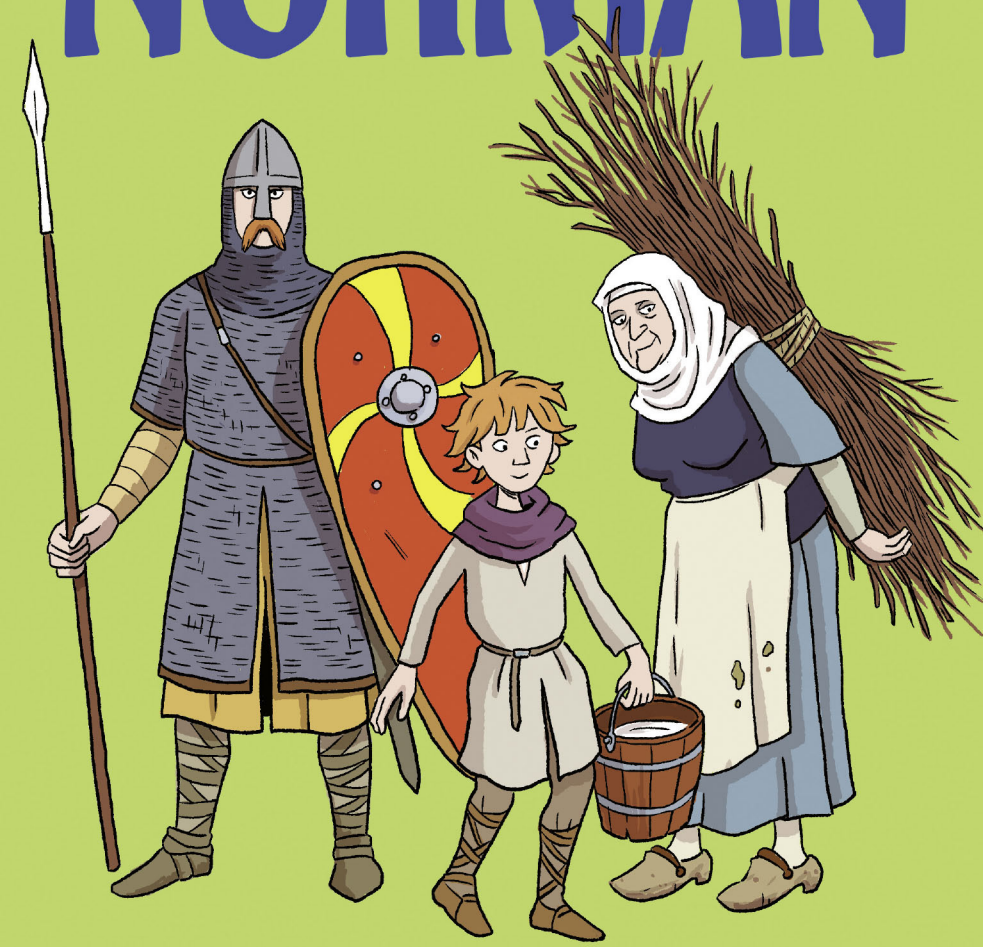
What it was like to be a ...

NORMAN



DAVID LONG

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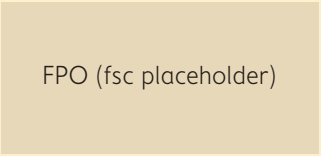
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For Peter Sillis, who started
the ball rolling

CONTENTS

1 **FROM PIRATES TO PRINCES** 1
Who Were the Normans?

2 **A KING'S BROKEN PROMISE** 9
1066: The Battle of Hastings

3 **THE ENGLISH ARE REVOLTING!** 24
The Harrying of the North

4 **THE RICH IN THEIR CASTLES** 37
Winner Takes All

5 **THE POOR ON THE LAND** 50
Forbidden to Travel

6 **GOING TO WAR FOR GOD** 60
The Importance of Religion

7 **BECOMING ENGLISH** 72
Turning Invaders into Neighbours

8 **THE ANARCHY** 83
Stephen versus Matilda

9 **OUR NORMAN HERITAGE** 93
How Norman Are You?

Important Figures of the Norman Period



Edward the Confessor
(King of England
1042–1066)



Harold II
(Earl of Wessex,
King of England
Jan–Oct 1066)



William I
(Duke of Normandy 1035–1087,
William the Conqueror,
King of England 1066–1087)



Harald Hardrada
(King of Norway 1046–1066)



Edgar Aetheling
(rebelled against William I)



Robert
(Duke of Normandy 1087–1106,
first son of William I)



William II
(King of England 1087–1100,
third son of William I)



Henry I
(King of England 1100–1135,
fourth son of William I)



Empress Matilda
(daughter of Henry I,
granddaughter of William I
and Malcolm III)



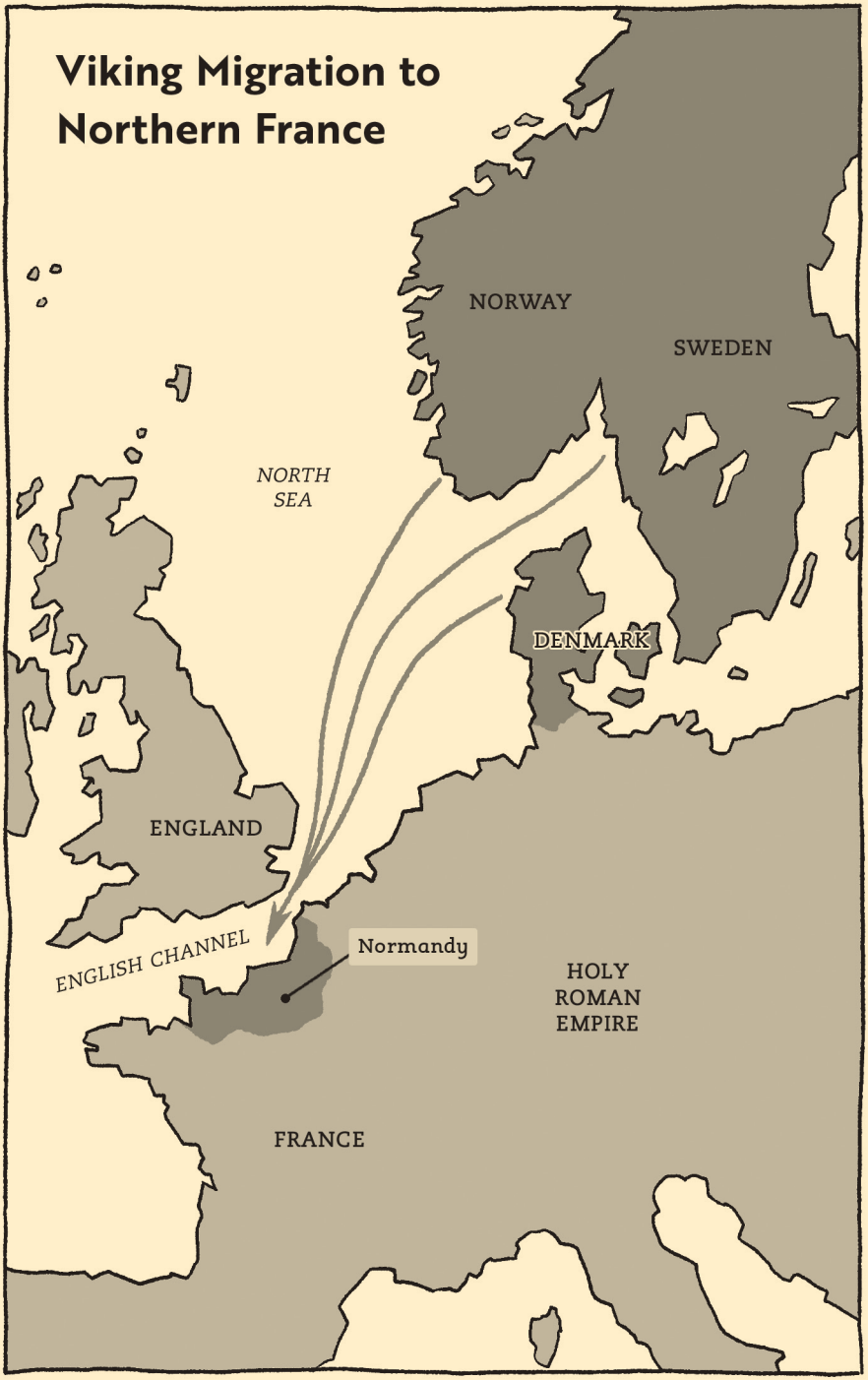
Malcolm III
(King of Scotland
1058–1093)



Stephen
(King of England 1135–1154,
grandson of William I,
Empress Matilda's cousin)

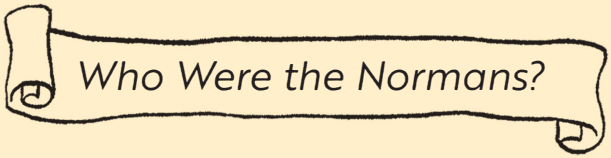


Henry II
(Henry Plantagenet,
King of England 1154–1189,
Empress Matilda's son)


Viking Migration to Northern France
NORWAY
SWEDEN
NORTH SEA
DENMARK
ENGLAND
ENGLISH CHANNEL
Normandy
HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE
FRANCE

1

FROM PIRATES TO PRINCES



William the Conqueror's Norman army invaded England in 1066. This army was made up of soldiers descended from Vikings. These Vikings had left Norway, Sweden and Denmark to settle in northern France more than 150 years earlier.

Vikings had a terrible reputation as pirates and ferocious warriors. In the ninth and tenth centuries, they raided many coastal communities around Europe. They would arrive by sea to rob, kill or enslave anybody who got in their way.

Fortunately, these violent attacks became less frequent as some of the Vikings switched from raiding to trading goods. They brought honey, fur and walrus ivory to trade for silver and other luxury items they couldn't find back home. Others used strong wooden ships called longboats to travel thousands of miles across some of the world's most dangerous oceans.

A few of the traders travelled eastwards as far as Siberia. But the most daring explorers sailed west, enduring terrifying Arctic storms to establish new settlements in Iceland, Greenland and even North America. This meant the Vikings managed to cross the Atlantic and land in America hundreds of years before Spain's Christopher Columbus did when he supposedly "discovered" America in 1492.

These epic voyages were very impressive for the longboats – simple wooden vessels that had no cabins or anywhere to shelter from the weather. A thousand years ago, most people



still couldn't read or write, so these sailors didn't even use maps.

In total, around 200,000 Vikings are thought to have left Scandinavia to search for a new life abroad, but not all of them were interested in going as far as Iceland or Siberia. Most just wanted some land they could farm, so many settled in England and Ireland, where the warmer weather made it easier to grow crops to eat.

Some Vikings decided to go a bit further. They were known as Norsemen, which means "people from the north", or simply Normans. They sailed across the English Channel to the region of France we now call Normandy. After finding a safe place to land, they built encampments for themselves and, later on, created small villages where families began to farm.



Vikings had been pagans for hundreds of years, which meant they worshipped many different gods instead of just one like Christians, Jews and Muslims do. However, after arriving in Normandy, they converted to Christianity, following in the footsteps of their leader, Rollo, and his son, Longsword.

The local population was already Christian, so the French king insisted that they do this. In return, the king agreed that the newcomers could stay in Normandy as long as the Vikings stopped their raids on his country.

The Normans built simple churches of wood or stone. They married French women and adopted the French language as well as French names and many other local customs. These included something called “feudalism”, which was a way of organising communities by making ordinary people work for the king or for their local lord in exchange for protection rather than money.

Nearly everyone in Normandy was poor because of this. Most Norman homes were very small compared to the houses we live in today, usually no more than one room. The walls were made of wattle and daub, which is a material made from woven branches covered in dried mud mixed with animal dung. A roof of reeds or thatch kept out most of the rain.

One end of the hut was used to shelter the family's pigs, sheep and cows. A fire in the centre provided heat in winter and was used for cooking. This meant that Norman houses were very smelly, and they were often filled with smoke despite there being a hole in the roof above the fire. People sat around the fire on stools rather than chairs, and the family's bedding was rolled up during the day to make space.

The Normans became well established in this part of France, and the leaders who came after Rollo and Longsword began using titles

to describe themselves, such as count, duke and even prince. These powerful men started to look and sound like Frenchmen, but they still had some of their old Viking habits.

Above all, they wanted to make themselves richer by taking land from other people. At the end of the tenth century, Norman soldiers began conquering Sicily and southern Italy. Later, a Norman called William, Duke of Normandy started to look across the sea towards the rich farmland of the British Isles.



William I
(Duke of Normandy)

Even as a young man, William wanted to be the king of England. He believed this would happen when the old king eventually died. Edward the Confessor was William's cousin and had ruled England for more than two decades. He was married to Edith, but they had no children of their own. According to William, Edward had promised to make William his successor. But when Edward died in January 1066, the throne went to Edith's brother Harold, the Earl of Wessex.



Edward the Confessor



Harold II