

## The Vikings

**Who?** They weren't actually called Vikings at the time. The Anglo Saxon Chronicle (main source of information for this time) uses word 4 times in the 500 years or so it cover. Known as Danes or Northmen.

**Where?** They were generally from Scandinavia (Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Iceland). However, they are not a distinct group – Viking was something you did, not who you were.

**Why did they start invading?** Farmland in Scandinavia was poorer, and population was rising. People needed other areas to live on. Vikings had already traded in Britain, so knew that it was wealthy. They wanted land to farm and personal wealth. Raiding and pillaging was a good income when they weren't farming.

**When?** According to the Anglo Saxon Chronicle, 'Danes' first appeared around 790 in Portsmouth. Their first raid was at Lindisfarne – raided in 793. A very wealthy monastery on an island in the north of England. When the Vikings attacked a monk originally thought they were lost, but they massacred everyone on the island and stole everything they could carry.

## Trade

Vikings sailed across much of the known world, trading, raiding and settling.

They traded furs, ivory, beeswax and honey in exchange for anything they could sell.

They reached Baghdad in 850 AD. Arab leaders wanted a type a bird they traded. We know this because Arab accounts of Vikings still survive, and Viking burials reveal jewelry from around the world.



It was an essential part of what a 'Viking' was. Only possible due to the long ship, and use sunstone to find their way on long iournevs



## Common misconceptions

### The name 'Viking'

Viking was not a noun, but rather a verb. To go raiding was to go viking. The 'Vikings' would actually have been called Danes or Northmen.

### They were mindless 'murderers and plunderers'

They were well informed traders and settlers. They knew about Britain's wealth from existing trade. Raiding was a means to providing their families with security.

### The horned helmet

Large helmets were dangerous in battle and would have been too heavy. The horned helmets were later invented to make the warriors seem fiercer.

