

THE VIKINGS

Why did the Vikings raid Lindisfarne Monastery and why was this so significant?



Name:

LINDISFARNE MONASTERY RAID



Lindisfarne Monastery was built in 634 AD by Saint Aidan, on the island of Lindisfarne.

The monastery sat at the heart of Christianity in the north of England and was highly respected by its people.

As its importance grew, more and more money and gift were sent to the monastery, as it became a popular holy place for pilgrimage.



Ruins of Lindisfarne Church, Northumberland

The English built their monasteries in remote places, such as islands, to keep them away from the politics of the mainland and they felt they would be safe from bandits and thieves.

As it was believed to be safe, no guards were placed there. The treasures were watched over by the monks and priests.



Why did this make the monastery vulnerable to Viking raids?

The Vikings (who were excellent sailors), chose the location of Lindisfarne due to it being unguarded and easily open to an attack from any side.

On June 8th 793AD, Vikings set their sights on Lindisfarne and the events that occurred would be the start of the Viking Age in Britain.

At that time, the Vikings had been raiding in Britain but on a much smaller scale. This was the first time they had targeted a larger settlement.



Why did the Vikings decide to target monasteries?

“Here were dreadful forewarnings come over the land of Northumbria, and woefully terrified the people.

There were amazing sheets of lightning and whirlwinds, and fiery dragons were seen flying in the sky. A great famine soon followed these signs, and shortly after in the same year, on the sixth day before the ides of January, the woeful inroads of heathen men destroyed God’s church in Lindisfarne island by fierce robbery and slaughter.”



Anglo-Saxon Chronicle

Write a newspaper report about what happened during the Viking raid on Lindisfarne Monastery, Northumberland.

Include an account from an eye-witness.

A template for a newspaper report. At the top left is the logo 'Nosy Gnome News' with a small character. To the right is a headline box with the text 'THE VIKINGS HAVE LANDED!'. Below the headline is a large rectangular box for the main report, with a quote line starting with a double quote and ending with a double quote. Below this are several horizontal lines for additional text. In the bottom right corner, there is a small circular logo for 'Teacher's Pet' with a dog's face and the website 'www.tpet.co.uk'.



“

Accurate reports of what took place during the raid are unclear, as at the time, records were not routinely kept but we know the monks had no way to defend themselves and a great slaughter took place that day.



One account describes how the Vikings destroyed everything in their sights with plundering, digging up alters and seizing all the treasures.

What happened to the Monks was far worse, as they were reportedly beaten or drowned in the sea.

Why was Britain so shocked and upset by what the Vikings had done?

The importance of the Lindisfarne raid is key to the history of the Viking invasion of Britain.

By attacking such a holy place (which was founded by a Saint), the Vikings had shown they had no respect for Britain or their religious beliefs.



What do we already know about Vikings that explains why they showed no respect for the monasteries or the monks and priests that lived there?

Following the attack, more raids took place.
The Jarrow and Iona Monastery were both raided due to being isolated and undefended.

Once news spread of the wealth and treasures being brought back to the Viking homelands, invasion was next on the Viking's agenda...

Writing task (choose one)

Write a letter to King Ethelred of Northumbria, from the perspective of a monk survivor of the Lindisfarne raid.



Things to consider:

What happened?

Why did this happen?

How did you feel?

How did you survive?

Write a letter to your family back home, from the perspective of a fierce Viking raider.

Things to consider:

How did you get there?

Why did you raid Lindisfarne?

What was there when you arrived?

What events took place?



