Editorial

WHAT KIND OF HORSES did the Vikings have and what did they look like? For what use did they have them and what role did they play in the Viking-age society? In the first article of this summer issue you are sure to find some answers to these questions.

It is always fascinating, I think, for us urban people to learn more about the close, interactive and also dependent relationship of man and animals in ancient times – a way of living that many people of today know nothing about. Maybe our car is the closest we can come to what a horse could mean to the Vikings?

Another interesting article among many others, on a totally different topic, is about the extent of the Viking-age Danish influence in south Sweden, a contribution to a debate that has engaged scholars in Scandinavia for a long time.

This issue is our last in cooperation with and as part of the EU project Destination Viking Living History. During the project’s three years, much progress has been made concerning the dissemination and marketing of Viking history and attractions, both at the local level of each partner as well as at the international network level, as you have been able to note through several articles in this magazine. Now, the aim of creating the Baltic Sea Viking Route will also be marketed through a brand-new guidebook. Read more about it in our next issue.

Summer is here and we have listed more Viking events than ever before. We wish you all a great Viking summer!

Enjoy!

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Words of Wisdom

Cherish those near you, never be the first to break with a friend. Care eats him who can no longer open his heart to another.

From Hávámál
( Words from “The High One”)

About the front page
The pregnant Icelandic mare named Skuldr frá Kvistum. Photo: Gunnar Britse
The origin of the horses

Traditionally the domestic horse is thought to have originated on the vast plains of the Ukraine. Here lived the Tarpan, one of the two wild horse breeds surviving until historic time, and in these surroundings the nomads developed the art of riding about 6000 years ago.

However recent genetic research reveals a slightly different picture. Evolutionary biologists have investigated over 600 samples from different living horse breeds together with fossil bones of wild Ice-age horses preserved in the permafrost of Alaska. Bones from Iron-age graves in Sweden have also been analysed.

Since mitochondrial DNA, which the offspring inherits from the mother, is used only the matrilinear relationships can be traced with this method. According to the results, horses seem to descend from many different, geographically spread, wild mares. Consequently, it can be concluded that mares were tamed at different times and at many places around Europe and Asia.

In another study, however, the DNA from the male Y-chromosome of 50 stallions of different breeds was analysed. The unexpected results showed no genetic variation at all, which means that all horses seem to be descended from one.

One of the subjects the County Museum of Gotland, Sweden is focusing on during the Viking Year 2005 is the Viking horse. The appearance and characteristics of horses of that period will be described and displayed, as well as their role in mythology and daily life.

The exhibition is located in an actual stable on the Norrbys museum farm in the parish of Väte, south of Visby. Real live horses, descendants of the Viking horses, will be kept in the surrounding paddocks. Horse shows and presentations of the different horse breeds will take place all summer.

This article sums up the main content of the exhibition.

Viking Horses

By Sara Eliason

The Norwegian Fjord mare and Viking descendant, Knuts Bocka. Notice the traditional mane style. Photo: Sara Eliason

Icelandic horses of today, on a beach on Fårö, Gotland. Photo: Gunnar Britse
single stallion! Perhaps wild mares from different stock in Europe and Asia were tamed independently while the stallions used in breeding were imported offspring from one or a few particularly good stallions, domesticated in a single geographic area.

The oldest finds of domestic horses in Scandinavia are from Gotland. One 4700-year old bone was found in a marsh in the parish of Eke and a jawbone from the Middle Neolithic settlement Ire in Hangvar. This jaw is the same size as a jaw of the native Gotlandic pony, the Gotland Russ.

Otherwise, Stone-age horse finds are rare. Finds of Bronze-age horses are more common and stone carvings from Sweden and Norway often portray horses, mostly as draught horses and more seldom as riding horses.

The two-wheeled wagon drawn by a team of horses depicted on a stone carving in the Kivik grave in Skåne is dated to 1300 BC. Opinions differ as to whether horses were first used for riding or as draught animals.

**Viking horse relationships**

It is likely that the origin of the Viking horse breeds can be found in northwestern Europe. However trading with living horses has probably taken place, at least since the Roman Iron Age, when large amounts of leather, meat and even live horses were needed for the Roman army.

Since Vikings were expanding and settling down in the British Isles as well as in Russia and the Baltic countries, horses from the native stock must have been mixed with the breeds from Scandinavia, especially those that were taken to Iceland.

The genetic research previously mentioned confirms that at least the Scandinavian and British breeds are closely related. The British Exmoor, Highland and Connemara ponies belong to the same genotype cluster as the Norwegian Fjord and Icelandic ponies.

Two Viking-age horses were also found to have this genotype. Another distinguished genotype cluster consisted exclusively of Icelandic, Shetland and Fjord ponies.

Among six DNA-analysed Iron-age horses, four separate types were found, all probably of Western European origin. No relationship with the Tarpan wild horse was found among these. The relatively high number of horse types among such a limited number of specimens, indicates that horse breeding was already well developed in the Viking Age.

Attempts to classify the Iron-age horses using morphological analysis have also been made earlier. Three different horse breeds have been distinguished by this method: The old Nordic Bronze-age...
horse, the Ihre horse (*Equus caballus nehringii*) and a Tarpan-type horse. The results indicate that the conclusions drawn from morphological analysis seem uncertain.

**The appearance of Viking horses**

The many horses found in the Viking graves give us several clues as to how they looked. Measuring the skeletons has shown that the horses were between 131 and 145 cm high, i.e. the same size as larger ponies of today.

Although pictures may have been an expression of artistic interpretation, Viking-age art gives us some information about what the horses looked like. Contemporary illustrations of horses indicate that they seem to have had shorter backs and thicker necks than most modern horses. However they concur with the looks of the Nordic and British old horse breeds.

Preserved textiles, from the Norwegian Oseberg ship burial and the Bayeux tapestry for example, often show horses of different colours and in Norse literature the colour of horses is sometimes mentioned. It seems that all the colours of modern horse breeds were also represented in Viking-age horses.

At the moment, evolutionary biologists in Uppsala are doing a DNA-analysis on several ancient horses aimed at finding out their colour, since relationships among horses also can be traced in this way. All white horses, for example, have inherited their colour from one single horse.

**Their descendants**

Among the 400 horse breeds of today, there are several that can be regarded as descendants of the Viking horses.

*The Icelandic Horse* is often pointed out as the true Viking horse. It descends from the horses that were brought to Iceland during the colonization of the island in the 9th century. Since it was mostly Norwegian Vikings who settled on Iceland, their horses were mainly native Norwegian horses together with British ponies. This mix became the Icelandic pony of today.

In the 10th century further import of horses to Iceland was forbidden and, according to that law, no horses have been brought onto the island since then.

The main characteristics of the Icelandic Horse are their thick mane and tail, their many different colours and five gaits. In addition to the three basic gaits: walk, trot and gallop, the Icelandic Horse is the only now-living European horse breed that naturally has two extra gaits: tolt and flying pace.

In tolt the horse moves its legs in the same sequence as in walking, but much faster. Tolt is a four-beat gait without a moment of suspension. In tolt, a horse has always either one or two feet on the ground. It is a very comfortable gait that enables the rider to cover long distances without tiring. Tolt tempi range ridden from working speed right up to racing speed and a fast toltting horse can reach similar speeds as in gallop. Flying pace is a two-beat speedy gait used for short distance spurts where the lateral pairs of legs move together and there is a moment of suspension.

There are several other modern horse breeds outside Europe that have 5 natural gaits. This used to be common among many horses in ancient Europe, which also can be seen in different pictures. The little Birka Horse, a piece of jewellery found in Birka, for example, shows a Viking mounted on a pacing horse.

*The Norwegian Fjord Horse* is one of the horse breeds from which the Icelandic pony derives. It is native in the western parts of Norway, where it traditionally has been used on farms as a draught and pack animal as well as for riding.

One of its main characteristics is the...
dun colour, the original colour of the wild horse. The thick mane is traditionally kept cut, a prehistoric relic you can see on many Iron-age horse pictures, for example on some of the Gotlandic picture stones. Thick bushy manes would otherwise disturb the warrior in battle.

A horse breed that is seldom mentioned as a Viking horse, probably due to its small size is the Gotland Russ. Nevertheless, it is the oldest of the Scandinavian horse breeds and can be detected as far back as perhaps the Stone Age.

Smaller horses were used for other purposes than riding, and you would therefore not expect to find them in Viking-age graves. Only the noble riding horses of the deceased warriors were buried with their masters. However, it was revealed that a Viking-age horse from Gotland (Brea in Halla) shared common ancestry with the Gotland Russ.

The many native horse breeds on the British Isles have also played an important role in creating the Viking horses. The oldest is the Exmoor Pony, often mentioned as the Celtic Pony, used by the Celts as a packhorse and a draught animal. It is a small (maximum 123 cm), hardy horse with a dun coat. The Scottish Highland Pony exists in two varieties, the mainland type and the smaller horse on the Hebrides. It is also a strong, compact horse, ideal as a pack animal.

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The art of riding and equipment
Horses served a number of purposes in Norse culture. Above all, they were used for riding. As warriors on horses we may assume that the Vikings were very skilled riders.

The art of equestrians was developed by the Eastern nomads and perhaps spread to the North in the late Bronze Age (400 BC) and onwards. The main source of the knowledge about the Iron-age equestrians is the graves, where fully equipped horses have often been buried with their masters. The images of riders on picture stones, runestones, decorated helmets, jewellery and textiles are also important sources.

Saddles
Early riders, for example the ancient Greeks, did not use saddles at all. The Scythians (700-300 BC) were the first equestrians to use saddles.

The Viking riding horse was probably equipped with a wooden saddle, a type still used in the Iberian countries and among Western riders. According to very few fragmental archaeological finds and depicted horses as well as similar modern saddles give us an idea of how they looked: Two parallel boards held together in an L-shape with two broad bows, one front and one back.

The saddles were often elaborately carved and painted and probably upholstered in leather and cloth. In Alsokog church on Gotland, a piece of wood with carvings was found, which proved to be a fragment of the front or back bow of a Viking-age saddle.

Bridles and bits
The parts of the bridles remaining in the archaeological finds are the bits and bronze mounts the bridles were decorated with. The bits are so-called snaffle bits, the same type that most riders use today. They are made of iron and have one or two joints. Curb bits, the sharper leverage bit that was invented for military use are not found in the Viking-age archaeological material at all. Each bit ring often has two sheets of tinplates, to which the reins and the side straps were riveted.

Contemporary pictures often show mounted Vikings, riding with the reins hanging loosely. The rider must have been using his legs and the body weight to steer, instead of the reins. In order to wield weapons and a shield from the horseback, this would be a necessity.

Spurs
The spur is an old invention, used by the Celts and the Greeks before the saddle and the stirrup were invented. During the early Iron Age, spurs were also used among the riders in Scandinavia. However they seem to fall out of fashion in the following centuries and do not show up again until the 10th century.

On Gotland, stirrups are not found in the Viking-age graves at all and the picture stones often show riders with toes pointing downwards and a body leaning backwards, typical of riding without stirrups. However loose finds of stirrups have been made even on Gotland.

A snaffle bit, found in the mouth of a horse in a Viking-age grave in Ire, Hellvi on Gotland. The horse, together with a dog, was buried with its master, a ten-year old boy. Each iron ring is mounted with decorated bronze cubes.

Photo: County Museum of Gotland
spurs found elsewhere are made of iron and with rigid legs.

As a consequence of riding, trousers were invented by the Eastern nomads. On two of the Gotlandic picture stones, you can see the riders wearing very puffy trousers, probably inspired by the Southeastern cultures.

Viking art often shows mounted warriors, but the Norse literature indicates that horses were used mostly to reach the battlefield quickly, where the warrior would fight on foot. Since the warriors often are depicted without stirrups and the bits found in graves are of a mild snaffle-bit type, not suitable for battle, this could be the case.

However the late Viking-age Bayeux tapestry illustrates mounted warriors in combat, but here the horses are equipped with both curb bits and stirrups and the warriors are wearing armour. This is the first step towards the heavy armoured knights of the Middle Ages.

Draught horses and women

Horses were also used as draught animals during the Viking Age. Since the few existing roads were quite bad, some researchers argue that wagons were used only for ceremonial purposes.

Wagon graves from the 10th century are common in southern Scandinavia, especially in Denmark. The deceased had been buried in a carriage-body, i.e. the upper part of the wagon that could be removed from the lower chassis. The absolute majority of these graves belonged to women from the upper classes. The famous early 9th century Oseberg ship burial in Norway also contains a complete wagon as well as sledges and textiles illustrating wagons and horses. Two wealthy women were buried together with at least ten horses. Women are obviously associated with wagons.

Contemporary pictures very seldom show mounted women, and when they do, the women are riding in a lady’s saddle (side-saddle) with both legs on the same side of the horse. However women driving are depicted on several picture stones. Maybe the woman went to Hel in a wagon drawn by horses, while the man rode to Valhalla.

Cult, myth and rituals

According to the rich finds of horses, the many horse illustrations and Norse literature, where horses often are mentioned, there is no doubt about the important role these animals had in the pagan ideal world.

The introduction of the horse into Scandinavia must have been a revolution for the prehistoric society. These fast, strong animals could easily transport people and goods long distances on land, opening up new opportunities for trading, making contact with other cultures and, of course, the conquest of other territories.

Objects and animals, having great importance in daily life and providing the owner with power and wealth, also often had a strong religious and mythological significance.

Symbol of fertility

The strength and speed of the horse caused it to be associated with fertility and early on it became a symbol of the sun – the source of all life. The sun moving across the sky, drawn by horses is depicted in Bronze-age stone carvings and the bronze Sun Wagon, found in a marsh in Trundholm in Denmark, is famous.

The association of the horse with the sun persisted into the Viking Age. In Norse mythology the sun is drawn across the sky by horses. The two steeds have even got names: Alsvinn – the quick one, and Arvkir – the vigilant.

Horse fighting

On the early 5th–7th century picture stones from Gotland, horses are often depicted together with the whirling wheel, a probable sun symbol. Several of these horses are also standing facing each other, ready to fight.

Such stallion fights were a common fertility ritual in the ancient Nordic culture, and also described in the Norse mythology. Horses were very important status symbols, and the power of the horse owner could easily be measured in this way.

Sacrifices

Horses had an important role in religious sacrificial worship during the Iron Age. The horse was dedicated both to Frey, the god of fertility and Odin, the greatest of the gods as well as the god of the warriors.

Many sacrificed horses have been found in marshes together with weapons, horse trappings and sometimes the bones of other animals as well as humans. In Skedemosse on Oland, over one hundred horses were found, sacrificed during the 1st and 2nd centuries. Since only bones from the heads, legs and tails of the horses were found, it is likely that the rest of the bodies were eaten during ritual meals.
The last journey

Horses were also sacrificial gifts in many burials. The Vendel and Viking-age ship graves often contain several horses and in many of the smaller Viking-age graves a single horse is buried with its master.

The pagan ideas of after-life seem to be expressed in these funeral rituals as well as on one type of the Gotlandic picture stones. The content of the ship burials often confirms the motifs on the picture stones. The scene is mostly interpreted as the journey of the dead warrior to Valhalla, sailing across the sea with the ship and in the final stage riding on the horse, often full equipped with shield, sword and spear. In front of him, a Valkyrie is holding a drinking horn, welcoming him to Valhalla.

Ships and horses

The connection between ships and horses, as we can see on the picture stones and in many graves, is also obvious in the Norse mythology where ships are described as the horses’ counterpart at sea – seahorses.

Horse heroes

Another type of Gotlandic picture stones seems to illustrate different scenes in a story. These scenes have been interpreted as being parts of myths in Norse saga literature. Even individual horses can be identified.

The eight-legged horse on the stone from Tjängvide, Alskog is obviously Odin’s horse Sleipner. Sleipner was the fastest of all horses, he ran quickly on land as well in the sky and over sea.

Another horse, famous from the Saga literature, is Grane, the horse of Sigurd Fafnesbane. It can be recognised on at least two of the picture stones, Tängelgårda and Hammars in Lärbro, where it is carrying the treasure in the coffer on its back. On both stones one scene illustrates the dramatic death of Sigurd; he is lying underneath his horse Grane, A couple of men with swords, the murderers, are holding the upset horse by the reins.

The end of worship

The importance of the horse in Scandinavia did not decrease with the introduction of Christianity, but the pagan worship of the animal was banned of course. Even the habit of eating its meat was forbidden, because of the horse’s important religious position. Even nowadays, most people refuse to eat horsemeat, which shows that Christianity really succeeded in sanctifying the horse.

About the author

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Further reading

Ellegren, H. 2002: It took many mares to form the domestic horse. Trends in Genetics 18.
Götherström, A. 2002: The values of stallions and mares in Medieval Upper Class Svealand. JONAS 13.
Nylén, E.1983: Vendelryttaren, en länk mellan öst och väst – forntid och medeltid. Tor XIX.
Ailkn’s wagon and Odin’s warriors

About the pictures on the Ardre monuments

By Thorgunn Snædal

The warrior
The man runs, braces himself against the dragon’s head, his sword on his left side and his mead horn held high, but it does not help, he is trapped for eternity between the Ardre coffin’s writhing dragons (fig. 1). The mead horn shows that the man is a warrior, on his way to become or already one of Odin’s heroes in Valhalla, where all warriors who have fallen in battle since the beginning of time are gathered. He is hurrying to the war games described in the Edda saga by Snorre:

"Every day when they get dressed they don their weapons and go out on the yard to fight and cut each other down. That is their game and when the day draws to a close they ride off home to Valhalla."

When they get home they seat themselves at the table like close friends and drink the mead that runs endlessly from the teats of Heidrun’s goat. This practical goat stands on Valhalla’s roof eating the needles of the Lärad tree. Therefore every warrior needs to keep track of his own mead horn and most of the warriors that are pictured on picture stones either have their horn ready or are met in Valhalla by a woman, probably a Valkyrie (see below) with a horn in hand.

The meat of the boar, Särimner was served with the mead, day in and day out: “he is boiled every day but is whole again in the evening and there are never so many people in Valhalla that the pork does not suffice.”

The pictures on the coffin’s other three sides confirm that our warrior is on his way to the battles in Valhalla.

On one of the gable stones (unfortunately fragmentary) a wild battle is described (fig. 2): A man, armed with a broad axe and surrounded by two men with helmets, is chasing another who is running for his life with out-stretched arms. On the other side stone (fig. 3), dominated by two symmetrical four-legged animals, a man is lying at the bottom of the picture, a fallen warrior.

On the other gable stone (fig. 4) the warrior rides into Valhalla on Odin’s eight-legged horse, Sleipner. He is still carrying his sword and has a small knapsack on his back. Above him stands a fully armed warrior with his spear and swords, looking as if he is taking a strengthening gulp from his mead horn. Next to him lies a man who has already fallen and at the very top a man who has been speared through the middle by his

Footnotes
1. Dagvarden was the first meal and was consumed either early in the morning or between 11–12 a.m. For information about life in Valhalla see Snorre’s Edda.
2. The importance of this peculiar name is unclear, possibly it means the one who rules over the shadows.
3. This kind of reclining male figures are found on several stones, e.g. Hammars and Tängelgårda in Lärbro.

Fig 5. Rodiaud Rodgairsdotter in Ardre died young leaving behind her young children. Stone erected by Simpa. Photo S. Hallgren ATA
The Ardre coffin (G 114).

All photos: S. Hallgren ATA

Fig 1. The front side. The inscription begins in the bottom left corner.

Fig 2. One of the gable stones. The battle is going on full tilt.

Fig 3. A man is lying at the very bottom of the other side stone. Such figures are common on picture stones and they probably depict a fallen warrior. The interpretation of the male-figure with a small person on his arm in top of the left corner is uncertain. It might be a variant of the snake pits depicted on several picture stones, as both figures look like they are being attacked by the snakes that are incorporated into the ornamentation. But the figure has also been interpreted as Kristoffer the Christ bearer.

Fig 4. The other gable stone. A warrior rides into Valhalla on Odin’s eight-legged horse. Above him stands a fully armed warrior and around them the customary war games are going on.

Fig 1. The front side. The inscription begins in the bottom left corner.
The finds from Ardre
In the summer of 1900, Ardre church was restored. When the church floor was removed remains appeared of an older church on the site, probably built at the end of the 12th century. In the ancient church floor lay a magnificent picture stone and a huge number of rune-carved stone fragments adorned with characters and ornamentation.5

When the stones had been taken up and sorted it became apparent that there were four runic monuments associated with two different families. Two tiny stones (75 cm high) with beautiful carvings on both sides were erected by a man by the unique name of Simpa.

The first stone was in memory of his wife Rodiaud who “died young leaving young children” (fig. 5) and the other in memory of “his and Rodiaud’s daughter” (fig. 6). These brief inscriptions describe a family tragedy. Probably Rodiaud died in childbirth and soon thereafter their young daughter, whose name we not know. At that time it was difficult to keep a small baby who had lost its mother alive.

The third runic monument is also quite a small stone (fig. 7):

“Ottar and Gairvat and Aisvat they raised this stone in honour of their father Liknat. Radjalvo and Gairinaut made good monuments for a quick man. Lik(n)raiv carved the runes.”

The front side is decorated with two beautiful dragons, with a male figure between them sitting on a stool with a chest or a low table in front of him. In his raised right hand he has a ring. Perhaps it is Odin sitting there with his gold ring, Draupner, which propagated itself into eight new rings each as heavy as the original every ninth night.6

Far down in the left corner stands a man, whose right leg is fettered by a chain that stems from the beginning strands of the inscription; possibly it is the fettered Loke who is portrayed here.

Other stone slabs form the coffin-shaped monument, whose scenes I have already described, according to the runic inscription that it was erected in memory of Liknaf’s wife:

“Liknaf’s sons (had) a good monument made in honour of Liknaf, a good woman, (Ottar’s) and Gairvat’s and Liknaf’s mother. God (and the mother of God) save her and those who made it [the memorial]. The biggest (?) memorial, that one can see … in Garda, which was at Vive’s (?)”.

Unfortunately important parts of the inscription are missing so the connection between the ending and the other text is lost. Who was in Garda at Vive’s remains therefore unknown. Ailikn must have held a significant position in the society since her monument is much grander than her husband’s, in whose inscription neither she nor her daughter Lïknui are mentioned.

It is difficult to determine how much time has elapsed between the husband and wife’s deaths; probably it is question of a decade or two. The son Aivat, who is not mentioned on the mother’s monument, has probably died by then.

Women and Valkyries
In general coffin-shaped stones were probably erected for women. The coffin form is meant to remind us of the wagon that carried women to the realm of death according to heathen beliefs. In an Edda poem is said that the Valkyrie called Brynhild was burnt in a wagon, dressed in precious fabrics and that she went in this wagon to Hel, the realm of death.

On the picture stone from Uddvide (Barshaldershed) in Grötlingbo parish a female figure is seen riding in a wagon with a side shaped exactly like the side slabs of the Ardre coffin.

Wagon bodies at this time seemed to have been designed so that they could easily be taken off, probably there were several different bodies for different transport purposes, and the Ardre coffin with its short ends reminds us of just such a removable wagon body.7

In front of the woman in the wagon on the Uddvide stone stands a woman/Valkyrie ready with mead horn, which shows that after death women also came to a place where they were received just like men with a swig of mead.

Perhaps it was imagined that dignified women could become Valkyries after death and serve the fighting warriors at the same time as they were given the power to decide which warriors were permitted the honour of falling in battle, thus qualifying to become heroes.

Footnotes
4. The slaughter of Sárimme is depicted on at least two picture stones: Lärbro, Tangelgärda I and VI, possibly even on the picture stone from Ardre.
5. Possibly there had been an older wooden church on the same site towards the end of the 11th or beginning of the 12th century and the stones were originally erected adjacent to it. Exact description of the find and the rune inscriptions are given in Gotlands runinskrifter volume 1, p.199f., where indications of a wooden church are reported.
6. Possibly Odin is portrayed here as the wise man, sitting in the sage’s chair in the hall of the high (i.e. Odin’s hall) beside Urd’s well giving good advice to people: “It is time to speak at the sage’s chair, beside Urd’s well …” (Havamal, verse 111).
7. A wagon body could obviously be constructed so that it could be lifted down into a boat, as part of the Oseberg queen’s burial attributes.
Valkyrie, the word means “those who choose who will die on the battlefield” were to be partly serving maids in Valhalla and “to lay and decorate the tables and to look after the beer vessels”, and partly to ride out and decide which men were to fall on the battlefield.

In certain Edda poems dignified women stand out as Valkyries even while still alive and some sources imply that heathen female priests could be named Valkyries or angels of death while still living.

According to the monument Ailiki belonged to a dignified and respected family and can very well have had some religious function, prior to her conversion, which can explain the choice of pictures on her coffin, while, at the same time, they reflect the uncertainty about religious beliefs that lingered on the island some time into the 1100s.

Simpa’s stones bear no explicit symbols of Christianity while the small crosses that begin and end the text on Liknät’s stone and the prayer in the coffin’s inscription testify to the family’s adherence to Christianity. This kind of small crosses do not occur in inscriptions from 11th century and beginning of the 12th century but, as a rule, begins inscriptions on the Medieval grave slabs and is thereby an indication that Liknät’s stone is younger than the traditional runestones.

The language used also indicates that the Ardre monument is younger than the traditional runestones raised at the end of 11th and the beginning of 12th centuries but older than the grave slabs and baptismal fonts attributed to the stone masters Sigraiv and Majestatis who began their work during the second half of the 12th century. This sets the time frame for the Ardre monument to the first or second quarter of the 12th century.

The change of faith
A hundred years after the dethroned Norwegian king, Olaf Haraldsson, visited the island and the Christianisation of Gotland was seriously initiated, the heathen faith and its myths have not yet lost their grip on the Gotlanders. According to the Gutagalan, despite the fact that even before Olav’s visits, Gotlandic merchants had learned about Christianity on their trading travels and even brought priests to the island, the conversion in faith was no walk-over victory for the Christians. The Gutagalan’s dramatic account of how Gotlanders burnt down the first churches makes this quite clear.

The same struggle was taking place on the island and the Christianisation of Svitjod did not become totally Christian until towards the end of the 11th century. According to an Icelandic source, this came about thanks to King Inge Stenkilsson, who became king about 1080. He was a Christian and when he refused to make a sacrifice at the thing, the Swedes thought that he was breaking the country’s laws. They expelled him and took the heathen, Blot-Sven, as their king instead. After three years in Västergotland, Inge returned, killed Blot-Sven, regained power and introduced Christianity. Probably the heathen temple at Uppsala was destroyed in connection with his return.

When the new religion became the norm and its new organization and rituals were established, the runestones had had their day. Now the Viking Age was also over and the need to erect monuments in honour of men who had died far from their home country had ended.

To some degree runestones were still erected during the first decades of the 12th century, but openings for a dexterous rune carver ought to have decreased drastically towards the end of the 11th century.

Footnotes
9. For the dating of the Ardre monument see Snaedal 2002 p 93F. Compare, however with Thunmark-Nylén 1991 p 190F. Therefore the coffin has not stood outside for more than 6 to 8 decades and had time to weather noticeably. The severe damages are quite normal considering the material’s susceptibility and the short base sections.
Possibly that is why the Upplandic runestone style becomes prevalent on Gotland just then. Unemployed carvers were looking for a new market and found it during the period when the Gotlanders were completing their transition to the new faith. That these monuments were strongly connected to the mission era and the oldest churches on the island is evident from the fact that of the 50-odd well-known rune stones from that time 30 have been found in or near churches.

The Andre monuments show that the struggle between the religions was not completed on Gotland until a few decades into the 12th century. Despite the crosses on Liknat’s stone and the prayer on Alilikn’s coffin, their children have designed the monuments according to ancient Gotlandic tradition, perhaps because Liknat and Alilikn, who must have been born at the latest about 1080 AD, could have been born and raised in a heathen environment and, at least partly, clung to the old faith even though their children had become Christian.

It seems that heathen and Christian beliefs continue to live side by side all through the 12th century. This is evident in that throughout the whole century there are Viking-age-type graves both in cemeteries and grave fields and both heathen and Christian objects are intermixed in the graves.

It was first when the building of stone churches was begun during the latter part of the 12th century, concurrent with the growth of the ecclesiastic organization, that Christ finally defeated the old gods. However, their presence is still mentioned in the introduction to the Gutalagen: “this is first of our laws, that we will deny heathen beliefs and recognize Christianity…”.

Gutalagen (and Gutasagan) were probably written down in the 1220s at approximately the same time as Snorri Sturluson wrote his Edda on Iceland, thereby saving many of the old myths from oblivion. His stories show that heathen mythology was still so alive on Iceland at this time that it is easy to recognize many of the scenes and figures on Gotlandic picture stones as far back as the 8th century with the help of Snorre’s descriptions. And judging from the continued vivid interest in them, the old gods have still not released their grip on the Nordic soul, not even after almost 100 years.

Footnotes
10. The oldest known coffin-shaped monument is dated to the 7th century.

This article was first published in Swedish by the County Museum of Gotland in the annual book Gotländskt Arkiv 2004, this year called Gotland Vikingaön (Gotland Viking Island).

Literature:

Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda, volume 1, Reykjavík. 1952.


GR = Gotlands runinskrifter 1, 1962, reviewed and interpreted by S. B. F. Jansson & Elias Wessén (SR1 11).


About the author
Thorgunn Snædal is a Senior Executive Officer at the National Heritage Board in Stockholm. As a linguist and runologist she has published a large number of books and papers on runes and runic inscriptions and on the culture and literature of the Scandinavians during the Viking Period and Middle Ages. In VHM 4/04 she contributed with the article “No Gute by the name of Sven”.

Fig 7. Perhaps it is Odin who is depicted here between the dragons on Liknat’s memorial stone, with the ring, Draupner, in his hand. The fettered figure in the very left bottom might be Loke, who was fettered in a cave because of his treachery, and above his head the gods had placed a venomous snake, whose poison was dripping down in a bowl that his faithful wife Sigyn was holding. But from time to time she has to empty the poison bowl. Then the poison drips down on Loke who is twisting in pain so violently that the whole earth is shaking. There Loke is lying, on his way to Ragnarök, the end of the world. Photo S. Hallgren ATA.
Who were the thegns of Cnut the great?

Since the middle of the 1980s I have proposed that the persons who are mentioned on runic inscriptions from Western Sweden and Denmark with the formulas "har∂a godan dræng" respectively "dræng" were members of the so-called thingalid of Cnut the great, king of England and Denmark between AD 1017–1035.

The thingalid was Cnut’s bodyguard and elite troops. I have also proposed that the Scandinavian kingdoms did not emerge as territorial units until the ecclesiastical organisation was completed in the middle of the 12th century. Since I recently observed that there are regulations concerning Danish thegns in the laws of Cnut, I consider my argument to be even stronger. A short description follows.

After two decades of fighting and several Danegelds*, forces led by the Danish king, Swein Forkbeard, managed to conquer England in AD 1013. Swein died at the beginning of the following year and his son Cnut was elected king by the naval forces. The English resistance became so strong that Cnut had to leave England to add his navy. King Ethelred returned to England and one of his moves was to outlaw all Danish kings.

However Cnut managed to organise more forces and returned to England where they were victorious. Cnut was crowned king of England in AD 1017. His brother Harald seems to have succeeded Swein as king of Denmark but Harald died in AD 1019 and Cnut became king of Denmark as well. Cnut resided mostly in England and visited Denmark on only a few occasions, so his power in Denmark was unclear to what extent he exercised it.

In spite of obviously very hostile English people, at least in the beginning, Cnut took possession of the well-developed English administrative system. In AD 1018 he demanded a final Danegeld of 80,000 pounds, corresponding to almost 40 tons of silver. This sum is considered to equal the entire income of England that year.

Among other things, this huge capital was used to settle up with most of the mercenary troops who had taken part in the conquest. Cnut kept 40 ships and he also had at his immediate beck and call the thingalid which, at a guess, consisted of 1000 warriors. They were used as bodyguards and to execute Cnut’s decisions.

In the thingalid the thegns and drængs held important positions. A thegn, or thane, has been known in England since the 7th century as the title for members of the territorial nobility. A king’s thegn was a person of great importance and he held certain special privileges. No one but the

* The name generally given to the payments made in England to the Viking armies at the end of the 10th and beginning of 11th century. (Eds. note)
king had the right of jurisdiction over him. In their turn, the thegns had followers, undoubtedly men they knew from their native lands or as brothers-in-arms. Drangs are known from late Anglo-Saxon sources and those in runic inscriptions are interpreted as being young unmarried warriors, perhaps corresponding to the housecarles in England.

The thingalid was crucial at the beginning of Cnut’s rule because of the hostility of the local people. The conquest resulted in decades of long and brutal fighting and the English people endured unspeakable suffering. According to the Icelandic historian Snorre Sturlason, who wrote his famous Heimskringla in the beginning of the 13th century, Cnut had a hard time getting people to accept him. Everything would indicate that Cnut was obliged to resort to mainly Scandinavian warriors who came from regions with former Danish connections and perhaps warriors from the Dane law, an area in north-eastern England, in order to get trustworthy troopers. According to an agreement between the English king, Alfred the Great, and the Danish chieftain Guthrum in ca AD 880, Danish people were allowed to settle there. However their loyalty to Danish kings more than 100 years later may have changed.

Among the officials who remained in service with Cnut was the archbishop of York, Wulfstan, who had a determining influence on legislation. Perhaps he considered that he could reduce the misery of the English people in this way.

As early as the beginning of the 1020s, law codes were issued in the name of Cnut. They contain both church and secular regulations. The church laws are almost identical with the laws of earlier kings but the secular regulations (Cnut II) contain some important new features. They begin by explicitly prohibiting heathen practices (taken from Whitelock):

5. And we earnestly forbid every heathen practice.
5.1. And it is heathen practice if one worship idols, namely if one worships heathen gods and the sun and the moon, fire or flood, wells or stones or any kind of forest trees, or practises witchcraft or involving death in any way, either by sacrifice or divination, or takes any part in any such delusions.

This is a description far from the Scandinavian heathen Pantheon who is described by Snorre Sturlason but reminds us of what the Byzantine commander Procopius writes after AD 500 in his account about the manner and customs in Scandinavia.

Apparently Wulfstan found it necessary to set down these regulations because of the spiritual state of the warriors in the thingalid and other units belonging to Cnut. Similar minute regulations cannot be seen in earlier codes even though England had been Christianised for 300 years. The Danish king Harald Bluetooth, grandfather of Cnut, boasts in the famous runic inscription at Jelling in Jutland ca AD 970, that he won all Denmark and Norway and made the Danes Christian (DR 42).

A bishop’s see had been founded in Skara in the nowadays Swedish province of Västergötland in AD 1015, in addition to the four already established in Denmark from AD 948. There were ambitions of establishing a common Christian organisation with its centre in Hamburg/Bremen in Denmark and Västergötland in the beginning of the 11th century.

The extent of the new faith among the population in Västergötland is not known. According to personal communication with Claes Theliander, the pre-Christian cemeteries had ceased to be used during the 10th century anyhow. We may assume that Wulfstan organised the baptism of all the members of Cnut’s retinue. Those who returned to Västergötland, perhaps the thegns accompanied by English missionaries, found a German bishop in Skara.

We know that the English had a strong influence on the early Christianisation of Västergötland. “Harða goða thegn” or “dræng” were in control of four out of five main roads through Västergötland. We also know that the German and English churches competed there and that the Germans finally organised the church until the national archbishop sees were established in the middle of the 12th century.

In Cnut’s law there are also regulations about “heriot” which originally entitled a lord to seize equipment or money of a deceased vassal so that his descendants could succeed as fiefs on the landed property (taken from Whitelock):

71.1. and of the lesser thegns: a horse and coat of mail and 80 mancuses of gold; and four swords and 200 mancuses of gold; and eight spears and as many shields, and a helmet unsaddled, and four horses, four saddled and four unsaddled, and four helmets and four coats of mail and eight spears and as many shields and four swords and 200 mancuses of gold; 71.2. and of the lesser thegns: a horse and its trappings, and his weapons or his healsfang in Wessex; and two pounds in Mercia and two pounds in East Anglia.
In three distinct areas in parts of Jutland, southeastern Scania and central Västergötland in Sweden the epithet "harða góðan" thegn respectively dræng occurs. The formula appears occasionally in adjacent areas. Those "harða góðan" inscriptions may be dated typologically to the first half of the 11th century.

According to the typology, which has been worked out by Professor Anne-Sofie Gräsland, they are classified as "Rak" (unornamented), "B-e-v" (i.e. the head is seen from a bird’s-eye-view) and "Pt 1" (i.e. the head of the runic animal seen in profile). According to personal information from Professor Gräsland the unornamented style may have still been used in the 1020s, and the Pt 1 and B-e-v flourished from the 1010s for a generation. The runic inscriptions are similar both regarding to content and style.

There are even two stones with identical inscriptions, one in Jutland and one in Ås, Västergötland (DR 127, Vg 112) raised over the same person. The titles occur in the Mälar region but never with the epithet "harða góðan". Instead Þegn is used as a proper name and the title is used in connection with the epithet "rottarr".

The connection between the inscriptions and the English king is in the epithet "harða góðan". "Góðan" has nothing to do with "goodness" but indicates some sort of relation. Most scholars agree in that the "good" apposition only refers to the king’s good men, his "hetwarthæ mæn", his dependants and his vassals. Good thegns are mentioned in English charters. "Harða" is meant to highlight the relationship with the king and may be translated as "utmost".

As usual in prehistoric conditions you may find other connections with those words in runic inscriptions. However the combination "harða góðan thegn" respectively "dræng" is never found outside the regions mentioned above.

My interpretation is that warriors from Jutland, southeastern Scania and central Västergötland applied for membership in Cnut’s forces and managed to join the thingalid with Cnut as their lord. They received no grants of land but kept their native landed property and their descendants boasted about their belonging to the thingalid on their memorial stones. This suggestion is contrary to a traditional belief that there was a King in Uppsala who ruled Västergötland. There are further indications that show that Cnut had influence even in the Mälar region.

Cnut’s forces had won the battle of Helgeå in AD 1026 against an alliance led by the Norwegian king Olav Diger and Cnut’s brother-in-law, Ulf from Denmark. Many scholars now consider the battle to have been fought in the Helgeå in Uppland close to Uppsala. In a letter AD 1027 Cnut declared that he was “king of all England, and of Denmark, and of the Norwegians, and of part of the Swedes”.

There are also several runic inscriptions both in the Mälar region and in other parts in Scandinavia that commemorate warriors who have been in England and shared the gelds, even Cnut’s geld.

Even now there is a runic inscription just west of Sigtuna mentioning a man named Gere “who in the West sat in thingalid”. This implies that Gere had joined the thingalid of Cnut, which had defeated the Uppsala king Anund, and that the descendants of Gere boasted about this on his memorial stone some 20 km from Uppsala.

The most important discussion about thegns and drængs is the one made by the scholars, Sven Aakjaer and K.M Nielsen, a few decades ago. After examining Scandinavian, English and North European sources, the former concluded that the Scandinavian thegns and drængs become followers of the king and were members of his hird. Nielsen did not agree because of the fact that the titles were not known from the hird of the Danish king.

However the extract of Cnut’s law above is evidence of the occurrence of thegns, and even Danish thegns, in the retinue of the English/Danish king, Cnut the Great.

I am quite convinced that if the inscriptions were found only in the realm of the medieval Denmark, nobody would have denied their connection with the Danish king Cnut. It is the inscriptions from the Swedish province Västergötland of today that pose problems.

Among scholars of early medieval Scandinavian history, quite a number today agree with me about the Danish connection in Västergötland during the Viking Age and early Middle Ages. A king of Uppsala had no means of ruling distant Western Sweden in those times.

Summing up, I stress the following:

- Thegn is a honorary title in England during Anglo-Saxon time.
- In Cnut’s law of AD 1022 there are detailed prohibitions of heathen practices and Danish thegns are mentioned among his closest retinue.
- Those thegns as well as their followers must have been baptised but their Christian temper may be questionable.
- Some twenty documents from Cnut are attested by persons with Scandinavian names of which some were thegns.
- Statements of Cnut’s thingalid are found in chronicles and on a runic inscription from Uppland.
• Runic inscriptions from the first decades of the 11th century, with the distinct formula "hār∂a go∂an thegn" respectively "dra∂g" exist only in three areas: in Jutland, south-eastern Scania and central Västergötland.
• The inscriptions commemorated the thegns and drængs of King Cnut who originated in those areas.
• Several other inscriptions from Sweden nowadays and occasionally from Norway commemorate participants in the conquest of England.

In the Viking Age there were no means of compelling warriors to take part in offensive warfare. Instead warriors from all over Scandinavia applied to serve the chieftains and kings who offered the best conditions for glory and booty. In the decades after the year AD 1000 it was undoubtedly the chieftains of Danish extraction who could offer the best conditions when they conquered England while, at that time, being the most powerful in Scandinavia.

Certainly there were no states in Scandinavia at this time. Kings had no nation-wide realms – only followers but their loyalties shifted. Only when the diocesan organisation, with the archbishop’s see in Uppsala, was completed in AD 1164 was it possible to try to govern the area of medieval Sweden. In Denmark and Norway this occurred some decades earlier. This is an example of heterarchy, which I have discussed, in my previous work.

Further reading:
English Historical Documents I. c. 500-1042, ed D. Whitelock, London 1979

About the author
Carl Löfving is a PhD and a lawyer. His dissertation Gothia som dansk/engelskt skattland. Ett exempel på heterarki omkring år 1000. (Gothia as Danish/English tributary land. An example of heterarchy around the year 1000 AD) was presented in 2001 and a summary was published in VHM 2001/4.
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Viking Market in Slite, Gotland

The weekend of May 14-15 marked another milestone in the Gotland Viking Island celebrations with a Viking market in Slite to celebrate the annual send-off of the Viking fleet. The students, parents and teachers at Slite elementary school had worked all winter planning and preparing for the market day.

The market was held on the shore of Vägume bay, a good hike from Slite centre, but offering plenty of room for the crowd of about 2000 who attended. We were able to browse among the stalls offering the traders’ wares; everything from Viking toys made by school children and exquisite jewellery, knives and felted woollen articles, to fresh bread and lamb roasted on a spit.

The sight of the four Viking ships moored along the beach and the excitement of the Icelandic pony race, with riders in period costume, provided a perfect authentic backdrop to the event.

These festivities were complemented on Saturday by an open house at the archaeological site of Spillings and the Viking farm under construction on the western outskirts of Slite, near Bogevik bay, which was quite probably an active Viking harbour in olden times, as well as the official opening of the Spilling hoard exhibition at the County Historical Museum in Visby on Sunday.

Text and photos: Luella Godman
How to make an early lute and rebecc

By Michel Bach, Ukranenland

In March 2003 an instrument-making workshop was organized and carried out by the musicians at the Ukranenland prehistoric village in Germany.

The idea of having a workshop had been growing for a long time and Ukranenland offered an opportunity to make it happen. Five musicians from different countries, for instance Poland and Chile, took part. They play mainly medieval music but had no experience in constructing instruments.

The workshop lasted for five days and almost the whole time we worked out of doors in the museum. The visitors and people from the daily newspaper thought it incredible that instruments could be made that way. The weather wasn't the best with wind and rain, but everybody was inspired enough to finish his instrument.

The tree trunks used, of birch - and poplar, weren't very dry. The trees had been cut down about 5 month previous and were spit up only 2 months earlier. That's why it was easier to work with the wood but we had to be careful so it didn't break during the process. We had this problem especially with two instruments, but it wasn't very difficult to repair them with glue.

Unfortunately we only had a very small number of special tools for the task, but thanks to good organisation and plenty of patience we were able to avoid problems.

Some days we worked for 10 hours and everybody was very tired by evening, but we had a lot of fun. The last day entailed the greatest effort and everybody was dying to hear the first sounds of their instrument, but there were still a lot of small time-consuming tasks before we could tune the strings.

We were all proud to be able to finish our instruments. The man from Chile even made two instruments, and he worked very quickly. They are not master instruments, of course, but they do look like original early instruments. We are sure that this won't be the last construction course and are now collecting ideas for the next one.
Viking-age music instruments

Most of the musical instruments from the Viking Age found in pictures and as excavation artefacts are bone flutes. We don’t know that much about string instruments. The Norwegian musician, Karl-Johan Gundersen from the Viking museum of Karmøy, made a very fine lyre, modelled on the one portrayed on the stave church portal of Hylestad*. It sounds great!

Some pear-formed instruments like the rebec (an early fiddle) and the quinterna (a small lute) are also known. The earliest representation of the rebec can be seen on the stave church portal. The lute was found as an origin 12th century artefact during excavations in Elblag near Gdansk (Poland). Several pictures illustrating ancient times show similar instruments.

How to make a fiddle and a lute

Both instruments are made the same way. There is a wide choice of wood: maple or cherry are possible as well as poplar or birch. The last two require less effort.

A piece of tree trunk approximate 60 cm will be carved and the inside must be flat. There we make a pencil drawing to trace the rough outline of the instrument. Now we can hack out the outline with an axe until it looks like a club.

Now it is time to make the resonance space inside the club. We can use a wooden hammer and a chisel, or, for the first big steps, a special axe (called tjäxlor in Swedish), which is quicker. Before you try to make an instrument this way, I advise carving at least one or, even better, several wooden bowls.

After you have more experience you will not be so likely to destroy the body at the last moment. The top will be made in pine, 3–5 mm thick. Don’t forget to make the sound holes before gluing it onto the body....

I’m sure the music played during Viking Age sounded richer using these instruments and not just bone flutes and drums.

Anyone who wants exact info about making the rebec can find it by visiting the following website:
www.crab.rutgers.edu/~pbutler/rebec.html

Contact:
Email: fidelmichel@gmx.de

* The stave church portal of Hylestad was located in a valley called Setesdalen in Norway. Unfortunately the church was demolished but the portal with the carvings is preserved and exhibited in the Historical Museum in Oslo. (Eds. note)
Kings and warriors
History and science

The “Nordvegen Visitor centre” at Avaldsnes, Norway, was officially opened by Queen Sonja, Friday the 29th of April.

From the exhibition.

Queen Sonja of Norway opened the Nordvegen Visitors’ Centre in Avaldsnes.

The Centre seen from above.

The Nordvegen Visitors’ Centre.
“A fantastic and exciting area” said the Queen, and she continued: “The history of Norway starts at Karmostrand, and Nordvegen is a good base for future research and excavations.”

The Nordvegen Visitor centre is situated not far from the medieval church at Avaldsnes, but it is “hidden” in the ground to prevent it from disturbing the church and the historic landscape. The entrance is made to symbolize Mimes bønn or “The well of knowledge” in Norse mythology and you will go down into the “well” to seek that knowledge in the exhibitions below.

The centre tells the story of Avaldsnes, the oldest Royal seat of Norway. Harald Fairhair, the king who unified Norway around 870, will be our guide through history. He will allow us to meet the chieftains, princes and kings who ruled at Avaldsnes from the Bronze Age to the Middle Ages. Some of these rulers we know from burial mounds, others we know from the Norse sagas and skaldic poems.

The exhibitions focus on communication, international contact and cultural influences from abroad. The archaeological material from Avaldsnes shows that contact with foreign people and countries has been a main feature for this area through the ages, and that the centre of power at Avaldsnes suffered alternate periods of prosperity and decline due to conditions in Europe.

The final meeting of Destination Viking Living History ended with a cheerful Viking dance – symbolic of the will of the partners to carry the network into the future. Destination Viking and its partners will survive and take on new and exciting tasks in the future!

Destination Viking Living History is almost history – the final ordinary partner meeting was held on Gotland, the Viking Island 2005, on April 20-24.

Hopefully, this is not the end of the Baltic Viking network, and plans for a continuation of Destination Viking are already in place and will be discussed in more detail at a November meeting at Gunnes Gård, north of Stockholm.

The final meeting naturally had a strong focus on summing up the activities carried out throughout the project period. Partners agree that the project has managed to address and develop a number of important issues concerning dissemination and marketing of Viking history and attractions around the Baltic Sea.

The project had as its main objective to establish a Viking Route around the Baltic Sea. The partners participating in the project represent destinations along this route. All partners have gone through a quality assessment and development process to improve the quality of their contribution to the route.

The prime focus has been on living presentations of history and archaeology by re-enactors in direct interaction with their visitors. Much attention has therefore been paid to didactics and to the quality of the environment surrounding the presentations: reconstructions of buildings, replicas of clothing, artefacts, jewellery, weapons etc., and the skills and conduct of the re-enactors.
For this purpose, quality assessment manuals have been developed, and all partners have done a self-evaluation of their quality status.

The Baltic Sea Viking Route will be marketed through a brand new book soon to be published. It will also be available on the project website: www.destinationvikinge.com.

The Viking route on Gotland

Gotland is well known for its medieval heritage, and the wonderful dinner hosted by Gotland Municipality was done in medieval style in a cellar at the backyard of the old Bishop’s residence in Visby.

Now, Gotland wants to focus more on its Viking heritage.

The choice of venue for the final partner meeting of the project was not coincidental. On the contrary, this year Gotland is promoting itself as Gotland Viking Island 2005. A strong focus has been placed on Viking-age remains and Viking-age history on Gotland this year. A number of very instructive and informative leaflets and brochures have been produced to ease access to the numerous Viking attractions and events on Gotland.

We had the opportunity of testing a small but important part of the Viking route on Gotland. We visited the Viking Village at Tofta, a site where the presentation of history is coupled with practical hands-on experiences of handicrafts and skills, accompanied by exciting Viking food, of course.

Village at Tofta is situated just south of Visby. Further south, we stopped at Paviken. Here, a number of Viking-age trading ports have been uncovered, and it also seems that a larger city was being constructed there when the Danes invaded and took over Gotland in AD 1288. The city wall surrounding the projected city is still visible, as are the foundations of the defence towers. The small church at Paviken is really only the chancel of a huge church that was being planned. Ruins of an older church are also visible close to the present church.

We continued on to Fröjel, where archaeological investigations of a large and important Viking-age trading place have been going on for several years.

From Fröjel, we headed eastwards to the prehistoric village of Stavgard. Here a number of buildings have been reconstructed to offer schoolchildren hands-on knowledge of history, crafts and other skills.

Not far from Stavgard, we visited the community of När, where the local inhabitants have decided to launch a new historical play based on the ‘snake woman’ motif found on several Gotlandic picture stones. They have built a large outdoor theatre with all facilities needed for a professional play. The play will be a co-production the professional theatre of Gotland, a local theatre group and the local history and folklore association. A Viking market will also be held near the theatre site.

In the middle of the island, the deserted farm of Fjäle has undergone a thorough excavation. At the farm there are ruins of Iron-age houses, but even Viking-age and Medieval houses. The complete cultural landscape of the farm is very well preserved, and replicas have been made of the medieval houses. The area also includes a pre-Christian cemetery.

The study tour was rounded off with dinner at the small village of Herrvik. Our partners from Ukrantenland, this time a whole small band of Viking musicians, entertained both us and all the other guests at the cosy inn, and most guests joined in a cheerful dance to end the evening.

This dance into the bright Nordic night could also be symbolic of what we want to achieve in the future: a more or less eternal Destination Viking network.

Hang on fellows!
By Jörgen Johansson

Steering a Viking ship replica can be very demanding, requiring you to be constantly alert for backing winds and to parry walls of waves threatening to end your voyage. But when a gentle breeze plays in your hair, and the sun burns your cheek, then your thoughts start to wander away over glittering waves on a blue sea. You begin to understand aspects of Viking-age seafaring, and get an insight into life onboard. What comes to mind at the tiller?

On which side the wind blows
It is generally accepted that Viking ships had their steering-oar mounted on the starboard (right) side, hence the name. Later developments in shipbuilding replaced the steering-oar with a rudder, and this rudder was placed on the sternpost, where it has been ever since, albeit with a few exceptions.

A rudder placed on the sternpost operates equally well irrespective of which side the wind blows. A steering-oar placed on one side of the ship will, however, operate differently when sailing into the wind, depending upon which side the wind blows.

This behaviour is important to learn and remember when sailing such replicas. The phenomenon described below applies when sailing into the wind, or when the wind comes straight from the side. When sailing before the wind, there is negligible list and therefore no problems.

Starboard tack
When sailing with the wind from starboard, the ship will list to port (left). This causes the steering-oar to be levelled, lifted higher up in the water. It will therefore be less efficient due to the less water pressure on the blade at a shallower depth.

Furthermore, the steering-oar will be working in turbulent water from the long keel, due to the ship’s leeward drifting. Finally, when turning to port, the steering-oar works to some extent against itself: the water jet from the steering-oar hits the far aft part of the keel.

In certain circumstances these factors cooperate and can cause the ship to be very difficult to steer. In fact, the crew should always be aware that the ship, sailing on the starboard tack, might simply refuse to alter course. This is very likely to occur when sailing on the starboard tack at some speed.

Port tack
When tacking with the wind from port, the ship will list to starboard. The steering oar will therefore be lowered and go deeper into the water, thereby becoming more efficient.

There will be no turbulent water due to leeward drifting. The rudder goes deeper than the keel so there will be only very little water jet hitting the aft part of the keel when turning to port.

Not all of those sailing Viking ship replicas may have observed the above difficulties. The levelling effect on the steering-oar depends on the width of the ship where the steering-oar is placed. The wider the ship at this point, the greater the levelling.

The Äskekärr ship was a cargo ship, being proportionally wider towards the ends, than the longships. Smaller ships are narrower, and should not be running at full sail anyway in a rising wind.

Thus, we see that a larger Viking ship replica sailing with the wind from the starboard side can under certain
circumstances be expected to manoeuvre poorly. The same ship, when sailing with the wind in from port, has excellent manoeuvrability. This fact must have been very clear to the Vikings as well.

**Navigation rules**

Today's international navigation rules state, amongst others, that when two sailing ships meet on collision courses, with the wind from different sides, then the ship with the wind from the port side shall give way for the other ship. The other ship, the one with the wind from the starboard side shall retain its course. This is an old navigation rule known by all sailors all over the globe.

One might wonder why it was once decided that the ship with the wind from port was chosen to give way in order to avoid collision. Why not the other ship, the one with the wind from starboard?

Is it farfetched to suggest that the Vikings, when sailing with the wind in from the port side, gave way to a meeting ship with the wind from starboard side? And if so, would it be unrealistic that such a habit spread among the British Isles, and became a rule, a law?

The British Commonwealth grew, the British Navy and merchant fleet came to dominate the world, and English maritime law began to influence local laws. Is it possible that such a local navigation rule thereby became internationally accepted?

I know that the above is only a thrilling theory. But there are two facts in it that cannot be denied: the large Viking ship manoeuvred better when sailing with the wind in from port side, and - incidentally - today's navigation rules state that the sailing ship with the wind in from the port side, shall give way to the other.

Does anyone out there know the history of laws, and can elaborate on this?

**The steering-oar**

From a nautical point of view, a steering-oar mounted on the side is inferior to a rudder mounted on the sternpost. Then why did the steering-oar survive as long as it did?

No doubt the Viking shipbuilders could have made iron hinges for a sternpost rudder if they wanted to. Instead they chose the steering-oar, hanging on a tiny shaft. Why?

The steering-oar was mounted more or less vertically, extending deeper into the water than the ship itself. However the steering-oar could be loosened, and periodically mounted diagonally. Thereby the steering-oar will come higher up in the water, allowing passage in extremely shallow water.

Practical tests have shown that it is possible to sail in this way. Voersaas's steering-oar has two different holes for the tiller. These holes are made with different angles, possibly to allow sailing in very shallow water. The steering-oar can also be loosened and will then be hanging horizontally on the ship, out of the water. This is done just before landing on a beach, or when rowing in shallow waters.

A Viking ship can, with her lightweight, flexible and relatively strong hull, thanks to the steering-oar easily load or unload cargoes on a riverbank, or sail onto a sandy beach at high tide.

As the tide goes out, the ship will rest on the bottom, loading or unloading her cargoes. At next high tide, the ship can leave again. Furthermore, a ship with her steering-oar hanging horizontally (or removed, for that matter) can be rope-towed far inland in very narrow rivers, load or unload, and then be towed BACKWARDS back to open water without having to be turned around.

This has been tested practically. Remember that the steering-oar always goes with a nicely rounded-up keel and stern, allowing the ship to be towed backwards without getting stuck on her deepest part.

**Judging Viking-age shipping**

Today, when we judge Viking-age shipping, we believe that cargoes have been transhipped from smaller coastal boats to ocean-going ships. If this is at all true, then how was the ownership of the cargo regulated?

Imagine the benefits of sailing, and towing the ocean going ship as far up a river as she can be safely afloat, load or unload, and then towing her backwards until she can be turned around for sailing.

To conclude: to my mind, the reasons for choosing the steering-oar before the rudder, were the ability to access shallow and narrow waters, and the handiness of the ship when NOT sailing. This ability reduces, or excludes, the need for piers and quays, i.e. what we call ports nowadays.

**About the author**

Jörgen Johansson is one of the founders of Sällskapet Vikingatida Skepp, who have built the Viking-ship replicas, Vidfamne (the Äskekärr ship) and Starkodder (Fotevik s). He is also one of the captains on these ships. Professionally, Jörgen is the site manager of Ale Vikingagårds.
Saga

A novel of Medieval Iceland

The "Saga of the People of Eyri", on which the novel Saga is based, was first recorded around 1270 AD, by an unknown author. Like the other sagas, this novel mixes facts with elements of fantasy, such as the ghosts and elves that were a part of the early settlers’ pagan life.

Saga is a rich historical novel about the first Icelandic settlements and tells the story of the savage rituals of feud and sacrifice brought by the settlers from their Norwegian motherland as well as their new, competing beliefs in a democratic legal assembly and a code of restraint.

When Thorleif, the Viking, trades his family lands to spite his son Arnkel, the ruthless Norse chieftain vows to regain them at all costs. Robbed of his rightful inheritance, Arnkel begins a venomous feud with his neighbours and with rival chieftain Snorri, a lawless dispute destined to end in betrayal and death.

Janoda’s characters are eloquently depicted by their passions and pagan beliefs brought to life in a tale over a thousand years old.
The author, Jeff Janoda, has spent nearly a decade researching the medieval period in Northern Europe and this is his first novel.

Boken om Vikingarna

(The book about the Vikings)

Archaeological excavations during the last 20 years in Russia and Ukraine have increased the scientists’ knowledge. These new observations as well as thrilling facts about the Vikings’ colonies in Greenland and Canada are popular scientifically presented in Boken om Vikingarna. The book is based on archaeological and historical facts as well as research about Vikings.

Sometimes the Viking astonished their surroundings with a democratic form of government and with women in strong positions. The Vikings were good organizers, a pre-condition to succeeding with the wide-ranging expeditions. Furthermore they were good engineers and incredible shipbuilders. How did the people from other cultures respond to Vikings? Some of them wrote it down. Read their own words!

Boken om Vikingarna was first published in 1998 and is available only in Swedish.

The author Catharina Ingelman Sundberg is a historian and journalist.
Ragnarók – Odin’s World

In all societies and at all times, religion has played an important part in the way the surrounding world is understood. This exhibition may give the visitor an insight into and understanding of what it means to a person’s life to belong to a culture with a different world-picture and concept of life.

The most visible religious manifestations are the daily acts and the celebrations taking place during the year. But religion is also an important basis for the structuring of society, for the perceptions of right and wrong, and for an individual’s understanding of himself and his surroundings. The special exhibition at Silkeborg Museum focuses on the religion and beliefs of the Iron- and Viking Ages; a period in history which we today see as our roots, peopled with our ancestors.

This exhibition will allow us to sense the pagan world, a world spiritually different from ours. Today there is a rising interest in pagan religion. As archaeologists, we believe we have an obligation to inform the general public of what is known about pre-Christian pagan religion in order to prevent false myth-making and misunderstandings.

The opening
The exhibition will open on Friday, 1 July 2005 with the attendance of an invited audience. The Irish poet and Nobel laureate Seamus Heaney will make the inaugural address, and Queen Margrethe of Denmark will grace the opening with her presence. The exhibition will be open to the public daily from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. from Saturday, July 2 until Sunday, October 30, 2005 (last opening day).

Partnerships
Silkeborg Museum is setting up the exhibition in co-operation with various researchers, among others, Professor Dr. Torsten Capelle, Universities of Münster and Lund, assistant professor Jens Peter Schjødt, Institute of Comparative Religion, University of Aarhus, and with the National Museum of Copenhagen. A large number of treasures are on loan from Statens Historiska Museum in Stockholm and the Nationalmuseet in Copenhagen. Lunds University’s Historiska Museum, Archäologisches Landesmuseum Schleswig, Manx National Heritage, Isle of Man, Kirkby Stephen Parish Church, Cumbria, St. Andrew’s Church, Middleton Yorkshire, and a number of Danish museums are co-operating with loans from their collections.

The Purpose of the Exhibition
The exhibition will be built up around archaeological, original artefacts: representations of the gods; artefacts thought to be attributes to individual gods; remains of cult buildings and cult activities; picture stones and runic stones; as well as graves illustrating religious practices and beliefs. The artefacts vary in size from miniatures and small jewellery to large picture stones. The interpretation of these finds are supported by written sources, which – all...
source critical questions considered – are
an invaluable help to understanding the
pre-Christian religion and concepts.
Sacrificial deposits reflect religion; the
large weapon sacrifices and the finds from
pagan cult houses immediately come to
mind, but there are also the less
spectacular finds from everyday life:
offerings made for the construction of a
house, placed under doorsteps, house sills,
or laid down at fords and bridges, or
beside roads.
Apart from the many original artefacts,
the museum will construct a copy of a
ship setting in the garden to show an
example of an important type of grave
from the Late Iron Age and Viking Age.
Today we know about the conversion to
Christianity and Norse mythology from
remains of the Viking Age and from
Norse sagas and poetry transmitted
through the Icelandic texts. The
exhibition will trace Odin/Wotan and the
other named gods back in time as far as
we believe is possible. The geographic
extent outside Scandinavia and northern
Germany goes west to the British Isles and
Iceland and north to the Viking
settlements in Greenland. Today we
recognise and still use the names of the
gods in the names of the days of the week,
a loan from the classical world made by
comparing and translating the
Greek/Grecian and Roman gods to the
Norse and Germanic gods. We still use
personal names and place names that even
today refer to the ancient gods and their
cult.
For centuries Norse and Christian
religions were practised side by side. Many
archaeological finds
point to this fact, the runic
inscriptions bear
testimony to this, and the sagas
tell us of the
tensions between heathens
and Christians, not just in the
society, but also within families.
The outlooks on life embraced by
paganism and Christianity are widely
different. The pagan concept of soul, the
ideas of justice, of the importance of
family and lineage, and the individual’s
obligations towards his family and society
were quite different to what we regard as
natural and self-evident today.

**Target Group**
The exhibition addresses itself to the
general public, that is, to those who are
interested in religion and history and
perhaps already have a certain knowledge
of prehistory as well as to visitors who
come in search of an aesthetic experience.
The visitors who come in idle curiosity
will be able to profit from the exhibition,
as will the youngsters whose interest in
mythology is based on Warhammer games
and The Lord of the Rings.
This is a unique chance for everybody
who is interested in archaeology, history,
mythology, or simply interested in looking
at beautiful artefacts crafted with great
skill. There will be activities for children
during the exhibition.

**Three Exhibitions**
The coming exhibition is a follow-up on
the two previous international exhibitions
at Silkeborg Museum: “Face to Face With
Your Past” in 1996 and “Gods of the Bog
– Facing Wood” in 2001. The sequence of
exhibitions will thus be a trilogy – not
just due to their number, but also with a
view to their subjects.
The first exhibition showed the people
of the bog and gave an explanation to the
reasons behind them becoming ‘bog
people’. The second exhibition showed
the gods of the bog, those gods to whom
many of the bog people may have been
sacrificed. Some of these gods showed
characteristics pointing towards named
gods known from late Iron Age and
Viking religion. The exhibition received
the prize of ‘Museum of the Year’; the first
time the prize was awarded.
This third exhibition will show the
religion, the cult of which ended at the
conversion to Christianity, but whose
beginning we sense in the presence of the
bog people and their gods.

For further information visit the website:
www.silkeborgmuseum.dk

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All photos credit to Silkeborg Museum
and the National Museum of Denmark.
2005 will be the Year of the Viking on Gotland, Sweden, here are some of the events:

Fröjel
June 27 - August 13
International courses with archaeology students from all over the world. Guided tours of the excavations. Café and exhibition of the finds that have been discovered in recent years in Fröjel. Children's archaeology. Don’t miss the exciting theatre “The Crystal Eye” about uniting the gods in the year 1005. A Viking-age market begins two hours before the performances.

The Gotland Althing
July 2–3
At the Gotland Althing in Roma Kungsgård you will meet Vikings from near and far and find Viking-age glass, pottery, handicrafts, textiles and more.

The Snakewoman’s Child Opening night July 14
The drama is performed in När parish at the mouth of Närsån stream, and takes place in the mid-900s at a time of transition between belief in the Aesir cult and Christianity.

An historic journey In the Viking Village
July 22–24
Experience an environment of the Viking Age, Middle Ages and modern artisans and salesmen. Challenge your family in different Viking-age games and sports, enjoy a good meal, listen to legends and myths or try your hand at different handicrafts.

The Medieval Week
August 7–14
This year the internationally famous Medieval Week will focus on the transition between the Viking era and the Middle Ages. This transition will also be the theme of several lectures, as well as theatre and musical performances.

Tor, Freja and the others
Children’s theatre at the County Museum of Gotland.

For further information:
Phone: +46 498 299 834
www.vikingsgotland.com

Viking festival and play, Hafrsfjordur, Iceland
June
Just 1150 years ago, Viking settlers came to Iceland, making it the last country in Europe to be inhabited by man. During this annual festival at the Viking Village, modern-day Icelanders and visiting Vikings celebrate their Viking heritage with feasts, arts and crafts.
Phone: +354 565 18 90
Email: info@icetourist.is
http://events.britishairways.com

Hafrsfjordspillene, Viking Festival, Stavanger, Norway
June 2 – 5
With operas like Rygekongen, a Viking-age village with market, historical food, Viking ship activities and historical seminars, this will be a Festival for a large audience, paying special attention to children and young people.
www.hafrsfjordspillene.no

Viking Market, Arsunda, Sweden
June 4 – 5
At the Viking farm in Arsunda, in the heart of the province of Gästrikland, the land of iron, you experience cultural history in an exciting, informative and living way.
Phone: +46 26 29 01 16
Email: info@arsundaviking.se
www.arsundaviking.se

Viking Festival, Karmøy, Norway
June 8 – 12
On historic ground you can visit the Viking market at Bukkøy, take part in Viking celebrations, attend concerts and theatrical plays and participate in historical marches and Viking processions.
Phone: +47 52 85 75 00
Email: uji@karmoy.kommune.no
www.vikingfestivaleni.no

Photo: Helga Jonsson
events in summer 2005

Viking Market, Krunderup, Holstebro, Denmark
June 17 – 19
Traditional Viking Market with camp, handicrafts, musicians, Viking-age food and battle drills. Reconstruction and Viking era re-enactment.
Email: flemming@hartr.de
www.hartr.dk

Viking Play and Market, Frederikssund, Denmark
June 17 – July 3
The Viking play's story builds on Danish folklore, where more than 53 years of experience has given Frederikssund a good reputation. This year's performance is called Gorm & Thyra. The market will be open June 18 – 19.
Phone: +45 47 31 06 85.
Email: info@vikingspil.dk
www.vikingspil.dk

Viking Market, Høvåg, Lillesand, Norway
July 1 – 3
An annual Viking Market at Bronseplassen where the Vikings will sell their wares and a lot of activities will happen in the longhouse.
Email: bronze@online.no
www.bronseplassen.no

Jels Viking Play and Market, Jels, Denmark
July 1 – 17
Every summer for 27 years a Viking play has been performed in Jels. The chronicles are enacted in Denmark's most beautiful open-air amphitheatre with a view of the Jels lakes. This year's performance is called Hoder & Balder. The market will be open July 2 – 3.
Phone: +45 74 55 21 10
Email: Info@jelsvikingspil.dk
www.jelsvikingspil.dk

Sigtuna Medieval Days, Sweden
July 2 – 3
In Sweden's first town, founded in 980, you can enjoy medieval atmosphere and meet rune carvers, find out about calligraphy or learn how to become a great acrobat. You can also listen to ancient music and performances, participate in historical guided walking tours and buy handicrafts. In the museum, visit the Röde Orm exhibition.
Phone: +46 85 94 80 650
Email: turism@sigtuna.se
www.sigtuna.se/turism

Midsummer for Vikings, Foteviken, Sweden
June 24
Midsummer celebrations for Vikings. The Viking reserve will be closed for the public during Midsummer's Eve and open only for Vikings. All Vikings from near and far are welcome!
Phone: +46 40 45 68 40
Email: info@foteviken.se
www.foteviken.se

The traditional Viking Week with Market, Foteviken, Sweden
June 28 – July 3
This is the biggest Viking market arranged in Scandinavia. You will find entertainment by musicians, dancers, storytellers and high quality handicraft products. The market will be open July 1 – 3.
Phone: +46 40 45 68 40
Email: info@foteviken.se
www.foteviken.se

Hørspelet, Sagaøya, Herøy, Norway
July 1 – 3
Love and conflict, the rivals meet in armed combat in the Viking play, The King's Ring. Bold men and fair maidens in a pageant about the Viking Møre-Karl, Olav Haraldsson and Unn, the girl from Herøy.
Email: kongensring@horspelet.no
www.herspelet.no

From the Viking week on Birka.
Photo by: Jonas Eriksen
Viking Week, Adelsö, Birka, Sweden  
**July 7 – 10**  
Welcome to the demesne of Hovgården on Adelsö and re-live the Viking Age! Viking-age market, ancient music and performances, historical guided walking tours, theatre, handicrafts and much, much more!  
Phone: +46 8 560 514 45  
[www.vikingaveckan.se](http://www.vikingaveckan.se)

Viking Market, Gudvangen, Norway  
**July 8 - 10**  
The Viking market and Nordic Summer Games is located in a historic area were you'll find a grave mound and the remains of a stone circle. UNESCO describes the place as one of the most attractive nature resorts. During July 5 – 7 the market place will be open only for Vikings. The market lies at the head of the fjord, where you might see dolphins, seals and, if you're lucky, even killer whales!  
Phone: +47 57 63 37 07, +47 92 86 29 28.  
Email: gog.Viking@online.no  
[www.vikingealley.no](http://www.vikingealley.no)

The battle at Jämlucka, Eketorps Borg, Sweden  
**July 9 – 10**  
The castle will be under siege by Scandinavian warriors. Meet the Vikings in their camp and try out their weapons.  
Phone: +46 485 66 20 00  
Email: jan.olofsson@kalmarlansmuseum.se  
[www.eketorp.se](http://www.eketorp.se)

The Vikings are coming, Oerlinghausen, Germany  
**July 10**  
A Celtic living history group visit the museum, free admission.  
Phone: +49 02/22 20  
Email: archaeeorl@t-online.de  
[www.amf-oerlinghausen.de](http://www.amf-oerlinghausen.de)

Viking Festival Egge, Steinkjer, Norway  
**July 14 – 17**  
The festival is located on historic Viking ground at Egge, the home of Saint Olav’s defaters. The festival especially wants to communicate with children in order to encourage their interest in history and their roots.  
Phone: +47 93 06 10 91.  
Email: post@vikingeestival.no  
[www.vikingeestival.no](http://www.vikingeestival.no)

The Saint Olav Festival, Stiklestad, Norway  
**July 22 – 31**  
Stiklestad is best known for The Saint Olav Drama which is dedicated to St Olav and the introduction of Christianity in Norway. The medieval market during the festival is an experience for all ages and includes theatre, musical games, archery and physical activities for children.  
Phone: +47 74 04 42 00.  
Email: stiklestad@snk.no  
[www.stiklestad.no](http://www.stiklestad.no)

The Olav’s Festival in Torshavn, Faroe Island  
**July 29**  
A genuine Viking Festival held every year on July 29th, and attended by people from all eighteen Faroe Islands. The market and games take place just as it did 1000 years ago with a variety of events.  
[www.faroeislands.com](http://www.faroeislands.com)
events in summer 2005

Saltvik Viking Market, Åland, Finland
July 29 – 30
Festivities with handicrafts, food, axe-throwing, singing, acting and much more.
Phone: +358 1824259.
Email: johanna.enberg@tourist.aland.fi
www.aland-vikingar.com

Viking Market, Eldet, Norway
July 29 – 30
A traditional Viking market in the area called “Borg i Viken”.
Phone: +47 69 28 58 38
Email: ole.jo@czl.net
www.borgykingiag.no

Viking Market and St Olav Days in Sarpsborg, Norway
July 29 – August 8
For the fifth year in a row Borg Viking Club will host its popular Viking Market. Scandinavia’s top artisans will be at the event selling their wares. There will be an opportunity to take part in competitions, and the Market will be open July 30 – August 1. The main attraction on the St Olav Days will be a new version of The Sword, a new attraction this year is a “minifestival” in June, with activities for and with children.
Phone: +47 95 93 39 95
www.visitsarpsborg.no

Viking Market and Moot, Moesgaard, Århus, Denmark
July 30 –31
The traditional and impressive Viking Market takes place during the last weekend of July. From the booths they sell Viking-style jewellery and handicraft products as well as different types of food and refreshments. Visitors can try their skills in archery and other activities.
Phone: +45 89 42 11 00.
Email: moes-info@moesgaard.hum.au.dk
www.moesmus.dk

Viking Market, Borg, Lofoten, Norway
August 3 – 7
The northernmost Viking market with 24 hrs of sun every day! We tempt you with incredibly beautiful scenery, the longest reconstructed Viking longhouse in Scandinavia, no market tax and much more!
Phone: +47 76 08 49 00.
Email: vikingmuseet@lofotr.no
www.lofotr.no

Viking Market at Hornebore Ting, Hamburgsund, Sweden
August 5 – 7
A Viking thing (a local council and court) is again taking place inside the mighty castle rock in Rannike. Craftsmen, merchants, musicians and storytellers from near and far. All at a typical market where Viking re-enactments and festivals are mixed for three unforgettable days.
Phone: +46 52 53 41 555
Email: info@horneboreting.se
http://hornboreting.se

Viking Market, Hemmet, Denmark
August 6 – 7
The Vikings from home and abroad camp in Bork Viking harbour where they exhibit their skill in weaponry and celebrate with Viking food, handicrafts and activities for children.
Phone: +45 97 36 23 43
Email: museum@skjern-egyad-museum.dk
www.skjern-egyad-museum.dk

Vikings are building a boat on Birka. 
Photo by Bengt A Lundberg

Viking Festival Vilkatlakai, Kovarnis, Lithuania
August 13 – 14
The Rimbert Chronicle tells us about a great battle, which took place on the Apuole mound in the year 854. The king of Sweden Viking Olaf gathered a great army and attacked the Apuole castle. Apuole is located in the very north-western corner of Lithuania, surrounded by two streams and swamps and ventured by a wall of century-old oaks and maples. Everything is like it was 1050 years ago, no sign of modern civilization will be seen.
Phone: +37 06 01 60 840
Email: vykintas.motuza@gmail.com
www.bagritt.ires.pl

Viking Market, Hobro, Denmark
August 13 – 14
An old Viking town with a Viking fortress, a Viking village and a copy of a longhouse, so Hobro has a lot of exciting Viking facilities! This year the event will be held on Slidehagen, a very beautiful area with surrounding hills.
www.run-vikingar.dk

Viking Market, Roskilde, Denmark
August 20 – 21
A Viking market will be held at Vikingeskibsmuseet in Roskilde.
Phone: +45 30 02 00
Email: museum@vikingeskibsmuseet.dk
www.vikingeskibsmuseet.dk

Vikings return to Serebrig Old Sarum castle, Wiltshire, England
August 22 – 29
A journey back to the Dark Ages. Explore an authentically re-created Viking longhouse and living history encampment. Experience the past with crafts, cookery and combat demonstrations. The week culminates with a spectacular battle displaying the might of the Vikings on 28 and 29 only.
www.visitsalisbury.com
In the 19th century Sweden saved a lot of Norway's cultural heritage by collecting a number of Viking-age treasures. Viking-age swords, other weapons, weaving equipment, sleighs, furniture and much more were brought to Sweden.

Artur Hazelius, the man in charge of the operation, collected objects from all over Scandinavia to make it possible for researchers from all over the world to come to the Historical Museum in Stockholm to study the Scandinavian culture. His plans came to nothing when the Second World War began.

It is very rare to find objects in such good shape today, says the curator Ulrik Skans.

Most of them dating from 600–1050 AD have been photographed so they can be used for scientific purposes.

More than 9000 objects have already been shipped to Norway and now another 2500 objects will be returned to the Cultural Historical Museum in Oslo.

Source: Svenska Dagbladet 2005-04-26
Ireland Campaign victory to re-route Waterford by-pass away from Viking site

The Save Viking Waterford Action Group (SVWAG) finally succeed: in February Minister for the Environment, Dick Roche, published his intention to re-route the Waterford by-pass to preserve the Woodstown Viking site in Ireland. This decision marks the first time in the history of the NRA that a road will be re-routed in the interest of heritage concerns.

Since Sept 2004, SVWAG has worked hard to make the re-routing come true and now they want a full research excavation of the site, where the priorities will be based on academic grounds rather than road-building schedules.

If you want to know more about Woodstown Viking site visit their homepage www.vikingwaterford.com

Source: Socialist Worker

The Vinland Map to be studied again

Danish experts have recently returned from Yale University in the hope of shedding more light on the Vinland Map. The map, showing the part of North America believed to be what is today the Canadian province of Newfoundland, were found in the early 1960s. It seemed to be a map drawn from Scandinavian discoveries between 800 and 1100 and dating from 1434. Some people believe it is evidence that Vikings were the first to land in the Americas.

Experts agree that the parchment dates from 1400s but in the 1970s some specialists began arguing that the ink used contained ingredients that were only developed in the 20th century.

Forgery or not? The researchers from Danish Royal Library and School of Conservation hope that modern techniques developed in Denmark will finally be able to expose the truth.

Source: Svenska Dagbladet 2005-03-07

A tip from the editor: Read more about the Vinland map in VHM 2/2000 and in the book Maps, Myths and Men. The Story of the Vinland Map, written by Kirsten A. Seaver and published by Stanford University Press.

“High status” Viking site in Cumbria

Six graves with seven intact frameworks were found during an excavation in Trelleborg fortress in Scania in the south of Sweden. Experts believe that they have found the fortress’s Viking-age inhabitants. The area is a well-known grave field and excavations have been made there earlier. The remains are well preserved mainly because they have been buried in extremely calcareous soil.

Besides the frameworks the archaeologists also found iron knives, a comb, a bronze needle, a whetstone and clay vessels. Trelleborgen is believed to have been built during the second half of the 10th century, when Harald Bluetooth ruled Denmark and the south of Sweden. Six similar fortresses have been found so far, four in Denmark and two in Scania.

Source: Ystad Allehanda 2005-03-05

Archaeologist may have found the former citizens of Trelleborgen, Sweden

Steve Dickinson, the man in charge of the excavation, says that after a month of study, experts have a new theory that the site wasn’t a burial site after all. The dig has unearthed several metal objects, which indicate the site was used as a market place. More time is needed to determine its exact purpose and use and the British Museum has offered to help the local teams.

Source: BBC News 2005-02-01
Sangerfest in Mount Vernon, Washington, USA

Scores of Norwegian-American singers will descend on Mt. Vernon this summer for the 96th Annual West Coast Sangerfest. The festival is to be held on July 1, at McIntrye Hall, Skagit Valley Community College and a dozen choirs will participate.

Mount Vernon is a small city in the middle of a very large Norwegian community, which encompasses four counties in the northwest corner of Washington State. The Viking influence is found all over the area and several small replicas of Viking ships have been made.

Every year people gather to celebrate the fellowship of their cultural heritage and enjoy songs from the old county.

...and once again, a silver hoard is found on Gotland, Sweden

Archaeologists have recently found another Viking-age treasure on Gotland. So far about 200 Arabic coins have been found, but it is possible that the treasure may be much larger. A metal detector search of the find site produced promising results.

As soon as the authorities get permission a full excavation of the area will be carried out. The site still remains a secret due to the danger of illegal treasure-hunters operating on the island.

Source: Gotlands Allehanda in May 2005

The warriors of the Iron Age at Gamla Uppsala, Sweden

Gamla Uppsala is one of Scandinavia's most remarkable sites of prehistoric remains. Since the building of the three royal mounds 1500 years ago, the site has fired people's imagination. This is the place where the Kings of Svea ruled and it is the realm's most distinguished cult place. In the shadow of the majestic mounds we can glimpse ancient figures and events. The theme in Gamla Uppsala this year is the Iron Age's war ideal. – Welcome to where Vikings, kings, guards, artisans and common folk from Iron Age are given new life!

The museum will be open daily from May 1–August 31 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

For further information:
www.raa.se/olduppisala
Email: gamlauppisala@raa.se
Phone: +46 18 23 93 00

Århus older than believed

Excavations in the city of Århus, Denmark show that Aros – the town by the river mouth – was founded around 850, almost 100 years earlier than previously believed. New finds show that, from having been a seasonal market place, the town grew and became a permanent town by the end of the 10th century.

The man in charge of the excavations, Lars Krants Larsen from Mosegaard Museum, relates that they found remains of a two-meter wide ditch, dated to 850, along the river. The ditch was refilled in 870 and the area was then used for settlement, with all the house gables facing the river. A similar ditch has also been found in Ribe.

Source: Århus Stiftstidende 2005-04-20

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

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