Editorial

SILVER AND THE VIKING AGE are strongly connected to each other, as we know from different parts of the Viking world. Now and then we get reports on newly discovered silver hoards. This time we are proud to present you with a large treasure trove found on the Isle of Man last year, a find that illustrates the distinctive nature of this small island’s Viking-age economy.

We are also happy to inform you of other recently reported Viking-age finds. For example, there are strong indications of two new Viking-ship finds, one in Norway and the other in Yorkshire, Britain. A Viking settlement has been uncovered in Ireland and the remains of a Viking village have been found in central Sweden. While in Gorodische, Russia, excavations continue at the place where the Norse chief, Rurik, according to the Nestor chronicles, founded a settlement.

Within the framework of the Destination Viking projects, Viking sites and attractions are being developed. New ideas for using the Viking heritage theme for tourism are introduced. This time partners from the Faroe Islands, Iceland and Sweden present their projects.

Lately, here at Viking Heritage we have been working hard to improve and simplify payment procedures for our subscribers and customers. We hope to have it set up soon. For more information have a look at our website: http://viking.hgo.se.

Please note that we also have a new e-mail address for subscriptions and book orders, E-mail: subscription.viking@hgo.se

You are always welcome to contact us and we wish you pleasant reading!

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P.S. It has just been announced once again that a silver hoard containing about 280 silver coins has been found on Gotland! Read more about it in the next issue!
To Manx people, and to motorcycle enthusiasts worldwide, the “TT” is a familiar acronym for the competition (Tourist Trophy races) that attracts around 40,000 visitors every June, and which has a history of over 95 years – a venerable tradition, if not actually dating to Viking times! Recently, the Isle of Man experienced quite a different kind of “TT”: Treasure Trove.

This major find comprised 464 silver coins, 25 ingots and an arm-ring, which were buried together for safe-keeping nearly 1000 years ago. The owner of this considerable fortune must have carefully guarded the secret of its location and probably died unexpectedly before having a chance to retrieve his/her treasure. Here it remained, in a protective lead container and completely undisturbed in its earthen safe, until 25 March 2003.

Context and Discovery
The Isle of Man, situated in the centre of the Irish Sea between Britain and Ireland, is a self-governing dependent territory of the Crown – not part of the United Kingdom. Tynwald, the island’s 1,000 year old parliament, makes its own laws and oversees all internal administration, fiscal and social policies. External issues, such as foreign representation and defence, are administered on Man’s behalf by the UK Government, but it does not legislate for Man except with the specific consent of Tynwald.

The Isle of Man has a rich and varied history from prehistoric burial monuments to Viking-age carved stones, runic inscriptions and burials, from monastic settlements to castles. The task of protecting, presenting and promoting this heritage lies with the national heritage agency — Manx National Heritage – and so it was to Manx National Heritage that the new hoard find was reported in March 2003.

A local metal detector enthusiast, Andrew Whewell, discovered the hoard in the west of the island and delivered the material to the Manx Museum in Douglas the following day. Archaeologists from the Centre for Manx Studies were commissioned to carry out an archaeological excavation at the site of the find – a field that had been unploughed for the past 50 years.

Treasure Trove law in the Isle of Man covers gold and silver objects and a reward will only be paid to the finder of such material if the discovery is promptly and fully reported. Andrew’s response to the discovery was commendable on both counts and after a court inquest was held by the High Bailiff, Mr Michael Moyle, in August, the hoard was declared Treasure Trove.

Valuations for the full market value will be sought and it is hoped that the hoard will be acquired by Manx National Heritage and displayed in the Manx Museum in Douglas.

Background
This is the first major hoard discovery of this period in Man since 1982, when a smaller hoard (deposited c.1050) was unearthed during the St Patrick’s Isle excavations. Indeed, aside from these most recent finds, only one other coin hoard has come to light since the Manx Museum opened in 1922. There are many more tenth and eleventh century hoards on record, including finds dating back to the eighteenth century, but these are generally poorly documented, and many of the coins and associated metalwork are now lost, or the provenances are uncertain.

The study of this important material was greatly advanced by the distinguished numismatist, Michael Dolley, in the mid 1970s; by James Graham-Campbell in the early 1980s; and more recently it was the subject of a Ph.D. dissertation by one of the present authors. The combined efforts resolved many of the questions relating to the early finds, resulting in the reconstruction of several lost hoards and the identification of a distinct series of coins minted on the island in the eleventh century, as first recognised by Dolley.

The picture became more complete as study progressed in the late 1990s, as did a sense of the true character of the Manx economy, in which coin and
bullion mixed and were used interchangeably, and a range of currencies, both local and foreign, circulated side by side. The concept of a flexible ‘dual economy’, where payment options were available, seemed to be the only logical conclusion based on the available evidence. But, would future finds support this interpretation?

The 2003 hoard helps us begin to answer this question. What we have, in short, is an exceedingly rare opportunity to examine the full contents of the bank account of an anonymous and wealthy eleventh-century Manx-Scandinavian “Viking”. The assemblage is both a reflection of the diverse and far-flung mercantile interests of its owner and further evidence of the complex economy that thrived in this location, a point that we will return to below.

Interestingly, Man has produced at least 21 tenth- and eleventh-century hoards with coins (yet, curiously, no hoard is known to date before the mid tenth century, despite the fact that Scandinavians were passing through the area beginning in the late 790s). This is a remarkable number considering the island’s size (572 sq. km). For comparison, no less than 83 coin hoards dating from 800–1100 are known from all of Ireland, 27 from Scotland, 11 from Wales, 16 from North-West England and 161 from the rest of England.

In other words, none of Man’s neighbour’s can begin to match the concentration of monetary wealth in Man.

One might better liken the situation to that of other ‘treasure islands’, like Gotland or Bornholm, even if the particular circumstances leading to increased hoarding in each location must be quite different.

Whether it was piracy, trade, or the wider ebb and flow of silver – or other factors that are imperceptible from a twenty-first century vantage point – something caused Man to prosper and accumulate wealth over a relatively narrow time-frame, from the mid tenth century until the later eleventh century. Manx coin finds are few and far between both before and in the century after this. The 2003 hoard is just one manifestation of this trend, and it is now the largest complete sample available for study.

**Composition of Manx Hoards**

Viking-Age silver hoards in Man, as elsewhere around the Irish Sea, sometimes comprise coins only, or bullion only, or they may contain a mixture of the two. The coins that occur in Man are predominantly foreign, since minting on the island only began in the 1020s. Hiberno-Scandinavian coins became available with the start of minting at Dublin at the end of the tenth century (c.995), and the eleventh-century hoards tend to include coins from Dublin, Anglo-Saxon England and, in at least one case, the Continent.

Yet another element mixed with these in local circulation: the ‘Hiberno-Manx’ coinage, which was produced somewhere in Man during the middle decades of the eleventh century (c.1025–c.1065). To date, no Kufic dirhems have been found in Man.

Bullion represents yet another form of currency, and is a common feature of hoards of Scandinavian character from Britain and Ireland. Bullion, in the form of whole ornaments or ingots, or fragments of them (hack-silver), also occurs with some frequency in the Manx hoards. Plain silver arm-rings, of the type associated with Scandinavian Scotland are the most common, while the somewhat earlier decorated broad-band arm-rings from Ireland are entirely absent.

At least five hoards, possibly six, include a bullion component, while there are also two coinless silver hoards and one of gold, comprising two eleventh-century finger-rings (one whole and plaited, the other ornate and fragmentary). Bullion would have been more practical than coin for larger transactions and, as a universally recognised medium, it would have served when other currencies were unacceptable.

That bullion, mainly in the form of whole and cut plain silver arm-rings, had a role in the Manx economy even after the 1020s, when the local coinage was being produced, is now positively demonstrated by four eleventh-century hoards.

It is difficult to be certain since so many of the hoards are not known in their
entirety, but it seems that homogeneous, single-type hoards are rare in Man, and it is much more common, particularly in the eleventh century, to find a mixture of currencies drawn from two, three or even more distinct regions. This is certainly the case in the 1972/5 find from Kirk Michael (c.1065), a deposit of 81 coins comprising five distinct currencies (including bullion from Scotland), and this variety is seen yet again in the much larger 2003 find.

In contrast, the 1982 hoard from St Patrick’s Isle contained only coins from Dublin, but these were struck from a limited number of dies, indicating that the parcel had not circulated in Man (or elsewhere) before being consigned to the ground for safe-keeping.

In other words, it is the mixed hoards that are typically ‘Manx’ and which we must look to for a representative sample of the currency that was prevalent and circulating in Man in this period.

The 2003 Hoard
The 2003 hoard contains an interesting selection of coins, 464 in all: 326 coins are from Dublin (Phases I and II); 79 coins are from Anglo-Saxon England (ending in Cnut’s Quatrefoil type), deriving from 25 different mints; 30 are from the Hiberno-Scandinavian/Manx transitional group, and were probably struck in Man; twelve appear to be related to this group but their origin and place in the Hiberno-Scandinavian/Manx series is uncertain; eleven are from a mint somewhere in the “Irish Sea”, perhaps the Wirral, as recently recognised by Mark Blackburn (Quatrefoil type); one is apparently a Scandinavian imitation; and five are at present unidentified or uncertain types.

In addition, the hoard contains 24 ingots (cut and whole), a rounded globule of silver and most of a heavy plaited silver arm-ring with decorated terminals. Finally, there are fragments of the lead container in which the coins and objects were deposited, and which acted as a shield to corrosive elements so that the coins and objects were in an extraordinary state of preservation.

Based on the Anglo-Saxon element alone the hoard would appear to have been deposited by c.1025, and perhaps a little earlier since Quatrefoil coins are present, but do not dominate. However, the Hiberno-Scandinavian element, with a large proportion of Phase II issues, suggests that the hoard was deposited slightly later, and a date c.1030 has been suggested.

The total weight of this find is approximately 1.3 kg, a substantial sum of money that, in its day, would have bought a flock of about 200 sheep. This is unusual by Manx standards, where hoards tend to represent smaller, utilitarian sums of money (equivalent to between 10 g and 200 g silver). Nevertheless, its value is still about half that of the great Douglas hoard of 1894, where the total weight was between 2-3 kg silver.

The hoard, quite literally, contains a wealth of information and it will remain the focus of study for many years to come. Its main contribution will be towards understanding the interface between Phases I and II of the Dublin coinage, while it also promises to shed light on the earliest stage of the Manx mint.

What is already apparent is that this array is typical of what was available to an inhabitant of Man in the first half of the eleventh century, and a similarly diverse composition (with three or more different currencies) occurs in no less than five other eleventh-century Manx hoards. This contrasts with the homogeneous nature of contemporary coin hoards from England and the Dublin vicinity, where a conscious effort was made to exclude foreign coinage. The situation is understandable, however, when one imagines the confluence of cultures in this island emporium: it only made sense to be armed with several currencies when negotiating this ‘international marketplace’.

Evidently in Man, and perhaps in the Irish Sea region generally, flexibility was necessary – possibly even desired and cultivated – in financial dealings. Indeed, if nothing else, the eclectic nature of the coin evidence reveals that Man was a vital hub for Irish Sea trade, which arrived from every direction of the compass, from the mid tenth century and throughout the eleventh century.

Just as the modern day TT competition raises Man’s profile and attracts a diverse audience for a few weeks every year, this Viking Age treasure trove testifies to Man’s cosmopolitan interests of long ago. As never before, the distinctive nature of this small island’s Viking-Age economy is spectacularly illustrated by the ‘TT’ of 2003 – Man’s best trophy yet.

For further information on the work of Manx National Heritage, please see; www.gov.im/mnh

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A treasure hoard found in Yorkshire – A Viking boat burial?

A treasure hoard recently discovered by metal detector amateurs, in a field in Yorkshire, could be one of the most significant Viking discoveries in Britain. Some silver coins, fragments of two swords and boat nails from the 9th century have raised hope that this could be a site of a Viking boat burial! If this turns out to be true, this will be the first Viking ship find in England.

The artifacts are typical of the personal treasures for use in the afterlife, earlier found in Scotland, Ireland and mainland Europe but not previously in England. The vessel itself appears to be about 30 yards in length.

The Norsemen from Scandinavia traded widely in addition to their invasions and conquests in Britain between the 8th and 11th centuries. The last major Norse invasion in 1066, shortly before the Norman conquest of England by William the Conqueror.

After being displayed at the Yorkshire Museum, the items will go to the British Museum for further study.

Source: The Guardian 2004-02-17
Female Viking
found in Russia

Russian archaeologists have recently found a Scandinavian woman in a grave-chamber from the 10th century in Pskov in the northwest of Russia. In this grave-chamber, described as typical Scandinavian, were also found about ten artefacts made from silver and bronze. The woman was buried in a sitting position and she was unusually tall. Among other things, a 50 centimetre-wide bronze bowl was found at her feet.

Source: Gotlands Allehanda 2004-01-30

Viking village found!

In a field, a few kilometres east of Vintrosa in central Sweden, the remains of a Viking village are under excavation. The archaeologist and project chief for the excavation, Kenneth Svensson, says that this is very unusual. No similar findings have been made earlier in these parts of the country.

The reason for the excavation is a highway construction through the region. Archaeological sites have to be scientifically examined by archaeologists before being removed. The previous year an archaeological survey was carried out in the region. This area was found particularly interesting, with a high probability of finding archaeological remains.

Findings were made that could indicate the remains of houses from the Viking Age. After a few days of excavations, the preliminary results showed that not only a farm with several buildings, but a whole village had been found!

So far the remains of six houses have been found. These consist of postholes (remnants of building posts holding up the roof construction and walls) and flat clay floors. The results of radioactive carbon-dating (C¹⁴) of charcoal, dates the houses to the middle of the 11th century. Even the building style indicates and confirms the dating.

Source: Nerikes Allehanda.

Vikings in North

By Birgitta Linderoth Wallace

In this second and final part of the article about Vikings in North America, the author proceeds with a close, detailed examination and presentation of the alleged medieval finds of the Norse presence in North America.

Part 1 of this article was published in VHM 4/03.

ALLEGED MEDIEVAL FINDS

The Kensington Stone Cluster

Axes

At least 17 iron axe heads of reputed 14th century date have been found in Minnesota, and one in Michigan. The latter and six axes from Minnesota are almost identical. All are big and heavy, with a long “sleeve” meant to cover the top of the wooden handle.

This, said Hjalmar Holand, is proof that they are medieval battle axes. In support he mentioned that an axe exactly like that can be found in the Sandvigse Samlinger in Lillehammer, Norway. He did not mention that a letter from the museum confirming this fact goes on to say that the axe had been turned over to the Sandvigse Samlinger from the Antiquities Museum in Oslo because it does not date to the Middle Ages but postdates 1500.

Axe in Gränsfors Bruks’s Axe Museum. Photo by B. Wallace

These 18th and 19th century carpentry axes in the axe museum at Gränsfors iron manufacture centre in Granfors, Hälsingland, Sweden, are of the same type as those found in Minnesota and Michigan.

Mora Axe. Photo by B. Wallace

Axe from Mora, Minnesota. The axe was found in 1933 in a farm field. Several others, from Harris, Erdahl, Milan, Sunburg, Thief River Falls and Willmar, Minnesota, and Republic, Michigan, are of the same type. All are broadaxes from the 18th or 19th century. The Mora axe is of puddled iron, a product not available before 1785.
America – New and Old

Halberds

A halberd is a combination of an axe and a pike. Their use reached its peak in the 16th century and they were cherished during the formal warfare of the renaissance. After the 16th century they became largely ceremonial, carried, among others, by the Vatican Swiss Guard.

Thirty-one small halberds have been found in Minnesota and other Midwestern states. Seven have been believed to be mementos of the hapless Kensington expedition; others found in southern United States have been claimed to be from the 16th-century De Soto expedition.

The halberds are shaped much like those displayed by the Vatican Swiss Guard but are much smaller and lighter and of a flimsy, riveted construction. The fact that one of them, from Lake Darling in Minnesota, was found 3 feet below ground, among the roots of a big oak tree, seemed to prove that it was very old.

The true provenience of these little halberds is almost as interesting as if they had been medieval. In the 1890s, the American Tobacco Company launched an advertising campaign for its Battle-Ax plug tobacco. To promote it, they designed plug cutters where the cutting blade was shaped like a halberd, attached to the cutting board with a hinge. After the cutters went out of style, some had their hinge removed, and the cutters were used by themselves for light jobs, including cutting kindling and decapitating chickens.

The axes in question are simply carpenters’ broadaxes of a type used in Europe and America in the 18th and 19th centuries and even later. Most of the other axes are of the same date.

One axe, from Johnson, Minnesota, is a tomahawk of native type.
Swords
Four small swords from the Middlewest have been presented as typically medieval. The diagnostic criterion, said Hjalmar Holand, was the straight cross bar. Holand has been widely believed, but these little swords are totally different from the heavy medieval swords we know from Europe.

One of the Minnesota swords, often referred to as the Brooten sword, was found during ploughing of a farm field. With slight variations, the type is well-known throughout the Western world. It dates to the early to mid-19th century. The example from Brooten is an 1841-style U.S Naval Cutlass.

The three others, from Ulen, Minnesota, Sutherland, Iowa, and Hibbing, Wisconsin, are less common styles. They are also early 19th century to early 20th century swords. The design is based on a French model, created for the 1794 École de Mars revolutionary military academy in Paris by the artist Jacques Louis David. Some, like the one found at Hibbing, were used as a ceremonial sword by an independent order of Odd Fellows as late as the first half of the 20th century.

Hankinson arrowhead. Photo by B. Wallace
This and another, identical arrowhead were found in 1934 in a gravel pit near Hankinson, North Dakota, in what was described as “an Indian Medicine Man’s grave.” Carnegie Museum of Natural History in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, has a whole collection of identical arrowheads collected in East Africa and brought back by an American missionary. Identical arrows but complete and with quiver were readily available via mail order from companies such as Bannerman’s in New York. In 1925, a set of twenty arrows, quiver included, cost $25.

Spears/Arrows
Spear heads claimed to be medieval Norse have a variety of proveniences. One, the so-called Windjuje or Whitehall spear from Wisconsin is a Colonial pike. Two others from Chokio and Mustinka River, Minnesota, are native and made of cold-hammered copper from the Great Lakes. A fourth, called a spear but actually an arrowhead, comes from Hankinson, North Dakota. It is, of all things, East African.


Firesteels
These firesteels (see the images) are much like Viking-age firesteels. However, the same types of steels were manufactured until they were replaced by matches in the late 19th century. They were some of the most popular items in the Indian fur trade, and Hudson Bay posts in the Middlewest would stock over 2000 of them every year.

Detroit Lakes firesteel. Photo by B. Wallace

The Ulen sword was found in 1911 during deep ploughing of a field on a farm near Ulen, Minnesota. It is the kind of sword used by the militia or lower ranks of the army in the first half of the 19th century. A maker’s mark on the tang of the sword indicates that it was made in Philadelphia in the early 19th century by the firm of Charles Eberle.

Photo by B. Wallace

Climax, Marlow, Lake Cormorant firesteels. Photo by B. Wallace
“Mooring” holes
To a Scandinavian, the strangest evidence of all is the so-called mooring holes. These are holes drilled in rocks, varying from irregularly circular to triangular, usually about 1” in diameter and 5 to 7” deep. They have been found in loose boulders, rather small stones, the hole most often pointing to the centre of the rock. The theory is that these holes were drilled to hold a loose mooring bolt of iron.

Presumably, the Kensington expedition travelled to and through Minnesota on the many rivers and lakes, anchoring at night. Afraid of enemies, they wished to assure a quick getaway. Therefore they carried a mooring bolt attached to a ship rope, drilling a hole for the bolt in a suitable rock whenever they stopped for the night. The bolt was inserted into the hole and should a hasty departure become necessary, the bolt could be flipped out with a simple tug on the line!

Proof that such holes were used in medieval times was found in Olaus Magnus’ History of the Nordic People published in 1555. Olaus Magnus shows a woodcut of ring bolts cemented into cliffs at the Bergen harbour in Norway. He says that

...one finds in many places along the passages rings of iron, larger than a warrior’s shield, fastened to the rocks with molten lead...especially near the prosperous city of Bergen

(English translation by H. Holand).

The kind of mooring bolts Olaus describes are permanent installations in often-used harbours, the same kind as used the world over, even today. The Norse, be they Vikings or medieval, did not carry loose ring bolts. For temporary anchoring, they did what people still do: they dropped anchor and/or tied the boat or ship to a tree or stone.

However, Holand and others have presented their mooring-hole theory so convincingly, that the belief in its validity is strong throughout North America.

The true origin of the holes is not a mystery. They are hand-drilled blasting holes made by farmers needing stone for building foundations. Many are located in areas which can be proven to have been dry land in the 14th century. Thus they are not along water ways.

There are also many more holes than those originally reported as Norse. About 300 additional holes have been reported from Minnesota and the Dakotas, about 25 of them on Olof Ohman’s farm.

The Stinking Lake blasted stone is located close to an alleged mooring hole, in a field of boulders, some of which have similar holes. This one has been blasted so that only half the hole remains. The property owner told me in 1965 that in the 1920s his father had drilled these holes when they planned to build a new barn. However, the barn was never built, so the stones were never blasted, except this one, which was in the way for sledding down a bank in winter time.

Another farmer, Emil Mattson, told archaeologist Tom Trow in 1981 about drilled stones on his farm, which was next to the Ohman farm. Ohman helped Mattson’s father to build a barn and granary, and the profiles of the chisel holes can still be seen in the foundations:

Gee, whiz, I had to crank the grindstone for ‘em to sharpen them chisels. You know, you had a chisel this long [showing about a foot and a half]. And then it was about as big as your finger... and then you took it like this and then you held it on the stone and then you/* gave it a crack and, you know, they were experts at turning it, see? And then they turn it, and then they gave it another crack, and that’s the way, after a while, the chisel went down in the stone... and they kept on drilling until it was about this deep.
believing this may try his or her own.

Emil Mattson also told stories of his father and Ohman going out with sharpened chisels in the morning and coming back at lunch with dull edges for Emil to grind. He even showed the grindstones they had used and spoke again about how hard the work was (Trow, Tom: “Small Holes in Large Rocks”: The “Mooring Stones” of Kensington. Minnesota History 56,3, Fall 1998: 120-128).

These holes are simply hand-drilled blasting holes. Such holes can be found throughout North America and the Western world. Otto Zeck, the curator of the Detroit Lakes Museum, who had grown up on a farm, told me that in the old days, when many of the farms were built in Minnesota, farmers would drill stones which they either wanted out of the way or wished to use for buildings. They would not necessarily buy the dynamite for the stones at the same time, however, but wait until the next time they went into town. By the time they were ready to blast the stones, they had sometimes changed their mind or forgotten where some of the stones were, so some were left alone.

The triangular shape was the result of hand drilling with a straight-edged chisel or drill. A pointed chisel produces a round hole, but a straight edge creates a triangular hole. It is in fact impossible to create anything but a triangular hole with a straight-edged chisel. Anyone not believing this may try his or her own hand at such drilling.

The Arctic group consists mostly of scattered artifacts or artifact fragments found widely dispersed on Thule Inuit sites, mixed in with Thule objects or in Thule houses in such a way that they could be no later than the sites themselves. The wide dispersal of individual small fragments indicates that they have been traded over long distances as pieces of “exotica” by native groups rather than by the Norse. That said, the objects obviously originated from Norse sites in Greenland.

In contrast to all but the Beardmore pieces mentioned so far, the objects found in the Arctic are genuinely Norse. Among them are the arm of a bronze balance, a piece of a bronze vessel, and other pieces of smelted copper. A small figurine of wood found on a 13th-century Thule Inuit site on southern Baffin Island seems to represent a person dressed in a 13th-century European cloak, bearing testimony to some form of contact between the Thule and the Norse.

On Skraeling Island (so named by the explorer Orto Sverdrup) just off the east coast of Ellesmere Island more than 100 objects were excavated in the 1970s and 1990s by the Danish-Canadian archaeologist Peter Schledermann on a Thule Inuit site dating from the late 13th century.

Among them were boat nails, pieces of woven wool cloth, iron knives and spear fragments, iron wedges, many iron fragments, a carpenter’s plane, an awl, a wooden box of oak, and pieces of chain mail. The excavator believes that they stem from the wreck of a ship en route to or from Greenland.

There is, at present, a research project headed by Patricia Sutherland at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, looking at archaeological collections from the Arctic for other evidence of Norse materials.

Conclusion

There is no artifactual evidence of Viking or medieval Swedes roaming New England or the American Middlewest. Europeans have been in the Middlewest since the 17th century, and all the artifacts believed to be medieval are from this period or later.

Even if, for a moment, we assume that the artifacts and sites described here really are medieval, the overall collection is implausible. All but a few of the artifacts are edged weapons: axes, halberds, spears, and swords. All that is left of the camp sites are rocks drilled for a mooring pin, and an inscription.

There is no evidence of other activities such as fireplaces, and personal metal objects. General household items most commonly found on Viking and medieval sites in Scandinavia and Greenland, such as clothing accessories, containers, tools, and other domestic articles are totally missing.

The chances that so many weapons would be dropped by a small expedition of 30 men, tracking one single time along river and lake routes from Hudson Bay to the centre of Minnesota and neighbouring states are virtually nil. Proportionally, this is a far greater number of weapons than those found in Scandinavia or Greenland. If all these weapons were indeed genuinely medieval we would have to conclude that the Kensington expedition consisted of an army of hundreds or thousands.

None of the reputed evidence from New England dates shows a Norse presence. A coin found on a native trading site at Blue Hill on the coast of Maine, was believed to have arrived in Maine from northern Labrador, as the site also contains indigenous artifacts from that area. The coin is Norwegian and minted during the reign of Olaf Kyrre, who reigned 1065 to 1080. Recent work by Dr. Edmund Carpenter suggests very
strongly, however, that the coin probably arrived in Maine via a coin collector.

One reason that many have so tenaciously insisted that Vinland must be found in New England is the mention of wild grapes in Vinland. It has been common belief that the northern limit of wild grapes is in New England. While it is true, that the northern limit for wild grapes in the United States is in New England, the northern limit in North America is in Canada, in northeastern New Brunswick and the St. Lawrence River Valley, and the L’Anse aux Meadows find suggests contact with this latter area. But that is another story.

Suggested further reading:
An exhaustive annotated bibliography of publications dealing with the Norse and North America can be found in Robert Bergersen’s Vinland Bibliography. Writings relating to the Norse in Greenland and America. Compiled and annotated by Robert Bergersen. Universitetsbiblioteket (University Library) i Tromsøs skrifter series RAVNTRYK No. 10. 411 pp. ISBN 82-91378-11-8, ISSN 0804-4554.

About the author
Birgitta Linderoth Wallace is Senior Archaeologist Emeritus with Parks Canada in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. Born and raised in Sweden and educated at University of Uppsala and Kansas University, her expertise has focussed on the Norse in North America. She has been responsible for much of Parks Canada’s archaeological work at L’Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site. Before coming to Canada, she was employed by Carnegie Museum of Natural History in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in the United States. While there, she conducted a systematic investigation into all reputed evidence of the Norse throughout North America. This article reports on some of that evidence.

Errata
Unfortunately, an Icelandic thorn-letter was missed in the article Viking in North America – New and Old Part 1 in VHM 4/2003, on page 7, first column, third point. The correct text is “PENO on the stone is PENE on the paper.” We apologize for the error.

The Editor

Gudrid the Wanderer

By Lynn E. Noel.

“And still I looked and hunted in the grass for the one thing I had brought with me – my spindle whorl. All those long winters I had done nothing but sit and spin. All my life was one long thread that spun me back to Eiriksfjord, to Iceland, and back to Norway. And here I had dropped it in the grass.

Snorri cried in my arms, and from the knarr came the cry, “Gudrid, come! We will miss the tide!” And then the wind came, and snapped my cloak open, and whipped the pin away, and I was left with the round ring only in my hand.

And I stand now on the deck of the ship, Snorri warm in my arms, to be borne again back to Eiriksfjord. So few we are now, with so many dreams - snapped, like the pin. And I think of my search in the grass and I wonder - will anyone ever know that we were ever here?

Troubled is my heart as I gaze across the frost-cold sea. Tomorrow will the whale-path carry me again to my country? Who will follow? Surely they will come. Who will know us when our work is done?”

—Gudrid the Wanderer

Reliving the Saga
Who would not want to relive the saga of Gudridur Thorbjarnarsdottir, wife of Icelandic merchant Thorfinn Karlsefni and colonist of Vinland the Good? She is arguably the most famous woman of the Viking Age. Even more, she is a unique hero to this new millennium. Her brief sojourn in Vinland gives her a special place in the hearts of North Americans.

The approach of the new millennium in the 1990s sparked angst and reflection among Americans of European descent. We struggled to integrate shame at conquest and dominion with pride in exploration and discovery. We want more than Columbus Day. We too desire a thousand years of history in place. Gudrid’s living history is my experiential education.

First Approaches
Where was Leif Ericsson’s fabled Vinland? What did the New World look like to the explorers of a thousand years ago? Gudrid the Wanderer was originally developed to answer these questions in 1991 for Seabourn Cruise Lines.

August 1991: L’Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland
As a guest lecturer, I had originally been
booked for a map lecture on North Atlantic exploration. At the last moment, schedule changes moved my talk to 10:00 p.m. the evening before our arrival at St. Anthony. Surrounded by ice in the coldest July since the Titanic sank, how were we to convince our well-heeled passengers to embark in an open tender through the “bergy bits” and tramp a mile across open fields in the sleet to visit Viking ruins?

Any heritage interpreter lives for such a challenge. I compiled an outline from Gwyn Jones’ Norse Atlantic Saga, and adapted two early English poems, The Wanderer and The Seafarer, to traditional gammaldans tunes. Onstage, I was so caught up in the tale; I couldn’t remember what I’d said. It was my first experience with the power of saga as story.

The next morning, the tender was full despite cold rain. Over forty passengers arrived as the Vikings had, on foot after sailing south from Labrador. The place gripped, fascinated, and inspired them, as it had me. It seemed my saga experiment was a success.

Living History as Archaeology

Gudrid the Wanderer remained a short storytelling piece for the next five years. The next opportunity came to explore the combination of arts and archaeology.

October 1997: Hanover, NH
In 1997, the Institute of Arctic Studies at Dartmouth College sponsored the Eastern Arctic Archaeology Elders Conference. As Institute Senior Fellow, I presented Gudrid the Wanderer to an international audience that included excavators of prominent Viking sites.

My research refocused on two crucial L’Anse aux Meadows artifacts: the ring-headed pin that demonstrated European presence through metalwork, and the spindle whorl that meant a woman had visited the site. First-person transformed archaeology into art. “The history books tell you about how the archaeologists found a cloak pin and a spindle whorl from a Viking woman. I’d like to tell you how she dropped them.”

Return to Primary Sources

Other work claimed my time for several years, until the Canadian Museum of Civilization invited Gudrid the Wanderer to animate the Smithsonian exhibit VIKINGS: The North Atlantic Saga. Here was the opportunity to integrate years of research.

January 1999: Reykjavik, Iceland
Who goes to Reykjavik in January? I loved it. We had only three days to visit the Arni Magnusson Institute, tour Thingvellir, and collect Icelandic music CDs. I spent three years devouring and digesting materials from that too-brief trip, and scheming to return.

Spring 2002: Period Clothing Research

The CMC/Smithsonian invitation funded a long-held goal: authentic period clothing, accurate to the last detail. A full discussion of Gudrid’s period clothing is available on the program website.

- Hand-stitched linen shift,
- woolen robe, tablet-trimmed cloak, and brass-buckled belt.
- Fish leather from Ireland, amber from Estonia, bronze and silver pins from Norway, beads and scarf of Frankish woad.
- Soapstone spindle and Icelandic lamb fleece in the mead-horn at my belt: I was shaping into a proper Viking trader, as befitted the wife of Thorfinn Karlsefni. I bundled my belongings in a linen bag and set sail for Canada.

June 2002: Ottawa, Ontario
The Smithsonian exhibit’s Saga Theatre in Ottawa/Hull became my home for a weeklong intensive workshop in Saga Performance. The CMC had scheduled Gudrid as a typical theatre program: on the hour in French, on the half hour in English. Bilingual first person on demand was both more practical and more challenging.

Again, storytelling made saga come alive. Soon I was retelling sections I had dismissed as irrelevant or uninteresting, rediscovering the living language as ancient words leapt off the page. In English or French, the sagas flowed, fluent and fresh with desire, love, loss, and...
longing for home.

I became Gudrid in my own heart. I told her story all day, every day, to anyone who came, whenever they came and for as long as they would listen. Once, as I sat quietly in a dark corner of the longhouse, I startled an elderly couple. “Oh!” they said when I began to sing and to spin. “We thought you were one of the statues!”

I came away from the CMC transformed by a goal achieved and a new course set, for primary research of Viking landscapes. Oddly enough, life was about to come full circle with another cruise.

August 2002: Snaefellsness, Iceland to St. John’s & Boston

Who could say no to a one-way ticket to Reykjavik? Residensea Cruise Lines offered their guest lecturers airfare and a cruise on the World. I could sail from Gudrid’s homeland to Vinland across the Davis Strait, one of the gnarliest stretches of water in the world.

We flew to Reykjavik a few days early to make my pilgrimage to the ruins of Gudrid’s homestead in Laugabrekka, West Snaefellsness. Icelanders’ famous hospitality and family networks were with us: the guesthouse daughter saw my odd costume on the clifftop, her mother phoned the mayor, and two hours later I told the saga for the community of Arnarstapi where Gudrid was fostered. They seemed bemused, but pleased, that their local heroine was famous enough to draw crazy Americans to Snaefellsness.

The Davis Strait did not disappoint. We made the three-day crossing from Reykjavik to St. John’s, Newfoundland in a Force 9 gale with 27-foot seas before sailing uneventfully home to Boston, in the wake of supposed Norse explorations south from Vinland.

June 2003: Oslo to Gotland

The fall and winter of 2002–2003 found new audiences for Gudrid the Wanderer closer to home. I found myself mastering the broader canvas of Viking history and geography, and eager to visit Norse homelands.

When my brother and his Swedish wife toured Scandinavia for six months to visit her relatives, I seized the chance for a research trip. I managed to see the Oseberg ship, Birka, Visby, and Fröjel, and was disappointed to have missed the VHM staff during my circumnavigation of Gotland. Two weeks is not enough for southern Scandinavia.

However, the fates were with me, and a chance meeting with a Newfoundland colleague in the Oslo train station led to this article. I thank the readership of VHM for this chance to relive, and to share, a most extraordinary journey into the life of a most extraordinary woman: Gudrid the Wanderer.

“Who will follow? Surely you have come. You shall know her, though her work is done.”

About the author

Lynn Noel is a geographer, musician, and heritage interpreter based in Boston, Massachusetts. Gudrid the Wanderer is recorded on A WOMAN’S WAY, available through amazon.com. Email: lynnoel@mac.com Web: http://homepage.mac.com/lynnoel/programs/Gudrid.html

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A sketch of a runestone in the Mønsgard Museum, Aarhus, Denmark, depicting a fearsome mask to frighten evil spirits from a fallen Viking. We offer this dramatic piece as a brooch or pendant.
By Odell Bjerkness

In a New York Times article entitled “Newfoundland Happily RedisCOVERS the Vikings”, James Brooke writes that the isolated island is trying to shed its label as Canada’s poorest province by attracting more visitors.

In the past, there were only a few moose hunters and trout fishermen who traveled to the northern part of the island. This past summer, 2003, over 36,000 visitors from all over the world (but curiously not so many from Scandinavia) came to this small remote fishing village with a winter population of 44. Located on the northernmost point of Newfoundland, it is nicknamed “the Rock”. Visitors were attracted to L’Anse aux Meadows, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, by the first authentic Viking settlement in the New World, which some scholars claim is the most important find of the millennium.

Smithsonian Exhibition Spurs Interest

In the U.S. and Canada, the fascination with the Vikings is due in some part to the Smithsonian exhibition, “Vikings, The North Atlantic Saga”. Since its opening in 2000 in Washington D.C. at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History, it has had showings in New York City, Denver, Houston, Los Angeles, and Ottawa (Canada), and a grand finale in St. Paul, Minnesota. It is estimated that over three million visitors went through the exhibition during the three years. This six-month stay in each venue broke attendance records for many of the museums, including the Smithsonian.

Because of the exhibition, its 432-page accompanying monograph Vikings, The North Atlantic Saga and other recent publications, Americans, particularly Scandinavian-Americans, have become fascinated by both the proven and unproven exploits of the Vikings in North America.

It is curious that the exhibition did not tour Scandinavia, because many museums there devote little attention to the westward movement of the Vikings that was the major emphasis of the exhibition.

Eight-Day Study Tour

As a result of the Smithsonian exhibition in St. Paul, a study tour was organized for enthusiasts interested in Viking history and archaeology. They came from all over: New York, Wisconsin, Louisiana, Ohio,
Ottawa, and Minnesota.

The group was formed by placing classified ads in the Norwegian newspaper Norway Times, which has a national circulation, and in an alumni magazine.

After meeting in Halifax, the group of 26 took a bus and ferry from Nova Scotia to the northern tip of Newfoundland. The bus followed the Viking Trail, formerly the Queen's Highway, along the west coast from Porte aux Basques to L'Anse aux Meadows, some 360 kilometers.

Recent Development at Site

Participants found that the original site has changed little since its discovery in 1960 by Norwegian Helge Ingstad and his wife Dr. Anne Stine. However, the land around the site has now been expanded to an area of 80 square kilometers, with more land to be added in the future.

A visitor reception center contains some of the 800 artifacts and 300 animal bones associated with the Viking occupation of the area. In addition, the building houses permanent educational exhibits, maps and a book/gift shop.

Parks Canada has reconstructed one of the original (and largest) longhouses, two smaller buildings, and a furnace hut alongside the remaining outlines of the eight original buildings.

Continuing Archaeologist Study

Much of the original site has been excavated, as well as about 25 percent of the surrounding area; however, significant remains of all the structures and some of the middens remain in situ. At the largest longhouse, foundations of another room on the shore side of the building have been uncovered. The small Black Duck Lake feeding the creek that leads to the site has not been thoroughly studied and could yield some interesting artifacts. As with many sites, more excavations are necessary but have been put on hold as new archaeological techniques are being developed.

The group learned that further excavations by Parks Canada and its senior archaeologist emeritus, Dr. Birgitta Linderoth Wallace, were undertaken from 1973 to 1976 and continued in 2002. Dr. Wallace is working on several publications dealing with the site and Dr. Benedict Ingstad, Ingstad's daughter, who teaches at the University of Oslo, is also involved in writing projects about L'Anse aux Meadows.

New Programs

There is a need for educational institutions and museums to organize groups to experience first-hand the Viking exploits as only an extended visit permits. Another study tour in September 2004 is planned to put together more pieces of the puzzle of the Viking exploration of the New World.

The Polar Star expedition ship is going to follow the Vikings’ water trail from Iceland to Greenland, Labrador, L'Anse aux Meadows (Newfoundland), and to what some consider the Vinland of the Sagas, the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

Study tours such as this are an important way to inform and gain support of the lay public for the rich legacy of the Vikings. It is also good for tourism in Newfoundland and wherever else there are Viking sites.

For more information, contact Professor Odell Bjerkness at objerkness@aol.com.

Further reading


About the Author

Odell Bjerkness is professor emeritus from Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota, and was advisor and lecturer at the Smithsonian Exhibition in St. Paul, Minnesota. In addition to the above program, he has taken groups to Iceland to study Viking settlements and has lectured on this topic in Scandinavia aboard cruise ships.

George Decker, a fisherman in L'Anse aux Meadows, led Norwegian explorer Helge Ingstad to the site in 1960 and was employed later as a caretaker. Around his neck are the keys for the various buildings used in excavations. Photo Loretta Decker.
Returning to the scene of the crime, or the legacy of graffiti....

By Geir Sør Reime

The third ordinary partner meeting of the Destination Viking Sagalands project took place in Orkney in January this year.

The third partner meeting of Destination Viking Sagalands project took place in Orkney in January 2004. All photos Björn M Jakobsen

The third ordinary partner meeting of the Destination Viking Sagalands project took place in Orkney between 22–27 January. More than 40 delegates attended the business meetings, and a great number of other people also came to the public lectures included in the programme. Travelling to the Orkneys in winter can be risky, but we were very fortunate and the weather was pretty good all through the programme, although a heavy shower hit us on Sunday when looking at the ruins of the Brough of Birsay.

Most partners arrived during Thursday and some of us took the opportunity to visit some of the major Neolithic sites of the Orkneys, namely the Ring of Brodgar and the neighbouring Stones of Stenness as well as Skara Brae. The excursion programme on Sunday focused mainly on Viking-age sites. The first evening we all gathered at Kirkbuster Museum. Here, Orkney Islands Council offered a buffet meal, traditional Orkney music and storytellers in an old house with open fireplace and stone floors.

The first session of the business meeting commenced Friday morning at the St. Magnus Centre. We were welcomed to the Orkney Islands by Steve Callaghan, Heritage Officer of Orkney Islands Council. Then followed a brief update from the project management and from each partner. The participants then split up into four working groups, each concentrating on the four different components of the project, viz. storytelling, saga routes and museums, events, and marketing.

After lunch, there then followed a series of public lectures attended by a great number of enthusiastic locals. First, William Thomson gave an introduction into several interesting aspects of the Orkneyinga Saga. Then Olwyn Owen from Historic Scotland presented a paper relating the excavation and interpretation of the Tuquoy site in Westray to information in the saga. Anne Brundle from Orkney Heritage then gave a talk on interpreting the sagas through (archaeological) artefacts. Sheila Faichney from the Orkney Tourist Board gave a talk...
on the importance of archaeological sites to the local tourist industry.

In the evening, Orkney Islands Council offered a civic reception in Council Chambers. Here, the Convener, Stephen Hagan, gave a short speech underlining the importance of the project for Orkney Islands development.

The partner meeting continued on Saturday with detailed discussions on the saga routes book to be published by the project. There were further discussions on the magazine and our intranet and website. Financial matters are also a recurring theme at any project meeting. John Hull from the Newfoundland Viking Trail then presented a discussion paper on how we should organise our marketing.

Again, after lunch there was a series of public lectures. First out was Bo Almquist, presenting a paper on Gaelic contacts within the Orkneyinga Saga, followed by a most entertaining presentation by Bob Pegg on ancient music. He combined academic presentation with live and recorded presentations of the sounds of a huge variety of instruments. Sarah Jane Grieve from Orkney Archives presented a most interesting paper on The Creation of the Norse Myth, or ‘The Golden Age of the Orkneys’ during the Norse period.

In the evening, we were all invited to a traditional celebration of Robert Burns, Scotland’s national poet. His actual birthday is the 25th January, but Burns Suppers are offered throughout the weekend at many places. The Burns Supper consists of a simple meal (haggis and trifle) and a tribute to Burns, followed by dancing. We went to Birsay Community Hall for our Burns Supper along with the local folks.

A whole-day excursion is an integrated part of any Destination Viking project, and no exception this time.

In addition to seeing a number of sites, Tom Muir told us a number of stories relating to landscapes we travelled through. I was particularly fascinated by his story of how the small island of Eynhallow (Holy Island) became visible to normal men. This small island was namely one of the islands used by the underwater people for their recreation and was invisible to us. As one of these underwater men once kidnapped his wife, this man decided on revenge, and finally managed to find this island and make it visible and solid by sprinkling it with salt. Thereby, the island became sanctified, hence its name.

Our first stop was the Broch of Gurness, a round fortified tower and village dating from the Iron Age (c. 2,000 years old). The next stop was the Brough of Birsay, a tidal island where there is a Norse settlement and chapel. Unfortunately the tide was in making access impossible.

After a short stop at the 16th century Earl’s Palace the party had lunch at Wylie’s Tearooms before another short stop at the Neolithic Ring of Brodgar.

Maeshowe with its runes was next, followed by the film show at the Orkneyinga Saga Centre at the Bu, Orphir. Here is also a round church, believed to have been built by Earl Hakon as atonement for his murder of Saint Magnus.

The tour ended with a visit to the magnificent 12th century St. Magnus Cathedral in Kirkwall.

The final part of the partner meeting took place on Monday morning. Apart from concluding on several items, there was a discussion on the dates of the two next meetings, in Greenland and in Newfoundland, respectively. It was finally agreed to have the Greenland meeting 9–15 August 2004 and the Newfoundland meeting in 27 October–2 November 2004. The final meeting of the project will be held in the Faroe Islands in July 2005.

On Monday evening, we all gathered in St. Magnus Cathedral to watch the children’s dance performance of ‘King Fornjot and the Orkney Earls’ which is based on Orkneyinga Saga. A fantastic achievement!

The meeting was rounded off with a formal dinner at Orkney Hotel in the evening. Here, a number of storytellers, from Orkney, Shetland and Sweden entertained us.
The Far Routes of History

By Birita Nolsøe, and Regin Debess, Faroe Islands

The Faroe Islands

Situated in the heart of the Gulf Stream in the North Atlantic at 62°00’N, the Faroe Islands lie northwest of Scotland and halfway between Iceland and Norway. The archipelago is composed of 18 islands covering 1399 km² (545.3 sq. miles).

The capital is Tórshavn, which means the harbour of Thor, who was a well-known god in Nordic mythology. Today Tórshavn – one of the smallest capitals in the world – harbours 18,000 inhabitants, which is more than one third of the total population [47.821 (March 1, 2003)].

The weather on the islands is maritime and quite changeable – from moments of brilliant sunshine to misty hill fog, to showers. The Gulf Stream surrounding the islands tempers the climate and therefore the fjords never freeze.

History

For millions of years, the Faroe Islands stood alone in the heart of the North Atlantic. The first settlers may have been Irish monks, probably in the middle of the 7th century, seeking a tranquil refuge in these remote islands.

What is better known and well documented is the Norwegian colonisation, which took place during the 9th century and developed throughout the Viking Age, making the Faroe Islands a central part of the Viking settlements along the coasts of the North Atlantic and the Irish Sea.

The Viking settlers established their own parliament with local “tings” in different parts of the islands and the main ting on Tinganes in Tórshavn. Christianity was proclaimed here around the turn of the last millennium. Shortly thereafter, the islands came under the control of the Norwegian kings, one of whom was the famous King Sverre, who was brought up at the Faroese bishop’s seat at Kirkjubøur.

Later the Norwegian crown came under the Danish monarchy, and with the Reformation, the independent Faroese bishopric was abolished and its properties taken over by the Crown.
Background
The Faroe Islands have a rich and interesting history, but until recently this history has been essentially invisible and unknown. There is a lot of written material of course and the exhibitions at the National Historical Museum in Tórshavn, as well as the small local museums around the islands, are of great importance.

However a project like Destination Viking presents a unique opportunity to increase knowledge and awareness of our history. In the tourism industry, history is one important area of interest and the visitor profile of the Faroe Islands suggests visitors who are mainly interested in nature, culture and history. From the historical point of view, a project like Destination Viking – Sagas and Storytelling presents a new and interesting opportunity to share and explain our history.

Saga Trails
The islands of Sandoy, Skúvoy and Stóra Dímun are areas of great interest in relation to both archaeological findings and history. On the island of Sandoy, significant evidence from the Viking Age has been found and the National Museum is currently working on further excavation plans connected to the Destination Viking project. The islands of Skúvoy and Stóra Dimon are also areas of great importance in the Faroese Saga. Moreover, the islands contain a rich storytelling tradition and many legends are linked to these islands.

The main goal of Destination Viking – Sagas and Storytelling is to create saga trails on all three islands. These trails will then be open to both local as well as foreign visitors.

The starting point for these trails will be in the village of Sandur, which is a natural starting point both in terms of tourism conditions as well as historical importance. The saga trails will tell the history of the Faroes, the Faroese Saga, and in addition the many tales of imaginary creatures, such as the huldufólk or hidden people, which were very much a part of storytelling in the old days.

The saga trails will mainly be footpaths, but they will also include sea voyages and road travel. To a certain extent the old mountain paths of the Faroes will be used and developed for the purpose.

The project is currently in a start-up phase and the first part is very much a matter of gathering information, establishing networks and preparing the first product development stage.

Locally the project will create jobs and other activities in co-operation with e.g. walking organisations, dancing societies and youth organisations.

On a trans-national level, the Faroe Islands Tourist Board and the National Historical Museum hope to learn from the past experiences of others, share know-how, inspiration and history, as well as establish some general guidelines for the planning, preparation and development of such saga trails.

Furthermore, being part of the northern peripheries has a great marketing worth and thereby strengthens our position on a global scale. By making our history more visible and accessible, visitors, as well as the local population of the Faroes, will learn more about our history in a new and interesting way.

About the authors
Birita Nolsø is Destination Development Co-ordinator at the Faroe Islands Tourist Board in Tórshavn.
Regin Debess is museum teacher and co-ordinator at the National Historical Museum in Tórshavn.

An old church. Photo: Absalon Hansen
By Helga H. Agustsdóttir and Þraudur Kristjánsdóttir from Dalabyggð Municipality (Eiríksstadir)

In the 89th chapter of Sturlubók Landnáma, which is from the thirteenth century, there is a story about Erik the Red and his father arriving to Iceland and their staying in Haukadal.

"Thorvaldur, son of Ásvald Úlfsson, son of Yknathorir, and Erik the Red his son travelled from Jadar because of their fighting. They landed in Hornstrandir and settled at Drangar. There Thorvaldur died. Erik married Thjódhildur, the daughter of Jörund Atla son and Thorbjorg Knarrarbringa, who then was married to Thorbjórn from Haukadal. Erik then went to Haukadal and ploughed land. He lived at Eiríksstadir near Vatnshorn. Then Erik's slaves started an avalanche of earth and stone on the farm at Valthjófsstaðir where Valthjófur lived, but his nephew Eyjólfur saur killed the slaves on the Skriðuklaustur hill near Vatnshorn. Because of this Erik the Red killed Eyjólfur saur. He also killed Hólmgerður from Leirstaður. Eyjólfur's nephew, took up his cause, Erik was made an outlaw from Haukadalur. He then took land on Brokey and lived at Tadir on Sudurey this first winter. Thorbjórn from Haukadal who is likely father of Thjóðhildur lived at Vatn in Haukadalur." 1

There are not many facts about Eiríksstadir, but they do provide important clues about the site. It is mentioned in Eiríksstadir Landnáma, written in the 12th century. Eirík saga and the Grænlendinga saga were written in the 13th century. In these sagas we read about things that happened 150–250 years before.

In these stories the writers are certain about Erik the Red settling at Eiríksstadir. The farm is not mentioned much until 1730 in the book about farms by Árni Magnússon. Then the name has been changed to Skriðuklaust but its former name is mentioned and why its name was Eiríksstadir.

All the knowledge we have points to the Eiríksstadir site where the ruins were excavated and the replica was built. Throughout the years scholars in Iceland seem have believed that the place was truly the place where Erik the Red lived and Leifur his son was born. (There has been debate about whether Leifur was an Icelander or not, but we know for sure that his mother was Icelandic and, as anyone knows, that is the only thing you can be sure about!)

Based on the information we have, the site is the only place that can be Eiríksstadir. Some of the first Icelandic archaeologists investigated the place and published their results.

We know that the first to investigate and write about Eiríksstadir is Brynjulfur Jónsson who was there in 1894. He describes the ruin but does not dig there. The year after Thorstein Erlingsson came and dug in the ruins. An American woman named Cornelia Horsford sponsored his work. Thorstein writes a report of his investigations in the "Ruins of the saga times" magazine.

In the year 1896 Daniel Bruun came to Eiríksstadir. He did not dig at the site himself, but he looked at the ruins and wrote about them. His writing is based heavily on the investigation that Thorstein Erlingsson had done the year before.

In 1938 the director of the Icelandic Archaeological Museum, investigated the ruins at Eiríksstadir and wrote about the work in his diary. This report was later published by Kristján Eldjárn, who was an archaeologist, and later became President of Iceland.

"To celebrate the 1000th anniversary of the land discoveries to the West, the Eiríksstadir committee decided to build a full-scale reconstruction of Eiríksstadir near the original site. The National Museum of Iceland was contacted to undertake a trial excavation in 1997 in order to obtain more information about the type and age of the ruin. The results of the excavation indicated that the ruin was indeed a 10th century hall (Icel.: Skál). That a full excavation of the hall could set a new light on the site. In 1998 a full-scale excavation of the hall took place, revealing the actual outlines of the walls so that its size and shape could be established."

By that investigation it was clear that the house was a typical Viking-age hall and can be dated to the 9th or 10th century.

The full-scale replica based on the archaeological evidence of the Eiríksstadir
The site was then built in 1999 about 100 m southeast of the original site. The house was built very professionally, the builders used only the tools used in the Viking Age and the house was made exactly with the methods and resources available at that time. At the site you can now see the ruins of the original house and the fine replica of it.

The Leif Eiríksson festival was held at Eiríkstaðir in Haukadal valley on August 11–13 to celebrate the 1000th anniversary of his sailing trip to Vinland. It was a pleasant, informative celebration for the whole family.

The festival grounds were divided in two and the years 1000 AD and 2000 AD were played against each other. In this way, the thousand years that have passed since the Leif-the-Lucky’s voyage to Vinland was celebrated.

About sixty foreign and local Vikings were present at the festival where both ancient and modern games were played, e.g. treasure hunts, etc.

The program included plays, singing and music along with various other events. Evening entertainment and dances were held for both young and old. Light refreshments prepared in the ancient manner, as well as more modern fare, were offered.

Local tour guides familiar with the area led various walking tours along the historical paths in the Haukadálur valley. Also there was a free fishing in Haukadálur Lake.

The Voyage of “Íslendingur”

Before the Viking ship “Íslendingur” started its voyage from Búdardalur harbour to Greenland and America, the crew was invited to Eiríksstadir where they had a Viking-style dinner. They drank ale from horns and used their fingers to feed themselves.

When they had finished the meal, the crew rode to Budardalur harbour followed by many riders from the area.

At the Budardalur harbour hundreds of people were gathered and the crew and their followers were welcomed by singing and tales. The captain of the “Íslendingur” said an old seaman’s prayer and our Minister of Travel and Communication, Sturla Bödvarson untied the landing ropes of the ship.

The purpose of sailing the “Íslendingur” was double. The first was to draw the world’s attention to the fact that it was Icelandic people who were the first Europeans to step on the ground of L’Anse aux Meadows in Newfoundland. (L’Anse aux Meadows was also called “Leifsbudir”).

The second purpose was to use this event to draw the America media’s attention to Iceland as a tourist destination, a country with a modern society, spectacular scenery and great history.

What has happened since 2000

Tourism at Eiríksstadir has increased since the year 2000. There has been a guide on the site during the summer, and last year about 12000 visited the site.

The replica house has also been used for some events during the wintertime, such as Christmas events and meetings.

School camps at Eiríksstadir

The idea of starting regular school camps at Eiríksstadir had been talked about here in our school, because of the many school classes coming there and finding the site interesting. Also there was recently a Viking theme in our school that awakened great interest among the parents and others in the county.

When we joined the Viking Destination project, the idea of creating regular school camps for kids aged 9-12 began to take form.

We have contacted the University of Education to have them work with us making learning materials and plans. In our work related to the school camps, of course we follow the Icelandic Curriculum for Education.

This season we will in be working with plans for the activities in the school camps, finding dwelling places, etc.

We visited Viking places in Denmark last June to get ideas of what could be done at Eiríksstadir. The trip was very interesting and we learned a lot of things, especially about what could be done and what we should not do.

We now have lots to do. We hope to get support from the Ministry of Education. We have to make a financing plan, to cooperate with other schools, archaeologists, teachers and storytellers.

The project is very promising and we will do the best we can.

Footnotes:

Viking camp in St. Petersburg

In August 2003, the Viking village of Storholmen, Sweden, travelled to St. Petersburg and raised a large Viking camp at the Peter Paul fortress near Neva beach. Viking ships from Sweden, Norway and the USA, along with the the Museum of National Antiquities in Sweden and the Russian society, Drouzhina, all participated in the camp. This event came to be seen as the largest, singular Swedish venture related to St. Petersburg's 300-year anniversary. It became an unforgettable memory for us who took part.

By Mats Geschwind,
(CHIEF BEARCLAW)
Viking Village Storholmen

Excerpt from Chief Bearclaw’s personal journal.

The Society RURIK is formed
The journey actually started a year or so prior to the actual departure. An interim society, “RURIK 2003” was established during 2002. Imbedded in this society were several ships and ship teams from all over Sweden, Norway and even the USA, Viking Village Storholmen and the Museum of National Antiquities (Historiska Museet) in Sweden.

During this year of preparation, countless meetings were organized in Värmland, Viking Village Storholmen, National Maritime Museum in Stockholm, in Russia and even telephone conferences. After many tops and turns concerning details about the camp, visas and customs issues, costs and transports and many other matters, the picture finally began to become clear.

The participants
It became a close, joint effort between the society RURIK 2003, the Peter Paul fortress, the Swedish Institute, Historiska Museet and the Ministry of Foreign affairs. The Stora Enso company sponsored the event by transporting all the Swedish boats back home at the end of the event. The boats that ultimately participated in the celebrations were Tälja, Regin and Viking Plym from Sweden, Norseman from the USA, Mjösen from Norway and Slavija from Russia.

In the heart of St. Petersburg, down below the Peter Paul fortress at a vast, sandy beach, Viking Village Storholmen together with the Russian Drouzhina society built a Viking camp that was open.
for the public between July 30 and August 3. Storholmen, Drouzhina and the crew from Regin (where some were also members of the Telge Glima society) offered handicrafts, music, dance and games and gave samples of the Nordic Viking culture with a programme that stretched over the period.

All the participating ship teams’ Viking ships lay aground on the beach. Their respective society’s members exhibited each one verbally. The Museum of National Antiquities of Sweden had a touring rune-stone exhibition on display that was presented on the spot by the Russian professor of archaeology, Gleb Lebedev, on a daily basis.

**The Viking festival – a big success**

The Viking festival was a surprisingly great success with an average of 9000 visitors per day on the beach. The media coverage was enormous, two dozen or more different publications and nearly as many radio and television channels showed the Vikings at the Peter Paul fortress every day. It was estimated that nearly 70–80 million people saw the Viking camp at some point through televised broadcasts in Russia alone. The event even attracted attention back home in Sweden on a couple of national news channels and also in some newspapers.

In addition, the event even attracted so much attention that the Vikings’ excursion to St. Petersburg became somewhat like a state visit. In accordance to old traditions, a salute cannon shot is fired off every day from the Peter Paul fortress at noon. On state visits and similar occasions the main guest may receive the honour of firing this salute. The latest to do this had been Prince Charles two weeks earlier.

On the closing day of our engagement I had the honour of firing this salute. It was a privilege and an unforgettable experience. The empty shell that I received as a memorable token shall be used to play the old ceremonial toasting game of “Lagom” in the Village, a game where a beverage is passed around for everyone to take a sip from till it’s emptied at the end of the circle, hence the need to drink just enough, and not too little or too much, a concept not totally practiced in Russia. In addition, the event even attracted so much attention that the Vikings’ excursion to St. Petersburg became

had gone to Russia three weeks earlier than the rest of us, to finalise all our prior agreements with the management of Peter Paul fortress, Alexej and the leaders of the Russian society Drouzhina, Peter and Rolf, amongst many others. She also handled the arrangements with the Swedish Consulate, Ethnographic museum, Professor Gleb Lebedev, the pub on the beach, Stora Enso company, Russian customs, sponsors like Ericsson, and so on and so forth.

Even Mats, Jerker and I who had been employed in the Village during July, went to St. Petersburg a week earlier than the rest of the Storholmen gang to coordinate the final preparations for the camp that was about to be built.

We also visited a large, medieval festival in the town of Viborg the weekend before, to make new contacts and perhaps acquire some stuff for the camp. Even this excursion was to be memorable. In the middle of the awards ceremony for all the participants in the society in the fortress in Viborg, Jerker and I were summoned up on stage before thousands of people, because we “returning” Vikings were also to receive a statuette. Incredible! A few plans for the future were primed with the festival management in Viborg. Finally we were invited to the big banquet in the Viborg fortress.

Once back in St. Petersburg the
Activities on the beach.

The meeting’s objective was to establish status halfway through the project period. The Gunnes Gård Viking village in Upplands Väsby, north of Stockholm, hosted the meeting. The meeting was combined with the project having a meeting with Mr Kristian Berg, Director of the Museum of National Antiquities, Stockholm.

Attendance at that meeting was very high, altogether 22 delegates from all partners attended. Naturally, the two partners from the Stockholm area, Gunnes Gård and Storholmen, sent the largest delegations to this meeting.

Mr Björn Jakobsen, the project manager, opened the meeting. He set the tone of the meeting by stressing the overall objectives of the project.

Our prime aim is to increase the number of visitors to our Viking villages by improving the quality of presentations, experiences and overall impressions. We strongly believe that the story of the Vikings is best told in a combination between museums, sites and reconstructions. We represent the reconstructed Viking villages where re-enactors, dressed and behaving like Vikings, directly confront visitors with history.

We have identified a number of areas where quality can be improved. These concern reconstructed buildings, replica clothing, jewellery as well as tools and weapons.

We also want to broaden the extent of our visitors’ experience by including a number of other attractions, like ancient monuments from the Viking Age, in the product we offer.

Finally, we also want to tell the world about our wonderful villages. To this end, we are developing marketing efforts based on the ‘Destination Viking’ brand. We are convinced that ‘Destination Viking’ will stand for quality adventure products in the future.

After the formal meeting adjourned on the first day, we were invited to visit Gunnes Gård. Here, several of the able staff welcomed us with food and drink in the small cozy houses at this reconstructed farmstead.

The second day, we started with a thorough discussion of our intranet solution, led by our specialist, Mr Svend Øvrebekk from Rogaland Training and Education Centre. Two main obstacles for more intensive use were identified: the complicated access procedure and the organisation of files into folders. Svend will now try and facilitate the access procedure and, in co-operation with other partners, re-organise the folders into a more coherent logical system.

Then Mr Dan Carlsson from Gotland University/Viking Heritage led a discussion on the book presenting our villages and their vicinities. Partners will have to start working on texts and illustrations for the book very soon.

After the adjournment of the partner meeting proper, Mr Kristian Berg, Director of Historiska Museet, joined us. He led a discussion on the relationship between museums, ancient monuments and Viking villages and re-enactment groups, especially in relation to how the Viking Age is presented to the public. There was a general agreement around the table that co-operation between these various actors should be intensified. A concrete suggestion was to arrange a conference on museum didactics and re-enactment didactics. The suggested Culture 2000 project linking these different actors into one project was also presented and supported.

The meeting was rounded off with a guided tour through various exhibitions at the Historiska Museet, foremost of course the new Viking exhibition. Here the Vikings of today met the Vikings of yesteryear nearly face to face, at least they encountered ‘real’ Viking-age objects, the objects that the Vikings of today bring to life at their Viking villages.

The next, ordinary partner meeting of Destination Viking Baltic Stories will be held in Ale municipality in Västra Götaland in early May this year.
Over several years, students from Gotland University have had the opportunity to take part in excavations related to the Viking Age in Russia. Here is a report from the summer of 2003 in Gorodische.

Our purpose with this article is to follow up on last year’s excavation in Gorodische, Novgorod. The excavation takes place where, according to the Nestor chronicles, the Norse chief Rurik founded a settlement that became his stronghold in the 9th century. The Norsemen named this place Holmgård.

This year there were seven of us students from Gotland University who arrived at Gorodische in the middle of July to take part in the REACH-financed exchange program between Swedish and Russian universities.

The weather conditions this year were as usual very hot but a change from last year was that the water level in the nearby river Volchov was almost 2 meters higher than normal. That meant that the beach close to the excavation area had disappeared and the excavation pit from last year was filled with water.

**Wooden boxes**
One of the targets for the excavation this summer was to find out more about the wooden boxes that were a part of the fortification walls that surrounded the settlement. The wooden boxes have been dated to the middle of the 9th century. According to the Nestor Chronicle that is about the same time as the arrival of the Norse chief Rurik. The purpose of these wooden boxes has been to keep the soil in the fortification walls in place.

Just outside the wall and the settlement we dug in thick organic layers. They varied in age from the 11th century to the 13th century. Most of these layers consisted of wooden branches, birch bark and parts of bigger wooden constructions. There was also a lot of cow or horse manure in these layers that amazingly still smelled in the heat of the day.

In this organic mix we found a lot of well-preserved items used daily, such as pieces of wooden barrels, wooden plates, leather shoes, ceramics and animal bones. In one certain spot there was a bigger concentration of leather shoes and parts of leather that could perhaps indicate the location of a leather workshop.

Among the ordinary material we found more special and rare artefacts such as a wooden plate with the letter E engraved in the bottom, maybe the signature of its owner. A crucifix of bronze was also found which could be dated to the late 13th, maybe early 14th century.

**The birch bark letter**
The most exciting and thrilling find this summer was a seal and a birch bark letter.
The seal bore the insignia of a late ancestor to the Rurik family. And one day, among all the numerous pieces of birch bark, the Russian archaeologist Valeria suddenly found, while carefully washing organic material in the river, a piece of a birch bark letter. This was a sensational thrilling find since they have been excavating on this site for about 28 years without ever finding any birch bark letters.

Of course there was a big celebration in the camp that day. The letter was immediately sent to experts in the Old Russian language. Some days later we received a first translation of the letter. To our surprise the letter contained an even more thrilling piece of information to add to the puzzle of the ancient history of Gorodische. It tells about different persons, and among the parts of the letter that have been translated up until now we can read some of the following:

To the father, give it to the prince, the priest asked you, I say goodbye to you, to mother and father.

This is only a first preliminary interpretation of the letter we got during our two weeks excavating in Gorodische. The birch bark letter is still under interpretation since there were some words that had not been seen before in the ancient Russian language. A problem is also that the letter is not complete and that makes it even harder to translate and interpret. But with great expectations we are looking forward to a more detailed report by Professor Evgenij Nosov, the head of the excavation in Gorodische.

An exotic find
During our stay in Gorodische, Professor Mark Brisbane from England visited us one day. Professor Brisbane was working at the Troitsky excavation site in the town of Novgorod. The reason that he came to our excavation was to collect the monkey skull, which we found one day when we were digging in the bottom of a trench from WWII. The trench was dug down through the layers of time and in the bottom it met with the old layers from the fortification wall from an early period of the settlement’s history.

The monkey skull can either come from the bottom of the WWII trench or belong to the times when the old wall surrounding the settlement was constructed. Professor Brisbane is taking the monkey skull to England for C-14 dating. If it turns out that the skull is from the early period of the settlement this certainly could tell us very interesting things about the ancient trading connections to the south.

A reminder from the past
During the summer excavations WWII did its best to remind us about the fierce battles. Some harvesting farmers almost ran over an unexploded artillery shell with their tractor only 15 meters from our tent camp. The Russian military later came and disarmed it.

The tent camp was actually situated in between big bomb craters from an air raid, which were overgrown with big bushes. The earth around the excavating site is totally littered with pieces of metal from the war, making it almost impossible to use metal detector to find older metal things according to Professor Evgenij Nosov.

A visitor from Sweden
One day we had the privilege of meeting Professor Tomas Johansson who unfortunately died later in St Petersburg. He came to us one day during the excavation and gave us Swedish students a lecture about the Viking-age contacts between Scandinavia and Russia. Tomas Johansson had great experience and knowledge of the Viking-age transport routes along the Russian river systems. He himself had travelled along most of the old transport routes and had a very special knowledge of how the Viking-age transports and communications were carried out.

Baltic ware.

About the authors
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Discovering Viking heritage milieus in Denmark

By JAN O. LUNDBRED

1. Introduction
The purpose with this essay is to demonstrate the relative “ease of access” to a particular category of tourist attractions in northern Germany and Denmark, more particularly the Viking heritage locations. As this type of heritage presents itself both as “sites” - heritage places often in the form of historical monuments or preserved, sometimes reconstructed, archeological discoveries in the physical landscape and as “under-roof institutions” – exhibitions displayed in diverse museum facilities – it also becomes necessary to discuss the location characteristics of the Danish museum network at large.

By relating the distribution of the two categories of Viking Heritage as defined above with the ease-of-access to the national space offered the typical traveling tourists through the existing national transport infrastructures, in the process also factoring in the visitor volume at certain important museum facilities, it is possible to arrive at an impression of the role played by select museum categories as tourist attractions.

A personal experience of ease-of-access situation on one hand and visitations to select Viking heritage museums during a fairly swift journey by car on the other, constitutes the origin of this exercise: in the month of May 2003, my wife and I traveled northeastward from Brussels through northern Germany and Schleswig-Holstein into Denmark.

Basically, we moved along Denmark’s modern and principal west-to-east transport corridor with its convenient freeway system. This gave us optimal mobility-cum-access to the Viking heritage attractions that we had planned to visit as they are located between historic Danevirke in Schleswig-Holstein (in Germany) in the South and the Baltic Straits with its dynamic Ærstad region in the East. Within these geographic boundary lines lies a bountiful exciting Viking heritage, which, given the relatively modest spatial dimensions of Denmark, also constitutes an easily accessible tourist attraction.

2. Access matters to tourists:
As a tourist product (= tourist attraction), the Danish Viking Heritage offers by and large very different degrees of ease-of-access compared to the typical, popular tourist product.

In classifying tourist attractions in general we can identify highly “nodal” destinations - distinct urban centers such as Ribe, Roskilde, Odense or Skagen –
some of which also have very site-specific attractions, the historically famous Roskilde Cathedral, the Roskilde Vikingship Museum, or the H.C. Andersen Museum in Odense.

In contrast to the nodal are the spatially extensive, “areal” tourist attractions, such as the landscape of the Danish Backeland region in the South, the coastal dune landscape towards the North of the Jutland peninsula, or the Danish archipelago with its numerous island units – Fyn, Langeland, Lolland etc.

Depinding upon which type of Viking history a tourist wishes to experience, the access question becomes critical in trip planning, largely due to the shape and form of this particular heritage. For instance, the North Atlantic-based Viking heritage is an extremely far flung, transatlantic tourist attraction, i.e. excessively ‘areal’ stretching from the North European Viking homelands of Denmark - and Norway - in the East via Iceland and the southern tip of Greenland to the Newfoundland shores in the West with its historic L’Anse-aux-Meadows Viking settlement. With such “areal dimensions” the access question takes on major significance.

In fact, to conquer an “areal” tourist product of such extensive geographic – and maritime – dimensions, the international tourist industry has, over the past couple of years, mobilized substantial financial resources for the development of special transport services essential for activating appropriate niche tourist travel markets: a combination of comfortable cruise ship services on one hand and of time-saving air transports on the other that has been quite successful in overcoming the problem, but of course at a price!

In contrast, the Viking homeland of Denmark, also an “areal” tourist attraction, is rather small-sized – 350 km. x 300 km. approx. Consequently, the product is easily accessible – hence it requires only modest travel time allocation and travel expenditures to experience.

In addition, the dimensional differences referred to above between two distinctly different tourist “regions” also affect the tourist’s exposure to the destination, which in turns, tends to explain their different tourist traffic levels: the more accessible an attraction the greater the tourist inflow!

This can be seen on international tourist flow levels as well as at a domestic level. For instance, more centrally located and small-sized destinations such as Switzerland (200 km x 330 km. approx.) record almost six times the tourist inflow into peripherally located Denmark; the same diminished inflows are typical for the Nordic country group as a whole with Norway at the 2.7 mill. level, Finland and Sweden at surprisingly higher, 4.2 mill. and 4.5 mill. visitors respectively – still well below the Swiss level.

The corollary to the above on the international scale is seen in visitor statistics for individual Danish museums: museums located in the Danish core region of Copenhagen on Zealand record annual visitor volumes in the 300,000+ range, while perhaps the internationally most well-known of all Danish museums, the H.C. Andersen Museum in Odense, Fyn, located slightly ‘off centre’ in Denmark halfway to the North Sea coast, only scores 150,000.

If we move further westward toward the Danish “periphery”, museum visitations drop sharply: the Haderslev Museum on the Jutland east coast registers some 40,000 visitors, while the small Tonder Museum on the Jutland west coast south of Esbjerg near the German border receives even fewer – around 30,000. Evidently, the distance-decay factor is hard at work!

Of course, exceptions to the rule of declining numbers relative to “peripheral” location exist: Skagen’s Fine Art museum at the top of the Jutland peninsula records more visitors than the H.C.Andersen museum, which can partly be explained by the very unique location character of Skagen AND its great reputation from an art history point of view. Odense has of course H.C. Andersen – the rest is “just” (unjustly said) a medium-sized city in central Denmark!

Given the above, the spatial dimensions of a definable tourist region forces specific tourist attractions to operate at different levels of market accessibility. Even territorially small countries feature “core” areas, i.e. more central, more accessible regions on one hand, and other, more ‘off-centre’, more peripheral, thus less accessible, on the other. So, why should not museum locations reflect the same predicament, or advantage!

3. Danish museums and accessibility: Considering the fact that Denmark offers a multitude of museums, among them a substantial number of specialized local history museums and some highly specialized Viking heritage museums, travel distances between the facilities in general tend to be short and not particularly time consuming. The greatest museum concentration is found on Zealand, where Copenhagen dominates. The capital region accounts for 1/5 of the roughly 200 museums listed on the Danish Museum List (see www.museums.dk/denmark.html).

If we become more specific and start looking for museums specializing in Viking heritage the numbers drop dramatically, and with that ease-of-access deteriorates – unless one stays in the principal transport infrastructure corridor. In fact, only four locations qualify as true Viking heritage museums:

I) the famous Roskilde Vikingship Museum on Zealand, and
II) the Ribe Vikinger Museum with its twin facility
III) the Ribe Viking Center, in southwestern Jutland, toward the German border and
IV) the Moesgård Museum in the Aarhus region.

However, if we relax the definition of a “museum” to even include archeologically based reconstructions, in other words important of historic Viking places, the numbers game improves. The official
“Follow the Vikings” publication identifies four such additional locations: 
- Lindholms Hoje at Norresundby on the Limfjord, 
- the magnificent Fyrkat Fortress at Hobro northwest of Randers, 
- the Viborg Diocese Museum in the same area, and 
- Trelleborg north of Slagelse on Zealand. 

The Viborg Diocese Museum in central Jutland stands out with its all-encompassing museum vocation stressing “the daily life in Viborg for the past 10,000 years”, a tall task for any institution geared toward local history!

Still, the number of the two categories combined above is limited – less than 10 more or less specialized Viking-related museum locations! Therefore, we might consider the importance of one final, rather prolific museum category, which immediately improves overall access to “Viking-related” museums for the weary but stubborn tourist traveler – and also, in some cases, offers additional and interesting local insights into the Viking heritage era: the local history museums. The national museum list registers 25 such museum facilities and the same list also includes the unique Viborg Museum referred to above.

In Denmark, the local history museums seem to constitute a basic museum category within the museum system as it is often via this “standard facility” that residents of smaller and sometimes more remote towns are reminded of interesting local history collections and exhibitions. In fact, the local institutions seldom back in “historic limelight”, a role that usually befalls the famous national museums in the national capital region, or for that matter, the highly unique archeological museums such as the Roskilde Viking Ship Museum.

In Denmark, as in many countries with a well-developed museum system, the local history museums are quite omnipresent – you find them down south at Tonder, up north at Hjortring in Jutland and northwestern at Holstebro, in the southeast at Maribo on Lolland, and eastward on Zealand at Holbæk west of Roskilde – to mention a few locations.

Their place names have usually an unfamiliar ring to the foreign tourist, who operates on a short time span, with money constraints and limited information, which tends to make him more aware of the big illustrious museums. As a result a tourist might simply find it a bit too complicated and too difficult to navigate to remote locations, such as the Langeland Museum in Rudkøping or the Sønderskov Local Museum in Broerup, or for that matter the Lake District Museum at Skanderborg.

The other more famous museum destinations simply exert too much of a pull anyway, especially the big name Viking heritage museums like the Ribe twin Viking museums, or the Roskilde Viking Ship Museum, or the National Historical Museum in Copenhagen, the latter sporting the finest collections anyway!

On the other hand, the weary tourist who finally rolls into the town of Rudkøping will most likely be charmed by both town and museum for some quite obvious reasons: Danish small towns have considerable quaint urban charm, which sets a relaxing pace for the visit – there is simply more time on hand relative to the size of town and museum, the museum staff and attendants can devote generous amounts of their time to visitors, thus the guiding becomes more relaxed and rewarding, the tranquil museum milieu in itself provides opportunity to relax and contrasts sharply to the rushed, crushed and forced mass (= mob) handling typical of the visits to “the big museum in the big city” during peak tourism seasons!

Thus, our journey started with the once geo-politically strategic and visually impressive DANEVIRKE south of the City of Schleswig and close to our second destination – HATHABU (Hedeby). From there, a short trip across the border into southern Denmark would direct us to RIBE and an overnight at the Danhostel facility overlooking the town’s river front with only a five minutes’ walk to the archeological river-site settlement, the medieval city core, cathedral and market square.

The fourth and final stop would require more substantial motoring eastward. The distance Ribe-Roskilde amounts to some 250 km, a half-day’s drive by “Swedish or Canadian car travel standards”, which ultimately would bring us to the ROSKILDE VIKING SHIP MUSEUM at the downtown waterfront, where, again, a nearby Danhostel is conveniently located for weary travelers. Ultimately we decided to exit Denmark via the most recent and possibly final example of the EU-Scandinavia transport infrastructure development program, the Baltic Straits bridge, which today functions as a major traffic flow integrator for the Scandinavian-Norwegian World and its European counterpart to the South. Indeed, the bridge performs a powerful land traffic channeling function for the long distance international overland traffic flow in Northern Europe with Denmark playing the role of geographic “midwife”, for better or worse.

5. The visitations: The Danevirke is no Hadrian Wall design, but an earthwork fortification of considerable dimensions and length – some 20 km. An equally lengthy history attests to an early Danish Viking-era defensive strategy at work in the 9th century, or even earlier, aimed at protecting the important trading axis between the eastern Baltic Sea flank with commercial Hedeby, and the portaging land transports across to Hollingstedt, toward the West on the Treene river, that
The Viking-era Haithabu/Hedeby, famous and important as a long-distance market town located in pastoral surroundings at the end of a deep fjord of the Baltic Sea, offers little visible historic evidence for the searching, modern tourist. Rather, it all comes in the form of archeological finds, now housed in a brand-new museum installation, the Wikinger Museum Haithabu (1985), which nowadays has become a major tourist attraction, recording some 150,000 visitors annually.

Of old Hedeby we saw little except its approximately half-circular settlement space protected by a modest, overgrown rampart with the inside space today consisting of meadowlands. Here once stood a substantial Viking-era town!

Again, we had to revert to museum exhibitions for clarifications, which resembled the Danevirke museum: impressive sets of historical cartographic photo montage, archeological finds from different periods, tools and artifacts, and of course an impressive Viking ship hall where a ship from the Viking era was displayed in all its graceful beauty.

An efficient museum, in perhaps too systematic – obviously historical – but otherwise structured around distinct themes “Ribe in the Viking Age”, the “Adventure Hall year 800”, and “medieval and commercial Ribe”. A high-quality museum boutique and a beautiful, inviting Museum Cafe completes the picture!

Its more active counterpart, the Viking Center is an outdoor museum paradise set in the meadowlands surrounding the town. Its layout is very rural, farmstead, barns, workshops, grazing areas for animals, etc. all combine to offer visitors an opportunity to practice Viking-era skills, tending farm animals, and engaging in old plays and games. Hence its popularity is high, especially among visiting young families.

The Roskilde Viking Ship Museum, Denmark. Photo: Alexander Andreeff

The Viking-etal Haithabu/Hedeby, and two impressive Viking-era historical museum facilities all make Ribe a highly popular tourist destination in a corner of Denmark with a relatively low population density, at least compared to areas to the South, in Germany.

The centrally located RIBE VIKINGER MUSEUM and its open-air museum twin – the RIBE VIKING CENTER – exert a major pull on the domestic tourist market but so do the coastal marshlands nearby and the North Sea, the latter two catering to nature lovers, bird watchers and beach strollers. With such a diversified tourist product:

I) Viking era,
II) medieval townscape,
III) urban historical quaintness,
IV) an endless seascape and shoreline near Ribe and surroundings makes for a first-rate tourist attraction easily accessible for both Danes and North Germans.

The Vikinger Museum displays are systematic – obviously historical – but utilitarian purposes. This is confirmed by leafing through any issue of the US-published Wooden Boat Magazine, which in a recent issue (Sept. 2003) conveniently features a lengthy article on this most famous and unique Danish maritime museum.

Due to such recent international PR-exposure, the summer of 2004 most likely will result in a massive invasion of North American “wooden boat” enthusiasts – that is just the way things happen when indirect tourist promotion converts into the realities of tourism impacting on well-publicized destination area tourist attractions!

As if the museum would need more visitors! Presently it records some 140,000 visitors annually, which places it among
the top 15 on the Danish Museum List.

The origin of the Viking museum goes back to the 60’s, when a remarkable marine archaeological find in the form of five Viking-era sunken ships – the Skuldelev ships – were hoisted from the muddy bottom halfway down the fjord. The ships had been well-preserved and varied in size and form.

The analysis of this large archaeological bounty lay to rest the commonly-held belief among Viking-era historians that the Viking (dragon) ship was the standard bearer of all long distance transatlantic and North Sea Viking sailing forays. Thus, the true building characteristics of both the Viking war ship AND the more practical “knarr”, the Viking cargo ship par excellence, as well as many smaller skiffs, used mostly in inter-local, archipelago transports, were revealed.

At the museum harbour a diverse fleet of smaller boats share space with the sturdy knarr and other, more middle-sized vessels. The different building methods and design lines of these boat types demonstrate interesting regional differences, but also common features in their dimensions and general equipment.

In the big hall lies the reconstruction of two large, typical Viking ship hulls, surrounded by glass box displays of the dramatic historical event of the Norse Viking assault around year 1000, which almost reached its objective, but was blocked at Skuldelev by a barrier of sunken ships – hence the Roskilde town of the Viking era was saved from destruction and did not have to share the fate that befell Haithabu some 50 years later.

At the big outdoor construction berth work is proceeding on a 100 foot-long Viking man-o-war ship. Progress on the project may be slow, as seen by our eyes and minds that favor modern-based efficiency and speed in technological production; the methods applied in this full-scale replica project are true to Viking-era construction techniques, from the splitting of the timber logs to the making of thin, flexible long planks, the laying of the keel, the staggering of the boards, and the fastening of inside-hull support ribs. It all amounts to a super-sized Wooden Boat Magazine build-a-boat project minus modern aids and props such as drawings, modern power tools, epoxy-laminated marine plywood, rust resistant screws, marine caulking, etc.

The work before us represents a remarkable reconstruction process, with the end result being an equally amazing sailing sight when it is finished and the reconstruction moves under sail down the fjord in a gentle southerly breeze on a fine summer’s day!

Keen tourist sailor tourists, however, do not have to wait until the man-o-war is ready. During the tourist season they can enlist for shorter day trips with smaller Viking-era sailing ships and get the feel of their handling and performance. Reaching in a good wind, these ships outdistance most of today’s hobby sailing fleet around the fjord. Under the right wind conditions they do plane, a true indicator of high-speed sailing!

The hands-on experience offered to the tourist at the Viking Ship Museum is unique among maritime museums. Perhaps what makes the institution truly remarkable, however, is the array of functions housed in the museum – more traditional indoor displays relating to the remarkable archaeological finds, the outdoor applied construction methods, the diverse collection of boats at dockside, modern marine scientific research at work on the Viking-ship phenomenon, nautical construction history in its widest sense including historic evolution of shipbuilding, changing construction methods, sailing performance paired with transport efficiency, to mention a few.

Combined, the numerous museum functions make for an outstanding and very special museum, indeed an enthralling experience for the visitor. We wouldn’t miss it for anything - and hopefully we will be back!

The rest of our journey is “just history”.

It took us across the Baltic Straits Bridge eastward, into familiar Swedish lands. The Scania province of Sweden does offer Viking-era museums, such as the Foteviken Viking Reserve near Malmö as well as impressive archeological sites, like the magnificent Ale Ship setting at the southeastern point of Scania, and a considerable number of rune stones.

However, accounting for these more easterly Viking era museums and archeological sites belongs to another discovery journey – not yet planned, only thought of, but maybe! Still, a return visit to Roskilde Viking Ship Museum ranks high on the travel wish list.

Montreal in December 2003

About the author
Prof. Jan O. Lundgren of Geography Department, McGill University (retired), Montreal, Canada, has a longstanding research interest in general tourism geography, with particular reference to tourist resource development in the North; the Canadian North, northern Scandinavia, and more recently the Baltic Sea basin. In VHM 1/2003 he contributed with the article The North Atlantic Viking Heritage Resource and Cruise Ship Itineraries.

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Bibliographic References:


Dansk Statistisk Årbog 2003, tabel 130, sid. 123, "Besøg på museer". The table provides information on the "big" museums and is not inclusive.

*Destination Viking - Western Viking Routes*, North Sea Viking Legacy, Gotland Center for Baltic Studies, Gotland University, Visby, Sweden.


Museums in Denmark, 2003, via www.museums.dk.denmark.html.

Pamphlet material from various museums include the following titles:

- *Haithabu Wikinger Museum*
- *Das Hjortspring-Boot*
- *Ribes Vikinger, Museum for vikingetid og middelalder*
- *Roskilde Destination Map* (to which should be added personal visits, photographic documentations etc.).


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**Swords of the Viking Age**

Written by Ian Peirce
Published by Boydell Press

This work deals with swords made and used in northern Europe during the Viking Age, from the mid-8th through to the mid-11th centuries. The author himself has selected and catalogued some of the swords he has purchased during his travels to museums in north of Europe. *Swords of the Viking Age* completes English-language works dealing with this subject.

Most of the swords are rarely seen and a few will be well known from previous publications. A full-length photograph and detailed photographs of each example are included in addition to Lorange’s lithographs from 1889. It even contains a classification according to Jan Petersen’s system as well as an introduction by Ewart Oakeshott.

Ian Peirce, a well-known lecturer and museum consultant, has staged major exhibitions featuring armour and weapons in England, France and Ireland. He has also written extensively on the Norman Conquest and about the Vikings.

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**The Historical Dictionary of the Vikings**

Written by Katherine Holman
Published by Scarecrow Press, Inc.
ISBN 0-8108-4859-7

The *Historical Dictionary of the Vikings*, by Katherine Holman, follows the trail of Vikings for over three centuries in Europe, North America and Asia. The Scandinavians during this period used their longships to colonise new property in the East and West and exchanged Nordic products for Eastern ones such as wine, spices and Arab silver. The increased contact with the wider world had significant influence on changes in Scandinavia – Christianity made its entry, kings extended their power and new towns and ports prospered.

This dictionary includes the main historical characters involved during this period, important battles and treaties, archaeological finds and sources of information of Viking period. It summarises the influence of Vikings as well as where they travelled and settled. The dictionary not only presents the greater picture, but also examines the everyday aspects of how people lived and worked. There is a chronological table, and detailed and annotated bibliographies for different themes and geographical locations while the introduction discusses the major events and development of Viking Age.

The author, Katherine Holman, a freelance historian, was recently a lecturer in Scandinavian Studies and Assistant Director of European Studies in the Department of Modern Languages at the University of Hull, England. She has also acted as a consultant to Viking Heritage Magazine on several occasions.
Written by J. Kim Siddorn

Some years ago I had the pleasure to review a book titled Viking Weapons & Warfare by Mr J. Kim Siddorn (Viking Heritage Magazine 4/2001). For readers who did not have the opportunity to read that review my impression of the book can be summarized as useful but somewhat incomplete.

My main objection then was that the book seemed to have been edited and proofread in a hurry, leaving several unnecessary and not always obvious misprints and oddities for the reader to deal with. On top of this several important parts in a book on Viking-age weapons simply were not there — for instance a chapter on axes. I hoped for the inclusion of such a chapter in the next edition of the book. In 2003 a new edition was indeed published and I am therefore delighted to present a review of it for Viking Heritage Magazine’s readers.

On the whole, and for good reasons, it is the same book — but, and this is important, it is greatly improved compared to the first edition. Mr Siddorn’s colourful language is still there, carefully and sometimes quite quickly leading the reader through the 192 pages. Facts are interwoven with over 20 years of experience from re-enactment battles and Living History displays in one of Britain’s leading Anglo-Saxon and Viking Societies, Regia Anglorum.

This second edition has been extended with two chapters, one on axes and one on missile weapons. Both of the new chapters, as well as the originals, are accompanied with several good, instructive drawings in numerous figures. A minor drawback is the lack of internal numbering in some figures — it tends to confuse the captions. The colour photograph-section in the middle of the book has also been re-worked and improved, both in terms of quality and the number of photos.

Despite all the improvements there are still problems, and unnecessary ones at that. In the review of the first edition I commented upon the lack of proofreading. It might be of minor importance but it is indeed somewhat disturbing to find the same misprints in the re-edition — what was the publisher thinking of?! I also commented on how references to other books were presented in the first edition. With some exceptions these comments still stand — several ordinary, running references to publications are given in the texts, despite no proper, full references to them in the book. This might also seem to be of minor importance and an example of my scholarly over-zealousness, but I do persist that you either use the common system for references or you do not give any at all — to do it by halves just creates confusion!

Other than these small errors I can not find much negative to comment upon — it is indeed quite captivating to learn what Mr Siddorn and other contributors have to tell about various aspects of the Viking-age warrior and his equipment — except for one thing that really surprises me: the so-called “Kiev helmet” is still mentioned in the new edition.

This helmet, that first showed up in a publication on another helmet, the one from Coppergate in York, is neither “unlike any other” nor from the Viking Age. Several others have been reported from the same general area and they have been positively identified as the steel frames of German jet-pilot helmets from World War II — scans of an original helmet from Siemens factories can be found on the Internet at (http://talbotsfinedoors.com/helmet/helmet.html). It’s about time to debunk the “Kiev helmet” once and for all! I regard the inclusion of it in the second edition of “Viking Weapons & Warfare” as yet another slip-up in the proofreading.

The final impression of the book is therefore better, but not as good as it potentially could have been. However one must not overemphasize the book’s drawbacks — to my knowledge it is still by far the most complete source of information on Viking-age weapons and warfare for the would-be warrior!

By Ny Björn Gustafsson, Archaeologist and Re-enactor.
For comments: midviki@hotmail.com

As archaeological discoveries advance and increase, the variety of construction media has developed, helping us understand not only how the past looked but also how it worked. This fully illustrated work by Mark Redknap examines and explains the ways we recreate our past through the eyes of the artists, the craftsmen, the historian and the forensic scientist. It also includes some of Welsh discoveries such as the life of the skeleton in Goat’s Hole, Paviland, on the Gower Peninsula and William Burges’ High Gothic rebuilding of Castell Coch in Cardiff.

Visualizing Our Past is engagingly written and even contains the medieval illustrations of King Arthur as virtual, digital recreations.

Dr Mark Redknap is Curator of Medieval & Later Archaeology at the National Museums & Galleries of Wales. He has a PhD in the Roman and medieval pottery industries of German Eifelgebiet and has directed numerous terrestrial and underwater excavations in England and Wales. He has been widely published.

The largest prehistoric cemetery on the Baltic island of Gotland is located at Barshalder between Grötlingbo and Fide parishes. Since the beginning of 1826, more than 500 graves have been investigated and documented there. Rich finds from the entire first millennium AD have been secured and this material is very important for research into the Iron Age on Gotland.

The cemetery at Barshalder was in use from c. AD 1–1100 (during the Roman Iron Age), Migration Period (AD 375–540), Vendel Period (AD 520–790) and Viking Period (AD 790–1150).

Few of Gotland’s rich Iron-age cemeteries have received monographic treatment. This thesis deals with this Iron-age cemetery that is superimposed upon a couple of Stone-age sites.

Volume 1 is designed as an interface to the large amount of archaeological material and documentation. The compiled contents have been organised to enable the reader to approach them from several different directions. The main lines of inquiry are the chronology of artefacts and burial structures, social stratification and gender roles, landscape structure, human geography, demography and economy.

Volume 2 chronicles five centuries in mortuary symbolism on Gotland and is developed from the compilation of Volume 1. Its analytical contents are organised under three headings: chronology, social identity and religious identity. One overarching aim is to make explicit and test the often somewhat intuitively conceived results of much previous research.

The author is convinced that whereas gender was to some extent negotiable and useful for symbolic play, biological sex was not. The two dimensions of classification, biological sex and gender, depend on different source materials. Most of the preserved and curated human remains from Barshalder consist of bags of cremated bone fragments, which can only rarely be sexed. Therefore, the dimension of gender takes centre stage.

According to Martin Rundkvist, the most eloquent testimony to social inequality in this archaeological record is the evidence of human sacrifice. In many cases, it can be expected that sacrificial victims were entirely stripped of the symbols of their social identity. Throughout the periods studied, there are a number of graves from Barshalder with bones that the author has interpreted according to the above-mentioned parameters as those of sacrificial victims. Wear-induced skeletal pathologies among these suspected victims also hint at slave labour.

A third book by the same author, called: Barshalder 3. Rojrhage in Grötlingbo. A Multi-component Neolithic shore site on Gotland, about the cemetery at Barshalder is about to be published.

By Christel Carlson, Viking Heritage
NEW SHIP DISCOVERED

Norway’s fourth intact Viking ship may have been found close to the place where the famous Gokstad ship was found in 1880.

The assumption that it was a ship find was made after researchers from the University of Oslo applied ground radar to a mound on the site. The pictures show an oval shape in the ground, which may be yet another Viking ship buried with the owner’s possessions. The researchers predict that the ship will be well preserved, thanks to the presence of preserving clay, which also preserved the Gokstad ship.

– If we are lucky, we will find some woodwork, says Trude Aga Brun, a Vestfold County archaeologist who wants to examine the site and informs that officials will try to excavate this year.

The Gokstad ship is one of Norway’s greatest national historic treasures. It is believed to have been built in the last decade of the 8th century, probably belonging to a king. There have been many findings of ship graves like this in Norway, but none as well preserved and complete as the Gokstad ship. It is also common that graves have been plundered and destroyed throughout history.

Source: Aftenposten, www.aftenposten.no

Viking find rewrites Cork history

The remains of ten individual houses have so far been uncovered at the Barrack Street and South Main Street in Cork, Ireland. The discovery has been described as one of the most exciting in the country and is proof the establishment of a 1000-year old Viking settlement of a kind previously only associated with Dublin and Waterford.

The remains of a rectangular house dated to 1050 AD is now the earliest known Viking settlement in the city of Cork, and among the earliest in southern Ireland.

Sections of mud and wattle walls, doorposts, sections of the bow of a Viking boat, fragments of decorated hair combs, metal artefacts and shoe leather have been found and recorded, as well as fish bones and cat skulls.

The site has already been earmarked for student accommodation, commercial units and a car park. Paul Kenny, the developer, has paid for the excavation.


Viking events in early summer 2004

Viking festival, Karmøy, Norway
June 9–13
On historic ground you can take part in Viking celebrations, see how the Vikings lived, attend concerts, theatres and a Viking market. You can also participate in historical marches and Viking processions.
Phone: +47 52 85 75 00.
Email: uji@karmoy.kommune.no
www.vikingfestivalen.no

The traditional Viking week at Foteviken, Sweden, featuring different handicraft training courses
June 14–20
The Viking week features a lot of different activities in the Viking Reserve. The handicraft training courses are available for anyone who is interested and usually last for two or three days. In order for a training course to take place, there must be an adequate number of participants.

The traditional Viking market, Foteviken, Sweden
June 17–20
This is the biggest Viking market arranged in Scandinavia. You will find a lot of genuine, high quality handicraft products. All modern plastic rubbish is strictly forbidden.
Phone: +46 40 45 68 40.
Email: info@foteviken.se
www.foteviken.se

Viking market in Frederikssund, Denmark
June 19–20
A Viking market with Viking games and stalls at the Viking site on Kalvøn.
Phone: +45 47 31 06 85.
Email: info@vikingspil.dk
www.vikingspil.dk

Scandinavian Midsummer festival, Burnaby, BC, Canada
June 19–20
Enjoy the Midsummer Magic and celebrate the longest day of the year in Burnaby, BC. Entertainment by music, dance, storytellers, magicians and Vikings. Family days, theme “Living History”, guest performing groups from Denmark and Sweden.
Phone: +1 604 294 3777
www.scandinaviancentrecentre.org

Midsummer celebrations at the Viking Reserve, Foteviken, Sweden.
June 25
A Midsummer feast is to be celebrated at Foteviken and all are most welcome to participate.
Phone: +46 40 45 68 40.
Email: info@foteviken.se
www.foteviken.se

Don’t miss the Viking festival in Hafnarfjörður, Iceland
June 16–20
Festival with Vikings, crafts, fighters, music, drama, feasts, Viking tents and lots of other activities.
Phone: + 354 565 12 13, + 354 893 64 35
Email: viking@islandia.is
www.fjorukrain.is

Viking play at Lindholm Høje, Denmark
June 15–27
Open-air performance of the Viking Play Trællblod, daily from June 15 – 27 at Lindholm in Denmark.
Phone: +45 98 17 33 73, +45 21 40 11 20.
Email: vikingesper@hotmail.com
www.geocities.com/vikingesper/lind-frame.html

More summer events will be presented in the next issue.
Viking Week July 7–11, 2004, at Hovgården and Birka

Birka on the island of Björkö in Lake Mälaren was the centre and the first real town in Sweden, with about 1000 inhabitants in its heyday. The town was founded in the 8th century and became an important trading centre as well as an international harbour for visitors from near and far. The period of activity in Birka has been estimated at the two following centuries until later 10th century.

At Hovgården on the nearby island of Adelsö there are many valuable remains from the Viking Age onwards, both from its time as a demesne of the Crown and as an administrative centre during the Viking Age. Close to the medieval church there are many large burial mounds, the biggest of which is called the Kings’ Mounds. A wooden palisade fortified the settlement and its harbour was guarded by pilings driven into the bottom of the lake, limiting the number of ships able to pass into it.

In the year 830 the Christian missionary Ansgar visited Birka, an event that is recognized as the first attempt to convert the heathen Swedes. There is now a museum on Björkö, which tells the fascinating story of Birka, exhibiting objects from the archaeological excavations. Birka and Hovgården were recognised on the World Heritage List in 1993.

Now the Vikings will be back again in July 7–11, 2004!

Welcome to the demesne of Hovgården on Adelsö with the trading centre Birka and experience the Viking Age coming to life again!

There will be many activities and happenings such as:

  • More than ten ships will sail, row and fight in the bay and also ferry you between Adelsö and Birka
  • The King’s troupe shows its prowess in powerful struggles.
  • Ancient music and performances
  • Viking-age market
  • Historical walking and guided tours, theatre, handicrafts, café and much much more!

You reach Adelsö and surroundings by ferry from Stockholm. The journey takes about 1 1/2 hours and takes you through the inner archipelago of Lake Mälaren.

Further information
www.vikingaveckan.se
www.ekeroturism.se
Birka Museum tel. +46 8 560 514 45
Ekerö Turism tel. +46 8 560 233 95

Welcome to Viking Week on the islands of Adelsö and Björkö! Photo Monica Andreasson

Old Norse religion in long-term perspectives

Origins, changes and interactions

Conference to be held in Lund, Sweden on June 3-7, 2004

A multidisciplinary conference to explore the character of Old Norse religion is about to take place in the medieval city of Lund, in southern Sweden. The conference is hosted by the Swedish interdisciplinary research project “Roads to Midgård: Old Norse religion in long-term perspectives”. Scholars and Ph.D. students from various disciplines are invited, which will provide rich opportunities for comparisons of time and space as well as dialogues between subjects.

Key issues at the conference will be origins, changes and regional interactions in relation to the world view and cosmology, rituals and religious practices, myth and memory, and reception and present-day use of Old Norse religion.

The results of the project have been compiled and will be published in a special book series in Swedish. To reach a broader international audience the conference proceedings will be published in English. The bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation is sponsoring the conference.

Please check the conference website at www.ark.lu.se/oldnorsereligion for the latest information.

Email: oldnorsereligion@ark.lu.se

Vittfarne expedition updates

As we reported in VHM 3/03, the Vittfarne association will conduct a scientific expedition with an authentic copy of a Viking ship. They will travel through Georgia and Azerbajdjan to Baku, which was a part of the Vikings “Särkland”.

The aim of the expedition is to check whether it was possible to travel by ship from the town Sigtuna, in mid-eastern Sweden, to the Caspian Sea, through the Black Sea and the Caucasus.

The expedition’s website has been updated and the site has now texts translated into English, Russian and an increased section in Azerbadzjani. In the near future there will also be texts in Ukrainian. Further, there are maps showing the expeditions route, and the expedition crew will soon be listed. A guestbook has also been added to the site.

www.vittfarne.com
The Kensington Runestone on a new mission in Hälsingland, Sweden

During its time in Sweden the well-known Kensington Runestone has, after the exhibition in Stockholm (see VHM 4/2003), also been shown in the Museum of Hälsingland, Hudiksvall.

The museum has built a local exhibition around the stone, called “The riddle of the Kensington Stone – A Hälsinge-story?”. Here the stone’s finder, Olof Öhman, is in focus.

Olof Öhman was born in the county of Hälsingland in 1854 and lived there until he emigrated to USA in 1879. After some time he settled in Kensington, Minnesota. In 1898 he found the stone embedded in the roots of a tree on his farm.

The exhibition tells about Öhman’s life, his youth in Hälsingland, the voyage to America and his life in America. Among the objects on display are his American trunk and a large number of letters written by Öhman in America and sent home to his relatives in Sweden.

With this exhibit the museum wants to draw attention to the cultural heritage of the stone and its runes, irrespective of whether they originate in 1362 or if a Scandinavian immigrant carved them in the late 19th century. Obviously the stone became a cultural heritage object, a symbol of identity for many Scandinavian immigrants in Minnesota.

With this in mind, the Museum has found a new use for the stone and its runes. Now it acts as an inspiration for present-day immigrants in Hälsingland (around 1000 persons at present) for reflections on moving, belonging and feelings of home.

Therefore the introduction texts of the exhibit are translated not only into English, but also into Arabic, Bosnian, Sorani (a Kurdish language) and Tigrini, that is spoken in Eritrea. Immigrants are also given the opportunity to write about their experiences and feelings about their new home country, just like Olof Öhman did in his letters.

The original Kensington stone was on display until February 16 and has since been replaced with a replica.

While in Sweden the stone has been thoroughly examined by many Swedish specialists. In the coming issue of VHM we hope to present some of their findings.

For more information see Viking Heritage Magazine 2/2002 and 4/2003 www.historiska.se www.runestonemuseum.org
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Golden Vanes • The North Atlantic Viking Heritage Resources • Masculine – Feminine – Human – about a Viking-age grave-field • Transvestite Vikings? • A Viking-age Tumour • Kaupang

The Mamman style from West Pomerania • Vikings in Russia: Military Affairs part 1 • Ukrainenland • Philatelic Vikings • Golden Vanes • Vikings In Melbourne

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