



HIBERN ð N ð RSE ð WIRRAL

jarl - the chieftains

(Old Norse jarlar, singular jarl) were at the top of the social hierarchy. Traditionally the earls were chieftains, warlords or leaders who had won great wealth and a following of loyal warriors through their successes in battle and raiding.

Later in the Viking Age, when the first kings rose to power in Scandinavia, the earls became aristocrats who were subordinate to the kings and held land for them at their pleasure.

The earl might have retained a retinue of warriors as bodyguards for which he would be responsible to feed and arm. These were typically highly trusted individuals.

These warriors primarily came from the trusted free men who tended to have little wealth to their names, and who raided in order to acquire some allotted land to farm, or portable wealth like silver. Inheritance customs in the Viking world typically meant that the older a son was more likely to inherit from his father, so Viking raiders might also have been disproportionately younger sons who hadn't inherited much and wanted to better themselves.

When Canute became the king of England in 1016. One of his first acts was to reshape the kingdom into the system like that used in Scandinavia. He divided the kingdom into four semi-independent earldoms, Northumbria went to the Norwegian, Erik of Lade, Thorkell the Tall was given East Anglia, and Eadric Streona had his pre-existing appointment to Mercia confirmed. Canute reserved Wessex for himself.

