

St Brice's Day

Written by

Rufus Rigby

Based on the events of the St. Brice's Day Massacre C.
1002

EXT. WINCHESTER, WESSEX - DAY

It's a morning of celebration in the Wessex capital, Winchester. Townspeople are seen wandering down the street conversing with one another. Primarily Anglo Saxons but Danes are also present. The people seem to be cheerful of the celebrations today, everyone's in good spirits.

NARRATOR

It's the 13th November, 1002. Today is St. Brice's Day, a feast day dedicated to the commemoration of Saint Brice, a Christian saint who lived in the 5th century until 444.

A wagon is being pulled through the town by horse, driven by an Anglo Saxon. As he rides through the town, people recognise him and wave happily at him, Danes included. Seems to be a popular man around these parts.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Across England, Danes and Anglo Saxons are beginning to coexist. Although it's a Christian day of feast, and the Danes aren't all Christian, all seems well between the two peoples living here in Winchester, Wessex.

The WAGON DRIVER passes by the local Danish BLACKSMITH, pauses for a moment and halts the wagon outside his shop. He dismounts his horse and approaches the blacksmith. The two greet each other, before the wagon driver gestures a request for a sword. The blacksmith happily obliges and presents him with what he's asked for. The wagon driver pulls a sack of coin from his belt and exchanges it with the blacksmith for the sword, before returning to his horse.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Some, however, are not so faithful in the trust that's been built. Precautions have to be made.

ZOOM OUT TO MAP OF ENGLAND

ZOOM IN ON THE DANELAW

CUT TO:

EXT. THE DANELAW - DAY

Danes only. They live a simpler life here, more in accordance

with their Viking traditions. Round huts with thatched roofs, wooden spokes surrounding the village.

NARRATOR

A large partition of the country has previously been allocated to the Danes by King Alfred The Great following a treaty with Viking King, Guthrum of East Anglia. Within the Eastern regions of England and some areas of the North, Danes live in a realm known as the Danelaw. There are farmers growing their own crops, traders selling their wares, everyone seems to be getting on with their lives, while the warriors are preparing their warships.

ZOOM OUT TO MAP OF ENGLAND

ZOOM IN TO OXFORD

CUT TO:

INT. HEADINGTON PALACE, OXFORDSHIRE - DAY

NARRATOR

As tensions are rising with the Anglo Saxons living in Wessex and Danes living in the Danelaw, rumour has it that King Æthelred II is going about his business as King at his royal palace in Headington, near Oxford.

ÆTHELRED sits at his throne in the dark, shielded from outdoor light. A messenger bursts in, half illuminating the King.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

It's at this point that King Æthelred hears word that the Danes in the east of the country are appearing to prepare their men for more raids. The Danish Ealdorman of Devonshire, Pallig Tokensen has already pledged his allegiance to King Æthelred, however, he has now defected to join the Viking raids. As well as these rising tensions in the East of the country, history has it that Æthelred is warned of an assassination plot by Danish

(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

settlers in Oxford, a disputed territory between the borders of Mercia, Wessex and the Danelaw. Disregarding the peace that has been brokered with Danish settlers in Wessex, along with a personal prejudice against the Danes, Æthelred takes little time to act on his counsel and orders that on this day, all Danish settlers living in England shall be killed.

KING ÆTHELRED II

They are but cockle among the wheat and as such, must be destroyed.

The messenger flees the room and spreads the orders.

ZOOM OUT TO MAP OF ENGLAND

We see visual data cues displaying the level of unrest beginning to occur across Oxford, with some Danish settlements in Devon appearing to react to the news.

NARRATOR

The orders became localised within Oxford, and news travels fast to Tokesen. History predicts that Tokesen was in Devonshire at the time he is informed that his wife, Gunhilde, sister of King Sweyn Forkbeard is being held hostage by Æthelred. To Tokesen, the worst has begun.

CUT TO:

EXT. ST FRIDESWIDE'S CHURCH, OXFORD - DAY

Anglo Saxon soldiers march across Oxford with Gunhilde held captive. They reach a hillside where St Frideswide's Church is in view, before charging in.

NARRATOR

Æthelred's nationwide orders commanded Anglo Saxon soldiers in Oxford to enact the killings immediately. They then storm St Frideswide's Church, where a group of Danish settlers were reportedly hiding from the chaos.

CUT TO:

INT. ST FRIDESWIDE'S CHURCH, OXFORD - DAY

The Anglo Saxons kick down the door to the church and find a group of 35-37 male Danish settlers cowering in fear. A soldier throws Gunhilde inside and bolts the door shut before setting the place ablaze with them all inside.

CUT TO:

EXT. ST FRIDESWIDE'S CHURCH, OXFORD - DAY

The Anglo Saxons stage a perimeter around the church while it becomes engulfed in flames.

NARRATOR

It's not known if Gunhilde was among the victims of the fire that burnt down St Frideswide's Church, however, according to sources, she was among the casualties during the attacks that day. Although this was likely Æthelred's own orders, this does not pan out well for the English king.

ZOOM OUT TO MAP OF ENGLAND

Danish population begins to dwindle, first in Oxford, then later more Danes begin to flee from Devonshire and the Danelaw.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

As the massacre continues across the country, a handful of Danish settlers and mercenaries flee to Denmark with the news. At least two months later, King Sweyn Forkbeard is informed of the massacre and the tragic loss of his sister, Gunhilde. Sweyn, who had no interest of peaceful relations with the English beforehand, having raided England in the 990s and accomplished a raid on London in 994, had now become furious with the news he had realised and orders a full scale retaliation on the English for what Æthelred had done.

ZOOM IN ON EAST ANGLIA/THE DANELAW

In 1003, Sweyn had ordered immediate campaigns to devastate areas in East Anglia and to have Norwich burnt to the ground. In the years that came, Sweyn ordered persistent raids on England between the years of 1007-1012, finally deploying his fleet in Sandwich in 1013, advancing his army north, forcing Æthelred to flee to Normandy.

ZOOM OUT TO MAP OF ENGLAND AND FRANCE

On Christmas day in 1013, Sweyn is crowned the first Danish king of England before shortly passing away on the 3rd February 1014.