

Fine Gall (Fingal), North Co. Dublin-Vikings' (Scandinavian adventurers) Legacy-Longphorts-(PLUNKETT) [Transcriptions-EIRE]

"Settlement and Society in Medieval Ireland," ed. J. Bradley (1988 (Book)).

SNIPPET: Fine Gall ("territory of the foreigners"), anglicized as Fingal/Fingall, is the name applied to an area of north Co. Dublin settled by Vikings and Hiberno-Scandinavians between the 10th and 12th centuries. It extended northwards from the Liffy as far as Skerries and westwards to the modern county boundary. It was controlled by the Hiberno-Scandinavian kings of Dublin and included within its bounds the monasteries of Swords and Lusk. Despite the collapse of the kingdom of Dublin, the area retained a tradition of territoriality reflected, for instance, in the creation of the PLUNKETT earldom of Fingall in 1628. (In 1993 the county of Fingal was created as an administrative division of the Irish Republic, from territory formerly within Co. Dublin).

Vikings (Scandinavian adventurers), subsequently known as Ostmen (Old Norse "men of the east") or Lochlannaigh (Irish "people from the land of loughs"). They first appear in Irish sources as plunderers and this remains their dominant image in popular memory. In reality their involvement with Ireland lasted almost 400 years, during which time the Scandinavians were transformed into farmers, traders, colonists, and urban developers.

The first Viking raid on Ireland occurred in 795 when Reachrainn, probably Rathlin Island (but Lambay Island has also been suggested), was attacked. During the next 25 years there was, on average, one Viking attack per year. The raids were hit-and-run affairs. Monasteries were the prime target, not only because they possessed treasuries of precious objects but also because they were densely populated centres with substantial stores of provisions and potential slaves. The pattern of hit-and-run raids ceased during the 830s with the arrival of large Viking fleets on the rivers Liffey, Boyne, Shannon, and Erne. The forces transported by these fleets were substantial and, commonly, they terrorized an area for some weeks or months before returning to Scandinavia for winter.

The success of these campaigns clearly gave rise to the next development, the foundation of longphorts at Dublin and Annagassan, Co. Louth, in 841. It was also used to describe the new Scandinavian settlements established at Waterford in 914 and at Limerick in 922. Longphorts were defended closures designed originally to protect ships. The sites are characterized by a sheltered harbor which was easily defended and had immediate access to the sea. (Subsequently the term was applied to any fortress or stronghold). Among modern scholars the earliest period of Viking occupation at Dublin (841-902) is usually referred to as the longphort phase. These were the first permanent Viking settlements in Ireland and were originally envisaged as defended bases in which the Scandinavian

forces could overwinter and plan the renewal of campaigning in the spring.. In the course of the 9th century Dublin developed into an important slaving centre. In 848 the longphort at Cork was captured, while the assault on Dublin in 902 was so successful that the Vikings abandoned the settlement and moved to Northern Britain and the Isle of Man. In 914, a great Scandinavian fleet originating in northern France landed at Waterford, initiating a new phase of plundering. Munster was devastated in 915 and Dublin was re-established two years later.

It has been argued that the Vikings had a negative impact on Irish society, promoting violence, accelerating church abuses, and terminating the "golden age" of Irish art. Modern historiography, however, has largely discredited these views and the port towns of Dublin, Wexford, Waterford, Cork, and Limerick are generally regarded as the Scandinavians' most enduring legacy. Scandinavian settlement in Ireland is unusual in its urban bias and motives more complex than the provision of pirate bases may have influenced the foundation of these towns. They were all well-placed, for instance, to take advantage of trade with the interior. The colonization of large tracts of territory does not seem to have been a primary objective of the Scandinavians in Ireland and it cannot be without significance that they put so much of their resources into the development of towns. An influencing factor in this regard may have been the view that Britain (rather than Ireland) was the principal area in which to achieve conquest and colonization.

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