

The Chronicles of Mann and the Isles

The Story of Olaf and Reginald



In the year 1228, King Olaf sailed away to the Hebrides with all the chiefs and fighting men, leaving the Isle of Man unprotected. While King Olaf was away, Alan, Lord of Galloway, Thomas, Earl of Athol, and Olaf's half-brother King Reginald came to the Island with their own fleet of longships.

Their army devastated the south of the island, plundered all the churches, killed every man they could lay hands on, and turned the southern half of the Isle of Man into a wilderness. Alan then sailed home to Galloway, leaving bailiffs behind to collect taxes from the Manx. King Olaf suddenly returned and drove them out. Law and order was restored, and the people came out of hiding and could live in safety once more.

But King Reginald was still determined to win back the Isle of Man, and plotted a secret attack. He waited until winter-time and sailed five ships from Galloway to St. Patrick's Isle, arriving at midnight. They took the Manx completely by surprise and burnt all of Olaf's ships and those of his supporters. Once again the tables had been turned.

Now that he had the advantage, King Reginald went about seeking peace with his brother and with the rest of the Manx. He made Ronaldsway his base and stayed there for about forty days, and his promises were so generous that the people of the south were drawn into an alliance with him, swearing that they were prepared to die so that Reginald could win back half of the kingdom.



Meanwhile in the north...

King Olaf wasn't prepared to sit back and allow his kingdom to be taken. He was a charming man, and just as Reginald was gaining power in the south, so he gathered together all the Manxmen in the north and smoothly talked them into supporting his claim to the throne.

On the 14th of February, on St Valentine's Day, King Olaf came with his band of followers to the assembly field, Tynwald, and there he waited. Tynwald was a meeting place to reconcile disputes, and to make new laws to govern the Island peacefully and fairly. Vikings respected and obeyed the rules of Tynwald and kept all weapons out of the fenced assembly area, as Tynwald was a place to make peace.

However...



King Reginald

Reginald approached Tynwald and began to draw his supporters up in battle order, as if to meet his brother in combat. Olaf and his followers advanced towards Reginald's men and suddenly charged, scattering them like sheep.

In the confusion several bad men on Olaf's side overpowered King Reginald and killed him instantly. Olaf learnt the news with a heavy heart, although he never took revenge for his brother's death. Many others fell in the battle and afterwards the southern part of Mann was devastated by raiders and the inhabitants driven out.

The monks of Rushen Abbey removed the body of King Reginald to St Mary's Abbey at Furness, where he was buried in the place he had chosen while he was alive.