

## The Vikings

The Vikings came from **Scandinavia** which is made up of **Norway, Sweden and Denmark**. The word '**Viking**' means '**pirate**' or '**raider**'. The first Viking raid took place in Ireland in the year **795 AD**.

1. **The Vikings were fierce warriors, fishermen, seafarers and boat builders**. Their ships were called **longships**. The biggest ships could hold up to 100 soldiers. Viking men used to paint their faces with a black powder called '**kohl**' to scare their enemies during an attack.
2. The Vikings attacked villages and monasteries along the coast of Ireland. They burned buildings and stole all the gold and treasures they could find, for example, books, chalices, brooches and rings. Round towers were built to protect the Irish from attack. They built many forts and eventually towns grew around these forts, for example, **Dublin, Wexford, Waterford, Cork** and **Limerick**.
3. Vikings were divided into small communities, each of which was ruled by a **king**. The King, the nobles and war chiefs were the most important people. Slaves were the lowest group. Slaves were known as **thralls**. Thralls could be bought and sold just like animals. **Thralls had to do all the dirty and back-breaking work**.
4. Every **Viking village** held **meetings** that were called '**Things**'. A thing was attended by a group of nobles and freemen, who decided on the laws and taxes and held trials.

5. Most Viking **homes** only had one room, in which the family cooked, ate and slept. The walls of the houses were made from timber or wattle and daub. A fire in the middle of the room provided light and heat. Most Viking houses had thatched roofs.
6. The Vikings were **pagans** with many gods but some adopted Christianity. Examples of gods are **Odin**- who was the most powerful. **Thor** – the god of thunder and **Freya** the goddess of love and war.
7. Viking alphabet called **Runes**.



### Wexford Viking Facts

1. Wexford is a Viking name. It comes from **Waes-fjord** meaning **‘Bay of the Mudflats’**.
2. A very popular Viking name in Wexford is Doyle. The Doyles built Wexford. **Doyle** is a surname meaning **‘the dark-haired stranger’**. Fingall and Finley are other Viking surnames. **Fingall** means **‘the fair-haired stranger’**.
3. **Viking streets** are often called **lanes** for example, in Wexford town there is Oyster Lane, Mary’s lane, Slaughter’s Lane, Cinema Lane and Keyser Lane. Keyser Lane is a Viking word meaning **‘Away down to the sea’**.