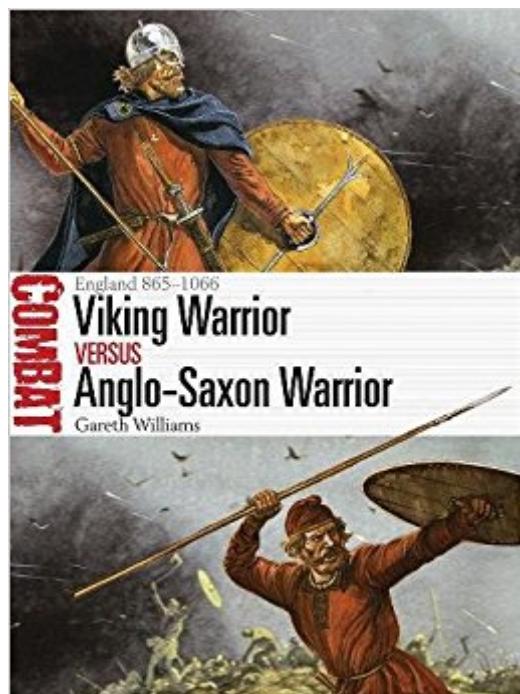


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Viking Warrior Vs Anglo-Saxon Warrior: England 865–1066 (Combat)



Synopsis

In the two centuries before the Norman invasion of England, Anglo-Saxon and Viking forces clashed repeatedly in battle, with mixed success for both sides. After the Vikings defeated three out of the four great Anglo-Saxon kingdoms and came close to defeating the fourth in the 860s and 870s, they conquered and settled large areas of England. The surviving West Saxon kingdom in turn conquered the Viking settlements in England to create the first unified English kingdom in the mid-10th century, before a new wave of Viking raids led to the Danish conquest of England in 1016. Fifty years later a Norwegian army sought to conquer England again, under the leadership of the celebrated Viking warrior Harald Hard-Counsel. His defeat at Stamford Bridge in 1066 is often seen as the end of the Viking age in England. The two sides are seen as very different in popular perceptions, but how much are these differences based on fact, and how much on the bias of the surviving contemporary accounts and later historical traditions? And how far did the two sides learn from each other in the course of 200 years of conflict? Drawing upon historical accounts from both English and Scandinavian sources, and on archaeological evidence, Gareth Williams presents a detailed comparison of the weaponry, tactics, strategies and underlying military organization of the Anglo-Saxons and Vikings, and considers the developments which took place on both sides between the arrival of the Vikings' 'Great Raiding Army' in 865 and the battle of Stamford Bridge.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gareth Williams has been a curator at the British Museum since 1996, specializing in the

Anglo-Saxon and Viking periods. He has published extensively on both Anglo-Saxon and Viking warfare, and curated the exhibitions Vikings: Life and Legend at the British Museum and Viking Voyagers at the National Maritime Museum Cornwall. Peter Dennis was born in 1950. Inspired by contemporary magazines such as Look and Learn he studied illustration at Liverpool Art College. Peter has since contributed to hundreds of books, predominantly on historical subjects, including many Osprey titles. A keen wargamer and modelmaker, he is based in Nottinghamshire, UK.

This Osprey Combat series #27 "Viking Warrior versus Anglo-Saxon Warrior" by Gareth Williams focuses on the two-century contest between the established Anglo-Saxon kingdoms and the Norse raiders-turned-conquerors from 865 AD to 1066 AD. It contains all the usual, excellent Osprey illustrations, photos and color plates. The author begins with a brief introduction into the dawn of the Viking age when the first raiders came ashore at Lindisfarne and how the raids increased in size and intensity until they were in control of half of England. The author methodically recounts how the opposing sides recruited/marshaled forces, each side's leadership and organization, mobility and logistics, objectives and strategies and formations/tactics used on the battlefield. There are color plates which compare Viking and Anglo-Saxon weaponry and equipment. Williams then analyzes three battles for which there is a good amount of written history. The author looks at the battles in as methodical a fashion as the comparison of the two sides. There are good maps showing movement for forces, there are summaries of the campaign and there is a good description of the course of the battle. The author gives a good interpretation of the period accounts. At the end, Williams offers his analysis and thoughts on the aftermath of the contest. I was impressed by the way the author went about looking at both sides, their advantages and disadvantages. The two sides were very similar in terms of equipment and fighting style. The Anglo-Saxons created a more sophisticated governing system to best use resources, but Viking leadership tended to be better (naturally, since a raiding or invading band led by successful commanders attracted more recruits than less successful ones). The singular advantage of this contest was the strategic mobility advantage of the Viking ships which could navigate across the North Sea and also make their way up rivers. They could literally appear out of nowhere to raid a monastery or take a town intact before most local defense forces could react. To be noted, the more successful Anglo-Saxon leaders such as Alfred the Great created navies of their own. This is a good, short work on the subject, lavishly illustrated with excellent research. If there's anything that gave me cause to question, it was the presentation of the "shield wall" as a phalanx-like, formal formation where individual members "locked shields" like the Greek phalanx. Nonetheless, this is a really good summary on the subject in an accessible and

visually impressive package.

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