

# CAUSE AND EFFECT OF THE VIKINGS

The Vikings were a very influential culture, their influence stretching across the Atlantic Ocean due to their constant travelling and exploring. A lot of their influence was on one of the countries they spent years extorting money from, England. A Viking woman's grave in Norway was found with a small wooden bucket and a ladle. The markings on the bucket seemed to be Anglo Saxon from around 700, but the first meeting of the Anglo Saxons and the Vikings was thought to be in 793. This brings to light the question of how Anglo Saxon artefacts ended up in a Viking grave in that time. There are many theories but it is possible the grave was looted and the items swapped, they were traded or even that the history books were downright wrong and the Vikings and Anglo Saxons did meet before we thought. There isn't much certainty in history if you look at it. Our opinions and ideas are always changing. This could show that the Vikings had a trading relationship with the Saxons, so as well as them being provided with a steady flow of money and materials coming in from England, England would have been given materials from the Scandinavians, and thus been imbued with the Viking culture. They have been everywhere, they've been to Baghdad, England, Greenland, Iceland, Scandinavia, it is even thought that they sailed up the coast of America. They have settled in many countries, and there are people all around us with some Viking heritage. If you have ancestry in Scandinavia, Scotland, England, Wales and so on it is quite likely you have Viking blood in you. A bloodline wasn't the only thing the Vikings left us with. They left us with a lot of their weapons and a very strong, but false image of vicious huge, men in horned helmets with massive shields charging at the enemy with a massive battle-axe. Most of that is reasonably accurate but they never had horned helmets, and that might surprise a lot of people, and it certainly surprised me. Possibly the strongest image we have of any culture, ever, is completely false. However they were absolutely formidable warriors who left their mark all over the world and had the English quaking in their boots. However they weren't purely violent however, they established many trade routes and trade centres, and were trading with many societies as well as raiding them and others. Tradesmen went to countries such as Germany and England to trade their goods. Other merchants preferred to trade timber, dried fish, honey, furs and salt, and in return the Viking received pottery, iron, and clothes.

## Interesting facts:

Vikings drank beer from the skulls of their enemies

Viking boats had dragon heads on the prows to scare enemies

Vikings only went to war because they were running out of land

Viking funerals entailed being pushed out to sea on your burning ship

Vikings did not fight on their ships, they were only to carry men

# VIKING WEAPONS AND ARMOUR

Vikings had a massive arsenal of weapons, most famously their iconic huge round shields and battleaxes. Their shields were made of hardwood and rimmed with iron. They often had carvings in the wood



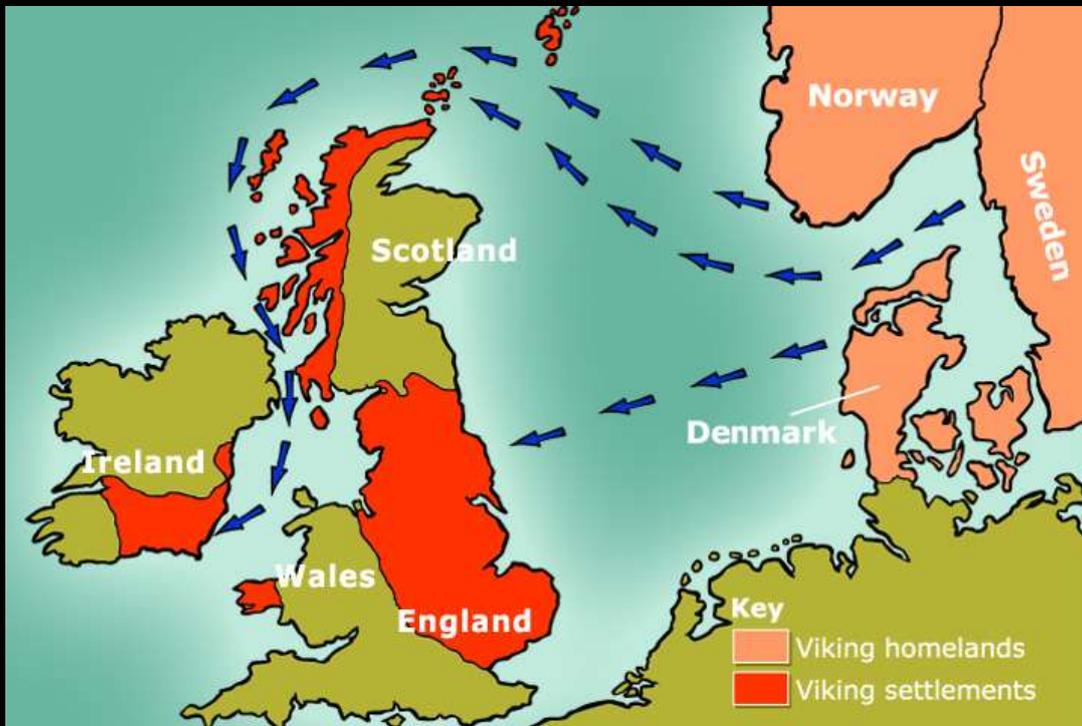
and/or a big iron stud in the middle. Their axes were usually bronze or iron with a wooden handle, and came in 2 sizes. Full size battleaxes were about 1.8 – 2 metres long and smaller war axes were about 1 metre long and also made of iron. However they didn't only use axes, they also used things such as greatswords, warhammers, normal swords, and spears. Greatswords were pure iron, the warhammers hardwood with an iron head and the spears were the same. The difference between a greatsword and a normal sword is the size. A greatsword was almost as big as a battleaxe, while a normal sword was 1 metre long. They were all extremely heavy hitting, and used while the Vikings were in almost no armour, as the Vikings were berserkers, that is that they fought wildly and with no thought to self-preservation. They were called Norseman by the English, and the name spread.



Everyone feared the Norseman and their massive battleaxes and iconic circular shields.

As for armour, they didn't have an awful lot. They wore mainly leather armour, often padded with fur. They also wore iron helmets with a piece down the nose, NOT adorned with horns. The leather armour wouldn't stop a straight sword or axe blow, however it would certainly dull an arrow shot. The armour was more designed for speed and mobility, or to stop a sword and/or an axe deflecting off the shield and hitting it at an angle with much less force. Vikings weren't exactly known for heavy armour and cautiousness. Vikings were extremely successful with their aggressive fighting style and lack of serious armour, so I am in no position to criticize. Now however, I would like to focus on their most iconic weapon, the battleaxe. The battle axe was a fearsome weapon, able to inflict a lot of damage and hit a shield with enough force to knock an unprepared soldier to the ground. As well as being extremely good for the actual fighting battleaxes were extremely intimidating. Imagine a great big hairy man running at you screaming while wielding a massive 1.8 metre axe! It would be just a little intimidating, and maybe just enough for you to turn your back and run screaming for the hills. The axe was as I said before iron, and it weighed quite a bit. The incredible thing about that is that they swung these massive things around almost with ease. Some Vikings start to train with the axe from age 5 so when they get to twenty five they are pretty handy with them. The battle axe was so successful in battle not just because of its massive payload at the business end, but also because of the length the lightly armoured Viking wouldn't be within striking distance of an average sword. Not to say the Vikings were never killed in battle. The common sword was lighter and quicker and if the wielder could get up close then the deadly end of the axe couldn't hit them and they could have a swing. If that happened the battleaxe wielding Viking really only had 2 options. Backpedal wildly so he could try and swing. Or he could choose to bash the enemy soldier with the handle of the axe, hopefully staggering him enough for the Viking to then be able to backpedal and swing. However more often than not things went the Viking way as it wasn't exactly easy to get up close as they were ferocious fighters. In my opinion they were one of the best in the world

# WHERE DID THEY GO?



The Vikings travelled far and wide as you can see by this map. They came from Norway Sweden and Denmark mainly onto the English , eastern Scotland, Ireland and even the west coast of wales. They sailed there using only the stars and sun for navigation, and purely under the power of the wind. They were incredible sailors and they were very inclined to go out and sail, and for good reason. Fame and fortune aside, the Vikings set sail for new land because the old Viking countries were running out of land and they need more to support the ever growing population. Vikings went everywhere from Ireland to Baghdad. They weren't always extorting countries, as they did to the English. They also set up trade routes and trade centres with many countries and had successful and peaceful relations with those countries. Believe it or not the Vikings weren't purely violent and aggressive. The Vikings actually settled in to Ireland England Scotland and Wales , and many people in those country, especially and most famously Scotland have Viking ancestry leading back to the 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> centuries. However this map can't show the influence that they had on the countries they visited. They were so memorable, so impressive, that civilizations everywhere have remembered the Terrifying Norseman with, in my opinion, the unfair reputation

## RESOURCE LIST

Primary- [www.BBC.co.uk](http://www.BBC.co.uk)

Primary- Horrible history-vicious Vikings book

Secondary- My brain

Secondary- <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova.html>

Secondary- [www.googleimages.com](http://www.googleimages.com)

