

What it was like to be a ...

# VIKING



**DAVID LONG**

Illustrated by Stefano Tambellini

What it was like to be a ...

# VIKING

DAVID LONG

Illustrated by  
Stefano Tambellini

First published in 2023 in Great Britain by  
Barrington Stoke Ltd  
18 Walker Street, Edinburgh, EH3 7LP  
[www.barringtonstoke.co.uk](http://www.barringtonstoke.co.uk)

Text © 2023 David Long  
Illustrations © 2023 Stefano Tambellini

The moral right of David Long and Stefano Tambellini to  
be identified as the author and illustrator of this work has  
been asserted in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and  
Patents Act, 1988

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be  
reproduced in whole or in any part in any form without the  
written permission of the publisher

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available  
from the British Library upon request

ISBN: 978-1-80090-212-1

Printed by Hussar Books, Poland

*For Leopold "Pop" Scott*



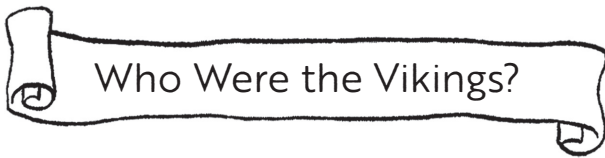
# CONTENTS

- 1. STRANGERS FROM AFAR** 1  
Who Were the Vikings?
- 2. DAWN TO DUSK** 5  
Life on a Viking Farm
- 3. UNRAVELLING THE MYSTERY** 18  
Religion and Writing in Runes
- 4. THE VILLAGE WORKSHOP** 29  
Battle-axes and Boats
- 5. SETTING SAIL** 42  
Trading with Europe and Asia
- 6. RAIDERS NOT TRADERS** 52  
Robbery with Violence
- 7. WAR AND CONQUEST** 61  
Taking Land as Well as Treasure
- 8. EXPLORING THE WORLD** 73  
From Iceland to North America
- 9. MAKING PEACE** 85  
Learning to Live with the Britons
- 10. THE VIKINGS' LEGACY** 93  
Are You a Viking?



# 1

## STRANGERS FROM AFAR



In the eighth century, Europe was a very different place to live compared to today. The countries we know didn't exist more than a thousand years ago, and hardly anyone went to school. People belonged to tribes instead of nations, or they lived in small kingdoms ruled by powerful chiefs and kings.

Each population was much smaller too. There were probably only around two million people living in the whole of the British Isles, for example, compared to nearly 70 million today.

The people in what we now call Scandinavia were mostly blue eyed and often had blonde or reddish-brown hair. They were called Norse or Vikings. Norse probably relates to Norway, but experts still don't agree where the name "Viking" comes from or what it really means. Viking men are mostly shown in films as bearded warriors with horned helmets. We see them sailing across the sea in vessels known as longships to attack members of other tribes.

Some of the Vikings did do this. Many of their most spectacular treasures were stolen





from other tribes in violent and bloodthirsty raids. Anyone they captured alive became a slave. But the Norse people weren't all bloodthirsty warriors, and none of them fixed horns to their helmets.

Most Vikings lived peaceful, normal lives. They loved poetry and telling stories as they sat around roaring fires at night. They made beautiful works of art out of stone and metal and by carving animal bones and antlers. The Vikings also began the world's oldest surviving parliament, where they voted to make laws and settled any arguments they had between themselves.

Many of the most famous Vikings were incredible explorers and adventurers. They sailed thousands of miles in their beautifully designed longships. Both men and women risked their lives crossing the Atlantic Ocean to settle in new lands. Other Vikings worked as traders and merchants, travelling almost

as far as the sailors did. They exchanged goods and ideas with people from the ancient empires of Europe, Asia and Africa.

All this helped the Vikings to develop a rich and fascinating culture. What became known as the “Viking Age” lasted for nearly 300 years, and it has captivated archaeologists and historians ever since.

