

= Ragnall ua Ímair =

Ragnall ua Ímair (Old Norse : Røgnvaldr , died 921) was a Viking leader who ruled Northumbria and the Isle of Man in the early 10th century . He was a grandson of Ímar and a member of the Uí Ímair . Ragnall was most probably among those Vikings expelled from Dublin in 902 , whereafter he may have ruled territory in southern Scotland or the Isle of Man . In 917 , he and his kinsman Sitric Cáech 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 . He fought against Constantín mac Áeda , King of Scotland , in the Battle of Corbridge in 918 , and although the battle was not decisive it did allow Ragnall to establish himself as king at York .

Ragnall 's rule was immediately challenged by a group of Christian Vikings opposed to his paganism . This group tried to organise an alliance with Æthelflæd , Lady of the Mercians but this attempt was cut short by her death in 918 . His reign saw three issues of coinage , although this was perhaps done on the orders of Hrothweard , Archbishop of York . In 920 Ragnall and his neighbouring northern kings came to an agreement with Edward the Elder , King of the Anglo @-@ Saxons , though it is a matter of dispute whether Ragnall recognised Edward as his overlord . Ragnall died the following year , whereupon the Annals of Ulster describe him as " king of the fair foreigners and the dark foreigners " . He was succeeded as king by Sitric Cáech .

= = 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 = =

Ragnall is presumed to have left Dublin with the rest of the ruling Vikings in 902 . It appears he settled in southern Scotland or the Isle of Man , and is described by some scholars as a King of Mann . He may or may not have ruled territory in western and northern Scotland including the Hebrides and Northern Isles , but contemporary sources are silent on this matter . The earliest mention of him in the Irish Annals is in 914 when he is described as defeating Bárid mac Oitir in a naval battle off the Isle of Man . Bárid may have been a son of Oitir mac Iercne , the man who killed a son of Auisle in 883 , or a son of Jarl Oitir , who later accompanied Ragnall and fought alongside him in England . Ragnall is mentioned in the annals again in 917 when he and Sitric , 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 , and Sitric led his men on a triumphant return to Dublin , where he established himself as king .

The Annals of Ulster record Ragnall , with his kinsman Gofraid and two earls , Ottir Iarla and Gragabai , leaving Ireland in 918 to fight against Constantín son of Áed , the king of Scotland . According to the northern English historical tract *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto* (completed in the 11th century but probably with access to earlier material) Constantín was assisting Ealdred son of Eadwulf , ruler of all or some part of Northumbria . The battle , known as the Battle of Corbridge , was indecisive , but this appears to have been enough to allow Ragnall to establish himself as king at York . Ragnall moved quickly and soon imposed his authority on the Vikings there . His position as king of Northumbria was immediately challenged by a group of Christian Vikings (York was mostly Christian by this time) who opposed Ragnall 's paganism . This faction approached Æthelflæd , Lady of the Mercians , an Anglo @-@ Saxon and a Christian , with an offer of submission , but negotiations were ended by her premature death in June 918 .

Ragnall had three separate issues of coins produced while he ruled York , showing that the machinery of government in Northumbria continued to function , though it is possible that the day @-@ to @-@ day working of mints and collection of taxes rested with the Archbishop of York , Hrotheward , rather than with Ragnall . The southern Anglo @-@ Saxon king , Edward the Elder , made some manner of agreement with Ragnall and the other northern kings in about 920 , the exact nature of which is unclear . The Anglo @-@ Saxon Chronicle states that they " chose him [Edward] as father and lord " , perhaps indicating that Ragnall acknowledged Edward 's overlordship , although many scholars have contested this as unlikely . Ragnall died in 921 , and is described as " king of the fair foreigners and the dark foreigners " by the Annals of Ulster . It may be that he was already dying in 920 when the Irish annals note the departure of Sitric from Dublin , replaced there by Gofraid . Sitric succeeded Ragnall as king of the Northumbrians at York .

= = Origins = =

The historian Alex Woolf has identified Ragnall with Rognvald Eysteinnsson , Earl of Møre , a figure closely associated with Harald Fairhair , the first King of Norway . Woolf provides two pieces of evidence in support of this theory . Firstly , both Ragnall and Rognvald are the grandsons of ' Ivars ' ? this would equate Ragnall 's grandfather Ímar with Ívarr Upplendingajarl , a son of the legendary king Halfdan the Old . Secondly , Rognvald 's son Ivar was killed while in Scotland , as was Ragnall 's kinsman Ímar ua Ímair . Other attempts have also been made in the modern era to link the Kings of Lochlann with historical figures in Norway ? Smyth has suggested that Amlaíb Conung can be identified with Olaf Geirstad @-@ Alf , King of Vestfold , (who was the son of Gudrød the Hunter and half @-@ brother of Halfdan the Black) , though speculation of this nature has not received much support . Ó Corrain states that there is " no good historical or linguistic evidence to link Lothlend / Laithlind with Norway , and none to link the dynasty of Dublin to the shadowy history of the Ynglings of Vestfold " .

= = Family = =

In the annals Ragnall is identified 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 Ragnall . One possible reason for the lack of a patronym might be that Ragnall was the child of a son of Ímar who never ruled Dublin , or who spent most of his time outside Ireland , thus making Ragnall 's legitimacy to rule Dublin dependent the identity of his grandfather , not his father . Another possibility is that Ragnall was a grandson of Ímar through a daughter , again with his right to rule dependent on his grandfather . Sitric 's kinsmen Ímar , Sitric , 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 .

An individual identified as Mac Ragnaill (son of Ragnall) by the annals may have been Ragnall 's son , though no name is given . In 942 Mac Ragnaill led a raid on Downpatrick , but within a week he was killed by Matudán , Overking of Ulster . The Annals of the Four Masters call Mac Ragnaill a jarl , but the Annals of Ulster call him a king . The Annals of the Four Masters also suggests he and his fellow plunderers came from an island .

= = = Family tree = = =