

Chronicle that “three ships of Northmen [MS. A, ‘of Danes’] came from Hærethaland ; and then the reeve rode to the place, and would have driven them to the king’s town, because he knew not who they were ; and there they slew him.”

If there is any discrepancy between the two tales, Æthelwerd’s has the advantage. For a century after this date the word “Northmen” is not used of the Vikings in the English chronicles. The entry is an interpolation, about which it is hardly worth inquiring too minutely. The date, usually given with definiteness if not with accuracy in the Chronicle, is wanting ; we are only told that it was in the reign of King Beorhtric. The place is not named, whereas the annals are otherwise careful to name the sites of battles, though we cannot always identify them. The three ships are suspiciously like the three keels of Hengist and Horsa, to whom Æthelwerd actually refers ; he also giving for date only the marriage of Beorhtric, in whose days the event happened. There must have been some song or story of a raid, which an editor of chronicles has tried to turn into history. The word “Hærethaland” does not appear in the Chron. MS. A, and is a later insertion into an entry which itself is an interpolation. Consequently, it is useless to build a theory of the home of these first Vikings—to hold, with Munch, that they came from Hardeland in Jutland, or, with others, that Hordaland, the country of the Hardanger fjord in Norway, is meant.

This is not the only instance of doubtful or fallacious statement in the history of the Vikings in Britain, as