsh or bare uplands partly explain the scarcity of Scandinavian place-names in some areas of the Danelaw. County divisions are indicated by dotted lines.

Wiganthorpe (Wigan from Viking). Place-names with a Scandinavian personal name as a prefix and an English suffix are also quite common – Towton comes from Tove and the suffix *-ton* – and imply that an English settlement has been partly renamed. In some cases the pronunciation of the English name was merely

changed a little, so that it came more easily to the Scandinavian tongue, for example, Shipton became Skipton and Chesswick became Keswick. Others were translated, for example, Churchton became Kirkby.

The naming process has been much discussed, but today it is generally agreed that many of the estates, farms and villages which the Viking leaders 'shared out' and the armies took over retained their names. There is much to indicate that the majority of Scandinavian place-names, certainly those with a personal name as a prefix and *-by* as a suffix, came into being somewhat later, when the large estates were split up into smaller units and given to individuals as their private property. The men who benefited from the estate divisions named their property after themselves. Some new farms with Scandinavian names were also established on marginal land, which had not been in use for some time, but these were relatively rare, for suitable soil was normally exploited. However, since Scandinavian language and Scandinavian personal names came to influence the language and naming customs within the Danelaw, some Scandinavian place-names were obviously formed a long time after the initial Viking settlements. This is especially the case with the names of fields and those based on Scandinavian loan-words for natural features.

The place-names also tell us that the Scandinavian settlements in the eastern part of the country were primarily Danish, which confirms the documentary accounts of the large armies, although some were Norwegian. From *c.* 900 there were also Scandinavian settlements in north-west England and the place-names demonstrate that both Norwegians and Danes settled there. Many of them presumably came via Ireland, Scotland, the Isle of Man or eastern England.

Perhaps the most important Viking Age find from north-west England is the immense silver hoard, weighing about 40 kilos, which was buried *c.* 905 in a lead chest on the banks of the river Ribble in Cuerdale, Lancashire (Plate 26). This is the largest of all known Viking hoards. Some of it must have been amassed in Ireland, possibly by one of the men driven out of Dublin in 902, for among the hack-silver there were penannular brooches and arm-rings like those current in Ireland. The hoard also included around 7,500 coins from different parts of the world. Most were

from the English Viking realms, particularly from York, but some were from the independent English kingdom and from the Continent and Hedeby, and some were Arabic coins which arrived via Russia. There were more than 1,000 other pieces of silver: fragments of jewellery and ingots, and a few complete objects. The hoard is thought to have been worth about £300,000 in modern terms.

Pagan Viking graves have been found in twenty or thirty sites in the Danelaw area, singly or in groups. They confirm that here, as elsewhere, the settlers included women. There are relatively few graves, given the number of immigrants, but presumably many adopted Christianity quite quickly, especially in East Anglia, where the first Viking king, Guthrum, was baptized as early as 878. He had his Christian baptismal name, Athelstan, stamped on the coinage during the 880s, while coins commemorating St Edmund, whom the Vikings had killed in 869, were minted in East Anglia c. 895. Shortly after the turn of the century the written sources cease calling the Vikings from south-east England heathens, so by this time Christianity was presumably generally accepted here.

In northern England the picture is more complicated. Godfred, who became king of York in 880 or 881, was a Christian and a good friend to the monastic community of St Cuthbert. There were also archbishops in York throughout the period of Scandinavian rule, although some of the kings were pagan. But the Church in the north of England seems to have had its difficulties. People appear to have been buried with grave-goods, hence according to pagan rites, in churchyards for a time, many churches probably decayed, and we know that a number of monasteries were abandoned, among them Lindisfarne and Whitby. Some of the York coinage from the first half of the tenth century has Thor's hammer on one side and St Peter's name on the other, which shows that both religions were practised. However, even the Scandinavian countries were in the process of abandoning the old faith and many Scandinavians in northern England were undoubtedly Christians well before the middle of the tenth century. The others followed quickly.

The art of stone carving flourished as a result of the conversion, giving rise to some of the most distinctive and interesting visible

traces of the Scandinavians in England. Before their arrival, stone sculpture was almost exclusively found in monasteries; the Scandinavians, especially those in northern England, became greatly interested in stone memorials, but they required new forms and some new motifs, in keeping with their own needs and taste.

By far the majority of stone sculptures from this period, primarily the tenth century, are crosses and house-shaped grave stones. The latter have been called hogbacks, after their curved roof ridge, which, like the curved long walls, were characteristic of the large secular buildings of the time (Plate 25). In Yorkshire alone there are remains of more than 500 crosses and hogbacks. Many are decorated in Scandinavian, or rather Anglo-Scandinavian, style, especially the Borre and Jellinge styles and their derivations. Some carry motifs from popular heroic legends or Scandinavian mythology. The great hero Sigurð Fáfnisbani, for example, is depicted on a cross at Halton in Lancashire, while a stone in Gosforth Church in Cumbria depicts Thor fishing for the World Serpent. The pictures on the most splendid of all crosses, the slender reddish cross which stands 4.42 m high in Gosforth churchyard, probably juxtapose pagan mythology and Christianity. The motifs on many stones cannot be understood today, but there is no doubt that these are Christian monuments, even though their decoration may include pagan elements and some motifs appear to be purely secular. The latter is the case with two warriors on horseback on a grave stone in Sockburn, and a warrior in full battledress, with helmet, shield, sword, spear, axe and large knife, carved on a cross in Middleton (p. 185), the reverse side of which is decorated with a limp ribbon-shaped animal in a sort of Jellinge style.

The number of stone monuments and the greatly varying quality of the carving indicates that they were commissioned by a relatively wide section of the community – and presumably also by the English. Some of the finest grave stones come from the Viking Age cemetery at York Minster, while many sculptures from village churches are rather rough works, on which the decoration was sometimes laid out using templates. The guidelines for motifs and ornaments might also be transferred on to the stone by means of small drilled holes – a practice used in Anglo-Saxon book illustration but not in pure Scandinavian art. On

many stones, irregularities and cutting errors were hidden under a layer of plaster and all stones were presumably then painted in strong colours, for many paint traces have been found, as on rune stones in Scandinavia.

The art of scaldic poetry seems to have been highly valued in York, at least in the time of Erik Bloodaxe. The Icelander Egil Skallagrímsson declaimed a grand poem in his hall, according to *Egils saga*; previously he had also composed in the hall of the English King Athelstan, though probably only a few of those present understood his art. After Erik's death a scald composed *Eiríksmál*, a grandiose memorial poem.

NEW EXPEDITIONS AND CONQUESTS

Throughout much of the tenth century many Scandinavians slaked their thirst for silver in Eastern Europe, and the efforts of the Scandinavian kings to extend and stabilize their realms involved a great number of warriors. Viking expeditions to Western Europe and England were unlikely to succeed, so these areas enjoyed a comparative respite from raids.

Around 970–80 the picture changed. Changes in Russia (see p. 285) meant that the influx of Arabic silver ceased around 970, causing profound problems in Scandinavia. And in 978 Edward, King of England, was murdered in mysterious circumstances. His brother Æthelred, who was only about ten, succeeded to the throne, and internal conflicts plagued the regime. Vikings re-appeared in 980 and raided the south and west coasts of England, returning in 981 and 982. The attackers were few in number for the time being: the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle relates that seven ships plundered Southampton in 980 and three looted Portland in 983.

Some of these bands may well have come from Ireland, but from 991 large Scandinavian fleets entered the fray. In that year, according to the Chronicle, Olaf Tryggvason (who was not yet king of Norway) came to south-east England with ninety-three ships. He plundered far and wide, killed the courageous ealdorman Brihtnoth at the battle of Maldon in Essex, which was commemorated in a grand poem. It was decided that the victorious army of 'Danish men' should receive a tribute of 10,000 lbs of silver in return for ceasing the destruction. From then until 1016, when Cnut the Great became the sole ruler of England, the Chronicle contains almost annual accounts of great calamities caused by Viking armies and records a stream of acts of treachery, instances of cowardice, poor organization, wrong decisions on the part of Æthelred and his men, and serious ill fortune on the English side. To a large extent these were actual events, but it was also the apology of posterity for England being totally overrun. These sections of the Chronicle were not written until after the final conquest, with the bitterness of defeat.

In 994 Olaf Tryggvason attacked again, this time in company with Svein Forkbeard, king of Denmark, and ninety-four ships. They tried, unsuccessfully, to capture London and then proceeded to harry the environs until it was agreed that they should receive 16,000 lbs of silver, and provisions. The army took up winter quarters in Southampton. A separate agreement was made with Olaf: he was confirmed in the Christian faith, received royal gifts and promised never to return to England with warlike intent. The Chronicle stresses that he kept his promise, but does not mention that this was probably because he returned to Norway with his booty, took the Crown there, and was killed in battle against his old comrade-in-arms Svein Forkbeard in *c.* 1000. Shortly after Olaf and Svein returned home, they and the Swedish King Olof had coins minted, which, for the first time in Scandinavia, were modelled on the familiar and valued English coins (see illustration p. 113).

From 997 'the Danish army' was again on the offensive in England. There was a lull in the year 1000, perhaps because many men had returned home to take part in Scandinavian wars, but the Chronicle relates that the army was in Normandy that year and that King Æthelred himself plundered heavily in north-west England and the Isle of Man, presumably in order to crush the Scandinavian peoples there. The Viking army returned the following year and in 1002 they were paid 24,000 lbs of silver. In the same year Æthelred forged family links with the ruling dynasty in Normandy by marrying Emma, sister of Duke Richard, and he ordered all Danish men in England to be killed on 13 November. This plan probably did not include all those

who were of Scandinavian extraction and whose families had lived in the country for a long time, but many lost their lives, among them Svein Forkbeard's sister and his brother-in-law Pallig, who had been in the service of Æthelred, but had betrayed him in 1001 by joining the attackers.

In 1003 and the following year Svein harried large areas of south and east England, presumably as an act of revenge. In 1005 the fleet returned to Denmark because of a great famine in England. It returned in 1006 and the following year was paid 36,000 lbs of silver. In 1009 the mighty Danish chieftain Thorkel the Tall and several other chieftains arrived with large fleets. They were at once given 3,000 lbs of silver by the people of eastern Kent and carried on to the Isle of Wight, which, as so often before, became a base for plundering southern England. The army moved on, raiding and pillaging and in 1011 Æthelred and his advisers decided to pay up again, but before they could do so the Vikings plundered Canterbury and captured the archbishop. He would not allow himself to be ransomed (a slightly later source says that 3,000 lbs of silver was demanded), which enraged the Vikings so much that they killed him. The Chronicle describes vividly how it happened: the Vikings had been drinking wine and were very drunk; they had the archbishop brought before their evening meeting, pelted him with bones and the heads of cattle, and one of them struck him on the skull with the back of an axe, 'and so he sent his holy soul to God's kingdom'. When the huge tribute of 48,000 lbs of silver was paid soon after Easter 1012, the army dispersed, but forty-five ships under the command of Thorkel went into English service and promised Æthelred to defend the country.

The expeditions against England had followed the almost classic course: small bands and scattered attacks were succeeded by large, mobile armies which overwintered and extorted fast-increasing payments – from 10,000 lbs of silver in 991 to 48,000 in 1012; and finally Viking chieftains were engaged to keep others away. However, in 1013 Svein Forkbeard sailed from Denmark to conquer the whole of England. He took with him his son Cnut, not yet twenty years old. Some of the ships must have looked like Skuldelev 2 and 5. About twenty-five years later the fleet was magnificently described in a work of literature (p. 88). It

landed at Sandwich, in Kent, and within a few months the country had been conquered. The army first moved to the Danelaw, which submitted and avoided being plundered. It then harried the areas to the south and west before moving northwards again. When all the English kingdoms submitted, Æthelred, Emma and their sons sought refuge in Normandy. Svein, as king of England, demanded tribute and provisions for the army. Thorkel the Tall did the same for his own army, which lay in the Thames, and had not joined Svein.

Svein Forkbeard, however, died on 3 February 1014. The army elected young Cnut king, but the English summoned Æthelred. An English army was organized and Cnut and his army were ousted. On their way back to Denmark the ships laid in at Sandwich in Kent and disembarked the hostages Svein had been given at the peace agreements; their hands, ears and noses had been cut off. Thorkel the Tall's army was given 21,000 lbs of silver by Æthelred, who obviously thought he might soon need it again.

In Denmark Cnut's brother Harald had ascended the throne. He helped reorganize the returned fleet, presumably because he was uncomfortable having an ambitious brother with a large army in his kingdom, and in 1015 Cnut set off again for England. The scald Óttar the Black says in *Knútsdrápa*:

> But a boy, you ship-batterer,
> when you launched your boat,
> no king younger than you
> yet cast off from his country:
> helmed one, you hacked
> the hard-cased ships,
> risked all, with the red shield
> raged along the shore.

This time the English defences were under the command of Æthelred's energetic son Edmund, who had succeeded his father in April 1016. The country was still weakened by acts of treachery, however, and Cnut was victorious at the great battle of Ashingdon. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle says that 'all the nobility of England was there destroyed'. Edmund and Cnut agreed to divide

the country, but before the year 1016 was out, Edmund had also died, leaving Cnut the sole ruler.

It was an impressive achievement to conquer England, but the armies of Svein and Cnut were probably organized on the same basis as the other Viking armies operating abroad: a number of *lið* (troops of warriors), each with its leader, who obeyed the king (pp. 67, 140). In this case the number of *lið* must have been very large. Both Svein and Cnut set out with a clear objective and must have had exceptional qualities as military leaders.

They would have found it easy to gather people for expeditions to England in 1013 and 1015, for by then everybody in Scandinavia knew that England's wealth was almost inexhaustible and not difficult to seize. The armies included men from all over Scandinavia, as had probably been the norm since 991. Olaf Haraldsson, later King of Norway and St Olaf, was, for example, in Thorkel the Tall's army of 1009–12. Many performed great deeds in England and returned home with silver, honour – and an inexhaustible fund of good yarns. In Sweden it was the fashion to raise rune stones at the time of the expeditions to England as well as later, when the veterans died, and many had their participation recorded on stones. The memorial inscription of Ulv from Yttergärde in Uppland ends thus:

> And Ulv took in England three gelds.
> That was the first which Toste paid. Then
> Torkel paid. Then Cnut paid.

Toste may have been a Swedish chieftain. Torkel is Thorkel the Tall and Cnut is Cnut the Great. Those who were given a memorial stone in Valleberga in Skåne with the following inscription may have been Cnut's men after he became king of England:

> Sven and Thorgot made this monument
> in memory of Manne and Svenne. God
> help their souls well. And they lie in
> London.

Some did not get that far. On a rune stone in Husby-Lyhundra in Uppland four men commemorated their brother Svein: 'He died in Jutland. He was on his way to England.' The mere fact

of having been on one's way to England was apparently worth recording on a stone.

CNUT THE GREAT AND AFTERWARDS

In Cnut's first years as king of England there was much to be done. The country was divided into four earldoms based on the old kingdoms. Cnut kept Wessex, Thorkel the Tall got East Anglia, Earl Erik, from the mighty Norwegian family of the earls of Trøndelag, got Northumbria; the English renegade, the ealdorman Eadric Streona, who had changed sides again and again, got Mercia, but Cnut had him killed within a year, 'rightly', says an English source. Other English nobles were also killed, among them Æthelred's son by his first marriage, Eadwig, and some were exiled. In 1017 Cnut married Æthelred's widow Emma, whose two sons remained in Normandy, thus becoming related to English royalty. Emma bore him two children, Harthacnut and Gunhild, or Kunigunde, although he also had another woman, Ælfgifu (or Alfiva) of Northampton, by whom he had two sons, Harald and Svein.

The great army was still in England, but by 1018 the conditions there had become so stable that it could be dissolved – after an unprecedented tribute of 72,000 lbs of silver, plus 10,500 from London alone, was defrayed. Forty ships – the famous *þing-lið*: loyal, splendidly equipped and disciplined Scandinavian warriors – remained with Cnut. Many probably still regarded him as the Viking conqueror and he based his power on these warriors. He also created a new English aristocracy, beholden to him for their prosperity. In all the battles since 991 many English noblemen had died heroically, had been killed by the kings on suspicion of betrayal, or had gone into exile. Cnut retained the main structure of English royal power, but his men were new. They had not served Æthelred, and as a result many lands were redistributed and the rule of the realm changed its nature.

In 1018 King Harald of Denmark died and in the winter of 1019–20 Cnut went back in order to secure his hold over Denmark, entrusting the government of England to Thorkel the Tall. From Denmark Cnut sent a letter to the English people,

which was presumably proclaimed throughout the realm, giving an account of his achievements in safeguarding England from Danish threats, and emphasizing his role as a Christian king of England and his authority there. Later Thorkel the Tall probably became Cnut's representative in Denmark, together with young Harthacnut. In the 1020s Cnut began to lay claim to Norway and in 1028 he captured the country from Olaf Haraldsson. It was then governed by Ælfgifu and her son Svein. In 1027 the king of Scotland submitted to Cnut. That year, during his great journey to Rome, Cnut sent another letter to the English people, in which he calls himself 'King of all England, and of Denmark, of the Norwegians, and of part of the Swedes'. In Rome he witnessed the coronation of the German Emperor Conrad and was treated with great honour. He also entered into practical agreements that benefited the English and the Scandinavians and arranged a marriage between his daughter Gunhild and Conrad's son Henry, who later became emperor. The marriage took place in 1036, but Gunhild died two years later.

Cnut became above all an English king. He went to Scandinavia when problems arose there or (as he implies in his letters) to prevent more Viking attacks on England. He brought peace to the country, which had been ravaged for so long; there is no evidence of internal revolt either. The price paid for peace was tribute to his *þing-líð*, but this was presumably seen as both cheaper and pleasanter than plunder and payment of Danegeld to harrying enemies.

Cnut set great store by the English laws of former times and he was a great benefactor of the Church. In many respects he became almost more English than the English, and in a shower of publicity he did penance for old Viking sins. In order to atone for the martyrdom of King Edmund of East Anglia in 869 he built a large church for the monastery in Bury St Edmunds; for the murder of the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1012 he had the body transferred with great ceremony from London to Canterbury; for the bloody battle of Ashingdon in 1016 he had a church built on the battlefield. Many churches received large gifts. The ceremony at which Cnut and Emma presented a golden cross for the altar of the New Minster in Winchester was immortalized *c.* 1031 in a drawing in the church's commemorative book,

Liber Vitae (Plate 27). Cnut's right hand grasps the cross, his left his sword. Cnut and Emma were often in residence in Winchester and he was buried there in the Old Minster when he died in 1035, aged about forty. The young Viking had turned into an exemplary English king. One could wish to believe a much later description of him in *Knytlinga saga* from the mid-thirteenth century:

> Knut was exceptionally tall and strong, and the handsomest of men except for his nose which was thin, high-set and rather hooked. He had a fair complexion and a fine, thick head of hair. His eyes were better than those of other men, being both more handsome and keener-sighted. He was a generous man, a great warrior, valiant, victorious and the happiest of men in style and grandeur.

Cnut's death meant the end of stability and the great 'empire' at once split up. Harthacnut was in Denmark and, in spite of much resistance from Emma and others, Ælfgifu's son Harald became king of England. Alfred, one of Emma's two sons by Æthelred, came over from Normandy, but was killed, and Emma had to flee. When Harald died in 1040 Harthacnut and Emma returned to England. Harthacnut imposed an immense tax to pay for his sixty ships and died two years later: 'he was standing at his drink and he suddenly fell to the ground with fearful convulsions', says the Chronicle. According to another version, 'He did nothing worthy of a king as long as he ruled.'

All Cnut's four children died without issue and Emma's other son by Æthelred, Edward (later known as Edward the Confessor), ascended the throne in 1042, which meant that Emma, having been the queen of two kings, saw a son by each of her husbands on the throne of England. In the reign of Harthacnut she commissioned a monk in the monastery of St Omer in Flanders to write a history of Cnut and his deeds, *Encomium Emmae Reginae*. It goes on to describe her two surviving sons, who are depicted in the book, together with their mother and the monk presenting her with the work. This work also contains vivid descriptions of Svein's and Cnut's fleets departing from Denmark in order to conquer England (p. 88). The problems of Æthelred's reign are not mentioned. Emma died in 1052 and was, like Cnut and Harthacnut, buried in the Old Minster in Winchester.

Edward the Confessor married Edith, daughter of the mighty Earl Godwin, who was by family and career connected with the Danish royal house, but Edward, who had been brought up in Normandy, allowed Norman interests to prevail over Scandinavian, and in 1051 he abolished the tribute, *heregeld*, which had financed contingents of Scandinavian mercenaries ever since Thorkel the Tall went into the service of Æthelred in 1012. All the soldiers were now sent home.

When Edward died without issue in 1066, Edith's brother, Earl Harold Godwinsson, was elected king. Others had their eye on the throne, however, and in September the king of Norway, Harald Harðráði, sailed for England. Like Svein Forkbeard before him, he wanted to begin his conquest in northern England, where the Scandinavian element in the population was strongest. He was defeated and killed by King Harold, together with a large part of the army, on 25 September 1066 at the battle of Stamford Bridge, 12 km east of York. Duke William of Normandy landed in southern England on 28 September, also with a view to conquest. Harold Godwinsson marched southwards in record time. At the battle of Hastings on 14 October his army suffered defeat, he was killed, and on Christmas Day 1066 William the Conqueror, a Viking descendant, was crowned king of England. The decisive battle of Hastings and the background to it was pictured about a decade later in the 70-m-long tapestry which came to be housed in Bayeux Cathedral in Normandy.

William introduced a completely new administration and a French-Norman aristocracy. There were several revolts against him; in 1069 a big uprising in northern England was suppressed and punished in an exceptionally brutal fashion. The large Viking fleets which arrived in 1069, 1070 and 1075, under the command of members of Danish royalty, made no significant inroads. In 1085 King Cnut of Denmark organized an immense fleet with the intention of reconquering the country over which his great-uncle had ruled. William transferred huge armies from Normandy to England, but Cnut's fleet never got under way. He was detained by problems on his southern border and in the late summer the fleet dispersed. His officials punished those who had returned home with such violence that it provoked a rebellion and in 1086 King Cnut was killed in the church of Odense

dedicated to the English St Alban. The dream of seizing the English throne eventually made Cnut Denmark's first royal saint. This was the last time a Scandinavian conquest of England was attempted.

For nearly a century Scandinavia had had a decisive influence on the balance of power in England. Svein, Cnut and Harthacnut had been kings there. Many others had participated in the government of the country and even more had served in the royal fleets. There was no real immigration in this phase of the English Viking Age, but the new Scandinavian aristocracy made a certain impact on art and culture, especially in southern England, where most of them lived.

Famous scalds composed poems in praise of Cnut the Great, among them the Icelander Óttar, who also made poems about St Olaf of Norway and Olof Skötkonung of Sweden. Scandinavian taste is clearly reflected in the ornamental arts, including objects manufactured in England. The predominant style in the period of joint rule was the Ringerike style, which was itself influenced by English art and was therefore close to English taste and the abilities of English artists. One of the most magnificent surviving examples of this style can be seen on a stone from the churchyard of St Paul's in London (Plate 22). This is decorated with a great beast in an animated pose, entwined by a smaller, snake-like creature. The motif is undoubtedly inspired by the animal picture on King Harald's large rune stone at Jelling in Denmark, and the representation is closely related to the beast on the gilt weather-vane from Heggen in Norway, which once graced the prow of a Viking ship. Traces of paint on the stone from St Paul's show that it was originally painted in strong colours: the animals were blue-black with white spots, while the tendrils and the frame were red and the background whitish. On the edge a part of a runic inscription, which must have continued on other stones making up the memorial, can be seen. It reads, 'Ginna had this stone laid and Toki'. We do not know the name of the deceased, but Ginna and Toki are Scandinavian names and they may all have been members of Cnut the Great's *þing-líð*.

Objects decorated in the Ringerike style have been found in Winchester and many other parts of southern England. The style was quite widespread and is occasionally used for ecclesiastical

manuscripts. The Urnes style, which succeeded the Ringerike style in the mid-eleventh century in Scandinavia, also occurs in England. It appears on stone carvings in churches, such as Jevington in Sussex, Southwell Minster in Nottinghamshire and Norwich Cathedral in East Anglia, as well as on various metal objects, including a bishop's crosier from Durham. A certain taste for Viking art survived into the twelfth century, but the Ringerike and Urnes styles never came to dominate English art or to influence it, as the earlier Scandinavian styles had in northern England a century earlier.

For Scandinavia these English adventures were of immense importance. Norway, Sweden and Denmark now had closer links with England than in the ninth century, and people from all the Scandinavian countries took part in the expeditions. Those who survived got a share of the huge amounts of silver paid as Danegeld and *heregeld* right up to 1051, and of the booty seized between 991 and 1016, although the leaders probably took the lion's share. Millions of English coins were paid out, of which more than 40,000 have been found so far in Scandinavia, and their number is still increasing. There are about 3,300 in Norway, 5,300 in Denmark and 34,000 in Sweden, but the relative numbers probably reflect the economic systems of the different countries rather than the numbers of people who travelled from each of them to England and the size of their profits. It is not surprising that Scandinavian coins were modelled on English ones for a long time after 995.

Many other objects from this period have also been found in Scandinavia, but of course much could have been acquired by trade. An English source from *c.* 1000, for example, says that York was a rich town because of the many treasures brought there by merchants who came from all parts and especially from Denmark.

English ecclesiastical influence was particularly strong in Norway and Denmark. English clerics were appointed to Church offices; English saints became popular, and English Church vocabulary was incorporated into the Scandinavian languages. The earliest Scandinavian stone architecture also displays English influence. It was undoubtedly commissioned by the aristocracy, who had spent half their lives in England. In the time of Cnut the Great, England, Norway and Denmark were in many respects

one cultural region, where the most influential figures regularly travelled from country to country with large retinues. The English adventures made Scandinavia internationally orientated to an extent never seen before.