In July 1995 a couple taking a walk through a valley in the eastern part of Iceland chanced upon an unusual-looking metal object sticking about 20 centimeters up out of the ground. Upon closer examination they could see that this object resembled the tip of an ancient sword. Moreover, bones of some type were scattered throughout the vicinity. The couple, having a hunch that this might be of some significance, notified the director of the National Museum immediately. It was in this manner that one of the most significant archaeological discoveries concerning the history of Iceland’s settlement was made.

What the couple in fact had stumbled upon was a pagan burial site: that of an ancient Viking and his horse. Graves of this kind are called kuml in Iceland. They are often covered with layer of dirt and rocks. At the time of the burials these graves were clearly visible, but today it is almost impossible to distinguish them from their surroundings. The graves are usually found by accident, either because of road construction or other human caused disruption.

The most distinguished part of the Viking’s graves is the *haugfjö*, the property buried with the Viking. Males were almost always buried with their weapons and females with their jewelry. It is common to find remains of boats in the graves and these are found both with males and females. Dogs normally accompanied their masters into the grave as well as the horses meant to carry their owners to Valhöll. Horses were normally saddled and bridled, prepared for their last ride.
The grave in Skriddalur valley lay on the banks of the Thórisár river. The grave was oriented with one end pointing south and the other to the north. This is the common orientation of pagan graves. The man was placed in the southern part of the grave and the horse by his feet in the northern section. The man was supposed to rise towards the north, to the open North-Atlantic sea, in the direction of the Skriddalur valley.

The Viking lay on his back with his knees drawn up, which is a common position found in graves from pagan times throughout Northern Europe. The grave was lined with skin, probably from a horse. This is the first example of a grave lined with skin discovered in Iceland, but it is common in Scandinavia. Wooden coffins were rare in Iceland during the first years of the settlement.

The man was 30-40 years of age, judging by the condition of the teeth and skull, and therefore well past his prime in that day of age. He was of average height, or 170 cm. The grave site is one of the wealthiest and most significant ever found in Iceland and there is no doubt that it dates to pagan times in Iceland. As you probably know, pagans believed in life after death and felt that the deceased individual would be no less in need of their personal possessions in the afterlife. The main distinction of pagan graves, therefore, are artifacts found buried with human remains.

Icelandic grave sites tend to be sparse in comparison with those found in other Nordic countries. Considering the splendor of the burial site in question, one might well draw the conclusion that the man laid to rest there was no commoner. He was buried in full dress, accompanied by his horse, and weapons. Also found in the grave were sword, shield, ax, spear point, the point of an arrow, two whetstones for sharpening swords, a large soapstone pot (the only one preserved in Iceland), a ringed cloak pin, a buckle, a belt tip, a stone of agate which is supposed to bring you luck, a small tin ring, two amber beads and a small purse containing four weights for regulating trade, a flintstone for making fire, and oddly enough one English coin.

The Viking found in the Thórisá-barrow in Skriddalur valley was also buried with his horse, a common custom for wealthier Vikings. The horse appears to have been young and strong, and was undoubtedly specially chosen for the important task of carrying the deceased to the world’s end.

The deceased gentleman was obviously well equipped for his journey to
Valhöll. In his right hand he held his sword and in his left a shield, as though prepared for a challenging battle. Some scholars believe that corpses laid to rest in a battle position had been killed in battle. According to pagan beliefs those who lost their lives in that manner went to Valhöll, whereas those who surmounted in a disease went to Heljar. The soapstone pot found in the grave was presumably placed there to ensure that he would suffer no shortage of food on the way to Valhöll, where food supplies were believed to be never ending.

The weapons found were skillfully made. The sword, the ax, and the spear head were made of iron, with a hint of silver inlay. The sword is heavy and flashy, and its length is 92 centimeters. Accompanying the sword were sharpeners so its bite would not lessen in the battle of the new world. The shield made of wood, was rounded and its center was made of iron. All remaining of the shield is the iron center and some wooden splinters.

The jewelry found indicates that the man was well dressed. He wore a cloak, presumably fastened with the ringed cloak pin, the buckle and tip, both made of bronze, decorated with dragon heads and other motives that stem from the Viking period in NorthEurope. The ringed pin is of Irish-Scottish origin. Similar ringed pins discovered in Ireland and Scotland, have been dated to the end of the tenth century.

The buckle and the belt tip is decorated in the style of Borró. This style was common in the first part of the Viking period in Scandinavia, and originated in Norway in the end of the ninth century. This is the first Scandinavian decoration motive used in Iceland. The man also wore the two amber beads around his neck, but these were probably imported from Denmark.

The horse was killed shortly before the burial for the sole purpose of following its master to the other world, as dictated by pagan beliefs. The riding gear gives yet another clue as to the social position of the deceased. The animal was saddled and bridled, as shown to by the bits, cinch rings and nails. This practice, in fact, bears a resemblance to other burial sites of significance from the same time period which have been found in Iceland.

Among the Icelandic population there is much speculation as to the identity of this distinguished person. We know that the Viking buried in the grave was a nobleman of Iceland, perhaps born between 930-940. Several renowned men have been suggested as being this person found. One of these is Thórir Hrafinkelsson, son of the famous chieftain Hrafinkell Freysgodi. Another is Thórir Atlason, son of Graut-Ali. Graut-Ali had settled on the eastern shore of the lake Lagarfljót and lived at Atlavik. Thórir is believed to have come from Norway with his parents. He later married a daughter of a man named Brynjólfur, who settled in Skriddalur valley in the early settlement period.

Many people want to lay claim to our Viking, even our Norwegian cousins. The origins of the Viking can undoubtedly be traced to Norway as the majority of his belongings are connected to Norway in one way or another. But first and foremost, the grave site itself is significant from an archaeological point of view. The task of the archaeologist is not to determine the identity of the individual but rather to use the information gleaned to shed light on the time period in which he lived.

The tradition of burial goods was adhered during from 900 AD to the
advent of Christianity in 1000 AD in Iceland. Mortuary sites from the begin- ning of this period tended to be luxu- rious, becoming increasingly austere as time went on. The artifacts in the site in question are believed to date from the turn of the tenth century, and the splendor in which the deceased was buried sup- ports this theory. Had it not been for the coin found in the grave one might well have assumed that the skeleton had lain there since that time and in all likelihood one of the first Icelandic settlers. The coin, which is English, has been dated and was minted between 955-957, as testified to by the cameo on it of King Eadwig, who ruled England at that time. The site has now also been radiocarbondated to the last period of the tenth century. This dating, which is likely the most exact ever of Icelandic graves, confirms the theory that the gentleman in ques- tion was buried with an inheritance. These conclusions are considered significant because they question the dating of other pagan graves excavated in Iceland. Until now dating has been based entirely on the age of objects found in them. The grave found in Skriddalur valley two years ago, is also one of the most important findings grave sites from the pagan period in Iceland. The main reason for this is how richly prepared the Viking was. Extravagant graves from the end of pagan times have also been found in neighboring countries to Iceland. These pagan graves have been interpreted as symbols in the effort to reestablish pagan religion which at that time was deteriorating. It may well be that the grave in Skriddalur valley is an example of such late pagan revival in Iceland. If this is so, it may also be postulated that the preaching of Christian religion, did not proceed without conflicts, in the contrary to what has been suggested in written Icelandic sources. However, the grave in Skriddalur valley is the youngest one found in Iceland. The artifacts show us how strongly the Icelandic people believed in an after life in Valhöll, or Heljar, so close to the Christianization of Iceland by the decree of the Altingi in the year of 1000. If the Vikings were pagans, and indeed not Christian, we can therefore say that in the Thórisá-barrow in Skriddalur valley was the last Viking in Iceland buried.

References:
Eldjárn, Kristján 1956: Kuml og haugfé í heidnum síd á Íslandi. Reykjavik.
Islendinga members research and recreate the costumes, tools, jewellery, domestic implements, food, armour and weapons of the Viking Age. This information and equipment allows Islendinga to arrange presentations on the domestic, cultural and martial aspects of the Viking Age. The members research and use the fabrics, colours, styles and jewellery of the Icelandic Viking culture. Authentic materials are used whenever available and are constructed using the same methods. Cloth is hand dyed with onion skins, walnut shells and various roots to achieve the desired colours. Tablet-Weave that has been designed and made by our members is used as trimming on clothes and as leg-binding. Jewellery is made using the "melted wax" casting method in the various styles and designs of the Viking period. Many items of jewellery also have a practical application which our members demonstrate in displays.

Like other medieval re-enactment groups around Australia, Islendinga participates in combat to both standardised and our own club rules. This includes individual combat, shield wall, skirmish, fort battles, bridge battles and projectile combat. Our members train every week to achieve a high degree of competence and safety. Our combat equipment consists of swords, axes, spears, shields, daggers and bows. There are also different forms of armor including helms, gauntlets, gambesons, mail and lamella. All our equipment is hand-made by our members using authentic designs.

Islendinga performs many displays around Victoria for local shows, schools, fairs, private functions and the media industry. From brief appearances to fully functional encampments, our members give the audience the chance to understand the Viking culture and dispel much of the barbaric perception of its people. People are often amazed at the complexity and diversity of the Viking culture, a great difference from the commonly held beliefs.

Islendinga frequently hosts and attends re-enactor weekends at various sites in our area. Clubs from Victoria and other states gather to demonstrate and share their knowledge and love of history. Every attempt is made to recreate the Viking way of life. Meals are prepared using the same foods and styles of cooking and are eaten using the same utensils. Each day is organised around the routines of medieval life and the turmoil of their changing world. During these events we have an opportunity to experience the Viking lifestyle and further our understanding of their culture. Australia hosts a biannual event where re-enactment clubs from Australia and New Zealand, gather together for what is called "The Australasian Medieval Conference ". This major event is held during the Easter period and boasts an attendance of over 400 re-enactors. Events include some of the largest re-enactment battles in the world. Markets, feasts, lectures, competitions, auctions, entertainers and much more all combine to provide a cultural experience that spans over two millennium of history. Islendinga was the proud host of the 1997 conference and looks forward to attending the 1999 AMC. At the end of each year, Islendinga holds its own Althing at a town called Walkerville (near Wilsons Promontory). During the Althing, decisions are made concerning the administration and organisation of the club. Members are elected for the official positions of the club in a ceremony held at the "law rock". The weekend is filled with games, celebrations and our traditional "Combat Archery on the Beach".

Islendinga is based in Burwood, a suburb of Melbourne in Victoria, Australia. Club members gather here every weekend to share their research, conduct workshops in medieval equipment and train with their weaponry. Veteran members share their experiences and expand their knowledge and new members are encouraged to experience all aspects of medieval re-enactment.

Islendinga is a democratic club where all members are involved in decisions and organisation. The club has four elected official positions:

Logmann (president): The Logmann is the figurehead of our club and is responsible for organising most events. The Logmann is also required to make a speech at the conclusion of each event.

The interior in one of the Viking Age tents.
The Central Board of National Antiquities will start with the building of a new museum in Old Uppsala during 1998, which will be opened during the year 2000.

Every year, thousands of tourists visit Old Uppsala, one of Sweden’s most interesting historical places. Old Uppsala was the place for the Svear’s royal centre and one of the foremost centres of the pagan cult during the Migration Period (400-550 AD). The three great burial mounds date from that time. When Sweden was Christianized in the beginning of the 11th century, the new religion was manifested at the same place.

The new museum has been designed by the architect Carl Nyrén. The museum will contain a permanent, basic exhibition with original items from the mounds, from the boat burials in Vendel and Valsgärde and also from settlements with reference to Old Uppsala. This exhibition will show Old Uppsala’s importance as a central symbolic place from prehistoric times until today, and the association of royalty and the church. The museum will also arrange special exhibitions.
The Vikings in the Iberian Peninsula: 
Questions to ponder

By Jose Manuel MATES LUQUE, Karmelo Torre 21 2 A, 48970 Basauri, Bizkaia, Spain

Not much is known about the Vikings and the Iberian peninsula (hereafter Iberia), including the North of Africa. At the end of the 19th century some scholars began to research the subject. Later on, from the 1950’s the subject was approached again. Writings from both the scholars from the 19th century and from the mid 50’s established the roots of our present knowledge. However, it seems that their findings were not widely used, especially by their colleagues in the North. Thus, it is not unusual to find that it is generally accepted that the so-called Viking World extended from Scandinavia to North America, via the British Isles, France, the Baltic, Russia and from there contacts with the Arab world in Baghdad, and Constantinople. Moreover, it is accepted that to some extent the Mediterranean also belonged to the Viking World. This might be true for the Eastern Mediterranean if the Viking presence as bodyguards for the emperor in Constantinople and the trading routes along the Russian rivers leading to the Black Sea and from here to Baghdad are accepted. However, what it is still to be established is to what extent the Western Mediterranean can be accepted as the Viking World. When talking about the Western Mediterranean we mean Iberia and the North of Africa.

In addition to this lack of knowledge about the Viking in the Western Mediterranean, maps showing the routes, battlefields or Viking locations are not good. Some of them show no place in Iberia in contact with the Vikings. In fact, the routes go along the coast, passing through the Strait of Gibraltar (called Norvasound in the sagas) and then, heading to Italy and/or Constantinople. Others show a few places, certainly not all, mainly near Santiago de Compostela, Tuy, Lisbon and Seville. Certainly these places and their surrounding areas were in contact with the Vikings more often than others. However, it is also true that other places in Iberia had a Viking presence.

So far, this comment is to point out that there is still a great deal to determine with regards the Vikings and Iberia. It is our desire to offer some ideas about the problems to be tackled. Therefore, we will not write an article about the history of the Vikings in Iberia, although some historical data will be used.

To understand the Viking presence in Iberia several clues have been identified. Each one deals with a topic which has some sort of link with the Vikings. Some links are stronger than others but all clues need to be re-examined thoroughly before a global conclusion can be reached.

Viking synonyms:
Muslim and Christian sources use different names for the Vikings: Madjus, Machus, Al-Urdumaniyun, Lordemano, Leodemanos, Nordomanus, and similar names. It is especially important to know if Madjus is a synonym for Viking or only for pagan, which would mean than some Madjus were not Vikings but Iberian pagans.

Place names:
Near Coimbra (Portugal) there are villages called Nordoman, Nortman and Lordoman; Lordemanos in the province of Leon (Spain). Their names are said to derive from the Christian name for the Vikings (see Viking synonyms).

Another Portuguese village called Guimaraes is said to be derived from the Nordic word Vigmar. In some sagas the names of places Grislupollar, Vilhjamsby, Fetelefjord, Seljupollar appear; they have been identified as Castropol, Vilamea, Betanzos and Rivas de Sil, all of them on the North-western coast. On the Basque coast, the villages of Bermeo (similar to Verma, in Norway) and Mundaka (from the Norse word mund meaning river mouth) are also said to be derived from the Nordic language. It is true that Mundaka is on the mouth of the river Oka, on the estuary of Gernika, but this does not necessarily mean a Viking connection.

Intercultural:
A Basque legend suggests that the first lord of the people of Biscay was Nordic. The translation into English of his Basque name is Lord White. This legend needs to be examined very carefully but it is interesting to point out that this Lord White was said to have lived in the estuary of Gernika and some villages on this estuary are said to have a Nordic origin (see place names). In Camelle (Galicia) is the “meeting of Nordeman”. The name fits very well with the names referring to the Vikings.

Warfare:
In order to be able to attack some places, the Vikings must have had a previous knowledge of them or native help. Some Muslim sources suggest that Viking ships arrived at Pamplona, where they kidnapped the king. This has resulted in dividing scholars into different schools of thought, those supporting the idea of sailing up the river Ebro and its tributaries up to Pamplona; and those who suggest a walking route from some point in the Basque Country (Bayonne, Gernika or Irun). Whatever it was, we think that they needed local help. If they come from the Basque Country, does this mean that they had settled down there and got on well with the native population?

Unluckily, archaeological clues are not very plentiful. The following must be kept in mind.

Settlements:
Where did the Vikings live while raiding Iberia? For shorts raids, they did
not need to build their own houses or defences. They could always use those they plundered. However, they are said to have been in Galicia from about 968 to 971. Did they build any special buildings for their own use? The estuary of Gernika is also said to have been used as a temporary base to replenish goods, repair ships and rest after raiding the Mediterranean and Muslim and Christian Iberia. The geographical position and the resources of this place makes it possible. It is also connected with Lord White and some “Nordic” place names (see above). In Africa, a Viking settlement has been suggested at Azila (Morocco).

Defences:
So far, no Viking building has been found. However, both in Christian and Muslim Spain, castles and towers were built to fight against the Vikings. This is what we call the “non-positive Viking architecture”, i.e., the presence of the Vikings made the natives build those defences. In this way, the Torres del Oeste, the Honesto castle and some defences for the St. James Cathedral were built in Galicia. Even a navy was set up by bishop Gelmirez. In Asturias, the gozon castle and defences around the church of San Salvador (Oviedo) were built. In Muslim Iberia, towers on the coast, walls in cities and a navy were also needed. In Portugal, the castle of Sao Mamede is another example.

Artefacts:
Despite all the Vikings attacks in Iberia, no recognisable Viking archaeological material has been found so far; the ornamental disc of Sabante (Galicia) and the Crosier of San Pelayo (Leon) have been rejected as Viking artefacts. In the Antifonario de Leon there is a soldier holding a sword; of which the hilt is said to be Viking. The only Viking artefact in Iberia is an antler box at the Colegiata de San Isidoro de Leon. However, it is not known how the box ended up there; several possibilities are offered; it was a gift from a Nordic pilgrim to St James chapel, or a gift from some Nordic king to a Spanish one late during the Middle Ages. So the possibility of it belonging to one of the Vikings who raided Iberia is not the only one and therefore it cannot be definitely connected to any of the Viking attacks.

The maritime skills of the Vikings influenced North European people. It is said that some of these Viking skills can be found in Iberia.

Sea vessels:
From the beginning of the 20th century, it has been suggested that some current traditional vessels in the North of Portugal such as the Duriense ship and in Galicia such as the dorna, the chalana and the gamela show a Viking influence. This area suffered several Viking raids and possibly the Vikings lived here for some time. This is said to be the source of this Viking shipbuilding influence. The same influence is seen in the iconography of the fishing villages in the Cantabrian sea (San Vicente de la Barquera, Santander, Castro Urdiales, Bermeo, Fuenterrabia and San Sebastian) since it is accepted that those ships depicted and dating from 1297 are clinker-built and therefore belong to a Nordic tradition. This supports the idea of a Viking settlement in the Basque area. However we have to ask ourselves if the source of origin is the Vikings themselves or other people influenced by the Vikings. Our answer is pending upon the discovery of any kind of ship timber from the Viking Age in Iberian waters.

Whales:
Connected to their maritime activities, it is said that the Vikings, settled in Bayonne from 844, taught the Basques whale hunting. Some scholars do not agree with this statement. They say the Basques had been hunting whales before the Vikings arrived. Even here, a third party, previously taught by the Vikings, could have taught the Basques this skill. This is a chicken and egg problem. However, if the Basques were hunting whales, they certainly needed some kind of vessel; if this is true, then, was this vessel of Nordic origin or a different one? If so, when the Viking Age ended, the Basques had vessels built in a Nordic way which leads to the problem explained before (see sea vessels). Unfortunately, no vessel or port installation for that period has yet been found.

Vocabulary:
Related to the vessels clue, Iberian maritime vocabularies contain Nordic words but again it has still to be proven if the source are the Vikings or if it is due to someone else previously influenced by the Vikings.

For the time being, our main aim in this presentation has been to point out some of the problems and clues that one has consider when examining the Viking presence in Iberia. As stated previously, all of them need to be re-examined. Some of the arguments to support the clues are probably correct, but others are weak and will be rejected. There is still much to do. Luckily for all of us, a new interest in the Vikings and Iberia has been developing during the last few years. Hopefully, new ideas, discoveries and conclusions will be come to light.
The excavations of a chieftain’s manor in Slöinge

Compiled by Olle Hoffman from articles of Lars Lundqvist, National Heritage Board/RAÄ

After almost 10 years of excavating agrarian settlements in the province of Halland, Sweden, important knowledge of the Iron Age elite has been revealed. The excavations were carried out by a team of members from The County Museum in Halland, The Central Board of National Antiquities in Kungsbacka and the Institution of Archaeology at the University of Gothenburg. The excavations were made possible thanks to the discovery of a pre-historical site in Slöinge by an amateur archaeologist, in the winter 1991-92. The most remarkable finds on the site are the precious metal finds, consisting of “foil figures”, one silver foil brooch and two brooches made of bronze. There are indications of metal working and glass bead making on the site. The composition of the finds and the surrounding countryside reveal a prehistoric settlement in Halland with central social, economic and religious functions, probably a chieftain’s manor.

The location of the dwelling site is peripheral and isolated from the closest known settlement area from historic times. The Slöinge site has no immediate marine connection, as it is located some 6 km from the coast. The area was composed of large meadow lands which were not to be cultivated until the 19th century. Settlements from the late Bronze Age, Iron Age or the Middle Ages were normally located on sandy soils surrounded by wet areas, Slöinge is instead located on stiff clay soils. The location together with its particular findings show that the site was not an ordinary agrarian settlement. Farming could not have been the primary purpose of the farm activities. The location of the farm on a height and at a point where travellers had to pass shows that good exposure was important. The farm is located at the crossing between two valleys and the place was likely to be passed by those travelling along the Suse river.

The 1993 excavation aimed to elucidate the traces of settlements in the area and find out more about the status of the preserved graves. The investigation disclosed 4-5 concentrations of traces of habitation (postholes, pits) within an area of 15,000 square metres. The findings showed irregular spreading throughout the area. Most of the findings were made on the top of the height which seems to have formed the nucleus of the settlement. Most of the finds which indicate specialised crafts, in the form of waste products from glass bead making, bronze working and raw garnets, were also found in this area. Finds, such as fragments of pottery, loom weights and soapstone pots, indicating permanent settlement were also found.

The remains of at least one house could clearly be discerned. Preliminary interpretations have suggested that there were several clusters of houses, possibly representing several units of the manor. The dwellings are scattered to conform with the landscape. The finds from the 1993 excavation show similarities to a number of other excavated sites in Denmark, Scania and also in central Sweden.

In 1994 and 1995 the two first regular excavations were made. The extent of these excavations was limited but, nevertheless, exciting results were made. These excavations were concentrated in the richest find-bearing area, area A. Resources were focused on this area owing to the indisputable remains of one house and the high concentration of archaeological findings. The main purpose was to find remains from living, craft, cult etc. which could be dated to establish a chronology of the central parts of the settlement.

The dominant type of structural foundations at Slöinge are postholes. There are also some larger and smaller pits and long and narrow grooves. Remains of at least three buildings may be traced by the large number of postholes.

House I was located on the ridge, a house divided longitudinally into three sections consisting of a central nave and two side aisles, with a width of 5,5 metres and a length of at least 18 metres, likely one of the older discernible houses. In the immediate vicinity of House I, about 30 postholes were found which have been related to House II. To the south further traces were found of one building, House III, in the form of wall-grooves and postholes from roof-support elements. None of the houses have been completely excavated but the two latter are almost identical with three sections, a central nave and curving walls. They were about 30 metres long and 8,5 metres wide. Research has paid a great deal of attention to the postholes, due to their large dimensions.

The discovery of preserved wood caused a sensation, in this case the remains of roof support posts made of oak. It was found in the second most westerly posthole in House III (fig.3 marked with D). Preserved wood was also found at the bottom of the next
posthole in House III (fig. 3 D and GG). Three pieces have been dated by dendrochronology. The analysed sequences suggest that one of the two large buildings can be dated to about AD 710. The settlement appears to have been occupied only during the younger Iron Age, about AD 400-1000.

Two of the postholes contained gold foil figures. The gold foil figures are very small, only 1 sq. cm and all except one depict a man and a woman embracing. In the posthole belonging to House III a hoard of gold foils was discovered; 42 complete or fragmented gold foil figures, some ten small parts of gold foils together with 9 splinters from glass beakers, bones, one thin glass bead, a spindle-whorl, ceramics and flint. The items were found close together and must have been placed in the post hole at the same occasion, probably as a result of filling material settling in the post hole when the post mouldered. The gold foil figures and the other items seem to have been deposited on the floor, next to the post. Their position in the post hole is thus secondary.

One of the aims of the Slöinge project is to survey the adjacent area in order to build models of the settlement structures in the immediate neighbourhood. Results indicate several Late Iron Age burial grounds and at least two settlements from the same period, within 1000 metres. During the excavations, normal archaeological digging technique has had difficulty detecting traces from smithies or bead production. That is why the team has chosen to practise wet sieving, in a similar manner as was done in Paviken (Gotland), Sorte Muld (Bornholm), Lundeborg (Funen) and more recently in Birka.

New excavations at Slöinge are planned when enough funds have been raised.
In April 1998, the Historical Museum of Gotland, Gotlands Fornsal opened their new treasury. Precious metals shaped during different periods have taken their seat in new specially-built exhibition cases between the columns in the room of S:t Göran.

That Gotland and treasures belong together is widely known, but that the island in proportion to its area has the greatest abundance of treasure hoards in the world is probably not as well-known. Of the 225,846 Viking Age coins found to date in Sweden, 145,432 have been unearthed on Gotland. From the Viking Age alone, over 700 hoards have been discovered. That the Gotlanders began the first systematic coinage in 1140 is probably also news to many people.

The basis of the work with the treasury has been to make an aesthetically attractive vault in the beautiful surroundings from the 18th century. Håkan Lyberg, the security expert of the National Museum of Antiquities has been working out the criteria for the security demands and the designing of the exhibition cases and interior decoration have been made by the architects Pietro Raffone and Mikael Andersson.

Excepting the large amounts of gold and silver that were moved from the museum’s old treasury, Gotlandic treasures formerly kept at the National Museum of Antiquities in Stockholm have been returned to the County Museum.

The silver hoard from Ocksarve in Hemse. Discovered in 1997. Dated to post 999 A.D., this being the date of the most recent coin (TPQ) in the hoard. The composition of the hoard is unique and includes large quantities of so-called bundles of silver, entwining rods, and objects from the Russian Empire. The total weight of the hoard is five kilos. The Treasury, Gotlands Fornsal. Photo: Raymond Hejdström
The Barshalder project

The largest prehistoric cemetery on Gotland is located at Barshalder, stretching for two kilometres along the road through the outlying lands between the parishes of Grötlingbo and Fide, at the southern end of the island's main body (fig. 1). Since 1826, more than 500 graves have been documented here during 46 fieldwork seasons. Rich finds from the entire 1st millennium AD have been secured. The original number of burials at Barshalder probably exceeded 6500, and c 2200 grave superstructures remain visible to this day. The site is currently being studied by the present author for monographic publication in a doctoral thesis at the Department of Archaeology, University of Stockholm.

The Barshalder cemetery seems to have been used by the population of a wide surrounding area, as for most of its period of use there are no other contemporary cemeteries known in Grötlingbo or Fide. However, there are three small satellite cemeteries to the west of Barshalder, two of which have long been known to date mainly from the Viking Period. Both of these, at Burställar-Sallmunds (registered ancient monument Raä Grötlingbo 2) and the Fidenäs railway station (Raä Fide 30), were almost completely ruined in the early 20th century.

The third satellite cemetery had, until 1997, never been the object of archaeological attention aside from its entry in the state ancient monuments register as Fide Raä 3. It has to be taken into account in the study of the Barshalder cemetery's development, and the first question to answer was its date.

In July and early August of 1997, two graves were excavated north-east of Fidenäs with the objective of dating previously untouched cemetery sections. Labour was provided by volunteer archaeology students from the College of Higher Education in Visby and the Gotland Residential College of Adult Education in Hemse. This was the first excavation of prehistoric sites in Fide parish since 1954, when Greta Arwidsson documented two ruined Viking Period inhumation graves in the Kaldåkern section of the Barshalder cemetery. A mound across the road and c 200 m from the site of Arwidsson's excavation could be dated to c. 100 AD.

The Grindvaktstugan cemetery – Fide Raä 3

The second trench of 1997 was opened in the then as yet enigmatic Fide Raä 3 cemetery. It is located on a c. 100 m long wooded ridge surrounded by fields, not far east of the former gatekeeper's cottage at the Fidenäs railway-crossing, the so-called Grindvaktstugan. The railways on Gotland were dismantled in the 1960s, but it is still easy to trace them in the physical and cognitive landscape.

Most of the cemetery ridge is covered with imposing clearance cairns, amassed in the 1950s when the fields N and E of the cemetery were brought into cultivation. The son of the farmer responsible for this action claims that graves were then covered, and that it was done with the express intent of leaving the dead to rest in peace. Nowadays graves are only visible at the southern end of the ridge as a number of indistinct flat stone-settings.

The excavations of 1997

The most distinct of these round stone-settings was dubbed Gst 1997:02 (fig. 2) and excavated. The trench covered 25 m² and grazed the edges of at least two neighbouring stone-settings. The excavation took 54 days' work. A well-made edge-circle of wedge-split and chiselled local sandstone was placed on undisturbed glacial sediment. It delimited a slightly domed stone-layer, also mostly of sandstone. Burnt bone fragments but no charcoal were found strewn among the stones over a diffuse area of slightly more than 1 m², north of the grave's centre. Along the outside of the edge circle to the west was a layer of small sandstone pieces covering three further distinct concen-
An osteological analysis performed by Petra Molnar of the Archaeo-Osteological Laboratory, University of Stockholm, has shown that the four burial deposits each represent at least one adult human of indeterminate sex but no animals.

The chronological span between the stone layers inside and outside of the edge circle is unknown. Both, however, post-dated the edge-circle. Its diameter was 4.0 m and the height of the grave c. 0.2 m prior to excavation. Sandstone blocks had been removed from the edge circle. The eastern two-thirds of it were missing, and there the grave's central stone-layer petered out rather abruptly into areas originally located outside the edge-circle.

Six iron knives, in various states of preservation, were found: two placed diametrically opposite one another at the periphery of the inner stone-layer, and four in the outer bone-deposits, of which one sported two knives. Five of the unearthed specimens can be established as belonging to the common Late Iron Age type with an orthogonal level difference between the blade's back and the tang. One of the outer bone-deposits with a single knife also contained fragments of a bone comb datable to the Late Vendel Period (680-800 AD).

Seven flint fragments and a hammerstone were found strewn throughout the trench. Only two of the flint fragments show any signs of working. Together with a coarsely chipped stone axe found 1996 in the adjoining field, these finds indicate a Late Mesolithic settlement site, which is rather surprising considering the level above the sea, c. 3 m.

In conjunction with the excavations three local private collections were documented, of which two contain finds collected when cultivating the fields north and east of the burial ground (fig. 3). The dates of these finds (two annular brooches and a paste bead), and of other objects of unknown origin in the collections, arrange themselves neatly throughout the Viking Period (800-1125 AD). The available evidence thus permits us to date the third satellite cemetery of Barshalder to the Viking Period as well, with its origins at least as early as in the Late Vendel Period.
Interpreting the satellite cemeteries

The main Barshalder cemetery has extensive Viking Period sections, of which the best known is that from the final period of pagan burial in the 11th and early 12th centuries. Large numbers of richly-equipped graves from this period were excavated in the 1960s at the northern end of the cemetery due to an expanding gravel pit. A lesser Viking Period burial site is also known from the Kåldåkern plot in the southern half of Barshalder not far from Grindvaktstugan, as mentioned above.

So, we see here how, with the advent of the Viking Period, a centuries-old tradition of using only the great communal cemetery was broken. Three groups began to bury their dead in new cemeteries on the shores of the Burgsviken inlet, while others continued to use the Barshalder cemetery. At the same time, new cemeteries were established further south in Fide parish. How can we explain this split?

Most of Fide and Näs parishes is very low-lying land which gradually surfaced from under the sea through the 1st millennium AD. Indeed, both of these parish-names signify low-lying land close to water. The groups behind the satellite cemeteries either were not permitted to or did not wish to bury their dead at the main Barshalder cemetery. I consider the best interpretation of these groups to be that they were the owners of new land in present-day Fide and Näs parishes. This suggests a pre-parochial social and territorial division between the deeply rooted inhabitants of central Grötlingbo and the settlers on the new land. The Viking Period burials at the Kåldåkern plot, however, may perhaps be seen to indicate that not all of the Fide landowners kept themselves apart from the Grötlingbo establishment.

Ever since the beginning of our era the Barshalder cemetery had grown along the road from the Grötlingbo heartland to the straits of Fide. It seems that as the straits closed and land rose from the sea a new identity was built on that land.

Martin Rundkvist

---

Where Was Leif Eiriksson’s Vinland?

By Rolf M. Nilstueen

Two of the ancient Norse sagas deal with the Vinland voyages. In the Greenland Saga, Flateyjarbok, which is told in Leif’s own words, the discovery of Vinland covers six pages, while another ten pages describe the voyages of Leif’s brother Thorvald and Thorstein, Thorfinn Karlsefni, and Leif’s sister Freydis. The Icelandic Saga, (Eiríks Saga or Hauks Bok), as told by Karlsefni, describes Leif’s voyage in only six lines, but provides much more information about his own voyage. Both sagas tell of wheat, vines and timber in Vinland.

Flateyjarbok, plus clear and undeniable archaeological evidence, proves beyond any reasonable doubt that Leif built his house at Follins Pond near the south shore of Cape Cod. However, lawyer Helge Ingstad became famous by claiming that Vinland was at L’Anse aux Meadows (LAM) on the northern tip of Newfoundland. Evidence found there proves it was a Norse village nearly 1,000 years ago, but none of that evidence has ever been traced to Leif Eiriksson. Nevertheless, Ingstad’s myth about Vinland has been dutifully repeated by National Geographic for January, 1988, 4; in Follow the Vikings by Viking Heritage in Visby, Sweden; by other Scandinavian organizations including the Sons of Norway in

Viking for January, 1998, 36; and by Ingstad himself in a NCVA program entitled Vikings in America. In the same program, Dr. William Fitzhugh of the Smithsonian places Leif Eiriksson’s “Helluland” and “Markland” in Labrador, hundreds of miles north of their actual locations.

Flateyjarbok tells, “In the fall of the year 999, Leif Eiriksson sailed to Norway and was the guest of King Olaf at Nidaros over the winter. In the spring, the King sent him to Greenland to preach the new religion of Christianity...Bjarni Herjulfsson set out to sail to his father’s house in Greenland, but after three days the fair wind failed, and north winds and fog came on, and this lasted for many days. When at last the sun came forth, they were able to get their bearings, whereupon they hoisted sail, and after sailing that day they saw land...Bjarni said, “I am for sailing in close to the land,’ and on doing so they saw that the land was without mountains, welltimbered, and there were small knolls upon it.”

Turning northward, “They left the land on the port side and let the sheet swing toward it. Then after two days they saw another land...and saw that it was a flat country covered with timber...The crew suggested that they land, but Bjarni would not...He ordered them to hoist sail, and they turned the bow fram the land and sailed out to sea for three days before a southwesterly breeze, when they saw a third land.

This land was high and mountainous, with ice upon it... They kept their course along the coast and saw that it was an island.”

From its size and distance from Greenland, this third land could only have been the west coast of Newfoundland. “Once more they turned the bow from the coast and held out to sea with the same breeze, but the wind increased... They now sailed for four days, when they saw a fourth land...That evening they came to land under a cape, and there on that cape lived Herjulf, Bjarni’s father.

“Eager to explore the new land, Leif went to visit Bjarni, bought his ship, and hired 35 men,”likely including same of Bjarni’s crew. Leif would have gotten detailed sailing directions from Bjarni, and would have sailed due south toward the land that Bjarni had last seen. “They sailed up to the land and cast anchor and went ashore. There was no grass there, and the background was all great glaciers. The land between the sea and the glaciers was one flat rock, and the country seemed to them destitute of value...Leif said, I will give this country a name and call it
Helluland,” (Land of Flat Stone). Hjalmar H. Holand (1956, 33) concluded that Leif sailed along the east coast of Newfoundland and anchored in the harbor behind Flat Rock Point, 15 miles north of St. Johns. Bald, precipitous mountains agree with Bjarni’s statement that the land was high and mountainous (Holand 1956, 40). Newfoundland is not a land of “all great glaciers,” but Frederick J. Pohl (1972, 174) says that in summer the snow fields in the Long Range Mountains there gleam white like glaciers.

“They now returned to their ship and sailed out to sea and discovered the second land. Again they sailed up to the land, put out a boat and went ashore. The land was low-lying and wooded with wide stretches of white sand, and the slope from the sea was not steep. Leif said, “This land shall be given a name from its resources, and shall be called Markland (Woodland).” “After two more days sailing...they came to the mouth of a river that flowed out of a lake. At low tide the ship ran aground a long way from shore, but when the tide rose under the ship they moved it into the river and anchored it in the lake...When they decided to remain there for the winter, they built a large house. The place they called Markland.”

Leif said, “This land shall be named ‘Vinland’ (withy vines) and ‘yin via’ (wine berries).” In the tradition of this seafaring people.”

Knowing that the Vikings pulled their ships out of the sea for the winter, Pohl searched the south shore of Follins Pond and found a gully 160 feet long that rose five feet above high tide. In the water adjoining the beach there was a clear space 30 feet wide, lined with boulders on either side, apparently cleared by human hands. In the gully were the remains of the sod walls of a ship shed having an interior width of about 21 feet. Along the center of the gully, Society members found a row of posts resting on flat stones, and on either side, rows of stakes slightly inclined toward the center, suitable for shoring up the hull of a Viking ship. Placement of the posts and stakes showed that the ship was double-ended with a straight keel like other Viking ships, and was about 69 feet in length with a beam of 18 feet. The bearing values of supports can be determined with close accuracy for planning foundations and driving pilings. The 9th-century Gokstad ship in Norway is 76.5 feet long with a beam of 17 feet. Stripped for hauling, the Gokstad ship would weigh less than 15 tons. By comparison, any of the decked ships of that size built during or after the colonial period would weigh 60 to 70 tons. Conclusion: the supports found at Follins Pond could only have been built for a Viking ship.

In 1016, Leif’s sister Freydis and her husband Thorvard sailed to Vinland with Icelandic brothers, Helgi and Finnboge, to collect a cargo of timber and furs. Freydis commandeered Leif’s house, so the brothers settled nearby. In 1960, Pohl and George McGrath searched the area around Mill Pond and found a rectangular hollow, 18 X 43 feet = 3 X 7 Norse fathoms, suitable for a shelter to provide sleeping platforms for the brothers, their women and their crew. A hard-packed floor, and earth discolored by rotting wood, are evidence of construction. At the old shore line there is an excavation of proper dimensions for shoring a Viking ship. Yet Ingstad (175) says, “Not a single trace of the Norsemen (has been) found in North America.” Thus he conveniently ignores the evidence listed above, plus the 26 authenticated Norse artifacts—swords, spears, battle axes, halberds and firesteels—that have been found in Minnesota; etc. See Nilsestuen, 1994, 31-35.
Pohl (210-11) describes the method by which the Vikings determined the time of the afternoon meal, and concludes that they were able to do so within 5 or 10 minutes. He then cites astronomical data that establish the time of sunset at the winter solstice on the south shore of Hollins Pond as 3:31 p.m. I phoned the Naval Observatory and learned that on that day, on the northern tip of Newfoundland, the sun sets at 3:34 p.m., nearly an hour earlier.

Ingstad (111) says, “En route to his father’s house in Greenland, Bjarni encountered bad weather and fog and, driven to the southwest, encountered unknown lands of which the last had glaciers...” Note that here he carefully omits the “many days” on which Bjarni was driven before turning northward, and the two lands he saw before reaching the glaciers. To find the new land, Leif would have had to reverse Bjarni’s course by sailing south from Greenland, but Ingstad (97) has a map showing that Leif sailed in the opposite direction, following the west coast of Greenland, then across Davis Strait to Baffin Island, and finally south along the coast to Newfoundland. “A number of factors suggest that (Leif) first sailed over to Baffin Island,” (187), but he neglects to tell us what those “factors” are, and there is no mention of them in either of the Vinland sagas. A 12th-century manuscript says, “South of Greenland is Helluland; next lies Markland; thence it is not far to Vinland (Pohl 1972, 149). This is confirmed by Ingstad’s map (105) on which Greenland, Helluland, Markland and “Vinlandae” are arranged in order from north to south, and the latter is drawn to look very much like Cape Cod.

Farther down p. 111, Ingstad tells of Leif’s landings on Helluland and Markland as told in Flateyarbok, but omits Leif’s description of Vinland which would further desimate his claim that Vinland was at LAM...“Here Leif constructed large houses.” That agrees nicely with his “many houses” (189) at LAM, but the sagas say Leif “hired 35 men” and “they built a large house,” which was later occupied in turn by Thorvald and Karlsefni...”The saga’s mention of grapes, wine and wheat should be regarded as a legendary addition. The partly meaningless talk of grapes and wheat supports this point.” It does? Since he can’t refute the evidence in the sagas, he denigrates it as legendary and meaningless...”Some summers (at LAM) were sunny and warm...The winters were relatively mild...In reasonable weather, cows and sheep could graze (186), but he doesn’t mention actually seeing any livestock.

If the weather is so mild, even in winter, why don’t the people there raise such animals to improve their lives?

Pohl (1956, 184), writes, “The (L’Anse aux Meadows) site does not by any stretch of the imagination fit the description in the sagas. It lies on a windswept terrace 12 feet above the sea. The nearest trees are nine miles away and they are stunted evergreens unsuitable for construction. The soil...was largely scoured away by the ice sheet in glacial times. Vegetation is but feeble and is greatly hindered by high winds. This is...a bleak and forbidding region of fog and deep snows. The natives say it has only two seasons—winter and August...It is not up a river on the shore of a lake.” At low tide, boats do not run aground a long way from shore. There is evidence of a row of shelters for small, flat-bottomed fishing boats, but no sign of a ship shed with shoring for a 60-foot Viking ship. Bjarni said the new land was “well-timbered with small knolls upon it,” but photographs of LAM show a flat and barren landscape.

At winter solstice the sun sets nearly an hour earlier than on Cape Cod. There are no grapes or vines, and there are no vines north of Nova Scotia (Pohl 1972, 212). So why in the name of common sense would Leif have named this place “Vinland” for resources that don’t even exist there? The bottom line is that the south shore of Cape Cod fits every one of the features described in the sagas, whereas L’Anse aux Meadows fits none of them.

In the NOVA program, Dr. Fitzhugh shows Leif Eiriksson sailing from the west shore of Greenland across Davis Strait to “Helluland, or Flat Rock Land, which is certainly the east coast of Baffin Island...The country is full of huge slab rocks, high cliffs, and boulders strewn around the beach,” and shows pictures of mountains rising precipitously out of the sea. But Leif said, “m e l a n d between the sea and the gla-
ciers was one flat rock.”

In central Labrador, Dr. Fitzhugh found “Markland, or forest land, with willows, dwarf birches and lichens, fruit trees (sic) with timbers for building houses and scattered vegetation clumps,” while his pictures show small hills, scattered small evergreens, and no beach. But Leif’s Markland was “low-lying and wooded, with wide stretches of white sand.”

Dr. Fitzhugh found “A 30-mile-long beach (the Norse) called the Wonder Strand” in central Labrador. That agrees in part with Leif’s description of Markland. The problem is that, while the announcer says, “It is only a few days sailing” from there to Vinland, it is more than 900 miles from Leif’s Vinland on the south shore of Cape Cod, while Leif and Bjarni said it was only two days sailing or about 300 miles from Markland to Vinland.

The NOVA program quotes at length the description of Vinland as related in the sagas, which is totally different from LAM—and then, without providing any justification for doing so, arbitrarily dismisses the sagas by saying, “But where exactly was Vinland?” It’s a very popular game.

Rolf M. Nilestuen
author of The Kensington Runestone Vindicated, 1994

References

Hjalmar H. Holand, Explorations in America Before Columbus, 1956, 27-47
Westward from Vinland, 1940, 12-30

Holge Ingstad, Quest for America, 1971, 96-112, 175-196

Frederick J. Pohl, The Viking Explorers, 1956
Atlantic Crossings Before Columbus, 1961
The Viking Settlements of North America, 1972
The battle and market at Foteviken 1998

The annual Viking market at Foteviken will take place during June 12-14 1998. This event is founded in memory of the battle at Foteviken in 1134 AD. The three days will be filled with activities for the public and the Vikings. The market will be filled with people, goods, smells and colours. Craftsmen will make and sell their products and voices will be mixed with singing and music. The cultural history of the Vikings will be emphasised during these days owing to the attention to poems, songs, plays, sagas and even competitions in the Viking game - “Hnefatafl”.

The Foteviken Market should be seen as an inspiring forum for contacts and a mediator of knowledge. An open “thing” for the Viking chieftains where future plans and co-operation can be discussed will be arranged one of the days.

The Northern European Viking Championships is an important part of the event at Foteviken. The championship consists of a true Viking single combat, a so called “Holmgång”. The first warrior to strike the opponent three times has won. A Viking sword is at stake! The other competition concerns “the Viking of the year at Foteviken”. This competition is individual and contains seven events (two events can be omitted): archery, pole-pushing, axe-throwing, light a fire, tug of war, spear-throwing and the spinning of one ell. The winners will be rewarded with fine prizes.

If you have questions about this event, please send a E-mail to: viking@foteviken.se

West-Viking: Norse in the Norse Atlantic

A large exhibition about the Vikings, their culture and the Norse expansion is planned. The exhibition aims at exploring the causes of the Norse expansion across the North Atlantic and the human themes of exploration and discovery. The exhibition will shed light on three larger segments, (1) the roots of Viking culture and society in their European homelands; (2) Viking expansion across the North Atlantic to Iceland, Greenland, Vinland and the Far North and (3) the impacts and legacy of West-Viking history.

The exhibit will utilise presentation techniques with both scientific and educational materials. Support materials will include re-constructions of costumes and traditional Viking artefacts, ships and videos. Related but separate exhibitions will also be prepared. The “West-Viking” exhibition is planned to open in the end of 1999 or in the beginning of 2000.

Investigations in the Black Earth

Edited by Björn Ambrosiani and Helen Clarke

Results from the excavations at Birka 1990-1995 are published in Birka Studies, a series produced by the Birka project under the editorship of Björn Ambrosiani and Helen Clarke. Four volumes have already been produced.


Volume 3 (1994) contains the papers given at the Twelfth Viking Congress, held in Stockholm in 1993: up-to-date accounts of the most recent research into Viking Age topics in northern and western Europe presented by leading specialists in the fields of archaeology, history, numismatics, place-name studies, linguistics and runology. Volume 4 (1997) contains the papers given at a scientific seminar held at Birka in 1994 presented by leading specialists in Quaternary geology and biology, and concerning the environment studies on the island.

Further excavation reports are in preparation, as are some volumes which will concentrate on subjects associated with the Birka Project. For example, there will be a biography of Hjalmar Stolpe who excavated in Birka in the 1870s and 1880s and also a volume devoted to the 1990s excavations at Hovgården on Adelsö, Birka’s contemporary royal equivalent. There will be fifteen volumes in all.
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.

Visiting address: Viking Heritage, Skeppsbron 18, Visby, Sweden
Postal address: Viking Heritage, S-621 85 Visby, Sweden
phone +46 498 292066, fax +46 498 292108
e-mail: viking.heritage@gotlandica.se
Internet: http://bull.got.kth.se/~viking