Editorial

At the end of a year it is time for retrospection but also for looking ahead. Here at Viking Heritage we can see that this year has brought many, many new readers to the magazine.

There are, I think, two reasons for this. Of course the first is the fine quality of the articles written by our excellent authors. Thanks to all of you who have contributed to the magazine, in a small and/or big way, during the year! Secondly we have many loyal, enthusiastic readers helping us to spread out information about the magazine, thanks to everybody! All your assistance is essential to keep the magazine going. And for the coming year we hope the fruitful co-operation of all kinds will continue to make as good a magazine worth reading as possible!

Every year, archaeological investigations bring forth new knowledge about the Viking Age. This time we proudly present the latest news from excavations in Uppåkra, southern Sweden, where the rare find of a ceremonial building has been made. Certainly this find will add new angles of approach to the pre-Christian traditions of the Nordic countries.

We are also happy to present an article that discusses the origins of imaginary Vikings, for example the question of horns on the Viking helmets.

As usual you will find many other interesting articles and you will see that the dynamic era of the Viking Age still attracts people from various cultural backgrounds and with different approaches to the Viking theme.

Viking Heritage wishes you all around the world a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! And of course: Pleasant reading!

Marita E Ekman
Editor

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Words of Wisdom

“A wayfarer should not walk unarmed
But have his weapons to hand
He knows not when he may need a spear
Or what menace meet on the road”

From Hávámal
(Words from “The High One”)

About the front page The Viking woman Sylvia from Gunnes Gård, Upplands Väsby, Sweden. Read more about this farmstead on page 26. Photographer: Anna-Cari Lind.
New excavations at the central site of Uppåkra, in the very south of Sweden

By Lars Larsson

Introduction
The site at Uppåkra in southernmost Sweden was first recognised in 1930s in connection with house constructions (Fig. 1). Excavations revealed occupation layers rich in finds and dated to c. BC–400 AD with a thickness of more than 2 metres. Settlement remains have later been found within an area of 1.1 x 0.6 km.

New investigations started in 1996. More than ten thousand artefacts, mainly of bronze but silver and gold as well, have been registered by metal detector surveys. Most of the finds date to the Vendel Period (550–800 AD) and Viking Age (800–1050 AD). These periods of occupation, previously poorly known, have proved to produce extensive remains of activities. However the finds indicate that ploughing has destroyed most of the youngest and uppermost occupation layers.

The introductory archaeological investigations in 1996–1999 were on a limited scale with one or a few trenches in eight places within the settlement. The excavation results in combination with detector finds suggest that the settlement began late in the Pre-Roman Iron Age and ended in the late Viking Age (c. 100 BC– c. 1000 AD).

Excavation of central areas
What processes were active in the design of settlement at Uppåkra, which covers an area of about 40 hectares, just a small area was excavated. Information from the small initial excavations was linked to other results from metal detector surveys, auguring and geophysical investigations, yielding an important basis for further field research. This presented several concentrations of settlement remains with indications of various artefacts combinations as well chronological differences in artefact dating. The options and excavations from other sites of similar structure from the Late Iron Age and the Viking Age such as Gudme on eastern Funen, Ribe and Tisso on Zealand in Denmark and Slöinge in western Sweden. Special interest was concentrated on the possibility of being able to follow an elite area over a long period. At most they can be followed back to the 5th century, while the majority belong to the Late Iron Age, including the Viking Age.

Discussion about the introduction and structure of central places was of main interest as well.

Therefore, plans for future investigations could be made with theoretical as well as empirical options. Thanks to sponsorship by the Tetra Pak company, these plans could be realised in a five-year field project which started in 2000.

The Swedish Iron Age in chronological order

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built on them, while at other sites these have almost always been destroyed by continuous ploughing. Although layers from the Late Iron Age have been mainly ploughed up, it should be possible to find relatively intact sections and to follow them down through the layers in the hope of finding the initial phase. Hardly any other site in south Scandinavia offered more suitable conditions for pursuing these objectives.

Efforts to find elite areas were concentrated in areas with extensive amounts of finds from metal detecting. We have looked especially for finds of obvious status markers such as artefacts of precious metals showing skilled craftsmanship, as well as finds made of special materials, such as fragments of glass beakers that might be used while feasting in a central building.

There are three or four distinct concentrations of material, which may indicate richer farm complexes. Interestingly, they are all located in areas of extensive layer formation (Fig. 2).

Two of these concentrations were considered particularly interesting for investigation. During 1999 and 2000, excavations on a larger scale began with stripping off topsoil in long, regularly positioned test trenches within areas in the central and southeastern part of the settlement respectively. In both areas there were rich remains of houses and other traces of activities. However, variation as regards both the types and the chronological spread of structures seems to be much greater in the central than in the southern area.

In 2001 two trenches comprising a total of roughly 4,000 square metres were stripped of topsoil in the central area of the site. The northern trench revealed traces of several houses. Ploughing had seriously damaged the structures, but parts of clay floors, collapsed walls, ovens and accumulations of loom weights could be documented in post-built houses dating to the Vendel Period and Viking Age. There was no evidence of any specific function, such as remains of craftsmanship except for fabrication of textiles. The houses are relatively small, between 12 and 20 m long. A sunken-floor house has been dated to late Viking Age by means of a double-shelled oval brooch. It had a depth of only about 0.1 m, which suggests considerable ploughing-off and levelling of the latest occupation layers on the site.

A house for ceremonial purposes

Conditions were different in the southern trench. In its eastern part, traces of one or more post-built houses with their fragmentary remains of clay floors could be identified.

Even while the topsoil was being stripped off in the western part of the trench, the outline of a house stood out distinctly, marked by a yellowish clay floor surrounded by a wall trench interrupted by three entrances (Fig. 3). The external dimensions of the house are 13 x 6.5 metres. In the middle of the house was a hearth, surrounded by small areas of stone paving. In view of the size of the house, the traces left by the two pairs of roof-bearing posts are remarkably large.

In a metal detector survey of the house floor, a small area south of the middle of the house produced a powerful response. Excavation uncovered decorated pieces of embossed gold foil along with glass, so a section of soil was removed intact with the finds in it. Careful exposure in the laboratory revealed a cup, 16 cm tall, with a clearly offset foot. It is made in bronze and silver with six decorated bands of embossed gold foil running round the cup (Fig. 4). The glass proved to belong to a bowl in a honey colour with offset ribs in blue on the bowl and ground ovals at the rim.

Both objects were deposited as offerings. They can be dated to the 6th century AD. The two containers might have been used for some length of time as ceremonial objects when they were deposited. This means that the house could be of a later date than the deposited objects.

The excavation of the house and its surroundings continued in 2002. The excavation of the posts shows that they had been re-dug. When the floor was excavated, at least three more floor layers were documented. The posts supported an extremely sturdy structure as they were dug to a depth of more than 2 metres. The trench surrounding the floor was more than 1 metre deep. In all four corners postholes

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**Fig. 2. Concentrations of occupation layers within the Uppåkra settlement. Map by Lars Larsson**
had been dug down to a depth of 2 metres. For this small house the remains of the wooden structure seems to be overdimensioned. They would better suit a structure with more than one floor or a building with a special roof construction. Might the Norwegian stave churches from the early Medieval Period have had a tradition of construction going far back into the Iron Age?

The excavation of the house is not yet finished. However, the filling of post-holes and trench included almost sixty small gold-foil figures with a naked male figure exhibiting a necklace and a belt as the sole decorations (Fig. 5). Other small gold objects were found as well as fragments of glass beakers and a door knocker – a sturdy iron ring with four knobs still inset in the iron cramp that was nailed to the door. Finds of an Arabic silver coin and a Viking-age comb indicate activities within the area until the Viking Age.

**A ceremonial area**

Around the western part of the house there lay an extensive area with fire-cracked stone and animal bones that may derive from large-scale feasting. Only some ten metres to the south of the house, a large number of spearheads had been found within a limited area. They belong to the Late Roman Iron Age and Early Migration Period and have been interpreted as votive deposits, possibly in connection with the cult of Odin, since the spear is one of this god’s attributes. During the excavation in 2002 several spearheads were found as well as a gilded piece of bronze with silver inlays. It turned out to be the eyebrow marking on a magnificent helmet from the early Vendel Period. This finds show that intentional depositions continued well into the Late Iron Age.

When expanding the trench to the north a large number of finds with spearheads and lance-heads dominating were found within two small areas. Concentrations are similar to weapon offerings found in bogs but the finding place in this instance is within a settlement site!

Ongoing conservation and continued investigations will expand knowledge of the structure and the finds it contained. However, the shape of the house and the finds indicate that it was used for ceremonial purposes as well as the area to the north and south of the structure.

**Indications of cult buildings from other Scandinavian sites**

The house cannot be perceived as a real hall building, even though certain objects of great symbolic value were found in it. In both form and content, however, it does show certain similarities to other houses in southern Scandinavia. Small houses with finds of objects related to feasting or ceremonials are found from the 6th century well into the Viking Age. At places like Lejre and Tissø that date to the Viking Age, there are smaller houses close to main halls.

These smaller houses have a system of roof-bearing posts and shapes differing from the ordinary structure. The finds also suggest a special function for the houses, with a cult and/or ceremonial meaning.

At Borg in eastern-central Sweden a manor existing through part of the late Iron Age and Viking period has been identified. Among the houses one in particular has been recognised as related to ceremonials. It was smaller than the other houses, had a different structural outline and was empty except for two amulet rings. Almost a hundred such rings were found just outside the building. This construction is dated to the late Viking Age.

The occurrence of glass beakers from other sites and the beaker of bronze and silver from Uppåkra is of particular interest in this case. Greeting visitors, whether real or imaginary, with a toast of welcome was a central ritual in Iron- and Viking-age ceremony. In many societies drinking toasts had an important function, with feasting as a significant social

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Fig. 3. House structure found during the excavation in 2001 with a yellowish clay floor (i), wall trench (2), two sturdy pairs of posts (3), small areas of stone paving (4) and a central hearth (5). A cup and a glass bowl had been deposited under the floor, their position marked by a dot. Map by Lars Larsson

Fig. 4. The cup found deposited below the floor of a house. Photo: Bengt Almgren

Fig. 6. Patrice for a gold foil figure showing a female holding a beaker. Drawing by Björn Nilsson
manifestation and also a part of cult acts. In the elite ceremonies of Scandinavia, drinking was linked to showing loyalty and swearing important oaths. Drinking may also have been an important symbolic act at weddings or sacrifices. Women seem to have played a major role in this ceremony. This is clear, for example, from the pictures of gold-foil figurines. The women are often holding out a beaker, and men are depicted drinking from these beakers. Both motifs occur on gold foil figures found in Uppåkra (Fig. 6). However, these motives do not occur on gold foil figures found in Uppåkra. Perhaps we could go as far as to suggest that the deposited beaker and the bowl may have had a function and a symbolism that the deposited beaker and the bowl may have had a function and a symbolism the case in the investigations during 2003.

References

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It was during the Romantic period, in the 19th century, that the modern image of the European Barbarians was created. This process took place as an answer to the yearnings of the diverse nationalistic movements, creating an image of old landscapes and medieval characters to help in the construction of modern identities: Celtic for the French, Teutonic for the Germans and Viking for the Scandinavians.

By Johnni Langer

Immersing themselves in this Barbarian glorification, several romantic painters struggled to capture all the nostalgic atmosphere that was predominant in that period. Such was the case of the Norwegian Peter Arbo who, in 1860, painted the magnificent “Asgardreien”, representing an old Viking meeting with great realism. Also in this decade, Arbo painted other pictures which made a great impression on his contemporaries, such as “Viking Chief” and “Haakon”. In those works, the details in the armour and weapons, such as chain mail, swords and helmets were all very elaborate and correct. At the same time, another artist of Norwegian origin, Johannes Flintoe, was painting “Duel in Skiringsal”, with the same features of accuracy found in his compatriot’s work.

And the Scandinavians were not the only painters creating such historically accurate visual representations of the Viking past. In 1870 the English W. G. Collingwood finished his work “The Thingvellir”, representing an Icelandic Viking meeting and, instead of using literary sources, he actually went to Iceland, granting his painting an even more impressive amount of detail and accuracy, in both geographic and cultural terms. The amour suits and clothing of the Icelandic Vikings were all depicted in the most precise manner.

But, despite this trend, especially strong in Scandinavia, of rescuing with great detail the image of those fearful Barbarians, the process took an unexpected turn when certain works appeared that would totally change the course of European iconography. More related to fantasy than fact, pictures representing Vikings with horns and other ornaments in their helmets became the norm rather than the exception. Why has the former visual representation fallen from grace, and why did artists fail to follow the work of the early 19th century Norwegian
The origins of the imaginary Viking

painters? Could it be for the lack of research and much needed information?

The picture of rude Barbarians was frequently perpetrated by artists of different nationalities and, since they were not Scandinavians, they might lack any proper knowledge of the Viking culture. Therefore, this new image for the Barbarian warrior would be made out of a collection of traits associated with prejudicial concepts in the minds of people who were ultimately foreign, that is, not from Scandinavian origin. And this image was often that of an uncivilised brute, bearing all the characteristics of a sub-human creature.

The best example of this new representation can be found in an illustration of French Normans, by Guizot, taken from the book “History of France”, published in 1879. The warriors were mostly shown as if they were “cavemen”, troglodytes wearing animal skins to cover their bodies. Guizot can certainly be said to have attained the violent picture of chaos and primitivism associated with the invasion of the Nordic peoples, preserving for the Frenchmen the honour of carrying the badge of civilisation. In the picture, the rider wears a helmet with a dragon wing – a totally fictitious detail, made out of pure fantasy. In reality, most of these specific ornaments for helmets – such as horns and lateral birdlike wings, were already commonly represented in the European iconography, but they were generally associated with mythological figures.

In the debut of Richard Wagner’s opera “Tristan and Isolde”, in the city of Munich in 1865, a picture congregated all the types of fantastic helmet ornaments. The paintings and decorations used on the stage were done by J. Noerr and, in the illustration for the final act of the opera, at the moment of Isolde’s death, she is surrounded by warriors carrying helmets with branches, horns and both bird and dragon-like wings. In this specific piece of work, Wagner intended to rescue the Arthurian and medieval ethos, deriving his subject from Celtic influences.

When he created boards for the stage set, Noerr might have been using as reference material, or been otherwise inspired by the work of François Gerard and Gustav Malmström. In 1800, Gerard painted “Ossian”, a work where he depicted an Irish soldier observing the Celtic god Oisin while he plays his harp – the soldier wears a Roman helmet, but it is decorated with an enormous, though solitary, wing.

Although Swedish, the artist Gustav Malmström can also be held responsible for this change in the Viking image. He was the illustrator for the book “The Saga of Frithiof”, a modern version of the Scandinavian hero, published for Esaias Tegner in 1820. In several pictures, Malmström depicted Viking kings with small lateral horns on their helmets and, more frequently, dragon wings. The association to this legendary monster is very clear and understandable. The ancient Scandinavians did appreciate its importance and also believed its existence, decorating their long boats, the “drakkars”, with heads and tails of dragons in their extremities. But, in the English version of the “Book of Tegner”, published in 1839, a series of paintings already showed Vikings featuring their modern image: in contrast with Malmström’s work, the horns on the helmets of those new Vikings had an uncommon size (Wawn, 2001).

As for the Celts, the bird wings (as in the modern Asterix) are also a purely random decoration, with little relation to any real Celtic ornament, and the same can be said of antlers and horns. The Celtic warriors wear conical helmets in battle, some carrying wild boar ornaments (same as the Saxons), or birds and geometric connecting rods. Therefore, as the Vikings and other so-called Barbarians, their battle helmets could not have been the inspirational source of the European artists from the 19th century.

There is, however, an important detail that cannot be overlooked: the Celts did have a god, Cernunnos, generally depicted with two enormous hart antlers in his head. Also, in some silver reliefs of Celtic origin, it is possible to see a man carrying a helmet with ox horns alongside the god Dagda and some animals.
A quite similar case can be seen in a bronze board found in Sweden, which can be dated back to a time before the Viking Age (6th century A.D.) where two armed warriors engage in a ritual dance. One of them is wearing a wolf-head mask and the other a helmet with pointed horns. In London, a bronze helmet was found with lateral horns, dated from the first century A.D. (therefore, it would have already been made during the Iron Age). Since it is extremely fragile, it could not have been used in war, so it is considered merely ceremonial. All these ornaments might have had a strict religious function, being used only in specific situations and by selected people, such as priests.

The only case that we know of in which a relic was found that supposedly would not fit these parameters is described by Ole Klintd-Jensen (1960, p. 91). It is a bronze helmet found in Denmark and dated back to the Bronze Age (700 B.C.) and, according to this author, it could have been used for battles. The helmet has two enormous winding horns and symbolic details, including two eyes and a nose in the form of a hook. We do not have better information regarding the archaeological context of where this relic was found, but in the example of the other helmets, a purely religious function cannot be discarded.

So, concerning objects from periods and cultures older than the Vikings, there might have been examples that could have motivated the curiosity and the interest of the artists of the 19th century, offering them a random mix of ancient cultures on which to base their musings. An important detail cannot be forgotten: in 1860, the Danish were already among the first to engage in a serious archaeological work, with their systematic study of prehistoric Europe. Two of their much-respected publications, the “Guide to the Northern Archaeology” (1836), by Christian Thomsen, and the “Primeval Antiquities of Denmark” (1843), by Jens Worsae, were both quite popular throughout the world. Known even to Brazilian intellectuals such as Varnhagen and Manuel Porto Alegre, who had access to them from 1845 to 1860, it is possible that these publications had supplied visual assistance for the artists interested in reproducing the costume and equipment of the old Barbarians. Cultural definitions and dating were still very precarious in European archaeology, allowing many misinterpretations. Some archaeological relics had been known in Europe for many decades, even centuries, such as the horns of gold of Gallehus, discovered in Denmark in 1639, and they had been studied several times since the beginning of the 19th century.

The matter of the repercussion of archaeological studies both in the arts and in the public perception of a culture, or period of time, is still an unexplored field, practically open to speculation. The painters’ eventual contact with this sort of detail regarding the art and religion of the Barbarian peoples cannot be ignored.

In the particular case of the Viking pictures though, a certain subject had also been related to their iconography since the Middle Ages: Germanic mythology. Nordic gods were generally conceived as wearing the typical mythological regalia of the period – until the 17th century dominated by the Greco-Roman standards. It was only due to the work of Richard Wagner that an attempt was made to either restore or create a modern representation of the Germanic myths, at the same time blending them with others taken from the Celtic world. Both historical and legendary ancestors of the Germanic peoples were brought to light by those new ideals, serving as elements to create the myth of the supermen who would regenerate the chaotic Western Civilisation by order and leadership. It is the awakening of the concept of idealised human archetypes, often present in the Wagnerian world, and also glorified in the works of Nietzsche and later in Nazi dogma.

Nothing embodies the image of strength and power better than a fearless warrior wearing a proud helmet properly adorned with ornaments taken from vigorous animals. Since antiquity, the horns are a symbol of the necessity to always confront one’s obstacles, as in the behaviour displayed by goats and other horned animals, of a furious clashing of heads to show male prowess, or the cults of fertility and prosperity associated with the bull. The origin of the Latin word *cornu*, horn, is the same as that of crown, and is associated to the Eastern god Cilicio, being an attribute of fertility. Also, in Hebrew the word *queren*, means both horn and power. So, one single representation – the pair of horns – can congregate diverse artistic meaning: virility, discipline, aggressiveness, force, power. All of this was crystallised during the second half of the 19th century as a common feeling towards the Barbarians and their combat equipment:

We want to see in their (the Barbarians) image a blind faith in a superior order, an unyielding discipline, a dark and mysterious depth – half-solar, half-sexual and fully masculine – which is contemptuous towards the weakness of our own collective consciousness, the hidden vices we recognise more or less depending on our level of lucidity – something we can almost sense behind the swastika (…) and that shows itself before our eyes in all that is monumental, colossal and titanic.

(Boyer, 1997, p. 708).

By 1870, the new Barbarian aesthetics can be seen clearly in the opening of Wagner’s “The Valkyrie”, second part of the opera “The Ring of the Nibelungen”. The valkyrie were the female warriors who lead the dead from the battlefield towards Valhalla, the Germanic paradise. In the painting made by Theodor Pixis for the stage set, these warriors were represented carrying a shield, a spiral chain mail with a disk for the breastplate, winged helmets, bracelets and necklaces (in the case of these last ornaments, the Celtic culture had an obvious influence). In the same year of 1870, painter G. von Leekle executed his work “Valkyries”, already presenting the same aesthetic standards used by T. Pixis, but with one extra detail: some warriors wore horned helmets. Some small variations can also occur, as with the Valkyries of the Norwegian artist Peter Arbo, of 1872, whose winged helmets featured very recognisable swan wings and were similar to the ones used in Wagner’s opera, “Lohengrin”, in 1858. Despite this, the standard model that would predominate from then on was the one with lateral wings – perhaps it was due to the descriptions found in late Norse mythology, where the female warriors were also said to be the Swan Maidens. Odin himself, father of gods, was changed from a faithful representation, as can be found in the homonymous painting by Burne-Jones, 1870 – where the god is seen wearing a long cloak and a hat – to that of an armoured warrior, wearing a helmet with eagle wings. This whole process may have been
Influenced by the aesthetics of Wagner’s operas, as can be perceived in the later painting “The License of Odin”, by F. Lekeke, 1875. But no painting with Barbarian inspiration was more famous and popular than “Funeral of One Viking”, 1893, by the English Francis Dicksee. The painting portrays the moment when a Scandinavian chieftain or warlord’s body was set on fire, together with his boat and belongings, to be pushed to sea afterwards by his friends.

The main idea behind that painting is the display of a powerful Barbarian, an imaginary figure mythical in its stature, and seen as truthful throughout the 19th century: huge warriors, mostly with their chests naked and showing off their rigid muscles, all wearing the fantastic horned helmet. In this painting, one of the few men where there can be seen any facial detail is a leader-like figure, who is raising his hand in a symbolic last homage to the deceased. In his other hand, he carries the torch used to set the boat on fire. This particular subject, that of the use of fire, is a constant in the Germanic tradition – at the climax of Wagner’s “The Ring of the Nibelungen”, the valkyrie Brunhilde throws herself into the funeral pyre of the hero Siegfried, as a symbol of individual sacrifice to redeem the world from chaos (Schneider, 1991, p. 106).

In this case, and the same goes for Dicksee’s painting, the fire carries the symbolic value of purification, illumination and redemption for the character’s tragic fate. This same subject will be repeated in the art of C. Butler (1909), Arthur Rackham (1910) and even in many contemporary painters, such as Anselm Kiefer (Soares & Schmidt, 1999, p. 71).

In modern times, myth has a very intimate relation with literature and art, especially in its visual forms. That is because myth is manifested in, and survives through, the force of symbolism, in this case symbolic pictures. And symbolism is one of the fundamental vehicles for any artistic language. The imaginary figure of the Viking that we have been analysing here – the powerful Germanic and Scandinavian Barbarian – appears unchanged throughout the 19th century, carrying with it the same values and meanings, as much in poetry as it was in opera or in the visual arts. As we have already said, the painters and sculptors had followed this image with precision and through several different works. The height of this trend in recovering Germanic mythological elements appeared with the music of Richard Wagner, between 1865 and 1876: the first time that a musician dared to substitute Greek gods for the Scandinavian ones (Schneider, 1991, p. 100).

And it is exactly during this period that the creation of this stereotype happened, and the idealised picture of the Barbarian became part of the artists’ repository of images with which to represent their fantasies. Wearing horned helmets, the Barbarian tended to the necessity of creating a powerful identity between the historical past and the lived moment. With this, art was impregnated with history – but not a “traditional” and “correct” history: more of a mythical interpretation of an immortal past, serving the yearnings of a collective consciousness that sought to obtain a cultural unity as much as a political one, being a perfect example of that the German unification of 1871.

“Art reveals itself as an agent both for the destructive processes and for regenerating ones in its relation to history, religion, myths and nature. But, simultaneously, it is also subject to the same sort of process due to the passing of time and to the historical events in which each artist inserts his struggle for the survival of his artistic language”) Soares & Schmidt, 1999, p. 75. And thus, the ascension of the idealised Barbarian during the 19th century realised motivations that went far beyond the individual interests of the artists involved in the process. It was the fruit of a moment when myth explained historical origins and was legitimised through the language of art. In our time, it remains only as a stereotype that keeps surrendering territory to new artistic interpretations. The image of Vikings and the Germanic Barbarians still continues to fascinate, but now it is governed by a new set of values and feelings.

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Introduction
REACH (Regional Exchange in Archaeology and Cultural Heritage) is a project for the exchange of teachers, scientists and students in the fields of archaeology and building restoration. Within the REACH-project Gotland University, Sweden is collaborating with universities and museums in Latvia and Russia, for instance the University of Novgorod, Russia and the local museum in Jekabpils, Latvia.

The REACH-project is a part of BSAAN (Baltic Sea Area Archaeological Network) and is mainly financed by the Swedish Institute, which is a governmental authority for the purpose of spreading knowledge about Sweden in foreign countries and working for exchange with other countries in the fields of culture, education, science and society in general.

During the summer of 2002 three groups of students from Gotland University received the opportunity to take part in three different excavations related to the Viking Age in Russia through the REACH-project. Here are their stories.

Text and photos by Johnny May and Carl Cederholm
Archaeology students at Gotland University

Historical background
At the end of the 10th century a town called Novgorod is established in Russia. The name Novgorod means “the new castle”.

This town had a predecessor “the old castle”, situated two kilometres south of Novgorod along the Volchov River. This place was known as Holmgård “the town on the island” during the Viking Age. Nowadays the name of this place is Gorodische or Rurikovo Gorodische.

According to Nestor’s chronicle, it is said to be the place where Rurik had his stronghold. Rurik is supposed to have been a Norse chief, who founded the first Russian prince-dynasty. He was sent for in the year 862 to bring peace between different groups of people around the lake districts of Ladoga and Ilmen.

Gorodische was an important centre for trading, handcrafts and military and political administration. During the 10th century, the settlements around Gorodische grew in importance and around the 11th century they had taken over many of the political and administrative functions. At this time Prince Vladimir Yaroslavovich moved his residence to what is now known as Novgorod, causing a decline in the intensity of activity in Gorodische.

The location of Gorodische is in many ways similar to that of Birka in the Mälar basin in Sweden: a peninsula or island surrounded by...
Gorodische

water most parts of the year, with a strategic position at a crossroad of trading routes, to the north, the Volchov River with connections with Lake Ladoga and the Baltic Sea and, to the south and southeast, Lake Ilmen and the river routes towards the Dnjepr and the Volga.

The first excavation at Rurikovo Gorodische was conducted in 1901 and since then there have been a series of excavations at the site. For 27 years Professor Jevgenij Nosov from the University of St. Petersburg has led the archaeological excavations on this site. Thanks to the REACH exchange project, archaeology students from Gotland have the opportunity to take part in these excavations. The purpose of this article is to provide information about this summer's excavation and to describe what it is like to be a Swedish archaeology student in Russia.

Every summer there are excavations on this site and the Nordic influences in this region are becoming more and more obvious. For instance bronze-amulets have been found with runic inscriptions, Thor's-hammers, a valkyrie-figure of silver and fibulas with ornaments in the Nordic animal-style. Many of the finds are similar to finds from Birka and Sigtuna making it possible that the Norse people who lived in Holmgård during 9th and 10th centuries originated from the region of the Mälar basin in Sweden. Even if most of the population were probably Slavonic there must have been quite a large number of Norse people. Professor Nosov describes the population at Gorodische as poly-ethnic.

In Novgorod conditions for the preservation of organic material are excellent because of the wet clay that embraces the thick cultural layers. For example, wooden logs from house constructions look like new even though they can be from the 10th century. Even leather is perfectly preserved.

The journey

This summer there were two students from Gotland University who took part in the excavation at Gorodische. We travelled by car together with two groups of students that were going to other excavations in the Novgorod region.

It can be quite an adventure travelling through Russia by car. The first problem we encountered was at the customs between Finland and Russia, where we had to wait several hours because we were in the wrong lane. Because of this we arrived to our destination early in the morning instead of around midnight as we had planned.

Another problem was the St. Petersburg-traffic that made the drivers quite nervous. When you enter and exit a city in Russia you have to drive through a checkpoint where foreigners almost always get stopped, and if you do, the police try their best to find something wrong with your car or your documents that they can charge you with.

The 2002 excavation

We arrived in the middle of July and took part in the excavation for two weeks. The main purpose of this year's excavation was to get more information about the fortification around the settlement.

During our time there we lived in a tent camp near the site together with the Russian students and the leaders. The work was very hard due to the extremely hot weather and we had to make many trips to the town of Novgorod to buy bottled water because we were afraid to drink the water in the camp. During workdays many of the excavation participants took any chance they could to take a swim in the canal that flows by the excavation site.

This year we continued to excavate at the edge of the settlement hoping to get down to sterile layers and to find out more about the construction of the palisade surrounding the area. We used spades to dig in 20-cm layers, except when we encountered cultural layers. In those cases trowels and brushes were used, so we can say that our methods were a combination between digging in contextual and artificial layers.

The soil at the site is rather mixed, comprising sand, clay and organic material, making it difficult to dig at times. All the soil that we dug up was carefully examined, using the river nearby the excavation to rinse away the dirt and clay with strainers in hope of finding more artefacts.

Documentation of the excavation is carried out with great accuracy. One of the methods is to take photos of the site every 20 centimeters, and also to draw exact pictures of every artefact or construction detail that is of major importance. Most Russians are very skilled when it comes to drawing because it is a part of their education. To locate the exact spot of the artefacts and the constructions they use a theodolite.

According to radiocarbon dating, we were excavating layers from the 9th and 10th centuries. The oak log at full length. The hole at the end is clearly seen.

http://viking.hgo.se
centuries. The oldest layer could, according to Professor Nosov, be dated to the middle of the 9th century. This is the same time that Rurik is said to have settled in Russia and may confirm the theory that this really is his settlement.

The finds
One of the more exciting finds this year was an almost perfectly preserved oak-log about 40 cm in diameter and about 2 metres in length. At one end of the log there was a square hole. It is uncertain what it had been used for but one of the theories suggests that it might have been part of a raft and another theory was that it had been used in the palisade construction. There were also several smaller logs found close to the big one that is easier to determine as parts of the palisade.

The bottom of a birch-bark vessel with some kind of inscriptions and also a piece of rope that was found just beside the vessel can be mentioned as examples of the good preserving conditions. Earlier this year a pair of leather shoes was also found.

Near the palisade there seems to have been a pit for garbage disposal. There we found a large amount of branches, animal bones and parts of broken various kinds of things. The ceramics that are found here are mostly Slavonic style but, in addition to the local wares, foreign pottery like Scandinavian and the Finno-Ugrian vessels has been discovered on the site.

Besides the above-mentioned finds, this year a small bell and different kinds of beads have also been found. Melting pots for making jewellery are another type of rather common artefact, which tells us about workshops here.

Among the most interesting thing that was found by the Swedish students this year can be mentioned a half bead from the 10th century made from red carneol. A few days before we were to leave the camp some of the other Swedish students that had been in Luhyino came to visit us, and naturally one of them found one of the best-preserved wood objects this year, a tally-stick.

During the excavation some of the people were preparing for next year’s excavations by digging in a new area. When we came to Gorodische they had found a trench from the Second World War and we were shown a food-canteen that had been found there. Because the frontline passed through here the upper layers are very mixed and different kinds of wartime material are often found here.

Celebrities
Obviously this place is of great interest not only to archaeologists, because during our two weeks two different television teams visited us. The first was a news team from St. Petersburg that did an interview with Professor Nosov and one of us Swedish students. The other team was making a documentary for the Swedish Television about Ingegärd, the daughter of St. Olaf. She was married to Yaroslav the Wise who was the prince of Novgorod and later became prince of Kiev.

Visiting Russia has been interesting not only because of the excavation but also in getting to know the Russian people who are very friendly and generous. It can be a problem communicating, especially in the stores, but despite minor problems we really want to return next year.
Lubitino

Text and photos by Linn Gunnarsson, Sara Stiber and Marte Storrusten
Archaeology students at Gotland University

The excavation
Since the beginning of the 1990s, Russia and Gotland, Sweden have taken part in the REACH-project, which has given Swedish and Russian students the opportunity to visit and participate in excavations in each other’s countries.

During July 2002, a group of Swedish students of archaeology from Gotland, went to the Lubitino region near Novgorod, to participate in the excavation of an ancient fortress, led by the University of Novgorod. It had already been underway a couple of weeks before the Swedish team arrived, and two big shafts had been opened. But the findings were thus far easily counted.

It was a great experience to learn the Russian methods and techniques. Everybody had to work with big spades instead of trowels. You had to stand up and bend over double, as well as use a special grip, to be able to peel away millimetre thin layers of the soil. The trowel was abandoned as long as there were no major finds. The method was effective but demanding for the unaccustomed Swedes.

The subdivision of the work was surprising as well. Instead of being divided into squares, and handling everything within their specific square, here people were divided by tasks. There were people sieving, digging, carrying soil or leading the workers.

The fortress
In Russia they also had a tradition of using the old chronicles in research. The mysterious Rurik, the presumed founder of Novgorod and moreover a Scandinavian Viking, is the figure that receives much of their attention.

The fortress, that is from the 11th century, is a presumed outpost for the prince of Novgorod. It was surrounded by a natural delimitation in the northeast, and by a wall of soil, stones and a wooden construction in the other directions. Last summer the wall was excavated and the remains of a wooden construction were found. They were a special type, which showed that it could have been in use for twenty years at the most.

A main fireplace was found on the settlement area, situated approximately seven metres from the constructed wall. Some beads of glass and a piece of iron were found in the fireplace besides coal.

A lot of ceramic fragments were found all over the excavation area as well as occasional bone fragments.

We came upon an unidentified bronze artefact as well, but there are some dating troubles. The artefact could also be related to the 17th-century ceramics that were found all over the area.

In the agricultural surroundings of Lubitino, a lot of “kurgans” and “sopkas” are seen. These are burial hills from the late Iron Age. One of the kurgans was excavated by another group of Swedish and Russian students in 1998. Gotland University has also been involved in introducing the Phosphate Spot Test method to the Russians.

Professor Kanjetskij was the leader of the excavation.

The excavation area with two pits.

Sara and Marte are digging according to local custom.
Staraya Russa
– a place of great archaeological interest

Text by Per Warmark
Photos by Emil Gustavsson

Introduction
In the Novgorod region of western Russia, immediately south of Lake Ilmen, lies Staraya Russa, a city with around twenty thousand inhabitants and an exciting history. The place was mentioned as early as the 11th century in several Russian chronicles and the forename Staraya – old – is certainly a later epithet but has been assigned to the place because other, younger locations in region also claim the name Russa. The primary name Russa is more disputed and certain sources have connected it with the name of Russia but several scientists have now rejected these theories. Instead it is likely that the name is coupled to the production of salt that took place here already during the Middle Ages.

Staraya Russa grew upon an expanding salt evaporation industry that saw the city prosper for a limited time. In time however the salt industry of Russia lost its share of the market due to an increased supply of mined rock salt. Russa became transformed into a trading centre.

The strategic location with several big rivers in the area made trade a profitable activity. Since the 9th century the Russian rivers had been of great importance for transportation of both people and merchandise and acted as a link between North of Europe and the Byzantine. For awhile Staraya Russa competed with its neighbour seventy kilometres north, Novgorod, over domination of the region but lost. While Novgorod consolidated its position, the importance of Russa decreased. The place stagnated and became a Russian small town. However the Soviet regime noticed Staraya Russa and placed military aircraft industry here.

Several expeditions
Despite a focus on modern aircraft technology in Staraya Russa, the history of the place has been of great interest to Soviet/Russian scientists during the entire 20th century. Not less than sixteen archaeological investigations have taken place here. During the Soviet period it was the USSR Academy of Science that led the excavations but after several years of turbulence, without any excavations, the Novgorod State University continued the undertaking. This spring, the 17th expedition began and for the second time Swedish archaeology students from the Gotland University were able to participate.

The Swedish students were able to see how Russian archaeologists work this summer. Their involvement is a part of the EU-financed REACH-project that enables exchanges between several East European states and Sweden. Several of the Russian archaeologists have also visited Sweden and Gotland.

This season’s investigations in Staraya Russa began in May and took place at two locations in the city. The main excavation was called “Petinski”, after the nearby church, which is a tradition in Russia. It is situated on Mineralnaja Street and during the Middle Ages this location was a part of the ancient Russa centre. This has resulted in cultural layers up to six meters thick.

In the 16th expedition, called “Borisoglebski”, the archaeologists were able to date the oldest part of the cultural layers back to the first half of the 11th century.
During that expedition many important facts reflecting several aspects of medieval Russia were found and it is this investigation that is now continuing in the nearby Petinskij excavation.

**Interesting and varying finds**

Accordingly work had proceeded down to the layers of the late Middle Ages by the end of July. The findings were ample and varying. Apart from mass-finds such as fragmented ceramics, animal bones, nutshells, etc. there were also interesting metal finds. They consisted to a large degree of fragments of pans for salt evaporation, so-called *tsrens* but in the somewhat younger layers different artefacts of metal were found. For instance, a pair of scissors and several keys can be mentioned.

These metal finds are of great value but what is especially exciting and specific for Staraya Russa however are the finds of organic materials. The composition of the soil has kept this material in extremely good condition and in many ways this is what has contributed to the great interest for the place. Similar conditions are very rare and along with Novgorod, Staraya Russa offers some of the best-maintained medieval remains to be found.

Pieces of leather are common and parts of shoes or boots are not at all unusual. During last year's excavations an almost intact pair of medieval shoes were found and in August this year a piece of leather with an inscription, presumably a seal, was brought to light. Several types of textiles have been dug up as well as different kinds of candles.

However most of the organic finds consist of wooden material, for natural reasons. Wood was simply the most common material during the Middle Ages. Fragments of tableware, wooden tools and spinning fittings are some examples of this stuff, not to mention all the constructions that are well preserved in the soil.

**Exciting inscriptions**

The type of finds that is in greatest repute is birchbark inscriptions after all. The Russian birch letters are famous due to the lack of written sources from the period and that these finds can shed additional light on history.

An example of how these inscriptions has changed facts about history concerns the Russian language. Until recently several of the "dirty" words that figure in the Russian language were connected to the invasion of the Mongols during the 14th century. However one of the birchbark letters containing these "dirty" words was dated to the time before the rise of the Mongols, which indicates that they were already in use and not of Mongolian origin.

Thirty-six inscriptions have been found in Staraya Russa of which four were located during the "Borisaglebskiy" excavations. The great prestige involved in the search for birchbark letters among the archaeologists working in the region is a well-known fact. There is even an unofficial competition between the expedition in Staraya Russa and an expedition in Novgorod over whom finds the next inscription.

The Swedish students who participated in the race had the chance to become the first foreigners to find a birchbark letter but none were found during their visit so the competition carries on. So far it is a draw.

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Dubhlinn's Vikings

By Lori Alexander

In the late 700’s, Norwegian shipbuilders began constructing what would come to be known as “longships”: vessels with long, slender noses, designed to cut cleanly through the sea and handle even the toughest summer sailings. Coupled with sail and rudder, and a need to escape the restraints of a family farm crowded with brothers, the light, flexible plank crafts were soon aimed towards the Irish coast.

The first isolated attacks on Ireland were in 795, using methods that would guarantee success: surprise, speed, and a clear escape route. Lone monasteries and coastal villages absorbed the earliest strikes, and the hoarded wealth of the Irish monasteries must have astounded those first Vikings.

Each summer, the number of Vikings venturing into Irish waters increased, and as young men returned home to winter at their family farms, word spread of Ireland’s lightly defended coast. Laden with monastic gold and slaves to sell on their rapidly expanding trade route, the raiders were drawn to Ireland summer after summer.

Feuding Irish tribesmen were in no position to defend themselves against the lightening-fast Norse longships. Divided into 150 kingdoms, each clan’s resources were consumed by the effort of protecting territory and power. It took the Irish fifteen summers to put forth serious opposition and claim a decisive victory against Norse incursions. Within a year, the Vikings returned, and slaughtered the Irish who resisted.

By the summer of 820, Vikings were using the Shannon to sail virtually unchecked into the heart of Ireland. The rich Irish monasteries dotting their route were left standing for one reason alone: to loot again and again, and maintain a steady supply of Irish captives.

In 837, 65 Viking ships were seen at the mouth of the Liffey River. By then, the sailors had been manoeuvring Irish waters for more than a generation. Along with the gold making its way to Scandinavia, Irish customs were arriving with Irish captives. Irish-style jewellery, manufactured in Norway, began to appear. High-status female Irish grave goods have been unearthed in Norwegian burials. As the Irish captives settled into Norse society, the Norse themselves were determined to carve a more permanent place in Ireland’s history.

The Norsemen built Dubhlinn, or “Black Pool”, in 841. They began forming local alliances, formally marrying Irish women, hiring out as mercenaries, and providing strength to upset the balance of native rivalries. Reinforcements continued to arrive, and at first, the growing settlement faced little organized resistance.

In 845, having coped with four years of regular Viking raiding and political interference, the Irish kings rallied. Under the King of Tara, the Irish defeated the Dublin encampment.

The victory was short lived. In 853, the Vikings wrested Dublin from the Irish and the Danes. Olaf became the first Norse king of Dublin, to be followed by his brother, Ivar the Boneless, and the entrenched Vikings began exacting tribute from their neighbouring clansmen.

The Vikings were again free to roam year-round from their Dublin base, and busied themselves sending raiding parties into Scotland and the north of Ireland. In a single recorded attack, they took 1000 captives. Mass abductions became common, and were possibly aided by Irish-Norse alliances, and Irish seeking to oblige Dublin’s demands for tribute.

Despite their influence, the settlement was small within a sea of opposition. While fending off encroaching Danes and unfriendly Irish, the Vikings were faced with their own internal rivalries, both in Dublin and among the Viking settlements of Cork, Waterford, Limerick, and along the north coast. After the death of Ivar the Boneless, three Viking families fought to control Dublin. Irish-Norse alliances were inevitable and necessary, and it was Ivar’s sons who seized control after allying with the powerful Irish O’Neill.

When Ivar’s sons were killed in 896, Viking leaders temporarily lost their hold. In 902, Ireland’s Leinstermen re-took Dublin. A sizeable number of Norse and Irish-Norse settlers left to colonize Iceland, some sheltered in the Western Isles, and others may’ve made temporary camps on Irish islands.

Little is recorded of the average Dublin tradesman or crafter, but by 902, the Irish perception of the newcomers had softened. The Norse had ceased to be, “white foreigners”, and become “Ostmen”, to distinguish the generations of occupying Irish-Norse Dubliners from Scandinavian Vikings. It’s probable that following the exodus of 902, Dublin’s mixed-parentage craftsmen, farmers, and the daughters who’d married into Irish clans remained under the protection of their Irish relations. Any Ostwomen who considered cutting ties to her Irish husband risked forfeiting her children to the Irish clan system.

As explained by Thomas G. Fewer MA, Waterford Institute of Technology, “in cases of divorce or widowhood, women took back with them any property that they brought into the marriage. However, their children were considered to be members of their father’s clan and would normally be expected to remain with his family should their mother return to hers.”
In 917, Ivar’s grandson Sihtric Cæch returned to Ireland. Dublin was again occupied, and the Norse began reclaiming their old settlements. Reasserting Viking authority, Sihtric battered the north with heavy raiding before moving onto York, leaving Dublin in the ruthless hands of his brother Guthfrith.

Attacking Irish supporters of the Limerick Norse, Guthfrith slaughtered first the men, and then 44 women, children and aged hiding in the sacred Cave of the Alders. In an ambitious attack on Viking-held Limerick, Guthfrith lost much of his army.

At the death of his brother Sihtric, Guthfrith lost finally Dublin itself to Limerick Vikings while distracted by a failed attempt to claim York.

Despite Guthfrith’s tactics, the bulk of Dublin’s Norse settlers had come to raise families, build a lasting home and found a trading center. Many spoke a language mixed with Irish words, and had Irish mothers, wives, and obligations. Over the generations, these seasoned travellers and traders built the richest port on the Irish Sea. Irish-Norse allegiances are well documented in the Irish annals and genealogies, and necessary for the Norse to survive within the climate of warring Irish clans. Thomas G. Fewer MA, points out, “It’s likely that as the kingdom of Dublin was fully incorporated into Irish dynastic politics by the early eleventh century that intermarriage between the two ethnic groups became increasingly more common. The gaelicised Viking surnames, such as MacAuliffe, MacSitrícg or MacGothmund, which are Viking surnames, such as MacAuliffe, MacSitrícg or MacGothmund, which are

200 surviving Viking Age buildings were unearthed, and Dublin’s Kilmainham presented the largest known Norse burial ground discovered outside of Scandinavia. Ireland’s Ostmen left ample evidence of their prosperous market town, and belied the image of aloof warriors concerned solely with raiding and slaving. Excavations established traces of the bakers, brewers, metalworkers, shipbuilders, cobblers, cooperers, farmers and merchants who had once occupied the thriving settlement and traded with their Irish neighbours.

Dublin couldn’t have flourished without a degree of cooperation and trading with surrounding countryside. According to Sarah Dent, curator for Dublínia Heritage Centre, “Much of the evidence for diet points to food sourced locally. Cattle, pigs and sheep were all slaughtered for food. Hare was also eaten, as was poultry, including wild geese. Fish and shellfish were staple foods, indicated by iron fishing hooks found near the river. Excavation of cess pits revealed evidence of local nuts and berries such as strawberries, blackberries and hazel nuts. As Dublin’s production was mostly agricultural, there would have been little need for importation of crops, livestock or hides and fleeces.”

The Ostmen’s defeat at Clontarf in 1014 had less to do with their position as Vikings, and more to do with the leadership choices of Olaf Kvaran. King Olaf of Dublin, the son-in-law of the King of Leinster, was allied and shared with the Irish faction’s defeat. While the Ostmen stayed on in Dublin, their leaders never again ruled. The military aristocrats remained, rich enough to continue paying tribute to their new overlords and as willing mercenaries. Like their more powerful counterparts, the children of Dublin’s brewers, cobblers, bakers and merchants prospered over the generations. Ostmen who wished to marry and raise a family, farm, trade, or craft slipped easily into Irish society. In Dublin, Irish and Viking alike thrived.

Sarah Dent describes the remnant of Dublin’s Ostmen at the coming of the Normans, 155 years after the Battle of Clontarf, “They were conquered along with the Irish, but Henry II realised that it would be to his disadvantage to outlaw them, as they were valuable tradesmen, carriers and mariners, and, as Edmund Curtis describes them, “the capitalists of Ireland at the time”.

When archaeologists excavated the modern Dublin Christchurch area, more than

When visiting Dublin, the spectacular Viking exhibit of the National Museum of Ireland, Kildare Street, is a must see. Dublínia, located at the base of Christchurch Cathedral, in the heart of the one time Viking settlement, also boasts a recreation of the Dublin excavation and a selection of Viking artefacts. The Wood Quay and Fishamble Street area can be explored on foot, and the path of the original excavation retraced by following commemorative plaques.

To research your Irish-Norse Ancestry contact: National Library of Ireland Genealogical Office Kildare Street Dublin 2, Ireland 353 1 603 0200

References


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When archaeologists excavated the modern Dublin Christchurch area, more than

About the Author
Lori Alexander is an American freelance writer residing with her husband and children in Skerries, County Dublin. Her background is in behavioral science and anthropology.

Safe harbours and scattered islands welcomed early Vikings. Photo Brian Pullman

When visiting Dublin, the spectacular Viking exhibit of the National Museum of Ireland, Kildare Street, is a must see. Dublínia, located at the base of Christchurch Cathedral, in the heart of the one time Viking settlement, also boasts a recreation of the Dublin excavation and a selection of Viking artefacts. The Wood Quay and Fishamble Street area can be explored on foot, and the path of the original excavation retraced by following commemorative plaques.

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What do we as 21st century Europeans have in mind when we stand on a silent hilltop looking across the Big Water to another world, to a civilisation of ages past? Those hilltops, once built for unknown reasons about 1000 years ago, and then abandoned by unidentified forces about 760 years ago in favour of a then “new” European border near the present Estonian village of Naha (name taken from an Aestis word that means both “fur” and “money”). Today, one can easily see a huge country now called Russia just 5 kilometres east of Lämmijärv!

Who were those entrepreneurs who erected such smart timber defence constructions atop prehistoric hillforts on the narrow strait of Peipus Lake to defend flourishing villages so long ago? Against whom? Why such an effort just before the ancient Scandinavian waterways leading into the east referred to by Norse travellers as Holmgardr in Austrvegr?

From about 800 until 1100 AD, almost 300 years, adventurous Scandinavian, Baltic and Tchuudi traders*, raiders and travellers sailed by Austrvegr (translation: the Eastern Route) to Holmgard (Novgorod), Isobourg (Irbsoka) and even further to Byzantia, Arabia and the Islamic world, exchanging Nordic furs for Arabic silver, and paving the way for the development of a European cultural route.

Lämmijärv, meaning “lukewarm lake” in Estonian, is a narrow strait between Peipus and Pskov Lake. Over 1000 years ago this waterway was approached differently than today, over Mother Water (in Estonian “Emajõgi”). The old fortress of Tarvata (now Tartu) locked a toll gate and taxed travellers. Vikings from Scandinavia were forced to take a longer route to Father Water (Isojoki or Velikaja) over the Narva waterfalls or even further – over Old Ladoga (Aldeignborg) and the Ilmen.

A few written sources in the form of sagas have survived to document those ancient times. These include Heimskringla, Brennu-Njals Saga, Guta Saga, Adam of the Bremen’s and Saxo Grammaticus’ stories plus old Russian chronicles. Some Russian, Estonian, Danish, Norwegian and Swedish historical hypotheses have emerged, based on the logic of the old stories… not very many scientifically precise texts, unfortunately.

By his own hypothesis, the Viking god Odin living at the Don River near the Azov Sea was expelled by the Romans and nomads about 60 AD. We like to believe that Odin crossed many Austrvegr (Russian) rivers and eventually established his tribe on the northwestern Estonian island of Osmussaare, then called Odinsholm.

Those heroic, tragic and colorful pagan (maausk!) days are covered now with Christian civilisation – a global Western culture that for centuries has tended to ignore everything that happened before missionaries arrived… Eurocentric maps, history books, the whole culture that ended

* Tchuudi traders: In 1000 A.D all northern Europe, east of the Baltic was under the Fennougric people’s control. Slavic tribes and Scadinavians covered the waterways when travelling, raiding and trading. However fishermen, hunters and farmers used mainly the local tongue. By the way, the village where our fortress was erected is called “Naha”, meaning “fur” by Estonian historians who describe this place as a Viking traders’ meeting place.
exactly on the Peipus-Lämmijärv, much as the British overbearing concept of "terra nullus" ignored the aboriginal culture and land rights existing before Captain Cook arrival on Australian shores.

Today?... Landscape and silent hilltops of Lääniste, Kureküla, Võuküla, Kauksi, Melliste and Rosma Viking-era fortresses are beginning to tell us many forms of "perhaps", lots of "maybes" and a very few "could bes"... However, our rivers, bogs, forests, hills and waterways are still standing and running – waiting for someone who is able to pick up an untold story!

We do not know where Viking chieftains such as Rjurik, Truvor and Sineus came from in the 860s, or why they came. Was it only to silence the Holmgard riots between Tchuudi and Slavic people? Perhaps they set sail from the Storholmen Viking village near Norrtälje in the Roslagen region of Sweden, presently thought to be the Scandinavian location closest to our eastern Baltic shores?

There is a Russian legend that tells us that after Kjazj Igor (actually the Viking chieftan Ingvar) who took his bride Olga (Elga) across the Big Water (Isokyki). Duchess Olga became first Russian autocrat, mercilessly killing all of her opponents, and taking bloody revenge upon the drevljaani killers of her husband.

Later Russian historians (Beletski, Afanasjev) guess that Duchess Olga was actually born as thshuud Elga (probably related to Estonians) in 890 at Võbutõ – a place sounding rather similar to "Võõpsu", today's tiny Estonian fishing village situated on the left bank of Võhandu river running into Läämmijärv not far from Räpina and Võuküla Viking-era fortress. Professor Tallgren of Tartu University has found many Arabic, Byzantine and European coins here dating back to the 10th century. Could these coins be the money once paid by Igor for his bride?

Our hypothesis is that from 800 AD until the so-called Ice Battle in 1242, Läämmijärv was a very central place for Austrvegr!

Another well-known story goes that the young Norwegian Prince Olav Tryggvason, having been exiled with his mother Astrid from Norway to Holmgard in 970, was intercepted and enslaved by Osilians (from Saaremaa) and eventually resold for a goat to the Reas family who treated him well. Where exactly in Estonia did the young Olav spend seven years of his early life, before his Uncle Sigurd from Holmgard bought his freedom and he became the first Norwegian king, the one who united his country under Christianity and sent Leif Ericsson to America?

Linguist and poet Kalle Eller believes that the place now called “Reo” located near the village of Süvahavva (Deep Hole) just few kilometres up the Võhandu from the Võuküla fortress was a likely place to host a “wiseman” (Regu)... and young Olav, as well?

A few years afterwards, tensions occurred in Läämmijärv, prompting the Russian Duke Jaroslav the Wise to attack Tarvata in the year 1030. He burnt down an Estis fortress and renamed that place “Jurjev” after his guardian angel. In the meantime, another exiled Norwegian king named Olav (Holy) Haraldsson, after baptizing Gotland into Christianity, went to see Jaroslav who had married his bride – Swedish Princess Ingegerd – who had been first promised to Olav. However after losing his kingdom, Olav was no longer useful to the Swedish King Olof Skötkonung who decided to give his daughter away to a more powerful ruler – Jaroslav from Kiev, related to the Danish kings, according to Saxo Grammaticus.

Did these three – Olav from Norway, Ingegerd from Aldeignborg (Ladoga) and the invading Duke Jaroslav meet, as legend tells us, near Tarvata one beautiful summer day in 1030 AD?

Quite possibly!

The exiled King Olav was a fast-mover – official Norwegian history mentions his final battleground at Stiklestad near Trondheim, in northern Norway, July 29, 1030, where he unsuccessfully attacked the Norwegian Crown and lost his life. Maybe when raiding Tartu in spring 1030 with Jaroslav, Olav received a substantial amount of wealth to enable organising an army for the battle so fatal to him! Six years later, Osilians (Saaremaa) pushed Jaroslav's tax men away from Tartu anyway. Free passage from Scandinavia to Novgorod was back under Tchuudi-Estis people's control for more than two centuries to come! The pagan island of Estonia was surrounded by the vast Christian world on both east and west!

Two young Estonian scholars, Dr. Marika Magi and Dr. Heiki Valk, recently widened our understanding of our history: Even after crusaders forced the last European pagans as Estonians to convert to Christianity in 1227 in such Estonian places as Valjala, Muhu and Saaremaa, many local chieftains remained in power as vassals bound to new rulers only by tax collection agreements for almost another 300 years. These semi-independent chieftains are mentioned particularly in southeastern Estonia at Siksali, in Virumaa and in Saaremaa.

The first German-Russian conflict in April 5, 1242 indicates clearly the remaining force of local chieftains. Thomash and Tereph are mentioned as warlords who disturbed crusaders near Hammaste and Võnnu before Duke Alexander of Neviski,

from Norway to Holmgard in 970, was intercepted and enslaved by Osilians (from Saaremaa) and eventually resold for a goat to the Reas family who treated him well. Where exactly in Estonia did the young Olav spend seven years of his early life, before his Uncle Sigurd from Holmgard bought his freedom and he became the first Norwegian king, the one who united his country under Christianity and sent Leif Ericsson to America?

A few years afterwards, tensions occurred in Läämmijärv, prompting the Russian Duke Jaroslav the Wise to attack Tarvata in the year 1030. He burnt down an Estis fortress and renamed that place “Jurjev” after his guardian angel. In the meantime, another exiled Norwegian king named Olav (Holy) Haraldsson, after baptizing Gotland into Christianity, went to see Jaroslav who had married his bride – Swedish Princess Ingegerd – who had been first promised to Olav. However after losing his kingdom, Olav was no longer useful to the Swedish King Olof Skötkonung who decided to give his daughter away to a more powerful ruler – Jaroslav from Kiev, related to the Danish kings, according to Saxo Grammaticus.

Did these three – Olav from Norway, Ingegerd from Aldeignborg (Ladoga) and the invading Duke Jaroslav meet, as legend tells us, near Tarvata one beautiful summer day in 1030 AD?

Quite possibly!

The exiled King Olav was a fast-mover – official Norwegian history mentions his final battleground at Stiklestad near Trondheim, in northern Norway, July 29, 1030, where he unsuccessfully attacked the Norwegian Crown and lost his life. Maybe when raiding Tartu in spring 1030 with Jaroslav, Olav received a substantial amount of wealth to enable organising an army for the battle so fatal to him! Six years later, Osilians (Saaremaa) pushed Jaroslav's tax men away from Tartu anyway. Free passage from Scandinavia to Novgorod was back under Tchuudi-Estis people's control for more than two centuries to come! The pagan island of Estonia was surrounded by the vast Christian world on both east and west!

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from Novgorod, actually a Mongol vassal himself, met them in battle. The so-called “Battle on Ice” at Lämmijärv never happened in the way it has been described so many times by recent Russian historians and glorified by Josef Stalin as Russia’s first victory over invading Germans.

However, the Battle on Ice, whether or not it happened, established the only European border still standing in the East! A true meaning of this cultural, religious and political border in Peipus-Lämmijärv between Catholic Rome and Orthodox Constantinopol retained through many wars and turbulent days for such a long time here but nowhere else! This fact is worthwhile considering as being very important not only for Estonia, but European civilisation!

The civilization border in Peipus-Lämmijärv closed the busy gate of Austrvegr. The Viking era was over. Happy days for the Lämmijärv Viking fortresses at Lääniste, Kureküla, Võuküla and local trader-chieftains were gone forever!

Next came the days of the Hanseatic League – another page of Estonian and European history…

Since 1999, a team of researchers from Lämmijärv Nature Park, has been working on a project to erect an authenthic Viking-era fortress in Kõrvõotsa Karljärv, Naha village near Lämmijärv in southeastern Estonia. This could become a landmark for history-lovers, re-enactment tourists, and particularly for educating local youth – a Theme Park similar to the Scandinavian Viking villages. Many academics, intellectuals and filmmakers from Scandinavia and all around the world have already expressed their strong desire to cooperate with us.

About the author:
Kalle Mälberg, Eesti Loodus, Lämmijärv Nature Park, has written a script for a 52-minute TV documentary, a 24-part TV docu-soap and a manuscript for book on the subject of this article, hopefully all to be published soon.
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Re-enacting a battle at a Viking fortress

On the October 13, 2002 we burnt down the replica of a Viking fortress in Lämmijärv Nature Park on, a Yellowing Day, which in our calendar is a Autumn Peak, in the year 10215 after the Ice Age.

The replica was built at the proposed site on Kõrvõotsa Farm, Räpina, Põlvamaa County, in south-east Estonia, using waste and more or less rotten timber which was donated by local timber traders. In the building process we involved 12 men and local schoolboys. The fortress was erected for one day – 10 hours. The 40-metre long, 2-metre high cross-beamed timberwall with 3 towers as high as 3-4 metres was burnt down after a re-enacted battle. Local invaders attacked by boats and on horseback.

All events have been filmed by digital camera recorded DV. The event was covered by Estonian media and the Lämmijärve Nature Park site was visited by hundreds of people. Today, we understand how original fortresses were built over 1000 years ago!

This experimental archaeological undertaking gives us many technical skills in restoring the practical organisation of defense works taken by Vikings. Today we are able to quickly erect a defense site as our ancestors probably did after they invaded the alien shores...Sic!
VIKING GENOOTSCAP

Start and organisation
In the first part of this article I already mentioned there was a great response to the Viking activity I had shown and explained on television and broadcast. Almost every day I received mail and phone calls for information from people who had seen me on TV and who found it a really interesting hobby. But two questions always returned: Do you have a magazine or newsletter where we can find more information, and does an organisation exist that works with Viking items?

So the necessity for setting up an organisation of interested people arose and in the following months I studied the possibility of starting something with all the people who had contacted me. Of course I had noted down their addresses and their areas of interest. They could be divided in three groups:

• Those who were just interested in history and Viking Age in the Low Countries (runes and mythology included). They wanted to study and read more about it.
• Those who just collected Viking items. They were just searching for all kinds of Viking stuff to buy.
• And a last group was more interested in real Viking life and wanted to do re-enactment. They were looking for more information about how to make Viking clothes, Viking shoes, Viking weapons …

The main question was of course what kind of organisation and how to organise it? But also how could I canalise these different approaches?

The answer was simple: The organisation had to do it all! But realising this was not self-evident.

I did not receive any money from the authorities (and still don’t) so I had to choose a good name in which everyone could recognise his interest and which would not scare off outsiders. In Belgium and the Netherlands people still think that Vikings just came for fighting, stealing, robbing, plundering and raping. And perhaps changing this idea is the primary motive for starting the organisation.

Finally I founded the organisation with the name:

VIKING GENOOTSCAP
Europees Studie- en Onderzoekscentrum voor Noordse Oudheidkunde, Runen en Mythologie.
Shortly: Viking Genootschap (ESONORM).
Translated: VIKING SOCIETY, European Study and Research centre for Northern Archaeology, Runes and Mythology.

The goal of the organisation is to study and research the Northern Mythology, Archaeology and Runic knowledge; more specifically focused on the Viking Age. It may undertake all kinds of activities to promote this goal, such as:

• Building up a full documentation concerning former mentioned research subjects and connected matters.
• Developing a study and documentation centre for the use of professors, scholars, teachers, students, pupils and everyone who wants to study, do research or to write a thesis on this subject.
• Setting up a library in which good scientific, popular and fantasy works, books, writings, and publications are collected and classified. The library can contain written and printed matters as well, such as photocopies, microfilms, or any other digital or non-digital texts, even audiovisual materials (possibly digital), or any other didactic or documentary matters.
• Carrying out fund-raising and by all means making possible study and research and promoting it.
• Participating and organising colloquia, study, education and training days.
• Participating and organising discussions, speeches, representations and performances in any way.
• Stimulating and promoting the way of

Here school children are guided into the Viking Age at a Viking market in Belgium 2001.
working and thinking according old rituals and integrating Northern art and utensils or designs in daily life.
• Setting up a museum concerning Viking Age, Viking history, Viking origins, Viking influence and Viking relics until now.
• Carry out practical testing of archaeological finds by means of experimental archaeology and re-enacting history, and by organising teaching practice, study weekends, living history and educational exhibitions.
• Aiming at promoting and establishing cooperation and collaboration between the several researchers, research centres research groups and organisations, in a national as well as international forum.
• The organisation can also organise activities and projects for unemployed people, or educational or cultural activities in the spirit of the Viking Age; and can establish separate organisations for this purpose.

As you see our aims and goals are rather well-specified and create a lot of opportunities for activities. It is of course, as you all understand, not easy to realise all this in a short time and it takes a lot of energy to keep on working.

But since our start in June 1999 with 19 members, we have grown to 50 members now. Our working area consists primarily of Flanders, but we also have members in the Netherlands. Our logo is based on the colours of the Swedish flag and immediately indicates our objective, as you can see here.

Activities and achievements

**Dressed like Vikings**
The beginning of the organisation went rather slowly, but soon there were some members who wanted to be dressed like Vikings. A huge research of information began. But in the meantime we had already started making tunics to find out the right dimensions and to try out several working methods and patterns. Unfortunately the linen was an orange colour…

But never mind, we had to start somewhere and it was good we attracted attention. I knew very well how Vikings looked, but what kind of materials did they use, and how? Which colours existed and which plants did they use for making dyes…? Then we started a search for natural materials, which are not so easy to find. Every month we had meetings with the people who wanted to do re-enactment to discuss what we had tried out and to evaluate the starting process. And each time we got new ideas and new issues to discuss.

Our shield (with coat of arms) is now hanging together with others in the Thinghall of Foteviken, Sweden.

![Odin with the two Valkyries.](http://viking.hgo.se)

**Midwinter feast**

Every member paid a small contribution (the starting year only appr. 7,5 Euro, from the second year 13 Euro) to cover the most essential expenses and to invest in new materials.

Because the contributions of the members barely covered all the expenses we had to find other sources. So we sold Viking beer. First the Danish Red Erik, later on the Dutch rather strong beer Erik de Noorman (33 cl – 10 % alc.). And because selling beer is much easier here than it is in Scandinavia, and drinking it is allowed (above 16), it is still an interesting investment…. Beside beer we also sell the several issues of our magazine, and also the Viking runes carved on little birch discs with an explanation of the runes.

From the beginning we took part at the Gallic festival in Destelbergen (near Gent), as friendly Vikings (it seems there were contacts between Gallic people and Northern seagoing people from the early 3rd century). We made shields and swords (not as good as the Paul Binns’, but strong enough to fight with…). The show must go on! People started to like us and we became rather famous here.

**Iceland horses**

But of course this is not the only thing we are doing. One of our members runs an Icelandic horse club. Regularly he organises a dressage competition. Sometimes he has to organise a show with the horses. In both cases he asks us to perform Viking life with horses. This is really fun and gives us the opportunity to form a really original Viking group with Icelandic horses. Mostly we show a settlement scene with an entrance on horses and Viking life in tents. So we teach people how Vikings travelled overland to markets and how they looked for new land. In exchange we can always rely on him whenever we need Icelandic horses.

**Viking Market**

Every year around midwinter we have our annual gathering, or as we call it: our Midwinter-members’ meeting. For this occasion we make a special Viking soup using original Viking ingredients. The soup is very filling with a lot of meat in it. And as beverage we brew our own mead. This recipe is a well-kept secret. But I can tell you that nothing remains of the several litres we make….

The midwinter feast is always introduced by a little ceremony and followed by a short act about the Viking mythology and midwinter. Every year Odin himself comes to visit us with two Valkyries in a sexy warrior’s outfit.

**Contribution**

Last year, in 2001, another of our members organised the first Viking Market in Mechelen, Belgium. In fact it was an initiative of a company that is specialised in organising special events and jumble sales. We did not
organise it ourselves because the investment was too high, but we got the opportunity to step into the limelight on the international level for the very first time.

I had to take care of the guided tours for the schools personally. We expected only three classes of some 20 pupils, but when the Viking market opened its doors, there were about 1500 pupils waiting to be guided. For this reason most of the schools were guided in English and the teachers had to translate everything. Nevertheless the schools were very enthusiastic and the children were much interested in Viking life. Totally some 5000 people visited the market.

**Handicrafts**

In the past two and a half years we have had a lot of work, but we managed to make several sets of clothes for men, women and children. We made usable axes and fighting axes for re-enactment. This spring we built our first Viking tent and forged our first Viking cooking tripod and several lamp standards. The forged materials were, of course, real replicas in true size and with the same torsion as the originals found in the Oseberg ship. It is easy when you have woodworkers, carvers and blacksmiths as active members. The blacksmith also makes hand-forged shield bosses for us. So if anyone is looking for really good strong hand-forged shield bosses, you can always ask for more information. This summer he will also try to make a Viking kettle (also Oseberg-type).

**Coat of arms**

Because our warriors had to be recognised we also searched for a coat of arms. Research to find a historically justified design started. We discovered that the oldest coat of arms of Flanders did not carry the black lion on the golden field, as every one knows it now, but a yellow – blue beam of rays, with a little red shield in the middle. This description is mentioned by Jan de Lange, better known as red-painted shield bosses.

Need I say we are very proud to have our coat of arms hanging in the Thinghöll in Fotevikken since June 27 this year? We feel it is a crowning of the work we have already done.

**Plans for the future**

Nevertheless there are still a lot of things to do in Flanders and the Netherlands. Is it a surprise when I tell you we have a lot of big plans for the future?

One of our first aims is to make an inventory all the Viking finds in Flanders and the Netherlands, and to organise a special exhibition around it. Another aim is to organise archaeological research on Viking relics. This could be accompanied by a study of place names and street names.

Our ultimate goal is to build a really great Viking camp that can be used for living like Vikings.

All these are long-term planning, but we also have planning that can be realised rather quickly. First we want to study the Viking items in one private museum and describe them. Next we want to establish a Viking camping place, where we can build a Viking house later on. This would be very useful as a gathering place in the centre of Europe. For this purpose we went to Göteborg this year to learn something more about the running and planned Viking projects in Europe.

We have ideas, we have a lot of interested and active members, we have so many possibilities, but we need a real gathering place and lots of money to realise our goals. So we are earnestly looking for good sponsors who enable us to expand our organisation.

**A Dutch Viking magazine**

The number of members is steadily increasing. We have attracted members from all over Flanders and even from the Netherlands. Now we had to find a way of giving information to everyone. The first Dutch Viking magazine was born and named: “de Ravenbanier”.

The first issue mentioned our goals and intentions and brought some global information about Vikings. The second issue was much better and with the third issue our layout attained an almost professional level. Our Ravenbanier is published in 100 editions, 3 times a year.

This year we started a unique series about the Viking personalities in the Low Countries mentioned in the contemporary chronicles. It is unique because it is the very first time that Viking history in the Low Countries (Flanders and the Netherlands) has been written, based only on original sources from that time. It is amazing how interesting history can be without assuming or copying other historians. Every article consists of about 8 pages, we always use footnotes and mention the historical sources. The author of the articles, Luit Van Der Tuuk, one of our Dutch members, writes the series especially for our magazine.

So anyone who is interested in reading it has to become a member of our group too. (As our magazine is written in Dutch, the series also is in Dutch. But it cannot be so difficult for Scandinavians to understand our language).

We have already described Harald Klaakk and Harald junior, then comes Roerirk (Rurik). Several others will follow. In fact this series fills the missing link in the early mediaeval history of the Low Countries. More often the texts are illustrated by pictures of Viking artefacts found in the Netherlands and by the mediaeval political leaders mentioned in the texts.

We hope one day to be able to publish our magazine in a more luxury edition with colour pictures. But as neither Rome and Paris were built in a day, we are trying first to reach the general goals of our organisation, and this dream is postponed to later when we will have better opportunities and finances.

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http://viking.hgo.se
Lake fortresses are a particular form of ancient settlement in Latvia, differing from the rest in terms of their location. The remains of lake fortresses were discovered in ten lakes in the course of a survey, based on folk legends, of underwater archaeological sites in Latvia.

Araisi lake fortress is located in south-eastern Latvia amid a picturesque landscape, 7 km from the town of Cesis. Evidence of the origins of the lake, its coastal inhabitants and miraculous stories of their lives is reflected in Latvian folk legends. A fortress is said to have sunk in the lake, at the place where today a tiny island lies. Could it be true?

Archaeological excavations
The small island in Lake Araisi has been known as an archaeological monument since the end of the 19th century. However the true nature of the ancient settlement in Lake Araisi was discovered only after three-quarters of about a 2500 sq.m. territory was investigated during ten seasons of archaeological excavations (1965–1969, 1975–1979). To make it possible, the water level was lowered one metre and dykes were built up around the excavation trenches. Water that did seep through was pumped out with motor pumps. During the course of excavations, it was clear that on this island a fortified dwelling place had been built on an artificially made wooden foundation, which was inhabited in 9th–10th centuries by the Latgallians, the largest of ancient Baltic tribes.

Thanks to anaerobic conditions the remains of the submerged wooden structures as well as the organic artefacts, which are usually not preserved at other monuments
from this period, have survived well in the occupation deposits below the water level. The excavations at the Araisi fortress revealed an archaic form of house construction, which had not survived among other ethnographically attested buildings. The houses did not have proper ceilings only gently sloping roofs of logs, covered with sheets of spruce or birch bark. On the right of the entrance was a small annex. The whole complex of buildings was surrounded by defensive structures. Of equal importance, artefact finds were obtained that provided insights into the inhabitants’ way of life and material culture.

The reconstruction
The Araisi lake fortress is at present the first so extensively studied monument of this type in the whole of north-eastern Europe. Therefore the idea to rebuild it and organize an open-air archaeological museum arose. Currently the reconstruction work goes on conducted by the Araisi Lake Fortress Foundation.

Work is carried out using replicas of ancient tools (narrow-bladed steel axes, chisels, wooden badges etc.). The lower parts of the structures are being rebuilt as copies of the originals while the upper parts have to be reconstructed taking into consideration fragments found in the cultural layer, ethnographic parallels and logical principles of construction.

Typical interiors of dwelling houses include clay ovens, benches, sleeping quarters, shelves with different household artefacts. There is already a reconstruction of a jeweller’s house with its interior constructed at the site.

Guides dressed in 9th century replica clothing help to communicate to visitors the idea of life as it was in the ancient lake fortress.

As a result of the reconstruction of the Araisi lake fortress, the ancient life style and building traditions of the Latgallian tribes during the Viking Age will be reflected.

http://www.muzeji.lv
Gunne’s gård

The reconstructed Viking-age farmstead Gunnes gård (Gunne’s farm) is an open-air museum with enclosed pastures, situated in the municipality of Upplands Väsby, near Stockholm, Sweden. The farmstead consists of a dwelling house, a cook-house, a byre and a storage building and is beautifully situated in an area with many archaeological remains.

Activities are for all ages but they focus on school classes and are aimed at bringing pre-history to life. Gunnes gård is operated and financed by the municipality of Upplands Väsby.

Viking-age Upplands Väsby
Upplands Väsby consists of three medieval parishes, Ed, Fresta and Hammarby. In the Viking period there were at least 34 farmsteads in this area and if you calculate that each farmstead had 6–8 household members then Upplands Väsby as a whole would have had at least 250 inhabitants.

The water level in the Viking Age was five meters higher than it is today. This implies that even the more central areas of Upplands Väsby had good access to Lake Mälaren via navigable waterways. Land transportation took place on narrow paths that connected the different farmsteads. Parts of this road system still remain and are visible today in the landscape as long narrow hollows.

In the Viking Age there were at least 11 farmsteads in the parish of Hammarby. These were Smedby, Vilunda, Skälby, Brunnby, Väsby, Hammarby, Vik, Eggeby, Nibble,
Dyvinge, Tryninge and Torsåker. As we notice all these places names follow well the traditional Iron-age way of constructing a place name using the suffixes -by, -sta or -inge.

Grave fields and hollowed roads
In close proximity to all these settlement sites we can also find Viking-age grave fields with some variation in size.

At the farmstead of Smedby there are two grave fields, both located close to the farm, one with 13 visible mounds and the other with 55. The fact that there are two grave fields might possibly be interpreted as an indication that Smedby consisted of two different farms in the Viking period. This is at least the case later on in the Medieval Period as we know it from the written sources. These were then named Lillgården (The small farm) and Storgården (The large farm).

Along the eastern fringe of the small grave field you can see the remains of a Viking-age hollowed road. Today this is only 30 meters long but it is most likely the road that connected Smedby and Vilunda.

Runic inscriptions
In Upplands Väsby there are 76 runic inscriptions, some of them only fragmentary and many of them have been moved from their original positions in the landscape. Almost all of them have decorations in the shape of a cross. This is possibly a result of the missionary activities that emanated from Sigtuna in the 11th and early 12th centuries.

Close by the larger grave field at Smedby there are three runic inscriptions erected by the Viking-age settlers. One is just in fragmentary condition but the other two remain well preserved. Both of them have been erected by a man called Vibjörn, one in remembrance of his wife “Gunnes dotter” (Gunne’s daughter) and the other of his father Sibbe.

As we can see Smedby seems to represent an ordinary Viking-age farmstead and this is the kind of settlement we aim to create in our pedagogical activities. Perhaps we should have named it Vibjörn’s or Sibbe’s gård (farm) instead of Gunne’s according to the runic inscriptions.

The reconstruction
Gunne’s gård is a reconstruction of a genuine Viking farmstead. An interpretation of archaeological remains at Pollista 70 kilometers northwest of Stockholm was the basis for the reconstruction. The reason for this was simply that at the time when we started our activities Pollista was almost the only example available.

During the entire period of reconstruction and development work of Gunne’s gård, the discussions with Stockholm County Museum concerning all matters of the reconstruction have been very important.

For further information:
Gunne’s gård
Ryttargatan 270
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Sweden
www.upplandsvasby.se/KFF/kfstart.htm
Ancient handicrafts part III

A Course in Viking-Age Carpentry

By Kristina Carlsson,
Licentiate of Philosophy and Antiquarian Project Manager, The Ale Viking Age Project

The Ale Viking Age Project is running a training programme with a special focus on ancient handicrafts. In the first few years, we will be concentrating mainly on constructing the planned buildings. Some areas of this programme have already been presented in two articles that appeared earlier in this series “Ancient handicrafts parts I and II”. The project covers many other areas in addition to the construction work. One of these areas is called ‘Theme Work’ and involves courses, held throughout the autumn of 2002, in Viking-Age wood sculpture, landscape architecture and cultivation, as well as something that we call construction special and Viking-Age woodwork.

We are running the woodwork course in conjunction with the local adult education authorities and regional handicraft consultants. Every Wednesday over a course of twelve weeks, a number of course participants spend time learning carpentry skills under the guidance and tuition of craftsmen Anders Lindberg and Peter Kondrén.

Wooden stools

Since many of us are beginners, we have decided to concentrate on producing relatively simple objects, but ones that can still be used as part of the Viking Age village equipment. We have begun by making three and four-legged stools from birch. These are being modelled on 11th-century stool seats discovered in Lund in southern Sweden during archaeological excavations. Sizes and heights vary according to personal taste.

The work includes all finishing stages, from when the wood is first split to the final touches to the finished stool. Hand tools that were used in Viking times – a small chip axe, a drawing knife and sometimes a sheath knife too – are used for this work.

Wooden receptacles

Since it is necessary to work with fresh wood when making stools, the wood requires a certain amount of time to dry, especially before the seat and legs can be joined. This time is usefully employed making wooden containers and receptacles of varying sizes and from different materials. For this work, we have drawn some of our inspiration from the rich array of burial objects found in the Oseberg Viking grave. A couple of smaller receptacles discovered there were probably used for holding milk. Another smaller container was fitted with a simple type of wooden lid. This may have been a box used for storing small items. The largest receptacle found in the Oseberg grave was over 2 metres long and 50 centimetres wide, contained traces of rye flour, and was most likely an enormous baking tray.

For the moment, however, we are working on smaller receptacles modelled on findings from Lund and which do not require large quantities of material. On some of the original findings, the brims on each side are decorated with a simple motif.

We have chosen birch and beech as the materials for making our receptacles, modelled on 12th century objects found in the nearby village of Lådöse and mid-11th century objects discovered in Lund. The receptacles are hollowed out of a half log using a small adze, a tool known as a...
Destination Viking
– Baltic Stories

By Geir Sør-Reime

Our project had an additional kick-off meeting in Norway during 8–11 November. This meeting was necessitated to get on schedule according to approved action plans. At the first kick-off meeting, in Foteviken in late August (see VHM 3/02), it turned out that we were not sufficiently prepared to discuss the various themes of the project in as much detail as described in our application.

This extra meeting took place in the County of Rogaland in western Norway with our partner Karmøy Municipality as host.

Most participants arrived by plane to Stavanger Airport and a coach transported them along the coast northwards to the town of Haugesund. The weather was nice and the clear autumn afternoon provided everyone with a magnificent view of the archipelago of Ryfylke and the high mountains in the far distance encircling this island realm.

Immediately after arrival at Haugesund, the first session of the business meeting took place at the hotel. Here, reconstructions (of Viking houses) and replicas (of Viking clothing and personal artefacts) were the two first themes on the discussion. We agreed to base our quality assessment and improvement work on the quality assessment manual from the North Sea Viking Legacy project. A form for easy

The rock carvings on the island of Ámøy are presented to the group by Geir Sør-Reime. Photo: Dan Carlsson

When making a receptacle, the first stage is to hollow out the split log using a small adze.

“tjäckel”, and gouges of varying sizes. The outside is shaped using a small chip axe and a knife.

Literature:
Kulturhistoriskt lexikon för nordisk medeltid , del XVI, 1980–82 (Cultural historical encyclopaedia for the Nordic Middle Ages, part XVI).

The finished product – a small birch receptacle – was made on the course at the Ale Viking Age Village and was modelled on findings from the Oseberg grave.
quality assessment will be made up. All partners will now make a thorough evaluation of their own houses, clothing and objects. For the next meeting the partners will also prepare a presentation of their plans for new reconstructions.

The following day, the party moved on to the island of Karmøy. The meeting itself took place in the new Pedagogic Centre, in a so-called electronic meeting room. Here, all partners had a chance to get acquainted with our new Intranet solutions, followed by exercises.

A draft contract between the lead-partner and partners was also presented. A discussion on our work with Viking sites and monuments followed this. All partners must send in a description of their own village and the sites and monuments in its vicinity. These will be presented on our web page. Our marketing strategies and publication activities were similarly discussed.

For lunch, the party went to the Viking Farm at Avaldsnes and was served traditional soup there. There were ample opportunities to study the various reconstructions at the farm and discuss it with the local Vikings.

In the evening, the party was invited to a dinner sponsored by Karmøy Municipality at the Mining Museum at Visnes, once an important copper mine which delivered the copper used to cast the Statue of Liberty in New York.

The meeting finished off with a half-day excursion through Rogaland on Sunday morning. Here we visited the Norwegian National Monument at Haraldshaugen, raised in 1872 to commemorate the unification of Norway at the battle of Hafrsfjord.

Close to the monument is also a stone cross, thought to have been erected in the middle of the 10th century, probably in commemoration of King Erik Bloodaxe. He fell in England, but for many years his widow and sons controlled parts of Norway in conflict with Bloodaxe’s youngest brother, Haakon the Good.

Next stop was a circle of standing stones erected in the Roman period to mark a central burial. The circle is located on the mainland site just opposite Avaldsnes church, where a similar circle was located. Today, only one of the stones of this circle remains.

The main stop this time was at the island of Åmøy, where we find one of the largest concentrations of rock carvings in Norway. These Bronze-age carvings depict ships, footprints, various types of circles and a few other motifs, including some rare axe depictions and a few humans and animals. There is a great variety of ship-types on the site.

The excursion was rounded off with a visit to Sola Ruin Church, a late medieval church completely demolished during WWII, and reconstructed during the 1980–90s. The church site, probably the site of the manor of the famous 10th century chieftain Erling Skjalldsson, offers a breathtaking view of the North Sea.

The next partner meeting of Destination Viking Baltic Stories will take place in Germany in April next year.

A brief aspects

Reflections by Kaare Johannessen
Curator at the Museum at Trelleborg, Denmark

There is an often-quoted saying in Denmark, that everybody’s talking about the weather, but nobody is doing anything about it. Anyone familiar with the climate in Denmark will understand this deep-felt wish for action, and at the Museum at Trelleborg, the staff has begun to make a serious effort in that particular area over the past few years.

It all began as an innocent happening during the Museum’s annual autumn holiday event in 1999. As an offer of entertainment to the visitors, they were invited to take part in the execution of a thief by hanging. Appealing to the dark, morbid side of the common visitor is a fail-proof road to success, as anyone who has witnessed a battle will know. The thrill of death and bloody murder is appealing when conducted within the limits of the secure knowledge that it is all theatre and nobody will really get hurt. It may not be a great compliment to the mental and moral habitus of either the participants or the spectators, but the simple fact remains that murder appears to be great fun. Also, it was a rare chance to let the public have a glimpse of the less grandiose aspects of Viking-age daily life (and death) of the less fortunate.

As expected, the hanging sessions went down quite well with the visitors, who were invited to help pull the rope (one spectator happily announced that it’s better than angling – you get the same feeling of fight at the other end of the line, only more so!).

The only problem was that during the first four days of the –99 autumn holiday, the weather was terrible. Rain poured down from sunrise to dusk, and everybody got completely soaked. After three days, the enthusiasm that is the hallmark of true Viking re-enactors was gone completely. Visitors were few, and it all seemed very miserable. In pure desperation, the staff decided on the fourth day that sacrificing the slave to the Old Gods in exchange for better weather instead of just executing him as hitherto was definitely worth a try.

Even the appointed slave thought it was a great idea, and thus, for the first time in a thousand years, a young, healthy man was hanged as a gift to the Old Norse gods at Trelleborg.

Naturally the sacrifice could not proceed entirely as it was done in pagan times. Firstly, we simply don’t know the details of religious procedures in...
those days well enough, and secondly we suspected that the authorities would probably not approve of an actual killing (!). Thirdly, we quite liked the guy, and would prefer not to kill him for real (recycling being the key word...). Therefore, the climbing equipment that had saved his neck so far was kept in use, and the only real novelty was the way the action was carried out.

The surprise of staff and spectators alike was considerable, when the sun broke through the dark, ominous clouds for the first time in four days at the very moment the slave was lifted from the ground. The effect of the human sacrifice was stunning, and we immediately decided to drop the executions and hang on to the sacrifice in the future.

At the time of writing, human sacrifice by hanging has been performed some 48 times at Trelleborg during the past three years. It has worked more or less efficiently every single time, which may or may not be a coincidence; we shall leave any theological conclusions entirely to the reader (but frankly we are a little disappointed that the Danish Meteorological Institute has so far failed to call us in as experts...)

During the past years, the happening has undergone quite a lot of development. At one point, hangings became too predictable and were replaced by beheadings, which are slightly quicker and a lot gorier. Likewise, the presentation and ceremony that surrounds the happening has kept growing, developing into a show with full audience participation and a series of slightly bizarre humorous elements.

When dealing with such grim actions as death by hanging or beheading, comic relief is necessary.

Creating a death scene that is entirely realistic is not a problem; it merely takes a bit of inventiveness and a lot of imagination. But stark realism is not the aim of happenings like this; it would make a far too strong impression on the spectators – especially the children – and instead of opening their eyes to the educational aspects of the session, it would just send them home with severe traumas. The educational aspects would, so to speak, drown entirely in blood, guts and gore.

Far too many historical markets and other such events contain bloody shows just for the fun of it, without having any specific educational aims. Bloodshed can be amusing in itself, but the whole point of a museum doing things like this should be educational. The "fun"-part of it is not essential in itself; it is only a way of catching the visitors' attention and opening them up to new information. Happenings, shows and events must never be staged solely to amuse, there should always be an educational purpose at the core of all activities at a museum. Pure entertainment is a matter for theatres, not for museums.

Thus, the spectacular deaths at Trelleborg are used as a means to convey factual knowledge of Viking-age religious beliefs and practices, and to challenge the views and concepts of the beholders and possibly make them reflect on their own attitudes and behaviour. The fact that all this takes place may pass by the spectators themselves unnoticed, but that is unimportant; understanding acquired on a subconscious level is still understanding.

In practice, conveying factual knowledge takes the shape of dialogue between the executioner, the victim, and the other "Vikings" involved (and, to some extend, the audience). Therefore, the important thing is not so much what actually happens, as what is said and done during the happening, the interaction between the actors.

At Trelleborg, the sacrifices have developed by improvisation over time into quite an efficient educational show. The visitors are gently forced to form a chorus to chant the "sacred hymn" (!), a humorous variation of a well-known Danish children's rhyme normally associated with ladybirds, in Danish mariehoens. It goes as follows: Marie, Marie, marolle – fly up to Our Lord and ask for good weather. When sacrificing a slave, it is of course altered into: Thrall, thrall marall – fly up to the Gods and ask for good weather, but due to pure habit, there is always at least one spectator that goes "to Our Lord" instead of "the Gods". This is naturally remarked upon by the Vikings, who take it as a cue to debate the relevance of various foreign gods. Finally, the slave is then killed as a gift to...
the old Norse gods as well as the Christian
god, Allah, Buddha and whatever other
deities that may be present.

The point, of course, is to illustrate the
theological open-mindedness of the pagan
Vikings, to show how bits of Christianity
(and possibly other religions) were quietly
assimilated into paganism and vice versa.
Furthermore, it serves as an illustration of
how the more subtle, abstract details of
Roman-Christian theology were often entirely
missed by the rustic, pragmatic Norsemen,
and thus of the entire pagan down-to-earth
attitude to the whole concept of religion.

The deliberate use of unmistakably
modern elements such as the "sacred hymn"
serves as absurd comic reliefs in themselves.
But more important, it makes it obvious to
the audience that this is not an accurate re-
enactment of how human sacrifice was
conducted in the Viking Age. The few known
contemporary accounts of human sacrifice are
far too unreliable and contradictory to be
authoritative, and thus some kinds of
reservations have to be made when staging a
sacrifice.

In this way, reservations are made in a
clear, but discreet manner; telling the
audience plainly that "this is how we assume
it must have been, but frankly we don't know"
would make the necessary sense of
disbelief very difficult. It would ruin the
experience and create a distance between the
happening and the audience. Making the
reservations in the shape of deliberate, honest
and obvious anachronisms serves the same
purpose without ruining the experience. It is,
in a manner of speaking, an external
comment within the limits of the illusion
itself.

Just before the sword is about to come
down, one of the Vikings starts announcing
that new guidelines for thrall sacrifice has
been issued by the Council of Thrall-Ethics (a
badly disguised parallel to the Danish
Council of Animal Ethics of the present-day –
again, a deliberate and clearly recognisable
anachronism), stating that thralls should be
anaesthetised before being killed. Generally,
this provokes cries of disapproval from the
visitors, who normally prefer the slave fully
conscious at the moment of death.
Anaesthesia is gently administered by hitting
the thrall's head several times with a big rock,
which makes a really nasty, thumping sound.

Finally, the beheading itself is then
performed. The action takes place atop a
small mound, ensuring that the audience has
a good, clear view without actually being able
to see anything in detail, and thus the cut
itself can go directly into the ground while
appearing to hit the thrall. Usually it takes
seven or eight blows and a lot of yelling and
kicking of legs to kill the slave. The last small,
but quite important detail, is the revival of
the dead slave soon after (much to the
embarrassment of the Vikings). It is extremely
important to let the children see the guy
afterwards, to finally remove any doubts as to
whether he was really killed or not.

The reactions of the spectators invariably
follow the same pattern every time. From a
state of reserved interest, people are taken
aback and amused by the obvious silliness of
the sacred hymn, only to be shocked by the
brutality with which the slave is then knocked
unconscious with a rock, and finally the
actual beheading is accompanied by roars of
laughter – the use of unnecessarily brutal
violence invariably stimulates laughter. By
then, the happening has in a very short time
moved people to abandon all illusions of
civilisation, which is replaced by pure, naked
blood thirst.

Finally, when the action is all over, the
actors close the show by making the
spectators look at themselves: "Look what we
made you do – ten minutes of theatre, and
you're all happily crying out for blood!" In
this way, people hopefully leave the display
with a slightly uneasy feeling of how easy it is
to turn normal, well-behaved civilised people
into monsters.

At Trelleborg, we don't kill people to show
the spectators how mean we are, but how
mean they themselves can be. Thus, they will
have learned a little about pagan religious
practices and the status of thralls in the
Viking Age, but also a little about their own
dark, sinister sides. After all, historical
education is not necessarily limited to things
from the past; it may also be relevant in our
own age on a personal as well as a general
level.

By sacrificing a thrall, we can make people
understand a little more of the religious mind
and the social interactions of the Vikings,
while also getting to know themselves a little
better. Surely, that is a fine achievement for
the modest price of a simple thrall now and
then...

Website http://www.vikingeborgejik/dk/
Ancestral Homes: Paintings inspired by the Viking Age

**Now on display in Seattle, USA**

The artist Scott MacLeod will be presenting his Ancestral Homes exhibition at the Nordic Heritage Museum in Seattle, USA, from February 24 to June 2003.

At the same time the “Full Circle: First Contact – Vikings in Newfoundland and Labrador” exhibition (see VHM 2/00) will be on display at the same museum. In addition there will also be a lot of activities on the Viking theme taking place in the museum.

The “Ancestral Homes” exhibition was inspired by Scott MacLeod’s Scottish and Norse Vikings origins.

In 1999 MacLeod was the recipient of the William Blair Bruce European Travel Scholarship from The Canadian Scandinavian Foundation. This enabled MacLeod to travel to Scandinavia and Scotland in search for his roots. His journey inspired a series of about 50 paintings and drawings in various media. In his work, there is a sense of fascination with the past and of longing for origins and home.

MacLeod is integrating heritage and history into contemporary art and in this way he indicates that heritage studies can help us to understand our identity; who we are in the present day world.

The ancestral home MacLeod uncovered through his research was a complex dynamic civilization, with intercultural mixing and constantly changing conceptions of ethnic and national identity. For example his ancestors came from the Outer Hebrides of Northern Scotland that were colonized by Vikings from Scandinavia. Several of the works in “Ancestral Homes” explore the similarities of Scandinavian and Scottish archetypes and symbols, evidence of the overlapping of cultures.

Krauka: Vikinga Seiður

The Krauka group takes you on a musical journey back in time to an era when the Norse culture blossomed over the North Atlantic region, the time when the Vikings were setting out on perilous sea voyages from Scandinavia across the Faeroes, Iceland and Greenland to Vinland (Newfoundland).

Krauka was formed in 1999 around the idea of combining storytelling and music from the Viking Age. First they did research on what kind of instruments existed in the north of Europe during the Viking Age. From this information they built their own instruments, but by using modern strings they made the music more powerful.

From the beginning Krauka was a band inspired by the Viking-age instruments and sagas, playing acoustically for about 100 persons. Later they have taken part in big festivals, for instance: in 2000 at a festival in Greenland, celebrating the 1000th year of Leif the Lucky’s finding Vinland; and in 2001 at a Viking festival on the Faeroe Islands. The same year they had their first school concert tour in Denmark and played in different Viking festivals in DK. In 2002 they played at a festival at Fjordukrain, outside Reykjavik in Iceland and at different locations in Iceland. This year they have also made two school-concert tours.

Trips to Canada and Poland are scheduled for 2003.

The musicians in Krauka are: Gudjon Rudolf: vocals, jew’s harp and percussion; Jens Villy Pedersen: flutes, lyre, rebec and vocals; Aksel Striim: bowed lyre, shawm, flute, druk and vocals.

Their CD was released in November 2001 and until now has sold in Australia, Canada, USA and Europe. The CD contains songs and melodies from Iceland, Denmark and Sweden and some of their own compositions.
The Skuldelev Ships I. Topography, Archaeology, History, Conservation and Display

Edited by Ole Crumlin-Pedersen & Olaf Olsen, and with contributions by Erling Bondesen, Poul Jensen, Olaf Olsen, Anette Hjelm Petersen and Kristiane Strætkvern. Published 2002 as Vol. 4.1 in the series Ships and Boats of the North by The Viking Ship Museum, Roskilde in cooperation with The Centre for Maritime Archaeology of the National Museum of Denmark.

More than 40 years ago, one of the most remarkable discoveries of Viking ships was made in the inlet to the town of Roskilde. Five ships were sunken in late Viking Age to block the entrance to the town. In the period 1957–1962 the ships were excavated, and are now on display in Roskilde.

The book is written by Ole Crumlin-Pedersen and a number of co-writers, and is the first part in the final publication of more than 40 years of work analysing and interpreting this very important ship discovery. This edition is the first in a two-volume series on the Skuldelev ships, and presents complete, up-dated analyses of all five ships and their historical background in Scandinavia and the British Isles in the mid-eleventh century.

Further chapters describe the topographical background of Roskilde Fjord, the excavation, documentation, conservation and restoration.

The book is an impressive work with many excellent illustrations and written by highly qualified scholars. It is a must for people interested in Viking ship technology.

The second volume in the series, The Skuldelev Ships II. The Reborn Ships, is to be published in 2003, will describe the experimental archaeological activities carried out reconstructing and testing the Skuldelev ships at full scale in Roskilde.

Dan Carlsson
Associate Professor
Gotland University

West Iceland History and Heritage Map

A new map of West Iceland has been produced by the West Iceland Tourism Association. Besides presenting a good, clear road map, this colourful production includes shorter stories and illustrations of the history of different places, famous personalities and characteristic animals.

On the reverse side of the map the general history of Iceland, from the settlement period up to present-day, is presented both in text and pictures.

For travellers to Iceland, this map will be a great help in getting an insight into the history, culture and stories that contribute an extra dimension to the landscape when exploring the west of the island.

Some of the songs have their origin in old Icelandic music where the singing was often accompanied by an old Icelandic musical instrument called “langspelet”. Other songs are examples of the Icelandic duo-song, which is sung in parallel quints and has much in common with folksongs from Georgia and other countries in the Far East. There are also songs of a type called “Rimur” in Icelandic, where the music and poetry merge into a story of heroes and historical events.

Their own compositions have stemmed from the possibilities offered by the musical instruments. Many of them have their origins in ideas that later have been worked out in jam sessions.

For more information
www.krauka.dk

The musicians in the Krauka group. Copyright: Krauka

http://viking.hgo.se
Vikings in ‘Svealand’ (Vikingar i Sveabygd)
The world’s oldest dragon-ship on the seas

Published by Täby Vikingaförlag
Stockholm 2002

This book is an anniversary book in celebration of Täby’s replica ship, Viking Plym that is 90 years old.

With colourful pictures the authors from Täby Viking Ship guild tell three stories in one. Firstly, the Swedes from the Lake Mälar basin, called “svear”, are described both at land and on sea a thousand years ago. You will also find newly made maps, for example one showing the landscape contours of the Mälar basin region around 1000 AD when the sea level was 5 metres higher than it is today.

Secondly, the story of the present-day oldest sailing dragon ship, Viking Plym, is told, from its beginning 90 years ago and how it has become a cultural treasure for the municipality of Täby, just north of Stockholm. Here the reader will get interesting insights into the sailing and navigation of Viking ships.

At last there is the story of how the ship guild has taken care of and displayed the ship at home as well as in foreign countries for 20 years. In later years the ship has also been sailing around the world on the waves of the Internet.

The book is written in Swedish but has captions and a summary in English.

Further information www.vikingplym.org

At the crossroads of space and time
Graves, changing society and ideology on Saaremaa (Ösel), 9th–13th centuries AD

Written by Marika Mägi
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Edited by Prof. Valter Lang
CCC papers 6
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Institute of History, Tallinn
Department of Archaeology
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The aim of this PhD thesis is to define in more detail the Osilian political organisation in the Viking and Late Iron Age and its transition into feudal society in the post-conquest period. The Osilians were the inhabitants of the island of Saaremaa. Saaremaa is also known as Ösel in Swedish and German and it is the second largest island in the Baltic Sea.

By analysing the Late Iron-age and Early Middle-age cemeteries of Saaremaa and attempting to observe the social structure, the author focuses on trying to find answers mainly to questions concerning the social and ideological development. Questions raised in the study are, for example: How stratified was Osilian society in the Viking Era? How far had hierarchism evolved by the end of the Iron Age? How did the society change in the revolutionary periods of Christianisation and feudalisation? Did the conquest involve only violence and conflict for the Osilians or did they look for compromise, for possibilities of adjustment with the transformed world?

Graves and burial customs have been chosen as the initial source of the study. The research is thus largely based on archaeological data, into which the author has tried to integrate historical and human geographic information. One of the aims was to test if, in identifying the social organisation of a society, an analysis of the same material based on different sources results in different conclusions.

The study presents many interesting ideas and new thoughts about Osilian society and the changes it experienced. Through different aspects concerning the burial customs, the artefacts found in graves and through discussions concerning sex and/or gender distributions in burials, an interesting picture arises. Osilian society, which had already been socially differentiated in earlier periods, became even more socially stratified at the end of the Late Iron Age and in the feudal period. Starting with the 10th century, there was a rapid accrual of archaeological material both on Saaremaa and its neighbouring areas. The author means that this probably indicates a change in burial customs, i.e. graves became more richly furnished. Especially from the 11th century, the burial deposits point to a reinforcement of warrior ideology in the society.

At the end of the book there are 103 pages of very good illustrations of the artefacts discussed.

By Tove Eriksson, Archaeologist, Gotland University

Marika Mägi has contributed to VHM 2/02 with the article “The district of Islands - at the crossroads of the Vikings.”
A New Viking silver hoard again!

The island of Gotland was a real centre in the Viking world, situated in the middle of the Baltic Sea. It was a meeting-point between east and west, and served obviously as a “middle man” in the trade and contact from the Black Sea area in the east and Western Europe. No other area in the Viking world has as many silver hoards as the island of Gotland. More than 700 hoards have been found on the island, more than in the rest of Sweden put together.

People used to discover at least one new silver hoard every year, and in mid-November this year it happened again. In the parish of Othen in the northern part of the island, a new hoard was found during work on a golf course. So far, some 600 silver coins have been found, dating mainly to the 11th C. The coins are mostly German, Danish and English, typical for the period in question.

Besides the silver hoard, many other objects from more everyday activities were found, among them several weights. Huge postholes indicate that the hoard had been placed in a house. Several years of investigations have given clear evidence that most of the hoards were placed in houses, and not buried far away in the forest or other remote places.

The investigation will go on for a few more days now, but there are plans to begin a more extensive excavation this coming spring.

Photos: Dan Carlsson

Exhibition – Mare Balticum, the Baltic Sea
– 1000 years of myth, history and art

The National Museum in Copenhagen has an on-going exhibition "Mare Balticum, the Baltic Sea – 1000 years of myth, history and art. With artefacts, pictures, texts and contemporary art the exhibition takes the visitors on a journey to the past and then back again to the present.

The Romans travelled the Mediterranean or “Mare Nostrum” as they called it. In the same way the north Europeans have travelled the Baltic Sea, however this exhibition is still the first to present the Baltic Sea as “the Mediterranean of the North”, “Mare Balticum”. The aim of the exhibition is both to maintain an established sense of community around the Baltic Sea and to appeal to curiosity and knowledge. Visitors are given an opportunity to reflect over what objects and art can tell us about life around the coastline during the last thousand years.

A major part of the exhibition is the 28 fortresses and fortified towns, which function as geographical reference points along the Baltic coast. Land maps, books, town plans, parts of wrecked ships and artefacts are all on display here. With a focus on fortifications, defences and rescue posts, it shows how, since Christianity came to the Baltic, the power game has changed through time from Denmark and Sweden to the Russian tsar and further to modern times with the Third Reich and the Soviet Union.

As the exhibition’s mythological central point, the myth of Vineta is told. Vineta used to be called the sunken Atlantis of the Baltic Sea. Even before the year 500 it was mentioned as the most important trading city in Europe. It is said that it had links with Rusina, Greece, Phoenicia and the Mediterranean. Around 970 the Arabic writer Ibrahim Ibn Jaqub described it as “a large city by the ocean with twelve gates, the greatest of all cities in Europe, farthest northwest in the country of Misiko (Poland) in the marshes by the ocean”. Maybe Jomsborg was the Nordic name for Vineta, Jomsborg was also called Junne or Jumnera – which later became Vineta. Vineta is also mentioned by Saxo Grammaticus (c.1200) in his history of Denmark and in the Icelandic saga of the Joms Vikings from c. 1240.

For generations Polish archaeologists have searched for Vineta and are now claiming to have found it in Wolin, in north-western Poland. The remains of a large international trading city from the Viking Age and the earliest Middle Ages have been revealed during excavations. Several of the artefacts from the excavation, dated to the 10th–11th century, are on display at the exhibition. Although there have also been other theories proposed about Vineta, it is up to the visitors to decide for themselves whether to believe that the remains from the excavation could be seen as testimony for the existence of Vineta or not.

This exhibition is on display at the National Museum in Copenhagen, from September 19, 2002–January 26, 2003.
New Exciting University Courses

Viking Heritage being a part of Gotland University now has the opportunity to present three new exciting university courses. The courses are parts of an ongoing research project, “The Gotlandic Paradox”, whose objective is the study of Gotland during the period 500-1500 AD.

You will find more information about the courses on http://frjoel.hgo.se and on http://viking.hgo.se. Questions concerning prerequisites, application and application forms can be found on Gotland University’s homepage at http://www.hgo.se. The courses give academic credits (or ECTS) provided by Gotland University. Both “The Viking Society” and “The Viking Landscape” are international and given only in English. The course “In the Dawn of the Middle Ages” is given only in Swedish.

Two international courses on the Viking-age theme

Few periods in our history stimulate our imagination to the same extent as the Viking Age. Their life and way of living has been a source of both fascination and discussion. The following two courses, the Viking Society and the Viking Landscape, deal with different aspects and angles of incidences during the Viking Age.

The Viking Society – General Course
March 5 – June 6. 10 credit points, 15 ECTS. In English.

This course is an introduction to the Viking-age society and its development over time. The course is interdisciplinary and analyses the reference material from different angles in order to give a more complex image of the Viking and the Viking Age. It consists of three main units: Who were the Vikings?, The Viking Homelands and Vikings in Archaeology.

The units discuss the physical remains that can still be found in the countryside and different mental issues such as social changes and contacts with the surrounding world.

Prerequisites for this course are general eligibility for university studies. The course is an Internet-based University course.

The Viking Landscape – Field Course
July 14 – August 15. 5 credit points, 7.5 ECTS. In English.

The aim of the course is to provide an introduction to the Viking Age and give a practical and circumstantial cognisance of archaeological as well as human geographical methods. The field course focuses on investigating the life and the structure of the Viking-age harbour at Fröjel, situated on the western part of Gotland.

The course is five weeks long and consists of thematic lectures, a guided field trip to local archaeological sites and four weeks of fieldwork. Lectures will give an introduction and background to the Viking Landscape and focus on the Viking Age on Gotland. Fieldwork will teach excavation techniques and recording, interpretation of artefacts, recording procedures and different surveying techniques, etc.

Prerequisites: Archaeology AB-level (40 credit points or 60 ECTS) or similar, which is equivalent to one year of full-time study in any of following subjects: archaeology, anthropology or other similar courses. English course B (TOEFL test minimum 500 p). Both the course literature and the working language will be in English.

One course on the Middle Age theme

Great changes transformed the Nordic society during the early Middle Ages (11th and 12th centuries) and conditions of human life in terms of ideology, economy and social relations became totally different. Material traces in the cultural landscape of this epoch are numerous, especially on Gotland. The following course deals above all with the mental aspects of the mentioned changes.

In the Dawn of the Middle Ages – Field Course
June 10 – July 11. 5 credit points, 7.5 ECTS. In Swedish.

The aim of the course “In the Dawn of the Middle Ages” is to provide an introduction to the cultural changes of the Nordic society during the Early Middle Ages. It will in particular focus on the process of Christianization and the mental and social implications of this phenomenon.

The course consists of thematic lectures and fieldwork. The lectures will give an outline of the cultural history of the Early Middle Ages in Scandinavia and an introduction to the field-methods of medieval archaeology. The fieldwork will take place in the parish of Frojel on western Gotland and contains elements of excavation and measurements of medieval masonry. Remains of an early-Christian cemetery, churches and a stone tower are the objects of investigation.

Prerequisites: Archaeology AB-level (40 p or 60 ECTS) or similar.

A new haven for the Rus Project

In August 2002 the Rus Project received a place at the seashore on the southwest coast of Finland, on Harfarö (in Finnish: Harvaluoto), in Pikis.

The haven is not very big, only 50 meters of shoreline, but the seaboard is convenient for boats and Viking ships with a length of up to 25 metres when berthing with their bows. The place is relatively well sheltered from high seas. The harbour has free access to the sea and no bridges or other obstacles limit access to the open sea. The navigable fairway has a depth of about 2 meters right in front of the pier.

The position of the haven is E 22° 29,5’, N 60° 21,4’. It is situated centrally for replicas sailing in the Baltic sphere. All replicas and their crews are welcome to visit.

There is a spring with delicious drinking-water 30 metres from the pier. This spa has been used for hundreds of years by the dwellers of Harfarö.

The haven has a ramp which it possible to pull ships up on the land.

For further information
www.qnet.fr/rus-project/haven.html
Viking Combs on CD-R

The Viking Gallery is a project dealing with the publishing of Viking-age artefacts and monuments. This will be done in the form of a series of CD-R. So far, two CD-R’s are published, one about beads and one about combs and comb-making. The one dealing with Viking and Medieval combs and comb-making has just been published. The CD contains a number of picture galleries, displaying different kinds of combs from Early Viking Age to late Middle Ages.

In all, there are more than one hundred pictures showing different kinds of combs, in some cases several pictures of the same comb to give a good view of the construction. Besides the galleries, all the pictures are also available as high-resolution jpg photos for a close-up look.

Besides the photos and the galleries, there is also a short report about combs and comb-making in Scandinavia available as a PDF-file.

In the task of mediating the history of the Vikings, there are plans for further issues of CD-R’s. The next volume concerns Viking Knives, with a short compilation about knives in Scandinavian prehistory in general. Preliminary release date is December 2002. Next will be a CD-R about objects of daily life. Besides presenting high-resolution photos of different kinds, there will also be detailed measurement of the size, design and construction of the different artefacts.

Later in the series of CD-R’s we will not only be dealing with artefacts, but also things like houses, graves, rune-stones and agriculture, as well as a CD-R about Vikings in general.

www.arkeodok.com

Wanted! Lost Viking Ship!

Viking Heritage has received inquiries from readers about what happened to the Viking ship replica Skibladner. It was supposed to cross the Atlantic to participate in the celebrations of the Leif Ericson Year 2000, but didn’t get any further than the Shetland Islands.

If you have any information concerning Skibladner please contact the editor!

Excavations in Stiklestad, Norway

Perhaps the name Stiklestad is familiar to you? Yes, that is the place where King Olav Haraldsson fell in a battle in July 1030, the same king who became known to posterity as St. Olav.

Olav was Christianised in Normandy and “persuaded” the Norwegians to become Christians when returning to Norway in 1015. He was the king of Norway until 1028 when he was driven away by Knut the Great of Denmark. Two years later he gathered troops from Sweden in an attempt to recapture his throne, but failed and died on a battlefield that, according to the sources, was found in Stiklestad.

Archaeological excavations have taken place in Stiklestad previously, but not to such an extent as the one started recently. In 1996 they found hearths, cooking pits and post-holes that indicate an ancient settlement in the area.

The new archaeological investigations, led by Eirik Solheim, are being carried out behind the medieval church, due to plans for new road and building construction. If interesting archaeological remains are found, maybe those plans will have to be changed. Now the archaeologists hope to find weapons and other concrete remains that can confirm that a battle actually took place there.

Source: Artefact, Internet Malmö
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