Chapter 4
Ingimund's Invasion

FREDERICK THRELFALL WAINWRIGHT

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In this paper, Wainwright gives more attention to the evidence for the Norse invasion of Wirral, particularly concentrating on the Irish Three Fragments *text and the distribution and type of place-names. Material in square brackets and sub-headings are editorial.*

The Norse in the north-west

The Anglo-Danish struggle, which dominates the reigns of Alfred the Great and Edward the Elder, has held the imagination of chroniclers and historians for over a thousand years. The Norse immigration into north-west England, on the other hand, escaped notice until the middle of the nineteenth century. The Danish settlement was a military conquest carried through by organized armies; the Norse settlement, a movement of comparable significance, was an unobtrusive infiltration from the west. This difference in character, coupled with a geographical remoteness from Wessex, probably explains why an immigration of major historical importance is altogether ignored by English chroniclers.

The Norse settlers were numerous enough to influence the development of north-western England as distinctly as the Danes influenced the development of eastern England. The immediate effect of the settlement, though seldom considered, was no less decisive: the plans and campaigns of Edward and Æthelflæd were inevitably controlled by the menace that lay in the north-west, and there is good reason to believe that the presence of the Norsemen provides a key to an understanding of the confused political conditions in Northumbria. They occupied the whole coast from the Dee to beyond the Solway, but their arrival and their settlement north of the Mersey, that is in Northumbria where their greatest strength lay, are not mentioned by any chronicler. The only surviving literary record of this mighty movement relates to an expedition of a certain Ingimund who established a Norse colony in Wirral, south of the Mersey and outside the areas of most intensive Scandinavian settlement. This Irish tradition — the story of Ingimund occurs in an Irish not an English chronicle — has been used more or less cautiously by many writers. The plain fact is that in its present form it does not readily command the confidence of scholars, and it is not generally regarded as either ancient or trustworthy. But, suspect though it might be, it is our only literary evidence of a Norse immigration into north-west England and it deserves careful consideration. A full and critical examination of this obscure Irish source awaits a scholar properly equipped for the task, but an attempt to reach tentative conclusions is already long overdue. Here we are

concerned only with the episode that centres in the name of Ingimund, and it seems possible to show that the story of his invasion is part of a genuine and early, perhaps contemporary, tradition.

An early tradition?

It became available to students in 1860 when John O'Donovan published his *Annals of Ireland, Three Fragments.*[1] The 'third' of these obscure annalistic compilations describes in some detail the adventures of *Hingamund* (ON Ingimundr) and his followers. They were expelled from Ireland and they failed, after 'a hard vigorous battle' to gain a foothold in Wales. Then they sought Æthelflæd's permission to settle in Mercia and she granted them lands near Chester. After some indefinite time they became impatient to posses the city itself, and 'all the chiefs of the Lochlanns [Norsemen] and Danes' approved Ingimund's plan to attack the coveted city if it were not given up to them on request. In reply Æthelflæd 'collected large forces around her in every direction, and the city of Chester was filled with her hosts.' There follows a vivid 800-word account of the Scandinavian attempt to seize Chester, but the details — the defenders, for example, are said to have fought with boulders, boiling beer, and bees — are obviously untrustworthy.[2] Difficulties do not end with legendary accretions which adorn what may have once been a simple story. More serious problems are discussed below.

It is a curious fact that for nearly a thousand years the Norse immigration into north-west England lay outside the knowledge of historical writers. This was due in the main to the lack of literary record, to the silence of the chroniclers, but it is noteworthy that Robert Ferguson drew attention to the movement four years before O'Donovan's edition of the *Three Fragments* appeared. In 1851 at Copenhagen had been published J. J. A. Worsaae's *Minder om de Danske og Nordmændene i England, Skotland og Irland,* the pioneer survey of Scandinavian settlement and influence in the British Isles. In 1852 Worsaae's work had been published in English (*An Account of the Danes and Norwegians in England, Scotland and Ireland,* London), and by it Ferguson was inspired to examine a smaller area, Cumberland and Westmorland, in greater detail The result of his labours was *The Northmen in Cumberland and Westmoreland* (London and Carlisle, 1856), and in this book he put forward 'the theory of an immigration, more particularly Norwegian, proceeding from the western side of the island.' Many of Ferguson's views and much of the evidence upon which they are based must now be discarded, but his central theme, that the north-west had received a Scandinavian population which was predominantly Norwegian not Danish and which arrived from the west not from the east, remains a notable contribution to historical studies.

Four years later O'Donovan published the *Three Fragments*, and the story of Ingimund's settlement in Wirral became available to historians. Other evidence accumulated, mainly from the study of place-names, and scholars like J. C. H. R.

[1] *Irish Archaeological and Celtic Society* (Dublin, 1860). The story of Ingimund will be found on pp. 224–37.

[2] A translation of the story is given above, pp. 21–3.

Steenstrup,[3] W. G. Collingwood,[4] Harald Lindkvist,[5] Alexander Bugge,[6] and E. Ekwall,[7] quickly placed the fact of a Norse immigration beyond all dispute. By far the greatest single contribution was made by Ekwall whose monograph of 1918, *The Scandinavians and Celts in the North-West of England*, was a definitive survey of Irish-Scandinavian place-name formations in the north-west. This scholarly investigation finally proved the accuracy of conclusions previously founded upon insufficient and ill-assorted evidence: it proved that the Scandinavians in north-western England were predominantly Norwegians but Norwegians whose place-names reveal their close associations with Ireland.

The invasion of Ingimund is clearly a significant event in the history of the north-west, but it is so enveloped in doubt and confusion that historians today are unwilling to give it more than a brief and non-committal notice. A thorough investigation of the source is urgently required, for we cannot continue to ignore either a tradition of such importance or the doubts that surround its origin. Few scholars have examined the *Three Fragments* carefully, and fewer still have been prepared to hazard an opinion on its reliability. Most comments are so casual that it is hardly fair to quote them. Yet one may note that Alexander Bugge[8] believed, more hopefully than accurately, that 'the so-called *Three Fragments* are acknowledged by all authors to be one of the most trustworthy of Irish annals' and that 'the original from which MacFirbis made his copy must have been nearly contemporaneous with the events that it mentions'. And more recently B. G. Charles has assumed that the *Three Fragments* 'contain a nucleus of genuine historical data despite their being late transcripts'.[9] But the weight of opinion has been against these views. Charles Gross saw O'Donovan's edition but stated only that 'the age of the MS. from which these annals were copied is not known' and avoided comment upon their reliability.[10] D. W. H. Marshall could find 'no evidence . . . to allow us to fix a date for the composition of the original MS'.[11] A more considered opinion comes from the careful scholar A. O. Anderson: he finds in the source no proof of its antiquity and he regards it as 'legendary rather than historical'.[12] It is not necessary to quote the opinion of other writers to illustrate the general attitude of uncertainty and distrust.

The chief reason for this distrust stares one in the face. In his preface O'Donovan explains that his text is taken from a copy of a manuscript which Dubháltach Mac Fir-Bhisigh (Duald MacFirbis) copied in 1643 'from a vellum

[3] *Normannerne*, 4 vols (Copenhagen, 1876–82).

[4] 'The Vikings in Lakeland', *Saga-Book of the Viking Club* 1 (1896), 182–96; *Scandinavian Britain* (London, 1908); *Northumbrian Crosses of the Pre-Norman Age* (London, 1927).

[5] *Middle English Place-Names of Scandinavian Origin* (Uppsala, 1912).

[6] 'The Norse settlements in the British islands', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4th Series 4 (1921), 173–210.

[7] *Scandinavians and Celts in the North-West of England* (Lund, 1918); *The Place-Names of Lancashire* (Manchester, 1922); 'The Scandinavian element', in EPNS I, i, (1924); 'The Scandinavian Settlement' in H. C. Darby, ed., *An Historical Geography of England Before 1800* (Cambridge, 1936).

[8] *Contributions to the History of the Norsemen in Ireland* (Christiana, 1900), pp. 5–6.

[9] *Old Norse Relations with Wales* (Cardiff, 1934), pp. 17–8.

[10] *The Sources and Literature of English History*, 2nd ed. (London, 1915), no. 1353.

[11] *The Sudreys in Early Viking Times* (Glasgow, 1929), pp. 9 ff.

[12] *Early Sources of Scottish History*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1922), I, lii.

MS., the property of Nehemias Mac Egan'. In other words O'Donovan had before him only a copy of a seventeenth-century copy of a manuscript about which nothing is known apart from the two facts quoted in the last sentence. The 'vellum MS.' is lost. Duald's copy is lost, and today we are left with O'Donovan's printed text[13] and the uncomfortable knowledge that the antiquity of the 'vellum MS.' has never been satisfactorily proved. The distrust of scholars is sufficiently explained by these facts. But one should add that the manuscript itself was apparently incomplete (the annals are rightly called 'fragments'), that the chronological arrangement of the material is incredibly confused, and that the atmosphere often belongs to legend rather than history. It is no wonder that historians shy away from the *Three Fragments*. In the face of such evidence any plea for these Irish annals or even for the skeleton of historical truth that may lie beneath them must be put forward cautiously. The present plea is not for the whole of the *Three Fragments*; it is only for the story of Ingimund, and it seems possible to argue that at least the outlines of this story are genuine history.

Supporting evidence

First of all it should be stressed that the story fits snugly into the known historical background. In the *Three Fragments* Ingimund is associated with a considerable Irish-Norse settlement which is supposed to have occurred in the Wirral during the first decade of the tenth century. It is a proved fact that an intensive settlement of north-western England was carried through by Norsemen from Ireland, and the evidence of place-names shows that Wirral received many of the immigrants. The military arrangements of Æthelflæd, especially her fortress-system, and other scraps of evidence all suggest that the Irish-Scandinavian immigration belongs to the early years of the tenth century.[14] Thus the chief events as recorded by the Ingimund tradition correspond with fact too closely to be rejected off-hand as fiction. If one were to dismiss the Ingimund tradition it would still be necessary to assume a similar invasion, of similar proportions, of the same date, originating in the same quarter and directed against the same area.

Historical references in Irish, Welsh and English chronicles provide emphatic support for the Ingimund tradition. The expulsion of the Norsemen from

[13] And, of course, the manuscript which O'Donovan used and which may be found in the Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique (no. 5301–20). It was listed by S. H. Bindon, 'On the MSS. relating to Ireland in the Burgundian Library at Brussels', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 3 (1845–7), 490–1; it was described by O'Donovan as no. 7, c.n. 17 Burgundian Library, and more recently it has been listed by J. van den Gheyn under no. 4641 in *Catalogue des Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Royal de Belgique*, VII (1907), 48.

I am indebted to M. Masai of the Bibliothèque Royale, who traced the manuscript and quickly secured me a photographic facsimile. The *Three Fragments* occupy 36 ff., and are written in a clear modern hand. The Latin rubric, incorrectly copied by J. van den Gheyn, runs thus: *Fragmenta tria Annalium Hiberniæ extractum ex Codice membraneo Nehemiæ mac Ægan senis, Hibernici Juris peritissimi, in Ormonia, per Ferbissium ad usum R. D. Joannis Lynch. Ab anno Christi circiter 571 ad annum plus minus 910.* The first, second, and third 'fragments' occupy respectively fos 1a–8a, fos 9a–16b, and fos 17a–36a. There follows an Index (fos 36a–43b). The story of Ingimund is found on fos 33a–34b.

[14] For a fuller discussion of the date of this immigration see below.

Ireland, an event which, according to the *Three Fragments*, occasioned Ingimund's expedition, is recorded under 902 in the *Annals of Ulster*,[15] a contemporary Irish narrative with a deserved reputation for accuracy. Even more definitive are the Welsh chronicles: the *Annales Cambriae*[16] and *Brut y Tywysogion*[17] preserve Ingimund's name, record his arrival in Anglesey and mention a battle at 'Osmeliaun' or 'Ros Meilon'. This Welsh account is shorter, more precise, but substantially the same as the account in the *Three Fragments* where Ingimund's attempt against Wales and his expulsion by the Britons after a critical but unnamed battle precede the story of his settlement in Wirral.

Less explicit but no less interesting is the oblique confirmation of Ingimund's subsequent adventures in Wirral, described with disconcerting fullness by the *Three Fragments*. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* makes no direct reference either to Ingimund or to Norse settlement in any part of north-west England, but there are certain points at which the English version becomes more intelligible in the light of the Ingimund tradition. The latter tells how Æthelflæd, anticipating a Norse attack on Chester, filled the city 'with her hosts' and in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, or rather in a short series of Mercian annals embedded in certain manuscripts of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*,[18] there occurs *s.a.* 907 the bald statement: 'In this year was Chester restored'. There can be little doubt that the introduction of Æthelflæd's hosts into Chester (*Three Fragments*) should be identified with the restoration of that city in 907 (*Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*), a significant indication that the Ingimund tradition is based upon fact. It is significant also that the Ingimund tradition gives what on general grounds is without doubt the correct reason for Æthelflæd's fortification of Chester, an important event left unexplained by the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Another odd link may be seen in the emphasis laid by the *Three Fragments* on the illness of Æthelred, husband of Æthelflæd and ealdorman of Mercia. Æthelred's affliction, which to a great extent excluded him from active government, is mentioned four or five times. At first sight this might appear to be a laboured bardic device to allow Æthelflæd to take the centre of the stage. But Æthelred's illness is more than that. It is a fact not altogether unknown to later writers,[19] a fact even reflected in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* itself. Æthelred died in 911, but in 909 and 910[20] King Edward directed the Mercian *fyrd* against the Danes without recorded reference to the Mercian ealdorman who does not figure in the campaigns of these years. And in 910 the building of a fortress at *Bremesburh* is explicitly

[15] W. M. Hennessy, ed., 4 vols (Dublin, 1887–1901), *s.a.* 901 '*alias* 902', I, 416.

[16] Egerton Phillimore, 'The *Annales Cambriae* and Old-Welsh genealogies from Harleian MS. 3859', *Y Cymmrodor* 9 (1895), p. 167.

[17] J. Rhys and J. G. Evans, *The Text of the Bruts from the Red Book of Hergest* (Oxford, 1890), p. 260; T. Jones, *Brut y Tywysogyon* (Caerdydd, 1941), p. 7.

[18] MSS B, C and D. See C. Plummer, *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, 2 vols (1892–99), I, 92–105; II, 116. See also F. T. Wainwright, 'The chronology of the Mercian Register', *English Historical Review* 55 (1945), 385–92.

[19] e.g. Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum* (ed. T. Arnold, Rolls Series, 1879): *mortuus est Ethered . . . qui fuerat diu infirmus.*

[20] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (ed. B. Thorpe, Rolls Series, 1861), I, *s.a.* 910 and 911.

attributed by a Mercian annalist[21] to Æthelflæd, not to her husband. These details suggest a situation explicable only on the assumption that Æthelred was incapacitated for some years before his death. The Ingimund tradition, preserved only in the *Three Fragments*, comes surprisingly near to the facts which apparently lie behind the brief but contemporary English version.

This indirect English confirmation of the Ingimund tradition is perhaps more convincing than the direct confirmation provided by the Welsh chronicles. Independence of witness is more important than elaboration of detail and, whatever may be the connection between the Irish and Welsh sources,[22] it is at least fairly obvious that the Ingimund tradition owes nothing to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. The points of contact lie so far beneath the surface that one cannot believe a later compiler could have used the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* in the creation of his story. He could not have seen Æthelred's illness in the omission of Æthelred's name and he could not have seen a Norse invasion of Wirral in the mention of Chester. The fact that the Ingimund tradition is unrelated to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* gives the latter's support its real value as evidence.

To rule out the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* as a source of the Ingimund story, however, is not to rule out other English sources. It is possible that the Irish annalist had access to a fuller English account which has since been lost, but there is nothing in the present form of the tradition to warrant such an assumption. There are, indeed, errors in the Irish account unlikely to have occurred in any English source. 'Edelfrid' and 'Edelfrida' (for Æthelred and Æthelflæd) might be ascribed to a careless copyist or to distortion in oral tradition, but the description of Æthelred and Æthelflæd (Ealdorman and Lady of the Mercians) as 'king' and 'queen' of the 'Saxons' represents a multiplicity of mistakes which could hardly have arisen in England. Such confusion of English titles and racial origins, on the other hand, is characteristic of Irish (and Welsh) chronicles.

It seems clear that the Ingimund tradition is not derived from any known English source, and it seems equally clear that it is not merely a late and imaginative composition. It comes too near the known facts of history to be so lightly dismissed. There is also the question of motive. The account of the attack on Chester would make good entertainment for any audience, but the whole story centres on Æthelflæd and it is not easy to see how any Irishman outside the tenth century would have hit upon this incident for elaboration unless he were following some earlier authority. It is probable that the story of Ingimund as it now stands contains both explanatory interpolations and literary additions, but the basic facts can scarcely have been conceived by a writer drawing mainly upon imagination and living in an age remote from the early tenth century. Whatever may have happened to the story in the centuries before 1643, it is difficult to believe that the original version was either late or legendary.

[21] Ibid, *s.a.* 910. Unfortunately Thorpe's ill-advised attempt at conflation has obscured the essential separateness of these Mercian annals which were inserted bodily as a series in MSS B and C of the *Chronicle* after the annal now dated 915. They can be more conveniently followed in Plummer, *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, I, 93–105.

[22] See further below.

Fortunately it is possible to prove that Ingimund himself belongs to history and not legend. It has been noticed above that Welsh chronicles refer to Ingimund and to his expedition to Britain, and in the *Annales Cambriae* (Harleian MS 3859) occurs the following short passage: *Ingmunt in insula món uenit et tenuit maes osmeliavn.*[23] We are not concerned with the relationship of the Welsh chronicles to each other, and we are not for the moment concerned with the problem of whether or not this entry represents a borrowing from an Irish chronicle. It is sufficient to remark that the version of the *Annales Cambriae* now preserved in Harleian MS 3859 was probably written down in its present form in the middle of the tenth century.[24] That is to say within a generation of Ingimund's voyage from Ireland, attack upon Wales, and settlement in Wirral (as recounted in the *Three Fragments*) we have the precise and unimpeachable testimony of a contemporary annalist that a man called Ingimund did in fact lead an expedition from Ireland to Britain. This brief entry not only corroborates, as noted above, the earlier part of the Ingimund tradition; it also proves the historicity of Ingimund and his expedition. Thus it is clear that at least the foundations of the Ingimund tradition are historical not legendary.

To recapitulate, there is good evidence that Norsemen from Ireland settled in Wirral during the early years of the tenth century, there is contemporary reference to Ingimund and to the fact that at this time he led an expedition from Ireland to Britain, and there is independent and contemporary English confirmation of the main features of the story preserved in the *Three Fragments*. In short, there is very good reason to accept the basic facts of the Ingimund tradition as representing a genuine contemporary account of historical events. This conclusion is quite sufficient for our present purpose. To pursue the problem further would lead us away from the firm ground upon which we appear to be standing, and we need not be drawn beyond this point. But there are two interesting questions which, though they cannot be solved, should certainly be raised. First, what is the age of the chronicle or material upon which the *Three Fragments* are based? And secondly, from what source did the compiler derive his information about Æthelflæd and Ingimund? The second question is vital to a discussion of the reliability of the Ingimund tradition, but is closely linked with the first and wider question.

The *Three Fragments*

It will prove difficult, if not impossible, to get back to whatever lies behind the *Three Fragments*. An attempt to discuss their sources and antiquity will obviously require a specialist's equipment, and here only a few points are raised in a tentative effort to throw light upon the origin of the Ingimund tradition. The first of the *Three Fragments* covers approximately the years 571–628 and the years 715–735; the second fragment (661–704) fills half the gap in the first fragment, and the third fragment runs from *c.*850 to *c.*918. At present we must assume that these separate sections are all extracts from the same compilation. We have the word of Duald MacFirbis that the vellum manuscript he followed was damaged

[23] Phillimore, 'The *Annales Cambriae*', p. 167.
[24] Phillimore, 'The *Annales Cambriae*', p. 144 ff.

and in parts illegible. The name *Three Fragments* is no indication that the extracts came from different sources, for it is clear that this name is not due to Duald.[25] And finally no one fragment differs greatly from the others in structure and general character: in each there is a series of short entries filled out with long explanatory and legendary additions. A. G. van Hamel, one of the few scholars who have seriously discussed the possible sources of these annals, thinks the third fragment is different in character from the other two but he inclines to the view that all are part of a single work.[26] His other conclusions are more important. He argues that the earlier part of the *Three Fragments* is based upon the same body of annals as that which underlies the earlier parts of the main Irish chronicles like the *Annals of Ulster* and the *Annals of Tigernach*, that is upon the lost compilation which is sometimes called the 'Old Irish Chronicle'. If this were true it would prove the antiquity of the basis of the *Three Fragments* for the *Annals of Ulster* and the *Annals of Tigernach* are known to have been built upon early contemporary material.[27] He goes much further and assigns to the *Three Fragments* 'a prominent position in Irish annalistic literature' because, he suggests, they are nearer to the 'Old Irish Chronicle' than either the *Annals of Ulster* or *Tigernach*.[28] If one follows van Hamel one must accept at least the basic framework of the *Three Fragments* as ancient and genuine. There are serious difficulties in the way of accepting all van Hamel's conclusions, especially his conclusions on the origin of the 'foreign notes', but we may follow him so far as to agree that the *Three Fragments* are based upon the same material as that which underlies the *Annals of Ulster* and the so-called *Annals of Tigernach*.

But future examination will probably show that the problem is more complicated than has been thought. Even if the basic framework of the *Three Fragments* is ancient, the form in which we have these annals represents more than a simple unexpanded version of lost contemporary accounts. Their present form is that of a literary composition which bears the stamp of a later age.[29] As is usual with Irish chronicles they seem to have been built up from several sources; some additions are of doubtful origin and some are obviously late. The source of each addition will have to be traced and its reliability separately assessed, for though much of the material is no doubt based ultimately upon

[25] F. T. Wainwright, 'Duald's "Three Fragments"', *Scriptorium* 2 (1948), 56–8.

[26] A. G. van Hamel, 'The foreign notes in the Three Fragments of Irish Annals', *Révue Celtique* 36 (1915–16), p. 5.

[27] Tomás Ó Máille, *The Language of the Annals of Ulster* (Manchester, 1910), especially pp. vi, 6, 18. On *Tigernach* see Eóin Mac Neill, 'The Authorship and Structure of the *Annals of Tigernach*', *Ériu* 7 (1914). By 'Old Irish Chronicle' is meant that collection of annals which forms the basis of the earlier parts of the *Annals of Ulster*, *Tigernach*, etc. The date at which this lost annalistic work was compiled is doubtful. Mac Neill suggests *c.* 712 which van Hamel clearly thinks is far too early. On this point the views of neither appear to be well founded.

[28] van Hamel, 'The foreign notes in the Three Fragments of Irish Annals', p. 10.

[29] Jan de Vries, 'Om Betydningen av Three Fragments of Irish Annals for Vikingetidens Historie' describes the *Three Fragments* as attempting to give 'et litterært utsmykket billede av vikingetidens historie' (p. 517) and he says (p. 510) that 'der er for meget lovprisning og dadel, for meget personlig i meddelelsernes utformning, der er for meget kunstnerisk stilisering'. See the whole article, *Historisk Tidsskrift utgitt av den Norske Historiske Forening*, Række V, Bind V (Kristiania, 1924), pp. 509–32.

contemporary or early written accounts, not a little seems to have been added later. The length and detail of the stories, the anxiety to explain and the tendency to moralize invest the whole work with an air of unreality, and without a single other manuscript for comparison it will be very difficult to pare away the later additions. Some of the most recent additions may be picked out easily enough. O'Donovan himself occasionally included in his printed text what in the manuscript before him were only marginal comments;[30] the scribe of the manuscript has made a few additions, not all in the margin,[31] and passages added by Duald MacFirbis may be detected.[32] How much Duald has added to the account that he found in the lost 'vellum manuscript' is far from clear, and there are several indications that the 'vellum manuscript' was itself an expanded version of an earlier compilation.

The chronological arrangements within the *Three Fragments* are entirely unsatisfactory. Events do not always follow each other in the right order and there are only about four fixed dates in the whole work — the dates in brackets are supplied by O'Donovan and have no value.[33] Sometimes the same event is recorded twice, an indication that more than one source was used by a compiler. These deficiencies and this confusion, however, do not testify against the antiquity of the underlying material or against the genuineness of the compilation. On the contrary, an early compilation from reliable sources might well be confused, but we should expect a late compilation, historical or legendary, to be more coherently arranged.

A study of the style and the language of the *Three Fragments* seems to offer the most promising approach to the problem of when the original material was first written down. Neither style nor language presents a clear picture. The style of the original work is obscured by what appear to be the long additions of a later age, and the language has suffered from modernization. Archaic words and phrases are embedded in the text, but the possibility that these have been deliberately inserted by a later scribe should not be entirely overlooked. So complex are the problems that we can only wait until some scholar examines the *Three Fragments* as Tomás Ó Máille has examined the *Annals of Ulster* and as Sir Ifor Williams has examined the *Book of Aneirin*.

In the meantime there are one or two indications that an expert linguistic analysis may not adversely affect the standing of the *Three Fragments* as a historical source. They apply especially to the later parts of the *Three Fragments* which are our main concern. We find a number of Hibernicized Scandinavian personal names, e.g. Amhlaoibh (ON Ólafr, Óleifr), Barith, Bairith (ON Bárðr, earlier Barøðr), Haimar (ON Heimarr), Hona (ON Auni), Iar(n)gna (ON Iárnkné),

[30] E.g. O'Donovan, p. 90, cf. manuscript fo 13a; O'Donovan, p. 134. cf. manuscript fo 19b; O'Donovan, p. 198, cf. manuscript fo 29b; O'Donovan, p. 192, cf. manuscript fo 34b.

[31] E.g. O'Donovan, p. 192, manuscript fo 29a.

[32] E.g. O'Donovan, pp. 20–2, manuscript fo 3a; O'Donovan, p. 64, manuscript fo 9a; O'Donovan, p. 182, manuscript fos 27a, 27b; O'Donovan, p. 192, manuscript fo 29a.

[33] Occasionally O'Donovan has inserted in his text an unbracketed date which appears in the margin but not in the text of the manuscript, e.g. p. 90, manuscript fo 13a, p. 134, manuscript fo 19b. On p. 198, manuscript fo 29b, he introduces a marginal comment into his printed text but draws attention to this fact in a footnote.

Imar, Iom(h)ar (ON Ívarr), Odolbh (ON Auðúlfr), Oittir (ON Óttarr),[34] Rodlaibh (ON Hróðleifr), Rodolbh (ON Hróðólfr), Tomrar (ON Þórarr), Tomrir Torra (ON Þórir, ON Þorri), Zain (ON Steinn), etc. These are sufficient, without the numerous other links, to show that the fragment is not fiction. Many of the men named are also mentioned in other Irish chronicles but some appear only in the *Three Fragments*; some names passed out of use at an early date in Ireland, and some, it may be noted, are preserved in forms which a later writer could hardly imitate unless he were following a written account. These names give to this chronicle an air of reality which not even the legendary details can destroy. There are also words of Scandinavian origin like *conung*[35] (ON *konungr*), *iarla*[36] (ON *iarl*), *micle*[37] (ON *mikill*), *stiurusman* (ON *stýrimaðr*) and what seems to be a Scandinavian battle-cry.[38] It would be premature to assume that some of these words may prove the story to be based upon a contemporary written account — the precise significance of each word and its form raises many problems — but it may at least be said that they are suggestive.

Another clue is provided by the term *Gall-Ghàidhil* which is applied to native Irishmen who had given up their Christianity and joined the Norsemen. D. W. H. Marshall has shown that *Gall-Ghàidhil*, as used in this sense, was current only for a short time about the middle of the ninth century — later it was applied to the inhabitants of Galloway.[39] The third fragment not only uses the term in its earlier sense; it also provides an exact definition,[40] so explicit that Marshall believed explanatory glosses to have been incorporated into the text.[41] It is highly probable that explanatory additions have been inserted into the original account, but if this is the case, it seems likely that they were inserted before 1200, for by this date *Gall-Ghàidhil* had become associated with Galloway and its people. Marshall suggests that *Gall-Ghàidhil* in its earlier sense was 'the individual fancy of some annalist writing upon the events of the middle of the century, an annalist whose writings have been incorporated into most of the now extant annalistic compilations'. He points out that it appears in the main Irish chronicles (*Annals of the Four Masters*, *Chronicon Scotorum*, and *Annals of Ulster*), but

[34] ON *Óttir has been suggested as a more probable origin for this Irish form of the name. See Marstrander, *Bidrag til det Norseke Sprogs Historie i Irland*, pp. 82, 85, 98, 156.

[35] E.g. *Amlaoibh conung, Imar conung.*

[36] E.g. *Barith iarla.* Also used of Oittir who is described as 'the most active *iarla* in the battle'.

[37] *Odolbh micle.*

[38] O'Donovan, p. 164. The facsimile shows the reading to be *núi nú.* On the meaning cf. Whitley Stokes, 'On the linguistic value of the Irish Annals', *Transactions of the Philological Society* (1888–90), 365–433, at p. 424.

[39] *The Sudreys in Early Viking Times*, pp. 9–20.

[40] 'They were Scoti and foster-children to the Northmen, and at one time they used to be called Northmen' (O'Donovan, p. 128). 'They were a people who had renounced their baptism, and they were usually called Northmen, for they had the customs of the Northmen, and had been fostered by them, and though the original Northmen were bad to the churches, these were by far worse, in whatever part of Erin they used to be' (ibid, p. 138). Cf. '. . . many forsook their baptism and joined the Lochlanns' (ibid, p. 126). See also pp. 130, 140, 230 ff. for references to Irishmen, sometimes called *Gall-Ghàidhil*, acting with the Norsemen.

[41] Marstrander, *Bidrag til det Norseke Sprogs Historie i Irland*, pp. 4–11, had already made this suggestion; in an interesting section on 'Gadgedlerne og deres Sprog' he touches upon several points later raised by Marshall.

always with the same connotation and only in the annals that lie between 850 and 860. He seems to have proved his point. Irish chronicles are usually compilations of the eleventh or later centuries — the trustworthy *Annals of Ulster* assumed its present form only in the late fifteenth century — but they are usually based upon earlier sources, sources which for the ninth century are often contemporary. Here is additional support for van Hamel's theory that the *Three Fragments* are based upon the same body of annals as that which lies behind the main Irish chronicles. For our immediate purpose it is enough to remark that the appearance of the *Gall-Ghàidhil* seems to carry at least this part of the *Three Fragments* back to the ninth century. It has become increasingly clear that much of the *Three Fragments* is based ultimately upon contemporary written accounts, but exactly how much has been added during the intervening centuries remains doubtful. Some of the long legendary stories look like additions from bardic tradition and some may not have taken on their present shape until the time of Duald MacFirbis, but even these parts of the *Three Fragments* may well have a long history behind them.

The source of the Ingimund story

What of our second question? From what source is the story of Ingimund ultimately derived? Ingimund's expedition from Ireland to Britain is an historical event, and the story of his subsequent adventures in Wirral receives strong support from English sources and from what is known of conditions in England. The story itself appears only in the *Three Fragments*, but, if we except the literary additions, it comes too near historical fact to be dismissed as mere bardic invention. It might have originated in Ireland or it might have been borrowed from England or Wales. The basic facts could have been supplied only by someone — English, Irish, Welsh or Scandinavian — who was familiar with events and conditions in north-west Mercia. And since there is no trace of any English account behind the story it seems probable that as a written tradition it took shape in Ireland or Wales.

A. G. van Hamel, too hastily dismissing the possibility of an Irish origin, believed that the Ingimund tradition was borrowed from a Welsh annalist who wrote in Latin and whose work may lie beneath the *Annales Cambriae*.[42] This attractive theory would explain the apparent link between the Welsh chronicles and the *Three Fragments*, and it would, if accepted, carry the Ingimund tradition, as a written account, back beyond the middle of the tenth century. But it is not impossible that the brief entry in the Welsh chronicles and the fuller account in the *Three Fragments* are independent of each other. Or if a borrowing must be assumed it might quite easily have been a Welsh borrowing from Ireland. It is known that close relations existed between Ireland and Wales during this period, and the balance in these exchanges apparently lay with Wales. Welsh annalists had access to Irish sources, and it has been suggested that the compiler of the *Annales Cambriae* used, among other sources, 'some lost Chronicle or Chronicles' later used in the *Annals of Tigernach* and later still incorporated into the *Annals of*

[42] van Hamel, 'The foreign notes in the Three Fragments of Irish Annals', p. 21.

Ulster.[43] It may be along some such line that we should seek to explain Ingimund's appearance in the Welsh chronicles.

There is certainly no reason why a story with Æthelflæd as its central figure should not arise in Ireland; her important role in northern England as the leader of the anti-Norse coalition is not recognized by West Saxon annalists, but her fame was considerable in both Ireland and Wales — as is shown by the fact that her death is thought to be worthy of mention by Irish and Welsh chroniclers. Despite van Hamel's view, it is easy to believe that the story of Æthelflæd and Ingimund was written up in Ireland. The connection between Dublin and York is only one of the links between Ireland and northern England in the early tenth century; there was constant communication, and Irish writers, especially those concerned with the activities of the Scandinavians, would certainly be interested in the fate of a Scandinavian expedition from Ireland and in the success of an English ruler against the common enemy. It is not profitable to pursue the problem further, but it should be noted that the Ingimund tradition is not out of place in an Irish work.[44]

The question of source must be left open but there remains the fairly safe conclusion reached above that the Ingimund tradition represents what was once a genuine historical account of events in north-west England. From it may be drawn conclusions of some importance to the history of the area. The literary details such as those which now envelop the story of the attack on Chester may be set aside as unreliable, but the sequence of events is clear: Norsemen, expelled from Ireland and beaten off from Wales, settled with Æthelflæd's permission near Chester in Mercian territory. After a period of peaceful settlement the new colonists became aggressive; Æthelflæd installed a considerable garrison in Chester, and the Norsemen launched against the city an attack which, though it failed, was regarded as formidable by the rulers of Mercia. No dates are supplied in this section of the *Three Fragments* but the expulsion of Scandinavians from Ireland is known to have occurred in 902. It has been suggested above that Æthelflæd's fortification of Chester is recorded both by the *Three Fragments* and

[43] Egerton Phillimore, 'The publication of Welsh historical records', *Y Cymmrodor* 11 (1897), p. 139.

[44] The above tentative remarks on the structure of the Irish chronicles and on their relationship with English and Welsh sources were in typescript before a copy of T. F. O'Rahilly's work, *Early Irish History and Mythology* (Dublin, 1946), came into my hands. O'Rahilly (pp. 235–59, 409–18, 501–12) criticizes severely the theories of Mac Neill and van Hamel and argues that many of their views must be abandoned. He dismisses Mac Neill's theory of an Irish Continuation of Eusebius, and he believes that the so-called 'Old Irish Chronicle' — which is perhaps not a good name for the main basis of the major Irish chronicles — consisted of:

(i) a mid-eighth century compilation (the 'Ulster Chronicle' is O'Rahilly's name for it) which ran from 431 to *c.* 740 and was then continued year by year, and

(ii) a later compilation, mainly from Eusebius, Orosius, and Bede, which ran from the Creation of the World to 430.

My survey is not materially affected by these views for in my comments on the 'Old Irish Chronicle' I seem to have avoided following Mac Neill and van Hamel into what O'Rahilly condemns as their errors. O'Rahilly does not discuss the *Three Fragments* or the Ingimund tradition, but by ruling out some of van Hamel's evidence and theories he incidentally confirms my opinion that the Ingimund tradition is probably of Irish not Welsh origin. I am not sure, however, that Professor O'Rahilly would see it in this way.

by a Mercian chronicler and that it belongs to the year 907. Therefore the Scandinavian attack upon Chester occurred in or soon after 907 — certainly before Æthelred's death in the first half of 911. Thus we have two fixed dates: the arrival of the Norsemen in 902 and the attack upon Chester in or about 907.

It is useful to be able to fix with such precision the date of the Scandinavian immigration into Wirral, but equally important are other conclusions which may be drawn from the story preserved in the *Three Fragments*. It is strikingly clear that Ingimund was not the only Scandinavian leader in Wirral; there were other leaders and other expeditions, and the alien settlers were numerous enough to attack the strongly defended fortress of Chester with some prospect of success. Thus we get at least a faint impression of the scale upon which the immigration had taken place before 907. It appears, too, that the Scandinavians arrived as peaceable settlers, not as an army organized for military conquest; it was some years before they combined in a violent and organized attempt to satisfy their aspirations. Thirdly, we are told that there were Irishmen and Danes among the Norwegian settlers. The repeated emphasis laid upon the incapacitating illness of Æthelred has been noted above, and it is a curious fact that the *Three Fragments* should supply in definite terms what is no doubt the true reason for Æthelred's failure to achieve mention in the English annals for some years before his death. He died in 911 and, if we are to believe the *Three Fragments*, he was precluded from active participation in government from at least 902 onwards. These contributions to our knowledge are incidental to the Ingimund tradition as we now have it, and they seem to reflect the work of a contemporary observer, however much the story has been distorted by later generations.

Place-names

Place-names provide unambiguous proof of Irish-Norse settlement in Wirral. In east Cheshire there are faint but unmistakable traces of Danish penetration from the midlands; central Cheshire is void of Scandinavian place-names and sharply divides the Danish influence in the east of the county from the much more powerful Norse influence in Wirral.[45]

Ingimund was a leader of the Lochlanns or Norsemen, but according to the *Three Fragments*, there were Danes and Irish among the Norse settlers in Wirral. Place-names do not clearly reflect this racial complex but they certainly show that Norsemen from Ireland were the dominant element in it. Arrowe represents ON **erg**, a Norse borrowing from the Irish (Ir. **airg(h)e**, Gaelic **airigh**) and usually accepted as a 'test' of Norwegian as distinct from Danish influence. This word was still used to describe a 'pasture' in the fields of Arrowe a hundred years ago: *Arrowe, Bithels and Youds Arrowe, Broad Arrowe, Brown's Arrowe, Gills Arrowe, Harrison's Arrowe, Smiths Arrowe, Wharton's Arrowe, Whites Arrow, Widness Arrowe*, etc.[46] The obscure name Noctorum may contain an OIr **cnocc**, another possible indication of the Irish associations of the Norsemen of Wirral. Elements preserved in minor names are not usually safe 'tests' unless it can be shown that the names arose in an age not far removed from the age of settlement, but at

[45] See the full discussion in chapter 3, above.

[46] Tithe Award Schedule (1846).

least suggestive are the OWSc 'test-words' like **brekka, gil** and **slakki** which occur in some of the minor names of Wirral. *Thwaite* (ON **þveit**), found in a group of field-names in Bidston, is not strictly a Norse 'test-word' but it is undoubtedly most common in areas where Norsemen, not Danes, are known to have settled, that is in Cumberland, Westmorland, Lancashire and west Yorkshire. These positive indications, together with the absence of the distinctive Danish **thorp**,[47] make it quite certain that the Scandinavians of Wirral were not Danes but Norsemen with pronounced Irish associations.

According to the *Three Fragments*, however, there were Danes and Irish among the Norwegians. There are no Danish **thorp**s in Wirral, and there are none of the other recognized indications of specifically Danish influence. With such vague and uncertain traces of Danish influence we must be content, but it is clear that in Wirral the Danish element, if it existed, was almost insignificant in an alien society overwhelmingly Norse.

As for a possible Irish element among the Wirral Norsemen the *Three Fragments* tells us that *Ghàidhil* were present at the attack on Chester, and we known that it was not an uncommon thing for Irishmen to throw in their lot with the Scandinavian raiders. It is sometimes held that words like **erg** and **cnocc** are due to groups of Irish settlers, but these words can be more easily explained as borrowings introduced by the Scandinavians. The presence of Irishmen among the Norsemen would no doubt facilitate the adoption of such words, but if there had been any great number of Irishmen in Wirral we might expect to find a few Irish personal names embedded in Wirral place-names. There are none,[48] and the existing traces of Irish influence may well be due to the Irish affinities of the Norsemen themselves. But on general grounds it is highly probable that there was a small Irish element in the Scandinavian settlements of Wirral, and though Irish personal names are not found preserved in the place-names there was a distinct Irish strain in the personal nomenclature of the area. Amongst the pre-Conquest moneyers of Chester are men bearing names like Gillicrist, Macsuthan, Mældomen and Mælsuthan.

The *Three Fragments* tell us that the Norsemen settled near Chester with the approval of Æthelflæd who granted them lands in that neighbourhood. The attack on Chester came later and illustrates the kind of trouble that might well arise, but there can be no doubt that the story of Ingimund is essentially the story of a peaceful settlement. In this the Ingimund tradition is supported by the silence of the English chroniclers, a silence incomprehensible if the settlement involved a violent upheaval or an organized military conquest. From Lancashire come further indications that the movement was a peaceful infiltration rather than a military operation.[49] Local skirmishes no doubt occurred, but the Norse settlement of Wirral seems to have been carried through without the disturbance that characterized the Danish settlement of eastern England.

[47] Thorpe may be English (OE **þorp, þrop**) or Scandinavian (ON **þorp**, ODan **thorp**), but in England when it is not English it is Danish rather than Norse in origin.

[48] [Though a *Coscarshull* recorded in 1365 in Great Sutton may derive from the OIr personal name Coscrach with **hyll**, see PN Ch **4** 195.]

[49] See F. T. Wainwright, 'The Scandinavians in Lancashire', *TLCAS* 58 (1945–6), 71–116, at pp. 75–8, 81–5.

Such evidence as the place-names of Wirral have to offer tend to confirm this view. First should be noted the curious fact that of the seven surviving place-names in **-by** only two, Raby and Helsby,[50] appear in Domesday Book; Greasby, which should be regarded as a Scandinavianized English name, appears as *Gravesberie*; but Whitby, another Scandinavianized English name, and Frankby, Irby, West Kirby and Pensby are all absent. This is curious because **bys** are usually places of considerable local importance and are rarely omitted from Domesday Book.[51] Inclusion in Domesday Book is some indication of size and importance, and we are driven to conclude that the **bys** of Wirral were neither large nor important. Another curious fact, which points to the same conclusion, is that though place-names in **-by** are seldom 'lost',[52] some of the Wirral **bys** have disappeared, presumably because they were too small and insignificant to maintain themselves as villages. For example, in Wallasey there once existed another *Kirkby* which appears in *c.*1240 as *Kirkebi in Waleya*,[53] in 1295 as *Kyrkeby in Valeye*,[54] in 1303 as *Kirkby in Waley*[55] in 1545 as *Kyrkeby Walley alias Wallasey, Kyrkeby Walley alias Kirkeby Wallasey*,[56] in 1555 *as Kyrkeby Wal(l)ey*,[57] in 1579 as *Kirkeby Walley*,[58] in 1594 as *Kerkebie Walley*,[59] and in 1639 as *Kirkby Walley alias Walleysey*.[60] Despite the identification with Wallasey the two names should be kept separate; Wallasey was originally the name of an area, not, like *Kirkby*, the name of a single site. The existence of this *Kirkby* in the north-east corner of Wirral explains why Kirby (near Hoylake) is known as West Kirby, a name which it has borne since at least the thirteenth century;[61] Kirby near Hoylake is 'west' of the 'Wallasey' Kirkby, not, as is sometimes stated, 'west' of Kirkby near Liverpool in Lancashire. In the Tithe Award Schedules of Upton (1837) are six fields called *Kiln Walby*; the name, which survives today, occurs in 1321 as *Gildewalleby*.[62] Other possible **bys** may be represented by the field-names *Haby* (Barnston Tithe Award Schedule, 1846), *Hesby* (Bidston Tithe Award Schedule,

[50] Helsby lies outside the Hundred of Wirral but belongs geographically to this area.

[51] In England there are some 760 place-names in **-by** and of these about 75 per cent are recorded in or before Domesday Book. If the four northern countries are excluded, as they ought to be excluded from such a calculation as this, the proportion recorded as in existence by 1066 rises to well over 80 per cent.

[52] The great majority of **bys**, being places of some local importance, have had an unbroken existence as habitation sites from the tenth century to the present day. They appear continuously in records and very few of them have disappeared.

[53] J. Tait, ed., *The Chartulary or Register of the Abbey of St Werburgh Chester*, 2 vols, Chetham Society New Series 79 and 82 (1920–23), II, 275.

[54] G. Ormerod, *History of Cheshire*, ed. T. Helsby (1882), II, 472.

[55] Ibid. Other forms are also given here.

[56] *Cheshire Sheaf*, 3rd series 20 (1923), p. 7.

[57] Ibid, 15 (1918), p. 12.

[58] Ibid, 15 (1918), p. 18.

[59] Ibid, 15 (1918), p. 14.

[60] Ibid, 15 (1918), p. 18.

[61] 1287 *Westkyrby*, 1289 *Westkirkeby* in *Chester County Court Rolls*, (Chetham Society New Series 84).

[62] *Cheshire Sheaf*, 3rd series 24 (1927), p. 40.

1842),[63] *Stromby* (Thurstaston Tithe Award Schedule, 1847) and *Syllaby* (Great Saughall Tithe Award Schedule, 1843).[64] Few early forms of these four names have been noted and we cannot be sure that they are genuine place-names in **-by**, but they deserve mention in this connection.[65] In any case, it is clear that the **bys** of Wirral, unlike most **bys** in England, were small, unimportant, and apt to disappear. When they are compared with villages like Eastham, Hooton, Ledsham, Leighton, Mollington, Prenton, Puddington, Saughall (Great and Little), Sutton and Upton, all bearing English names and all mentioned in Domesday Book, they give some support to the view that the Norsemen did not seize the larger English villages and did not, on the other hand, succeed in creating important villages of their own. The evidence is vague but it leaves one with the impression that the Norsemen were generally content to occupy the poorer lands left uncultivated by the English. Thus place-names tend to confirm the theory that the Norse settlement of Wirral was not a military conquest so much as a peaceful infiltration, and again they fall into line with the story preserved in the *Three Fragments*.

The Norsemen of Wirral may well have arrived as peaceful settlers but they seriously increased the difficulties of Æthelred and Æthelflæd. They had settled within the boundaries of Mercia and they must have caused constant anxiety to rulers preoccupied with urgent problems arising from the Danish settlements in the eastern midlands. Even if one ignores the potential danger of concerted Danish-Norse action the situation was critical, especially as the Norsemen were obviously ready to resort to violence when they thought they might profit by it. The fortification of Chester in 907 is some measure of Mercian alarm, and the attack upon the city shows that the Mercians had not misjudged the position. In itself the existence of groups of Norse settlers in Wirral must have worried rulers who had other dangers to face and other problems to solve.

But the political repercussions of these settlements cannot be studied in isolation. The Norsemen who settled in Wirral were but the spray from the wave of Norse immigrants that swept into north-western England, and only when the great movement is viewed as a whole does its political importance become apparent. During the early tenth century the Norsemen dominated the political scene in northern England; they were a menace not only to the English but also to the Britons, to the Scots, and to the Danes in Northumbria. And behind the meagre scraps of recorded history there are signs that Æthelflæd's real contribution to the English victory lies not so much in her efforts against the Danes of Derby and Leicester as in her efforts against the Norsemen in Northumbria. She seems to have welded the northern peoples into at least a

[63] [See also the form quoted PN Ch **4** 311 for Hesby: *campus qui vocatur Eskeby*, 1357 *MinAcct*, 'farmstead at a place growing with ash-trees', *v.* **eski, býr**.]

[64] [Also noted as *the Silly Bub Crofts* from 1680 *Cheshire Sheaf*, 3rd series 46 (no. 9411), in PN Ch **4** 205, where Dodgson writes, 'perhaps originally a p.n. in **býr**, changed to ModE *sillabub* by popular etymology, but it is equally likely to have been originally *sillabub*, from the quality of the milk-yield from the pasturage . . .']

[65] *Signeby* is sometimes quoted as a 'lost' Cheshire *-by* (e.g. Collingwood, *Scandinavian Britain*, p. 193), but this is due to a misreading of Harleian MS 2115 by G. Ormerod, *History of Cheshire* (1819), II, 191.

temporary alliance against their common enemy, and her fortress system was aimed as clearly against the Norsemen as against the midland Danes. We cannot here discuss in any detail the political implications of the Norse invasion; it is enough to remark that Edward the Elder, developing Æthelflæd's policy, was able to achieve a temporary pacification of the north. Even so the Norse menace was not entirely removed. Edward found it necessary to build a fortress at *Cledemupa*, probably at the mouth of the Clwyd and possibly at Rhuddlan. A fortress in this region would be of great strategic value for it would control not only the Clwyd valley but also the whole coast between Anglesey and Wirral, and together with the fortresses at Runcorn, Eddisbury, and Chester, it would effectively check the entry of Norse adventurers from Ireland.

To examine the political repercussions of the Norse invasions upon the Anglo-Danish struggle, upon conditions in Northumbria, and upon the relations between the English, the Welsh, and the peoples of the north, lies outside the scope of this study. Ingimund's invasion concerns only Wirral, and was only a single episode in a great movement which directly affected the whole of northern England, but it should be regarded as typical of the many other and unrecorded expeditions that went to make up one of the most important migrations in British history. The essential facts of the story preserved in the *Three Fragments* seem to be trustworthy. Therefore the Ingimund tradition is of singular interest as the only surviving account of a Norse invasion and as a concrete illustration of what was happening in north-west England during the early years of the tenth century.