Editorial

This autumn issue begins with the first article of two, exploring an aspect of the Viking Age that permeated everyday life as well as ritual events – the magical world of the Vikings. Here we make contact with a conception of the world, totally divergent from that of today, difficult to grasp but essential for gaining deeper knowledge and understanding of the Viking-age society, with relevance all over the Viking world.

The summer has been rich in Viking events and we are happy to give you reports from some of them. More and more we realise that events related to the Vikings and Viking Age are growing parts of the tourist industry of today.

Therefore the way in which this fairly short period of the prehistoric era is presented to a larger public is important. Our partners in the Destination Viking projects, most of them reconstructed farms and villages, are aware of this point and with the help of extensive interchange they are working hard to improve the quality of all the different aspects of their activities. Here we continue to present their work and operations – and the thinking behind them.

Under the guidance of Birgitta Wallace we also take a closer look at the Norse in the North Atlantic. Based on the findings from L’Anse aux Meadows as well as recent archaeological and saga research in Iceland and Greenland, she maintains to have found the place of the legendary site of Vinland!

So I do hope you will enjoy all this interesting reading. And as usual your comments are welcome.

Marita E Ekman
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Words of Wisdom

SOLITUDE and COMPANY

Young and alone on a long road,
Once I lost my way
Rich I felt when I found another
Man rejoices in man

From Hávamál
(From the High One*)
Viking Heritage Magazine  3/04

Viking-Age Sorcery

By Neil Price

The pre-Christian religion of the Vikings
The pre-Christian religion of the Vikings is a topic of perennial appeal to academics and members of the public alike. Every synthesis of the Viking Age includes a chapter on religion, and books devoted to the subject continue to appear at regular intervals.

However, over the last decade or so, researchers have begun to build up a more detailed, perhaps more subtle picture of early northern spirituality. Old Norse “religion” in fact embraced a great many more areas of life than we would today associate with that term, including what we would today probably characterise as sorcery or magic.

My own research in recent years has attempted to get to grips with these other “religions”, and to understand how they fitted into the world-view of the Vikings. In this article I will briefly examine the documentary evidence for sorcery in the Viking Age, continuing in the next issue with an archaeological look at the people who practised it.

In moving away from a traditional view of religion, it firstly helps to dispense with the word itself. Instead we can think of a “belief system”, perhaps a better term as it sets spirituality where it belongs alongside everything else that the Vikings thought about, mixed together with every other aspect of their lives both sacred and profane. Even so, the notion of a system of any kind is misleading here.

At present we in fact know very little about the detailed practice of Old Norse religion, and Viking “paganism” was probably never a consistent orthodoxy such as later writers like Snorri Sturluson tried to present. It never have been systematically understood even by those who practised it.

This applies not least to the inhabitants of Asgard, and their relationship with human beings. The “worship” required by the Norse gods was not adoration, or gratitude, or even unreserved approval, and was thus utterly unlike the Christian relationship to the divine. The religion of the Æsir and Vanir demanded only a recognition that they existed as an integral and immutable part of human nature and society, and of the natural world, and that as such they possessed an inherent rightness – perhaps even a kind of beauty. If one wished to avoid disaster, it was necessary to come to terms with the gods, and the terms would be theirs, not those of their followers. The question of “believing in” the Norse gods was probably irrelevant.

Sorcery and the Icelandic sagas
It is against this background that we must consider sorcery. Among our most detailed sources here are the Icelandic sagas, the medieval prose narratives that may or may not tell us about the Viking Age that they claim to describe. It’s not going too far to say that the entire corpus of saga stories is saturated in sorcery, witchcraft and magic (it is difficult to find a precise term). In one way or another the effects of magic are seen and described in almost every tale, to a greater or lesser degree.

This in itself is not a new observation, of course, as the sagas have long been linked in various ways with the contemporary European traditions of medieval fantastic literature, given a Nordic twist in the post-Viking consciousness of Iceland. However, in general the sheer scale of this presence, the sheer quantity of sorcery that appears in the sagas, has not been properly acknowledged. The key question here is of course the extent to which this reflects a medieval magic realism – essentially a genre of imaginative fiction – or whether it instead echoes a Viking Age magic reality.

In order to get closer to such problems, we need to ask the following kinds of questions:

A carved head in the medieval stave church at Hedde, Norway. Is this a Christian representation of Odin, the one-eyed master of sorcery? Photo: National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen.

This is the first part of two articles examining the evidence for Viking Age sorcery and sorcerers, based on the author’s thesis The Viking way. Religion and war in late Iron-age Scandinavia.
Sorcery in the sources
How do we know about this kind of sorcery in the Viking Age? Since 1877 more than 300 scholarly works have appeared in this field, primarily literary and linguistic studies. The source material for Nordic sorcery is very varied, but the most explicit descriptions all come from medieval Icelandic texts, of which the most comprehensive is Snorri’s Ynglingasaga, part of his semi-legendary history of the kings of Norway, the Heimskringla. Especially detailed depictions come from the Saga of Eirík the Red and the Saga of King Hrolf Kraki; these two works are those most often cited, but among the sagas of Icelanders there are in fact a great number of additional, brief mentions of magic.

From the older Scandinavian sources – such as the mythological and heroic tales related in the Poetic Edda – there are several oblique references, especially in Lokasenna, Hymnulur and Völuspá. To these we can add references to sorcery in several of the skaldic praise poems, many of which are thought to actually date from the Viking Age, as well as in the Pedlar – the long lists of names for gods and other mythological beings that were compiled as an aid to poets.

Seiðr
It is clear from these written sources that one concept above others lay at the core of Old Norse concepts of magic. Its name was seiðr (seid or seid in the modern Scandinavian languages). We find it described at length in a number of sources, and circumstantially in a great many more.

It seems to have been a collective term for a whole complex of practices, each serving a different function within the larger system of sorcery. There were seiðr rituals for divination and clairvoyance; for seeking out the hidden, both in the secrets of the mind and in physical locations; for healing the sick; for bringing good luck; for controlling the weather; for calling game animals and fish.

Importantly, it could also be used for the opposite of these things – to curse an individual or an enterprise; to blight the land and make it barren; to induce illness; to tell false futures and thus to set their recipients on a road to disaster; to injure, maim and kill, in domestic disputes and especially in battle.

More than anything else, seiðr seems to have been an extension of the mind and its faculties. Even in its battlefield context, rather than outright violence it mostly involved the clouding of judgement, the freezing of the will, the fatal hesitation.

It was also closely linked to the summoning of spirits and other beings of various kinds, who could be bound to the sorcerer’s will and then sent off to do her or his bidding. An important category of these beings was also an extension of the individual in the form of a multiple soul.

The link to cultic practice comes primarily through the god Odin, who is named in several sources as the supreme master of seiðr, along with Freyja from whom he learnt its power. The Vanir – the family of older, earther gods who first fought with the Æsir and then joined them – provide a clue to another important aspect of...
this sorcery, in their role as divinities of fertility and sexual potency.
Not only do many seiðr rituals seem to have been sexual in their objectives, but they may also have been so in the nature of their performance. Beyond the practices with specific carnal intentions, this emphasis on sexuality is also often found in a surprising number of seiðr’s other functions mentioned above. By extension, the enactment of these rites seems to have placed so great a demand on their performers as to mark them with a different form of gender identity, outside the conventional norms of Viking Age society. It is in connection with all these elements that seiðr has consistently been viewed as a Norse counterpart to what has elsewhere been called shamanism.

However, seiðr is far from the only form of sorcery mentioned in the Old Norse sources, and before proceeding further we first need to pose a question as to the nature of these other magics, their relationship with seiðr, and the degree to which they may be considered collectively.

Galdr
Essentially there occur five categories of sorcery in the sources, besides seiðr itself. Three of them were also named complexes of ritual and technique – though apparently in a looser sense than seiðr – while the others are modern constructions that derive from an analysis of the texts.

The most distinctive of these five is undoubtedly galdr, which seems to have been a form of sorcery focusing on a characteristic type of high-pitched singing. The word has a relative today in the modern Swedish verb gala, used to describe the crowing of a rooster.

The saga descriptions of galdr-songs note that they were pleasing to the ear, and there is a suggestion of a special rhythm in view of the incantation metre called galdrmál, as described by Snorri in Háttatal and used occasionally in Eddic poems.

Galdr occurs in a variety of contexts, and it seems that its status as a distinct form of magic was probably beginning to blur by the end of the Viking period. It performed many, if not all, of the same functions as seiðr, and in a great many instances the two are used in combination (the term seiðgaldr even occurs in a fourteenth-century source).

Despite this, in every case it is seiðr that sets the pattern for the ritual as a whole. Galdr can be seen rather as a particular element in a larger complex of operative magical practice, one option in the toolkit of ritual. By the Middle Ages proper, the term had become synonymous with magic in general.

Gandr and útiseta
Galdr forms yet another distinct category here, with origins that go back much earlier than the Viking Age. Its early history is shown by tantalising references from Classical writers, for example in Dio Cassius’ Roman History. By the Viking Age, and as with galdr, we find combinations of ritual forms. In several instances there are references to sorceresses using gandr in conjunction with seiðr in order to prophesy, for example in Völuspá.

Another aspect of Norse sorcery was the practice of útiseta, “sitting out”, which does not seem to have been a specific ritual so much as a technique to put other rituals into effect. Clearly related to Odinic communications with the dead, in brief it seems to have involved sitting outside at night, in special places such as burial mounds, by running water or beneath the bodies of the hanged, in order to receive spiritual power.

The magic used by Odin
The rituals performed by Odin form a category in their own right, beyond the specific complexes of seiðr and galdr, both of which the god employs. Several of them are also available to human sorcerers, but the

A reconstruction of a völva’s dress and equipment, based on the description from the Saga of Eiríkr the Red. Drawing: Thórhallur Thráinsson, author’s copyright.

The god has control over the weather and the elements, he can divine the future, heal the sick and seek out the hidden.

Besides the magic used by Odin, we also find the fifth category of “general” sorcery, with a vocabulary of terms that appear to mean simply “magic” in the same vague sense as we use the word today.

The functions of sorcery
But what was all this sorcery for? How was it used? Some of the functions these different types of magic performed can be traced in the sources, and we can draw out a range of attributes for Nordic sorcery.

Firstly there appears a kind of “domestic” magic, used in the context of everyday concerns and minor disputes, in the life of the village, the farm and the fishing community. Taking the Old Norse sources as a whole we find sorcery used for the following purposes:

- foretelling the future (divination)
- bestowing good fortune (blessing)
- bestowing bad fortune (cursing)
- manipulating the weather
- attracting game animals or fish
- healing the sick
- sexual enhancement (attracting the

http://viking.hgo.se
opposite sex, curing impotence, etc.)
• sexual detraction (warding off love spells, causing impotence, etc.)
• causing mild harm to people, animals or property

About the author
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Further reading:
The various forms and functions of Viking magic discussed here are explored at detailed length in the author’s book, listed below alongside other recent works on Old Norse sorcery.


A fragment of human skull pierced for use as a pendant and inscribed with a runic charm against sickness, invoking Odin for protection. Found at Ribe in Denmark, and dating to the early Viking Age. Photo: Den Antikvariske Samlingen, Ribe.

Large excavation of a Viking ship burial in Vestfold, Norway
Major excavations to open Viking graves in Gulli farm south of Oslo are taking place this summer. Expectations of finding Viking-age treasures are high though ship nails have already been found.

Lars Erik Gjerpe who is in charge of the project expects the team to find weapons and jewellery, including jewellery brought back to Norway by Vikings more than 1100 years ago.

The woodwork of the ship in the first opened grave has decomposed but measurements from where the nails were found can reveal the ship’s size and construction. The burial site was in use from the end of 8th century to the middle of 10th century and has been connected to wealthy relatives of agricultural families at the farm.

The last time a major Viking burial site excavation took place was in Kaupang in 1950. Source: Aftenposten
The Viking week at Adelsö

The largest Viking fleet in one thousand years! An authentic Viking village with craftsmen from all over Europe. Do-it-yourself activities, Viking food and games, music, theatre performances, concerts, competitions, and much more.

That was the program for this year’s Viking week at Adelsö in Lake Mälaren, Sweden.

In the midst of all these activities Sweden’s most experienced Viking now living, Erik “Tofta” Johansson from Gotland, walked around giving the place the right atmosphere.

Nineteen years ago Tofta was one of the crew members that took the Viking boat Krampmacken to Black Sea and Istanbul. He has also sailed on the Russian rivers past Novgorod to the old Swedish village on the shore of Dnjepr.

A gathering of Viking ships

A part of Adelsö, together with Björkö and Birka, belongs to the World Heritage. During the Viking week the organizers had succeeded in gathering almost a dozen Viking boats, including those at Birka.

The anchorage at Adelsö was not very good, so when the easterly wind increased, the boat crews had to watch over the valuable crafts during the night. Adelsö has a guest harbour, which might be the only harbour in the world where Viking boats are not welcome.

Only four of the boats had crews: Stefnir from Uppsala, Blanka that belongs to the Medieval Museum in Stockholm plus Regin and Tälja. Regin and Tälja participated in the successful archaeological experiment last year when the crews managed to sail and row from Sweden to St Petersburg in Russia.

The skipper of Tälja, Göran Jacobson, did a test this year, too. He tried to capsize the boat to see how well she behaved. Tälja is an authentic replica of the most complete Viking boat in Sweden, Viksbåten, found in a field not far from the town of Norrtälje.

Tälja did not want to overturn, so the crew had to press her down so she should capsize. In the water the crew quickly took down the mast, gathered the sail and turned the boat back on its keel. It was impossible to drain Tälja, but the crew could row the boat ashore full of water.

Pernilla Danielsson was very nervous before the experiment, but afterwards she said: “It was not at all unpleasant. Actually it was a lot of fun.”

Kalle the Runecarver

On Adelsö lives Kalle Dahlberg, the only professional rune carver in Sweden. He also takes tourists on guided tours in the Hovyard area, where the kings lived when Birka flourished.

With a piece of cloth Kalle Runecarver deftly demonstrates why he thinks that the runestones’ carvings should be painted.

Yearly event

This was the first time a Viking week was held at Adelsö. Besides all the historical events there was also, for example, a portable beer brewery, and every night on the open-air dance floor there was a belly-dance show.

The inhabitants of Adelsö are now planning to turn the Viking week into an annual event.

TEXT AND PHOTOS: CALLE AHLSTRÖM, VIKING VISITOR FROM GOTLAND
Vikingarnas egna ord  
(The words of the Vikings)

The runic stones are our oldest written documents, in that they give a picture of how the people lived in Sweden more than 1000 years ago. But are the signs really telling the whole truth? If you listen to the stories our runic stones mediate, a source of information appears about the Viking Age. The texts have been interpreted and accounted over the years, interpreters have tried to derive them in historical events described in medieval texts.

Second-hand sources have been used to explain an original document – but why use a detour if there’s a short cut to the Vikings? In the messages of the runic inscriptions we can see what the Norse of that time thought was of importance to mediate to the posterity and their age. They give us an imagination of how the Vikings apprehended themselves and the world they were living in.

Vikingarnas egna ord points to the runestones’ value as original customers from the Viking Age and demonstrates what’s beneath in these thousand year old texts. Read and learn from the Vikings’ own words!

Lars Magnar Enoksen is a writer, artist and runologist and has published widely. Vikingarnas egna ord is available only in Swedish.

Land, Sea and Home

Edited by John Hines, Alan Lane and Mark Redknap
The Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph
Volume 20

The 28 papers in this volume explore the practical life, domestic settings, landscapes and seascapes of the Viking world. Their geographical horizons stretch from Iceland to Russia, with particular emphasis on new discoveries in the Scandinavian homelands and in Britain and Ireland. With a rich combination of disciplinary perspectives, new interpretations are presented of evidence for buildings and technology, navigation, trade and military organisation, the ideology of place, and cultural interactions and comparisons between Viking and native groups. Together, these reveal the multivalent importance of settlement archaeology and history for an understanding of the pivotal phase within the Middle Ages that was the Viking period.

488 pages, 156 B&W illustrations
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Order online at www.maney.co.uk/books/mam20
“Vikingfestivalen Karmøy”
June 9–13, 2004
– a flashback...

BY JOHN ARVE HVEDING, AVALDSNES

The "Vikingfestivalen Karmøy" is an annual Viking festival organized by the municipality of Karmøy in Norway. The festival's aim is to create and develop interest and understanding for local history and Viking life. The municipality of Karmøy has run this festival since 1992, and the biggest event is the Viking market on Bukkøy, a small island in Avaldsnes.

The Viking market
The market takes place at the Viking farm on Bukkøy. The Viking farm is getting bigger every year, and this year the boathouse was finished. During the festival, all the houses were in use by Vikings and open to the public.

It was an international Viking market with 100 participants from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Poland and England. The participants were craftsmen, traders and living history actors.

The market was open to the public from Thursday to Sunday. Thursday and Friday morning we had a special program for schools and kindergarten classes. This program contained storytelling and music in the roundhouse, a historical play by pupils from the local cultural school, a battle, rowing trips and guided tours of the market. This year 1200 pupils visited the market.

During the opening hours of the market the public could join a blacksmith course. The course was a success, and there will be more courses in future.
festivals. In the weekend three ships took part in the festival, “Tyra” from Norheimsund, “Mjøsen lange” and “Håkon Håkonson”.

The ”saga night”
Saturday evening is “saga night”. It is an event for families, with historical plays, battle, music, saga telling and games and activities for children.

During the festival nearly 5000 people visited the market.

Other historical events
The opening of the festival took place on Wednesday in Kopervik. It started with a Viking parade from the town hall to the city park. In the city park there was a little market for a few hours, and it was here the official opening took place.

After the opening there was a historical lecture at the cultural centre in Kopervik. The festival finale was a church concert in “Olavskirken” at Avaldsnes.
KNOT another Viking project...

By Geir Sør-Reime
Project manager, KNOT project

KNOT – a Culture, Nature and Tourism project
Earlier this year, a project called KNOT was approved for funding from the Interreg IIIC programme.

KNOT, which really stands for “Culture, Nature and Tourism” in Scandinavian, is meant to be a kind of network, or knot, linking together existing Interreg projects that have the cultural or natural heritage and tourism development as their themes.

Accordingly, both Destination Viking projects, the Baltic Sea “Living History” and the Northern Periphery ’Sagalands’ projects are partners in the KNOT network.

Kick-off meeting
The KNOT project had its kick-off meeting in late May in the picturesque setting of the southern plain (Söderslätt) of Scania in Sweden.

The principal objectives of KNOT are to improve the partners’ skills in tourism development; and to provide tools for exchanging information between partners’ and projects’ databases.

The partners, besides the two Destination Viking projects, represent a wide variety of projects, including the North Sea Cycle Route, the NAVE nor-trail footpath network, the Northern Bronze Age Route project proposal, the GeoShare project for sharing geographical information; and also a number of more local cultural tourism projects, including the Willow Land project of the leading partner, Vellinge Municipality, in Sweden.

While Vellinge Municipality is the leading partner of the project, the operational leadership lies with Rogaland County Council in Norway.

The kick-off meeting included introductory discussions on all components of the project, as well as a Viking Day at Fotevikens Museum. Here, the Viking King Björn and his Lieutenant Sven took the partners on a guided walk through the Viking Village at Foteviken.

There were opportunities to practice Viking skills as well, and the evening ended in one of those unforgettable Viking parties with good food and drink.

The meeting also included a study trip through the industrial heritage landscape of south-western Scania.

Of particular interest to Destination Viking partners will be the opportunity of linking geographical information from different sources into each other’s websites. Björn, Geir and Rögnvaldur will be able to give information in more detail at upcoming partner meetings.
This felt particularly true when the Destination Viking Sagalands partners visited Eirik the Red’s farm Brattahlid at Qassiarsuk in southern Greenland on August 11th this year. His longhouse and the church of Tjodhildur, his wife, have been reconstructed close to the original site and provided a thought-provoking and magnificent background to the 4th partner meeting of the Sagalands project.

The party also visited the site of the Greenland bishopric, Gardar with its present name of Igaliku. Here, the Norse presence is felt even more strongly, with such an abundance of visible ruins of the cathedral, the bishop’s hall and a number of other buildings, around 40 in all. Unfortunately, there haven’t been sufficient funds available to keep the ruin area in the condition everyone would wish, but still, they are strong reminders of a vital Norse community that thrived from 985 AD until the 15th century.

The Bishopric at Gardar was established in 1124 AD and had a resident bishop until 1378 AD.

A very remarkable site is the church and manor at Hvalsey. The church here, built in the 13th century, still stands to full height, albeit its roof is long gone. Even the chieftain’s hall is still standing tall, as are a number of other buildings in this complex, which lies further south, closer to the town of Qaqortoq (Julianehåb).

The main part of the meeting was held in Narsaq, where there are also several ruins of Norse farmsteads going back to the very landám-phase (first settlement) of Greenland. One of the longhouses here has recently been restored and made more accessible as part of the Sagalands project.

The project partners all flew into Greenland from Reykjavik on Iceland. We landed in the settlement of Narsarsuaq, and crossed over the fjord to Qassiarsuk (Brattahlid). Then we sailed out the fjord.
to the Igaliku (Gardar) landing place and walked for about one hour up (and down again!) to the Gardar ruins. Then there was a 3-hour boat trip out the fjord to Narsaq, where we stayed for three days. Then we sailed further south, to Hvalsey and Qaqortoq, before sailing back among the floating ice floes for 5–6 hours to Narsarsuaq to catch our plane back to Iceland.

The main theme of the meeting was marketing, and a seminar on that theme was held at the Community Hall in Narsaq. The main papers presented here concerned the marketing of South Greenland, of Tjodhild’s Church at Brattahlid and the development of a marketing strategy for the Sagalands project.

It is interesting to note that Destination South Greenland is making the Norse heritage of Greenland a major part of their marketing strategy. We also heard about the intention of making Tjodhild’s Church an ecumenical centre. Tjodhild’s Church is the first church established in America, and also the place where the first baptism on the American continent took place.

All partners of the Sagalands project will now contribute to the development of a joint marketing strategy. Our Newfoundland partner, the Viking Trail Tourism Association (VTTA) of Labrador and Newfoundland, which just recently received funding from the Federal government and thereby became a full partner of the project, is leading this undertaking.

The seminar also included a presentation of the EPOCH project, which was recently approved for funding from the Sixth Framework Programme for research. This project could offer opportunities for funding additional activities of the Sagalands partnership.

The Viking Centre at Wieringen in the Netherlands is one of the showcase projects of EPOCH.

At the meeting, all partners reported on progress in their own local efforts. Work on the book had just started, and a lot of good ideas came up. The marketing strategy group will look further into this, and how the book can also fit into other marketing activities that will be part of the joint marketing strategy.

It was further decided that the collection of stories should be ready by autumn, and a collection of good stories will be published on the web. The final drafts for the book should be ready by November 15, and a website presenting Viking events in the North Atlantic will be set up immediately.

The next meeting of the project will be held in Gene fornby in the town of Örnsköldsvik in Sweden 2–7 February 2005. A further meeting is planned for July 22–27, 2005 on the Faroe Islands, with the concluding meeting in Newfoundland in late September 2005. Partners have already started discussing what to do after the conclusion of the current project, and there is full agreement that the network established must continue and be formalised as one result of the project.

Similar discussions will take place for the Destination Viking Living History project when they meet in St. Petersburg in October this year.
The Viking Market at Foteviken

Text and photos by Sven Rosborn
The Museum of Foteviken

In the summer of 2004, the ninth Viking market was held at the Viking reserve at Foteviken in southern Sweden.

In what appeared to be a never-ending stream they poured in, those Vikings who had chosen to live at this historical site for a few days. They were to be greeted by the worst imaginable weather but when on the Sunday evening the market finally came to an end, everyone appeared to be in good spirits and a happy mood.

An ancient history
The Viking market at Foteviken has in all probability an ancient history. It should be pointed out that there is a lapse of more than eight hundred years between the present-day markets and those originally held, even if the site is probably the same.

This is where Halör was situated, which is mentioned in the oldest preserved manuscripts. Halör is the oldest known market in Scania. It is mentioned in the so-called “Färinga saga” which were probably written at the end of the 11th century. They tell of how the main character Trond from the Faroe Islands in his youth, sometime towards the end of the 10th century, set off eastwards on a trading voyage. During the winter he came to Norway and then set course south.

“At summer was approaching, Trond together with some other merchants set off to Denmark and in the summer they arrived at Halör.”

A large crowd had gathered there. It is said that while the market was being held, nowhere in the whole of Scandinavia were so many people assembled in one place. At this time Harold Gormsson, better known as Blue Tooth, ruled in Denmark. “King Harold and a large body of men were also in Halör that same summer.”

It so happened that two of the king’s men, Sigurd and Härek, were robbed in a so-called “tent-shed” that had been splendidly furnished. The king demanded that no merchant was to leave the market until the thief had been found.

However, Trond cleverly solved the problem. Each merchant was to buy himself free by making a payment of a small sum of silver. This satisfied King Harold who “sailed away immediately afterwards with a large fleet of ships.”

In the saga it says that Halör was the largest market in Scandinavia. Trond received a quarter of the silver that had been collected, thus making him the
richest man on the Faroe Islands.

This also adds credence to the fact that it must have been an extremely large market. The last time the market was mentioned as located at its old site is on June 4, 1134, when a large battle took place very close by. Some years later – at the end of the 12th century – the market moved to the other side of Höllviken, to the site that was later to become Skanör.

In all probability the market was moved as a result of the herring fishing activities which had now begun in earnest. In the middle of the 12th century the Germans had formed the merchant association known as the Hanseatic League, and it was they who had taken the initiative. With their new, large-capacity ships, called cogs, the German merchants could transport the salt used as a preservative from Luneberg directly to the market place. Thanks to this new product, the traditional market at Foteviken was re-sited and duly became a large fish market at Skanör. As a result, the actual timing of the market was also changed. The early pre-summer market became instead an autumn market to coincide with the time of year when the herring move down through the Oresund.

To reconstruct a Viking market

Let us now return to the present and the Viking market of the summer, 2004. Many visitors were fascinated by the visiting Vikings and no doubt many asked the question as to what sort of people these were?

The international cultural phenomenon of re-enactment movements is a trend that is growing quicker by the year. But what exactly does the modern “Viking” represent? For those wishing to delve deeper into the phenomenon, Bodil Petersson’s excellent book, Föreställningar om det förflutna – “Acting out the past”, can be recommended. However, it is only available in Swedish (see the book review in VHM 2/03. Eds note). The only contribution I wish to make here is to add some comments as to how an annual market could be devised at Foteviken in order to create an “historic” meeting place in Scandinavia. Modern Viking markets have been in existence for a considerable time – and other than this particular phenomenon there is little other innovation from which to draw. But what if an annual market was to constitute only a small part of a significantly larger Viking concept?

No doubt a thousand years ago there was a permanent settlement on the site that had created the foundations for an annual market. Therefore in Foteviken, a permanent historic environment was developed, which everything should stem from.

Foteviken Viking reserve

In 1996 the first two small reconstructed houses stood completed in what is now the Foteviken Viking reserve. Today 22 houses now stand on the site. The dream of building a complete small Viking town is slowly being realised. The concept is unique, where else has such an early town environment been reconstructed in full scale?

The advantage of it being a town and not the customary group of peasant dwellings is that completely different types of peripheral activities can be developed. In the towns of that period there were many different walks of life represented. There were different types of craftsmen and royal officials, with their own town rules and regulations etc.

At Foteviken too a “town council” was quickly created, partly organised according to the Scandinavian model of the early Middle Ages. Thus the foundations were laid for a large group of people with varying fields of interest to be able to participate in the town activities. Without this “town council” the Viking reserve would hardly have been able to exist.

With this large group of volunteers – we estimate there will be approx. 130 residents in the town – the organisation of such a large annual Viking market will prove much easier. The first market at Foteviken was held as early as the summer of 1996. When this event is reviewed with a degree of hindsight, in its simplicity it had a touch of the ridiculous about it. But just here lies the challenge and the innovation.

Foteviken asked for no official funds to cover the costs for outsiders to participate. Other markets in Scandinavia pay enormous sums to get Vikings to take part.

Recreating part of an historic reality

This perhaps sounds slightly mean but the basic idea behind Foteviken is an attempt to recreate part of an historic reality. No one who came to the market at Halör a thousand years ago received payment for going there. In fact, quite the contrary, it is quite likely that the king charged a fee to each merchant who attended.

At the Viking reserve today however it is free of charge for all Vikings from around the world to visit and stay for the
whole summer. If there is room in one of the Viking houses then they may certainly live indoors, otherwise perhaps a Viking tent can be borrowed. Should they have good quality products for sale, they may be sold free of charge. Foteviken makes no charge for this. The same principles apply during the annual Viking market, no charge for visiting Vikings, only free breakfast and a free feast on the Saturday evening.

The rumour spread quickly that something different was happening in southwestern Scania. The market in 1998 had grown considerably. Now "the Battle of Foteviken" was also re-enacted for the first time.

It was on the beach of the Viking reserve on June 4, 1134 that the large bloody battle took place during which a Danish prince and five bishops were slain. By marking the historical site of the battle, Viking warriors came streaming in to witness the event. Foteviken offered the services of international instructors to teach the skills of stunt fighting. Today the fighting events are an integral part of the actual market itself.

The more houses have been constructed and the more like a town the Viking reserve has become, the more important it is for us to show the diversity of a community from that period. The elements of battle were an important part of life but so were handicrafts, housing, trade and family life.

Official funds
The Viking reserve has been built without any official funds being made available to it. Cultural Sweden has quite simply not understood the enormous potential that exists within re-enactment movements generally.

Throughout the country practitioners of these movements, one of most important cultural manifestations in current times, are undergoing substantial economic difficulties. At the same time an increasing number of bureaucratic museums are receiving official funds to exhibit things which are currently not in pace with what many of the public actually want.

The fundamental principles for Foteviken read: “Culture is the contact between people of all categories.” This can be placed in direct contrast to the watchword which corresponds well to the official museum institution of Sweden: “When bureaucracy moves in, culture moves out as it is impossible for the two to coexist within the same space.”
An international peace organisation
Storholmen Viking Village, 80 km. north of Stockholm is an outdoor Viking museum. For four years Storholmen has cooperated with an international peace organisation called IAL in Sweden, directly translated into English as “International Work Teams”.

The organisation gives people from all over the world an opportunity to go to another country and work with, for instance, social issues, culture, or ecology, and meet other people from many different countries. The general idea behind IAL is to increase understanding between different cultures.

IAL has partners on all continents, and Storholmen is one of several in Sweden.

The volunteers receive food and accommodation while they participate in the camp.

All the camps are presented in a special paper, so that people can sit in their home country and choose where they would like to go, and what they feel is worth working for. It is also a cheap way to travel, and most participants in the camp are students.

The co-operation between Storholmen and IAL is a big success, and many volunteers have chosen to come back several years on their own after their camp.

The volunteers come to Storholmen Viking Village in the summer, before and during the busiest part of visitors’ season. The tasks for the volunteers in Storholmen vary of course from year to year depending on the activities in the village. But the main thing is to develop the Viking village, and give the visitors an experience and some reflections on the Viking Age.

Another task is just to work together as a family in the village. Providing insight into the complex Viking era, giving visitors an interest for history, and working against prejudices are our most important tasks.

Why international volunteers?
One of the reasons we think having these international work teams in the village is such a great thing is that it gives visitors to the village, an impression. When they come to this Swedish Viking village they meet people from all over the world. We think this is an important angle on how to view ancient time.

Alliances were important in those days, but alliances were not between countries, because these boundaries were not yet drawn. We know for a fact that Vikings living on the east coast of Sweden had vital contacts with Russia and the Baltic region. Stressing these connections is especially important since the picture of the static blonde Viking raping and pillaging is the popular image. We aim at giving the picture some nuance with this international cooperation.

The article that follows is written by one of the volunteers, Bill Skeely from Australia, who participated in both Storholmen volunteer camps in June and July 2004.

An Australian Viking in Storholmen Viking Village

Thinking back now, I guess it all started when I was a boy growing up in Sydney. During the school holidays if I was lucky, my parents would take me to a place called “Old Sydney Town”, where actors and enthusiasts would re-enact life and events during Australia’s early colonial period (think British Red Coats flogging convicts).

So when I saw Storholmen Viking Village offered as part of a volunteer organisation whilst browsing the Internet, I knew without a doubt I had to somehow get myself to Sweden.

A little bit about Storholmen Viking Village: It can best be described as an outdoor museum located beside Lake Erken, seventy kilometres north of Stockholm.

Its goal is to provide insight into the everyday life of the people who lived during the Viking Period. The visitors get to see and try prehistoric handicrafts and learn about the Viking Age through music, games, storytelling, sword- and combat displays.

My first impressions upon arriving at the village were of accidentally straying onto a film set, a bit like Mel Gibson’s Braveheart. From every direction it was as if I had gone back in time, authentic buildings and structures, people wandering around in traditional costume, the sound of axes in the background and the noise of goats and chickens.

There I met Mats (Chief Bear Claw) and his wife Britta for the first time. As the leaders of Storholmen they had also taken on the task of being surrogate parents to the volunteers, some 15 of us. They handled this superbly and with such kindness and patience that I am forever grateful.

Speaking of the other volunteers, to paint the picture I was the only native English speaker (English being the working...
english (language) and the only person from outside of Europe. My fellow workers came from Russia, Belarus, Serbia, Estonia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, The Netherlands, Greece and, of course, Sweden.

English being my native language turned out to be a mixed blessing; people would refer to me for grammatical questions and as a personal dictionary. However in most cases I was the least understood of the volunteers.

An example of this occurred when Professor Vladimer from the Ukraine came and stayed at the village to present a series of Viking period lectures and to observe Storholmen life. Following one of his lectures I attempted to engage him in a further discussion, but was entirely unable to make myself understood. The solution was to ask a lady from Russia to interpret my questions from English into Russian, and Mr Vladimer (who could also speak Russian) would respond in English. Funny to say the least, the situation was probably not helped by Mr Vladimer’s generous offers and servings of Ukrainian Vodka.

Some of the various tasks and projects I was involved with included the construction of a watch tower, adding to an already standing blacksmith house and the chopping and preparing of wood for the construction of traditional woven fences to protect the vegetable garden from the resident goat family.

Although the work was sometimes hard it was very rewarding. In civilian life it’s not always possible to see the outcome of your labour, however at the camp watching something you’ve worked on gradually take shape was the most satisfying aspect for me.

The Vikings are generally thought to have dined on hearty meals with much drinking of mead and alcohol involved; this I am very happy to report is certainly the case. We experienced many great banquets and welcomed new guests frequently.

In particular a group of six Russians came, two fighters, three musicians and one talented seamstress. Our Russian fighter friends turned out to be most fierce and treated us to some exciting and spirited sword displays accompanied by ancient music (one engagement involved the breaking of a sword in mid combat).

Often a good day’s work and hearty meal was followed by a sauna and swim in the lake. Sleep would come easily at the end of the day, even if we did sleep on straw with nearly 24-hour daylight.

Although I speak as if I was a Viking from day one at the village, this was not actually the case. Upon arrival our hosts Mats and Britta informed us that we would begin our stay at Storholmen as thralls or slaves.

But if we were diligent and completed a series of tests consisting of making an item each from textile and wood as well as an object from iron in the blacksmith shop, we could advance. On successful completion of these tests, we would be asked a series of questions at the official
naming ceremony, and with a bit of luck we would be awarded a symbolic Viking name and rune stone.

The public perception of the Vikings is of a bloodthirsty lot, raping and pillaging their way around the world and wearing horns on their helmets. At Storholmen I learned that it was really only a small percentage of people from Scandinavia who were involved in these exploits and that none ever wore horned helmets!

The vast majority were craftspeople, farmers and merchants, although there was war-craft and swordplay on display at the village; acceptance and common interest in the Viking period is the substance that joined a diverse range of volunteers together.

Chief Bear Claw, Britta, Ola, Siv, Pelle Bull, Bergman, Thomas and many other members of the village demonstrated such wonderful hospitality, generosity and a willingness to share their knowledge and experience, which made my stay at the village the most memorable time of my trip.

The author with some other volunteers.
Photo: Andrej Vankevich/Storholmen
Gisla-Saga Project
Westfjords in Iceland

The saga
Gisla-Saga is one of the better-known sagas in Iceland since it is taught in the elementary schools. It has been said that the story itself, so well written, is enough to travel with if you are interested in seeing the sites where the saga took place.

Fjörður (Thorbjørn) sur, who was Gisli’s father, had been driven away from Norway with his family. He landed his ship in the mouth of the Haukadalur River and made his home at Saeból.

Gisli, Thorbjørn’s son, along with his brother and their wives had made their home at Hóll (Hill). Hóll stood on a hill called Gislahill. It is in the middle of a field with a beautiful view over the Haukadalur Valley.

Below Gislahill was once a stream that Gisli had waded in on his way from Saeból and back when he killed Thorgrim, a heathen priest. The streambed is now dry but because of this murder Gisli was sentenced to exile. He was an outlaw for many years, until he was killed in Geirhofsfljórdur.

Right below the slope where Thorgrim was killed is a pond called Seftjörn. Here winter sports such as ball games took place, which actually led to the death of Thorgrim.

The Gisla-Saga project
These sites and many others are part of the Gisla-Saga project that is on going in the Westfjords in Iceland. All of them are parts of a bigger project called Destination Viking Sagaland, whose objective is to make an assessment of the Viking heritage and tourism.

Dorothee Lubecki, representative of travel affairs in the Westfjords, has been preparing this project with others for the past two years and invited the local people in Thingeyri to a meeting in March this year. She informed the guests of what has been going on during the past year and what the plan looked like for the next three years, involving the local people and others who are interested in participating in the project.

Since Thingeyri is located so close to Haukadalur Valley it was considered a good choice for the center of the project. A lot of good ideas have emerged from the discussion of this project and some have been put into use, like guided walking tours in Haukadalur Valley where most of the Gisla-Saga took place.

What has been going on in Thingeyri since the meeting?
To begin with, a course in tablet-weaving was held. Participants learned the basics of tablet weaving. The colorful belts that can be made are used to decorate clothes from the Viking Age.

Photo: Sigmundur Thórðarson

Sewing clothes from the Viking Age.
clothing from Viking times. Edda Graichin was the instructor.

Then there was a course in sewing clothes and shoes from the Viking Age. It was held on weekends in April and May. Over 30 costumes were sewn by participants from the ages 13 to 76 years old. The costumes were sewn out of hand-woven wool, linen and silk and the shoes were sewn out of lamb leather. Kristína Bergman, from Reykjavík was the instructor. She has designed and sewn all the Viking costumes that are on display in the Perlnuni í Reykjavík.

Other activities in Thingeyri
For the past few years a festival has been held in the summer in Thingeyri. A large tent is put up where people can sell their handmade merchandise, baked goods and much more. The festival is called “Dýrafjarðagar”.

Last year we were visited by Vikings from Reykjavík who have specialized in fighting with swords as well as a few of our own Vikings (the ones that were able to finish their costumes). Viking tents were borrowed from a Viking association in Hafnarfirði that holds its own Viking festival every year.

Gallery Koltra, a handwork group in Thingeyri, specializing in selling handmade goods has also taken interest in the Gisla-Saga project.

What lies ahead?
The outcome of the courses that have been held in connection with this project indicate that the local people in Thingeyri are very interested in participating. On the last day of the sewing course five people were chosen to prepare the next stages of the project which is to form a committee or association around the project with has its own manager and steering committee. They held several meetings with Dorothee to prepare for a general meeting with all interested parties in Thingeyri.

The meeting was held in the community hall at Thingeyri. The preparation committee explained their ideas of how they see this association taking part in the whole project and with their own projects in the future.

A steering committee of five people was nominated with two people as substitutes. Their job will be to raise funds and make cost estimates, time schedules and prepare more courses in connection with the Viking Ages. For example, building a little Viking town, making tools, jewelry and other handicrafts.

They will also, in cooperation with other members of the association, create and promote a positive image for the project of Gisla Súrsson in order to increase the flow of guests to the area and put into action some of the ideas that have already arisen and the ones that come to mind in the next few years.

What has been accomplished since the committee was established
They have established a non-profit organization and found a name for the project, which is West Vikings or in Icelandic Vikingar a Vestfjordum.

They are preparing a website which will be launched on the Internet this year and are designing saga signs that will be in three languages. The signs will be put up on the most interesting places along the roads in Westfjords according to the most important events in Gisla Saga. This will be done in cooperation with the Traffic Ministry.

The drawings and budget plans for the building of the first part of the Viking site were agreed upon and we are very proud to say that it was possible to construct and use this summer when the yearly festival “Dýrafjarðargar” was held.

For further information contact Sonja at valdie@snerpa.is
Experimental History
Over the past three decades or so, it has become increasingly more accepted for Danish Museums and research institutions to make use of experimental archaeology. Through the manufacture and use of tools, boats, houses etc. an extended understanding is acquired of the items left to us by our predecessors. Thus, experimental archaeology contributes to our overall knowledge of the material conditions of the past.

Among historians, however, the use of experimentation is virtually non-existent. This, of course, is largely due to the fact that history – unlike archaeology – is not based on things that can be physically recreated. History is basically concerned with the study of how humans have interacted and naturally it is very difficult to recreate these intangible mechanisms, as they leave few physical traces.

And yet, with our present knowledge of the material conditions of times gone by, and our insight into the accounts of the written sources on such matters such as society and social conventions, in certain contexts it may be highly useful to recreate an historical event or situation. The result may not be serious research, but from an educational point of view it can be very profitable indeed.

For a number of years school classes have been offered the opportunity of reliving the every-day life of the Vikings at the Museum at Trelleborg on Seeland, Denmark. Here, the children dress in Viking clothing and take part in various crafts and activities that date back to the Viking Age.

The aim is to strengthen and stimulate their understanding of the conditions of the common man in Viking-age Scandinavia, and to strengthen their identification with their ancestors of a thousand years ago. The intention is not to make the children experts on the Viking Age, but to fan the spark of historical interest present in most children, and inspire them to seek information on their own afterwards.

The Basic Plot
In an attempt to take the children even further into the world of the Vikings, a role-play was launched in the spring of -03, intended to illustrate daily life in a fictitious, but fairly representative Viking-age settlement.

The setting of the play is the (non-existent) farmstead of Vorbygaard, owned by Helgi the Chieftain, nicknamed the Rich. His wealth is rooted in his magnificent beer brewing, and the beer at Vorbygaard is of such high quality that it is renowned in all the lands of the Danes. People gather from near and far to taste this truly magnificent beverage. Songs have been composed in its honour, and it is commonly claimed that a warrior drinking this beer will become fearless and invincible in battle.

The year is 978 AD, and King Harold Gormsson Bluetooth is in charge of the nation. He has held the throne for well over twenty years, and during his reign the Danes have prospered. But lately, unrest has come to the country. Harold’s son Swein fancies the crown, and thinks that his father is taking altogether too long to die. He has therefore conceived a plan to help him along. Rumour has it that Swein has gathered a large fleet, with which he intends to force his father from the throne. Allegedly, troops are gathering, and have already proclaimed Swein king. The conflict between father and son has brought the country to the verge of civil war.

All this has passed largely unnoticed by the good people at Vorbygaard, where life goes on as it has always done. Helgi tries to avoid getting entangled in politics, as it is definitely not good for business. But when one of Swein’s envoys knocks on his door and demands all the beer as war-tax before the next full moon, Helgi and the other inhabitants of Vorbygaard are forced to choose sides in this bitter struggle.

Several factors played a part in the choice of this simple plot. By letting the role-play focus on the beer, a humorous and self-ironic distance to the entire project is established. Even very small children know that there was no such thing as beer giving
Here the role-play takes place in the reconstructed longhouse of Trelleborg Museum. Copyright: Trelleborg Museum.

superhuman strength, but the beer theme is in full accordance with commonly held views on the Vikings. Thus, right from the outset, the prejudices of the participants are put into play, and the children are forced to face their own preconceived notions.

The choice of an obviously silly theme also clearly signals that this is not in fact a fully authentic reconstruction of an actual historical event. This is hugely important, as Trelleborg as a Museum must be responsible for the information conveyed.

In accordance with the essay on human sacrifice printed earlier in these pages by Trelleborg’s curator, Kaare Johannessen, historical events can be performed, as long as the necessary reservations are made clearly and honestly. There is a difference between recreating a specific historical event (which is virtually impossible), and staging scenes that convey collective, common and characteristic situations.

The plot also has the advantage of combining the daily life on the settlement with major political events and themes of the day. In this way, the participants get the feeling of being a part in the making of history, and are therefore forced to take a stand on the historical conflict that is the framework of the play.

**The Course of the Play**

Prior to arrival, the teacher of each individual class is contacted for a discussion about the play. Here, the choice of characters is presented, with the role casting among the children left in the hands of the teacher. It is important that someone who knows the children distributes the various parts if the play is to function properly. Thus on arrival at Trelleborg, everybody is already acquainted with the main setting and their own place in the plot.

In this way, the basic everyday life on the settlement can be established immediately on arrival. After a very brief introduction, the children are set to their various tasks, each according to the nature of his or her own character. This is the single most important part of the play, as this is where they encounter Viking-age daily life. It is also at this point that they are acquainted with the social structures of the period. Helgi the Chieftain and his family can freely structure their business, while the other inhabitants have very strict rules for their duties.

It is decisive for success that the children are persuaded to engage actively in the play. The more they take on their character and improvise along the given guidelines, the more vivid and convincing is the result. Ideally, the Museum staff should withdraw entirely from the play, and leave the further development to the children themselves. If their imagination is captured and fuelled, they gradually become the Vikings that they play, and not just schoolchildren on an excursion. This is achieved partly through the various tasks they are employed in, and partly by the social relations build into each character or springing naturally from it.

The second phase of the play is heralded by the arrival of a messenger from Swein, claiming the handing-over of the much-famed beer as a war-tax. The messenger says that the beer will be collected at the next full moon. If not delivered on time, Swein will regard it as treason, and the entire settlement will be confiscated as spoils of war.

The “negotiations” are conducted in the Museum’s reconstructed longhouse, where all participants gather (including the game leader and King Swein’s envoy, played by another staff member). A high table is erected, where Helgi and his family reside, while the rest of the children are benched along the walls. After the traditional welcoming of the envoy by offering bread and salt, the negotiations for the Vorbygaard beer can begin.

The game leader (played by a staff member, representing King Harold) and Swein’s envoy speak only to Helgi, and it is thus entirely up to him to decide how the situation should be handled. Using both threats and promises; Swein’s envoy demands the beer as war-tax. He speaks of Swein’s mighty army, and what it does to people who disobey his orders. He shows the luxurious clothes and weapons given him by Swein in reward for good service, and says that this is how Swein shows his appreciation to loyal supporters. After issuing his demands, the envoy takes his leave, promising to return soon to collect the beer.

Following his departure, Helgi includes the other children for counselling. Historically, this is highly incorrect, but it forces all the participants to form an opinion on the situation. Thus, they are all forced to take a stand on the national crisis reflected in the play, and which was a stark political reality of late 10th century Denmark. In this way, the play is raised from an individual level to a much larger, national level.

Usually (though not always, as Helgi alone makes the final decision) the play ends when the children decide to defend their beer. The boys begin warrior training, and the girls start preparing a large farewell feast for their men.

When Swein’s envoy later returns, he is mercilessly murdered by the children, who afterwards drinks their beer themselves and party through the night (the beer being actually brewed by the children themselves during the stay, and containing no alcohol).

**The Parts**

For a role-play to work optimally, it is
important that all the parts are convincing within the context of the play. They do not need to be entirely historically believable, but they must be operational within the story that constitutes the play.

In order to make each character functional within the play, it is important that everybody has a convincing personality. A part must contain their function on the farmstead, their temper, their social relations etc. These factors must be loosely defined to enable the player to take up his part in the play. Each character is drawn in only a few lines, and is regarded as a base that the children must imbue with various personal characteristics according to their own temperament.

In developing each character, it is important at all times to keep the group as such in mind. Each figure must be an active and individual wheel within the limits of the overall machinery of the group. Obviously, there cannot be twenty chieftains in one settlement, but if planning is done correctly careful, a thrill may gain as much influence as a farmer or a chieftain. It merely requires that each character be carefully thought-out, and the social framework clear.

In this way, it is entirely up to each participant how actively he or she will engage in the development of the play. Thereby, some parts avoid becoming unimportant and insignificant, and ultimately boring to perform.

In fact, the experience is often that Helgi’s is the hardest part to play, as his elevated status as chieftain robs him of the close social network of the other participants. As the only chieftain, Helgi has no given duties, and must invent tasks for himself.

Thralls, on the other hand, quickly create a bond consisting of their (in the nature of things) tough duties, and apparent low social status.

The following is a selection of the characters developed for the school classes at Trelleborg, as presented to them prior to arrival.

**Thorgrim the Hers**
The game leader, a member of Trelleborg’s staff, plays Thorgrim. He is a hers, a representative of the authority of King Harold, and his word is final in all matters. He does not engage actively in the daily business of the settlement, and his prime function is as Helgi’s councillor during the play. Thorgrim and Helgi are friends and work closely together in their attempt to solve the conflict.

**Helgi the Rich**
Helgi the Rich is a farmer, the owner of Vorbygaard, who has made a fortune selling the beer that has made his settlement famous. The beer has made Helgi a rich man, and has earned him his nickname. He is mainly interested in the well-being of his business, and tries to stay out of politics. However, he is befriended by King Harold’s local representative, Thorgrim the Hers, and is therefore counted as a supporter of Harold.

Even though Harold allegedly Christianised the Danes, Helgi is not entirely convinced that Christ is the sole true God; discreetly, he continues to worship the old Gods of his ancestors, and confides with Signy in matters of importance. Helgi decides everything; his word is law on the farm. He is firm, but just, and he is renowned for taking good care of his people.

**Astrid Thorfinn’s daughter, Helgi’s wife**
Astrid is the omnipresent mother of the entire settlement. She is the one who sees to it that everything functions on a daily basis. As Helgi is not very interested in running a farm, Astrid is the one in actual charge. If disobeyed, she will tell her husband so he can punish the perpetrator.

Astrid is a very wise woman. She knows that treating the thralls well is a good investment, for then they will work much harder. She is accustomed to getting her way, and gets furious if not obeyed instantly. Naturally, everybody at Vorbygaard — including her husband — is terrified of her.

**Gorm and Sigurd, the Warriors**
The two warriors constituting Helgi’s personal guard (!) came to the settlement last summer, and have enjoyed Helgi’s hospitality ever since. They spend most of the day drinking beer and telling tall-tales of their grand voyage to Ireland. They help Helgi rule the population of the settlement, but will also lend a hand when hard work requires strong men. Most people on the farm are slightly scared of them, especially at night when they have been drinking heavily of the good beer.

**Halfgerd, the Blacksmith’s wife**
Like her husband, Halfgerd is freeborn. She is the mistress of the farm, and she is trusted with the highly important task of brewing the much spoken-of beer of Vorbygaard. Halfgerd loves her beer, and would frankly prefer to drink it all herself. She gets very upset if anyone speaks ill of her beer, or forgets to be suitably impressed by it.

Halfgerd is Astrid’s best friend, and has a lot of influence on how the farm is run. The entire economy of the settlement depends on her skills as a brewer. All thralls must unconditionally do as she says.

**Signy the Weawe**
Signy is the widow of a freeman, who died a few winters ago. She is staying on the farm until Helgi can persuade someone to marry her. This has turned out to be somewhat difficult, as she is unspeakably ugly. A long, hard life has left its mark on her rugged face. She works as a weaver, supplying everybody with warm clothes for the winter.

Signy is a wise old woman, who knows about ancient magic. She knows fortune telling and can cast nasty spells. Signy never left her pagan faith entirely, and makes discreet sacrifices now and then.

**Jeanne, the House Thrall**
Jeanne is a beautiful French woman, who has been with Helgi for only six months. They have already become great friends, and often take long walks for hours. Helgi thinks it is important to spend time with her, so that “she can be acquainted with our culture”. On account of her friendship with Helgi, she holds some influence on the running of the farm, and she has given her a precious bracelet. Her work is in the kitchen, under the stern eye of Astrid. They are not very good friends.

**About the author**
Mads Thernoe, Ph.D. has recently taken over responsibility as curator at the Trelleborg Museum in Denmark. He is a historian, educated at the University of Århus. For the last ten years he has practised different kinds of re-enactment and for the past five he has also been a volunteer at the museum at Trelleborg. He will continue the Trelleborg tradition of making history come alive in both an amusing and educational way.

Email: mt@vastmuseum.dk
L’Anse aux Meadows and Vinland: The Norse in the North Atlantic

BY BIRGITTA WALLACE

For more than a century, people have been searching for the legendary site of Vinland. Thanks to the findings at L’Anse aux Meadows, coupled with knowledge gained from recent archaeological and saga research in Iceland and Greenland, I think we can finally say that we have found it. Vinland was the coastal regions surrounding the Gulf of St. Lawrence, with its chief settlement at L’Anse aux Meadows on the northern tip of Newfoundland. Let us look at the evidence.

The Vinland Sagas
Most people writing on the Vinland sagas and the L’Anse aux Meadows site have taken for granted that the Vinland voyages were a colonizing venture, and that L’Anse aux Meadows was a Norse farming settlement. However, if we analyse the Vinland sagas, we can see that these voyages were explorations for resources needed by the new Greenland settlement. Colonization may have been a long-term goal, but the immediate motivation was profit.

The two major versions of the Vinland Sagas, The Greenlanders’ Saga and Erik’s Saga [hereafter GS and ES] describe voyages to North America from the newly established settlements in Greenland. Both sagas describe three distinct areas: Helluland in the north, closest to Greenland, Markland a little further south, and farther south yet, a richer, more diverse area, Vinland, where wonderful

Following the Ingstad excavation the site was declared a National Historic Site of Canada. Bengt Schönębäck (far left in the photos) 1973–1975, led additional excavations 1973–1975 for Parks Canada. The excavations continued in 1976 by Birgitta Wallace (sitting, far right). Most of the crew were local fishermen, among the best and most careful excavators the author has ever worked with. The remaining portions of the building terrace and much of the bog skirting the buildings were excavated, as were areas north, east, and south of the site. A great number of Aboriginal campsites were discovered on the southern shore of the bay, as well as on the terrace. Five distinct Aboriginal cultures were documented, ranging in date from about 4000 BC to AD 1500. However, none of them had been present during the Norse occupation. Photo C. Lindsay

The site was excavated 1961–1968 under the direction of Anne Stine Ingstad, archaeologist and wife of Heige. Eight Norse buildings were uncovered during this time. Photo B. Wallace

William Munn, a Newfoundlander, was the first person to suggest that L’Anse aux Meadows was the place where Leif Eriksson first set foot in Vinland. Munn published a small pamphlet in 1914 in St. John’s Newfoundland under the title “Vineland Voyages: Location of Helluland, Markland & Vinland”. In 1956 the Danish archaeologist Jørgen Meldgaard surveyed the shores around Newfoundland’s Northern Peninsula and conducted a small excavation at Wester Brook about 25 km southwest of L’Anse aux Meadows. The Norwegian explorer and writer Heige Ingstad arrived in L’Anse aux Meadows in 1960 and launched a research expedition the following year.

Photo courtesy The Evening Telegram, Ltd.

http://viking.hgo.se
resources such as grapes grew wild in the forests. The GS describes four expeditions and one, which never reached its goal. In ES all four expeditions have been combined into one.

In GS, the new lands are accidentally discovered by an Icelandic, Bjarni Herjólfsson, and explored fifteen years later by Leif Eriksson.* The explorations are continued by Leif's siblings and brother-in-law, but under Leif's control. In ES, Leif's role is reduced to that of accidental discoverer, in a garbled account of a storm, grapes and impressive timber logs. The real explorer and hero is Leif's brother-in-law, Thorfinn Karlsefni, together with his wife Gudrid.

The motivation for writing ES explains the differences in the two sagas. The Icelandic saga scholar Ölfur Halldórsson and others have demonstrated that the purpose of ES was to enhance the role of the Icelanders Gudrid and Thorfinn Karlsefni. They had to be glorified to reflect favourably on their direct descendant Bishop Björn Gilsson for whom canonization was sought in the 13th century. The need to establish proper credentials for his beatification has affected the content of ES, particularly the roles played by Thorfinn Karlsefni and Gudrid. Karlsefni usurps Leif's position as leading explorer, and all the expeditions are combined into one mega-expedition led by him.

The GS has only one settlement, Leifsbúðir, Leif's Camp. ES has two: Hóp, "Estuary Tidal Lagoon," and Straumfjord, "Fjord of Currents." These locations have often been regarded as three separate spots. However, a comparison of the three locations shows that GS has simply combined Straumfjord and Hóp into Leifsbúðir. Straumfjord is a base in northern Vinland from which expeditions leave in the summer to explore in all directions, returning to spend the winter. Hóp is a summer camp at a considerable distance from the many tidal estuary lagoons protected by offshore sandbars. The lagoons were so shallow that ships could be brought in only during high tide. It was a more hospitable area than Straumfjord. On the shores there were fields of self-sown wheat, forests with mausir wood, (wood burls), and grapevines climbing trees. However, the area was inhabited by large groups of native people, and the Norse feared them.

The activities described consist of exploration and collection of resources of value back in Greenland. Chief among these were lumber and grapes. The exploration takes place only during the warm season, since the winters are harsh everywhere along the Atlantic coast north of Virginia. During the winter, the explorers return to their permanent base, Leifsbúðir in GS or Straumfjord in ES, where they wait out the winter until the sea conditions again allow travel, to new or known profitable areas, or back home to Greenland.

Colonization was not the purpose of the voyages. The participants in the Vinland voyages were labour crews hired for a particular voyage. Almost all were men, chosen for their physical capabilities. Only a few women were employed, and there were no regular families.

The base was founded and controlled by the family of Erik the Red, head of the new Greenland elite. The expedition members

\* Eds note: There are many ways of spelling the name Leif Eriksson who was born around 960 A.D. in Iceland, for example: Leifur Eiríksson, Leif Erikson, Leif Ericson, Leif Ericson, Leifs Eiriksson, Leif Ericsson Den Hoptim, Leif The Lucky, Leif Den Lykkelige, Leif Erikson.

L'Anse aux Meadows lies on the northern tip of Newfoundland’s Northern Peninsula, facing Labrador. It is a key landmark after sailing down the coast of Labrador. Arriving at the narrow Strait of Belle Isle, one suddenly finds land on two sides. Crossing the Strait to the new coast, one lands in the vicinity of L'Anse aux Meadows. Map and photo B. Wallace
reflected the social stratification of Norse society. At the top was the leader, in all cases members of Leif Eriksson's family in Greenland. The leader's wife could accompany her husband, or in one case, perhaps vice versa. The only child mentioned is Snorri, who was born during an expedition. The leaders sometimes had merchant partners who shared in the profit, as did the work crews. There were also members of the leader's personal staff, and slaves.

The size of the expeditions varied between thirty and sixty-five. Living quarters were at first *búðir*, temporary dwellings with walls of sod and roofs of tent cloths. As soon as the expedition decided to stay the winter, large halls were built. Even though livestock were brought, no structures were built for them as the animals could graze out-of-doors during the winter.

The Archaeological Evidence: The L'Anse aux Meadows Site
L'Anse aux Meadows differs from all other Norse sites in Iceland and Greenland. At the same time it forms an amazing parallel to the base of *Struamfjord*. The site is on the northern tip of Newfoundland's Northern Peninsula, facing the Strait of Belle Isle and the Labrador coast, only 18 km away. It lies on a grassy plain on a shallow bay on the exposed outer coast. Regular Norse settlements were never on the outer coast but a good distance inland in more protected locations.

The Norse houses are on a terrace about 100 m inland. Closer to the sea is a small hut in which iron was manufactured. The terrace encircles a peat bog. Its surface is fairly dry now but would have been considerably wetter in the 11th century. A brook winds its way through the bog to the sea from a small lake about one kilometre inland.

The vegetation has changed since the 11th century. Until a couple of generations ago, the dense Newfoundland softwood forests came close to the site.

Traditionally, winters have been severe with much snow. In 1998, however, when the average temperatures were just a couple of degrees warmer than normal, there was no snow at all, and in 1999, very little. Recent ice core data have proven that the climate was warmer in the 11th century, with a special warming peak around 1000. This means that winter at L'Anse aux Meadows were free of snow at that time. Livestock could indeed have grazed outside all winter as stated in the saga.

The function of the L'Anse aux Meadows site
The archaeological evidence is clear that L'Anse aux Meadows served two functions: it was a base for further explorations, and it was an over-wintering place where boat repair took place.

The Norse houses form three complexes, each with a large hall flanked by a hut. One also has a small house. A charcoal pit kiln and a hut where iron was manufactured lay on the other side of the brook. The even spacing of the buildings and the well-sorted artefact distribution indicates that all were in use at the same time and part of an organized expedition.

Map by B. Gallant and B. Wallace

The site consists of three building complexes in a north-south line on the terrace. Each complex consists of a large hall and a small hut. The southernmost hall also has a small house next to it. A hut for iron manufacture is off by itself, away from the other buildings. Barns and byres always found in permanent settlements are missing.

The buildings were of sod over a timber frame. These were substantial houses meant to withstand winter. A full-scale reconstruction of the three buildings in the southern complex has been made. After a thousand years only the footprint remains. The living quarters had benches along the sides and a long fire in the middle of the floor. There is some evidence that the walls were panelled. The buildings were Icelandic in style, of the kind that developed over the 10th and 11th centuries.

We have about 149 radiocarbon dates for the site as a whole, about 50 of which pertain to the Norse occupation. They indicate that the site was occupied some time between 980 and 1020.

The finds consist of five categories:
- Small personal items
- Carpenter's waste
- Waste from iron making
- Waste from smithing
- Discarded and cut-up boat nails.

One can distinguish the same unequal social situation at L'Anse aux Meadows as is described in the sagas for the Vinland expeditions, and the same type of structures. Two of the dwellings are large chieftain's
Three small objects were associated women’s handiwork: a spindle whorl, a needle hone, and a fragmentary bone needle. The objects show that there were women on the site, but all other artefacts are associated with male activities. In the background is a stone used either as an oil lamp or base for a door pivot.

Photo Rocky Chan.

L’Anse aux Meadows and Vinland

If L’Anse aux Meadows is Straumsfjord, where then is Hlíð? Hlíð was more ephemeral summer camp. It probably did not include...
permanent buildings so it would have left slim traces in the archaeological record. Hóp was a good distance south of Straumfjord.

One saga says, "according to some men’s report, they spent only two months there."

Here also L’Anse aux Meadows matches the Vinland story. We have proof that the Norse at L’Anse aux Meadows travelled farther south. Three butternuts (white walnuts), and a burl of butternut wood cut with a metal knife were found in different spots on the site but always within the content of the Norse woodworking waste. Butternut trees have never grown in Newfoundland, so they must have brought in by the Norse. Their origin indicates where Hóp may have been.

The northern limit of the butternut tree, now and in the 11th century, is the area along the St. Lawrence River just east of Quebec City and in northeastern New Brunswick. I suggest that the latter area is Hóp because Quebec does not have lagoons.

The most interesting thing about the butternuts is that wild grapes grow in the same areas as the butternut trees. This is the northern limit of wild grapes in North America. Neither butternuts, nor grapes are native to Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia.

In their natural, wild state, grapevines are usually found growing among hardwood trees. The vines wind themselves around the trees, making the trees look as if they are bearing grapes. These are the “grape trees” of the sagas. The trees were cut and trimmed and brought back to Greenland. The hardwood yielded better lumber than the softwoods and birch of Newfoundland, and the grapes were such an amazing find that the whole area was named Vinland after them.

The real significance of wine and grapes in the Vinland Sagas has never been fully appreciated. Some writers have suggested that the stories about grapes were just a symbol for the paradise-like qualities of Vinland. Others propose that Vinland really means Pasture Land. Modern Norse linguists have never accepted the latter. It is also a misunderstanding of what drove the Vinland explorers. There would have been no interest in far-away pastures. In Greenland there were already more land and pastures than could be worked by the small colony, and Leif and his family had the very best of them.

Instead we have to look at the role of wine in Norse society. Wine had been held in great esteem among the Norse since the days of the Roman Empire and had been imported since then. It was an extreme luxury, associated with wealth, power and religious leadership. Ostentatious drinking and feasting ceremonies marked the elite. For Leif and his family, a potential supply of wine would have been a welcome prospect for maintaining their new position as the first family of Greenland.

Hóp means estuary tidal lagoon, sheltered water behind sandbars. It was at Hóp the grapes were found. Both Prince Edward Island and eastern New Brunswick are known for their long, protective sandbars and the warm sheltered lagoons behind them. However, at the time, only New Brunswick had the butternuts and the grapes.

In New Brunswick several large rivers issue into the lagoons, among them the Miramichi, which traditionally has been the richest salmon river in eastern North America. This is an area with large hardwood forests, inviting meadows, grapes and butternuts, altogether different from northern Newfoundland, Greenland and Iceland.

The Miramichi also harbored the densest populations of native people in Atlantic Canada. They were the ancestors of the Mi’kmaq, and they have occupied this area for thousands of years, continuing into our days. The first encounter between the Mi’kmaq and Norse was friendly. The Mi’kmaq had fur for which the Norse paid with red woolen cloth and milk. Soon, however, fights ensued, with people killed on both sides. The Norse felt threatened and retired to Straumfjord.

Vinland emerges as the coastal areas around the Gulf of St. Lawrence. L’Anse aux Meadows is within the northern border of Vinland, serving as the gateway into that region. The Gulf forms an inland sea which one can circumnavigate beginning and ending at L’Anse aux Meadows.

The Strait of Belle Isle funnels the traveler into the Gulf. Within the Gulf, a new ecological zone begins, with large hardwood forests and more diverse resources. The alternative route along the eastern coast of Newfoundland, an island the size of Iceland, is much more exposed and less inviting, with extensive stretches of rocky coast and scrub forests. The same is true for the Atlantic coast of Nova Scotia.

The coasts of Newfoundland and eastern Quebec looked much like Norway, a landscape familiar to Icelanders and Greenlanders, and the climate was about the same. Imagine their delight when they encountered the lands in the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence. The weather was warmer,
Pastures in Greenland were plentiful, and there was no labor to spare for colonization of distant lands. Demographers have shown that for colonization of distant areas to succeed, a minimum of 400 to 500 individuals are required, and that would have been the entire population of Greenland at this time. It was difficult enough for them to maintain contact with Europe, and, unlike the contact with Vinland, communications with Europe were essential. Wine and lumber could be had in Europe, and Europe had many other necessities not present in Vinland, such as precious metals, spices, exotic textiles, and political and personal connections. The Greenland colony was too small to sustain expeditions to two distant areas, in opposite directions. Vinland was a splendid country, but the time to settle had not yet come.

Butternut, *Juglans cinerea*, is a North American species related to walnut. The burl of butternut wood has been cut with a sharp metal knife. Photos B. Wallace

The northern limit of grapes in North America is in New Brunswick and the Saint Lawrence River valley. Photo K. Leonard

Why were Vinland and L’Anse aux Meadows abandoned?
Vinland and L’Anse aux Meadows were short-lived ventures. They were too far away, and Vinland already had large populations who outnumbered the Norse by many thousands. There was no pressure for emigration out of Greenland at this time.

Eastern New Brunswick is known for its warm estuary lagoons sheltered by long sandbars. It is likely that this area was Vinland’s Hóp.

Photo by A. Dufresne

About the author
Birgitta Wallace is Senior Archaeologist Emeritus with Parks Canada, Atlantic Service Centre in Halifax, NS. Born and raised in Sweden and educated at University of Uppsala and Kansas University, her expertise has focussed the Norse in North America. She has been responsible for much of Parks Canada’s work at L’Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site. Before coming to Canada, she was employed by Carnegie Museum of Natural History in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in the United States. While there, she conducted a systematic investigation into all reputed evidence of the Norse throughout North America.
Waterford Viking settlement may have been a town

The recently discovered settlement in Woodstown, Co Waterford, Ireland is much larger than originally thought, and may well be the most exciting site discovered in Europe in over a century. The dig has been described in media as “Ireland’s Pompeii”.

So far up to 3800 artefacts have been found over a distance of 135 m. The site located close to River Suir is 1.5 km long by 0.5 km wide. The settlement is believed to date back to the mid-9th century.

Crop marks shown in photographs suggest that a large complete Viking town remains virtually intact with a pattern of streets and houses just under the soil surface.

It is thought that up to 4000 people may have been settled in the area, with access to an impressive fleet of ships.

To date, nails, weights, jewellery, silverware, weapons, ceramics and some ship fragments have been found. From evidence, a fleet of 120 Viking ships occupied the site about 812; which gave the settlers control of the harbour and the three-river system the Suir, the Barrow and the Norse. This allowed them ready access upriver to the wealthy lands and monasteries of the river valleys.

The builders of the railway along the edge of Woodstown between the site and the Suir, demolished a mound in a field called Seadún old fortress. The mound seemed to contain a large number of bones and all indications so far suggest that this may have been a Viking ship burial, the only one found in Ireland.

Source: Waterford News & Star

The non-enigmatic runes of the Kensington stone

BY HELMER GUSTAVSON

The exhibition of the Kensington stone at the turn of the year in the National Museum of Antiquities in Stockholm aroused great attention from the public, newspapers, magazines and television. There was a thorough discussion of whether the runestone is false or true – and it was quite obvious too that the stone is a vivid symbol for Swedish identity among many of the descendants of the Swedish immigrants in the USA.

Although every Scandinavian runologist and expert in Scandinavian historical linguistics has declared the Kensington stone a hoax, there are still enthusiasts who proclaim the inscription not modern but authentic. If so the inscription must be a bouquet of linguistic anomalies!

There are a huge number of articles and books on the Kensington riddle – recently Birgitta Linderoth Wallace wrote two clear and lucid articles in Viking Heritage Magazine 4/03 and 1/04 on the stone and its history. Still the best presentation in Swedish of the Kensington Stone and an excellent pinpointing of the irregularities at different linguistic levels of the inscription is the paper “Runstenen från Kensington i Minnesota” in Nordisk tidskrift 1949 by Sven B F Jansson.

Diagnostic forms

A comparison between diagnostic forms of runes from the Middle Ages and those of the Kensington stone shows that the latter ones cannot be of medieval origin. They are from later times, later than period of the Reformation.

The old tradition of using runes in everyday life in Scandinavia came to an end at the end of the Middle Ages. In the 16th and 17th centuries there were revivals of runic script and in the province of Dalecarlia the use of these in part new runes, the Dalecarlian runes (dalrunor) thrived – we know of circa 350 runic inscriptions from Dalecarlia.

Most of these Dalecarlian inscriptions are very short telling us the name or giving us the initials of the name of the person who made the wooden bowl or dish and when it was made. Sometime the inscription is a quotation of a prayer or a hymn. There was an early antiquarian revival too.

The Kensington stone.
Byline: Christer Åhlin/Statens historiska museum

Copies of Viking Age quartz and carnelian beads
Rune Pendants
Viking T-shirts
Medieval style Rosary Beads

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Runic inscriptions or the runic alphabet was printed in learned books, such as Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus (1555) by Olaus Magnus. From the end of the 16th century there have always been enthusiasts who were acquainted with these scholarly runic inscriptions or alphabets printed in books. They liked to inscribe runes in manuscripts, finger rings, knives, drinking horns, wooden objects like rune-calendars and other artefacts. Sometimes they even manufactured rune-stones to create the feeling of a glorious past.

The rune forms in these late inscriptions diverged very little or not at all from those in the runic monuments of the Viking Age or from the runes in the books of the learned antiquarians. But the runes in the 18th and 19th centuries sometimes differed.

A runic character in these post-reformation inscriptions could now adopt different varieties of form (allographs) without affecting the underlying identity of the runic character (grapheme). At the same time the runes were used in new contexts, for example in a diary kept by a peasant. And in the 19th century as a matter of fact even presentations of the runic alphabet were printed in popular surveys of different scripts.

The Kensington runes are to be seen in these circumstances and three examples of inscriptions from the 18th and 19th century prove that the Kensington runes do not belong to the Middle Ages, but to the 19th century, if anything.

The Månsta yoke
At the exhibition of the Kensington stone in Stockholm there was a yoke from the Månsta farm in the parish of Ålvdalen in Dalecarlia with inscribed runes made by Perlas Olof Olsson. The yoke inscription is some ten years later than the find of the Kensington stone in 1898.

The inscription of the yoke runs “This yoke I made the 10th of September 1908. OOS” (Petra. bärträ. gotPe. iag. Pen. 10. september. 1908. oos). The numerals in the inscription are pentadic, just as in the Kensington inscription. Perlas used almost the same runic form for the runes a, ä, g, b and p as the carver of the Kensington inscription.

The pulpits in Täby church
A great deal older than Perlas’ runes is the inscription in the boarding of the staircase of the church pulpit in Täby church outside Stockholm. The pulpit was repainted by the workman Samuel Cronberg in 1758, who commemorated his work in the runic inscription: “This pulpit is painted Anno 1758 by Samuel Cronberg”

Larsson, diagnostic forms:

for a, g, k, v and ā

Kensington, diagnostic forms:

for a, g, k, v and ā

Larsson, the year 1885 in pentadic numerals:

Kensington, the year 1562 in pentadic numerals:


The a-rune has the same runic form as the Kensington stone and the a-rune was written according to the same principle as the a-runes in the three inscriptions, an X with a small circle above, while the a-runes has two dots above.

The Larsson rune rows
A few years ago the grandchildren of Edward Larsson from the Pernils farm in the village of Holsker in the Dala-Floda parish in Dalecarlia donated their grandfather’s collection of papers, books, letters and farm documents to the Archives of Dialect, Place-names and Folklore in Umeå. Larsson was a tailor by profession and had travelled around a lot to receive his training from master tailors. He was a musician too and most of the papers in the collection are hand-written music scores.

When he died 1950 the collection was inherited by his son and later by his grandchildren.

The archive curator Staffan Lundmark found two sheets of paper containing various scripts and showed them to Tryggve Sköld. Sköld, a retired professor, who published them in the periodical DAUM-KATA 2003 (www.sofi.se/daum/katta/katta13/katta13.pdf). The papers were signed by Edward Larsson 1883 and 1885 – for the numerals he used the same pentadic system as in the Kensington inscription!

Both papers contain a full runic alphabet consisting of 27 symbols and 10 pentadic numbers. Some of the runic forms (a, g, k, v, ā, ō) of the Larsson rune alphabet are identical to or intimately related to those of the Kensington.

There is no reason to doubt that the Larsson documents are genuine. And it is inconceivable that the runes of the Kensington type – otherwise unknown in the Middle Ages – would have survived in Sweden for more than 500 years leaving no other traces in runic material in Sweden!

Questions to be answered
The runic inscription in the pulpit in Täby church, the inscription of the Månsta yoke and the Larsson rune rows show that there has been a post-Reformation runic script in Sweden resembling the runes on the Kensington stone. This runic script probably developed in the 18th and 19th century and it must have been familiar to the Swedish emigrant who carved the Kensington inscription in the 19th century.

Although the runes on the Kensington stone are by no means enigmatic, the rune stone still is of great interest in many ways. It has aroused varied attitudes towards ethnicity and roots, linguistics and scholarship, history and myths. And these attitudes are really worth studying.

And still there are questions to be answered. We want to know who actually carved the inscription, the technical execution of the carving and the original placement of the stone.

For my part I’ll try to find out if the source of the Kensington runes may be found in a secret rune row used by journeymen and travellers and originating in Dalecarlian runes.

May 25th 2004

About the author
Helmer Gustavson has for many years been a rune expert of Runverket (Runic Studies), a department of the Swedish National Heritage Board. His research interest is foremost directed towards rune inscriptions from the Viking Age and the Middle Ages as well as inscriptions from later times. Email: helmer.gustavson@raa.se
**Land, Sea and Home**

Edited by John Hines, Alan Lane and Mark Redknap
Published by Maney Publishing
ISBN 1 904350 25 9

This book, being the result of a conference on Viking-period Settlement at Cardiff July 2001, gives a broad picture of the Viking world, from Iceland to Russia in the east. It contains some 28 different articles, divided into three main sections; Scandinavia and Northern Europe, the Atlantic and Britain and Ireland; it gives an interesting and updated view of many other areas and aspects of Viking life.

The eastern connection is displayed by two interesting articles written by Tamara Pushkina. *Viking-period Pre-Urban Settlements in Russia and Finds of Artefacts of Scandinavian Character* and Nikolaj Makarow’s *Rural Settlement and Landscape Transformations in Northern Russia, A.D. 900–1300.* The latter article deals with a field of history that we have little knowledge of so far – the influence of Vikings in the rural landscape of Eastern Europe.

But the main part of the book deals with Britain and Ireland, and the many new excavations and discoveries that have been made during recent years. Fascinating excavations have been carried out on single farmsteads, like Cille Pheadair, Simy Fold and at Sedgefor in Norfolk.

Several articles also deal with an overview of settlement structure in different regions like the Irish Sea region (by David Griffiths), Wales (by Mark Redknap) and North-West Somerset (by Stephen Rippon).

This collection of conference articles offers a substantial set of special studies, which reflect much current research into the concrete cultural history of the Viking Period, even though there are few entries from the Viking homelands dealing with new discoveries. In all, it is fascinating reading, and the book is well recommended for information about new discoveries.

It can be ordered directly from the publisher at: www.maney.co.uk/books/mam20

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**Vinland Revisited: the Norse World at the Turn of the First Millennium**

Edited by Shannon Lewis-Simpson
Published by Historic Sites Association of Newfoundland and Labrador Inc.

In connection with the millennium anniversary of Leif Eriksson’s discovery of America, an extensive symposium was held dealing mainly with the Viking expansion westward. Papers from the seminar were collected and are presented in this extensive book. In all, about 40 different articles present an impressive detailed study and update of Viking society, mainly in the western direction.

The book is divided into three sections. The first section can be subdivided into two distinct groups. The first group concerns the identity of those who settled in Iceland, Greenland and briefly in Vinland. The keynote address, which was given by Peter Sawyer, summarises the history of Norwegian settlement in Scotland, Ireland and Iceland. The second group of articles concerns the voyage to Vinland and takes up the nature of the settlement in Greenland.

The second section of the book deals with Society, Culture and Settlement, and the keynote was presented by Magnus Magnusson, who examines the diverse nature of the Viking Age in the context of its recognised saints.

The final section of the book deals with Exploration, Navigation and Cultural Interaction, with a keynote from Peter Pope, discussing the obsession with the “discovery” of North America.

In all, it is an impressive compilation of knowledge concerning the story of the Vikings going west. It covers all aspects of Viking life; from sailing to beliefs, and is well illustrated.

This book is a must for anyone interested in the Vikings and the North Atlantic. It can be ordered at: www.historicsites.ca

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**L’Europe des Vikings Exhibition Catalogue**

Edited by Claudine Glot and Michel le Bris
Published by Centre Culturel Abbaye de Daoulas
Daoulas, France
Available in French.

*L’Europe des Vikings,* edited by Claudine Glot and Michel le Bris, is the catalogue for this summer’s exhibition of the same name at the Abbaye Daoulas Cultural Centre in Brittany, France.

In most peoples’ minds the Vikings were brutal men, warriors and plunderers wearing helmets with horns. This picture that people still bear in mind emanates from the late 19th century when Vikings became very popular and were “exploited” in art and music. However, nothing could be more wrong. *L’Europe des Vikings* deals with this “problem” as well as showing that they (also) were tradesmen and explorers, and above all they were bearers of a very high culture.

This is a most interesting, beautiful book presenting the diverse world of the Vikings.

You get a good summary of their culture in all the countries of the Viking world, from Iceland in the west to Russia in the east, from Finland in the north to Normandy and Brittany in the south.

Under headlines like: *Les Vikings, miracle ou mystère* (The Vikings, miracle or mystery), *Et la mer se couvrit de voiles* (And the sea was covered with sails), *Élagir les horizons du monde* (Broaden the horizons of the world) and *le Viking imaginaire* (The imaginary Viking), interesting articles are written by different authors and specialists from many different countries. The catalogue is richly illustrated with photos of the most exquisite objects.

By Malin Lindquist
County Museum of Gotland
Viking grave – finds on Frösön, Sweden

Archaeologists believe they have found traces of the first Christian graves on Frösön in northern Sweden. A grave containing not only the remains of a female but even bead-jewellery and clasps was discovered while excavating close to the Västerhus chapel. The church was in use between the 12th and 15th centuries. The grave is dated to the 11th century, in the period of transition between pagan and Christian times.

The burial finds indicate that the grave is older than the chapel, though the custom to present the deceased with gifts came to an end in connection with the advent of Christianity. Judging from the jewellery and the fact that she was probably buried by private arrangement under a chapel of her own, it seems as though the woman was once wealthy. The finds will be sent for analysis that will present further information.

Source: Länstidningen

A Viking-age farm is about to be build in Trelleborg in Sweden

This spring construction of a Viking-age farm has begun in Trelleborgen in Trelleborg, Sweden. It is the first step in a big building scheme, which will be ready for the city’s 750-year anniversary in 2007.

Hopefully the first longhouse will be finish this summer. The drawings for the erection around the stronghold are done and the people in charge are eager to get the farm in use. Besides the Viking farm plans also include building an amphitheatre, a stone labyrinth, a sacrificial place and a playground.

It is important that the inhabitants have the opportunity to take advantage of the attraction a Viking farm in the centre of the city will constitute.

Source: Sydsvenska Dagbladet

...and in Ireland

Recently a significant discovery of the remains of a Viking, probably a woman who was buried 1100 years ago, has been made close to a medieval church north of Dublin. In the same grave the archaeologists found a bronze oval brooch of Scandinavian manufacture, an unusually long bone comb, and other copper alloy ornaments.

The brooch, which is dated to the later ninth century, is the first find of an oval brooch in Ireland for a century and only a few of this type have been found there earlier.

Many ancient sites and artefacts are being unearthed in Ireland right now due to the extensive road and building works that are taking place throughout the country. Earlier this year, a major Viking settlement was discovered at Woodstown on the River Suir in the southeast of Ireland, due to excavations made in advance of a planned road bypass for the nearby city of Waterford.

Spirit of the Past

Spirit of the Past – A new informative Swedish website in English, offering Viking-age and medieval information and merchandise, is now available on the Internet. This site provides comprehensive information about Viking costumes, Viking beads, medieval rosaries, Viking symbols, Viking ornamentation, runes and other history-related topics. Here you can also buy copies of Viking-age gemstone beads, medieval glass rings and medieval style rosary beads, along with modern rune jewellery, t-shirts, posters and beads.

Check out the web site: www.spirit-of-the-past.com

Viking Heritage magazine

The ultimate forum for all those interested in Vikings and the Viking Age!

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On September 4, 2004, the replica of the large Viking ship “Skuldelev 2” was launched in Roskilde, Denmark. With grand ceremony it was given the name Havhingsten fra Glendalough by Queen Margrethe II of Denmark. The Danish and the Irish Ministers of Culture were amongst those who gave speeches honouring the new ship and around 11 000 people from near and far came to see the launching.

Havhingsten is a full-size copy of one of the five Viking ships that was sunk by the Vikings in Roskilde fjord in the 11th century as a barrier towards attacks from hostile fleets. These ships were excavated in thousands of pieces in 1962, and the other four finds have already been reconstructed and can be seen at the Roskilde Viking Ship Museum.

Archaeological evidence suggests that the original ship was built in Dublin, Ireland, around the year 1040. At that time the Vikings had settled in Ireland and built several fortified bases along the coast.

The ship is 30 metres long and has taken four years for eight craftsmen to build it by hand. Everything is built in the Viking way, not only in terms of materials but even using reconstructed Viking-age tools. Plans are for the ship to go on a long voyage to Dublin in 2007.

The launching was the start for a Viking market week in the Copenhagen region, where Viking sites are advertised for example on buses. And in the Viking Ship Museum in Roskilde an exhibition about Viking ships on stamps from all over the world, is on display.

The largest-ever Viking ship replica – Havhingsten fra Glendalough – has now been launched in Denmark!
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