

= Sigtrygg Silkbeard =

Sigtrygg II Silkbeard Olafsson (also Sihtric , Sitric and Sitrick in Irish texts ; or Sigtryg and Sigtryggr in Scandinavian texts) was a Hiberno @-@ Norse king of Dublin (possibly AD 989 ? 994 ; restored or began 995 ? 1000 ; restored 1000 and abdicated 1036) of the Uí Ímair dynasty . He was caught up in the abortive Leinster revolt of 999 ? 1000 , after which he was forced to submit to the King of Munster , Brian Boru . His family also conducted a double marriage alliance with Boru , although he later realigned himself with the main leaders of the Leinster revolt of 1012 ? 1014 . He has a prominent role in the 12th @-@ century Irish Cogadh Gaedhil re Gallaibh and the 13th century Icelandic Njal 's Saga , as the main Norse leader at the Battle of Clontarf in 1014 .

Sigtrygg 's long reign spanned 46 years , until his abdication in 1036 . During that period , his armies saw action in four of the five Irish provinces of the time . In particular , he conducted a long series of raids into territories such as Meath , Wicklow , Ulster , and perhaps even the coast of Wales . He also came into conflict with rival Norse kings , especially in Cork and Waterford .

He went on pilgrimage to Rome in 1028 and is associated with the foundation of Christ Church Cathedral in Dublin . Although Dublin underwent several reversals of fortune during his reign , on the whole trade in the city flourished . He died in 1042 .

= = Life = =

= = = Family = = =

Sigtrygg was of Norse and Irish ancestry . He was a son of Olaf Cuarán (also called Kváran) , King of York and of Dublin , and Gormflaith ingen Murchada . Gormflaith was the daughter of the King of Leinster , Murchad mac Finn , and the sister of his successor , King Máel Mórda of Leinster . She had previously been married to the King of Meath and High King of Ireland , Máel Sechnaill ? the first of her three husbands . She was a beautiful , powerful and intriguing Irish woman , who according to the 13th @-@ century Icelandic Njal 's saga , was " the fairest of all women , and best gifted in everything that was not in her own power , but it was the talk of men that she did all things ill over which she had any power " . Sigtrygg 's paternal half @-@ brother was Glúniarn , " Iron @-@ knee " , who ruled as King of Dublin from 980 ? 989 .

An incident involving the ransom of one of Sigtrygg 's sons late in his reign , in which " seven score British horse " were mentioned in the list of demands , suggests that Dublin was one of the main ports for importing horses into 11th century Ireland , and that Sigtrygg and his family may have been personally involved in animal husbandry .

= = = King of Dublin = = =

Sigtrygg may have succeeded his paternal half @-@ brother Glúniarn as king of Dublin in 989 , but it is just as likely his rival Ivar of Waterford came to power in the city then . The Irish annals record little information about Sigtrygg , his family or Dublin during these first five years of his reign . Benjamin Hudson claims this was because of the arrival of the future King of Norway , Olaf Trygvason , who took up residence in Dublin for a few years after marrying Sigtrygg 's sister Gytha . Trygvason had met Gytha while raiding along the coasts of the Irish Sea . The presence of a powerful Viking leader in Dublin was a deterrent to Irish raids , and Trygvason may have weakened Sigtrygg 's foes by plundering them .

Hudson argues that Trygvason 's return to Norway in 994 coincided with the temporary expulsion of Sigtrygg from Dublin by his rival Ivar of Waterford , . Ivar may have already ruled there from 989 until forced out by Sigtrygg in 993 . Much depends on the interpretation . Either way , Sigtrygg was back within a year . In 995 , he and his nephew , Muirchertach Ua Congalaich , attacked the church at Donaghpatrick in County Meath . In retaliation , Máel Sechnaill entered Dublin and took the ring of Thor and the sword of Carlus . Sigtrygg then attacked Kells and Clonard in 997 . In 998 , Máel

Sechnaill and the King of Munster , Brian Boru , forced Sigtrygg to recognise their lordship by giving hostages .

Sigtrygg realised that Dublin 's wealth made him a target , and that his city needed powerful allies and walls . The Dublin countryside did not provide sufficient resources for competition against powerful Irish princes . Sigtrygg first allied with his maternal uncle , Máel Mórda mac Murchada , King of the Uí Fáeláin of north Leinster . In 999 , they defeated their cousin the King of Leinster Donnchad mac Domhnaill , and imprisoned him in Dublin .

= = = First Leinster revolt against Brian Boru = = =

Late in 999 , the Leinstermen , historically hostile to domination by either the Uí Néill overkings or the king of Munster , allied themselves with the Norse of Dublin and revolted against Brian Boru . This provided the opportunity for Sigtrygg 's second alliance with Máel Mórda mac Murchada . Brian 's forces inflicted a crushing defeat on the united Leinster @-@ Dublin army at the Battle of Glenmama , and followed the victory with an attack on the city of Dublin . The 12th @-@ century Cogadh Gaedhil re Gallaibh gives two accounts of the occupation : Brian remained in Dublin from Christmas Day until Epiphany (6 January) , or from Christmas Day until St. Brigid 's Day (1 February) . The later Annals of Ulster date the Battle of Glenmama to 30 December 999 , while the Annals of Inisfallen date Brian 's capture of the city to 1 January 1000 . In any case , in 1000 Brian plundered the city , burned the Norse fortress and expelled Sigtrygg .

According to the Cogadh Gaedhil re Gallaibh , Sigtrygg 's flight from the city took him north , first to the Ulaid and then to Aéd of Cenél nEógain . Both tribes refused to help him . As Sigtrygg could find no refuge in Ireland , he eventually returned , submitted to Brian , gave hostages and was restored to Dublin three months after Brian ended his occupation in February . In the meantime , Sigtrygg may have temporarily " turned pirate " and been responsible for a raid on St David 's in Wales .

Brian 's daughter by his first wife was married to Sigtrygg , and Brian in turn took Sigtrygg 's mother , the now thrice @-@ married Gormflaith , as his second wife .

= = = Years between the revolts = = =

Dublin enjoyed a sustained period of peace while Sigtrygg 's men served in the armies of Brian . Sigtrygg never forgot the Ulaid 's refusal of aid when he fled from Dublin , and in 1002 he had his revenge when his soldiers served in Brian 's campaign against the Ulaid and ravaged their lands . His fleet raided Ulster , and he plundered Kilclief and Inis Cumhsraigh , taking many prisoners from both . They served under Brian against the Ulaid again in 1005 , and against the Northern Uí Néill in 1006 and 1007 . Cenél Conaill , the last of the Northern Uí Néill Kingdoms , submitted in 1011 , and Brian was formally recognised as High King throughout Ireland .

A remembrance of Sigtrygg 's reign during these years is preserved in the late medieval Icelandic Saga of Gunnlaug Serpent 's Tongue . Only fragments survive of the verses in the Sigtryggsdrápa , a drápa composed by the skald Gunnlaug Illugason while visiting Sigtrygg 's court . The verses praise Sigtrygg for his royal ancestry , and describe Dublin as a busy , thriving port . Archaeological excavations of ships , gold , clothing , and pieces for games from around this time seem to confirm the description . According to the prose , Sigtrygg considered rewarding the poet with ships and gold , but instead granted him a new suit of clothes .

= = = Second Leinster revolt against Brian Boru = = =

Some time during the 1010s , Brian Boru divorced Queen Gormflaith , and she began to engineer opposition to the High King . Around 1012 , relations between Brian and Leinster had become so strained that revolt broke out among the Leinstermen . Sigtrygg aligned himself with the forces of Máel Mórda , leader of the revolt , and the chiefs Ua Ruairc , Ua Néill , and others . Together , they defeated Brian 's ally Máel Sechnaill near the town of Swords , and Brian for the moment was unable to render assistance .

Sigtrygg sent his son Oleif to lead a fleet south to Munster to burn the Viking settlement of Cork . The fleet also attacked Cape Clear , crippling Brian 's naval power , which was concentrated in Cork .

According to Njál 's saga , Gormflaith " egged on her son Sigtrygg very much to kill King Brian " , sending him to win the support of Earl Sigurd of Orkney , and Bróðir and Óspak of Man at any price . Sigtrygg arrived in Orkney for Sigurd 's Yule feast , where he sat in a high seat between the two brothers @-@ in @-@ law , Earl Sigurd of Orkney and Earl Gilli of the Southern Isles . The saga also records that Sigtrygg was very interested in the Burning of Njáll Þorgeirsson at Bergþórshvoll and what had happened since . Afterwards , Sigtrygg bade Sigurd to go to war with him against Brian . Despite Sigurd 's initial hesitance and against the advice of his men , he eventually agreed to arrive in Dublin by Palm Sunday with all his men , on the condition that if Brian was slain , Sigurd would marry Gormflaith and become King of Ireland .

Sigtrygg went next to Man , where he also persuaded Bróðir to be in Dublin by Palm Sunday , and he promised Bróðir too that , if successful , he would be allowed marry Gormflaith and become King of Ireland ; the terms of this agreement were kept secret . Óspak was dissatisfied with the arrangement , and refused to " fight against so good a king " .

The two forces met at the Battle of Clontarf , on Good Friday in 1014 , a battle that claimed the lives of the main commanders on both sides : Brian and his son Murchad on the Munster side ; and Máel Mórda , Sigurd and Bróðir on the Leinster @-@ Norse side . According to Irish sources , Sigtrygg did not take part in the battle , but held his garrison in reserve in Dublin . The Cogadh Gaedhil re Gallaibh records that Sigtrygg was able to observe the progress of the battle and the movement of the battle standards from the ramparts of his fortress . As the modern Irish medievalist historian Donnchadh Ó Corráin notes , Sigtrygg " wisely kept within the city and lived to tell the tale " .

Earlier Scandinavian sources (the Orkneyinga saga , Njál 's saga and the Darraðarljóð , composed soon after the battle) contend that he did actually fight valiantly at Clontarf . The Darraðarljóð , showing the persistence of paganism among the Vikings of Dublin , describes the Valkyries as following the " young king " Sigtrygg into battle . Njal 's Saga records that Sigtrygg was on the wing opposite Óspak of Man for the whole battle , and that Óspak eventually put the king to flight .

= = = = Reign after Clontarf = = = =

Immediately after Clontarf , Sigtrygg 's fortunes appear to have declined , even though he emerged with his kingdom intact . Máel Sechnaill , now again recognised as high king , was undoubtedly the battle 's main beneficiary . In 1015 , plague struck Dublin and Leinster , and Máel Sechnaill seized the opportunity to march south to burn Dublin 's suburbs . While Sigtrygg was able to ally with Leinster for another attack on Meath in 1017 , the alliance was dissolved when Sigtrygg blinded his cousin Bróen , Máel Morda 's son and heir , in Dublin .

In 1018 , Sigtrygg plundered Kells ; he " carried off innumerable spoils and prisoners , and slew many persons in the middle of the church " . These captives would either have been ransomed or sold off into Dublin 's lucrative slave trade . When Sigtrygg raided south in 1021 , he was defeated at Delgany in County Wicklow where the new King of Leinster , Augaire mac Dúnlainge , " made a dreadful slaughter of the foreigners " in the Kingdom of Breifne . In 1022 , the Dublin fleet sailed north against the Ulaid , only to be destroyed in a naval battle against Niall mac Eochaid , after which the Norse crews and ships were taken prisoner .

According to the American medievalist historian Benjamin Hudson , " matters went from bad to worse " for Sigtrygg after the death of Máel Sechnaill in 1022 . The great Irish princes began to compete for the High Kingship , and the political situation in Ireland became chaotic as there was no clear choice for supremacy . Accordingly , " Dublin became a prize for those who would rule Ireland and wanted the town 's wealth to finance their ambitions . "

Hostages were taken from Sigtrygg by Flaithbertach Ua Néill , King of Cenél nEógain and the Uí Néill , and Donnchad mac Briain of Munster in 1025 and 1026 respectively , in support of their bids for the high kingship . These hostages brought no security , and Dublin was raided in 1026 by Niall mac Eocada of the Ulaid in revenge for the naval attack of 1022 . Sigtrygg formed a new alliance

with the men of Brega . In 1027 , Sigtrygg 's son Olaf joined Donnchad of Brega in a raid on Staholmock , County Meath . Sigtrygg and Donnchad 's army was defeated by the men of Meath under their king , Roen Ua Mael Sechlainn . Sigtrygg rallied to the fight again at Lickblaw where Donnchad and Roen were slain .

In 1029 , Sigtrygg 's son Olaf was taken prisoner by the new lord of Brega , Mathghamhain Ua Riagain . Sigtrygg was forced to pay a ransom of 1 @, @ 200 cows , 140 British horses , 60 ounces of gold and of silver , " the sword of Carlus " , the Irish hostages of Leinster and Leath Cuinn , " four hostages to Ua Riagain as a security for peace , and the full value of the life of the third hostage . " An additional 80 cows " for word and supplication " were to be paid to the man who entreated for Olaf 's release . The incident illustrates the importance of ransoming noble captives , as a means of political manipulation , increasing one 's own revenues and exhausting the resources of one 's foes .

Sigtrygg 's fortunes improved in the 1030s . In 1030 , he allied with the King of England , Cnut , and together their fleets raided Wales . A Dublin colony was established in Gwynedd , and for the following years Sigtrygg was at the height of his power . In 1032 , without allies , Sigtrygg won a victory on the Boyne estuary of a type previously unseen by his dynasty for two decades , against a coalition of three kingdoms : over 300 members of the Conailli , the Ui Tortain , and the Ui Meith were captured or killed at the Battle of Inbher Boinne . In 1035 , he plundered the celebrated stone church Ardbraccan in Meath , burned 200 men inside , and carried another 200 off into captivity . (In revenge , the church at Swords was plundered and burned by Conchobhar Ua Maeleachlainn , who took away cattle and captives .)

Meanwhile , in a renewal of ancient feuds that same year , Sigtrygg executed Ragnall King of Waterford , in Dublin Ragnall was the grandson of the Ivar , Sigtrygg 's earliest rival , who had contested for Dublin decades before . Echmarcach mac Ragnaill , King of the Isles forced Sigtrygg to abdicate in 1036 . Sigtrygg died in exile , at an unknown place , in 1042 .

= = Issue and legacy = =

Sigtrygg married Brian Boru 's daughter , Sláine , and they had one son : Olaf (d . 1034) . According to the Annals of the Four Masters , Olaf " was slain by the Saxons " on his way on a pilgrimage to Rome . He was survived by one Ragnhild , from whom Gruffudd ap Cynan and the Kings of Gwynedd were descended .

Separately from Sláine , Sigtrygg had five children : Artalach (d . 999) , Oleif (d . 1013) , Godfrey (d . 1036) , Glúniarn (d . 1031) and Cellach (d . 1042) . The annals record the death of Oleif ? " son of the lord of the foreigners " ? who was killed in revenge for the burning of Cork . Glúniarn was killed by the people of South Brega in 1031 . Godfrey was killed in Wales in 1036 by one Sitric , " son of Glúniarn " ? as factionalism was common among Viking settlers , this could have been the same Glúniarn as Sigtrygg 's half @-@ brother , thus making Godfrey and his killer cousins . Sigtrygg 's daughter Cellach died in the same month as her father .

Sigtrygg was also , according to the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography , " a patron of the arts , a benefactor of the church , and an economic innovator " . In the 990s , he established Ireland 's first mint , in Dublin . He established a bishopric at Dublin and in 1028 he made a pilgrimage to Rome . It is thus possible to attribute the origins of the establishment of territorial bishoprics in Ireland on the Roman model , one of the most important results of 11th @-@ century Irish Church Reform , to Sigtrygg . He went on to found Christ Church Cathedral in Dublin , which today is the oldest building in Dublin , but relatively young in comparison to the many monastic cathedrals in the rest of Ireland . Like many of the other coastal cathedrals in Ireland , it is of Hiberno @-@ Norse origin . The cathedral , initially a wooden building , was rebuilt in stone in the 1180s following the arrival of the Anglo @-@ Normans to Ireland , led by Richard de Clare , 2nd Earl of Pembroke .