Editorial

ON THE FRONT COVER of this summer issue we are happy to present you with three unique figurines, excavated two years ago in Lunda parish just outside the town of Strängnäs, Sweden. These figurines are just a few centimetres high and made from gold, silver and bronze. Without doubt they are images of deities or maybe just one god, since they all have the same pose, but the question is who?

Although the figurines are dated to pre-Viking times, around 400 - 600 AD, they embody a continuous prevailing Iron-age cult before the conversion to Christianity. This summer you'll have the chance to see them exhibited in the Old Uppsala Museum. And we hope to come back to them with an article in our next issue.

The meeting with other religions and the religious transition from paganism to Christianity during the Viking Age, which is a theme of many exhibitions and events this summer, affected almost every part of society. What this change meant to the women is the subject of the interesting article, Viking-age Women, by Birgit Sawyer.

In this summer issue we also offer you some tips for a Viking garden as well as a few cooking hints. And as always, we try to keep you updated on what is happening in the Viking world of today. Thanks to all of you who have provided us with news and suggestions!

Have an enjoyable summer and of course a good read!

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Editor

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The unique figurines from Lunda, Sweden. Read more about them in the Editorial above and on page 32.
Photo: Bengt A Lundberg, Riksantikvarieämbetet.

http://viking.hgo.se
Viking-age Women

BY BIRGIT SAWYER

Is there any truth in the belief that women in pagan Scandinavia had a freer status than their Christian sisters? Modern research is sceptical and very few now believe that active and independent women disappeared after Christianization. What really changed was the attitude towards women and their role in society.

In Snorre Sturlason’s saga about St Olav (in his Heimskringla from the 1230s) two women, both called Sigrid, play important and fatal roles as inciters; one incites her brother-in-law, the other her husband, to kill Olav and are thus given the main responsibility for his fall.

Their incitements were successful but had consequences they would hardly have wished for; one of Olav’s killers was the first to believe in and proclaim the holiness of Olav, and the other was exiled and killed.

How far can we trust Snorre’s account of these women and their roles? When he wrote Heimskringla, c. 200 years after Olav’s death (at Stiklestad in Norway in 1030), the oral tradition surrounding it had undergone great changes.

Another problem is that none of the older sources known to Snorre mentions these two women by name, nor do they depict them as inciters. This suggests that Snorre himself created their roles. The fact that he calls them both Sigrid indicates that he took his inspiration from another, earlier and similarly invented, woman called Sigrid, namely Sigrid “the strong-minded”, widow of the Swedish king, Erik, first described by the Icelandic monk Odd Snorrason (in the 1190s).

As daughter of a magnate, widow of King Erik and mother of King Olof “Skötkonung”, Sigrid was a very powerful, sought-after woman. She was proud and did not tolerate marriage proposals from “lesser men”. On one occasion she had two of her wooers (both kings!) burnt, hence her nickname.

The Norwegian king, Olav Tryggvason was very attracted to her, and she readily accepted his proposal. Olav sent her a golden ring, but when Sigrid discovered that it was made of gilded copper, she became very angry and feared he would deceive her even in other matters. Thus things did not look too bright for Olav, and, when he demanded that she be baptized, they got even worse: Sigrid flatly refused, whereupon Olav refused to marry her, called her a pagan bitch and hit her with his glove. Sigrid stood up and said: “this may well be the death of you”, and then they parted.

Sigrid had not uttered an empty threat; she soon married the Danish king, Sven Forkbeard and urged him to revenge the humiliation Olav had caused her. This he did by defeating Olav in a major sea battle (at “Svolder”, somewhere in the Baltic), during which Olav jumped overboard and drowned.

We meet women who incite their male kinsfolk also in other sources, both earlier and contemporary, notably in Saxo Grammaticus Gesta Danorum. A common feature of all these works is that strong influential women rarely occur in Christian times, but often appear in pagan times and during the transitional period. Earlier research, supposing that sagas and historical writing reflected real conditions, interpreted this as meaning that in pagan times women had been more independent, active and influential than they were allowed to be after the introduction of Christianity.

In this way, the myth about “the strong Nordic woman” was created, a myth that has proved to be remarkably persistent and has been the theme of many publications and exhibitions in Scandinavia and elsewhere.

“Myth”? – Is there no truth then in the belief that women in pagan Scandinavia had a freer status than their Christian sisters? This question cannot be answered on the basis of medieval sagas and history writing; they were written by Christian authors, describing conditions several hundred years before their own time, and they had their special, Christian, purposes.

Modern research is consequently sceptical about the truth of these accounts, and as far as women are concerned, very few now believe that active and independent women disappeared after Christianization. What really changed was the attitude towards women and their role in society: a pagan – active – woman ideal
It was actually not until the 19th century that delivery deaths became very common, because then women more often gave birth in hospitals, where they were exposed to bacteria (transferred by doctors, coming directly from ill patients – or from autopsy). Before that women gave birth in their own homes, assisted only by other women, and in serious cases magic was used.

Since Astrid’s mother was Christian, the pagan magic was replaced by a Christian prayer, e.g. “Mary gave birth to Christ, Elizabeth gave birth to John the Baptist. Be delivered in their names. Come out child. The Lord is calling you to light!” (found on a Norwegian rune-stick).

Astrid was born without complications and was a healthy child; nevertheless there was still the question whether she would be allowed to live; as a girl she ran the risk of being exposed. In pagan times it was the father who decided if a new-born child should “be placed on his knee”, that is be given food and brought up – or if it should be left to die.

Astrid was born in 1015, had a pagan father, Tor, and a Christian mother, Tora, and three elder siblings, two brothers and a sister.

ASTRID’S SAGA – a reconstruction
Before Astrid was born, her mother Tora was very worried; would the birth go well? Would she give birth to a healthy child? Would she have a boy or a girl?

The delivery was always dangerous for the mother as well as for the child, but contrary to what has long been believed, delivery deaths were not particularly common in earlier times, when diseases (like diabetes and rickets), causing serious complications for birth-giving women were unknown. It was actually not until the 19th century that delivery deaths became very common, because then women more often gave birth in hospitals, where they were exposed to bacteria (transferred by doctors, coming directly from ill patients – or from autopsy). Before that women gave birth in their own homes, assisted only by other women, and in serious cases magic was used.

Since Astrid’s mother was Christian, the pagan magic was replaced by a Christian prayer, e.g. “Mary gave birth to Christ,Weaving was women’s responsibility; it was heavy tiresome work, since they used standing looms.

Drawing by Viktoria Persdotter.

There are many indications that female infanticide was more common than male in Scandinavia, as in other parts of the world. Since Tor and Tora already had two sons and a daughter, Tor was not very keen to let yet another daughter grow up; daughters had to be endowed with part of the family property when they were married, and with two daughters he would have less to give to his two sons and heirs.

Tora then reminded him that he had promised to respect her Christian faith, according to which infanticide was against God’s will, and she persuaded him to accept Astrid and have her baptized. Still, however, dangers were not over; in earlier times infant mortality was very common due to bad diet, lack of care and knowledge about remedies for illnesses. In order to see three children grow up to mature age, a woman must have been prepared to have three times as many pregnancies.

Our Astrid survived the dangerous period of infancy and grew up to be a lively girl, who, however, soon had to abandon games in order to learn as much as possible about running the home and the farm. She must often have been envious of her brothers, who spent most of their time outdoors, riding, hunting and fighting.

The Lord is calling you to light!” (found on a Norwegian rune-stick).
while the Volva taught him about the creation of the world and its end. We learn about this in the collection of poems called "the Edda", which seems to mean "grandmother", implying that older women were considered as wise bearers of tradition.

Astrid also learnt that in daily life women had important roles; they could sometimes be allowed to act like men, especially if no male relatives were at hand to master difficult situations (e.g. to take care of the farm or exact revenge). Married women had a strong position, running the farm, sacrificing to the gods and guarding the family honour (above all by inciting their men to take revenge). Strong women were appreciated, not for exercising their own strength, but because they were supposed to let their sons inherit it.

**What Astrid learnt from her mother** was often the opposite what she had learnt from her father. Instead of the emphasis on war-like virtues she was taught about tolerance and mercy, instead of the emphasis on fertility she was taught about chastity, instead of the importance of the family, she was taught about the salvation of the individual, and instead of the emphasis on honour and self-assertion she was taught about the Christian ideal of humility.

According to Christian teaching there was only one – male – God, but Astrid must have found the Trinity, Father, Son and the Holy Ghost, most bewildering. Swedish rune-stone inscriptions from the 11th century show that the missionaries did not teach about the Trinity, probably fearing that the pagans would think Christianity polytheistic. Instead, they identified God with Christ, which explains the quite common prayer: "May God and his mother help his soul".

Astrid also learnt about life after death, about paradise, hell, and purgatory. It was new to her that magic was regarded as a sin, and that the only true knowledge was to be found in the Bible, which could only be interpreted by specially trained – and celibate – male priests. She also learnt about a Christian woman’s duties: to be obedient to her husband, to teach him, their children and servants about the Christian faith, to work against pagan customs, and to support the representatives of the Church.

It cannot have been easy for Astrid to grow up with such divergent views, and we can assume that, like many others, she mixed elements from both religious spheres. There is much to indicate that for a long time Christian teaching had influenced the thinking of many Scandinavians, and we must allow for a prolonged period of syncretism with the Christian God at first considered as one of many, later as superior, and finally as the only true God, a process in which the pagan deities did not disappear but were demonized.

The saints played an important role, compensating for the loss of the pagan deities, filling the need to pray to special mediators in different situations. At an early stage the disappearance of female deities seems to have been compensated for by the cult of Maria. It is likely that this cult had a special appeal to women; the rune-stone material from eastern Sweden shows that almost half of the inscriptions with the prayer "May God and his mother help his soul", are found on stones erected by or in memory of women.

In general the rune-stone material suggests that women were among the first to accept Christianity. Why? My suggestion is that they welcomed a God who promised salvation after death. The belief in paradise must have filled a huge gul, and the Christian community had place for all, even the infertile, the abandoned, the poor and the orphans. Women were probably also attracted by the Christian prohibition of infanticide.

**Thus, during her upbringing** Astrid had lots of things to think about, and she had even more, when, as a 10-year old, she heard that her father wanted to marry her off to her cousin, the 30-year-old Hallbjörn, son of her uncle. In this way Tor could ensure the land that he and his brother had inherited could be kept within the family.

It was important to plan for the future, because both Astrid’s brothers had gone on Viking expeditions, and one could never know if they would return. Moreover, Astrid’s elder sister was in poor health and unlikely ever to marry.

Astrid was not asked herself, but her mother protested vigorously, referring to Christian rules about marriage. According to the Church girls could not marry until they were 12 years old (boys at the age of 14); also the girl had to be asked; the consent of both parties was demanded; Astrid and her cousin were too closely related, and the Church forbade marriages between close relatives; Hallbjörn had been married before and was recently divorced, and he also kept a concubine, whom he wanted to keep after his marriage with Astrid. According to the Church only life-long monogamy was tolerated; divorce was forbidden, and
mutual fidelity an absolute demand. We can imagine the collision between these contrasting views on marriage; the opposition to the Christian rules can be witnessed in all medieval law-codes in Scandinavia. Thanks to her mother, however, Astrid did not have to marry her twenty-year older cousin, and when she was 14 years old, her father accepted her marriage to the son of a neighbour, an alliance that filled all ecclesiastical demands on a Christian marriage. There were, however, many discussions about the way in which the bride was to be endowed.

In Scandinavia there were two main principles of inheritance, one according to which the father decided who was the main heir and how much should be given to the other children. The main heir was normally the most suitable son, who took over the farm, rights and duties. The other children were given their shares when they left the home.

Astrid’s mother, however, wanted another principle to be applied, namely the one recommended by the Church, according to which the family property should be divided between sons and daughters in fixed shares with Jesus counted as a co-heir. If there were four children, the property should thus be divided into five shares, one for Jesus and one each for the children. The shares were called “head shares”, and the sons counted for whole, while the daughters counted as half, heads. The explanation for this must be that a man had to give from his share to his future wife (“dower”).

Tor had a big farm, lots of cattle and riches, but if he were to give Astrid and her sister their shares, less would be available for his sons. Again we can imagine the discussions between him and his wife! According to Tor the sickly daughter had no right to an inheritance, but according to his wife she – like Astrid – should have her half share, because the Church demanded that everybody give alms.

The tug-of-war over these different inheritance principles can be followed in the Scandinavian law-codes, and it is very interesting that the Norwegian National Law (1274) as well as the Swedish one (c. 1350) compromise between the two. Astrid got her daughter’s share as a dowry (probably as personal belongings, e.g. house furnishings and jewellery) and also a dower from her husband (in land). We do not know if the spouses held their property separately or jointly; both are possible.

If Astrid’s husband was Christian, they would have wanted the blessing of the Church. Astrid had five children before her husband died; three died as infants, and as a widow she was responsible for a big farm and two minor sons. She was now independent, could make her own decisions – and was probably not tempted to marry again.

She got even more responsibility when her parents died and her brothers were reported as dead. Together with her sister she then inherited her parents’ farm and was fully occupied. Unfortunately she also had to witness the death of her two adult sons, who fell at the battle of Hastings in 1066.

Astrid was then 51 years old; an old woman, if we consider the life expectancy at this time (47 years). The fact is, however, that especially the life expectancy of women seems to have increased during the 11th century. The rune-stone inscriptions show that women often survived both husbands and children.

My Astrid is a fictional person, but undoubtedly there were many women like her in 11th century Scandinavia. In all periods women have been strong, enduring and active; we must not put too much faith in literary – and biased – sources!

Trondheim 16/4 2004

About the author

Birgit Sawyer (earlier Strand) is the author of numerous publications in her fields, e.g. Kvinnor och män i Gesta Danorum (doctoral thesis), Göteborg 1980, several articles and books on women in medieval Scandinavia, The Viking-Age Runestones: Custom and Commemoration in Early Medieval Scandinavia, Oxford 2000, and, together with her husband Peter Sawyer, Medieval Scandinavia: from Conversion to Reformation, ca 800-1500, Minneapolis 1993 and Die Welt der Wikinger, Berlin 2002. She has been a research fellow and a senior lecturer, University of Gothenburg 1986-1996 and is now a Professor in the Department of History and Classical studies at NTNU (Norway’s Technical and Natural-Scientific University in Trondheim) 1996 - present.

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“The meaning of food” – about Viking-age food and drink

By Malin Lindquist

The County Museum of Gotland is opening an exhibition “The meaning of food” in April where eating culture over the centuries will be displayed. A Viking-age table is going to be set.

The main idea of the Viking, when not on board his ship, is in his role as warrior or tradesman at big feasts. Studying finds from excavations we get ideas about his whereabouts but the everyday struggle for life does not leave any obvious traces. One of the aspects that is disregarded is food and drink. What was their daily meal when ashore and how did they manage to supply food on their long trips on board their ships, at sea or on the Russian rivers?

Table objects
Table objects were mainly made out of wood. Unfortunately most of this perishable material has disappeared, except for a few articles.

From the famous Norwegian Oseberg ship there are some well-preserved household objects such as barrels, bowls, tubs and even a big metal kettle.

From the Swedish Viking-age ship grave called Tuna in Badelunda in central Sweden there are some timeless household utensils as casks, dishes, spoons and so on. Most outstanding are a wooden cup and an elegant spoon for honey or jam. These ship graves were the women’s graves.

In Birka some elegant funnel-shaped goblets of glass imported from the glass industries in the Rhine valley have been found.

Due to the near lack of objects we have to turn to other sources. There are three or four main sources about Viking-age life to turn to: the Gotlandic picture stones, the Icelandic sagas and the Bayeux tapestry. The testimony of Ibn Fadlan, the Arabic ambassador who actually met Vikings, is another important source of information. However his opinion is the opinion of a sophisticated Muslim Ambassador meeting with, in his mind, savage Norsemens.

Feasts
I think a very common opinion about the Vikings is that they were “party-people” – always having big feasts, drinking beer from horns (and wearing helmets with horns). This idea arises from the late 19th century, during the romantic period when the glorious past was honoured. These preconceived notions also give a kind of idea how “life” in Valhalla was expected to be: eternal drinking and eating.

However Icelandic literature is full of information and notes which can give us an idea about life and ideas during this period as long as one bears in mind that

“Herds know the hour of their going home and turn them again from the grass But never is found a foolish man who knows the measure of his maw”

Hávamál

Two men are throwing a party. Notice the waiting dog to the left. Detail from the picture-stone at Änge, Buttle parish. (S. Lindkvist: Gotlands Bildsteine)

Here meat is being cooked and the servants are in attendance. Detail from the Bayeux tapestry.
they were written down some 200 years later. They tell mostly about the splendid feasts, not simple everyday life. We learn that a tablecloth was used and the meat was roasted or cooked over an open fire, using spits as also can be seen on the Bayeux tapestry.

One of the main virtues mentioned is generosity. Meat and bread should be served. If you could not afford steaks you could always serve a soup with smaller pieces. White bread on the rich man’s table, black on the poor man’s. A feast could last for three days and it was good manners to invite strangers as well as relatives and great men.

Mead, the drink of Gods
Mead is said to be the drink of the Vikings. On the Gotlandic picture-stones, Valkyrians (?) welcome the fallen hero to Valhalla with beer or mead from drinking horns. The beloved drink is made from honey, which gives it a golden colour just like floating amber. It can be as strong as 17 % alcohol and was the drink of the Gods, especially Odin. If there was no mead, beer was surely served in drinking horns and bowls. Beer was flavoured with hops. Even wine could be served, at least in high society.

Ibn Fadlan says:

“the Norsemen drink beer and drink all day and night. It is rare that one of them passes out with the goblet in his hands.”

It was considered an insult to refuse a toast but there was a balance between “being a man” and not drinking too much. One should bear Havamal’s words in mind:

“Drunk was I then, I was over drunk in that crafty Jötun’s court. But best is an ale feast when man is able to call back his wits at once.”

Even if drinking-horns are to be seen on the Bayeux tapestry and the picture-stones they are never found in Viking graves where bowls of glass (Birka), pottery or wooden casks are found. The horns or rather their mountings occur some 400 years earlier, during the Roman Iron Age.

The daily bread
One difference from the big feasts at home or in Valhalla the daily bread was simple and probably rather monotonous. The Vikings were a bread and porridge-eating people. The household was based on self-subsistence and storage. Seasonal products were important. In order to store food over the winter there were three main methods: smoking, drying and fermentation.

The daily food consisted of porridge, porridge and more porridge, made out of cereal grains, seeds from wild plants or peas. Bread was surely common as well as blood bread. Of course wild plant and animal products from the surrounding area were used but meat, eggs, etc from domestic animals were more of an exception, as these animals were rather small and not that high producing.
Milk products were probably also rather rare. However, there is a certain kind of pottery from a migration period settlement (Vallhagar, Gotland) which indicates the knowledge of making cheese during the 5th and 6th centuries.

Food was prepared over an open fire. It was mostly boiled, still the healthiest way to prepare food. A stew with vegetables, meat or fish was probably appreciated. Among vegetables it is said that the Vikings brought green cabbage from England. Roasting meat over an open fire was an exception and only used for big feasts as we have seen.

As no ovens are known the bread was baked on an open fire. (However in the fore-mentioned Vallhagar an oven is found in one of the houses). To drink there was always water, beer or mead.

Of course, we cannot imagine the taste of this food. Salt was not very common, honey was used for sweetening and perhaps different spices like saffron, brought home from the Orient, were used exceptionally.

Food on board
On board the Viking ship the men most likely enjoyed the same simple monotonous food as ashore. The tradesmen on the Russian rivers could find fresh food along the route, while on the long trips over open seas, porridge, bread and porridge, and mixed, one can imagine, with a fish or more. At the faraway exotic market places they had food they could never have dreamt about.

How to cook on board? From the Oseberg ship we know that there was a cauldron of iron hanging on a strong chain of iron from a three-legged stand with claw-like feet. A fire was lit inside the cauldron and the food cooked in a smaller pot over the fire. This construction was very practical and stable even on rough seas.

In life hereafter and on the way there
In one of the Gotlandic Viking-age graves food for the last journey was served. In a bronze vessel on a layer of coltsfoot, a pike was placed together with four eggs.

Having once reached Valhalla mostly pork was served and the boar Särimmer was cooked and eaten every evening.

Ibn Fadlan who attended a Viking captain’s funeral in far-off Bulgar notes to his surprise how people carried on board a ship to eat and drink: fruit, bread, meat, onions, two cows, a hen and a rooster to be divided between the dead chief and his slave. His dog and two horses followed their master on this last journey.

The Vikings probably had a good food intake but as said somewhat monotonous. According to examined skeleton material there are few traces of undernourishment. Due to this healthy way of eating they became rather tall. Interesting information from research carried out at the University of Stockholm shows for instance that mainly animal food has been found in the graves but vegetables at the settlements. Analysing pot shards from sites on the Swedish mainland will tell us in more detail what they ate, if there were regional differences finer than what can be observed even today.

Just recently a pot from the late Viking period with some material inside has been found on Gotland. We are eagerly waiting for the analysis of its contents – is it porridge or what?

From the exhibition “The meaning of food” at the County Museum of Gotland. Photo: Raymond Hejdström
Porridge as in the Viking Age
4 servings

10–15 dl water
3 dl chopped wheat kernels (soaked over night)
3 dl pearl barley
1 1/2 dl whole grain wheat flour
1 1/2 dl crushed nuts
3 tablespoons honey
bits of fresh fruit, whatever the season has to offer

Put the kernels, flour, pearl barley and crushed nuts in a pot. Start by pouring 10 dl of water in the pot and placing over an open fire. Stir the porridge and turn the pot to spread the heat. Pour more water in the porridge if it gets too thick. After 1/2 hour of cooking add the honey, nuts and fruit. Cook the porridge until the fruit is moist and soft and it has the desired consistency, about 15–30 minutes.

Red beetroot soup
4 servings

5–6 red beetroots water
1 teaspoon salt/litre of water
1 piece of white cabbage
2 yellow onions
2 tablespoons butter
1 1/2 litres bullion salt
pepper
1/2 teaspoon cumin
1/2 dl chopped parsley

Brush and rinse the beetroots. Put them in boiling, salted water and let them cook until they are soft, which takes about 30–40 minutes (depends on their size). Pour off the water and let them cool. Peel and cut the beetroots into strips. Chop the cabbage and onions and fry in butter, then add the bullion and let cook over slow fire for about 15 minutes. Add the beetroot and boil together for a minute or two. Season with salt, pepper and cumin. Add the parsley when serving.

This recipe is from the book Vikingar gästabud (The Viking Feast) by Michél Fant, Roger Lundgren and Thore Isaksson.

Here we present some recipes that easily can be made over an open fire.

Bread

10 dl thick wheat flour
5 1/2 dl liquid (buttermilk)
1 egg
salt
Knead flour, liquid, egg and salt long and thoroughly. (If necessary add more flour or liquid). Shape the dough into small buns and then press them flat and thin. Bake the bread over a glowing fire on tinplates about 2–3 minutes on each side. It should be light brown and sound hollow when tapped on. The dough can be sweetened with honey.

A Viking settlement has been discovered along the planned route of the €300m Waterford City By-Pass. The authorities have confirmed that the site is of special interest and can demand a significant amount of additional experience. The site was first located at Woodtown last August. Several artefacts, such as iron nails, rivets and fragments of pottery have been found through excavations. The biggest find yet – a Viking sword and a shield, which now are being examined and cleaned up in a laboratory.

It is understood the planned road would affect one third of the site and according to the Department of Environment they have two options: to protect the site and build the road over it or go for a full archaeological excavation. However Waterford City Council’s Director of Transport Services has confirmed that re-routing the road is being assessed. An excavation could add at least a year to the construction time and an extra €40m to the cost of the project. The assessment will be concluded within a week or two.

The Viking era was an important phase of Irish history; the Vikings established Dublin, Cork, Waterford and Limerick, Ireland’s principal centres to name a few of their trading outposts.

Source: Waterford News & Star
2004-05-07
Some Viking events in the summer of 2004

Viking Play at Fredrikssund, Denmark
June 18–July 4
This year’s performance is called Leif den lykkelege.
Phone: +45 47 31 06 85
Email: info@vikingspil.dk
www.vikingspil.dk

Herøye, Sagaøy, Herøy, Norway
July 2–4
Love and conflict, the rivals meet in armed combat in the Viking play, The King’s Ring. Bold men and fair maidens in a pageant about the Viking Møre-Karl, Olav Haraldsson and Unn, the girl from Herøy.
Email: kongensring@heroyspelte.no
www.heroyspelte.no

Sol-Fest, Ardglass, Northern Ireland
July 2–4
The summer festival is a celebration of local history, heritage and the natural beauty of the Northern Irish landscape and includes a Viking longship regatta, evening banquet at Ballyhorman, a flotilla of vessels and much more.
http://www.ardglassvikings.org.uk/

Sigtuna Medieval Days, Sweden
July 3–4
Don’t miss the new Sigtuna Medieval Days festival, in Sweden’s first town, founded in 980. You can enjoy the medieval atmosphere and meet rune carvers, experience calligraphy or learn how to become a great acrobat! You can listen to ancient music and performances, participate in historical walking and guided tours and visit craftsmen in the museum garden. Sigtuna Medieval Days is a joint project of Sigtuna Turism and Sigtuna Museum.
Phone: +46 8 594 806 50
Email: sofia.hiller@sigtuna.se
www.sigtuna.se/turism

Jels Vikingspil, Jels, Denmark
July 2–18
Every summer for 26 years a Viking play has been performed in Jels. The chronicles are enacted in Denmark’s most beautiful open-air amphitheatre with a view of the Jels lakes. The summer 2004, the title of the Viking chronicles is Kong Skjold which would not be complete without a Viking longship.
Phone: +45 74 55 21 10
Email: info@jelsvikingspil.dk
www.jelsvikingspil.dk

Viking festival, Stenkjer, Egge, Norway
July 16–18
Welcome to the Norwegian national Viking festival located on historic Viking ground at Egge, the home of Saint Olav’s defeaters. The many-faceted festival program will attract every age group and make for excitement from morning to evening.
Phone: +47 93 06 10 91
Email: www.vikingfestival.no

Viking camp at Skäftekarr, Löttorp, Sweden
July 19–25
Viking camp with market. From ancient times to the Vikings.
Phone: +46 48 52 22 13
www.skaftekarr.se

Moesgård Viking Festival, Denmark
July 24–25
An annual festival the last weekend of July, with an open-air market where the locals meet the longships upon their return from their summer raiding and trading expeditions. Here homemade wares are bartered for exotic ones from foreign lands. Horsemen show off their skills and the prowess of their steeds. Vikings from home and abroad display their skills at armed combat. Goods, food and drink are on sale at the market.
Phone: +45 89 42 11 00
Email: moes-info@moesgaard.hum.au.dk
www.moesmus.dk

The Saint Olav Drama, Stiklestad, Norway
July 28–August 1
For many people, Stiklestad is best known for The Saint Olav Drama, which is performed each year in the end of July. It’s a historic play dedicated to St. Olav and the introduction of Christianity to Norway. The drama will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2004. Visit the Medieval Market with demonstrations and sales of craftwork as well as music, juggling and food inspired by medieval traditions.
Phone: +47 74 04 42 00
Email: stiklestad@stiklestad.no

The Olav Festival in Torshavn, Faroe Islands
July 29
A genuine Viking Festival held every year on July 29th, and attended by people from all eighteen Faroe Islands. The market and games take place just as they did 1000 years ago with a variety of events.
www.faroeislands.com

Saltvik Viking Festival, Åland, Finland
July 30–31
Feasts with handicrafts, food, axe throwing, singing, acting, and much more. A four-meter tall Viking wooden sculpture welcomes visitors.
Phone: +358 18-24259
Email: johanna.enberg@turist.aland.fi
www.aland-viking.com

Viking Festival, Wolin, Poland
August 6–8
Annual festival with warriors, craftsmen, Viking ships, music and ceremonial groups.
Phone: +48 91 32 61 975, +48 91 32 60 471
Email: stowarzyzenie@jomsborg-vineta.com
www.jomsborg-vineta.com

The Swedish Viking-age Archery Championship at Fotvikken, Sweden
August 2004
This unique championship will be arranged at Fotvikken for the second time. This is a unique opportunity for visitors to experience something different and unusual. It might even inspire some visitors to take up historical archery themselves!
Phone: +46 40 45 68 40
Email: info@fotvikken.se
www.fotvikken.se

Viking drama at Söderala, Sweden
August 5–15
The Söderala Vane play is based on a legend from 11th century and tells how Söderala church received the vane. A drama containing love, humour and excitement.
Phone: +46 27 07 53 53
Email: rolf.berstedt@se-saws.com
www.soderalatjoljen.sida.nu

Viking event in Apullen, Latvia
August 27–29
Historic show featuring events in Apullen in 853 – battles between Baltic tribes and Vikings.
http://viduramziu.lietuvos.net/pilys/index-en.htm

Largs Viking Festival, Scotland
Late August–Early September
The Largs Viking festival celebrates the Battle of Largs in 1263 – the end of the Viking’s political reign in Scotland. The festival includes a Viking Village, theme activities, live animals, and Battle of Largs re-enactment, burning of a longship, fireworks display and entertainment throughout.
Phone: +44 1294 32 44 94
Email: ghamilton@north-ayshire.gov.uk
www.vikingar.co.uk
Some notes on the production

By Ny Björn Gustafsson

Nowadays we know that Viking-age padlocks were produced in Scandinavia, contrary to the traditional interpretation of them as Eastern imports. And the method used was not so complicated...

Most readers of this magazine are familiar with the island of Björkö in Lake Mälaren, Sweden. Excavational work at the island, executed over four centuries has produced an enormous wealth of finds, predominately from the Viking Age. These finds, along with the unique number, around 3000, of preserved late Iron-age graves and typical earthworks make Björkö the most probable location for the best known urban centre in Viking-age Sweden – Birka.

This article will centre on one of the find types from Björkö and elsewhere in the Norse cultural sphere – the padlocks.

Some areas of Björkö have attracted more interest from archaeologists than others. One of these “special” areas is commonly known as “the Garrison”. It is located in what was originally a sloping valley between the summit and a nearby lower point of a small mountain, Borgberget – roughly translating as “the Hill-fort Mountain”, which is Björkö’s highest point.

The Archaeological Research Laboratory of Stockholm University has excavated the Garrison area during summer seasons ever since 1997 under the supervision of Dr Lena Holmquist Olalsson. Prior to this, campaigns were undertaken in 1877 and 1934.

A wealth of finds – most of them of a seemingly masculine character – has been recovered. Finds such as arrowheads, knives and axes stress the military significance of the site.

Several terraces are to be found at the Garrison and on one of them the remains of a building were found. The so-called “Hall of the Warriors” measured approximately 20 by 10 metres. Like most houses from the Viking Age, slightly curved rows of postholes and the floor level were the only traces to be found of the hall.

Further up the slope a forge was excavated a few years later. The whole complex seems to have been constructed during the first half of the 10th century and the massive amount of arrowheads at the site combined with clear signs of fire indicates that it met with a violent end during the later part of the century.

The padlocks were found in and around the hall and on a lower terrace further down the slope. In all 44 more or less fragmentary padlocks have been found to date – this in an area of less than two acres!

They were the second type to be acknowledged at that dig – hence the labelling Type II.

Several Type II-padlocks were also found in the graves at Björkö during the 19th century and since the beginning of the 20th century. A traditional interpretation has been that they were Eastern imports. This was based mainly on the fact that padlocks of the same type are still common in some parts of Asia. Recent finds from, for example Björkö’s Black Earth – the former town area – and Ribe in Denmark have shown that this interpretation has to be re-considered.

Both at Björkö and in Ribe’s Viking-age cultural deposits, fragments of severely burnt clay have been recovered. These shards all show the same special features – they are burnt to the verge of vitrification or beyond on the outside, while their inner faces are not as burnt and show various imprints. The sizes and shapes of these imprints vary, but some display a striking resemblance to the outer sides of contemporary padlocks.

This was first acknowledged by one of the archaeologists of the Birka Project, Torbjörn Jakobsson Holback. He analysed thousands of shards, both of the said type and others, and he came to the conclusion that padlocks were indeed made in Scandinavia during the Viking Age. Jakobsson Holback limited his study to the ceramic shards – how the locks were made was left as an open question.
of Norse padlocks

How were they made then? Well, the imprints on the shards leave vital clues to the process. Several shards display imprints of narrow twisted rods. These can be matched to the decorative rods attached to the outer long sides of some lock-cases. Other, finer imprints run in the opposite direction of the “rod-imprints”. On closer examination they were apparently made by some kind of fine, spun threads that seem to have been tied around the lock-cases.

A probable explanation for the threads is that the loose parts of a lock-case were laced together as one piece prior to their being baked into wet clay. Hence this also indicates that the lock-cases were brazed in “one piece”, i.e. all joints were brazed together in one heating session instead of, as some earlier interpreters had it, one joint at a time by means of an open torch and a blow pipe.

For the latter method to be successful the solder – copper alloy – needs to be of a different composition for each joint. This to decrease its smelting temperature – otherwise the heat for the soldering of a second joint would re-smelt the solder in the first since they smelted at the same temperature and so on. An open flame would also render an oxidizing environment around the solder, which in turn weakens the joints since solders do not stick as well to other metal faces when they are covered by oxides.

Another feature to be taken into account is displayed on the lock-cases themselves. All the locks from the Garrison are quite severely corroded and most are fragmentary. On some of the lock-plate fragments the surface structures of the outer and inner sides are different. The outer sides are covered by corrosion while the insides in turn are covered by a glassy, shiny surface that appears to be burnt. If these shiny surfaces are combined with the ceramic shards a hypothetical line of production for a padlock-case could be suggested as follows:

- A jig, somewhat smaller than the final lock-case is made from a burnable, yet soft material, for example fabric or leather.
- The top, bottom and side plates, along with the hasp sheath (fig 1) are laced to the jig and thin rods of solder matrix, copper alloy, are applied at the would-be joints. If the lock-case’s long sides are to be decorated with twisted rods these are tied in position on top of thin strips of additional solder.
- The whole piece is baked into wet clay, which then is allowed to dry.
- The brazing “package” is thereafter put in a furnace and heated until the outer layer of the clay vitrifies, becomes glasslike and sticky. Inside the package the jig burns and consumes all the trapped oxygen, thus creating a reducing environment which in turn renders better joints.
- The package is allowed to cool and is opened. The carbonised remains of the jig can then be removed through the key and mechanism holes.
- The outer face of the lock-case is polished while the inside can not be reached and therefore left as it is.

To test this hypothesis I have performed several brazings and the method gives perfectly stable lock-cases with good joints even when very small amounts of solder (brass) were used.

The method itself was far from unknown during, at least, the early medieval period. The 12th century German priest Theophilus described a method to braze iron in his treatise “De Diversis Artibus” – “Upon Divers Arts” - by means of covering it in wet clay.

In addition to the padlocks from the Garrison three shards of possible brazing packages were found by the forge mentioned above – it is therefore quite possible that some of the padlocks were produced at the site.

An interesting fact is that “clay baking” has been, and still is the traditional method when the joints in tin cattle bells are coated with brass and soldered – the Swedish word for the technique is “Brasing”. The main difference is that inner joints are not needed since the bells are folded from larger metal sheets and riveted together – the brazing is performed to tighten the joints, thus giving the bells clearer “voices”. Instead of a jig a piece of charcoal is put in each bell to create the crucial reducing environment inside the clay package.

Early medieval bells, such as the ones from York show the same general features as modern ones. It is therefore quite possible that padlocks and cattle bells were produced alongside each other.

Ethnographical sources from 19th century Sweden also tell of padlocks being produced in a similar fashion but it is stated that the actual technique by then was long forgotten.

To conclude and sum up this article it can be said that padlocks were indeed produced by the Norse population during the Viking Age, they were not imports, and they were produced through a simple, yet refined method that with some modifications survives to this day.

Further reading:


About the author
Ny-Björn Gustafsson is an archaeologist and a Viking re-enactor. Over the years, he has contributed several articles to Viking Heritage Magazine.
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Fig 3. Fragments of a brazing package, find nr 3313, scale 1:1
Excavations at St Ninian’s Isle, Shetland

BY RACHEL BARROWMAN

Introduction
Since 1999 a project based at Glasgow University, directed by the author, has been researching, surveying and excavating at a chapel site on the small island of St Ninian’s Isle, off the west coast of mainland Shetland.

Forty years previously excavations at the site had uncovered the ‘St Ninian’s Isle treasure’ and the site and the small team of excavators who dug it were brought briefly to the attention of the British media. However, although it received less attention at the time, the excavators had also found a very important archaeological site.

Renewed excavations, and research into the original work at the site have revealed just what a special place this was – a site used for initially for settlement, later for worship and burial, the evidence for which spans almost 2000 years.

Earlier Excavations
Every summer vacation, between 1955 and 1959, Professor A C O’Dell and a small group of students from the Geography Department at Aberdeen University, travelled to the Shetland Isles to excavate at the site of a ruined medieval church.

The Shetland Isles lie around 340 kilometres north of Aberdeen, 340 kilometres west of Norway at the same latitude as Bergen. The site they had chosen is situated on the east side of a small island called St Ninian’s Isle, a small uninhabited island off the west coast of mainland Shetland.

This island is joined to the mainland of Shetland by a sandy spit, or tombolo, so that the island is but a short walk across the sand from the mainland on all but the stormiest days or at very high tides. The island rises to 50 m above sea level on its west side, with a gentle slope down to the sandy beach on the east side. The site itself is situated above this beach at 20 m above sea level, in an area of deep deposits of windblown sand.

In 1955, when the team from Aberdeen University began digging, their intentions were simply to find the church, which was at this point buried beneath several feet of windblown sand. Local stories and tradition helped the team to locate the church and it was soon uncovered, together with hundreds of burials from the Medieval and later periods.

As the excavations progressed in 1956 to 1958 however, more and more complicated archaeological features and deposits were uncovered, and so the team found themselves out of their depth in many ways than one. Not only had they removed several generations of burial and up to six metres of windblown sand in places, they had also uncovered the beginnings of a fascinating and complicated site.

Evidence emerged that the site had been used for around 2000 years – first for settlement in the pre-Christian Iron Age, later for worship and burial in the Late Iron Age (Pictish) and Norse periods, and finally as a burial ground for the Shetland community on the mainland, from the Middle Ages to the mid-nineteenth century.

Buried Treasure
In 1958 the excavations were thrown into the limelight when a Shetland boy who had come to the site to help out for a day, uncovered a most spectacular find in the east end of the Medieval church, below the floor foundations. Below a stone slab inscribed with a cross he found what he thought at first was a squashed metal helmet and fragments of wood. Careful investigation revealed that it was actually a carefully hidden hoard of twenty-eight silver objects and the lower part of a porpoise jawbone, contained in the remains of a larch wood box.

The objects included seven shallow bowls, a hanging-bowl, a spoon, an unusual claw-like object, a sword pommel, three thimble-shaped mounts, two sword chapes and twelve penannular brooches. All the objects were ornately decorated with patterns reflecting influence from England, Ireland and the province of the Picts (parts of what is now called Scotland). Several of the objects remain a mystery, not least the strange ‘claw-like object’ and the thimble-shaped mounts.

Although the hoard was buried on an early church site, most scholars are of the opinion that the hoard is a secular one, buried around the time of the Viking invasion of Shetland at the beginning of the ninth century AD.

Professor O’Dell and his students returned to the site for one last year of excavation in 1959. By now he realised that he had uncovered more than he or his team could properly deal with, having no archaeological training at all. No records

Adult male, aged 24-35, re-interred some time in the 11th to 12th centuries AD after death from severe traumatic injuries Photograph: R. Barrowman.
had been made of the excavations since 1955 – no finds numbers, no plans except one plan drawn at the end of the excavation in 1959, no numbering of soils or finds, and only a few sheets of notes or photographs were taken, and these for personal reasons by the students on the excavations. The large majority of burials removed from the site were dumped with the spoil in heaps around the site and over the cliff edges.

The group had by now dug down into the top of the large mound of windblown sand, and in doing so had created a hole around 15 by 12 metres, and up to 6 metres deep, around and to the south of the ruined church. At the end of the season in 1959 they consolidated the site by filling in the holes below the church with sand and building revetment walls around the area outside the church to stop the collapse of the windblown sand into the hollow. Forty years later on, the site is covered in vegetation, but otherwise remains as it was left.

Fourteen years after the last season, a volume was published with full research on the treasure and some of the amazing stone sculpture from the site. The latter included evidence of an early Christian carved stone shrine, cross-inscribed stones, a hogback grave marker and other Christian sculpture.

In this volume, one of the former students from the site, Dr Alan Small, attempted to give an account of the archaeological remains, other than the treasure. However, in the face of no proper site recording at all, he was unable to produce more than a few pages from the personal recollections of colleagues, a few notes, and the personal site diaries and photographs of other students.

New research forty years later on...

The St Ninian’s Isle project at Glasgow University was initiated in 1999 with a view ultimately to prepare recommendations for future management of this famous site. The condition of the site had deteriorated considerably due to wind erosion and rabbit burrowing, and the presence of human bones eroding out of the soil on a regular basis was becoming a problem.

In contrast, the treasure from the site, which is located in the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh, continues to draw attention and debate, and is still the largest hoard of Pictish silver ever recovered. It was felt that the balance needed to be redressed between the treasure, and the site from which it came.

A large part of the new project was therefore to research the previous excavations. However, further survey and excavations were also undertaken – a documentary study, topographic survey, geophysical survey and small trial trench excavation in August 1999 and the two larger excavations in July 2000.

In recent years material has come to light from the previous excavations - a notebook, a file of correspondence, slides, photographs and three boxes of finds have been deposited in the Shetland Museum, the Shetland Archives and the Aberdeen Marischal Museum. This material is being studied by the author and it appears that it might be possible to cross reference some of these finds and some of the notes and perhaps begin to build a picture of the 1950s excavations. Small scraps of paper were included with some of the sherds of pottery, some with a little sketch or the name of an excavator, and with some detective work it is beginning to be possible to try and match notes with finds.

A study of the boxes of finds from the 1950s excavation has shown that the whole assemblage is in keeping with a Late Iron Age and Norse site including, as well as a thousand sherds of Late Iron Age pottery, a broken steatite dish, a glass bead, a spindle whorl, a clay bead, pumice and animal bone. Three of the burials removed from the site in 1958/9 have also been located and submitted for radiocarbon dating (see below).

New Excavations

After four small trial trench excavations in 1999, two larger trenches were excavated in July 2000. Trench 1 was opened to the south of the church over the area of the 1950s excavations and Trench 2 to the north, in a previously unexcavated area. Although work on Trench 2 is still ongoing, the publication of the results of the Trench 1 excavations is due to be completed next...
year as part of the research into the 1950s excavations. The main objective in this area was to establish a chronological sequence for the burial and structural remains, and to distinguish between those features excavated, and possibly reconstructed, forty years previously, and those undisturbed by the earlier excavations.

The excavation was very successful, and many exciting features were revealed. The earliest feature on the site was an Iron Age structure, which was only partially uncovered. Overlying this were two areas of midden, one containing much pottery and animal bone, the other comprising mainly shells. Finds also included bone beads, large amounts of Iron Age pottery, a broken gaming piece, and worked whalebone. Into these midden deposits two burials were interred, without accompanying cist or grave goods – an newborn child, 0–2 months old, and a four to five year old young child.

In addition to these burials, four stone cists were also excavated. Unfortunately these had already been excavated in the 1950s and most of the contents removed and lost. However, one of the cists had not been fully excavated, and a burial was found within the cist, which had sunk below the level of the bottom of the cist slabs – it is presumed that for this reason the excavators missed it forty years earlier. This burial was of an adult male aged 26 to 35 years old, who had been buried in an extremely flexed position and was only partially articulated – suggesting that the body had been buried, exhumed when semi-decomposed, and re-buried. This individual had also experienced extreme traumatic injuries, including broken bones and a slice through the back of the skull with a very sharp object, which no doubt caused his death. He had been buried with an iron knife, which would suggest perhaps a pagan rite. However, radiocarbon dating gives a date centred on the twelfth century AD.

One burial was excavated from this group of cists in 1959 – a crouched burial of an adult female, aligned north to south and apparently accompanied by a child, within the largest cist on the site. This cist appeared to be set into a wall, which was excavated aligned north to south, across the area.

Adjacent to these features, but undisturbed by the previous excavations, a kerbed feature, filled with quartz pebbles and stones, and separated into five 'compartments' by upright stones, was discovered. The compartments were aligned east to west, and at the west end of each compartment was a small upright headstone. On the surface of two of these headstones were inscribed crosses, both of the same form – a double cross with possible interlacing of the lines and the beginnings of an interface design at the base. Beneath the pebbles and stones of this complex, six infant burials were excavated, buried into the midden below.

Adjacent to the infant burials two long cists were excavated, each of which was empty. These had also been filled with quartz pebbles, and one of the cists had a smaller cist attached to it. A flat schist slab that had been inscribed with a simple cross covered this smaller cist. It seems likely that these burials all date to the Early Christian period, about which little is known in Shetland. There are no Iron Age cemeteries excavated in Scotland or the Northern Isles with which to compare these to, and only one other (Pictish kerbed cairn) Early Christian burial excavated in Shetland.

There can be no doubt that the finds from the renewed excavations on St Ninian’s Isle in July 2000 are of unique importance.

Dating

The three skeletons excavated from the site in 1958/9 are at present being radiocarbon dated. Although these burials are now boxed in a museum and out of context, it has been possible to link two of the skeletons with the correct stone cists excavated in 1958-9 and shown on the only published plan of the site.

One, a woman dating from the late Iron Age (first indications are to around the 5th century AD) was buried in an extremely flexed position, with one arm behind her back, and may have been buried with a child. She was buried before Christianity came to Shetland.

The second, a young male, is of later date, and was buried in the Christian tradition, lying supine, facing east, in a stone ‘long cist’.

The nine burials excavated in July 2000 have also been radiocarbon dated. The dating of some of the burials is shown to be later than first thought, placing the entire corpus firmly around the end of the Iron Age and into the tenth century AD. In particular the group of six infant burials have radiocarbon dated to some time in the tenth century AD.

This is a time of great upheaval in Shetland. Christianity had spread to the islands probably at the end of the seventh, or into the eighth century, but by the end of the eighth century/beginning of the ninth, Shetland and the north of Scotland were subject to raids by Vikings, and later, Norse settlers, who were themselves still pagan. In fact the St. Ninian’s treasure itself may have been hidden in the face of an incoming Viking attack, as experts are of the opinion that it was probably buried at the beginning of the ninth century AD.

A Place Apart

The excavations at St Ninian’s Isle have raised issues of ethnicity and religion, as well as date. Although the death of an individual can be dated, what remains to us in the archaeological record can only hint at the life of that individual. What is certain is that both the 1950s and more recent excavations have revealed evidence of a special site, ‘a place apart’, which was chosen for burial and worship from the earliest centuries AD and through some of the most turbulent times in Shetland’s history.

About the author

Rachel Barrowman, MIFA, FSA Scot, is the Project Manager for the Viking and Early Settlement Archaeological Research Project at Glasgow University, and Director of the St Ninian’s Isle project. She now lives with her husband and two children on the Isle of Lewis in the Western Isles, and is at present working on a survey of the Early Christian chapel sites of the Isle of Lewis. It is expected that the results of the current research and work at St Ninian’s Isle will be published in 2005.

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A VIKING FAMILY IN NORMANDY
– a presentation of the Vemundr family, a Viking re-enactment group in France

By Didier Vimond

I am the president of a small family re-enactment group called “VEMUNDR, une famille Normande”. We number twenty-three members, including me, my wife, a friend of mine and his wife and some members of my family (brothers, uncles, aunts, cousins, nephews and nieces)!

This association aims at showing the public a different aspect of the Vikings and their culture. We try to do the best we can with what we have. We don’t want to forget our roots, and we want other Normans to know about them. In Normandy, the Viking heritage is a part of the collective subconscious, and Viking civilization is part of a common Northern European heritage we share with all other Nordic people. The Viking mythology remains deeply rooted in the hearts and minds of the people living in Normandy.

Scandinavian colonisation began at the end of the 9th century, and a significant amount of Vikings settled and scattered over numerous colonies in Normandy. In 911, Rolf (or Rollon), a leader of the Seine valley settlers, forced the king “Charles Le Simple” to acknowledge his occupation, in exchange probably converting to Christianity and giving the French monarch military protection.

One of our aims is to improve basic knowledge of the Viking era. Through this, we want to show the people the authentic and genuine aspects of the Norman cultural background, far from all the stereotypes and preconceived ideas. Our activity is divided into two strongly connected parts: genealogy and re-enactment.

Genealogy is the means for us to reconstitute our family tree (the VIMOND). We try and fill in the blanks between our potential ancestor VEMUNDR and the present VIMOND family. It may seem like a waking dream, however our research enables us to improve our knowledge about the Viking Age and their descendants, the Normans. This knowledge has to be constantly updated and serves as a basis for our re-enactment activities.

We not only teach people about dates, battles and kings’ names, but rather the forgotten history of everyday life. They can smell the smoke of campfires, touch the tents, clothes, weapons, etc. We really enjoy recreating, acquiring and reliving those artefacts. Children can really feel history! In moments like these we feel very proud to be a Viking family of the third millennium!
During the shows, we are more than a mere re-enactment group; we become "archaeonauts", having travelled in the 10th century, bringing back all kinds of artefacts authenticated by both archeologist and historians, and presenting them to the 21st century public.

There is another dimension in this activity: nurturing pride and consciousness of the roots we share with numerous other peoples throughout the world. Re-enactment is a strong cultural act: sharing our past to build a better future!

The readers of Viking Heritage Magazine must be aware that in France and more particularly in Normandy, there are a lot of Viking re-enactment groups. Those groups are able to gather their manpower, knowledge, equipment and teaching capabilities. Therefore their performances make a deep impression on the general public, thus giving them a brand-new idea of the Viking Age.

We have many plans in progress. First, we intend to go back to the land of our ancestors, visit as many sites (museums, archeological sites...) as we can, then meet the modern-age Vikings and share their experience and knowledge of the Viking heritage.

Our second objective is to have a Viking boat, one more dream for us!

Language checked by Denis Chaton and Luella Godman.

Gotland in the year 1005. The island’s harbours and trading places bear witness to an extensive trade. A thousand years later we know that Gotland has the largest concentration of Viking-age finds in the world. The Gotland Viking Island 2005 happening is aimed at both the people of Gotland and visitors from near and far. Now, as in the past, we welcome everyone to our island.

Four main events will depict the life of the Vikings over a year. The events will be held around the island at sites of historical importance, where perhaps similar activities once were held. Throughout the year experiences, performances, exhibitions, Viking-age handicrafts, courses and activities follow the tracks of the Vikings on Gotland and their trading trips out into the world.

Another highlight during the year will be the opening of the exhibition of the Spillings hoard, the world's largest silver hoard, at the County Museum of Gotland. The hoard weighs over 70 kilos, compared to Sweden's second largest treasure find of around 12 kilos! The size and the content are an archaeological sensation and arouse great international interest.

The many grave-fields, about fifty harbours and thousands of archaeological finds that have been discovered in the soil on Gotland are all evidence of Gotland’s greatness during the Viking Age. Over 700 silver hoards have been found here. The more than 400 picture-stones dating from the Migration Period and Viking Age constitute documents the like of which are not found elsewhere. They give us priceless facts about the maritime shipping, tools, religion and prose of that time.

For all those who are interested in Vikings it is nearly incredible to think that a single little island can find room for so much cultural history. The evidence left by the Vikings speaks an international language and comprises an international heritage well worth seeing. Four main events will depict the Viking Year, 2005.

Midwinter blót
February 1–6, 2005
Vikingabyn in Tofta is the place where the Vikings ensure themselves of a good coming year. Food, music, handicrafts, drama presentations and market. The highlight is the blót and feast with whole grilled lamb in the village longhouse.

Departure
May 14–16, 2005
The departure of the Viking fleet is preceded by a large feast with a market for the trading goods to be sold in the East and West.

Althing
June 2–3, 2005
The ultimate authority for political, legal and religious matters. People from all over the island gather at the Althing to participate in rituals, trade goods at the market and not least to meet with others, discuss and have a good time.

About the author
Didier is a professional soldier (warrant officer in the French military police) and mad about Norman history. He discovered living history in the year 2000. From time to time he leaves his uniform and wears the Viking tunic in company of his parents, his wife Sylvie and their children Sigrid and Halvard.
Email: vmd@oreka.com

http://viking.hgo.se
Viking Island 2005

Homecoming
September 24–25, 2005
The Viking fleet returns with new exciting trade goods. The market artisans and traders meet the people of Gotland in a sumptuous banquet with entertainment by festival performers.

During the summer of 2005, several exciting activities like a visit from the Viking-age fleet, markets and musical performances will take place. The program will be updated continually on www.vikinggotland.com.

In 2005 we travel 1000 years back in time. You’re welcome to join us.

Information
Gotland Viking Island 2005
Gotland University
+46 (0)498-29 98 34
www.vikinggotland.com
Register on our e-mailing list to get updates on new happenings.

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A sketch of a runestone in the Moesgard 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.
This novel is a work of historical fiction and tells about the Norse first discovery and colonisation of America. It’s seen through the eyes of a clumsy yet endearing youth, who is the only living survivor of Bjarni Herjolfsn’s voyage in 985.

Against his mother’s wishes, the boy Harald sneaks on board the Viking ship, Mist. After a few days’ journey some of the crew members are involved in a mutiny. Harald is the only one who survives the captain’s revenge. He hides in the forest and is later found by a man called Rik. Harald stays with Rik, who treats him like a son, for several years and they get along very well together. Harald even converts to Christianity. The day Harald turns seventeen Rik is murdered.

The story continues 15 years later when Harald has been hired on as a sailor on the raiding ships. Then he gets the opportunity to become captain on a ship going off in search of a new land. They are lucky and find a new country, which they call Vinland. On board the ship is a young boy called Otter, who Harald takes under his wing in the same way as Rik took care of him.

The novel is meant to be a light amusing read and interesting for readers who appreciate a Viking-age story. However the front-page is misleading: according the archaeological evidence the Vikings never had horns on their helmets! Depicting Viking helmets with horns is a much later mix of sources from different cultures.

Written by Rune Edberg
Södertörn Archaeological Studies 2
ISBN 91-628-5977-3

In June 1950, Ormen Friske, a replica of a Viking ship, was wrecked in the Nordic Sea. All 15 members of the young Swedish crew drowned. Dead bodies and pieces of wreckage were washed ashore the coasts of North Friesien and Jutland.

According to witnesses, Ormen Friske ended up in a shower of American aerial bombs by mistake, which demanded the ship to put into a port of refuge.

Although the relatives and the German authorities requested a full inquiry, the Swedish government never investigated the accident. Instead the case was reduced to silence and the blame for the wreck was put on the crew’s alleged lack of knowledge.

With support of Swedish documents and foreign archives, private photographs, preserved artefacts from the ship and interviews, for the first time this study in contemporary archaeological gives a collected picture of the tragedy, its consequences and remaining memories.

The book is fully illustrated and contains many unique photographs. It is distributed by the author rune.edberg@telia.com and available only in Swedish.

http://viking.hgo.se

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The Viking Way

Religion and War in Late Iron Age Scandinavia

Written by Neil S. Price Ph.D.
Published by University Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, Uppsala
Sweden
ISBN 91-506-1626-9

The Viking Way examines the evidence for Old Norse sorcery, looking at its meaning and function, practice and practitioners and the complicated constructions of gender and sexual identity with which these were underpinned.

Neil S. Price attempts to recapture the subtlety and sophistication of Viking mind in which the pervasive presence of magic - real magic within a real society was an integral part of the worldview. In particular, the thesis focuses on the notion of a "super national empowerment of evidence" essentially the way in which the physical prosecution of warfare was supported by a structure of rituals intended of produce success in battle.

A key element of the proposed explanatory model concerns patterns of religious interaction between the Scandinavian and Sámi peoples, set in the context of broader contacts between these groups, framed against a background study of shamanism and the belief systems of the circumpolar and sub-arctic cultures.

The book is soft cover, 435 pages, well illustrated with beautiful drawings and represents one of the most important contributions to Viking studies in recent years.

Krauka: Stiklur

In their new CD Stiklur, the Nordic group Krauka shows that simple sounds from ancient music instruments can be transformed into a modern symphonic universe. They take you on a musical journey back in time to when the Viking culture blossomed over the North Atlantic region.

The Krauka trio investigates the possibilities and limitations of instruments that have their origin more than 1000 years ago. They have done research on the kinds of instruments that existed in northern Europe during this time and from this information they have built their own, while using modern strings to make the music more powerful. Some of the group's lyrics have their roots in the Nordic myths and some deal with issues of today. Their inspiration comes from folk music, blues and rock.

Since 1999 the group has performed in Greenland, Iceland, Faeroe Islands, Poland, Sweden and Denmark. Their first CD, released in 2001, has been sold around the world.

If you want to know more about Krauka and their music see Viking Heritage Magazine 4/2002 or www.krauka.dk

A 1937 report to the authorities refers to two aged oak groves in a moss in Kjula, a small place close to the city of Eskilstuna in Sweden. The find might shed light on Eskilstuna's Viking Age, but nowadays no one knows the actual find location. The groves were photographed and samples were taken, but the find still remains in the moss.

Gunilla Larsson, the archaeologist who found the documents, which she describes as thrilling, wants to get in contact with people who might remember the find. A magnetometer that could sense wood-living microbes would be too expensive as method.

The report describes a number of holes with so-called wooden nails; which indicates that the boat wasn't made in the area. But how did a ship of that construction end up in a small lake, that didn't have any connection with the sea? Is it possible that it might be a fertility sacrifice?

One explanation is that it might come from a plundering raid, as it is well known that ravages from Vender, Curer and Estes took place from the 11th to the 13th centuries in the surroundings of valley of Lake Mälaren. Research could show how old the find is and, if it appears to be a mercantile ship, it is possible to show which waters it sailed in and the kind of cargo she carried.

Source: Folket 2004-03-26
Destination Viking

Destination Viking is a concept for presenting the Vikings and the Viking Age. It includes museums, visitor centres, prehistoric villages, re-enactment groups etc., and is working with research, presentation and the development of a trans-national tourist destination.

Destination Viking includes a number of separate projects, currently the Destination Viking Baltic Stories, funded by the Interreg IIIB Baltic Sea Region programme and the Destination Viking Sagalands project, funded by the Interreg IIIB Northern Periphery programme. An application for Interreg IIIB North Sea Region funding for a Destination Viking Waterlinks project was submitted in March.

The Destination Viking projects are co-publishers of Viking Heritage Magazine, and Viking Heritage is a partner of Destination Viking.

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The Vikings take over Historiska Museet!

This summer between May 8–August 29, Historiska Museet in Stockholm, Sweden, will bring together sagas and myths with real live people and objects from the Medieval Ages in the exhibition The Middle Ages – dead or Lajv.

Among other things an exhibition called Olga and Ingegärd – Viking princesses in the East, will be on display. It deals with two Viking women who became consorts to princes in the old Russian Empire and their lives, including exciting tales of adventure, hope, power and religion. Both are now sainted in the East.

A well-preserved crypt found in Kiev in 1998, containing the remains of a Scandinavia woman from Ukraine, will be on display to the public. Who was she?

This event opens June 24 this year and lasts until June 19, 2005.

On the July 3rd and 4th Storholmen Viking Village from Roslagen will be taking the museum by storm. Fun, games and music will welcome children and adults alike to participate in a fantastic journey in time. Along with the Swedish and Russian Vikings, the Viking princess, Ingegerd, will also make an appearance and tell of her exciting life in the East.

During the season the Storholmen Viking Village in Norrtälje will focus on the East and women during the Viking Age and the Viking princess herself will of course have a leading role.

For further information:
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Photo: Per Linusson
The fourth ordinary partner meeting of the Destination Viking Living History (formerly known as Destination Viking Baltic Stories) project took place in Ale municipality along the Göta River in western Sweden, May 6–9.

The River

The Göta River, or the River as it is called in the sagas, has played a great role in the history of the three Scandinavian realms. Norwegians, Swedish and Danish royalty and peoples fought for the control of the river for centuries, and for many centuries the three countries’ borders met at the mouth of the river. The fight to be the Lord of the River is still manifest in the numerous town and castle remains along the river.

Reconstructions of houses

The theme of this meeting was house reconstructions. This is one of the main themes of the Living History project. Therefore, a seminar on Viking-age house reconstructions was a major part of the meeting.

The seminar was a combination of theoretical and practical approaches to the problem. At first, experts like Jochen Komber and Kristina Carlsson gave the background and ideas behind the Viking-age chieftain seat now being reconstructed in Ale. This reconstruction is based on finds from Tisø in Denmark. A dwelling house is being reconstructed now. We went up to look at it after the theoretical seminar.

Here the group is visiting a Bronze-age rock-carving called Stugåsberget found in Skepplanda in the northern part of Ale. Here, as early as the Bronze Age, a ship – almost 3 metres long (the biggest one in the county of Västergötland) – was cut together with the image of a wagon. From a historic view this region is characterized by the fact that important land and waterways met here and the whole economy of the region has been based on communications and transport of goods.

Photo: Kristina Carlsson
introduction, and spent a long time studying and discussing its various details etc. Currently, the roofing is being laid, and in fact, the house could be used for a Viking celebration in the evening.

After the discourse at the building site, there was another practical session centred round use of replica building tools from the Viking Age, again a combination of testing and discussion.

The Ale Viking farm is situated on a hill close to the Göta River and close to the place where the Äskekärr ship was found. When finished, the farm will be a sort of chieftain's seat. This chieftain will again be a Lord of the River.

Along The River
On Saturday, the whole group departed on a study tour along the River. Kristina Carlsson was our knowledgeable and inspiring guide on the tour tracing the old routes of trade and power along the River.

We started in Lödöse, one of Scandinavia's oldest towns. A royal manor was built here in late 11th century. A few decades later, a town emerged on the site. From the middle of the 12th century, Lödöse was one of two places in Sweden where coins were minted. Lödöse probably was a very important commercial and administrative centre, and at its height during the 13th and 14th centuries. Lödöse suffered severely during the plague, and in 1368 the town was burnt by the Hanse. In 1473, partly due to the fact that the Norwegian charged customs on shipping to Lödöse at Bohus Castle, a new town, New Lödöse was founded further down the river, at the mouth of the Säve River.

Next stop was Nödinge church. The area most probably also played an important role during the early Viking age, and remains of an 11th century church have been found here. The name of the village could indicate a Danish origin and witnesses the mix of Norwegian, Swedish and Danish influence along the River for centuries.

Bohus Castle is situated on a high cliff where the River splits into two mouths, and it controlled much of the traffic on it. The castle was erected from 1308 onwards by the Norwegian kings. The castle remained in Norwegian hands until 1658, when the whole province of Bohuslän was ceded to Sweden.

Close to it lies Kungahälla, also one of the oldest towns of Scandinavia. The old town lies around 2 km west of present-day Kungälv. The town originates from late 11th century. Slavs destroyed it in 1135, but the town was rebuilt and reached its height in the 13th century. The Norwegian kings then built a castle on Ragnhildsholmen in the river. At the beginning of the 14th century, its importance diminished, but the town lived on until Kungälv was founded around 1650.

By Pétur Jónsson, Chairman for Grettistak ses and Curator of Reykir regional museum North Iceland.

He has been called the Last Viking. Born on the cusp of Paganism and Christianity in the northern part of Iceland. An outcast, a fighter – a loner who was stronger than anyone around and had nothing in common with his fellows. His turbulent life is recounted in the famous Grettis Saga.

Grettis Saga
The Sagas of Icelanders are narratives of adventure and conflict, set in the Viking Age, written down in the vernacular by anonymous authors in Iceland, during the 13th and 14th centuries. Most of them take place in the unique society the Vikings
founded in Iceland, but also in countries like Norway, Faroe Islands, Orkney and Greenland.

One of the best known of the Icelandic sagas, *Grettis Saga* tells of the outcast Grettir, who was born at Bjarg near Miðfjörður fjord in northern Iceland. He clashed with society early on and was an unruly child, rebelling against both his father and his fellow men. He was sentenced to exile at the Parliamentary assembly at þingvellir and spent the bulk of his life roaming around the country, persecuted by his enemies.

*Grettis Saga* tells of Grettir’s conflicts and confrontations with both natural and supernatural enemies in Iceland and Norway, and part of the story focuses on his travels in Norway. Grettir spent 19 years in exile – more than anyone else in Icelandic history – and was finally killed at Drangey in Skagafjörður.

*Grettis Saga* is the Icelandic saga that has been preserved in the greatest number of manuscripts; it has been printed and published in numerous languages. The story is well known in all of Europe: in Germany, plays based on the saga of Grettir have been written and performed, the Faeroese have composed poems about him; and on the Scottish islands of Shetland the story of Grettir the Strong has been told by storytellers for generations.

The Sagas of Icelanders are not typical heroic literature, but rather stories of flesh-and-blood humans burdened with a heroic legacy. Grettir is the strongest of all men, and battles with men and berserks, tomb-dwellers, ghosts, bears, giants and monsters – defeating them all.

*Grettis Saga* is a hero-centred story bearing many of the characteristics of a good novel: introduction, climax, and dénouement. It is nonetheless clear that the story is based on real-life events and people who lived in Iceland around the year 1000.

Though Grettir himself is no longer among us, his story lives on in print and in people's minds. Many places in Iceland, including a number of well-known historical sites, are named after him. Most of these place names are in Húnavík western county – as Grettir was born at Bjarg in Miðfjörður fjord. All over Iceland are giant “Grettistökk,” huge stones that Grettir is said to have wrestled with. *Grettis Saga* makes specific reference to several of them.

A plaque commemorating Grettir’s mother, Ásdís, has been erected at Bjarg. Also at Bjarg are stone markers describing the places related to Grettis Saga: the hillock where the church built by Ásmundur, Grettir’s father, once stood had been built; two “Grettistökk” with which Grettir is said to have wrestled; and Grettispúfa, where Grettir’s head is buried.

**Grettistak**

In 2002, a private non-profit organisation called Grettistak was founded in West Húnavatnssýsla County. Grettistak focuses on the culture and history of the county, with particular emphasis on *Grettis Saga*. Its objective is to make *Grettis Saga* – and other local stories of historical significance – visible and accessible to tourists and local citizens alike, and to use these stories to attract a greater number of tourists to the area, with the long-term aim of fortifying all types of services and contributing to the build-up of the region as a whole.

Plans include the establishment of a special information centre that will
provide information designed to introduce visitors to the region and will include an exhibition and recreation area dedicated to Grettir the Strong.

Grettistak is a participant in the project Destination Viking Sagalands, which is subsidised by the European Union's Northern Periphery Interreg III B Programme. The project involves the collaboration of 15 local projects in 6 countries. Among the project’s emphases is the marketing and promotion of all the participating local projects. In addition, the project aims to make places of historical interest more accessible through the construction of walking paths and informational signs, as well as through festivals and other organised events.

Since 2002, guided tours have been provided at Bjarg, Grettir’s birthplace, every Sunday in June, July, and August.

Grettir Festival
Since 1997, a special Grettir Festival has been held in West Húnavatnssýsla County. Most often, the festival has been held at Bjarg. Sponsors of the festival are the West Húnavatnssýsla County municipal authorities, the region’s tourism association, and a group of interested individuals who wish to keep area history alive.

Until the present, the Grettir Festival has been a rather conventional family-oriented affair featuring various types of entertainment. A guided tour of Grettir’s birthplace and childhood home is available, and guests can learn about the various place names and historical sites in the area and hear the highlights of Grettir’s life and saga.

Another festival event is the Grettir Cup, wherein local men and women compete in a “strong man” competition. Participants compete in a number of tasks – such as dragging cars and lifting heavy objects onto a platform – and activities can become quite tumultuous when “huge” Grettistök are heaved into the air.

The festival closes with song and dance and the spontaneous composition of traditional Icelandic chanted verses called rímur. The Grettir Festival plays an increasingly important role in the region’s tourism industry, and the number of festival guests grows from year to year.

Grettir Festival August 7–8 2004
This summer’s Grettir Festival will be held on August 7–8 2004. At the evening party, which will be held on Saturday in the Community Centre in Hvammstangi, local residents will entertain their guests with games and music. A lecture on Grettis Saga will be featured, and a dance band will play.

Sunday’s activities will centre on multi-faceted family entertainment at Bjarg in Mýðjörður. There will be games and “Grettir Tasks” for children of all ages; guests will be offered a guided tour of the Grettir area, and the story of Grettir the Strong will be told.

The indispensable Grettir Cup competition will be held, with fine prizes for the winners in the men’s and women’s divisions, not to mention the honour of beating the title of the area’s strongest resident. There will also be outdoor singing and dancing, and refreshments will be sold at the festival.

Grettir Ásmundarson. A full-page illustration in AM 426 fol., late 17th century.
The kitchen garden at Gunnes gård

BY MARGARETA NILSSON

It’s the month of May. These are busy times at Gunnes gård with school children activities, guided tours, the animals that recently arrived at the farm and the kitchen garden. For the third year in a row we have to dig, sow and plant.

“Growing kitchen vegetables adds a female perspective”, says Anna-Cari Lind who has been working here since the beginning of Gunnes gård, “and a new dimension in our work – where does the food come from. Vegetable gardening is easier than growing cereals.”

Margareta with the hopbine. Photo Sylvia Rodin

Practical Iron Age living means the children have to change identity for a day. With Viking names and clothes, they do crafts and other farm work. One group of six to seven young Vikings has to prepare lunch, and we’ll start the day by talking about what kind of food people ate 1000 years ago. Then we make a stew of onions, turnip, cabbage, parsnip, herbs and beef. A thin unfermented bread, which the children make on iron pans over open fire, is served with butter and honey. When the horn sounds, for the lunch break, the other children eagerly gather in the cookhouse.

Starting up
In April 2000 Gunnes gård suffered a heavy loss, when the byre was destroyed by fire. We had to move the pigs to pasture for the summer. When pigs root around, they make a natural job mulching the topsoil, so this seemed to be a good time to start a kitchen garden.

Because Gunnes gård is located in an area with numerous archaeological remains we got in touch with the County Administration. They suggested a location...
on the grounds and called attention to the fact that prehistoric farmlands were often located on self-drained, somewhat sloping, and easily cultivated land.

In the spring of 2001, we fenced the planned kitchen garden, and seeded it with flax (Linum usitatissimum). The decision to start growing vegetables was preceded by many intensive discussions about the development of the farm and the activities with school children.

When the co-operation for the construction of Gunnes gård started between the Municipality of Upplands Väsby and Stockholm County Museum, in 1988–1989, the County Museum had talked about the future, and the importance of describing the ecological cycle. With the kitchen garden we are now closer to this goal.

In March 2002 we took our next step into the future by joining the EU-project, Destination Viking - Baltic Stories. Our aim is to bring pre-history to life and make Gunnes gård a “living” farmstead.

How old is “old”?
The coming of Christianity and the monastic system later on, have usually been the explanation of how most of our garden plants where introduced. But from the 6th century to the beginning of the 9th, the Norse contacts with Europe and the Eastern world grew quickly. The Vikings brought home seeds, cuttings and grafts. Among the archaeological finds are henbane (Hyoscyamus niger), marshmallow (Althea officinalis), and opium poppy (Papaver somniferum).

In the search of the kinds of seed that were used during the Viking Age, we got in contact with the National Agricultural Museum of Sweden in Julita and Sesam, the Society for seed-growing and protection of cultivated plants in Sweden, a non-profit, non-governmental organisation. From Sesam we got field peas (Pisum sativum var. arvense), Shetland cabbage (Brassica oleracea var. capitata) and broad beans (Vicia faba).

The kitchen garden is situated in a southern slope. Along the fence grow three elder bushes. Elder (Sambucus nigra) has had a magical significance up to modern times. It was grown not too close to the house, due to its strong fragrance, the enticement of friendly gnomes and the deterrent effect on trolls, but also because it caused headaches. Freya, the goddess of love, fertility and war, was believed to protect the elder.

A warm, dry season
The spring and summer of 2003 were dry and sunny. The flax came into flower and the hops were loaded. Small signs told the visitors what was growing.

The white cabbage (Brassica oleracea var. Capitata, a substitute for leaf cabbage) was sowed late in May and then came the drought. This made them small and no great addition to the cooking. But the turnips were fine. (You can sow them early in spring, at a temperature of +10 Celsius, and they are good in casseroles.)

The field peas got some sort of disease, and only produced enough for next year’s planting. Even the broad beans suffered from the dry weather.

Sweet herbs and medical herbs true to the period in our garden are wild strawberry (Fragaria vesca), hops (Humulus lupulus) and woad (Isatis tinctoria).

We also have medieval plants such as sage (Salvia officinalis) and garden parsley (Petroselinum crispum). They (and yellow onion) are all registered in Charlemagne’s
Capitulare de Villis imperialibus, from 812 AD, but are not believed to have been grown in Uppland, in the year 1050.

Harvest
In September harvesting onions and flax became a popular task among the school children. After some drying time indoors, the flax seed cases were ripped off, and we laid the flax on the ground to ret. It makes no difference if flax has been ret or not. You can store it for a very long time – decades and centuries – anyway!

The children heartily dug up weeds when the harvest ended, in the beginning of October. This was a popular task, while waiting for their lunch to be ready. It even became so popular that some children rushed to eat, eager to get back to their digging.

When the weeding was done, we spread a layer of spoiled hay over the soil. This covering prevents the weeds from growing when spring comes. Half dried manure and ashes from the hearths can be spread in the fall or the early spring.

The weather turned cold in the middle of October 2003. It began to snow, quite early for these parts of Sweden.

Plans for the future
A part of our plan for the future is to be self-sufficient in sweet herbs for our cooking. We are also thinking of creating a small wooded meadow in part of the fenced area.

Elm (Ulmus glabra), ash (Fraxinus excelsior) and small-leaved lime (Tilia cordata) give the animals nutritious feedstuffs during winter season in form of dried leaves. Hazel (Corylus avellana) and Glaucous Dog-rose (Rosa dumalis) bushes would provide us with nuts and rosehips.

A wooded meadow was very important for a Viking-age farmstead. It will also create the opportunity for even more activities for our school children.

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Plants introduced in southern Scandinavia during Iron Age

Early plants, introduced before 800 AD

**Vegetables:**
- Ground-Elder
- Wild Celery
- Wild Turnip

**Sweet herbs and medical herbs:**
- Fool’s Parsley
- Henbane
- Round-leaved Mint
- Opium Poppy
- Vervain
- White Mustard

Plants introduced 800-1050 AD

**Vegetables:**
- Cabbage
- Chickory
- Chives
- Creeping Bellflower
- Field Penny-cress
- Garden Angelica
- Parsnip
- Sand Leek

**Sweet herbs and medical herbs:**
- Common Comfrey
- Coriander
- Garden Cress
- Greater Celandine
- Marsh-mallow
- Soapwort
- Valerian
- Woad

The Viking Homestead Gunnes gård
The Gunnes gård Viking Homestead is an open-air museum in a genuine Iron-age setting. Other sites here include Bronze-age Cairns, Iron-age burial grounds and several runic stones. Today the museum consists of a dwelling house, a cookhouse, a byre, a pit house and storage building. It is a reconstruction of a Viking homestead in the early years of 11th century AD. The original homestead was discovered during excavations at Pollista, Municipality of Håbo. See also VHM 4/02

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http://viking.hgo.se
Top of the World – Nordic Mythology on New Stamps

By Geir Sør-Reime

The eight Nordic postal administrations in March have issued a set of eight different stamp issues with a common theme: Nordic Mythology. The issue is the first of eight celebrating Nordic co-operation. The next issues will appear 2006 and 2008. The participating postal administrations are those of Åland, Denmark, Faeroe Islands, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Greenland.

World of the Gods
The theme chosen for the first issue was mythology. This includes not only Norse mythology, but also Finnish and Greenland myths. Except for Åland, every country issue two different stamps. All countries issue these stamps joined together in a so-called miniature sheet, but several countries also issue them in ‘normal’ sheets. Norse mythology is featured on the issues of Åland, Denmark, Faeroe Islands, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden.

The stamp of Åland
Åland, the only country issuing only one stamp, has chosen the myth of Fenja and Menja as their subject. The myth of the two giantesses is told in the Old or Saemundar Edda. They were sold as slaves by the Swedish king Fjolner to King Frodi, the Danish king. They were forced to grind gold for King Frodi with the magical mill, Grotte. One night, an army attacked the two women. Their leader took Fenja, Menja and the mill, Grotte with him. They were then forced to grind salt onboard his ship and finally the ship sank due to the weight of all the salt. Fenja and Menja continued to grind salt on the bottom of the sea, and that’s the reason why the ocean waters are salty.

Heimdal and Gefion
The two Danish stamps feature the two Norse gods, Heimdal and Gefion. Heimdal (or Rig as he is called in some texts) is a somewhat mysterious figure. In some texts, he is named as the forefather of men, other texts tell that Oden is Heimdal’s father. In any case, Heimdal is the guardian of Ásgard, the home of the gods. He sits on top of a mountain and guards the Bifrost, the bridge between the worlds of the gods and men. The Bifrost bridge is visible for us humans as the rainbow. Heimdal blows his horn, Gjallahorn, to warn the gods of danger and when Ragnarok, the end of the world, is coming.

Gefion is a fertility goddess. When Oden had settled in the Danish city of Odense, he sent Gefion out to find land. The Swedish king Gyrlfe granted her all land that she could plough in one day. She then gave birth to four sons, whom she made into oxen and with them before the plough she separated Zealand out of Sweden, and moved that piece of land close to Funen, where Oden resided. The hole left in Sweden is today Mälaren Lake (according to Snorri). Gefion later married Skjold, Oden’s son, who became king in Lejre and the forefather of the Skjoldung royal family.

On the Danish miniature sheet, the border surrounding the stamps shows a map of southern Scandinavia, with Heimdal standing in the lower left corner, watching hordes of fable animals and giants emerging from the sky. From the north come the Rimtussi and the Fenris wolf, from the east the sea giants and the Midgard orm, whereas the Mispel people come from the south along with the Nidhug dragon.

The stamps of Faroe Islands
The Faeroe Islands issue two stamps featuring the god Thor, and the sea-goddess Ran. Thor was a very popular god on the Faeroes, and their capital, Tórshavn, bears his name. Ran hunted seamen with her net and drowned them in the sea. Her daughters were the wild waves.

The stamps of Iceland
Oden rides on his horse Sleipnir on the two Icelandic stamps. Sleipnir is the horse with eight legs. On either side of Oden fly his two ravens, Hugin and Munin.

Njord and Balder
The Norwegian pair of stamps also shows two Norse gods, Njord and Balder. The sea god Njord is lord of the winds and rules the sea and fire. Balder, son of Oden and the goddess Frigg, was the god of piety and innocence. The famous Balder myth tells how his mother took oaths from everything that none should hurt Balder. Loke found out however, that the small mistletoe had not given the oath.

To prove Balder’s invulnerability, Frigg invited all men to shoot at Balder, but nobody could hurt him. Then however, Loke offered Hod, the blind brother of Balder, an arrow of mistletoe. So Hod kills Balder. Balder was put on his ship, Ringhorne, along with his wife, Nanna, who died of shock upon learning of Balder’s death, and they both were burnt along with Balder’s horse.

The stamps of Sweden, Finland and Greenland
The Swedish stamps show a warrior entering Valhall, the Hall of Oden. A woman is greeting him, probably a valkyria, offering him a drink from a horn. The motif is reproduced from a picture-stone from Gotland.

In addition to the Norse myths on these stamps, the Finnish stamps feature Luonnotar, the Mother of Water and the Maiden of the Sky, according to the Kalevala.

The stamps of Greenland illustrate the Moon Man, dressed in polar bear skins, who controlled the fertility of animals and humans, the elements and the hunt. The Northern Lights illuminates the northern skies when the dead play ball with a walrus head.

For further information: http://www.topoftheword.nu/

About the author
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Drills for Viking ship in Vestfold
Gravhugen, also called Kjemphaugen, and Oseberg-II in Vestfold, Norway, might contain rich findings and possible remains of a ship burial. A georadar investigation by a German company last year showed a big heap of stones under the ground.

A number of holes will be drilled were the possible ship burial might be. If they don’t find any wooden remains it doesn’t mean that a ship never has been buried in the grave. Both in Denmark and England ship burials where the ships were decomposed have been found. However it is possible to prove that it is a burial place even if there are no wooden remains left.

Expectations are high as Vestre Rom is an area where Viking ships have been found earlier. An excavation will be expensive and keep a number of archaeologists and conservators busy for many years.

Source: Aftenposten
2004-02-09
NEW VISITOR CENTRE – VIKINGS ON WIERINGEN

The Dutch Viking Foundation and the municipality of Wieringen announce the opening of the only visitor centre in the Netherlands entirely devoted to the country's Viking heritage – with an extensive emphasis on Wieringen – scheduled for 1 July, 2004.

More information in the next issue of Viking Heritage Magazine and on the website www.vikingen.nl.

Information: stichtingwegvdvikingen@quicknet.nl

Viking exhibition in France

Name: L'Europe des Vikings (Europe of the Vikings)
Place: Abbaye Daoulas, Finistère (Brittany) France
Time: May 14–November 14 2004

There will be a big Viking exhibition this summer in the cultural centre of Abbaye Daoulas, Finistère (Brittany), France. Under the scientific supervision of the French professor Régis Boyer, the exhibition deals with subjects as the Scandinavian world, the sea, the raids and the trading routes.

You will meet Germans and Scandinavians, Vandals and Burgunders, and learn about their religion, society, art and handicrafts. Magnificent objects such as Gotlandic picture-stones and silver hoards as well as jewellery, rune-stones, pottery and manuscripts lent by more than 40 museums in England, France, Scandinavia and Russia are on display.

During the exhibition there will be programs for both children and grown-ups.

Further information:
http://www.abbaye-daoulas.com/fr/index.html

The Old Uppsala Museum

The Old Uppsala Historical Center in Sweden, has changed its name to The Old Uppsala Museum. During the 2004 season some of the signs and information material will be changed and from the first of May 2005 the new name will be fully established.

The museum is located at the three huge legendary grave hills from the pre-Viking age (400-550 AD), known as “Kungshögarna” (the Kings’ mounds) in Uppsala, Sweden. This place is one of the most legendary cult sites in the Nordic countries and one of the most important centres of what was later to become Sweden.

Summer season 2004

Blot, heathen rites, sacrifices and contact with gods is the common theme during the season at the Old Uppsala Museum in 2004. Reminders of human beings' attempts to appease the gods, such as weapons, amulets and human bones, will be shown in the museum.

In July Vikings with boats will set up camp outside the museum, and children will be occupied with a lot of activities, like camps with weapons, acting, cooking and storytelling.

The figurines from Lunda

Among the exhibits this summer are the unique figurines from Lunda, see the front page. They are just a few centimetres high, made from gold, silver and bronze, and were found two years ago outside Strängnäs in the middle of Sweden. It’s not very common to find these kinds of artefacts among other finds that put them in a context. All three figurines have the same pose, which may indicate that they represent the same Æsir God.

A lecture on the figurines will be held in the museum on June 20 at 2 pm, when the responsible archaeologists from the Lunda excavations, Gunnar Andersson and Sara Fritsch, will tell you more.

Later this year a book about them will be published. The book is called Att föra Gudarnas talan – figurinerna från Lunda (Representing the Gods – the Figurines from Lunda) and it has been written by the archaeologists from the Lunda project.

The museum will be open daily from May 1 –August 31 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. For further information see www.raa.se/gamlauppsala and www.raa.se/gamlauppsala/pdf/sommarprogramzoo4.pdf

Viking-ship harbour found on the west coast of Sweden

Archaeologists believe to have found a Viking-ship harbour at Köpstad, Galtabäck along the coast of Halland in western Sweden. So far a number of south Gothic house grounds from the 11th century have been excavated. The find might well be an archaeological sensation. Nowhere along the west coast has a medieval harbour ever been excavated. As early as 1920 the Galtabäck ship was found at the mouth of the Galtabäck River.

The harbour’s situation reminds of other medieval harbours especially on Gotland. It is still a secret if the area also constituted a shipyard, however it is established that all human activities came to an end during the 14th century, which the experts believe might depend on the Black Death.

Source: Göteborgs-Posten 2004-05-17

The Iron Age horse Sleipner, with his eight legs, was the saddle horse of Odin. Copyright: RAÄ
In the vicinity of Ales stenar (Ale’s Stones)

Ales stenar is considered one of the cultural monuments and best known of Sweden’s ship settings from the Viking Age. This grandiose monument is located at Kåseberga on the south coast of Sweden. Its length of 67 m and width of 19 m make Ales stenar the largest ship setting in Scandinavia. It consists of 58 large granite blocks, some of which are over 2 m high. The front block exactly marks the spot where the sun sets at midsummer and the back block the point of sunrise at winter solstice.

Believed to have been raised in the late Viking Age, it is not clear whether the area was an actual grave or a cult centre. The name might be traced to the old Gothic word ahls, meaning holy place.

Every year more than 600 000 visitors are amazed by Kåseberga’s magnificent ship setting and scenery. The wide interest in the area creates increasing demands for a long-term approach to preserving the area’s culture and nature values. A cooperation between the municipality, the county administrative board and the Central Board of National Antiquities has led to a joint program to enhance experience of the region.

This summer there will be guided tours with experienced guides who will allow visitors to get a wider view over the region’s history and nature. There are also plans to set up a visitors’ centre, which will inspire visitors to visit other areas in the neighbourhood.

New exhibition in the museum of Birka, Sweden

The 2004 summer exhibition in Birka is called Thor, Christ and Allah – about Gods and people in Birka. Here you can meet up with people who have been living in Birka and others who might have been visiting the Viking town. Other than heathen Norse you also have the opportunity to get acquainted with Christian missionaries, concubines, Khazares and Sami people.

Food and drink are the theme of the season, since the actual meals were of special importance to the Vikings. In the working Viking-age kitchen you can watch Viking meals be prepared, you can also watch films about the warriors of Birka and follow the new archaeological excavations.

This summer, the Viking team, Mälare Kölar will build a Viking-inspired boat, the smith will forge and craftsmen work with wood and skin handicrafts.

The museum will be open daily July 3–August 22 between 10.30 a.m.–6.30 p.m.

For further information: www.raa.se/birka or Birka Museum +46 8 560 514 45

Runic inscription could shed light on Viking settlement

A runic inscription found ten years ago in Dalgety Bay, Fife, in Scotland, has provided evidence that Vikings once might have settled in the area. The Vikings are known to have ransacked Fife in the Middle Ages but there has been little means of proof of their settlement before this find. Runic inscriptions are rare on the mainland of Scotland and archaeologists find it amazing that it has been found in a lowland central Scotland position.

The meaning of the inscription, probably dating from the 9th to 12th century AD, and the kind of runes, still remains a secret. The runes include three groups of letters, a collection of consonants and vowels, presumably initials of three separate Norse individuals. There is no way of using scientific methods for dating the items, but it’s possible to look at the way the stone is cut. Experts from Cambridge University have been contacted to help in solving the problem.

A similar runic inscription has been found on a glacial boulder called the Pittarthie stone, which may have been used by Vikings to mark their farmland boundaries.

Source: The Herald 2004-03-08
Once again – Silver hoard from the 8th century found on Gotland, Sweden

About 280 silver coins were recently found on Gotland when a landowner was working in his garden. He notified the antiquarian authorities of the island who were soon able to ascertain that yet another hoard had been found. Investigation of the find location with a metal detector enabled them to identify the actual deposit site, which will be fully excavated.

So far the treasure consists of a collection of coins and silver spirals, most of them German but there are also coins from England, Denmark and Italy. The coins are dated preliminarily to the years 1020–1050. The hoard is now under excavation and will later be displayed at The County Museum of Gotland.

According to the archaeologists the find is interesting because of its unusual location; no other ancient remains have been found near by. The collection might be the result of a trade journey to Germany, says Kennet Jonsson, a Stockholm University coin expert, and once again it indicates the important mercantile position Gotland enjoyed as a trading centre.

Nowhere in northern Europe have as many hoards of silver from the Viking era been discovered as on Gotland. Until now, over 700 precious metal finds have been registered. These consist primarily of silver treasures, spread evenly over the island.

Excavations on the island of Samsø, Denmark

In 1967 a landowner in Soby, on the island of Samsø, found a late Viking-age trefoil bronze piece on his property. This event led to a big excavation of the area in 1978. Soby appeared to once have been a Viking-age village. Eight well-preserved pit houses were found; one of them turned out to have served as a weaving house. The houses have been quite small just 4 x 4 meters in circumference.

Now, after all these years, it is time again for another excavations of the 1000-year-old village. Archaeologist Jeppe Gejr Larsen is in charge of this excavation that already has revealed several new-found pit houses.

Source: Århus Stiftstidende Netavis

The expedition in Vittfarne´s wake

The Vittfarne expedition has arrived in Gammelvansby in Ukraine. After years of planning, a lot of complications, blood, sweat and tears, the boat is now launched, rigged and ready to sail. The great Viking adventure, Expedition Vittfarne, is finally beginning!

The expedition’s destination is the town of Baku in Azerbajdzian, where they plan to end up in the middle of August. They are planning, a lot of complications, blood, sweat and tears, the boat is now launched, rigged and ready to sail. The great Viking adventure, Expedition Vittfarne, is finally beginning!

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Remarkable finds in central Sweden

Excavations in Råsvalslund, Lindesberg, Sweden during 2003, resulted in remarkable finds. The archaeologists found graves from 9th century and settlements from 12th century. The people who lived there probably worked in a ironworks.

The find is amazing as Viking settlements in central Sweden are very rare. The artifacts, silver and bronze pieces of jewellery, tools and fishing equipment are all of high status.

One of the dwelling houses seems to be made of timber, a modernity from the region that we now call Russia. Previously houses of this kind have only been found in bigger cities. It's now desirable that the area serve as an attraction.

The artifacts are on exhibition in the County Museum.

Source: Bergslagsposten 2004-03-17

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The County Museum of Gotland’s showcase, Fornsalen in Visby, presents a wide range of authentic objects that tell of Gotland’s 8000 years of rich, exciting history.

Take a look at the famous picture-stones and silver hoards, things related to daily living and feasts, birth and death, all of which give evidence of the life the Vikings led on Gotland as well as their travels afar both eastwards and westwards.

2005 is the Year of the Vikings on Gotland

During the summer of 2005 the largest Viking-age silver hoard in the world will be on display... 68 kg of silver and 20 kg of bronze objects... the Spillings Hoard from the parish of Othem on Gotland.

Welcome to Fornsalen!

The County Museum of Gotland
www.lansmuseetgotland.se

Länsmuseet på Gotland