Editorial

Dear Readers,

We are very happy to present you with a special, extended summer issue of the Viking Heritage magazine! Among all the interesting reading, we are proud to publish five articles in co-operation with the Nordic Spirit Symposium, which took place in Thousand Oaks, California in February 2001. The theme of the symposium was The Vikings: Eastern Traders, Merchants, Empire Builders, Royal Guards, which also is the highlight of this present issue.

The summer season is in full bloom with many important excavations of Viking-age towns and trading places going on around in the Vikings’ world, for instance in Wolin, Gnezdovo, Birka, Kaupang and Fröjel. Here you can read about the latest results of the excavations of Birka. In coming issues we hope to tell you more about results from other Viking-age related excavations.

This is the last issue in collaboration with the international North Sea Viking Legacy project that has now come to an end. Therefore we would like to thank everyone from the project who has contributed interesting articles in the last six issues! Hopefully we will work together again in the up-coming Destination Viking project (read more on page 35).

We also want to welcome our new readers! Today we have subscribers in 27 different countries all over the globe! And of course many more are welcome to join!

Lastly, I would like to thank my co-workers here at Viking Heritage, Mia Göranson, Alexander Andreeff and Therese Lindström, who have done a great job making this issue the most extensive ever!

We hope you will enjoy reading it!

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Words of Wisdom

Foolish is he who frets at night,
And lies awake to worry
A weary man when morning comes,
He finds all as bad as before.

From Hávamál
(Words of "The High One")

About the front page:
The big Viking from Fröjel, who was found in one of the graves excavated in 2000. He was around 50 years old and his skeleton showed that he had worked hard during his lifetime. Just underneath him another skeleton was found, a woman lying in the opposite direction with her feet under his head. Photo: Tove Eriksson

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Heritage News

Heritage News 36–39
By Lena Holmquist Olausson

“They made a lightning raid on the inhabitants who were living there in peace and quiet and took the town by armed force and returned home after taking much booty and many treasures.”

This quotation is from the chronicle about the life of Ansgar, the missionary. It is written by his successor, Rimbert, who was archbishop of Bremen, sometime between the years of 865 (the time of the death of Ansgar) and 888 (the year of Rimbert’s death).

This special excerpt concerns plans for a raid aimed at plundering Birka. But it never took place; for several reasons the action came to nothing. Instead the banished King Anund, who led raid, travelled on with his Danish followers to a place on the other side of the Baltic Sea, in present-day Estonia. It seems from the quotation that they were more successful there. The description provides an excellent picture of the social conditions of that time.

For the people of Birka the threats of pillage and armed conflict were most certainly part of daily life. Recent studies on the Continent have shown that the pre-state societies were characterised by violence and aggression. Threats of this kind were used in the power struggle between petty kingdoms in Scandinavia and Europe in the Viking Age and early Middle Ages. Research concerning military organisation and fortification has been neglected in terms of academic studies of the late Iron-age society in Sweden. Former research projects and excavations on Birka have largely focused on the town and cemeteries. The aim of the research project, Hillforts and fortifications in Central Sweden 400-1100 AD, is to fill this knowledge gap.

Birka is strategically situated at a junction of trading routes along the waterways in the Lake Mälaren. During the Viking Age the lake was the main communication link in the Mälar Basin. Even during the winter, when ice covered the water surface, it was the best means of transport. But its accessibility also made the town vulnerable to attack. Clearly the town had a strong defence from its very beginning. Birka’s defence system consisted of a hillfort and a
The town rampart

The town of Birka was surrounded by a rampart, 450 metres long today but originally 700 metres long. There are seven openings in the rampart and it is hard to say if all of them existed from the beginning. These openings ought to have been fitted with towers in order to fulfil the purpose of the rampart, but only an excavation can verify if this has been the case. The rampart is a stone construction with earth filling and topped by a wooden palisade. Many men were needed to defend such a long rampart. From calculations we know that one man every third (every fifth) metre is necessary to ensure good protection. Perhaps we should consider that the hillfort was the main defence and that the rampart filled other purposes than only defence. It may have served as a landmark, the town where special laws were prevalent. The law “Bjärköarätten”, which is the oldest known urban code in Sweden, can have had its origin in Birka.

The rampart ends abruptly in the south, where it has been altered by cultivation in later times. There have been discussions of whether the rampart could have had extended up towards the hillfort and, in that case, where it stretched. In order to understand the whole system of the defence and construction, this was an important question to answer. My starting point was that the whole construction forms a unit and that all parts were linked so as to constitute an integrated defence.

Careful examinations of the ground between the rampart and the hillfort have been made using geo-chemical and geophysical methods. The result pointed out a very sharp delineation of the cultural layer, indicating the stretch of the rampart, that is to say, the whole town has been surrounded entirely by the rampart.

When examining the southern part of the rampart in the thirties, a large number of rivets that archaeologists call boat rivets were found. Holger Arbman, who carried out the examination, interpreted the rivets as being remains after boats that had been piled up on the very well-built stone and earth rampart. Piling up old wooden rubbish on this carefully prepared construction seems strange. My opinion is that the iron rivets were used when building the wooden palisade, but that doesn’t exclude the re-use of old parts of boats in the construction. Three thousand rivets were needed to build a Viking-age ship and the shortage of wood must also have been widespread. Rampart excavations show that it has been enlarged upon several occasions, the first at the same time as the town was founded. Thus, the assumption that the rampart was built in the 10th century does not add up.

In the north the rampart is connected with the Viking-age shoreline. There a pile barricade continued out into the water and also surrounding the harbour area. A line of poles was documented during diving investigations in the 1970s. The purpose of the poles must have been to regulate the routes of the harbour and to prevent hostile raids. Björkşärden, the harbour on the other side of the bay, which belongs to the King’s estate on the island of Adelsö, is also important in this context; marine archaeologists have also found wooden constructions there.

The hillfort

The embankment construction of the hillfort represents a striking element in the landscape. It is one of the most grandiose structures we know from the Scandinavian Viking Age. In the Mälar Basin there are around 500 ancient forts. The designation is a technical antiquarian term including structures with different functions over a long period of time, from the Bronze Age to the Viking Age. One important fact is that the hillfort of Birka is the only one excavated so far that has been dated to the Viking Age. The rampart of the hillfort has a semicircular form, is 350 m long and has a height of 2-3 m. On top of it a wooden palisade has been placed or, more correctly, a parapet and a battlement. The first excavations of this rampart took place in 1996. It was shown then that this rampart was built similarly to the town’s rampart, but that it was built in a better-planned and stronger way. In the filling, remains of a wooden construction in the form of some hundreds of iron rivets, post-holes and charcoal were found. The palisade consisted of a 2 m broad battlement with a timber-framed parapet. The rampart was built in two phases.
Dating indicates that the rampart was erected at the same time as the town of Birka was founded, sometime towards the end of the 8th century. "C-dating shows that the older wooden construction of the rampart burned in the 9th century.

In the chronicle of Ansgar, there is mention of a hillfort where the inhabitants take refuge in a critical situation (the one mentioned in the beginning of this text). There it is noted that the hillfort is not especially strong. This alarming event should have occurred sometime in the middle of the 9th century, a time that corresponds to the dating of the fire in the oldest part of the rampart. The hillfort doesn’t seem to have been strong enough to resist raids and after the fire it was rebuilt to double its height.

During our excavation we could see that the younger rampart was burnt at least twice towards the end of the 10th century or the beginning of the 11th. It is said that Birka was abandoned around the year 975 and this could be a sign that the hillfort continued to be used.

A mighty burial mound was built in the oldest part of the ramparts. On top of the grave a big stone was erected. The stone was inserted and fitted into the wooden palisade. Underneath the mound of large boulders, in the firm till, a ditch was dug where a middle-aged man had been buried together with a horse. The very small fragments of textiles that were found, indicate a valuable costume made of silk material inter alia. The grave is dated to the middle of the 8th century, making it the one of oldest in Birka.

The monumental mound, the horse burial and the fact that the grave was consciously built into the parapet indicate its symbolic importance. The grave has represented a clearly visible monument to the inhabitants of the newly established town. Perhaps the buried high-ranking man had had some part in the founding of Birka.

**The Garrison**

In a hollow in the terrain directly northwest of the hillfort lies an area that has been called the Garrison since the 1930s. The reason is that a remarkably large amount of weapons like arrow- and spearheads, shield bosses, chain mail and perhaps the most noteworthy, iron lamellar armour, were found in the excavations. The lamellar armour are the only ones known from the Viking Age in Scandinavia and belonged to a very valuable kind of armour. The rich and important finds that were made in the 1930s were never published and that is part of the reason why this strategically important area has never received the attention it deserves.

In the area there are a number of constructed terraces where houses have stood. The area was partly enclosed by a wooden palisade built on a low stone wall. There is also evidence in this area of several phases, the oldest one beginning in the second half of the 8th century and the youngest dating to the 10th. Remains of the oldest phase consist of hearths. On top of those, stone-paved terraces have been built. For four summers, 1997–2000, excavations have been underway on two of these terraces.

**The Warriors’ Hall**

On the upper terrace, remains of a magnificent house, 19 m long and 9.5 m wide, have emerged. It was situated on a height, clearly visible from the passage at Björkö, and must have been an attractive sight for the passersby. The house has had two entrances. It had double-vaulted walls, making it well insulated. It is a hall house containing two large rooms with high ceilings and a fireplace in each room. Along the walls of the house spearheads, parts of shields (shield bosses), locks, keys and chest fittings were found.
The house differs totally from the small, square houses known from harbour area of Birka and it had a completely different function. It also differs from other houses in the surrounding countryside. Until now there is only one parallel, the large hall building that was excavated on the plateau of the King’s estate north of the church in Old Uppsala. It is true that this house is double as long, 40 m, but it has the same characteristic double walls as the house in the Garrison.

The house had a special function as a warriors’ assembly hall, intended for gatherings, festivities and religious ceremonies. It may also have served as an armoury. In the western part of the house the finest and most exclusive finds lay concentrated in the floor layer. Here a dragon’s head made of bronze, pieces of glass goblets, two sword handles and many other things were found. There is every reason to suppose that this was where the seat of honour of the house lay and where the king was seated when visiting the Garrison.

The symbolic meaning of the weapons was of great importance for the warriors and they appear in several settings. Partly they have been placed along the walls, as with the spears, and partly they have been deposited in the ground as so-called house-offerings in some parts of the construction, when the houses were built. This kind of offering was found in one of the most central post-holes of the house. Different objects, such as two spearheads, one exclusive bronze scabbard, two Islamic coins, a small decorated Thor’s hammer made of horn, completely unique in its kind, and about 40 sawed-off comb-cases were placed in the pit. These comb-case fragments are also of interest as they are strongly connected to the male warriors’ equipment. Every warrior wore a richly decorated belt on which he hung different objects like his comb.

More or less all the objects found can be associated directly with the warriors. The spear is the symbol of the God Oden who was also the God of warriors. Spears were deposited in many of the fortification’s constructions.

The warrior we meet here is a well-equipped and educated soldier who stayed at the Garrison all year round, at least some of the force. From the offal we can understand that the soldiers had supplies of fresh meat throughout the entire year.

Here we begin to sense an increased professionalism, a transition from a warrior bound directly to the king to a paid professional soldier. Most likely the Garrison constituted its own community within the society of Birka, in need of provisions such as food, fuel and other things. Therefore, over the next three years we intend to try to find out how this community functioned by excavating the adjacent terraces. In order for their operations to function, the soldiers needed, among other things, a kitchen, a storeroom and a smithy. In the excavations hundreds of iron knives of all sizes have been found, from unused to ones with really worn edges. They could have been made in a Garrison smithy.

The last event that took place in the Garrison is that the house burns down and the place seems to be abandoned very suddenly. Left behind were numerous weapons found spread out all over the area, which can indicate that the Garrison was exposed to a hostile attack. Questions like: who the raiders were and why the weapons were left behind without being taken care of, now remain to be answered.

Editor’s note: This article has also been published in Swedish in the exhibition catalogue, “Birka’s Warriors” from the University of Stockholm issued in connection with the summer exhibition of the same name at Birka Museum in 2001.

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The children aged 5–15, who take part in Gotland Art College’s courses for children under the guidance of their teacher Ljiljana Ljubz, have created a praiseworthy artistic exhibition about the Vikings. The children’s Viking images were made in connection with 15 Turkish schools where the Turkish children were encouraged to freely express their own view of the history of Asia Minor.

My co-worker at Gotland Art College, Staffan Laurin, and I assisted Ljiljana with the teaching. We came up with the idea that the Viking Age could be an interesting theme to inspire our pupils to work with. The fact that Gotlandic Vikings have surely travelled to the East to Miklagård, Istanbul, made the subject even more fascinating to the children. We could even tell them that we know that some Vikings served as the emperor’s bodyguards and that one of the signs of the Vikings being in Istanbul is the carved runes on the balcony parapet of Hagia Sofia’s grandiose dome. Another sign of the contacts between Vikings and the East, that the Gotlandic children are familiar with, are all the large silver hoards with Islamic coins and objects found on Gotland.

Sonja Böhlander Tanrisever, my contact in Istanbul, and I hope to be able to carry out an exchange between the artwork of Turkish and Swedish children. Maybe sometimes in the near future the Turkish children can show their images of the history of Asia Minor in the Historical Museum of Gotland. We see our work as a beginning to pave the way for friendly relations over the borders to the East – the East being in fact much closer to us than we think.

Translated and revised by Mia Göranson

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**Children's Images of Vikings on display in Istanbul**

**BY HELENA ANDREEFF**

The artist, Ljiljana Ljubz, teaching a group of children about colours. Photo: Helena Andreeff

The artist, Ljiljana Ljubz, teaching a group of children about colours. Photo: Helena Andreeff

Viking village from above, wood piled for the winter to the right, by Catarina, 8 years old. Photo: Helena Andreeff

Hagia Sofia’s grandiose dome. Another sign of the contacts between Vikings and the East, that the Gotlandic children are familiar with, are all the large silver hoards with Islamic coins and objects found on Gotland.

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A thousand years ago, the Vikings were known and feared as some of the world’s greatest shipbuilders, raiders and travelers. While many Viking Age Scandinavians ventured west in their longboats – reaching as far as North America – many others headed east, tracing the wild Russian rivers to distant trading centers, leaving behind a trail of coins and artifacts. In search of trade, payments in Arabic silver and adventure, the Vikings crossed the eastern Baltic, founded a Russian colony, and – some of them – made it to the doorways of the Middle East.

As part of the continuing Millennium Celebration in the Scandinavian countries and in the United States, the Vikings’ unprecedented world travels, which took them further east than any other Europeans of the time, were discussed in a Nordic Spirit symposium sponsored by the Scandinavian American Cultural and Historical Foundation (SACHF) and held in February. Nearly 200 people, many who came from as far away as Canada, North Dakota and Minnesota, attended the symposium, which was held on the campus of California Lutheran University (CLU) in Thousand Oaks, California.

The symposium got underway Friday evening with words of welcome from Scandinavian consular officials, CLU president Luther Luedtke, and Howard Rockstad, SACHF president. Keynote speaker for the Friday session was Björn Ambrosiani, project director of the Viking Age excavations at Birka, Sweden, one of the earliest towns in northern Europe. The evening included a performance of Edvard Grieg’s music played by pianist James Massengale of the UCLA (University of California at Los Angeles) Scandinavian Department, with Hardanger fiddle renditions by Bill Boyd of Seattle, Washington. Norwegian actor-writer Trond Woxen presented a reading of Yngvar’s Saga, thus beginning the symposium’s transition eastward.

Saturday’s agenda included presentations by keynote speaker Evgenij N. Nosov of Russia, as well as talks by Mats G. Larsson of Sweden, Judith Gabriel Vinje of Los Angeles, and Erik Axel Wessberg of Copenhagen, and a second talk by Ambrosiani. With a thematic emphasis on the role Viking Age Scandinavians played in trade with western Asia and their sojourns and settlement in European Russia, speakers illustrated their talks with slides of the coins, jewelry, routes and artifacts that represent the latest archaeological findings, in a testimony to the diversity of Viking Age life.

Larsson opened the morning session with an illustrated discussion of Scandinavian activities in the East in the light of runestones and other written sources. Nosov, head of the Novgorod excavations, discussed Scandinavians in northern Russia in one of the high points of the symposium. Whereas Ambrosiani’s Friday talk dealt primarily with Birka, his Saturday talk dealt with Birka’s contacts with Russia and beyond. Danish
musicologist Wessberg gave very popular demonstrations and discussion of several recreations of Viking Age musical instruments, ranging from a cow’s horn to a stringed harp. A panel discussion comprising questions from the audience for the distinguished panel of symposium presenters concluded the afternoon session.

Despite the centuries of “bad press,” Vikings were not only pillagers, according to the speakers as they pointed out the diversity of Scandinavian lifestyles during the years 800-1100. “Vikings are thought of as the rude, pillaging people of the North, sweeping down over Western Europe,” Ambrosiani said in his opening statement. “That is the picture we have had for a long time. The historical sources were written by the priests and monks who were badly treated by them.” But that is an incomplete picture, he said, one that does not take into account the majority of Scandinavians of the time, who were not represented by the term “Viking”. “The word Viking by definition is a sea pirate,” Ambrosiani said. “The other Scandinavians, 99 percent of the population, were quite peaceful people living on their farms, some in towns, and if there had not been this other society, there would not have been Vikings either, for they needed to come back each year. They really were only a small part of the history of the period.” Many of the Viking “sea pirates” were young men from the upper social classes, he noted, who ventured forth to make a name for themselves and to bring back money. By trading furs and other items in the teeming markets of the East, they collected the gold and silver coins that today provide valuable clues to their mercantile activities.

A Viking Feast capped the two-day event, featuring an appropriate menu of roast pork (mørbrad med svedser og aebler), salmon, lamb stew with dill sauce (dillkött på lamm), red cabbage (rødkaal), carrot casserole and roasted vegetables, all topped off with a Viking ale mead. For sweets, strawberry pudding (rødgød med fløde) and baklava (for an “Eastern connection”) were added. After-dinner entertainment included musical selections by Wessberg on his Viking-style instruments, and a saga performance by members of the Los Angeles-based Scandinavian Theater Company. Parties who traveled the farthest, and several who were the earliest registrants for the symposium, were each given a special treat – a recent copy of Viking Heritage Magazine.

Articles by four of the presenters, Nosov, Larsson, Vinje and Wessberg, are included in this issue of Viking Heritage. As Wessberg authored an article on various Viking Age instruments in the 1999 Newsletter Number 1 issue of Viking Heritage, his article in this issue focuses on interesting historical aspects of the lur. An article by Ambrosiani and a second article by Vinje are planned for the following issue of Viking Heritage.

The annual Nordic Spirit symposium series, which presents programs celebrating Scandinavian contributions to history and the arts, is sponsored jointly by SACHF and CLU, and made possible by a grant from the Barbro Osher Pro Suecia Foundation. The series began in February, 2000, with a program on the western activities of the Vikings, from England to L’Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland. The next program in the series, planned for February 22-23, 2002, will focus on later-age “Vikings,” Scandinavian immigrants to America in the 1800s and early 1900s. Although the series will tackle a broad range of Scandinavian cultural subjects, it is anticipated that it will return to the real Viking Age in the future.

SACHF also sponsors the Scandinavian Cultural Center at CLU, a developing museum-resource library collection.

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Erik Axel Wessberg, Judith Gabriel Vinje and Evgenij Nosov pondering weighty questions during the panel discussion. Photo: Larry Ashim

“Viking maids” Sandra Kane and Norma Cretal flank Swedish speaker Mats G Larsson. Photo: Larry Ashim
The first Scandinavians in northern Rus’

By E. N. Nosov

The Viking raids and trips historically were an external manifestation of the structural changes in Scandinavian society. Scandinavia entered a new phase of social, political and economic history at least a century before the end of the 8th century, which was marked with the origin of new towns, development of crafts, long distance trade, and wide-spread dispersion of Scandinavian culture.

One of the regions where Vikings – or Varangians, as they were called in Rûs – appeared in the second part of the 1st millennium AD was the territory of Eastern Europe. These lands represented far-off regions of European cultures. Covered with dense woods and marshes, with sparse Finnish and Baltic populations, they would not seem to be of any interest to the overseas newcomers in comparison with the rich Christian monasteries, churches and towns of Western Europe. In this connection the question about the motives of Scandinavian movement to the East arises.

In order to answer it, two general circumstances should be kept in mind. First of all, in the second part of the 1st millennium AD, the Slavs from the region of the Carpathians and the adjoining regions began their movement in different directions, including northeast. Belonging to the population of Central Europe, the Slavs carried along the stable habits of agricultural households. By the 8th century the most northern group of Slavs reached Lake Il’men’, and, finding themselves surrounded by peoples of different languages, mainly Finns, began to call themselves the Slav name common to all kin – the Slovenes.

The second factor that played an important role in the history of the northern part of Eastern Europe was the fact that one of the main trade and military routes of the Middle Ages – the Baltic-Volga route – lay across it. At the end of the 1st millennium AD commerce with Islamic countries was the only source of silver coming to Eastern Europe. Before 840 AD about two thirds of this silver remained in Eastern Europe. The other part the territories around the Baltic. The main trade routes and centers situated there can be identified by chains of hoards of Oriental coins (all in all, we know of about 1000 hoards with more than 228,000 Oriental coins).

Two regions on the territory of Northern Russia are marked by concentrations of silver. They are the mouth and the upper reaches of the Volkov River, both pointing out the two main centers located there – Ladoga and Novgorod. In Ladoga, the earliest of all known Eastern European hoards of Arabic coins was found, with the earliest coin dated at 786 AD. One dinarum was found in the oldest cultural layer of this site (the earliest dendrodate is 753 AD). The quick rise of Ladoga in the second part of the 8th–9th centuries was caused by its intermediary role in Oriental trade as well as by its activity connected with the service aspects of the route (accommodations for crews to rest, the exchange of goods, crafts, shipbuilding, and control of security). The entire economy of Ladoga was centered on its external relations. The Scandinavians visited Lake Ladoga before the Viking Age. But at the moment the stream of silver coins flooded Eastern Europe, they, trying to control it, began to move to the middle of the territory along the waterways. The activity on the tradeways was connected with the desire to take silver, fur and slave markets under their control. It was the main motive for Scandinavian activity in the East at the initial stage of their penetration of the region. The aims of Scandinavians in the West and the East were greatly different. In the woods of the East there was nothing to rob. In order to become rich it was necessary to take part in intermediate trade and to control activity, and in order to succeed in such activity, it was necessary to get integrated into the high strata of the local society.

Scandinavians met the Slav colonization stream in Eastern Europe. Here the Slavs and Scandinavians joined various forms of economic and social relations against the background of a vast Finnish world. In this “international copper,” if it is possible to say so, the Russian state originated, the first
towns appeared, and the foundation of Northern Rus' was formed. In the history of the Slavic and Scandinavian relations, the lands along the Volkhow occupy a special place. From here the Scandinavians began to penetrate into the territory of Eastern Europe, where they had their first close contacts with the Slavic world. Two towns on the Volkhow were extremely important in this connection.

Ladoga is the place where the earliest Scandinavian objects were found on the territory of ancient Rus'. They are found in the settlement, starting with the oldest layers, referring to the middle of the 8th century. Among the finds there is an oval brooch, a fragment of an iron neck-ring, a wooden stick and a bronze plate with runic inscriptions, a bronze needle case, combs of Friesian and Scandinavian types and others. A number of objects of Scandinavian design were made in Ladoga itself.

In the oldest archaeological horizon in Ladoga a unique blacksmith’s and jewelry complex was found. It included a forge, a metal workshop, and a jeweler’s furnace. A hoard containing instruments consisting of 22 objects that once belonged to a craftsman was found there as well. There were seven pincers, jeweler hammers, scissors to cut metal, a minute tiny anvil, drills, a wire drawer and other items. The hoard is connected with craftsmen who came from Scandinavia, as the technologies which were used by the craftsmen were unknown to the Slav and Finnish populations of that time.

Opposite the Ladoga settlement, on the right bank of the Volkhow River, a Scandinavian graveyard, Plakun, was excavated. About twenty low mounds dated to the 9th–10th centuries were found there. These contained burials performed upon the rite of cremation in boats and one burial in the burial chamber. In one of the mounds a sword piercing the foundation was found, representing a typical feature of Scandinavian burial rituals. The fact that there was a special cemetery for a number of Scandinavians shows evidence of the separation of a number of Scandinavians of Ladoga from some other citizens.

Another cemetery excavated near the St.Clement church in Ladoga and dated to the 11th–12th centuries gives very interesting material for anthropological analysis. This is the only Scandinavian series known in the northwest of Russia. The majority of burials – 90% – contained the remains of men and women, which proves that the cemetery belonged to a group of people living continuously in Ladoga. The St. Clement’s series shows a strong likeness with the series of skulls from Sweden, Britain and Iceland. The data obtained from this burial field reveal a certain gradual distortion of Germanic features. This could be a result of assimilation by the local population and it already happened in the first and second generations.

The archaeological data provide convincing evidence of the Scandinavian presence among the population of Ladoga starting from the initial stages of Ladoga’s existence. Those Scandinavians were not only men, but also women; not only warriors and traders but craftsmen as well. They lived in Ladoga in the 11th and the 12th centuries at a time when their gradual assimilation with the local population is indicated based on anthropological data.

Novgorod is situated at the place where the Volkhow originates from Lake Il’men’. It was, as it is now, a key point on the map of Eastern Europe. A center here allowed control of the main waterways of Eastern Europe and administrative management of the central part of the Lake Il’men’ region. The central point of the district is Gorodishche, which was called Rurik Gorodishche by local historians in the beginning of the 19th century, a settlement located on an island two kilometres off Novgorod. In the 9th and the 10th centuries Gorodishche was a major craft and trade center. It was also an administrative and military settlement located on the main crossways. Among the objects indicating the broad international relations of its population are Oriental and Byzantine coins, beads, amber, walnuts, objects from Scandinavia and other countries, among them the 3 hoards of dirhams.

Scandinavian objects appeared on the site in the second half of the 9th century. However, their major part is attributed to the 10th century. Some cult objects, like neck-rings with “Thor’s hammers”, pendants, two amulets with runic inscriptions, and a figure of “valkyrie”, could not have reached Rurik Gorodishche as objects of trade, but obviously indicate that Scandinavians were living there. Gorodishche was also a center of craftsmanship where objects similar to ones from Scandinavia were produced, which is evidence for the presence of those who had a feeling for the style of northern decorations. Thus, Scandinavian craftsmen probably worked there as well.

The economic and political importance of Novgorod was constantly growing from the second half of the 9th century, as the town enjoyed a very advantageous position in the agricultural region. At the end of the 10th century it became a center of Christianity for Northern Rus’. The fortified center of the town moved from Rurik Gorodishche to a new place around the central Cathedral of St. Sofia.

In Scandinavian records Novgorod is called Holmgardr. The name of Holmgardr is older than that of Novgorod. There are various explanations for the appearance of the name Holmgardr, with two main explanations. According to the first one, Holmgardr is a Scandinavian name and there is no local background for it. In this case Holmgardr may be “a town on the island” or “insula town” (from holms, island), or “a territory with settlements on islands” (from holm, an island or a hilly area on a swamp or a low meadow, and gardr, a fence, yard, or farmstead), the meaning which eventually transfers to the name of the town. The topography of the upper reaches of the Volkhow complies with such explanations of the name. According to another explanation, the Scandinavians reproduced in Holmgardr some Russian name which had existed before Novgorod and could sound in Russian as Holmgard (holm, in Slavonic, a hill, and gard, in Slavonic, a town). The topography of the area supports this idea very well (“the town on a hill”) and also Russian chronicles mention the word Holm (a hill) as the name of one part of the town. However, there are no simple linguistic proofs in favor of any of these interpretations.

Written records and archaeological data reveal the complex relationship between the Slavs and Scandinavians in Northern Rus’. The many-sided relationship of both peoples was not in the least a passing episode, but a remarkable phenomenon in the history of Europe. The Varangians turned out to be its merchants and craftsmen, warriors and princes, officials and robbers. Some of them appeared in the country at the time of sudden raids and disappeared on their fast vessels; others stayed there for a long time and returned to their native country with fortunes which they had saved through long years; still others settled in Rus’ forever with their families, gradually forgetting their native traditions and losing the anthropological features of Germanic people.

Language checked by Howard Rockstad.

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Some of the most detailed accounts of Viking Age life come from the far periphery of the Scandinavian world, in the rare accounts written by Islamic chroniclers in the East.

The time of the greatest expansion of the Islamic world, which stretched from Spain – Al-Andalus – to India, was also the time of the greatest movement of Viking Age Scandinavians. They were bound to encounter each other somewhere along the way, particularly in the East, as the adventurous merchant-warriors of the North made their way to the teeming trade centers of Russia and the “Saracen” world to exchange their furs and other wares for the sought-after silver coins, trading with Muslims who had themselves ventured north and west to find opportunities for commerce.

The Abbasid caliphate was generating a vast amount of travel and geographical literature, sending out envoys and reporters to describe the commercial and postal routes of the expanding realm, and making note of the various peoples they encountered along the way, including those known as the Rus, referred to by Arabic writers as ar-Rusiyya. The ethnic designation of Rus was not always clear, with Slavs and Scandinavians and others abounding in the teeming hybrid culture of Russia and Western Asia. The term referred generally to a commercial and political organization of elite warriors and merchants in the area, and sometimes, other terms were used. But many details in the Arab descriptions are identifiable as Scandinavian.

We would in fact know little about these Norsemen in the East were it not for Muslim chroniclers. The earliest reference to the Rus by a Muslim writer was made in the early 9th century by Ibn Khurraadadhbih. Born of a Persian family, he grew up in Baghdad, where he became the head of the caliph’s postal and intelligence-gathering service. His job was to note everything about the climate and conditions along the postal routes that crossed the empire.

In 844 he wrote about the saqalibah – a term generally used for fair-haired, ruddy-complexioned northerners. It is thought that Ibn Khurraadadhbih was referring to the Vikings and not the southern Rus when he describes them as established traders in the Greek and Caspian worlds. He tells how they came in their boats, “bringing beaver-skins, and skins of black foxes, and swords, from the furthest part of the Slav lands down to the Black Sea.”

He tells us that the Rus traders
transported their wares by camel from Jurjan, a town at the southeastern end of the Caspian Sea, and rode down to Baghdad, probably venturing several times into Iraq and Iran. They would have joined the regular system of caravans, which could consist of hundreds, even thousands of camels, riding down to Baghdad and other Middle Eastern trading centers, many carrying loads of silk and other luxury goods. According to Ibn Khurraadadhbih, these northerners had servants who had learned Arabic and acted as interpreters.

From Baghdad, the headquarters of the ruling Abbasid caliphate and home to a million souls, envoys and chroniclers set forth to investigate the surrounding lands of the caliphate, sometimes to negotiate trading terms and scout for new markets. They have left us the most detailed contemporary descriptions we have of the Viking traders in the East, giving us unparalleled information about their dress, behavior, religious practices and warfare. While they clearly saw through their own cultural lens, and their accounts sometimes contained exaggerations typical of travelers’ tales, many are considered fairly objective.

Some painted a picture of the Rus trader-warrior with strong heroic undertones, noting their reckless daring and scorn for death, as well as their loyalty to their leader and a readiness to come to the aid of their comrades. The Persian historian Ibn Miskawayh described the Rus as men with “vast frames and great courage” who carried an impressive arsenal of weapons, including swords, spears, shields, daggers, axes and hammers.

A geographer named Ibn Rustah, writing in the early 10th century, noted about the Rus that “They honor their guests and are kind to strangers who seek shelter with them, and everyone who is in misfortune among them.” He also reported that they maintained a strict code among themselves: “...whoever among them does wrong or is oppressive, they find out such a one and expel him from among them.” And, he included some fashion notes, pointing out that many of the Rus had adopted certain Central Asian influence in their wardrobe, and were going about wearing baggy balloon-leg trousers that were tight below the knee.

Ibn Rustah also tells us their primary interest in the region was sales: “Their only occupation is trading in sable and squirrel and other kinds of skins, which they sell to those who will buy from them. In payment, they take coins which they keep in their bag.” He and his colleagues left us inventories of the Rus wares, which included wax and birchbark, fish-teeth, honey, goatskins and horse hides, falcons, acorns, hazelnuts, cattle, swords and armor, as well as furs of sable, ermine, weasel, mink, colored hare and fox.

Black fox was the most valued of all the furs, according to al-Mas’udi, who explained that the Arabs were eager to have caps and coats made of the fur. Ibn Hawkal gave us the edification that black fox skins retain heat better than any other kind, so that they were considered excellent for old men and invalids.

According to the geographer Ibn Hawkal, writing in the year 977, the Rus ran a slave trade that flourished “from Spain to Egypt.” Although according to another account, this was on a fairly small scale, and not conducted at public markets. Ibn Rustah commended the Rus he observed as being “clean in their dress and kind to their slaves”.

By far the most important eyewitness account of the Norse merchants in the region was that of Ahmad ibn-Fadlan ibn al-Abbas wrote. “Tall as date palms, blond and ruddy.” The men, he observed, were tattooed with dark-green figures “from fingernails to neck.” The Rus women wore neck rings of gold and silver, “one for each 10,000 dirhams which her husband is worth; some women have many.” Ibn Fadlan described other ornamentation: “Their most prized ornaments are green glass beads of clay, which are found on the ships,” and they also wore festoons of colored beads, large oval brooches from which dangled such items as knives, keys and combs, and “breast-boxes made out of gold, silver and wood.” He had harsh words, however, for Rus hygiene: “They are the filthiest of God’s creatures”, he observed. And although he acknowledged that they washed their hands,

Ibn Rashid ibn Hammad. Ibn Fadlan was part of a delegation sent out from Baghdad by Caliph al-Muqtadir to the Bulgar capital on the Volga, a major market site. The king of the Bulgars had requested help building a fort and a mosque, as well as personal instruction in the teachings of Islam. Ibn Fadlan was secretary of the Abbasid caliph’s delegation, and he ended up acting as religious instructor too, having been trained as a faqih, an expert in Islamic canon law. The delegation left Baghdad in June, 921, and took a circuitous route, passing east of the Caspian, not arriving in the Bulgar capital until May, 922.

Ibn Fadlan wrote about his travels in his Risala, the official report he filed after returning to Baghdad. About one-fifth of it is devoted to the Rus, whom he met up with at the Bulgar settlement. He expressed certain admiration for these people: “I have never seen more perfect physical specimens,” he face and head every day, he was appalled that they did so “in the dirtiest and filthiest fashion possible” by using a communal basin of water. This describes an ancient Scandinavian and Germanic custom, a detail that helps identify the subjects as Vikings, but which caused revulsion in a Muslim who was only permitted ablutions with poured or running water.

Some Rus embraced the religion of their Muslim hosts, but Ibn Fadlan noted that the old habits still had their pull: “They are very fond of pork and many of them who have assumed the path of Islam miss it very much.” Islam also prohibits alcohol, and the Rus were said to relish their nadjidh, a fermented drink they seemed to drink night and day. “Sometimes,” he wrote, “one of them dies with the cup still in his hand.”

As to their own religious practices, Ibn Fadlan witnessed a band of Rus merchants celebrating the safe completion of a Volga
voyage, writing down that they offered sacrifices to wooden figures stuck into the ground. The praying merchants then instructed their deity in this way: “I want you to provide me with a merchant who has many dinars and dirhams, who will buy from me everything that I want him to buy, and he will not contradict me in what I say.”

The most dramatic scene he witnessed was the Volga funeral of a chieftain who was cremated with his ship. This oft-quoted description of the rite is one of the most remarkable documents of the Viking Age, filled as it is with details of the dead leader being carried to a pavilion on the ship, and laid to rest on a Byzantine silk-covered couch. He lies amid a treasury of expensive items, rich foods and strong drink, as well as a dog, horses, oxen, and poultry, and is accompanied by the body of a slave-girl who had volunteered for the honor of being slain and burned with her master. Many of the details of the scene he saw, and was informed about from interpreters, are borne out from evidence in Scandinavian burial finds.

And while the Rus he observed were a mix of Slavs and Scandinavians, some scholars say he was clearly referring to some Norwegians when he wrote about Northmen who lived three months away . . . across the ocean . . . on a mountainous coast. These people were, according to Ibn Fadlan, the recipients of divine providence. “God the lofty and sublime every day makes a fish come out of the ocean to them. Thereupon one of them comes with a knife and cuts off from it as much as is needed for him and his family. When they have received as much as they need, then the fish turns around and returns back into the sea. And in this way they live every day.” This probably referred to the seasonal appearance and return to the sea of the North Sea whale.

In any event, he was unique among all the sources, an eyewitness reporter whose information is unparalleled. Other Islamic sources, largely based on secondary accounts, note more belligerent Rus activity in the region. Ibn Hawkal writes of a large Rus army invading Bardhâ’a on the Caspian’s south shore in the 10th century, holding it for a year. The occupation broke down, after the women of the town gave the Rus a secret “cup of death” to drink, resulting in a dysentery epidemic. Only about 400 Rus survived, slipping out under cover of darkness and returning home, with as much booty as they could handle.

The Muslims of Spain called the Vikings by the term al-majus, heathen wizards, fire-worshippers, a term they also used in referring to Zoroastrians. When Viking pirates sacked Seville in the 9th century, an Arab poem described how the majus had filled the ocean with red birds, perhaps referring to their sails.

After the attack, the emir arranged a truce and dispatched an ambassador to the king of the majus. And so the handsome poet-diplomat known as al-Ghazal sailed to Ireland or Denmark, bearing a gift for the Norse king and his wife, Queen Noud. He would write of the queen’s beauty: “She lives in the farthest-off of God’s lands, where he who travels thither finds no way.” We have written evidence of only one other Arab who actually ventured to the farthest-off of God’s lands. Al-Târâshî, a merchant from Cordoba, visited the Danish market town of Hedéby in the mid-10th century. He wrote that it was a very large town at the extreme end of the world ocean, whose inhabitants ate a lot of fish. He recorded seeing sacrificed animals, hoisted high atop poles. He was astonished to learn that Norse women enjoyed the right to divorce, parting “with their husbands whenever they like.” The men as well as the women of Hedéby applied some artificial make-up for the eyes, which—in the words of Al-Târâshî, “when they use it their beauty never fades, but increases.” He didn’t find beauty in everything, noting: “I’ve never heard such horrible singing, it is like the howling of dogs— only more brutish.”

Shortly after 965 the stream of silver came to an abrupt end, coinciding with a scarcity of silver in the Islamic realms. When Islamic silver again started to arrive in Scandinavia at the end of the 10th century it was only in small amounts and around 1015 it stopped completely.

The Varangian and Saracen Routes began to lose their dominance as Western Europe began to revive its own commercial routes. The Age of the Vikings — the Silver Age — had come to an end. A millennium later, scholars are increasingly turning to the Islamic coins, unearthed from buried hoards in Scandinavia, Russia and the Baltic area, as well as the Islamic written accounts, to learn about the Viking Age sojourns eastward.

About the author
Judith Gabriel Vinje is a veteran journalist who spent many years covering the Middle East for print and broadcast media. She is currently West Coast contributing editor of Norway Times (Nordisk Tidende), a weekly newspaper published in New York. She writes about Norwegian, as well as Middle Eastern, literature and culture, and has spoken and written articles about the Viking Age connections between the Scandinavians and the East. She is active in Sons of Norway and the Scandinavian Theater Company, and has written and produced programs on Norwegian history. Her published articles include Among the Norse Tribes: The Remarkable Account of Ibn Fadlan, in Aramco World, November/December 1999.

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The Saga of Fadlan's

Antonio Banderas portrayed the role of 10th century Arab envoy Ibn Fadlan in the 1999 Disney/Touchstone film “The Thirteenth Warrior.” He is shown here with Dennis Storhøi, playing Herger, the Viking. Photo courtesy Touchstone Pictures.

Fragments of the original Risâla were included in Muṣâjam al-Buldân, the geographical dictionary of Yaqût, which was completed in 1228. But it would not be until the 19th century that Europeans would be able to read about Ibn Fadlan’s journey to the Volga. A German translation from Yaqût was made in 1823; segments were translated into Norwegian in 1896 by Alexander Steppel; A.S. Cook’s English version was published in 1923.

A copy of the complete manuscript of the Risâla, probably dating from the 11th century, was discovered in Meshed, Iran by Ahmed Zakî Valîdi Togan (1890-1970), a Bäshîr Türk scholar. His German translation of the manuscript, Ibn Fadlân’s Reiserbericht, was published in Leipzig in 1939. Proficient in several languages, Zakî Valîdi had studied medieval history in Vienna and wrote his doctoral thesis on Ibn Fadlan’s journey to the Northern Bulgârs, Turks and Khazars. He taught at Bonn and Göttingen Universities, and was director of the Islamic Institute at Istanbul University.

His translation included portions from a 16th century Persian geographer, Amin Razi, who had worked from an even older Risâla manuscript, and scholars often present segments from both versions when they vary significantly.

Other translations of Zakî Valîdi’s discovery appeared on the scene; a Russian translation came out in 1939, and a Hungarian one in 1951. Marius Canard translated it into French in 1958. An English version of Risâla segments not included by Yaqût was published in 1949 by R. P. Blake and R.
The Lur of the Vikings

By Erik Axel Wessberg

"... now Frode let blow the lur to call for these men he had placed in hiding", so Saxo writes in his telling of a situation where King Frode Fredegod and his men were about to be trapped by the English, but were aided by a reserve troop that heard the lur.

"Go fight against the Wends when you hear my lur!" says King Magnus the Good to his men just before a battle.

And about a situation where King Olav the Saint is to leave with his ships, Snorre writes, "Then he would let the lur sound, the tents were taken down on the ships, and they started rowing."

The lur is mentioned time after time in the Scandinavian medieval chronicles. The stories have always been well known to historians, and when in 1797 two beautiful ancient horns were found by workmen digging for turf in Bruderslev moor in Jylland a little north of Copenhagen, the stories from the chronicles would have come to mind immediately. The finds were named: Lars.

The horns were indeed beautiful and impressive, with highly specialized craftsmanship – in every way a treasure for a king or chieftain. But they were not the lurs of the Vikings. When researched more closely, they were shown to be from the Bronze Age; in other words: 2000 years older than the instruments described in the Scandinavian chronicles – twice the distance in time to the Vikings, as our time is to the Vikings.

Whether the historians actually knew that from the beginning, or they really did mistake the age of the horns in the first place, seems to be a little uncertain. Christian Jürgensen Thomsen, the first director of the newly-founded National Museum in Copenhagen who was the one who gave the big horns the name lur, was also one of a group who established the system of different prehistoric ages, the Stone Age, Bronze Age, Iron Age and Viking Age, so at least he was aware of the problem concerning the proper dating of the archaeological find.

In any case, the mistake was made, and lur has proven to be a bad name for the bronze horns. The bronze lurs are forever connected with the Vikings. The Viking blowing the Bronze Age lur is so common on paintings and tourist posters and many other places that it is impossible to wipe out.

The 'Viking' is surrounded by romanticism. Forgotten are the times when he was feared and hated as the pirate and rapist he actually was, now that he has become one of the strongest trump cards for the Scandinavian tourist offices in their effort to sell their countries. And as the Bronze Age horns - magnificent, great, beautiful pieces of art and excellent craftsmanship as they are – are equally well suited for the job, it is no wonder that bronze horns and Vikings are still found together in such situations.

Every year Danes and tourists visiting Denmark will be exposed to at least three to four big "Viking plays" in different parts of the country. Fifty to a hundred persons will take part in each of them. This is the way the participants choose to spend their summer holiday, creating and playing a role in the Viking play of the year. A story from the sagas will be dramatized – of course a dramatic one about love, hate, fights between men and so on. Live horses, armies, big settings, and lots of action will characterize these outdoor plays, and as the evening gets darker and the story comes to an end, the lur will be heard.
that the connection between the lur and the Vikings was a mistake was cleared up for the archaeologists years ago, as mentioned. But it is amazing how little this is known among people in general. The average Dane still connects the Viking and the bronze lur. When for instance I tell people I work with the music of the Vikings, people will ask, “have you brought the lur?” And you may stand in front of the lur in the Danish National Museum and listen to all the fathers teaching their children about the instrument of the Vikings.

But what is this instrument actually? If the historians of the 19th century had experimented a little with the instruments they had found, they would immediately have realized that it was not the instrument of the sagas and chronicles. It is big and relatively heavy; it requires some time to be picked up, lifted to its playing position and blown. You cannot walk around carrying it without occasionally getting it between your legs and stumbling. The instrument is, in other words, anything but handy. It is certainly not the instrument of the battlefield and the fleet.

The Bronze Age lur are instruments for ceremonial use. There can be little doubt about that. They are always found in pairs, where one is a mirror image of the other. Their appearance, the way they look, must be equally as important as the sound. In the worship of the God of the Sun, which seems to be the important god of the Bronze Age, the pairs of lur had their important role. It must indeed have had a magnificent effect. But that is another story.

The lur of the sagas and chronicles must have been a very handy instrument – one the lur blower would always carry with him when sailing, when sneaking in the dark night to make an attack, when fighting on the battle field, and when sleeping too – an instrument always ready to be brought into action within a second. The power of the king or chieftain and the survival of the people would to a great extent depend on the lur blower’s ability to make the signal in time.

The word lur in the old Nordic language is closely related to the words for kneading thorough and cradle – things made from hollowed wood. The linguists very soon came to the conclusion that it must be a wooden instrument that their archaeological colleges were looking for, and they pointed to the naver-lur, a folk instrument in Norway and Sweden, as a possible model. It is a 3 to 4 foot long branch, split in two, hollowed, and put together again and wound with bark from the birch tree so that it will take the shape of a tube which can be blown like a straight trumpet. It is used even today for weddings and other feasts in many places in Norway and Sweden, but, first of all: it is sold to the tourists.

Wooden artifacts are rarely preserved in the Scandinavian finds. But a few years ago the two parts can each be hollowed out, and then finally put together again to form the tube. The outer rounded shape of the Herning lur is quite precise. It is tempting to think it must have been turned, but it is not impossible to make a very precise round shape without using turning techniques, if you are skilled. And I believe that the craftmen of those times were very skilled.

The two halves of the Herning lur were held together with eleven windings of strips of ash wood. Not the best material to choose. One could think of a lot of other materials – leather for instance – that would be better and much easier to work. But again: we may be dealing with a technique that we have not fully understood.

Furthermore, no trace of glue or any other material to make the assembly tight was found. To my mind, and according to the results of my experiments, it is impossible to make it work without some sealant. The instrument must be completely tight if it shall work well. Just a minor leak will make the tone weak and less brilliant. I am convinced that material of some kind to tighten it must have been used.

One may wonder about the choice of wood as the material for the body of the instrument. Metal such as bronze is, for instance, much better. A natural big cow horn would work better too, and must have been much easier to use than the wood. But instruments made that way out of wood did exist all over Europe, not only as folk instruments, but as highly esteemed instruments for art music too, up to at least the 17th century. Obviously they belong to an old and strong tradition.

The Herning lur is 82 cm (32 1/4 inches) long, which is approximately the length of a small piccolo trumpet. The mouthpiece is, however, big, more or less the size of a bass tuba (5 cm or 2 inches in outer diameter with an opening as big as 1 cm., or a third of an inch), and the width of the tube is equally big, like the tuba, all the way to its end, where it is 5.5 cm. or 2 1/4 inch).

Trumpet and trombone players who have tried the bronze lur will say that the mouthpieces are surprisingly much like those on modern instruments and excellent, and that the instruments play well from a contemporary point of view. This cannot be said about the Herning lur. The big tube...
and mouthpiece, and the short length, are judged, from a modern point of view, to not be a good combination.

One possibility is of course that it was played in a different way than we do today. Another possibility is that it simply is less than good. If this is so it could indicate either that the skill and ability to make this kind of wind instrument declined from the Bronze Ages to the Iron Ages, or that the instrument from Herning just was not the best one of its time; it just happened to be the one that was found. So even if we have found an instrument that probably is an authentic lur, I’m not convinced that we have found the right one, or the very best one yet.

How many signals the people of these times would have known is impossible to tell. It could be any number from one to twenty or thirty, or even more. A signal may be simple. One blow means this, two blows shortly after each other means that and so on. Or one could also think of the type, “three short blows and two long”, “one short, one long and then two short” and so on – an unlimited number of different combinations is possible with one tone only.

But as two or three different notes are not too difficult to make, there is to my mind no reason to think that the lur-blower of the Iron and Viking ages would not have used that. In other words, signals in the form of a simple melody are likely to have been used. And that kind of signal has one quality the other type does not have; it is much easier to learn and to remember. A melody is easily picked up. Everybody knows many melodies by memory, and when they are there, they are not forgotten again. To the memory of the Viking warrior there could easily have been a melody by the name of, “The fleet is to take leave immediately”, another by the name of, “warning, the house is on fire!” and many others of that kind.

To me this would be logical. But then I read in the chronicle, “the king tells the lurman to blow steadily, constantly”. Nothing about a certain signal or a specific message, just blow. And on another page the king cries, “we are being attacked,” we are being attacked” and to the lurman he says “blow as hard as you can”. Again, not the signal “We are being attacked” – no, just blow the horn. And the same for a situation where a battle is to start – blow, blow, blow all that you can! – not an order to blow certain clear signals, just blow.

Possibly different signals were not used. Maybe they just used the sound of the lur, to encourage, maybe to drown the cries of agony and fear (they must have been there too), or maybe simply “to make the pot keep on boiling,” like what can be seen at a football game today where the fans together with many bottles of beer bring toy horns to make noise and create this very specific mood of the sports game.

I personally believe in the melody signals – and at least a number of ten or so clearly different ones. In my opinion it must have been so. Some of the expeditions, the fleets, the armies of the times, were quite big, even if we understand that the chronicles sometimes exaggerate the figures. To make the expeditions efficient and to make many men and ships work as one machine, clearly a good overall view and a method to give an order or message in a quick and precise way is necessary. The lur is suited for this. Even if we could think of many things that would make the Herninglur better for the job, it works. When reading about the Braavalla battle and other stories, and the lur is mentioned, I think it is fair to have the Herninglur in mind.

Language checked by Howard Rockstad

About the author
Musicologist Erik Axel Wessberg is a Danish composer, arranger, music teacher and television director. He has been a lecturer at the University of Copenhagen Department of Music for five years. He has devoted considerable effort toward reconstructing ancient musical instruments and experimenting with those instruments, which include bone flutes, York panpipes, the Lund-fife and Falster-offe reed instruments, the Oseberg birch lur, the Västerby horn and the lyre. He has also produced a CD of “Viking Tones: I Dreamt me a Dream.”

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It is only for a short time during the Viking age, mainly the 11th century, that we can get such fascinating glimpses of the lives of individuals. During this century a large number of runestones, around 3000, were raised in the Scandinavian countries, the outstanding majority of them in Sweden.

We do not know for certain why this habit started and blossomed during such a short period, but at least in Sweden it seems to have some connection with the contemporary Christianization of the country.

The runic inscriptions telling about voyages abroad amount to around 200, and one of the largest groups is in fact the one mentioning Greece. The reason for this is most likely the major probability of dying on such a trip, as foreign countries are mentioned mainly when the commemorated person died abroad. More peaceful journeys around the Baltic are thus not reflected to the same extent.

But why was it so dangerous to go to Greece in the Viking Age? Partly, of course, because it was a long journey on Russian rivers with many risks included, but more because of the most common aim of the voyage – to serve the Byzantine emperor in Constantinople in his Varangian Guard, one of the elite forces of the empire. And as this force often was sent into the battles when the situation was especially dangerous, it sometimes happened that most of the force was more or less completely outfought.

One of the most distinguished members of the Varangian guard was the future king of Norway, Harald Hardrada, "the hard ruler". He came to Constantinople, the Miklagard of the Icelandic sagas, in the 1030s and stayed there for about ten years. He soon became the leader of the Varangians and performed many great deeds for the empire, commemorated both in the sagas and the Byzantine sources.

Thanks to the runestones we also know another leader of the Varangians. His name was Ragnvald, and he had runes carved in memory of his mother Fastvi on a large stone block by a path leading through the woods to their homestead Ed in Uppland. The last part of the inscription says:

Ragnvald had the runes carved; he was in Greece, was the leader of the retinue.

Another expedition causing a large number of casualties was the one led by Ingvar "the far-travelled" around 1040. Almost 30 runestones can be connected with this tragic event, all of them located in eastern Sweden. The one which gives the best description of the voyage is the one found in the basement of the castle Gripsholm in Södermanland, now raised by the entrance road to the castle:

Tola had this stone raised for her son Harald, the brother of Ingvar. They travelled man-like far after gold, and in the East gave the eagle food. They died south in Serkland.

To "give the eagle food" means to kill enemies, and the text thus seems to indicate that Ingvar and his men took part in a battle eastwards, i.e., probably in Russia, and then went on to the south to Serkland, which can be translated as "the land of the Saracens," most often interpreted as the region around the Caspian Sea.

There is also an Icelandic saga telling about the same Ingvar. It is rather fanciful,
but the general picture of the expedition is the same as given by the stones: in 1036 Ingvar and his men went to the Russian prince Yaroslav, and after some years' stay with him they went on to the more distant parts of the East, where they fought for a king against his rebellious brother. After the battle they turned home, but in 1041 both Ingvar and most of his men were killed on the way back by an epidemic disease caused by treacherous women.

Fortunately there are two foreign sources which seem to cast more light on this mysterious expedition. The first one is the Russian Primary Chronicle, which tells about Varangians helping prince Yaroslav in his battle against the Patzinacs outside Kiev in 1036. The second one is the chronicle of the Transcaucasian kingdom Georgia, which states that a contingent of Varangians arrived in the country in the beginning of the 1040s and helped the king in his struggle for the throne against his brother and a rebellious vassal.

This battle took place at the former forest of Sasirethi near Tbilisi, today's capital of Georgia. This is also how far east we can conclude that Ingvar and his men went if we only use the most reliable sources. But there are also some interesting narratives in the saga which indicate that the expedition in fact reached the Caspian Sea. That is especially true of a description of an abyss or whirlpool having a close correspondence to the properties where the travellers' stones were raised seem to belong to persons of the upper part of society.

As most of the runestones from the Viking Age were raised in Sweden the expeditions abroad are manifested mainly in this country. However, the voyages probably went from all the Nordic countries to places in every direction where honor and fortune – the important things in life during the Viking Age – could be gained.

One failed expedition to Russia which is not reflected on the Swedish runestones is the one led by a chieflain who in the Russian chronicle is called Jakun, which must be the Norse name Hakon. He is described as a very handsome man with a gold-knitted coat, arriving in Russia with his troops to help Prince Yaroslav against his brother Mstislav. However, Yaroslav lost the battle and Hakon had to flee, leaving his luxury coat behind him.

Statistically seen, it should have been possible to trace this bloody battle among the runic inscriptions in central Sweden if a large part of the soldiers had come from this area. As that is not the case, the conclusion seems to be that both Hakon and his troops came from some other region. One exciting possibility is that he was identical with the Norwegian earl Hakon, known in the sagas for his handsomeness and his taste for gold-ornamented wear.

There are only a few runic inscriptions in the East in spite of the many men who passed there during the 11th century. In Russia there is only one, a part of a grave monument on the island Berezanj in the estuary of the river Dnepr. In the former Byzantine empire there are some more: two graffiti names carved on the balustrade in the cathedral Hagia Sophia in Constantinople (Istanbul), and a nicely ornamented but very worn inscription on a marble lion which once stood in Piraeus but now is in Venice.

Thus, only rarely did the many thousands of men going eastwards find it worthwhile to carve runes where they stayed – the runestones were connected with the real properties at home and with their owners and were mainly meant to be read by the neighbors. That could be something to consider when we hear of runestones at places in other parts of the world which were only very temporarily visited by a few Scandinavians.

Language checked by Howard Rockstad.

About the author

Since obtaining his archaeology doctorate from Lund University, Mats G. Larsson has worked as a part-time scholar at Lund University, concentrating on the Iron Age. His doctoral thesis dealt with late Viking Age society based on ancient monuments and runestones. Larsson began his career with a Master of Science from the Royal Institute of Technology and worked in Swedish industry with production automation. Since switching to archaeology, he has written a number of scholarly and popular books on the Viking Age, such as The Realm of the Rus: The Norsemen and the Birth of Russia.

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http://viking.hgo.se
The story of the Viking-age ship from Äskekärr

By Jan Borg, Monica Gustafsson and Mats Sjölin
Published by Göteborgs Stadsmuseum, 2000, Norra Hamngatan 12, 411 12 Göteborg, Sweden

As the title suggests the book deals with the discovery, excavation and exhibition of the Äskekärr ship. The ship from Äskekärr was found in 1930s in the Swedish province of Västergötland, but the remains were stored until 1990s when the ship in its entirety was shown to the public for the first time at Gothenburg City Museum.

The book tells the story from many different perspectives. The reader can follow how the concepts of archaeology, conservation and public display have evolved among scholars and museums during the 20th century with the ship from Äskekärr as a focal point. The authors also write about how the scientific and public image of the Vikings and Viking Age has changed over the last century.

Ken Walters – the first Viking re-enactor craftsman to become a Member of the Guild of Master Craftsmen!

Ken Walters is an English woodcarver and woodturner who drifted into re-enactment about two years ago. His main interest is in Viking Britain between 800 AD and 1000 AD and most of the artefacts he reproduces are of items found in England.

The objects that he makes are copies of originals found by archaeologists and he works from measured drawings and photographs, often supplied by Museums or by organisations like the York Archaeological Trust.

Recently Ken Walters’ work was recognised by the Guild of Master Craftsmen and he is now the first Viking re-enactor to be made a member of the organisation in Britain. Guild membership is only given to those whose work has reached a high standard.

Ken uses only British hardwoods from the carefully managed woodland at the Beacon Country Park and where possible he matches the wood used in artefacts with wood still growing today. Every part of the tree is used. Ken turns or carves the wood, the sawdust is used as pet bedding at schools for the disabled and the shavings and chippings go back to the Beacon Country Park where it is put onto muddy paths to stabilise them. Some of the bark is used to dye wool, and unsuitable bark is used as a mulch.

During the year Ken Walters attends many different events where he shows and sells his handicrafts. When he is at re-enactment events, not multi-period markets, he also displays and uses a variety of reproduction Viking tools, all copies of original tools from finds in England and the Scandinavian countries.

To introduce his business into the modern world Ken Walters now has a website at www.hcra.co.uk
E-mail: kenwalters@beeb.net

Replicas of 10th century wooden artefacts from Viking York (Jorvik) and Dublin, made by Ken Walters. Photo: Ken Walters

Ken at the Viking market at Cressing Temple, England, in May 2001. Photo: Ken Walters
The county of Sogn og Fjordane is rather sparsely populated. It is, however, well known for its scenery, the fjords, the high mountains, the large Jostedal glacier, and the coast. The largest areas of arable land are in the middle and eastern part, especially along the fjords. Here we find the richest grave finds from the Viking period, reflecting strong Viking communities. The fjords and the coast were important for communication, and from the coast it was not so far to the British Isles. We find strong influences from the British Isles in the Viking material.

The rock shelter of St. Sunniva at Selja
The rock shelter and the legend of St. Sunniva of Selja played an important role in the early phase of establishing Christianity in Norway. According to the church’s official version, Sunniva was an Irish king’s daughter who fled the country from a pagan Viking chieftain. Sunniva and her followers landed on Selja. After some time they sought refuge from the pagan Norwegians in the rock shelter and God saved them by letting stones seal the entrance. Later King Olav Tryggvason and the bishop found sweet-smelling bones. The body of Sunniva was found whole and uninjured. This took place in the year 996.

The rock shelter became a pilgrim site. By the year 1070 Selja had become the seat of the first bishop of Western Norway and by early twelfth century a Benedictine monastery was established. The monastic church was dedicated to the English martyr, St. Alban.

The possibility of Irish hermit monks’ presence has been debated, likewise that the cave may have been a pagan ritual site taken over by the Christian cult.

The rock shelter itself is a funnel-shaped crevice, 50–60 meters above sea level. Outside the rock shelter a large stone terrace was constructed in the twelfth century. Here lie the ruins of the small Romanesque church of St. Sunniva and the terrace probably served as the liturgical gathering-place for the pilgrims. On the flat ground below the rock shelter lie the preserved ruins of the monastery.

The island of Selja had a strategic situation and was a natural haven for ships waiting for clement weather. From here one could see westwards to the treacherous stretch of sea at Stad, which had to be passed when travelling along the western coast of Norway.

The grave mounds at Myklebust – A family graveyard and a king’s burial place
Nordfjordeid, situated at the head of a fjord arm of the larger Nordfjord, was a propitious place in the Late Iron Age society. Here there was favourable arable land, easy communication across the inland, and a relatively short distance westward to the main line of communication – the coast.

Here at Myklebust two dominating, similar-sized grave mounds lay in a group of five Viking mounds. The impressive mound on the flat beach contained a burnt ship burial site. The other grave mound lay on the edge of the low terrace immediately behind and was excavated in 1903–04. It contained a total of six graves, both male and female, dating from 700 to mid–900. Most likely the mound contained family graves.

The burnt ship burial site was excavated in 1874 and the mound was later restored. The grave mound is approx. 30 metres across and four metres high. It was surrounded by a ditch one metre deep. The ship was the same size as the Gokstad ship judging from the size of the charcoal layer and the number of buckets that were found. A bronze vessel, an Irish hanging bowl had been buried later and...
The burial site is dated to the second half of 800. Ship graves from 800 are known from Borre, Oseberg, Gokstad and Karmøy and they seem to be associated with early kingdoms. The buried man has been interpreted to be either Audbjørn or Vemund, two succeeding kings of Firdafylki. According to Snorri Sturlusson, King Harald Finehair killed them when unifying Norway.

A visitor centre connected with the grave mounds and the prehistory in the region of Nordfjord is being planned. Viking sites are signposted and information about sites and the prehistory in the Nordfjord region is available on their web site.

The Gulathing - The oldest regional thing in Norway

The Gulathing, the oldest regional “thing” or public legislative assembly in Norway, was situated in Gulen from the time it was established, sometime between the end of the 9th century and 930, until it was moved to Bergen in 1300. According to Are Frode's Íslendingabók, Icelandic laws enacted when the Althing was founded in 930 were patterned on the earliest Gulathing laws. Initially, the Gulathing was probably an althing, a general assembly open to all free men. Over time, it developed into a lagting [law thing or court], an assembly covering a large judicial district to which each of the member counties appointed a certain number of representatives.

Initially, the Gulathing probably just covered the following areas: Fjordane, Sogn and Hordaland; later this was extended to cover six counties from Agder in the south up to and including Sunnmøre in the north, and then, later still, also Valdres, Hallingdal and Setesdal. The Gulathing probably assembled at two different places in Gulen, first in Eivindvik and later in Flolid.

The Gulathing law is the earliest known Nordic code of statutes, and was probably not written down until late in the 11th century. However, the earliest preserved fragments of the law are from the end of the 12th century or beginning of the 13th. There is just one handwritten copy of the entire Gulathing law, dated to around 1250 and today this is preserved in the University Library in Copenhagen.

A large section of land at Flolid, a few kilometres from Eivindvik, has been zoned for the development of a memorial to the Gulathing. In 1997, a temporary outdoor stage was erected along with a small “Viking village”, used for three years in the “Håkon Adalsteinfostre in Gula” pageant. In 1999, the Gulathing was selected as the Millenium Site for Sogn og Fjordane County.

The first Gulathing Seminar was held in Eivindvik in September 2000 on the theme of the Gulathing law, its origins, development and influence. The Gulathing Seminar will continue as an annual two-day seminar considering different topics linked to the Gulathing and Gulathing law and is arranged as a joint project by the University of Bergen and Sogn og Fjordane College.

The stone crosses at Eivindvik, Korsund, Svanøy, and Rygg

In Norway stone crosses are found mainly along the western coast, and are traditionally dated to the Late Viking or Early Medieval period. They are seen as an expression of Christian influence from Ireland and Great Britain.

A large number, 19 stone crosses have been recorded from the county of Sogn og Fjordane. Recent investigations confirm that several crosses are made from a special rock, a garnet-muscovite-schist. This stone comes from the ancient stone quarries in Hyllestad, in Sogn og Fjordane county where the main production at that time was hand mill stones (quern stones, see VHM 1/2001, editor’s note!). The majority of the stone crosses are standing on their original locations, but some crosses have been moved, mainly to churchyards.

Here we will present five stone crosses. Two crosses, one so-called Norwegian-Celtic or Irish cross and one Anglian cross, have been raised in Eivindvik. The Irish cross stands at the gate to Gulen Church, while the Anglian cross stands at Krossteigen, placed so that on the winter solstice (21 December), the cross stands where sun meets shadow, and for a brief moment, it is touched by the sun’s
rays. They were probably not erected at the same time. These stone crosses are often associated with the conversion of the local population to Christianity at the Gulathing. Two stone crosses stand within sight of each other at Eivindvik. This is one of the places locally thought to be the site of Gulathing, see above.

At Korsund a slender stone cross nearly four metres-high stands at the southern entrance of a narrow sound. The sound is only 10 meters across here and very shallow at low tide. The cross is named St. Olav’s cross and there is a myth associated with it. A few such tall, easily visible stone crosses stand further south along the outer coast. They could also have functioned as landmarks for navigation.

At the churchyard on the fertile island of Svanøy near Florø stands a stone cross with a runic inscription. The cross is two metres high and 1,3 metre across the arms. There is a hole in the middle. A runic inscription along one side says; “Tord let raise this cross in the memory of….” The name is illegible. This is one of four stone crosses with runes found in Norway. According to tradition it was moved from Brandøy directly across the fjord.

The stone cross at Rygg just outside Sandane is approximately two meters high and 0,75 meters across the arms with a small hole in the middle. The stone cross stands on top of a natural mound between the road and the fjord. From here there is a lovely view to Gloppefjord, a fjord arm of the larger Nordfjord. This area had a rich agricultural habitation during the Early and Late Iron Age.

Grave mounds at Balestrand – King Bele’s grave?
Today two large grave mounds can be seen at Balestrand, on the northern side and halfway along the Sognefjord. The mounds are situated on top of a gentle slope close to and with an excellent view of the Sognefjord. They are 16 and 18 meters across and two meters high, restored around 1886. Until the beginning of 1800, three mounds and two long barrows were situated here. Then the mounds and long barrows were, not uncommonly, removed through agricultural activity and excavation. One female grave was identified, the rest were male graves with grave goods, for instance a fragmented Ulfberht sword.

According to local lore King Bele was buried in the largest mound. King Bele plays an important part in Frithiofs Saga (1820-25) by Esaias Tegner. This Norse romantic saga became enormously popular in Europe in the 19th century. “King Bele’s mound” was depicted by such well-known Norwegian painters as Hans Gude, Thomas Fearnley, Johannes Flintoe, all belonging to the National Romantic period. All in all this made beautiful Balestrand in Sogn a favourite place for artists and tourists to visit throughout the century.

Kaupanger – A Viking market place
Kaupanger is the only known site in Western Norway with kaupang as place name. Kaupang is an old Norse word for trading place. Kaupanger in the eastern inner half of the 200 km-long Sognefjord, lies in the junction of several fjord arms. From the head
of these fjord arms contact was established across the mountains to the large inland valleys of Eastern Norway.

Kaupanger is situated in a sheltered lagoon-shaped bay with gentle slopes well suited to agriculture. Kaupanger stave church from the second half of 1100, is the third church on the spot. Archaeological excavations revealed that the first church was erected here in last half of 1000. Kaupanger as a market place most likely goes back to the same time or even further back in the Viking period. Presence of culture layer and Late Iron Age single finds suggest that the habitation area is to be sought in the area between the church and the fjord. Archaeological excavations have revealed a larger production area, where production of iron, charcoal and tar was carried out.

From 1100 Kaupanger was denoted as an urban centre. It is mentioned in written sources when King Sverre burnt Kaupanger in revenge after the important battle at Fimreite in 1184. In 1201 King Inge was crowned here as king.

Its nickname Lusa-Kaupanger from 1100 shows that Kaupanger then was considered rather small, it then grew larger. However, it declined during Late Middle Ages.

Ytre Moa – A deserted Viking farm
This rare Viking-age farm is situated on a small terrace high above the valley floor in Øvre Årdal, in the innermost part of the Sognfjord. The farm consists of six houses and several cairns. The houses and eight cairns were excavated in the 1960s. The houses are short with an entrance at one end. The thick walls of stone and turf were lined inside with wooden panelling. The houses contained finds such as working and hunting tools, jewellery and personal equipment. The houses are interpreted as having had separate functions such as dwelling, storehouse and cattle shed as known from the later historical farms. The cairns lie in between the houses and to the east, however their excavations revealed few finds. At the edge of the terrace a woman’s grave was excavated. She was buried with her personal belongings in a stone setting shaped like a boat.

Viking-age farms are uncommon, probably due to the fact that they were situated in the same place as the later medieval and younger farmsteads. This farm was deserted probably due to damage by the spring, making further habitation on the terrace impossible.

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Traditional Norwegian longboats navigating “The Viking Way” are heading west into the setting sun on the Atlantic Ocean. Photo: Olaf T. Engvig

Ocean Navigation
In mid-June, the two longboats, with six crew members, all the equipment, safety gear and provisions are ready to go west from an island north of Bergen. 30 loaves of bread, other stores and spare clothing are secured in sea bags. Two inflatable life rafts, a complete sets of emergency equipment, Helly Hansen survival suits and an emergency beacon are the most modern gadgets we take along just in case. We did bring however, a brand new position indicator and a battery. It is placed in the following boat and coordinates would be read morning and evening to later compare with my logbook and see what the error might be. We wait for two days in rain and fog before the wind comes around to the direction we wanted it.

Saturday afternoon a breeze from the northeast picks up and we decide to get under way. A short row brings us past the tip of the headland and the course is set straight into the vast Atlantic Ocean. We are sailing with the sun about 30 degrees to port of our beam. In two hours it is more in our bow and I estimate the time to be 6 pm. The wind is nice and steady and we are doing good speed steering straight west into the sun. It is close to midsummer and by approximately 8 o’clock, Norway is falling behind far away aft and the sun is on our starboard side about 30 degrees and 10–15 degrees above the horizon, much as I had hoped for. We carry a full sail and have the head of the sail all the way forward on starboard. All the three members of the crew are sitting on the side. This is perfect sailing, which takes us into the sunset. The speed must be about 6 knots. The boats run nicely and gently, but take a few splashes of spray on starboard bow every now and then. This is the well-known signature of the low
and speedy open longboat.

The sun sets into the ocean but some cloudbanks forward obscure the view. The sky is beautiful, red and gold to the north deep blue the other way. "Froya" has a golden vane in her masthead. It is glowing like a lighthouse in the twilight. I am impressed with its signaling effect. Heavy coastal traffic of big tankers and cargo ships are gone. It is beautiful and we are approaching midnight. The moon is up aft on port, the wind is steady and the speed is good. Gunn is following very well in "Froya" while I am ahead in the "Hitra". Stig and Marit in Gunns boat are asleep and so are Knut and Inger in mine.

The wind is increasing and we are picking up speed. We are both sailing as hard as a full sail allows and I estimate the speed to be closer to 10 knots. If this is continuing, we will reach Shetland in two days. Sunrise is not registered. The sky to the north and east is overcast, but we are sailing so close-hauled as we can, trying to keep the bow up and the direction to the west. I will try to gain some of what I have lost. I feel the course is for the southern part of the islands. Suddenly the sun breaks through the clouds. It is about 5 degrees above horizon and 4 notches aft on starboard. We are still heading west. But the wind is my determining factor. I can only do my best and hope it will take us there.

It is easy to follow the raising sun. Only by using my hand and a pencil can I say when it stops and starts to descend again. Observations are done continually and I am confident I can determine mid-day with half an hour margin. The sun has started to descend and we are getting closer to Shetland by each hour as "Hitra's" bow is pointing a bit North of West. The sun is still aft of midship. This is promising. I feel confident like the old fishermen I have talked with. Knowing where to go was as natural as walking. If this excellent sailing keeps up, we will reach Shetland sometime tomorrow, we must be over half the way after 24 hours of sailing. But we are in for a change. The horizon forward to the northwest is pitch black.

Changing Winds

Bad weather is coming our way. So far we have only had a simple meal with bread and water. We have oilskins on, but I order all members to put on survival gear. Mine get a whole splash of water inside as I am putting it on. Knut also got wet. We reef down our sail to be prepared. It looks bad. But the feared squall had no wind, only a little rain. But the sea that follows is rather big. Waves of more than 6 feet build up. We are falling off to the south, but are soon back on course.

Unfortunately, the speed has dropped to only 2-3 knots.

Then the wind and the waves suddenly increase. With reefed down sail we are shooting out of waves down into a valley and up the next one. When "Froya" is in between to waves, and we are on top, we look down into the boat as if looking onto the ground from the window of a building. We are sailing close together. The next moment we can only see the very tip of their mast; the rest is all covered behind the big wave between us. This experience is unbelievable. Suddenly more than half the boat is in the open air when it shoots out over the top of the wave and gently tips forward and rushes down the surfside. This is spectacular sailing. We are doing good speed with only a small piece of the sail less than half up the mast. It is fun, and I regret I didn’t bring a film team and a watertight camera. This sailing should have been recorded. We are playing hide and seek with the big seas and feel confident we have the upper hand.

For a while I don’t care if this does not bring us where we planned to go. We must be heading more south or southwest during the evening. Big black clouds make an early and dark night. The wind is still strong and the waves are big. It is raining. The two boats have problems keeping contact. Our kerosene lantern’s small light is easily lost only a few yards away as the boats are in between waves or when the sail obscures the sight. This night was a nightmare. We lost track of each other several times. At one time we had to use flares and that helped. We finally decide to call it quits. We lower our sails and tie the boats together with a long

Knut and Inger are admiring "Hitra’s" speed during the first day of sailing straight out into the Atlantic. Photo: Olaf T. Engvig
One of all the places we could have reached is line. “Hitra” carries a sea anchor and it proves to be a perfect solution. It is no one here in the middle of nowhere, and we all go to sleep, apart from one person that keeps a relaxed watch. I get my first two to three hours of sleep in my survival suit. It has been on for much more than a day and is not particularly warm.

Dawn is gray. Everything is gray. The sea is relatively calm, but it is wet everywhere. We are all freezing cold. Teeth are clanking without stop. It is hard to get any heat back in the body. We start sailing. The wind is determining our course. It is coming from northwest as far as I can tell. We are picking up good speed but are forced south, and I tell my crew that we are east of the Orkneys at the moment. This is a new day with great difficulties making food. The bread is all soaked in salt-water spray before the butter is on. We brought 30 breads among us and are still working on the first one. Nuts, raisins and sweet biscuits and water from our oak barrel make up our daily ration. It is impossible to change to dry clothes. Spray averts that. Strange smells of trapped seawater and body odor escape from the neck of our survival suits. They are not fit as full-time bodysuits on a Viking voyage. The spare clothing might be wet as well.

The waves splash inboard as we are sailing. We have used our wooden scoop and bailed now and then since we started. That job keeps us in motion and helps keep us warm. Our fingers are swollen from holding the sheet, they have blisters and the skin has cracks and it hurts. Only by using all my willpower did I manage to set the sail this morning. With two reefs in we are still doing good speed. No sun can tell us where we are. Observation of directions is impossible. The wind is completely in charge of our sail. That is the only factor that can take us to shore and it is also the factor that controls our day on board the longboats.

**We, the Navigators**

My original plan was to start the voyage further north on the coast, but I decided to start right north of Bergen, which is shorter. With a steady wind from the east that would have worked well. But with the prevailing wind blowing from west, Stadt would have been a better choice. Shetland would have been easier to reach. But we also would have had a greater chance of bypassing the islands and continue out into the waste North Atlantic Ocean if we started far too far up the Norwegian coast. We did not want that to happen.

“Now we are heading for Scotland”, I told my crew on the third day. Our sailed distance must be more than the distance between Bergen and Shetland by now. Last night’s observations indicated that I was still further south, which I fully expected. We also experience difficulties with the “Froya” keeping up, and have had this problem all the time. That adds an extra dimension to my navigation. I know the speed of my boat, but can’t tell exactly how much time we are loosing by stopping or slowing for our follower to catch up. Sometimes it also forces us to steer more to the south than we planned to.

I finally decided that we missed all the islands. Hopefully we are heading for the Scottish Mainland. I wrote in my logbook the most possible landing place would be Aberdeen or Peterhead in Scotland. If we overshot, we would have another one or two days of sailing and could make land at Lindisfarne. We were more than exhausted already and did not want to spend more time in this miserable environment if it could be avoided. All of us lacked sleep, a good meal, exercise and rest, dry clothes and a hot bath. We were physically and psychologically exhausted.

The next day we reached land. It was Scotland. Old and majestic remains of the castle at Cruden Bay greeted us. It looked like it could have been attacked and burnt by Viking not long ago, but that was an illusion. The Peterhead Port became our landing in Scotland. That suited us fine, as we later planned to go to York. That upcoming voyage and the sail back to Norway is another story. The relief was great when we finally could get ashore. The crossing was much tougher than we expected. But we made it and we are proud that we did so without any modern navigational aid. The record for this voyage shows that we must have sailed more than 300 nautical miles from we started north of Bergen. We used 66 hours. That gives us an average speed of more than 4,5 knots, which is very good, bearing in mind that we stopped for a few hours twice. The wind was blowing almost all the time and in some periods we must have been making around 10 knots.

Of all the places we could have reached on this voyage it is interesting to note that the place where we landed is the spot on...
the British Mainland that is closest to Norway. From Cruden Bay in Scotland to Jæren in Norway, the distance is 240 nautical miles straight across. Jæren is 120 nautical miles south of Bergen. In 1914 the Norwegian aviator, Trygve Gran, was the first person in the world to cross a large stretch of water in an airplane. He flew his tiny Bleriot-monoplan from Cruden Bay across the North Sea and landed in Jæren. At that time it was considered a major leap forward in air navigation over open water. We sailed the other way. Hopefully we also made a contribution to further understanding of navigation on the open sea with only the horizon to look at in all directions.

**Lessons learned**

First of all, the new radio positioning system we had for later analysis of sailing data started malfunctioning the first evening out and broke down the next day. It gave no information. It was supposed to be working even under tough conditions. Our longboat probably became too much of a challenge. But we really didn’t need any. I predicted and anticipated my standing position every day and the recorded information we have show that I had a surprisingly good knowledge of where on the open sea we were. I later learned that one of the crew members in the “Froya” had kept a watch in his pocket without anyone knowing. He could proudly tell me that on all of the many incidents I anticipated the time of day by looking at the sun and guessing the time, I had never been more than half an hour off. Time changes as we move west. Often I could be within 5 to 10 minutes. He was truly amazed and found it hard to believe that this was possible. Two days before we reached land I entered the prediction that it would most likely be Peterhead, Scotland into the “Hitra” logbook.

This Viking expedition told us that the sun alone was the Vikings greatest guidance on the ocean for their way across. Stars are of no use on these high altitudes during summer. We could see one planet and the sun alone was the Vikings greatest guidance during summer.

The “season of light” would be the natural time for the Viking fleet sailing these harsh waters. I think the sun is wonderful to use and I believe the Vikings knew very well how to use the sun, and they used it as we did to sail the high seas. The relative darkness during the short night hours was my best indication of where we were heading. It told me if I had kept a straight course to the west or drifted off. The night became distinctly darker only one or two degrees to the south of the latitude we started, even before midsummer. It was easy to tell. Only if the Viking’s had fog for days on end did they get lost. So would we have been. Besides this, the performance of the boat will tell where you would be and when to reach land. That was crucial knowledge to the Vikings, as it was to us. According to this the Vikings measured distance at sea in days of sailing.

One crucial fact remains, and it is so obvious that it is often not taken into consideration when scholars are discussing Viking sailing and navigation. The wind and weather is often left out. No matter how good the navigation might be when it comes down to practical sailing it is the wind that controls where the ship is heading. That fact alone determined if you would hit your target. With one square sail and a low sail/rigging, like when we had reefed down, it is hard to tack and make much headway. Under optimal conditions with a full sail, our 19th Century-rigged boat can do 60 degrees to the wind. This angle gets wider as conditions gets worse.

If the wind turns around, our advice would be to do as the Vikings probably did. They went ashore and waited for the wind to be right before they set sail. If we had kept the wind we had when starting, blowing steadily out of the east, we could have made it to Shetland in two days. When it swings around, and start to blows in your nose, you are fighting a loosing battle. That is why the “Hitra” is equipped with ten long oars. We didn’t bring rowers, and our final options became Scotland or Norway. Trying to tack back and forth is not a tempting alternative. In that case we could be staying at sea for a very long time.

Some books on Vikings refer to a long list of things that helped them in finding their way, from drifting kelp and seabirds to sunstone and wooden compass-disc. We can tell from experience that to be sailing for days under the conditions we had is entirely different from working out arguments on Viking navigation at an office desk. None of the signs mentioned would have helped us any. We saw some oil installations and also ships’ traffic close to the coast but they did not yield any new information. We saw some

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**We brought copies of two gilded vanes from late Viking age to test their usefulness. They were useless as weathervanes. Photo: Olaf T. Engvig**
items and therefore should have been present like navigational instruments from later periods. It is hard to use any precision device in a boat that sits low on the water and is constantly moving and rolling. Our two replica vanes were useless and only a nuisance. They would never have been carried on Viking ships crossing the high sea as my report on the vanes conclude. I strongly believe the Vikings sailed the seas on basic training, knowledge and experience in much the same way we tried to do it. The Viking Navigator's guidance was found in his environment at sea and his knowledge before the voyage.

**How bad were the Vikings?**

Even if I have a lot of experience sailing open boats with square sail, I would never have guessed how hard it would be to undertake this voyage. After several long trips along the coasts of Northern Europe, I thought I understood how Viking sailing and navigation would be. We do not insist that all the Vikings experienced what we did when we sailed straight out into the Atlantic. We selected rather small boats and a small crew with one crewmember basically disabled the whole way due to sickness. That meant more hardship for the rest. But Vikings might also have had disabled or sick crewmembers, been cold and wet, and encountered pouring rain, high seas and heavy squalls. Even such difficulties as leaks, a damaged sail, a broken mast, fog and lack of wind could be present.

From our experience on this voyage we learned other lessons that few sources discuss.

When we ended the voyage, we were completely worn out. The only things we could think of was a big hot meal, a good warm shower, new clean clothes that were not wet and cold, and a long good rest in a soft bed or relaxing in the sun, away from the rain in a rocking boat. If Viking sailors, crossing the North Sea for more than 4 to 5 days as we did, had experienced something like what we encountered, they would have been in the same state of distress as we were. We were extremely frustrated and tired. If Vikings had sailed on and finally landed at Lindisfarne it would have meant at least a couple of more days at sea. That would have been enough to scare the monks at Holy Island so they shut their doors to this scary group of dirty men with long beards and bloodshot eyes.

If someone had shut the door in my face when we landed in Scotland I probably would have broken down the door in order to gain access to food and drink, heat and rest. Besides, it was the common Viking law to attend to people that had been walking the mountains or sailed the sea. The payback would come later. The Viking’s “Hvamal” states that you shall provide food and shelter to travelers that are cold and hungry:

The Saxon annals that record the attack on Lindisfarne has only described how bad the intruders had behaved. If you only listen to one side of the story the verdict might not only be biased, it could be entirely wrong. History has shown over and again that the church is not always the Good Samaritan. I believe that the attack on Lindisfarne could have been an unhappy episode of misunderstanding and bad judgment that grew into hostility among the Easterners and made the Vikings seek revenge. The result proved to be something quite different from what was the intention. It became the Viking age and changed the history forever. The episode at Lindisfarne made the Viking's understand that this was a new way to swift and tremendous wealth. This part of history is not very well investigated. Perhaps our interpretation is not so good either.

Even today the “bad boys” are those who usually hit the headline news or today’s papers. More than 90% of the population never makes it to the spotlight. We have no reason to believe that it was different in the Viking age. The Saga tells of a limited band that did things worth mentioning.

We, the crew of the “Hitra” and “Froya” will ask for more analysis of the coming of the Viking movement, taking Norse mythology, Viking customs and Viking law into account. Also, the story of “The Nice Viking” that settled abroad should be emphasized as they have done at Jorvik Viking Center in York. As for the navigational aspects of Viking sailing, I am convinced that the Vikings sailed their boats on the North Atlantic Ocean basically by the experience and knowledge the Viking navigator kept inside his head. He would use what he had seen and learned since he started navigating as a child. They didn’t need a lot of remedies to find their way, because they “just knew it”, like people today know how to drive a car on highways, find the right off-ramp and bypass obstacles and signs on the long way home. If you have learned it by heart you don’t need a map or a compass.

**About the author:**

Olaf T. Engvig grew up in Rissa, Norway where he was trained in navigation and sailing as a young boy. He went to sea and holds a deck officers license. He also has a Cand Philol degree in maritime history from the University of Oslo. He is an experienced square sailer and a writer with several books on maritime topics. At present he lives in Burbank and is working on the emigration from Scandinavia to man the Pacific Coast Steam Schooners.

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Brewing up a Storm

BY MICHAEL CUNNINGHAM

To the Skaldic poets of medieval Scandinavia the pouring out of Ódinn’s mead was realised through the expressions woven within their compositions and the resultant performances garbed in diction and metre. Certainly these pourers of Ódinn’s mead often alluded to its lore and gift in verse but what of the mead that flowed from the drinking horns of Midgardr, that which filled the great halls with the clamour of men. What of its properties...

One property employed during the brewing of ale in the Viking Age is presently commanding a lot of interest from the “Mol...
Obituary

Helge Ingstad proved Vikings sailed to America

BY OLAF T. ENGVIK

Helge M. Ingstad, the world-famous outdoorsman, scholar, explorer, author and governor who found a Viking settlement on the great northern peninsula of Newfoundland and proved that the Vikings came to America 500 years before Columbus, passed away in Oslo on Thursday, March 29, 2001. He was 101 years old. Helge Marcus Ingstad was born in the village of Meråker close to the Swedish border of central Norway on December 30, 1899 and became one of the very few persons who lived in three centuries and saw the change of a millennium.

Helge Ingstad was an outdoorsman from early childhood, raised in a family with much interest in nature and cultural history. He graduated from law school in 1922, and established himself as a lawyer in Levanger. After a few years he decided to do what many young men in Norway did in those days. He sold his law practice and went to America. Ingstad became a trapper in Arctic Canada. For four years he stayed in the wilderness, hunting, fishing and writing, his only close company being his dogs.

Back in Norway he became the governor (sysselmann) of East Greenland, then “occupied” by Norway. The international tribunal in Den Haag rejected Norway’s ancient claim on the island and Ingstad was called home. He was then appointed governor of Svalbard, where one of his tasks was dog-sledging and visiting the many trappers on different locations throughout the islands. In those days Svalbard was shut off from the rest of the world for more than six months a year. In the latter part of the 1930s Helge Ingstad studied the Apaches in Arizona and searched for a lost Indian tribe in the Sierra Madre Mountains of Mexico. Towards the end of World War II he served in the liberation of Northern Norway. In 1950 he went to live with the Nunamtiut in Alaska, studying their life and recording their music.

Early on he established himself as a best-selling writer. His first book, “Pelçejerliv” from 1931 describes his life as a trapper in Canada. It became a sensational hit and is today one of the classic Norwegian books of last century. He met young and lovely Anne-Stine Moe and they married just before the war. She graduated with a degree in archaeology and together they formed a magnificent team for arctic historical research.

In 1953 they went to West Greenland to study the old ruins of the Viking settlement there. Eirik the Red and the Greenland Saga’s westward voyages were the foci of Helge Ingstad’s interest, while Anne-Stine established herself as a vivid field archaeologist. Helge became more and more determined to try to find “Leifsboder” in “Vinland det Gode”, a place described in the Saga. Some believed that Vinland was fiction; others said that – if Vinland and Leifsboeder existed – it would be like searching for a needle in a haystack.

In 1960 Helge Ingstad used the rescue cutter “Halten” to embark on a voyage that took him to Markland in Labrador. He even found Vonderstrand, a distinct and very long beach. But where was Vinland? Resisting conventional thought that Vinland was connected to wild grapes mentioned in the Saga and supposedly being further to the south where grapes would grow, he instead started to suspect northern Newfoundland to be the right area. He knew that words
from Viking time Norway ending with -vin, like Bjorgvin and Granvin, meant green pastures, “grassland” or eng, which is meadow in Norwegian. “Meadowland” could be the Vinland of the Saga, and a land Viking explorers were looking for. Open, uninhabited areas just like in Greenland would be a nice site for a stopover and stock up on items and supplies hard to find back home.

Ingstad’s intuition led him to the small fishing village of L’Anse aux Meadows on the northern tip of Newfoundland where he met George Decker, whose family had lived there for generations. Decker showed Ingstad some old ruins believed to be remains of an ancient native settlement. When Ingstad saw the sights, it reminded him of the old farms he had studied in Greenland. Everything looked similar, and he figured this could well be the location he was looking for.

His wife was called on to prove his theory by an archaeological dig, and the Canadian authorities gave the necessary permissions. Over the next seven years the site by Black Duck Brook was excavated under the leadership of Anne-Stine Ingstad. In 1964 a Norse spindle-whorl was the first of a series of excavated artifacts, including a classic Viking ring-pin, that all gave solid proof that this was, indeed, an old Viking settlement. The site showed collection of bog iron ore with furnace for iron making, as well as repairs of boats with iron rivets done in a way only the Vikings would do it. Workshops and other houses were unearthed. The main building was an impressive 70 feet long and 56 feet wide structure. At its peak this village with its own bloomery must have been a strange and impressive sight to any visiting Stone Age native.

It is believed that as many as 70-90 persons, males and females, have lived in the settlement over a period of 30 years, and that it was inhabited throughout the year. Butternuts from New Brunswick or further away tell that the Vikings sailed south along the coast from this station and that the Saga’s Vinland would be land to the south of Labrador.

It is quite amazing that Helge Ingstad actually found Norse settlement on Newfoundland. He was not an archaeologist by training. It tells us that his great experience, his systematic research and clever approach to the topic gave him the best possible help in locating the area. The teamwork between him as an expedition leader and his wife as a professional archaeologist was the perfect match. Together they changed the history of the New World and ended centuries of disputes and wondering where the legendary Viking seafarers had gone. They changed fiction into facts and proved that these were houses in which the first Europeans that came to America lived.

Helge Ingstad continued writing all his life. His production is impressive. In “Westward to Vinland”, published in 1969, he tells of the voyage on R/S “Halten” and describes how he found the Viking sites. This grand discovery, that the Vikings had been the first white men to set foot on American soil, didn’t come without a bitter rejection and much suspicion from scholars that should have been the first to embrace the results. The Ingstads experienced gossip and meaningless critique particularly from Scandinavia with Denmark leading on. The couple was even accused of faking unearthed items from the location. These attacks on the excavation devastated Anne-Stine. It took time before international scholars came along. But little by little the academic world gave approval. Radiocarbon analysis dated objects from the site to be from between 890 and 1090 AD. They belong in the Viking Age and the time of Leif Eiriksson, Thorvald and Thorfinn Karlsveine and all their Norse contemporary according to written records.

My young daughter Gunn and I were specially invited to Anne-Stine Ingstad’s doctoral dissertation at the University of Oslo’s “Garde Festsal” when she defended her doctoral work on the excavation of the sites at L’Anse aux Meadows. For us it was a final proof that the Ingstads’ years of hard work after the first discovery was given the credit it deserved. We presumed that this would be a classic reference book for all that want to see tangible proof of Norse expansion westward to America during the Viking Age.

Today L’Anse aux Meadows remains the only documented Viking Age settlement in North America. In 1978 it was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is an important recognition of our Viking Heritage, in that our seafaring ancestors sailed all the way from Norway to Greenland and America in open boats, across some of the most hostile and coldest waters in the world. After they landed, they even developed an “industry” by producing iron and establishing a shipyard with repair facilities at the location by Black Duck Brook in Newfoundland.

The King of Norway knighted Anne-Stine Ingstad to Commander of the Order of St. Olav. Helge Ingstad was knighted with the Grand Cross of the same order. He was a Norwegian laureate from 1970, and a recipient of numerous honorary doctoral degrees and awards from Norway and abroad. Anne-Stine died in 1998, 80 years old.

Last year, one hundred years old, Helge Ingstad traveled to Washington DC as a guest of honor for the opening of the three million dollar exhibition “Vikings: The North Atlantic Saga” at the Smithsonian’s National Museum. The exposition will visit America during 2001 and 2002. In January of this year Helge Ingstad was awarded with a monument in bronze of Anne-Stine and himself outside the Viking Ship Museum at Bygdøy in Oslo. His Majesty King Harald unveiled it with Helge Ingstad present. For the 101-year-old explorer this became his final recognition.

Helge Ingstad was given a grand funeral
The Viking Project in Ale County continues...

**By Bodil Petersson**

The Viking project in Ale county has been awarded a contribution from EFS-council to start a labour market course in prehistoric building technology in autumn 2001. The course is aimed specifically at unemployed culture workers, immigrants, and construction workers. The participants will receive education in building technology, history, language, drama and more. The course consists of building a Viking-age farmstead like one you could have seen in the year 900, contemporary with the Åskekärr ship – the Viking ship found in the village Åskekärr in Ale county in 1933, and which is on display nowadays at the Göteborg City Museum.

The blue prints of a Viking hall, barn, ceremonial building, and craft house have been drawn up in co-operation with Jochen Komber, an archaeologist at the museum in Stavanger. Archaeologists and timbermen will also design the interior of the house together with the participants.

EFS-council awards the contribution for one year at a time and the Viking Project in Ale County has received 2.5 million SEK for the first year. The employment office in Ale County, will contribute an additional 2.4 million SEK.

Besides 20 students there will be a project leader, timbermen, teachers, a project secretary, a drama teacher and foreman attached to the project. Part of the project is to study continued research concerning the Göta älv valley in the Viking Age.

For more information contact project leader Thomas Sundsmyr, +46 (0)303-33 03 43 or the project office +46 (0)303-33 09 35.

**Footnote:** The Viking Project in Ale County was started in 1999 by the Educational and Cultural committee in Ale county and is a project within North Sea Viking Legacy. Besides preparation of the Viking Age Farmstead project, a nature- and culture path with signs informing about the Viking Age and even fossils of nature and animals in the area has been made during the project. Within the partial project, research is producing a publication about the Göta älv valley during the Viking Age and a database is under construction.

Plans are to build a Viking hall in Ale county. The era is the 10th century, i.e. the same time as the Viking-age ship that was found in Åskekärr, Ale county.

The British

**By Preben Ormen, Chairperson BC Viking Ship Project**

The British Columbia Viking Ship Project (BCVSP) is building a fully functional Viking ship replica to be launched July 7, 2001 at the Vancouver Maritime Museum, Canada. BCVSP is formally organized under the Scandinavian Community Cultural Centre as part of the Norwegian House Society, but is open to participation from all Scandinavian groups, indeed anyone who is interested in Viking ships, Vikings or Scandinavian culture and heritage in general.

Officially, field work started June 26, 2000 when we began clearing the ground for our 24 by 64 foot boat shed. We have worked virtually every Saturday since that time. Recently we introduced a Sunday work party as well.

**Our objectives**

We are building a 40 foot, or half size, replica of the Gokstad Ship, a Viking ship built around 890 AD and found in a burial mound outside of Tønsberg, Norway. The Gokstad ship is currently on display in the Viking Ship Museum in Oslo. The Gokstad ship was selected as the model because it is one of the most famous Viking ships found to date. In addition, detailed drawings are available and over the years many scale copies have been built in several countries.

**About our approach**

Some replica building projects have recreated the authentic building methods and techniques right down to hand splitting logs, recreating tools and hand forging soft iron boat rivets. For example, a very active group has formed around the Roskilde museum in Denmark. In fact, of the 40 or so replicas we have identified, Denmark has more active Viking ships than any other nation.

Our objective is to capture the spirit of these old ships and make it possible for people to experience what it was like to sail and row in a Viking ship.

We are following the original construction details and fitting of parts, but are allowing ourselves the use of modern tools for shaping and dressing the wood.

Even with modern tools, a Viking ship is essentially a manual process requiring time and considerable skills for lofting of plans, hand fitting of strakes, frames and other parts, not to mention the riveting. Thus, our project will still preserve some of the most important aspects of the ship building; the coming together of people to build something they care about.

Stoltenberg gave a speech and Norwegian TV personality Erik Bye read Helge Ingstad’s own “Farwell Poem”, Bishop Gunnar Stålsett and many other dignitaries joined with Ingstad’s closest family in this final and touching goodbye to a great man.

Helge Ingstad had an amazing life. Most of all, he showed us that the Vikings’ adventurous spirit is still alive in Norway after a thousand years.

**Footnote:** +46 (0)303-33 09 35.
Columbia Viking Ship Project

More than just hull construction
The BC Viking Ship Project emphasizes shipbuilding as a community event. We want to use the shipbuilding as a catalyst for other events and activities. For this reason we have project groups for hull construction; sail, mast and rigging; oars and shields; carving; costume making; fundraising and promotion.

We have put on Viking-themed events and are launching a naming contest for the ship. The team has been steadily growing and we have a lot of fun in the process. The project has its own Internet web pages hosted by Preben Ormen on his site http://www.digitalnorseman.com

About Viking Ship construction
The Viking ships were flexible and moved with the water. The hull planking was done with a technique known as clinker building where the planks, or strakes, overlapped slightly and were held together, or fastened, with rivets. The ship was built by laying the keel with stern and stern posts fitted. Then the planking was laid up.

To control the tension and shape of the hull as the strakes were laid up, the hull was weighted down with rocks piled on the inside. Floors, knees and beams (known as “bites”) were fitted later.

The clinker building technique has survived from at least as early as 350 AD, the year the Danish Nydam boat was built. The Nydam boat is the earliest known clinker built boat found to date. In Scandinavia, clinker built vessels have been in uninterrupted use right up until our present day. A rekindled interest in traditional vessels has actually revived the boat building community in many countries.

Our project is thus a continuation of this trend and will contribute to the preservation of this ageless ship building technique.

The project team
While clinker building is not an entirely lost art, it is clear that the success of our project is vitally dependent upon access to one or more skilled boat builders familiar with this technique.

We are extremely fortunate to have several professional boat builders on our team who all have a life long involvement with all aspects of boat building. The building activities are under the direct supervision of Kris Frostad, a well known BC boat builder with 170–180 boats to his credit. Many of the boat builders on our team learnt their craft in Norway at a time when clinker built rowing boats were still commonly in use for local fishing and other activities.

Other team members have strong maritime links, but we are also bringing together many people from all walks of life who enjoy being involved with a fascinating project such as this.

The primary project management and administrative duties have been assumed by chair person Preben Ormen, a management consultant and professional project manager; vice chair Tom Kottmeier, a Marian Toft, the past President of the Norwegian House Society and current President of the Scandinavian community Cultural Centre.

The majestic stern view with all strakes in place. Photo: Preben Ormen

The living ship
The building phase of this project is of course very exiting to most anyone who hears about it. However, the ship has a life after the construction is finished, often a long one. The oldest actively sailing replica today is the Swedish “Viking Plym” which was built in 1912.

We are now preparing the custodial framework for our Viking ship as part of the project similar to the very successful Danish, Norwegian and Swedish Viking ship associations looking after their many replicas. This new organization will be responsible for the maintenance and operation of the Viking ship. An ongoing fundraising program will be put in place to provide for the maintenance and operating expenses.

We see the ship as playing an important role in the continuing promotion of Scandinavian Culture and Heritage. We are also exploring tie-ins with other organizations such as the Vancouver Maritime Museum who is very supportive. The Museum will be host to a traveling Viking Exhibit during the summer of 2001 and our project has committed to support the launch of the event by supplying 40 costumed Vikings. Some of our members are going to be awfully busy with needle and thread over the next few months!

The budget
While a clinker built Viking ship is relatively inexpensive to build for a vessel its size, we will still need to procure the necessities. Our current working budget is CAD $61,400.

We expect to raise the funding from donations of materials and services, from fundraising efforts such as raffles and special events, from donations by individuals and organizations in or close to the Scandinavian Community and from such grant applications as we can make to e.g. provincial or other organizations.

At the time of this writing, the biggest out of pocket expense so far has been the 21/2 inch #8 copper rivets and roves. We secured boat lumber by donation with an approximate value of $7,000 and numerous donations from individuals and local Scandinavian cultural organizations. Lumber for spars and rudder was recently donated, as well. Most of the material for the boat shed was donated or bought from local recyclers. To keep the finances healthy, we have arranged a number fund raising events and have a great looking T-shirt for sale with our own logo. The logo was designed by Olaf Oden, our resident Viking artist. Our bank balance is sufficient right now to cover the costs of sails and rigging, our next big ticket items.

Where we are now
On Sunday September 10, 2000 we held a keel raising ceremony. This was the first real milestone of the project. On Saturday, April 14, we put in the last strake on the hull. We have now completed the internal frames and knees and removed all the station molds. We have sized the spars, sail and rigging and determined the sail cloth and rope dimensions.

Several oars have been completed and we have the parts ready for assembly of about 16 shields.

Our next big event is a fund raiser on May 25 when we are planning to serve food made with Viking recipes and have a lot of people in costume. We are confident that we will be ready to launch as planned on July 7 of this year.

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Looking back – and ahead

BY GEIR SØR-REIME, PROJECT MANAGER NORTH SEA VIKING LEGACY

The North Sea Viking Legacy project is approaching its conclusion. Now it is time to look back—and ahead.

The project recently arranged its final seminar, on cultural heritage and tourism in Gothenburg 19-22 April. NSVL was also co-organiser of a seminar on spatial planning and cultural heritage arranged by the Kings of the North Sea project in Newcastle 29-31 March.

Gothenburg seminar

The seminar in Gothenburg was co-organised with BALDER, an Interreg IIC Baltic Sea Region project, which includes the Via Viking sub-project. There has been a close co-operation between NSVL and Via Viking throughout the project period, with mutual board representation.

The seminar included papers from Mr Eugenio Yunis, Director of Sustainable Development of Tourism at the World Tourism Organisation in Madrid. He gave a report on the recent study undertaken jointly by WTO and ICOMOS on tourism and world heritage sites. The report includes a number of recommendations and constitutes a major step towards more sustainable destination developments.

Mr Stephen Harrison, Director of Manx National Heritage then gave a paper on the “Story of Mann”, the integrated approach to cultural heritage presentation on the Isle of Man.

Mrs Inger Erdtsson giving a paper on the interaction between cultural heritage preservation followed him; presentation and use based on the experience from Gunnebo Castle.

Mr Michael Loveday, Director of Spatial Planning at Norwich City Council, who gave a paper on how the cultural heritage of Norwich has been integrated into modern city planning followed them.

These papers were followed by a number of workshops discussing the strengthening of local identity and social inclusion, strategies for local cultural heritage and sustainable destination development.

Later, the results of the North Sea Viking Legacy project and the BALDER project were presented, along with plans for future developments of the two projects.

Mrs Cecilia Nilsson from Västra Götaland region, a Swedish member of the group preparing the new Interreg IIIB North Sea Region programme then gave an introduction to this new and exciting programme.

In addition to the work sessions, the seminar also included a full-day excursion to various cultural tourism destinations in the area north of Gothenburg, including the new Nordic Watercolour Museum in Skärhamn on the island of Tjörn, the new Rock Art Museum in the World Heritage Area of rock art in Northern Bohuslän, and the Innovatum industrial museum and science centre in Trollhättan.

Destination Viking, first preparatory meeting

Probably more important was the first preparatory meeting of the Destination Viking project. At this stage, quite some time was devoted to a thorough look into possible funding sources, like Interreg IIIB and IIIC, Culture 2000 and similar programmes.

There seems to be general agreement about the planned joint activities to be included in the new Destination Viking project, whereas much work remains to be done concerning partner activities. It is very important that projects wanting to participate find other partners to share in the development of site development activities.

It was agreed that a paper prepared by Mr Jan Stobbe of the Dutch Viking Foundation should be the base of activity development. The themes included here are:

- people (the multicultural society, people connected in ancient and modern times)
- ports (tradition and renewal of old
networks, various waters and water-related activities
• products (traditional ones, development of new, regional ones based on tradition)
• powers (from petty kingdoms to a united Europe; continuity and discontinuity throughout the times; integration)

No doubt the maritime aspect of the Vikings will be a major element in the new development.

Plans are now to present the new ideas at the Interreg directoria in Aalborg in June, and at other occasions that may arise. We will also try and organise national meetings for potential partners to further elaborate the ideas.

Newcastle seminar
The North Sea Viking Legacy project was also a co-organiser of the seminar on spatial planning and cultural heritage organised by the Tyne and Wear Museums on behalf of the Kings of the North Sea project. This project organised a travelling exhibition focusing on North Sea history AD 200-800 AD. The exhibition is currently on show in Esbjerg, as its final destination.

A number of interesting themes were discussed at the conference. A kind of conference programme states that:

The historical environment is important
• as a cultural asset in its own right
• as an educational resource
• in developing a sense of identity and pride of place
• as a means of recognising cultural diversity and yet drawing communities together in common action
• as a tool for regeneration and as an economic driving force.

Among the points discussed was that archaeology should be seen as an integral part of the planning process: planners and archaeologists should be working together with specialists from other disciplines. Here reference was also made to the Valetta Convention.

It was also discussed how we could get the public more involved in archaeology and cultural heritage. One conclusion was that public access should be built into all aspects of spatial planning and archaeology.

It is evident from research that historical continuity is important to people. Cultural heritage must remain (in one way or another) in any given locality, notwithstanding any development that takes place. In this context, the importance of raising awareness of the value of the historical landscape was also stressed.

A full report with all papers will be published.

Joining the Destination Viking
Any partners interesting in joining the Destination Viking project (details of planned joint activities were published in Viking Heritage Magazine 4/2000), should not hesitate in contacting me at gs@gfk.rogaland-f.kommune.no

Symposium in September at Birka, Sweden
War and conflicts in transition periods – From the heroic warriors of the Bronze Age to the medieval mercenaries.

A conference will be held on the island of Björkö, in the vicinity of Stockholm, September 13–16, 2001. The subjects of the conference are the development of the military organisation and defence systems in Northern Europe, with a focus on the late Iron Age and early Middle Ages.

The conference is organised within the research project Hillforts and fortifications in central Sweden 400–1100 AD, managed by Lena Holmquist Olausson, University of Stockholm. She and her staff have excavated a Viking-age military site on Birka during recent years.

Researchers and specialists from different disciplines will hold lectures about their different studies on the subject of the conference.

Discussion will focus on three main themes:

• The development of military organisation, weaponry and strategy from an economic, social and technological perspective.

• Cognitive and mental aspects of the martial society.

• The martial society, warfare as world conception and “primus motor” for development of society.

For further information and how to participate, please contact:
Lena Holmquist Olausson
and Michael Olausson
michael.olausson@telia.com
On June 16th a completely new permanent exhibition about the Viking Age will be opened at the Museum of National Antiquities in Stockholm, Sweden. The exhibition covers more than 900 m² and more than 4,000 original objects. It is the largest exhibition ever shown of the museum’s collection of objects from the Viking Age.

Much work has been done creating a milieu that ensures the objects’ long-term continued existence. The aim has been that the artefacts will be kept just as safe in the showcases as they were earlier in the museum’s storerooms, while, at the same time, they will be accessible to a big audience.

The form of the exhibition

Naturally, the artefacts’ irreplaceable historical and scholarly worth has accorded them a central position in the exhibition. Here only original artefacts are shown, and, instead of placing the objects in constructed milieus as has been done in many exhibits during latter years, we have chosen to expose them in a more traditional way, as specific artefacts in their showcases.

The knowledge the exhibition wishes to mediate is based on interpretations and assumptions of the archaeological research. But only in exceptional cases are these of the nature that they can be the basis of some entirely reliable statements. Therefore we have chosen to give the exhibition an abstract, aesthetic character, with lots of room for the visitor’s own experiences and interpretations. But we have also attempted to show connected finds when possible, in order to get as close to the archaeological original sources as possible.

The idea has been to emphasise that the artefacts shown are taken out of their original context, and represent a culture we are never able to recreate or reach a complete knowledge of. However they should naturally be the basis of a continued research and new interpretations, regardless of how they are exposed in the exhibition.

The contents of the exhibition

However to reach a public an exhibition must have a story.

In our exhibition the story is about how the power was manifested during the period we describe, and about the changes and quality of the transitional stage that characterise the Viking Age. Therefore the story circulates around three main themes, with the headings: “Power and sovereignty”, “The farm and the town” respectively “Heathenism and Christianity”. Around these three themes we group the artefacts in thirteen subsections, where text, maps and images create a context that can be changed in time with future new facts or interpretations.

In the room we have also reserved space for shorter thematic exhibitions planned in co-operation with other museums. The idea is to try to reflect current questions at issue within archaeological research around
New technology
Together with Ericsson Radio Systems and Birka Energy we are also working on finding new ways to utilise digital technology and wireless communication. The ambition is to create possibilities for the individual visitor to choose how he or she will experience the exhibition and stimulate curiosity and fantasy. On the long term the aim is to create “the museum without walls”, making large parts of the exhibition together with the collections and competence of the museum available without limits of time and space.

As a first step in this process the museum has produced, in collaboration with Birka Energy, an interactive presentation about the Viking-age town of Birka on a CD-rom, which will be distributed to all schools in Sweden during the autumn.

In connection with the opening of the exhibition, a new digital guide will be presented, based on wireless technology and developed in co-operation between Ericsson and the National Museum of Antiquities, to be evaluated in relation to what we hope will be a large audience.

For further information:
www.historiska.se

About the author:
Ph.Dr. Leif Jonsson has been the project leader of the exhibition.

Fröjel Discovery Programme, Sweden

The fourth year’s excavations at the Viking-age port of trade at Fröjel parish, Gotland, began in May. This year the season will be the longest so far. May began with a field course for students in archaeology from Gotland University College. On June 25 a course for amateurs begins and then on July 15 the international field course with participants from all over the world starts. Finally, in August students from Copenhagen University will end this year’s excavation season.

This year we have archaeology and anthropology students from the USA in the west to India in the east. Most of the international participants have stumbled upon the excavations at Fröjel through our homepage on the Internet (http://frojel.hgo.se). The coverage we get through the Net is wide, so we do not need to put much effort into other means of publicity.

The principal aim of the excavation this year is to gain more knowledge about changes in the settlement pattern over time at the former harbour and trading place. Over the years we have found both cemeteries and remains of houses. Fröjel had its heyday the 11th and 12th centuries, before Visby, the main town on the island of Gotland nowadays, became the most important shipping port in the 13th century. Then the smaller ports of trade along the Gotlandic coast disappeared and the town of Visby took over their political and economical role.

The public has the opportunity to follow guided tours through the excavation area. The visitors receive a detailed insight into archaeology and its methods. We have noticed that the public interest for excavations and archaeology has increased over the past years. People really want to see archaeology in action.

There are guided tours three times a day from July 2nd until August 9th (at 10 a.m., 1 p.m. and 3 p.m.). When necessary they are guided in English. The tour begins at the old school building, west of the church in Fröjel parish. You can also visit the excavation as a group.

For information and booking, please call or send a message to research assistant Alexander Andreff +46 (0) 498 299881, +46 (0) 70 6613305, alexander.andreeff@hgo.se
http://frojel.hgo.se

NEW SILVER HOARD FOUND IN HOLLAND

Yet another silver hoard has been found at Westerklijf in Wieringen in the province of North Holland.

In 1996 and 1999 two hoards of silver Arabic and Carolingian coins, hack silver and various items of silver jewellery were found. In the middle of March 2001, a third hoard was discovered. This one has not yet been researched, but the preliminary impression is that it can be dated to ca. 840–875 AD. It contains 13 or so Carolingian coins, including one or two rare types (denaro scoldato) amongst the more common Dorestad types, hack silver, 25 or so dirhems and a rare silver coin (fibula) that is worn and has a portrait of an emperor, probably Louis the Pius.

The hoard has been purchased by the municipality of Wieringen, and will be on display in due course.

The Vårby hoard. Copyright: The Museum of National Antiquities, Stockholm
Viking Art by Olaf Oden on exhibition in Canada

Olaf Oden is a Swedish born artist who bases his inspiration on one of the most remarkable historical findings from the Viking Age, the Gotlandic picture stones.

A Baltic island full of Viking treasures, Gotland lies 90 kilometers East from mainland Sweden. “This stone carving is very unique”, Olaf adds. “Many of this art creations cannot be seen in any other parts of the world, not even in the rest of Scandinavia.”

Gotland was a trade center during the Viking Age, but despite the trade and circulation of people on the island, the Gotlandic style of stone carvings remained local. This people didn’t have much wood and started to create carvings in stone slabs instead of the dominating woodcarvings. These carved stones were erected in cemeteries and by roads as memorial monuments for religious purposes. They reflect the different believe systems that people in this island went through from 400 AD to 1100 AD.

The art images on these stones are not as detailed and elaborate as other Viking art creations of the time, but it is a more expressive work that shows free expressions of art by independent artists. Olaf suggests that: “if you see one of these stone carvings today the image always stays in your mind and little by little the magic of it will reveal its meaning to you.”

Most of these stones are now seen at museums in Visby, the island’s main city, and in Stockholm, some of them still can be seen at their place of origin or at one of Gotland’s many beautiful churches.

This summer Olaf will exhibit 60 paintings of his 85-piece collection at the Nordic Heritage Museum located at 3014 NW 67th St. Seattle, WA 98117-6215, Canada.

Phone (206) 789-5707
Website: www.nordicmuseum.com

The exhibition will take place from August 5th to September 8th, 2001.

Some of Olaf’s work will also be at the Vancouver Maritime Museum, from June 14th till October 7th, 2001, where they have a 40-foot (half-size) working replica of the famous Viking ship known as the Gokstad ship at their moorage. The museum will have a hands-on children Viking exhibition along with display of Viking art.

For further information please call the Vancouver Maritime Museum in British Columbia, Canada at: (604) 257-8300 or visit their website: www.vmm.bc.ca/exhibits.htm

Celeste Wiberg
Viking Events in the Summer of 2001

June

Frederikssund Viking Festival, Denmark
June 22–July 8
The festival features an open-air play performed by 250 “Vikings”, followed by a traditional banquet set in a recreated Valhalla. Every evening except Mondays. Tel. +45 47 31 06 85

Lindholm Høje Viking Market, Denmark
June 23–24
Each summer a Viking Market is held here and, in addition to this, an outdoor Viking play is performed June 19–July 1. Tel. +45 98 17 55 22 http://www.vikinger.dk http://wikinget.net/d/Lindholm/index.htm

The Great Viking Market at Foteviken, Sweden • June 29–July 1
Three days of feasts, competitions, performances, lots of craftsmen and exciting goods. Tel. +46 40 456840 http://www.fotoviken.se

Jeju Viking Spill, Jeju, Denmark
June 29–July 15
In Jeju, a Viking play has been performed every summer for 25 years, this year’s play is called Krakas Havn. A Viking Market is also held here June 30–July 1. Tel. +45 74 55 21 10 http://www.jeulsvikingspil.dk/

July

The Market “A Wick Alive”, Viken – Kaupsang, Norway • July 4–8
An extensive Viking market and gathering of Viking ships, open to the public, July 6–8. On the days prior to the market, internal activities and seminars, etc. will be arranged. Tel. +47 99 58 60 06

Viking Days Festival at the Nordic Heritage Museum, Seattle, Washington
July 7–8
Tel. (206) 789-5707 MarianneF@nordicmuseum.com

“Vikings’ Europe, 793-1066”, Normandy, France • July 6–15
This Viking Festival of EU, which takes place every two years, has chosen the theme of “Vikings’ Europe” this year, with expected participation of 350 members of historical re-enactment groups from all over Northern Europe, Normandy included. http://www.multimania.com/hagdik/Eu-Annoville2001.html#Eu

Viking Market at Trelleborg, Denmark
July 7–15
The market is one of the many Viking activities organised for visitors during the year. Tel. +45 58 54 95 06

Viking Market in Wolin, Poland
July 13–15
About 250 Vikings from eight countries will participate at this great market. http://www.wolin.pl/

Viking Market at Bronzeplassen, near Kristiansand, Norway • July 13–15
Tel. +47 37 27 41 69 http://www.bronzeplassen.no/

Viking activities at Ladsbyklipseum, Denmark • July 15th
See how the Vikings lived: cooking, handicrafts and more. ladmus@post.tele.dk

Viking Festival in Annoville, Normandy, France • July 16–22

Midsummer festival with a Viking village, Vancouver, BC Canada • June 22–24
The BCVSP Viking ship replica will be on display at this festival. (There is an article about BCVSP in this issue of Viking Heritage Magazine.) http://www.digitalnorseman.com

Hildver Viking Market, Åland, Finland
July 27–28
For the third time a large Viking Market will be held. Here you can experience the enjoyable events and traditions of the Viking Age. Crafts, food, music, plays, etc. johanna.enberg@turist.aland.fi http://www.goaland.net

The Viking Market “Borg i Viken”, Sarpsborg, Norway • July 28–29
Tel. +47 69 28 58 38

Viking Moot, Mosegaard Prehistoric Museum, Denmark • July 28–29
Rich in traditions, this Viking market attracts 60,000 annually. Tel. +45 89 42 11 00 http://www.moesmus.dk

The Story of Saint Olav, Stiklestad, Norway • July 25–29
A historic play dedicated to St Olav and the introduction of Christianity to Norway is performed here every year. Tel. +47 74 07 31 00

August

Hombore Thing, Sweden • August 3–5
This event will take the spectators back in time to the Viking Age. Play and market. Tel. +46 525 345 23, +46 525 204 00 http://msnhompages.talkcity.com/LaGraNgel/midviks4vshbt.html

The Viking Festival in Catoira, Spain
August 5

Viking Market at Ladbyklipseum, Denmark • August 11–12
A Viking Market is one of this summer’s events at the museum. Tel. +47 65 32 16 67 http://www.vikinger.dk/dansk/ladby.html

Largs Viking Festival, Scotland
End of August – beginning of September
Festival favourites include the authentic Viking village, the Battle of Largs re-enactment, traditional boat burning ceremony and a spectacular fireworks finale. Concerts and craft fair are other features of this festival. Tel. +44 01 294 324482 http://www.vikingar.co.uk

http://viking.hgo.se
VIKING HERITAGE
A network for Viking-related Knowledge

The objectives of the network are:

- To develop and maintain the European Institute of Cultural 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.

Viking Heritage acts as a monitoring and advisory body on all issues relating to an enhanced understanding of the Viking history.

In promoting these aims, VIKING HERITAGE provides an information service with VIKING HERITAGE SERVER & DATABASE (http://viking.hgo.se) in co-operation with NORTH SEA VIKING LEGACY.

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