

WIRRALH SKIP FELAGR



Viking & Anglo Saxon Living History

The story of Ingimund.

The story of Ingimund is one of great importance to those interested in the early history of the Wirral as he is seen as a local Viking hero, maybe even a founding father for the area. It is however a story surrounded by subjective discussions regarding just what are or are not recognised facts and just how much is merely plausible inference to fill in many gaps and create a story.

There is no one period text that clearly outlines the full exploits of Ingimund, yet scraps of information do appear in a few early medieval documents. Let us also keep in mind the Vikings themselves weren't inclined to keep detailed written records so these notes are likely to be other people's possibly confused or biased accounts of what they'd heard about Ingimund, not some kind of first hand personal journal.

The Welsh Annales Cambriae indicate that in 902AD someone called Ingimund came to "Mon" (the Isle of Anglesey) but make no mention of him travelling to the Wirral. A famous Irish source known as the three fragments is a mid seventeenth century transcription of now lost earlier period documents which offer more detail about Ingimund. It is written that a Dublin leader named Ingimund and his men attacked Wales but having been repulsed continued east to Mercia where they "sought land for the building of barns and dwellings near Chester". Aethelflaed Lady of the Mercians and eldest daughter of King Alfred the Great is credited with granting them land which most assume to be the end of the Wirral peninsula. Some have questioned why she should be so generous with land and property but it seems that this land was acquired peaceably and possibly through negotiated sale/purchase.

Soon after Ingimund grew greedy and is said, with allies, to have launched an attack with the apparent goal of "seizing Chester and possessing its wealth and lands". A description of the siege is quite expressive and relates the throwing of rocks, boiling beer and swarms of bees from the city walls thereby defeating the attacking Norsemen. Sadly there is no way to know if the scribe recording this conflict knew any of this to be true or even if this was accurately transcribed in the seventeenth century. The Anglo Saxon Chronicles record the restoration of Chester in 907AD which could plausibly relate to the unsuccessful attack by Ingimund, but it is written that it was not long before they came to wage battle again.

There's not a lot of documentary evidence to go on but it seems clear that however insignificant or important a leader he was and how many other Norse men he had influence over, it does seem that someone called Ingimund left Dublin looking to set up a new home. We can be quite sure from a variety of types of evidence that the Norse were settling the Wirral and founding a new Viking community at the start of the tenth century so it is quite plausible that at some point after 902AD Ingimund became one of these settlers, possibly even pioneering this settlement. However, if we were to play Devil's advocate we don't actually have certain proof he ever set foot anywhere on the Wirral or that he was any kind of hero, merely that he seemed to have been one of many Vikings expelled from Dublin, that he lost a battle in Wales, peaceably acquired an unknown piece of land from the Saxons and then lost a battle at Chester.

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