

History - The Norse Neighbours

Key Vocabulary

Norse	The people, language, and culture of ancient Scandinavia (the northern part of Europe that includes modern-day Norway, Sweden, and Denmark) during the Viking Age, which was from about AD 700 to 1100.
Fortified	Making a place super strong and safe from attacks, like building a fortress or a stronghold.
Danelaw	The Danelaw was a large area in the north and east of England where Vikings (mostly Danes) settled and lived by their own laws instead of the Anglo-Saxon laws that were used in the rest of England.
Expansion	The Norse people were moving out of their original homes in Scandinavia and spreading out across the world.



The start of the Viking Age. In 793 AD, the Vikings launched a surprise and brutal attack on the peaceful monastery, stealing treasures and shocking everyone across Europe. This raid is often seen as the beginning of the Viking Age in Britain.

Viking longships were designed with a very shallow bottom, which meant they could sail across deep, stormy oceans *and* sneak up shallow rivers to land right on a beach or village shore for a surprise attack.



Many places in Britain still have names that are like clues the Vikings left behind! Most of these names are in the **North and East of England** (the area called the Danelaw), and they often have special endings that tell you what the place was like hundreds of years ago.

-by (pronounced 'bee'): This is the most common ending and means **farmstead** or **village**. If a place ends in -by, a Viking probably settled there first

-thorpe: This ending means a **secondary** or **outlying farm** (a farm built a little later, maybe on slightly rougher land).

-kirk: This comes from the Old Norse word *kirkja* and means **church**.

-thwaite: This means a **clearing** in a forest or a meadow.

-toft: This means the **site of a house** or a building plot.

-gate: In street names, "gate" means **street** (not a big door or entrance, like we use it today).

Key Dates

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793 AD: The Viking Age in Britain officially begins with a terrifying surprise attack on the holy island of **Lindisfarne**. Monks were killed or captured, and treasures were stolen. This shocking event showed how good the Vikings were at **seafaring** (sailing the seas) in their fast, shallow-bottomed longships, allowing them to attack unprotected coastal spots.

Around 850 AD: The Vikings changed tactics. Instead of just raiding and leaving, they started staying for the whole winter in England for the first time. This marked the beginning of their **expansion** into permanent settlement.

865 AD: A massive Viking invasion force, which the Anglo-Saxons called the "**Great Heathen Army**" (or Great Viking Army), landed in East Anglia. This was not a quick raid; it was a full army aimed at conquering and taking over the English kingdoms.

867 AD: The Great Heathen Army captured the important city of York (which they renamed **Jorvik**). During this battle, the Northumbrian kings **Ælla and Osberht** were killed when they tried to retake their city. (The King **Aethelred** you might be thinking of was the King of Wessex later on, not the Northumbrian one).

871 AD: The Great Army moved south and began attacking the last remaining powerful Anglo-Saxon kingdom: **Wessex**. This is when **Alfred the Great** took over as King of Wessex after his older brother, also named **Æthelred**, died.



King Alfred
the Great

January 878 AD: The Viking leader Guthrum launched a surprise winter attack on Alfred's royal base at Chippenham, forcing King Alfred to run away and hide in the marshes of Athelney.

May 878 AD: King Alfred came out of hiding, gathered a large army, and decisively defeated Guthrum at the Battle of Edington.

878 AD (after the battle): Guthrum and Alfred made a peace agreement known as the Treaty of Wedmore.

As part of the deal, Guthrum agreed to be baptised as a Christian, with Alfred as his godfather. The Vikings had to leave Wessex for good.

A later written agreement (the Treaty of Alfred and Guthrum) set up the borders for the Danelaw, the part of England where Vikings lived under their own laws.

