

# The Vikings in East Sutherland

by Bridget Mackenzie



Illustrated by Sally Orr

NOTE TO READERS

This booklet tells how the Vikings came to Sutherland, and how their leader Sigurth met his death in 895 and was buried at Cyderhall, near Dornoch. It tells you how we know these things, and how the Norsemen lived when they were here.

If you are interested in place names, or in the Vikings, or in Scottish history, or in knowing more about the area you are in, this may be the booklet for you.

The names of the Norsemen have been spelled in the English fashion. They are pronounced with the stress on the first syllable. Skibo has a long i as if it was Skeebo; Sigurth has a short i as in "big".

This booklet is based on a talk given to Dornoch Heritage Society on 8th October 1985.

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THE VIKINGS IN EAST SUTHERLAND



The Vikings who came to East Sutherland

were mainly from Western Norway, probably by way of Orkney or Shetland. In the first half of the 9th century they were making sporadic raids on the Scottish mainland, but it was around 850 that the Norsemen came to settle, when they had already begun to colonise the Northern Isles and parts of Caithness.

Much of the evidence about the Vikings in South-East Sutherland is in the Orkneyinga saga "the story of the men of Orkney",

a history of the Earls of Orkney compiled in Iceland. This should be approached with caution, as it was compiled as late as 1220, using older material, but even that was considerably later than the age of Viking settlement in the mid-9th century.

There are no contemporary records other than the place-names left by the Norsemen, and a few archaeological remains, such as the "Viking's Grave" at Cyderhall, near Dornoch, and the Ospisdale brooch.

