A new silver-hoard found on Gotland; again!

It’s happened again! A new silver-hoard has been discovered on Gotland. The treasure was found when a landowner was checking his fields and happened to kick an insignificant lump of earth which was lying on the ground. This turned out to be not only earth, however, but inside was revealed a large clump of silver spirals and silver rods.

The farmer notified the antiquarian authorities, who soon were able to ascertain that yet another hoard had been found. Investigation of the find location with a metal detector enabled them to identify the actual deposit site. This consisted of a collection of coins and silver spirals, which was set in plaster and transported to the hospital to be X-rayed. The treasure is now under excavation and will be displayed at Gotland’s Historical Museum. It weighs about 3 kg. and consists of a couple of hundred coins but primarily a amount of silver pieces and raw material.

The coins originate mainly from Germany, but there are some from Denmark, England, Italy, Bohemia, and the Byzantine Empire. The earliest coin dates the hoard to 999 A.D.

No other place in northern Europe have so many hoards of silver from the Viking era been discovered as on Gotland. Until now over 700 precious-metal finds have been registered. These consist primarily of silver treasures, spread evenly over the island. In total there are about 145,000 coins, of which about 65,000 coins are Arabic, the remainder mainly German and English coins. The enormous amount of silver clearly indicates the important mercantile position Gotland enjoyed during the Viking era.
At the conclusion of the first issue of the Viking Heritage Newsletter, I declared in no indefinite terms that our aim was to produce more of the same within a reasonable length of time. The goal was set high, 4 issues per year. I assumed then that a large part of the material, including illustrations, would come from you, dear members of Viking Heritage. I envisioned too that the next issue would deal mainly with the changes within the 50 highlights chosen by the European Council to represent the world of the Vikings. However, upon looking back, I can only state that we have not nearly been able to live up to those early expectations. The main reason can be seen largely in two elements. One is that we are far from collecting the amount of material we had hoped for. The other, and perhaps more embarrassing, is that those of us working on developing Viking Heritage, are not anywhere near achieving our ambitious goals. A large portion of our time has been occupied with planning and commencing the establishment of the Viking Heritage Server and Database. This data base will, aside from functioning as a central data base where it is possible to search with different concepts and happenings in the Viking world, increasingly become the media of the future for this newsletter. There are many advantages inherent with using the electronic media in this context. It is particularly advantageous in keeping abreast of new developments and being able to transmit them more or less daily. We can, of course, cut down on printing and postage costs not a minor consideration in our present economic situation. However, at the same time, we are aware that the printed word will still, in the long run, be the media which many prefer to use, and therefore we intend to continue transmitting information and knowledge this way. The change that can be impending, however, is that we concentrate on producing one or two printed publications a year striving after a more comprehensive content and an attractive layout. Naturally we would like to hear your views on this suggestion. For your information about who are members at present, this issue includes a membership list. It should be an interesting starting-point for making connections to other persons or groups who in some way work with the Viking theme. In our latest issue we requested some background information from our members, in order to be able to create a diversified network revealing the different aspects of the Viking theme and to initiate co-operation between individuals and groups. Unfortunately response has not been overwhelming and we would like to encourage you to add to our information wherever possible. The main emphasis during the next year for Viking Heritage is placed on two areas in particular, aside from efforts to increase our membership which at present lies around 300. Partly it is to expand our data base to a comprehensive data bank with regards Viking history in all its shapes and phases. We are, in this, very dependent on your assistance by providing information and material. We are very grateful if you could send us, short or long, notices about current projects, arrangements, new finds etc. etc. Feel free to do this in the most convenient way, e-mail, fax, or mail. Illustrations accompanying submitted material are always greatly appreciated. As mentioned further on in the article, we intend to open the data base this coming autumn.

The other happening, beginning during summer 1998, is that Viking Heritage in conjunction with Gotland College of Higher Education will commence an excavation of a Viking age harbour, with the opportunity for interested persons to participate. For more information see the text inside the newsletter.

This time the newsletter contains a number of scientific articles concerning interesting projects and investigations in Denmark, Sweden and England. There is also a report from one of the many groups working with promoting history through theatre etc. This contribution serves to represent all those groups around the world who in different ways bring our ancient history to life, for schools, as well as the general public. In addition there are a number of short news-type articles. All in all we hope that this issue will provide a period of relaxing reading.

Dan Carlsson
President

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President
Iron Age settlement in southern Sweden

During 1996 members from several institutes formed a group in order to initiate a research project concerning the Iron Age of the southernmost part of Sweden, including the county of Scania and the southern part of the county Halland. Members from the Institute of Archaeology, University of Lund, Malmö Museum, the Central Board of Antiquities, branch office in Lund and Halland’s Museum, Halmstad take part in the project. The aim of the project, entitled "The social structure of southern Sweden during the Iron Age", is to study the development of the society in a chronologically broad perspective from 500 BC until 1000 AD.

Intensive research is aimed at the Iron Age society of Denmark as well as the central part of Sweden. In that perspective the southern part of Sweden is partly neglected. Due to intensive exploitation a large number of rescue excavations have taken place in southern Sweden since the early 1970’s. However, information about most of these achievements is insufficient due to the fact that resources for writing excavation reports have been limited. Therefore, an important task of the project is to make the information about the excavations of Iron Age sites available for further analyses.

The Uppåkra site

In the project a site at Uppåkra, situated approximately 5 km south of Lund, is used as a catalyst because of its special structure and find material.

The site at Uppåkra was first recognized in 1934 in connection with house construction. A minor excavation revealed occupation layers more than 2 metres thick. The topmost occupation layer could be dated to the transition between the late Roman Iron Age and the Migration Period. Part of a wattle-and-daub house was investigated.

Small rescue excavations starting in the 1960’s have revealed occupation remains dated from the entire early Iron Age and covering an area of approximately 1.1 x 0.6 km – the largest occupation site known so far in southern Sweden. Stray finds dating to the late Iron Age have led to the conclusion that the site might have been occupied during most of the first millennium AD.

Because of its size and finds Uppåkra has been interpreted as the site of a regional centre for the southwestern part of the county Scania, although our knowledge about the structure and function of the settlement during the late Iron Age was very limited. In order to gather more information about the site new investigation began in 1996.

Investigations in 1996-1997

In 1996-1997 the entire area was surveyed by metal detector. The result has been very impressive. So far more than 2000 artefacts, mainly of bronze but also of silver and gold, have been registered. Most of these finds are dated to the late Iron Age with the main part dated to the Vendel Period and Viking Age (ca. 550-1000 AD). The use of metal detectors has revealed extensive remains of activities from this period of occupation, which was previously poorly known. The finds are vertically limited to the ploughzone, which indicated that most of the youngest occupation layers have been destroyed by ploughing while thick layers dating to the early Iron Age are still protected.

The artefacts are found throughout the site but with at least three clusters. The number and composition of finds shows the site not to be deviating from an ordinary Iron Age site. The importance of the Uppåkra site in a south Swedish perspective can be exemplified by some ornament types in which the Uppåkra finds double the number of previous finds in the county of Scania. Several weights as well as fragmented Arabic coins are indications of trade during the Viking Age. Ornaments,
Viking Age Uppåkra

Several questions of importance related to the Viking Age settlement can be asked. Still we do not know much about the size of the Viking Age occupation. Viking Age artefacts are found within the areas of thick occupation layers, indicating a settlement of considerable size. However, so far we do not know if all these concentrations were simultaneously settled or if the settlement moved from one area to another during the Viking Age. Some artefacts such as a small lions’ head in gilded silver, a small head of a boar as well as ornaments of extremely high quality are interpreted as belonging to the highest social level of the society.

The size of the site, the number of finds and finds interpreted as markers of high social position support the interpretation of Uppåkra as a central place of political power. Finds like a statuette of the god Oden and a gold foil figure indicate the ritual character of the site. In Uppåkra the political and religious power is likely to have been combined.

The location of the site on a rise – one of the highest places on a plain – close to Lund raises questions about the relations between Uppåkra and Lund. According to the composition of coins and ornaments Uppåkra predates Lund. The earliest dendrochronological dates of Lund are 990. When the Danish kingdom, joined by representatives of the Christian church, included Scania in an early Danish state, Lund was founded as a manifestation of this new power. The geographically close connection between Lund and Uppåkra might mark a symbolic relation to the traditional centre while the dislocation signs the introduction of a new era.

Another question concerns the relationship between the prehistoric site and the Medieval village. The latter, Stora Uppåkra, is situated to the north of the prehistoric site. Except for some coins the metal detector survey produced no indications of settlement from the Medieval period within the prehistoric site. However, the church is situated a short distance south of the village within an area of thick layers of prehistoric occupation. This might indicate that the original wooden church was part of a Late Viking Age manor with traditions to earlier periods.

The first notation of Uppåkra in written sources is from 1085. In King Cnut the Holy’s deed of gift to the cathedral in Lund, farms in South Uppåkra and the other Uppåkra are included. This proves that two Uppåkra existed in the late 11th century. According to an analysis of the earliest land survey documents from the 18th century, fields on the border between the lands of the villages are named Toftåkrarna, toft indicating deserted settlement (Riddersporre 1996). This is the location of one of the largest concentrations of Viking Age finds combined with a thick occupation layer. The inhabitants of that settlement might have founded the two villages of Uppåkra during a very late part of the Viking Age.

Future research

For the nearest future geophysical measurements are planned in order to get a better understanding of the organisation of the site. Excavations are also planned in order to get a more detailed knowledge of the structure of the individual concentrations of occupations layers. The investigation of Uppåkra will hopefully continue for may years to come.

References

Ladby is situated on north east Funen, near the provincial town of Kerteminde and not far from Kerteminde Fjord and Storebaelt. During the 1930's the land owner often found skeletal fragments in one of his fields, so he contacted chemist Poul Helweg Mikkelsen, Odense, who was the archaeological expert on Funen at that time. In the grave area there was a long elevation in the terrain, and farm owner Eriksen came across stones in this mound - furthermore, stones which lay in rows. The chemist made a trial excavation in the autumn of 1934, and found a number of stones and gradually also nails, and it became clear that the site contained a ship grave. The National Museum was immediately contacted, and conservator Rosenberg was sent to inspect the find. Rosenberg could only confirm Helweg Mikkelsen’s observations, so a proper excavation was carried out from May till the autumn of 1935.

Presumably the whole ship had been covered by a roof of wood. Remains of such were found over the entire front of the ship (bow) and fragments over part of the back end (stern). 11 horses and 4 dogs, as well as a few antiquities were found in the bow section. In the stern section, everything seemed to have been ransacked. Over 600 articles or article fragments were found in the ship grave. The material consisted of, among other things, a dog harness with leads for 4 dogs, which corresponded to the number of dog skeletons found. The harness consisted of a hand piece where the leads to the individual dogs were gathered. The hand piece was made of bronze, still showing the remains of gold plating, and decorated with animal figures. The prize piece of the find is an ornamented, solid silver buckle which comes from a sword belt or ordinary belt. Leaf patterns are cast on both the buckle and belt holder. The buckle is from the 9th century and is Frankish. In addition, there are 4 sets of horse harness (however not all were complete). There were bits, reins, strap fittings and dividers, stirrups, decorative buttons of tin and bronze, a spur as well as a decorative strap, possibly from a saddle. One piece ends in a bulb with an animal figure. There weren’t very many remains of the presumably wide range of textiles in the grave. Both coarse and fine fabrics were found, showing different weaving techniques. A number of the fabrics had been embellished with embroidery and trimmings of gold and silver thread, like Birka material. Forty-five iron arrowheads lay just over the rail on the starboard side behind midship and there are several examples of, that the top part of arrow shafts are preserved and wound on with thread. A hand-protector from a shield, of the type known from Birka graves, and mint coins from the first third of the 10th century, were also found.

Of kitchen articles, mention can be made of a wooden tub in 60-70 fragments spread over a large part of the stern and at completely different levels. The staves were strengthened with sheet iron, with narrow iron bands around the tub. Fragments of a bronze bowl were, in the same way, widely spread. Similar finds are known from Danish 10th century graves, and in Birka the type is known from the first third of the 10th century, so there is talk of import from the British Isles. The spread fragments of a silver plate lay behind the middle of the ship. It had a 1 cm wide edge, decorated with a band of interwoven pattern and gilt. To while away the time of the dead, there was a board-game - although all that was left were four corner fittings. Something quite special was a wooden board with painted ornaments found...
on the ship's port side. The colours soon faded, but not before it had been copied.

Already during the excavations, the find was interpreted as a grave for a chief. This view still applies, although with slight variations. The striking thing is that no human skeleton(s) have been found, and that a lot of the grave goods that have been found, were spread over a large area and very fragmented. In addition, there was a lack of the equipment one would expect to find some remains of, such as swords.

All this leads one to assume that the grave has been plundered. The reason for this is more complicated. Did the following generations wish to re-bury the deceased chief according to current Christian ideals? If so, why were the kitchen articles broken? Did a rival - and successful- lineage wish to show their superiority by dishonouring a family whose importance was waning, and in doing so, proclaim their own ability and power?

We don’t know who the deceased was. The grave is similar to the ship-chamber grave found in Hedeby, and H. Helmut Andersen has put forward the theory that the Ladby grave’s principal character was a member of one of the Danish royal dynasties, and Wamers suggests the grave is a manifestation of “chief ideology”.

It was decided as early as the summer of 1935, that the ship should not be moved from the site and that a concrete vault be built over it. This solution had not been previously practised, so little was known about the consequences for the preservation of the ship’s impression, and after only a few years problems arose. Spraying with different chemicals was attempted, but no solution was found to the fundamental problem. This is, that the ship still lies as found, meaning that ground water rises as a result of capillary action.

Moisture problems became so bad in the mid 80’s that something had to be done, and a ventilation unit was installed. Time proved that the expectations for the ventilation unit’s effect were overly optimistic, as there are still problems with moisture and accompanying growth of micro-organisms. Now we have reached the stage where something radical must be done, if the ship’s impression is to be preserved.

And how can that be accomplished? Yes, the contact between the ship’s impression and the underlying ground must quite simply be broken. The method is not finally decided, but will presumably consist of boring a row of pipe elements in under the impression and pulling a hose back through each of them. The pipes will be filled with concrete, and when this has set, the ground will be carefully dug out under the impression and more concrete will be sprayed up under the pipes, which will finally be sealed with moisture-proof paint. The method has not been used previously on ancient monuments, so a full-scale experiment will be carried out on an area beside the mound, so we have a chance to evaluate whether the method is as good as it seems. At the time of writing, we are just starting an archaeological test excavation on the experimental area - we would hate to destroy other cultural monuments in the effort to preserve one.

In 1985, a small display was constructed depicting the Kerteminde area in Viking times (place names, runic stones and archaeological finds) and of course the ship grave. Ladby’s ship museum has been selected as Funen’s Viking centre, and in time the museum must be extended. Most of the finds from the grave will be displayed, and there will be copies of a large number of articles so one can see how they were originally shaped. Among the themes to be dealt with will be death cults and religion in the Viking period.

From the grave finds, it is difficult to get a good impression of how the ship looked in her prime, so we have started to work on making a replica. This is in collaboration with the National Museum’s Marine Archaeological Research Centre, where the grave has recently been part of a research project, and where the necessary technical and craftsmanship expertise is available. At present, a ship-builder is working on a 1:10 cardboard model of the ship, and later a wooden model will be made to the same scale. The model work may seem overwhelming, but it is necessary to have solved all possible questions and problems before attempting construction of a full-scale model.

The Ladby ship is thus an old find, only now receiving the frame of reference it deserves.

Picture page 6 The ship burial can be seen on its original spot. At the entrance of the small museum there is a brief exhibit about Viking finds from the area. Photo Kerteminde Museum.

A view over the area. The ship burial was found close to the river, in the centre of the picture. Photo Kerteminde Museum.
Viking armies captured York on All Saints' Day 866 AD, and shortly after the Great Army colonised the town's hinterland in the first of a series of partitions of land between Danes and English. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records that in 876 the Danish leader Healfdene “shared out the lands of the Northumbrians, and they proceeded to plough and support themselves”.

Two decades of intensive urban excavation with the historic city have now given archaeologists a vivid picture of life within the Viking capital but we know much less about rural settlement in its hinterland. Place name evidence, and village names ending in -by and -thorpe, as well as settlement names incorporating Scandinavian personal names, have been used as evidence of dense Viking colonisation in some areas, particularly in the Yorkshire Dales and Wolds. Unfortunately, the first recorded usage of most of these names is not until William the Conqueror’s Domesday Book of 1086. Excavated rural settlements of the period are few and far between and it is widely assumed that most lie underneath modern villages. Where settlements have subsequently been abandoned, however, it has proved possible to carry out archaeological fieldwork.

The Yorkshire Wolds are rolling chalk uplands to the east of York. At Wharram Percy, a major series of excavations pioneered by Maurice Beresford and John Hurst initially focussed on the desertion of the medieval village. During the latter stages of the project it has become clear that Wharram was extensively occupied during the Anglo-Saxon period, and that a high status individual of Scandinavian origins occupied the area which was to become the South Manor house. A Borre style belt slide and strap end found at the South Manor were probably manufactured in Scandinavia and arrived in the Wolds with a Scandinavian settler. Indeed, it has been suggested that the planned layout of the medieval village at Wharram Percy originated in the 10th century, at the same time as a small timber chapel was erected in the valley.

More recently, a team from York University’s Department of Archaeology has been investigating a site at Cottam, some eight miles due east of Wharram, with funding from the British Academy. Crop marks had long indicated the presence of a settlement enclosure, apparently sitting astride an Iron Age or Romano-British trackway. However, the settlement was undated until we were able to verify the connection between the enclosure and large numbers of copper alloy objects...
which had been recovered from the area by metal detector users. These finds, ranging in date from the 8th to early 10th centuries, included numerous Northumbrian low denomination copper alloy coins, or stycas, as well as large numbers of dress pins and strap ends. The Scandinavian style objects included a Jellinge-style brooch as well as two small pyramidal bells. It appears that these finds had been focussed in two clusters. The southern concentration coincided almost exactly with a sub-rectangular enclosure; the northern concentration was less obviously linked with settlement traces until a magnetometer survey revealed the presence of a number of sub-rectangular fields lying either side of a trackway. It appears that the ditches demarcating these fields had generally been too shallow to influence the growth of the crops.

Dating of the metal objects revealed that the 8th and 9th century finds were predominately in the southern group; whereas the later 9th and 10th century finds were predominately in the northern group. This idea of localised settlement shift was supported by field walking which indicated that Torksey ware, a type of pottery popular from the late 9th century onwards, was only found in the area of the northern enclosure. Further confirmation was achieved by sample excavation within the areas of the finds concentrations. These revealed a number of fragmentary post-hole buildings, with the abandonment of the southern focus dated by a coin of Aethelberht of Wessex, dated 858-866 AD, discarded in a pit in which a weathered female skull had also been placed. Settlement then shifted to a new site c.250m to the north where in the late 9th century a massive timber gateway and associated bank and ditch was erected in front of a new farmstead. Pottery from the new farmstead indicates that it had connections with urban markets in York, as well as to the south of the River Humber, in Lincolnshire.

However, the new farmstead was relatively short-lived. Evidence suggests that it was abandoned within the space of fifty years, and that settlement now moved again, possibly to the site of the deserted medieval village at Cowlam, which is less than 1km to the west. Excavations carried out here in the 1960s focussed on the footings of medieval chalk buildings but re-examination of the results has revealed the presence of earlier timber halls and the distinctive Torksey ware pottery.

In conclusion, examination of the shifting settlement pattern around Cottam and Cowlam now allows us to propose the following settlement sequence. In the 8th century AD an Anglo-Saxon farmstead was established next to a trackway which had continued to function as a communications route since at least the late Iron Age. This site was occupied until the mid 9th century when disruption, possibly associated with the Scandinavian takeover of York, forced the construction of a new gated farmstead. By the 10th century, however, settlement moved again and now the tofts and crofts of the later medieval village were established, along similar lines to those seen at Wharram Percy and other Wolds settlements. It has long been accepted that the layout of towns such as York was established during the Viking Age. The countryside is now beginning to reveal a similar pattern, with village after village first being laid out during the 10th century, during the Scandinavian partition.
During the 4th week of July, Plymouth, England commemorated an unusual event. For the year of 997 the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles states: "LYDFORD, Llydanforde, Saxon, of the Noyle of the Water, Town and Castle in Devonshire, standing upon River Tamar Whereunto an Army of the Danes pierced in the time of King Ethelrede, and burned it, spolinge the People". The event the Chronicle tells about was an Viking raid on the royal mint in Lydford. This was a mint established 975-978 by Edward the Martyr. At Lydford the "Lydford pen-nies" were produced. These pennies were used to pay the Danageld and most of the remaining coins can be seen in Stockholm, Sweden. The Vikings also burned the neighbouring Benedictine Abbey in Tavistock.

It can be considered strange to commemorate burning and pillaging, but the theme of the Festival was the change in relations between England and Scandinavia that has taken place since then. It was the friendship and good faith between Britain and Scandinavia that was in focus. The highlight of the Festival was the unveiling of a Rune-stone on Thursday the 24th made by the Danish sculptor Magnus Krogh Andersen at the Hoe in Plymouth. The stone was a gift from the five Scandinavian countries and was unveiled in the presence of the ambassadors of the Scandinavian countries, the Mayor of Plymouth and other dignitaries. Magnus Magnusson also held a excellent speech about the history of the Vikings in Britain. The event at the Hoe finished with a re-enacted battle between the Vikings and the Saxons. It was performed by the Vikings of Middle England and re-enactors from Scandinavia.

All during the week Viking camps where set up at Mount Edgcumb Park and along the river Tamar. There visitors could see Viking handicraft, Vikings, battles and different happenings. Three ships where also present. It was the two Viking Age replicas, Krampmacken from Gotland and Heimløsa Rus from Finland, and a half-scale replica, the Sea Wylting, of the 7th century Anglo-Saxon Sutton-Hoo ship. Heimløsa Rus was on a voyage from Finland to the Mediterranean and stopped for two weeks in Plymouth on the way. The ships sailed in Plymouth strait and rowed up the Tamar River and visited different places where people could see them and come aboard. The week was ended with a big Anglo-Saxon banquet in Tavistok. The week was a success and was covered both by local and national press and TV.

The new Runestone at the hotel in Plymouth. Photo: G. Svedjemo.

Viking woman at the camp at Mount Edgecumb park. Photo: G. Svedjemo.

Krampmacken and Sea Wylting on the River Tamar. Photo: G. Svedjemo.
On the sandy tongue of land, on which southern Sebbersund in the northern part of Jutland and close to the Limfjorden is located, existed in the Viking period a big settlement with a church. On the cape there was not room for farming of any significance, so it was trading, handicrafts and fishing that formed the basis of the settlement. The town grew large after the standards of the period and, at its height, covered an area of around 65,000 sq metres. The area is separated in three different parts.

**Workshop area**
The workshop area with its marketplace lies in the middle of the settlement. So far we know that there were ironsmiths, bronze founders, silver- and goldsmiths there, but surely other craftsmen were found in the workshop area. Common for the craftsmen was that their products were sold in front of the workshops.

It is certain that this site originally began as a marketplace. The mountain next to the settlement can be seen from the surrounding Nibe Bredning and would have been known to all from the Eastern Limfjord. It was therefore an excellent meeting place.

Different types of craftsmen would have visited the marketplace and in time settled here, generating the growth of the site into a town.

**Settlement site**
In the summer of 1990 one could observe, from the top of the mountain, an area of patches in the cornfield. These patches are evidence of where the Vikings built pithouses on the cape. Pithouses are small working/living huts, where - as the name suggests - the floor was dug out of the ground and the hut covered with a sloping roof. Most of the houses are round and were used as waste depots. Therefore one can see from the corn where the houses were, due to better growing conditions on those spots. Because of the summer drought in 1992, one could count around 150 pithouses, visible on the surface.

**Church and churchyard**
On the southernmost part of the settlement, there was a wooden church in the middle of a churchyard. The church was rectangular, with a smaller chapel towards the east. Altogether it was 13 metres long and between 4 and 6 metres wide. The church was constructed with posts dug into the earth in a line with the wall.

Surrounding the church was the churchyard, stretching out approx. 40 x 40 metres. The churchyard is estimated to hold around 1000 graves. The dead are all buried in east-west orientated graves with their heads towards the west, and nearly all have a pillow of turf under their necks. This pillow would have allowed the head to be in a nearly vertical position, so that the Christian believer could witness the Second Coming of Christ, believed to come from the east.

As is usual with Christian graves, the dead were buried without burial gifts or personal belongings. Therefore the graves are difficult to date. There has only been found a half coin in one of the graves, and that could not be dated.

A little less than half of the dead have been buried in coffins. The rest have probably been wrapped in organic material. It looks like the coffins were
made of the material one had on hand or which was easy to acquire. Many of the coffins were made of ship planks. The bows of smaller boats were also used as coffins, as were hollowed out trunks (logboats). Some children's coffins were made of troughs, either bakers' dough tubs or slaughter-troughs used in butchering.

One grave is standing out from all the others by the fact that it was made from rocks and boulders. The sides and lid were of cleaved granite rock, while at the grave's western end there was placed a big block of chalk with a space carved out for the head. Mortar was used, to keep earth from sieving in. In this stone grave lay a very well preserved skeleton of a man, not more than 150 cm tall. This person was evidently of high standing and with connections with the church in Sebbersund.

Interesting is that a Carbon 14 analyses dates the man to the 9th century.

What Sebbersund was when the Vikings were there

The settlement at Sebbersund was a large, important trade settlement, where imports from Norway and England were both traded and repacked for transportation to other areas around the Eastern Limfjord.

At the marketplace, various craftsmen worked, and their crafts were traded to inhabitants of the surrounding countryside, close to the fjord. The raw material used for the large scale manufacturing of iron products was evidently imported from Norway.

While the town was growing larger, in the years around 1000 AD, a change of religion took place in Denmark. Unfortunately, we do not know when the first church was built at Sebbersund, nor do we know when the stone church replaced the wooden church.

The Roman church at the top of the mountain was dedicated to Saint Nikolaj, patron of commerce, navigation and fishing. This fits in well with the Viking settlement, where trade and fishing evidently had a large role. The small boats from the graves in the churchyard would have been very suitable as fishing boats on the Nibe and Halkaer Bredning waterways. The settlement may have been the most important trading place in the Eastern Limfjord.

Why the settlement disappeared

At some time around the beginning of the twelfth century, the Limfjord passageway was closed towards the West and North and then became a fjord. With
this closure, important seaways were blocked towards Norway, England and the West coast of Europe. The fjord became less salty and the fishing changed. Therefore the importance of Sebbersund as a trading and fishing post diminished.

What makes this settlement so interesting?

Most of the trading settlements from Viking period remain as towns to the present day. Therefore the archaeological information on many of the earlier settlements in Denmark is to be found three or four metres under the now existing street level. However, in Sebbersund, the evidence has been undisturbed since the twelfth century and can be fully excavated.

The wooden church and churchyard are exceptional in Danish history, in that it is the first time we have had the chance to excavate a stave church which has not been disturbed by a stone church of later date. The churchyard gives us the possibility to study people’s length, life spans, child mortality rates, small and large bodily defects and about some of the first Christians in Denmark. The churchyard gives us a good picture of Danes during the years from approx. 1000 to 1100 AD.

Some examples of brooches found and manufactured at Sebbersund. Photo P. Birkedal.

The churchyard consists of more than a 1000 graves. The open space is where the church have been standing. Drawing P. Birkedal.
Since 1989, 'The Birmingham Vikings', also known as 'Dahrg de Belne' and led by society Jarl John Sheard and his wife Roz, have been the local group of the oldest and largest Dark Age re-enactment Society in England - 'The Norse Film and Pageant Society' - now also known simply as 'The Vikings'. The Birmingham Vikings are based both at the Sheards' home in Yardley, Birmingham and at Bells Farm, a Grade II* listed Tudor/Elizabethan building in Druids' Heath, Birmingham.

The ubiquitous Birmingham Vikings were formed to provide education and entertainment for adults and young people based on the historical period of the Vikings, Saxons, Normans and Celts. Put simply, we recreate the real life world of the Dark Ages with costume, acting, crafts and demonstrations of combat and life skills of the period. We are a non-profit making organisation linked to a registered charity and undertake extensive work with schools and the public, both locally in the Midlands and central England and nationally, with a strong educational element and an emphasis on children and the family. As a non-profit group, we are of course always delighted to hear from potential sponsors! Our work has for many years involved both authentic 'living history' displays and exciting battle re-enactments, often at major shows at historic locations such as castles and stately homes, including work for English Heritage - and for 1997 we already have seven bookings for events at their sites.

The group attracts members with a wide range of interests and includes craftsmen and women, academic researchers, a qualified teacher, an archive photographer, drama specialists, and warriors to provide ferocious looking battle re-enactments as well as authentic 'living history' displays and activities. You don't have to start off as an expert, though! Training is available in all the skills necessary to make a good re-enactor, so all you need to be prepared to do is to put in the work, study and research necessary to be an authentic Viking in whichever walk of life you choose - and acquire or make whatever costume and equipment you need!

Researchers ensure costumes, equipment, craft and life skills are as accurate as possible, while the craftsmen and craftswomen take the academic research a stage further, reproducing clothing and other artifacts, practising and

An idyllic but smoky campfire scene as The Birmingham Vikings (portraying Saxons on this occasion) prepare a breakfast of oat cakes and honey. Photo by Stuart Williams 1996.

Mention the Vikings to most people and they think of burly long-haired louts wearing helmets with horns, eyes bulging, nostrils flaring, minds set on a bit of rape and pillage, so it may surprise a few people to learn of the Vikings who live in Birmingham, in the Midlands of central England.

The Saga of the Birmingham Vikings

By Stuart Williams
stroming with techniques so that the public can see as authentically as possible how the Saxons and Vikings actually lived their lives. To this end, individual members also research and create a 'character' whom they play while working with the public, for example, Ulf Johanson, warrior, hunter and fisherman; Ragnhild, wife of Olaf Haroldson, Jarl of Dahrg de Beline; Thorfinn Gunnarsen (sometimes known as Thorfinn the Boastful), Danish warrior, mercenary and storyteller; Fearn, Celtic wife of Sigurd the Trader, and so on. Joining and acting as a family is positively encouraged. Portraying the conflicts and accommodations made between Christian and Pagan religions of the period also involves us in further research, the results of which are shown in, for example, the banter between Jarl Olaf Haroldson (a Christian convert) and Thorfinn Gunnarsen (a staunch Norse Pagan). 

A new venture for 1996 is our own World Wide Web site on the Internet, allowing 'surfers' around the world to see information on our group and take advantage of our links to Viking information resources worldwide through 'The Bifrost Project'. We can be found at: http://web.ukonline.co.uk/members/thorfinn/bifrost/dahrg/index.html

Over the years we have built up an impressive array of equipment and artifacts, many created using crafts skills within the group, with larger props needed by the group purchased from fees and donations from local shows. We transport these nationwide and many of the group's public appearances involve setting up our own 'village' with craftsmen and women interacting with visitors to the site, acting out scenes from history. In this way, we both entertain and educate people with the true story of the Vikings.

Many of the shows we organise or take part in also involve spectacular clashes of sword and shield as 'Saxons' and 'Vikings' fight it out for each small piece of England. Despite very ferocious looking encounters on the battlefield, there are very few injuries, as the group's 'Warriors' are trained to high safety standards before being allowed to perform in public.

It's not all research, craft work and battles, though, as with any other 'club'

The Birmingham Vikings enjoy meeting with other like-minded Dark Age re-enactment groups, gathered around the camp fire after a show, or in the local pub, sharing a song and tales of heroism or the deeds of the Gods! We also hold banquets during the year when members are honoured when society awards are given.

Our educational wing 'The Viking Experience' was founded in 1991. Directed by a professional teacher, it provides exhibitions at popular museum sites, teacher training for Education Authorities including Walsall, Tamworth and Birmingham, and extremely popular school visits across the Midlands. Making education fun and sparking the imagination, our services help children in many not so obvious ways - including enhancing cultural identity, inspiring racial and religious harmony, encouraging creativity and providing a unique way of helping children with special needs.

'The Viking Experience' has recently produced a booklet of background information and craft projects based on the Viking lifestyle. The booklet is in response to the needs of teachers and youth workers. Since 1991 'The Viking Experience' has been bringing history to life for many children across the country. The talks by a specialist teacher in Viking or Saxon costume lead on to children trying on costume and handling reproduction artifacts. The visits are often rounded off with 'craft workshops' enabling children to make their own reproduction artifacts from modern low cost materials. With background information, together with a series of tried and tested projects on a Viking theme, 'Craft Projects for the Junior Viking' may also be just the thing for parents looking for holiday activities for their children. Further details can be obtained from the contacts at the end of this article.

Why should you become a Dark Age re-enactor and join The Birmingham Vikings? If you are a fan of the Vikings, are fascinated by their history, want to study them in very practical - and fun - way and wish to revive the spirit of honour, loyalty and good fellowship of the Norsemen (and women!) and make it part of your life, you can do this quite simply. Step back into the past and set sail with The Birmingham Vikings!

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World Wide Web Site: http://web.ukonline.co.uk/members/thorfinn/bifrost/dahrg/index.html
Anundshög is one of the most prominent ancient monuments in Sweden. A visitor will find an exciting combination of Viking monuments and attractive rural surroundings. There are individual information boards with texts in four languages.

In the autumn of 1997 the Department of Archaeology of Stockholm University will carry out a minor excavation in the largest mound - Anundshög. The aim of this excavation is to get a better knowledge of when the mound was built. Postgraduate students will also study other aspects of the ancient monuments in the surroundings. Of significance is that the grave with richest discovery of ancient gold jewellery in Sweden was excavated just about 1000 meters away at Tuna.

The board of culture in Västerås plans to open a summer café next to Anundshög in 1998. This will be done in co-operation with the Badelunda Society of Local History. In connection to this café there will be a small room with information about the Badelunda district but also about other important historical monuments in the vicinity of Västerås.

1998 is a year of culture in Sweden because of Stockholm being the Cultural Capital of Europe ’98. This means that Anundshög will be a place for special arrangements. During the summer the well renowned theatre group ”4:e teatern” will perform a specially written play about the Vikings and their gods. The place for the play will be one of the two large boat-shaped monuments (ship-settings) beside the mound. In the summertime it will also be possible to make a Viking tour by bus from Stockholm to Anundshög. The tour will pass by various highlights from the Viking era.
While I was temporally working at Viking Heritage I was asked to contribute with an article about an earlier visit to Novgorod and the Troitsky excavation. In the summer of 1995 we were 15 Archaeology students from The College of Higher Education at Gotland, who had the opportunity to travel to Russia and take part in the Troitsky excavation in Novgorod. This was in connection with a collaboration between The College of Higher Education at Gotland in Sweden and the Dept. of Archaeology, Moscow State University.

Briefly about the history of Novgorod and Gorodische.

Novgorod is one of the oldest cities in Russia. According to the literary sources and to Russian folklore there were internal conflicts among the Eastern Slavs around Novgorod. They were so violent that they had to call upon a foreign prince who could unite them into one strong state. Their choice was Rurik, a Scandinavian chieftain, who in 862 became ruler of Novgorod, which became known as Holmgard among the Scandinavian Vikings. Rurik was eventually succeeded in 879 by his son Igor who reigned 912-945. In the 13th and 14th centuries, Novgorod became a trade outpost of the Hanseatic League and was a major cultural centre. (Engelmann, “Russia,” Microsoft (R) Encarta 1995).

Novgorod is situated in Western Russia divided into two banks by the Volchov river, the Sofia Bank to the West and the Merchants Bank on the East side. The name Novgorod means "new town". Gorodische "the old town" was an important trading and military centre in the 9th and 10th centuries. It is situated 2 km further up the Volchov river in the region around the Lake Ilmen.

The scholars have earlier in accordance with historic sources and the fact that Gorodische is older than Novgorod, assumed that Novgorod was a replacement of Gorodische. In later years the archaeological excavations have brought up material which proves that the settlements developed simultaneously throughout the 10th century. The archaeological material also shows that the population of the towns consisted of Slavs, Balts, Finns and Scandinavians (Brisbane 1992: 39 a.a.).

The Troitsky excavation.

The Troitsky excavation was started in 1973 in accordance with the town planner’s schemes for the St Sofia’s side of the town and it has been continued ever since. When we arrived in Novgorod in the end of July 1995 there were full activity at the site and we were immediately put to work. The majority of us had not studied archaeology more than one year and had only one month’s experience of practical field work. With spades in our hands we set about the task although under the supervision of the russian archaeologists.

We were accompanied by several Russian youths who had taken the opportunity to earn some extra money during the summer holidays. They explained to us that they got paid for each uncovered square and for extraordinary finds. The Russian archaeologists were entirely devoted to measuring and documenting the finds. Unfortunately we did not receive very...
much information from them regarding the excavation and the finds we brought up, since there were hardly none of them that spoke any other language than Russian.

The cultural layers had been divided into three chronological levels 18-19th centuries, 14-17th centuries and 10-13th centuries. We were placed at the 10-13th century level. The layers were uncovered in units of 4 sq.m. and the stratum in layers of 20 cm. which were checked with the help of a level. The state of the preserved objects was fascinating, the waterlogged soil had preserved wood, bones, leather, textiles and other organic materials. Some of the remains of the wood houses were almost intact and the timbers were suitable for dendrochronological analysis. One of the most spectacular finds in Novgorod are birch-bark letters. Since the 30’s there have been more than 750 found. They cover all sides of life; from love letters to recording business transactions. We did find some birch bark rolls but we never found out whether they were letters or not.

There were also some time left over for excursions and we had the opportunity to visit a Russian/Swedish excavation team at Gorodische under the leadership of ass. Prof. Ingmar Jansson. One evening we had the pleasure to listen to a musician who played on musical instruments reconstructed after the Novgorod finds. After two weeks in Novgorod it was time to travel back to Sweden and to continue our archaeological studies with all the new knowledge and experience we had gained.

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Follow the Vikings! - take part in an excavation of a Viking age harbour

By Dan Carlsson

Few periods in our recent history stimulate our imagination to the same extent as the Viking era and there is no other Scandinavian phenomena as widely known throughout the world as the Vikings. Their life and way of living fascinated even Medieval scholars and there have been a multitude of exhibitions and publications based on the Vikings and their time.

Viking Heritage, in conjunction with Tidsresan, which arranges bus trips to places of cultural historic interest, will conduct, commencing the summer of 98, an event on the Viking theme, with heavy emphasis on knowledge and quality. The arrangement is a combination of a 2-day programme in the Stockholm area and participation in an exciting archaeological excavation of a Viking harbour on Gotland.

The event begins in Stockholm on Saturday, July 11, with Tidsresan organising a guided bus tour to the world of the Vikings. Täby and Vallentuna north of Stockholm offer one of the richest treasure-troves in Sweden in terms of remains from the Viking days. There are numerous rune stones, house foundations, grave fields, not to mention the renown Jarlabankes bro. The trip also includes a guided tour of the Historical Museum and a Viking-inspired meal. On Sunday, July 12 there will be a visit at Birka, Sweden’s first city. Local guides will accompany the tour guests.

The tour continues to Gotland on July 13, and guests will participate in the archaeological dig at the Viking harbour in Fröjel all day Tuesday the 14th. The excavation is part of a research project to be carried out over several years aimed at intensifying knowledge of the Viking harbours and trade. You can choose to dig for two or three week periods. You can even choose to participate in just one part of the programme, either the excursion or the digging.

The excursion will be led by Kristina Svensson, archaeologist and museum teacher, in co-operation with the National Historical Museum. The digging at the Viking harbour will be led by associate professor Dan Carlsson, Viking Heritage and the Gotland College of Higher Education.

For more detailed information concerning costs, practical arrangements, etc.;

With regards the excursion days in Stockholm: contact Kristina Svensson, Tidsresan, address Brahegatan 56, 114 37 Stockholm, tele. +46-8 6676671, fax +46-8 66274 70. Tidsresan arranges this and other cultural trips for groups throughout the year.

With regards the archaeological digs on Gotland; Contact Dan Carlsson, Viking Heritage, 621 85 Visby, tel. +46-498 292066, fax +46-498 292108, email dan.carlsson @ gotlandica.se
The objectives of the network are:

- To develop and maintain the Council of Europe’s Viking Routes project.
- To co-operate with schools, universities etc in the field of education and training in the study of the Vikings.
- To collect information of present Viking history activities, and to distribute information about Vikings and their history.
- To create a fund for The Annual Viking Management Prize to the best Cultural Heritage Management of Viking History.

In promoting these aims, VIKING HERITAGE has begun an information service for its members with the newsletter Viking Heritage Newsletter. It will organize conferences and seminars and act as a monitoring and advisory body on all issues relating to an enhanced understanding of the Viking history, operating at both international and national levels.