

= Sitric Cáech =

Sitric Cáech , also known as Sitric Gále , (Old Norse : Sigtryggr , died 927) was a Viking leader who ruled Dublin and then Viking Northumbria in the early 10th century . He was a grandson of Ímar and a member of the Uí Ímair . Sitric was most probably among those Vikings expelled from Dublin in 902 , whereafter he may have ruled territory in the eastern Danelaw in England . In 917 , he and his kinsman Ragnall ua Ímair sailed separate fleets to Ireland where they won several battles against local kings . Sitric successfully recaptured Dublin and established himself as king , while Ragnall returned to England to become King of Northumbria . In 919 , Sitric won a victory at the Battle of Islandbridge over a coalition of local Irish kings who aimed to expel the Uí Ímair from Ireland . Six Irish kings were killed in the battle , including Niall Glúndub , overking of the Northern Uí Néill and High King of Ireland .

In 920 Sitric left Dublin for Northumbria , with his kinsman Gofraid ua Ímair succeeding him as king . That same year he led a raid on Davenport , Cheshire , perhaps as an act of defiance against Edward the Elder , King of the Anglo @-@ Saxons . In 921 Ragnall ua Ímair died , with Sitric succeeding him as King of Northumbria . Though there are no written accounts of conflict , numismatic evidence suggests there was a Viking reconquest of a large part of Mercia in the following few years . An agreement of some sort between the Vikings of Northumbria and the Anglo @-@ Saxons was achieved in 926 when Sitric married a sister of Æthelstan , perhaps Edith of Polesworth . Sitric also converted to Christianity , though this did not last long and he soon reverted to paganism . He died in 927 and was succeeded by his kinsman Gofraid ua Ímair . Sitric 's son Gofraid later reigned as King of Dublin , his son Aralt as King of Limerick , and his son Amlaíb Cuarán as king of both Dublin and Northumbria .

= = Background = =

The ruling Vikings of Dublin were expelled from the city in 902 by a joint force led by Máel Finnia mac Flannacán , overking of Brega and Cerball mac Muirecáin , overking of Leinster . Those Vikings that survived the capture of the city split into different groups ; some went to France , some to England , and some to Wales . Archaeological evidence suggests Dublin remained occupied in the years immediately following this expulsion , perhaps indicating only the ruling elite were forced to leave . However , Viking raids on Irish settlements continued , and in 914 , a large Viking fleet travelled to Waterford . The arrival of this fleet marked the re @-@ establishment of Viking rule over parts of Ireland , and was followed by more Vikings settling in Limerick the following year .

The main historical sources for this period are the Norse sagas and the Irish annals . Some of the annals , such as the Annals of Ulster , are believed to be contemporary accounts , whereas the sagas were written down at dates much later than the events they describe and are considered far less reliable . A few of the annals such as the Fragmentary Annals of Ireland and the Annals of the Four Masters were also compiled at later dates , in part from more contemporary material and in part from fragments of sagas . According to Downham : " apart from these additions [of saga fragments] , Irish chronicles are considered by scholars to be largely accurate records , albeit partisan in their presentation of events " .

= = Biography = =

Sitric is presumed to have left Dublin with the rest of the ruling Vikings in 902 . Coins dating from the period bearing the legend " Sitric Comes " (Earl Sitric) , and the mintmark " Sceldfor " (Shelford) , have been found as part of the Cuerdale Hoard , perhaps indicating that he ruled territory in the eastern Danelaw during his exile from Ireland . The Anglo @-@ Saxons conquered all of the Danelaw south of the Humber by 918 , but there is no mention of Earl Sitric in English sources , suggesting he was no longer ruling there at the time .

The earliest mention of Sitric in the Irish Annals is in 917 when he and Ragnall , another grandson of Ímar , are described as leading their fleets to Ireland . Sitric sailed his fleet to Cenn Fuait in

Leinster , and Ragnall sailed his fleet to Waterford . Niall Glúndub , overking of the Northern Uí Néill saw these Vikings as a threat , and he marched an army south to repel them . The Vikings fought against the men of the Uí Néill at Mag Femen in County Tipperary and claimed victory , though only through timely reinforcement by Ragnall and his army . This was followed by another at the Battle of Confey (also known as the Battle of Cenn Fuait) , against Augaire mac Ailella , overking of Leinster , who died in the battle . Augaire 's death marked the end of effective opposition to the Vikings ' return to Ireland . Sitric led his men on a triumphant return to Dublin , where he established himself as king , while Ragnall returned to England and soon became King of Northumbria .

According to Downham , the departure of Ragnall and his contingent of warriors may have emboldened Niall Glúndub to try to expel the Uí Ímair from Ireland once again . In 919 Niall led a coalition of northern Irish kings south to Dublin . The forces of Sitric and Niall met near Islandbridge in modern @-@ day County Dublin (dated 14 September by the Annals of Ulster) . The resulting Battle of Islandbridge was an overwhelming victory for Sitric and his forces , with Niall falling in battle alongside one of his kinsmen . Five other kings , and a kinsman of the ruler of the Southern Uí Néill also died fighting against Sitric 's army .

In 920 the Annals of Ulster report that Sitric left Dublin " through the power of God " . Sitric travelled to Northumbria where he assumed the kingship of Northumbria , succeeding his kinsman Ragnall who died the following year . Sitric was followed as King of Dublin by his brother or cousin Gofraid ua Ímair . In 920 Ragnall had submitted to Edward the Elder , King of the Anglo @-@ Saxons . That same year , following his departure from Dublin , Sitric led a raid in Davenport , Cheshire , in violation of the terms of submission agreed between Ragnall and Edward . Smyth has suggested that this was an act of defiance by Sitric , indicating to Edward that he would not submit to him like Ragnall .

Neither the Anglo @-@ Saxon Chronicle nor Æthelweard 's Chronicon makes mention of Sitric in the years 921 ? 924 , i.e. between his installation as King of Northumbria and the death of Edward the Elder . However , there are coins in existence which were minted at Lincoln during the period that bear Sitric 's name . These are an important piece of evidence since they suggest Sitric ruled a large area south of the Humber , a claim contradicted by the Anglo @-@ Saxon Chronicle which says that all the ' Danes ' in Mercia (i.e. south of the Humber) submitted to Edward in 918 . These coins might indicate Viking reconquest of a large area in the years 921 ? 924 , which if it did happen went unremarked upon by the Chronicle . Edward 's control of Mercia likely stretched the kingdom 's resources to breaking point , allowing Sitric to exploit the ill @-@ will towards Edward that existed among the populace there , with Edward being unable to effectively oppose Sitric . Downham suggests that the silence of the Chronicle might be due to Edward 's failing power in the latter years of his reign , and its tendency to only record successes and not failures . His death in 924 is not recorded by a number of important Frankish , Welsh and Irish annals , suggesting a fall in importance and standing from the zenith of his power in 920 .

Edward the Elder 's successor , Æthelstan , met with Sitric at Tamworth in 926 . The Chronicle does not mention the reason for the meeting , but it reports that an unnamed sister of Æthelstan was married to Sitric . Several years previously , in 918 , Æthelstan 's predecessor had used a royal marriage to bring Mercia under Wessex control . According to Smyth , the fact the marriage between Sitric and Æthelstan 's sister occurred at the old Mercian royal centre at Tamworth reinforces the suggestion that this marriage was supposed to perform as a similar function to the one in 918 . The agreement reached at Tamworth seems to have necessitated Sitric 's conversion to Christianity , though he soon reverted to paganism . Sitric died the following year and was succeeded by his kinsman Gofraid ua Ímair . The Annals of Ulster describe his death :

= = Family = =

In the annals Sitric is sometimes identified by the use of one of his epithets , or by the use of " ua Ímair " , meaning " grandson of Ímar " , but never with a patronymic . As such , it is not possible to identify which of the three known sons of Ímar (Bárid , Sichfrith or Sitriuc) - if any - was the father of Sitric . One possible reason for the lack of a patronym might be that Sitric was the child of a son of

Ímar who never ruled Dublin , or who spent most of his time outside Ireland , thus making Sitric 's legitimacy to rule Dublin dependent the identity of his grandfather , not his father . Another possibility is that Sitric was a grandson of Ímar through a daughter , again with his right to rule dependent on his grandfather . Sitric 's kinsmen Ímar , Ragnall , Amlaíb and Gofraid are the other known grandsons of Ímar identified by the use of " ua Ímair " . All except for Amlaíb ruled as either King of Dublin or King of Northumbria at one time or another .

The Annals of Clonmacnoise mention two sons of Sitric , Ausle and Sichfrith , falling at the Battle of Brunanburh in 937 . Another son , Aralt , ruled as King of Limerick for an unknown length of time until his death in battle in 940 . Sitric 's son Amlaíb Cuarán (d . 981) reigned twice each as King of Dublin and King of Northumbria , and may have been the basis of the Middle English romance character Havelok the Dane . Gofraid (d . 954) may have been another son though his father his only named as " Sitric " so it is not possible to say conclusively he was a son . According to the Orkneyinga saga , a daughter of Sitric named Gytha was married to Olaf Tryggvason , King of Norway . According to Hudson , this is unlikely to be correct , since the marriage is said to have occurred sixty @-@ three years after Sitric 's death . It is much more likely that Gytha was actually a granddaughter of Sitric through his son Amlaíb Cuarán .

Sitric married an unnamed sister of Æthelstan in 926 . Historians generally describe her as Æthelstan 's only full sister , but Maggie Bailey points out that this rests on the late testimony of William of Malmesbury , and the Anglo @-@ Saxon Chronicle makes no such distinction when recording her marriage to Sitric . William did not know her name , but traditions first recorded at Bury in the early twelfth century identify her as Saint Edith of Polesworth . The truth of his identification is debated , but regardless of her name but it is likely that she entered a nunnery in widowhood . According to some late sources , such as the chronicler John of Wallingford , Amlaíb Cuarán was the son of Sitric and this West Saxon princess .

= = = Family tree = = =