***The 9th and 10th centuries***

***In England these two centuries were dominated by the Viking raiders and settlers and the fight back by the English from the south-west. York was the Viking capital of Jorvik and their legacy remains with us to this day!***

**Power and conflict**

This map shows England in 878, with the English kingdoms divided by the Danelaw. Viking raiders at the end of the 8th century, began settling in the 9th. The English kings were pushed back to the south-west. The great English rulers Alfred, Ethelfled and Athelstan fought back against the Danes and Athelstan became King of all England in 937. However, it was past the time of the Norman Conquest before the Danish kings gave up their claim to England. The division of England can still be seen in our place-names. For example, you won’t find many ‘-by’ endings outside the Danelaw.

"England 878" by Hel-hama. Own work. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 via Commons - https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:England\_878.svg#/media/File:England\_878.svg

**Faith and fears**

The invaders were pagans and they raided Saxon monasteries for their treasure and to take away the monks and local people to be sold as slaves They also believed in many gods, the chief of whom was Odin. Slowly the Vikings were converted to Christianity. The Viking leader Guthrum was baptised as part of the Treaty of Wedmore with King Alfred.

**Home and health**

Life was hard and violent. Most people died young and childbirth was life-threatening. Stories were an important part of the culture. The most famous Old English epic ‘Beowulf’ was probably written down at this time. It tells the story of the hero who kills Grendel, a monster which has brought terror to the Great Hall of Hrothgar, king of the Danes.

Reconstruction of Heorot, the Great Hall of Hrothgar

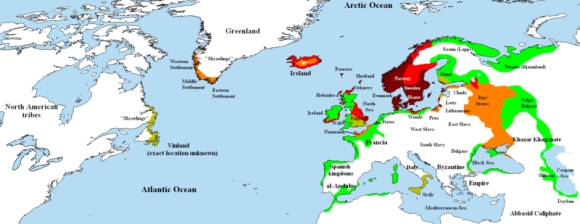
**Art and Architecture**

Vikings were skilled craftsmen who valued fine metalwork. This treasure was discovered near Harrogate.

**News and views**

The Icelandic adventurer Egil is the hero of a saga in which he is ship-wrecked in the River Humber. Egil arrives in Jorvik, where his enemy, the Norwegian king Erik Bloodaxe, has his court. Erik threatens to kill Egil, but agrees to release him when, overnight, Egil composes a poem to celebrate Erik. The poem is known as the head-ransom. Erik’s hall may have been in what is now King’s Square.

**Wider world**

The Viking’ world was much bigger than this rather small, damp island of Britain! Had they heard of the Tang dynasty – rulers in China of the greatest Empire of the day.

**Medieval remains**

The world-famous Jorvik Viking Centre preserves some of the remains of the Viking city. The street plan and names within York’s walls is also Viking e.g. Micklegate comes from the Old Norse for Great Street. Some of the buildings in the city centre are still the width of the Viking properties on which they stand. York is the city with the highest percentage of people whose DNA suggests a link to the area that is now Denmark.

A modern York shop on a Viking footprint.