



Viking Kings of Britain and Ireland: The Dynasty of Ivarr to AD 1014

Clare Downham

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Vikings plagued the coasts of Ireland and Britain in the 790s AD. Over time, their raids became more intense and by the mid 9th century, Vikings had established a number of settlements in Ireland and Britain and had become heavily involved with local politics. A particularly successful Viking leader named Ivarr campaigned on both sides of the Irish Sea in the 860s. His descendants dominated the major seaports of Ireland and challenged the power of kings in Britain during the late 9th and 10th centuries. In 1014, the battle of Clontarf marked a famous stage in the decline of Viking power in Ireland while the conquest of England in 1013 by the Danish king Sveinn Forkbeard marked a watershed in the history of Vikings in Britain. The descendants of Ivarr continued to play a significant role in the history of Dublin and the Hebrides until the 12th century, but they did not threaten to overwhelm the major kingships of Britain or Ireland in this later period as they had done before. This book provides a political analysis of the deeds of Ivarr's family, from their first appearance in Insular records down to the year 1014. Such an account is necessary in light of the flurry of new work that has been done in other areas of Viking Studies. Recent theoretical approaches to the subject have raised many interesting questions regarding identity, material culture, and structures of authority. Archaeological finds and excavations have also offered potentially radical insights into Viking settlement and society. In line with these developments, Clare Downham provides a reconsideration of events based on contemporary written accounts.

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