Dear Readers,

In this last issue of the year, we are happy to present you with many interesting articles, among them the second instalment by Alexandra Sanmark, penetrating the strategies of conversion in the Viking Age. Here she discusses how the worldly and religious powers worked together using legislation and regulations to transform everyday life into a Christian lifestyle, more similar to the rest of Europe at that time.

The Destination Viking projects will soon be transformed into new projects. Before that, several of the Sagalands’ partners are presented in this issue – welcome to partake of reports and stories from L’Anse aux Meadows in Canada, as well as Shetland, Orkney, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

And while you are touring around, make a stop in Viking-age Latvia also featured in an extensive article this issue.

Here I would also like to take the opportunity to thank all of you readers who have contacted us with encouraging acclamation during the year. For example, some readers mean that VHM is their primary source for all things Viking and another reader wrote that VHM is a success in building bridges between the more traditional archaeology, experimental archaeology and re-enactment.

Well, it is certainly very pleasant to receive this appreciation – because building bridges between researchers and interested laymen has always been one of our primary objectives in producing Viking Heritage Magazine!

Yours faithfully,

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Editor

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**Words of Wisdom**

A small hut of one’s own is better,  
A man is his master at home:  
A couple of goats and a corded roof  
Still are better than begging.

From Hávámal  
(Words from “The High One”)

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About the front page

Typical Gotlandic brooch for smaller tools. Photo Raymond Hejdström. Read more on page 8–9.
An important part of rulers’ wish to create a Christian society was the introduction of Christian legislation. Through a comparative study of laws in different geographical areas it is clear that rulers and clerics from the early stages of conversion tried to enforce at least five Christian practices. These were the observance of fast and feast days, baptism, churchyard burial and Christian marriage regulations.

The earliest Norwegian laws
These five practices will be discussed through the ecclesiastical regulations in the earliest Norwegian provincial laws, i.e. the laws of the Gulathing, the Frostathing, the Borgarthing and the Eidsivathing.

The dating of these laws has been discussed by many scholars, as the earliest complete manuscripts date from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Despite this, it is clear that they all contain regulations that derive from various time periods. The chapters that will be referred to in this article have been dated to the first 150 years of Christianity in Norway, i.e. c. 1020–1150.

It is important to remember that the laws contain the regulations that clerics tried to introduce. It is very difficult to establish how far they succeeded in actually enforcing them. It is however interesting to note that the laws include a detailed system aimed at making sure that the regulations were followed.

As an example it can be mentioned that a priest was obliged to inform his parishioners of approaching fast and feast days. He should therefore send out a kind of wooden calendar on which all such days were marked. This calendar was then sent from farm to farm according to a predetermined route.

Fasts and feast days
I will now show how rulers and clerics attempted to enforce the observance of the Christian fasts and feast days. Fasting had been seen as an important virtue from the time of the earliest Christians. This practice had its roots in the Bible, where people are reported to have fasted for various reasons, such as to repent and to express their devotion to God.

The practice of fasting gained increasing importance during the Middle Ages. In this period, theologians argued that fasting was a way of expiating sin. This view reaffirmed the fasts as times of mourning, sorrow, and self-denial.

Medieval theologians wished to...
distinguish more clearly between the profane and the sacred areas of life. They therefore emphasised the idea that Christians needed to prepare themselves, e.g. by fasting, before they could take part in religious ceremonies. The conception that the prayers of those fasting would rise to heaven, while the prayers of the satisfied would sink to the ground, became widespread. All these factors contributed to the increased significance of fasting, not only before communion, but also throughout the liturgical year.

The medieval seasonal fasts were subject to variation over time, and also varied slightly between different geographical areas. The most common fasting seasons were however Lent, the Rogation Days, the vigils of major feast days, as well as every Friday.

Lent covered the weeks before Easter and was one of four periods of abstinence called Quadragesima. The other Quadragesimal fasts took place in the weeks leading up Christmas, to the day of John the Baptist, and to Assumption Day.

The Quatember fasts consisted of four three-day fasts spread over the year. The Rogation Day fasts took place on the three days preceding Ascension Day.

These fasts are all included in the Norwegian laws, although some appear under local names. In diagram 1 we can see that Lent, the Gang days (i.e. the Rogation Days), Vigil fasts, Imbrudagar (i.e. the Quatember fasts) and the Friday fasts covered a total of 96 days. If the population adhered to these fasting regulations, they would have fasted nearly one third of all the days in every year.

A fast lasted until three pm. Thus it was after this time that the population would have been allowed to eat their single meal of the day. These regulations concerned everyone who was over the age of twelve and in good health. A population who made their living by manual labour must have found the requirement that they work without food until three pm for one third of year very difficult to live up to.

Variation of food restriction
The dietary regulations during the fasts were subject to variation. According to Ancient Christian teachings, only complete abstinence from food and drink was approved as ‘real fast’. However, during the Middle Ages, the fasting requirements were relaxed.

From the seventh century, a variation of food restrictions that went under the name of abstinentia emerged. These restrictions mainly included abstinence from what is now termed ‘red meat’. The consumption of fish and shellfish was thus allowed during many fasts.

There were also different versions of ‘semi-fasts’. As a result wine, fish, fowl, egg and milk products began to be allowed during many seasonal fasts. By the thirteenth century, this relaxed observance had become widely accepted.

In Norway there were three different types of abstinentia. The least strict form was the ‘non-meat fast’. During these fasts, the Norwegians were allowed to eat foods that contained fish, milk and eggs. A stricter type was the ‘dry fast’, which apart from all kinds of meat also excluded eggs and dairy produce. The strictest type was the ‘water fast’ when only the consumption of bread and salt was allowed.

Diagram 2 shows that the largest potential impact of these regulations on the diet of the population was the exclusion of red meat from meals 93 days of the year.

Regulations during the year
Rules and clergy also tried to enforce the other three Quadragesimal ‘fasts’, which in Norway were called gagnföstur. During these periods there were no dietary restrictions. Instead weddings and sexual relations were prohibited.

Diagram 3 shows that through the introduction of all the seasonal fasts, rulers and clergy attempted to regulate almost 41% of the year.

In addition to this, rulers and clerics also tried to enforce the observance of Sundays and feast days. Diagram 4 demonstrates that after the introduction of Sundays, feast days and fasts, only 33% of the year remained which clerics did not try to regulate.

As a general rule, Norwegian laws prohibited the performance of all types of work on these days. Every Sunday and a number of feast days began as early as noon on the preceding day ‘when a third of the day remains’, and lasted until dawn the following day.

This means that the population was prohibited from working during almost one quarter of the days in a year. And on 70% of these, work was prohibited starting on the afternoon of the preceding day. It is thus evident that the introduction of Sundays and feast days is likely to have caused complications e.g. during harvest time, and to procuring food by hunting and fishing.

Exceptions were made for particular feast days, when the population was allowed to carry out necessary tasks, such as tending their livestock. Such rules however only applied to very few days, for example at certain times during Christmas and Easter.

One such example is found in the law of the Frosthunding where it is stated that Pope Alexander III (1159–81) had agreed that ‘with respect to the herring fishery in Norway… one may fish at any time when the herring seeks the shore except on the days of the highest rank’.

Major reasons for regulations
There seem to be two major reasons why regulations regarding fast and feast days,
baptism, churchyard burial and Christian marriage were seen to be crucial at the earliest stage of conversion.

The first is that the observance of these practices did not require the existence of a tight network of churches and priests; indeed in order to fulfil the requirements regarding three of these practices, neither churches nor priests were needed.

The laws of fasting regulated the day-to-day eating habits, the marriage laws aimed to control marital patterns, and the regulations regarding Sundays and feast days only stated that no work should be carried out on these days. At no time did these laws require the population to attend church. The system of sending out information via wooden calendars further demonstrates the methods used to inform the population without the use of churches.

Three of the provincial laws regarding baptism stated that children should be baptised in church. The population was however given one year to baptise their newborn, before any serious punishment would be imposed. Moreover, if no priest was at hand an ordinary person was allowed to baptise a child. This could take place in other locations than in church.

The Gulathing Law even included a description of how to perform a baptism. This law stated that if a child became ill and no priest could be reached ‘...the men who
are bringing the child shall give it a name and plunge it into water, speaking these words over it: I baptize thee…’

Churchyard burial
The regulations regarding churchyard burial stated that all dead bodies should be brought to a churchyard within five days, although allowances were made for people who lived far away from a church.

It is clear that some members of the population were buried in churchyards from the early stages of conversion. On Voøy on the northwest coast of Norway, excavations have revealed two churchyards that came into use between c. 900 and 1000. Another such example is provided by the churchyard in Gamlebyen (Oslo), which dates from c. 980-1030.

It is however unlikely that there were sufficient churchyards for all members of the population, so this requirement might therefore have been difficult to fulfil.

Scholars have demonstrated that there seem to have been at least two alternative ways of Christian burial. The most common solution was to use specific areas of the traditional burial grounds. This is suggested by finds of ‘characteristically Christian’ graves in the latest phases of pre-Christian cemeteries identified both in Norway and Sweden.

At Stav and Hässelby (Uppland, Sweden), the possible Christian graves were often located in the outskirts of the cemeteries, and marked by rectangular stone-settings. It has been suggested that such areas may have been consecrated by the erection of stone crosses or rune stones decorated with crosses. Some of the pre-Christian burial grounds in Uppland seem to have been used for Christian burial even into the twelfth century. Valsta outside Sigtuna is one such example.

Another alternative to churchyard burial seems to have been demarcated Christian cemeteries without churches. Indications of this practice have been seen in Anglo-Saxon England.

There is both written and archaeological evidence to suggest that cemeteries without churches also existed in Scandinavia. The Gulathing Law suggests that that churches were sometimes erected on ground that had already been consecrated. In a chapter that deals with the consecration of churches it is stated that ‘if in any case the site is hallowed but the church is not, [consecration] shall be bought from the bishop’.

Two burial grounds at Birka (Uppland) and Säntorp (Västergötland) are possibly such examples from Sweden. The graves in these cemeteries all bear Christian characteristics and were placed very close together. In pre-Christian cemeteries, graves were normally spread over larger areas. The proximity of the graves at Birka and Säntorp has been seen to suggest that burials needed to be kept within an area that had been consecrated for burial.

Transforming everyday life
I will now turn to the second reason why the regulations regarding the observance of fast and feast days, baptism, churchyard burial and Christian marriage were introduced from the earliest stages of conversion.

It appears that these practices were intended to transform traditional everyday life into one of a Christian nature. We have already seen how the laws concerning fast and feast day regulated daily life. Altogether the practices regulated work, free time, eating, choice of marriage partners and sexual relations, i.e. almost all areas of life at the most basic level, from birth to death.

Conversion through the introduction of the Christian calendar seems to have been an established missionary strategy, as these particular regulations exist in most of the laws included in my study.

Pope Leo I (440–61) seems to have been one of the forerunners. In his sermons to the Romans he showed a strong concern to draw them into the rhythm of the Church’s public worship. Leo laid special importance to almsgiving on particular days, seasonal
fasting and daily worship. This strategy was emphasised by a number of churchmen in subsequent centuries. Moreover the introduction of a new calendar had been employed on many occasions in later times in order to eradicate old habits and practices. One such example is the republican calendar that was introduced after the French Revolution. This consisted of ten-day weeks and removed all Sundays and Catholic feast days. Another example comes from the Soviet Union where Joseph Stalin brought in a five- and then six-day week in order to interfere with the population’s church attendance.

**A Christian lifestyle**

A most interesting aspect of the Norwegian laws is that all regulations that aimed to enforce Christianity included in this study are exclusively concerned with outward behaviour. No law contains any provisions that relate to the Christian belief of the people. This focus on Christian practices is clearly demonstrated by the Frostathing Law which states: ‘This is the first command in our lawmaking that we shall be obedient to Christianity and the church, the king, and the bishop, and that we shall live according to law and right behaviour and the correct rules of the church’.

This further illustrates that rulers’ and clerics’ primary aim at this time was to make the population follow a Christian lifestyle. The laws regarding the five Christian practices were decrees, not prohibitions. It seems that it was through these regulations that the harshest breaks with the old society were intended. The population was firmly tied into a web of detailed regulations throughout the year, and rulers and clerics may thus have been able to fight the various kinds of surviving pre-Christian practices more successfully than through outright prohibitions.

The laws make it clear that churches were not necessary for the population to follow a Christian lifestyle. Therefore, the number of churches in an area may not be the indicator of the spread of Christianity. Moreover a lack of churches should not be used as evidence of opposition to Christianity.

Finally, it should be pointed out that a person who fulfilled the requirements of outward conduct must have been regarded as a good Christian.

**Literature:**

*Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London and Ronceverte 1986)

Fletcher, Richard. *The Conversion of Europe. From Paganism to Christianity* 371–1386

**New find in Sweden**

**Crucifix from the 10th century**

An early example of Christianity in Sweden has recently been found in Västena, Sweden. In archaeological excavations of a Viking-age grave, dated to the 10th century, parts of a crucifix have been discovered. Two outstretched hands are preserved, and on one of them the ropes on the arm that tied Christ to the cross are visible. The crucifix is made of bone or horn.

The grave contained cremated bones of one individual, probably a woman according to the typical women's objects found in the grave. Besides jewellery there were also some Arabic coins as well as a great number of animal bones including horse teeth, which makes this grave rich and comparable with the graves in the Viking-age town of Birka.

The grave is sensational – the woman was buried in accordance with a heathen tradition but together with a Christian object. With other words it is an example of a grave from the early phase of the conversion period in Sweden.

**Source:** [Corren.se](http://www.corren.se)
The key

– a practical object and symbol of power

BY MALIN LINDQUIST

The key – a historic object

In the collections of the County Museum of Gotland and the Historical Museum in Stockholm, Sweden, there are more than 100 keys from the Gotlandic Iron Age, all of different sizes and designs. The purpose of this article is to present just one category of prehistoric artefacts, on the surface simple and common but also beautiful, useful and perhaps even symbolic objects.

The key is a “living proof” of an ancient human instinct – protecting one’s property. This protective instinct is one of the many phenomena in history of man about which we say “since time immemorial” or “as early as the ancient Greeks”.

The latter corresponds in this case to reality: Homer, who gave us immortal literature some 2 700 years ago tells us in the Iliad about the locked gates of Troy, impossible to overpower, causing the Greeks to build the famous horse to sneak into the town. In the Odyssey, Penelope opens a door: “and in her rounded hand she took the hooked key, hammered artistically of copper, but its handle was of ivory”.

As always, one is tempted to say, the ingenious Romans developed the technique by using feathers and locks combined with an object, which rightly can be called a key.

The origin of the padlock is said to be in the Orient, where it was used by nomadic tribes to lock in their property. It is believed that the Vikings found them on the marketplaces far eastwards and brought them home. Why not? However this opinion is now changing. Lately the opinion that they were produced in the North has emerged (see VHM 2/2004). But still – their origin can be oriental.

Anyway, these kinds of padlocks worked in the same way until the beginning of the 18th century when the famous Swedish inventor, Christoffer Polhem (born on Gotland!) came up with the so-called security lock, which could not be picked or opened with a false key.

The ancient key mentioned by Homer was more of a hook to use in a simple bolt of wood on the inside of the door.

For every lock there is a key

A padlock must have a key. On Gotland there are finds of keys from as early as the 3rd century AD. Lively contacts with the Romans meant this exquisite invention found its way to our latitudes. These keys are made of bronze and they are simple but elegant.

Somewhat later, during the 5th and 6th centuries, keys are found in Gotlandic “giant’s graves” i.e. foundations of houses, and, by their size, are mainly for doors and made of iron.

During the Viking Age there was a rich flora of different designs and sizes. The ones made of iron were mainly plain while the bronze ones often had some kind of ornamentation. Some of them are big enough for a house door or a chest, others are smaller for boxes and cases.

The kinds of simple wooden locks that were in use in our Scandinavian pantries and storehouses until recent times are indeed a heritage from antiquity.

The history of the lock is the story of more than four thousand years of competition between the ingenuity of the one who wants to protect his belongings and the inventiveness of those who have tried to dupe those who have locked themselves in and thought themselves safe.

(”...and Conan handed over the keys”. From the Bayeux tapestry.)
am pretty sure that most of the iron keys were forged and homemade. The smaller ones of cast bronze were probably made by "specialists", perhaps travelling craftsmen.

**Women and keys**

More than 90% of the keys were found in graves – most of them in women's graves. The rest were found in settlements. Almost without exception Gotlandic women wore a special brooch with chains to which, for instance, a key and a knife were attached. Sometimes the woman had two keys with her on her long journey into death. These keys can easily be interpreted as the symbol for her responsibility. Consequently it seems to have fallen on the woman's lot to protect house and home.

Later on, during medieval times, if a woman had achieved a position of esteem in society, it became established that she also received "the right to locks and keys". Interesting enough there is one key found in the grave of a child (at Birka there are seven children's graves with keys). In these cases the keys probably also have some symbolic meaning.

**Keys in mythology**

Keys are sometimes mentioned in our Scandinavian mythology. For instance when the God Thor was dressed up as Fröja (Trymskvida), he wears keys on his belt. It is also a well-known fact that the blacksmiths who forged the keys were skilled in magic.

The key symbolizes, as we have seen, responsibility or/and integrity but also power and control. On the Bayeux tapestry from 1060 AD a dramatic scene tells us how the Duke of Conan, after his castle was burnt down and he was forced to surrender, hands over a key to William the Conqueror. The text tells us: "ET HIC CUNAN CLAVES PORREXIT" which means "... and Conan handed over the keys".

In our culture, ownership is solidly established and theft still regarded as a crime. Just like private property, common property must also be protected. The difference between ancient times and today is that there are other means of protection nowadays.

Today the key has been changed into a little plastic card – hardly something to look at and enjoy as a beautiful, practical symbolic object.

**About the author**

Malin Linquist is well known to the readers of VHM as she has contributed several articles over the years. In her daily work she is the senior curator and responsible for the archaeological collections at the County Museum of Gotland. She has worked as an archaeologist for many years, mainly on Gotland.

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Vikings in Latvia
Throughout history, nation states have followed a simple set of guidelines for growth; a development of a system of laws, subsequent taxation and then warfare and conquest.

In the Viking Age the Scandinavians followed this same reasoning in their expansion to the shores of Latvia in order to obtain more arable lands and increase their wealth. Local tribes made life difficult for the Vikings and the conquests were not easy or sustained. They did however leave their influence which is very much part of today’s Latvian culture.

During the Viking Age, Latvia reached new levels of social and economic development through their associations with the Scandinavians. Important changes in agricultural development were the emergence of the three-field farming system, the bifurcated wooden plough and iron plough shares, cultivation of rye, the widespread use of the broad-bladed axe and the rotary quern. Developments of crafts and advances in working iron and non-ferrous metals were also seen.

Latvia – one of the Baltic nations
Latvia, as one of the Baltic nations, is fairly small, (168,350 sq. km/65,000 sq. miles) and throughout the centuries has been attacked and invaded by many other...
peoples: Swedes, Danes, Lithuanians, Poles, Germans and Russians.

During the Viking Age, Latvia consisted of five distinct cultural tribes; Kurlanders, Semigallians, Livonians, Selians and Lettgallians. Their boundaries, as shown on the map, changed over the centuries due to continual internal tribal conflict. It was this conflict, and an inability to unite against a common foe, that would later see them fall to the German Teutonic Knights and Christianization in the 13th century.

These tribal languages would, however, combine over the centuries (with the exception of Livonian) to make up what is now the Latvian language.

Within Latvia today there are still at least 10 different dialects and Livonian is on the list of endangered languages.

Politically, Latvia today is very democratic with over forty official political parties, reminiscent of the Scandinavian Althing and its political structure.

**Goods and coins from the Iron Age**

During the early and middle Iron Age, exports from the south-east Baltic included furs, timber, wax, honey and slaves. Among imported items were salt, tin, copper (bronze), silver, spices and silks.

**Active trade from the Viking world and beyond is evidenced from grave finds, which include glass beads, cowry shells, and coins.**

Among the coin deposits, Bohemian, German, Byzantine, Arabic, Anglo-Saxon, Danish, Norse and Danish/Norse imitations are found. The earliest coin is of Anglo-Saxon origin for Edgar circa 959. Of the more than 3200 coins found pertaining to this period, a large portion were worn as pendants and jewellery. The denominations meant little outside their sphere of origin and were retained and worn for their silver weight and worth, like 'oath rings' found elsewhere, denoting the wealth of the individual.

**Trading routes**

The Daugava (Dvina) (1200 km long/745 miles) was the most important trade route through Latvia.

From Birka, (the largest Swedish trading town until the 10th century) to the silver-rich area of the Black Sea and Constantinople it was an arduous
journey of 2600 km/1615 miles. This route did not seem to be used as frequently as the route using the Staraya Ladoga and the Lovat/Volchev river systems.

It has been suggested that the Swedes preferred to travel through their own colonies rather than risk foreign and possibly dangerous lands, or higher taxation, even if this detour resulted in adding an additional 800 km/497 miles to their journey.

The earliest Scandinavian presence in Latvia, was at Grobin founded circa 650, some 10 km/6 miles inland from the Baltic Sea. Its importance as a settlement and trading centre is comparable to other early Northeastern European towns like Helgo or Staraya Ladoga. Three of the eight cemeteries at Grobin are Scandinavian and from the over 3000 graves, direct links can be made to Gotland and the Mälaren Lake region near Birka.

Many of the place names near Grobin are of Scandinavian origin. The most unique find from this area is a Gotlandic-style picture stone, the first of its kind found on the eastern shores of the Baltic.

Viking artefacts are found continually upstream of the Daugava River into the Polotsk and Tur Duchies areas of present-day Belarus. These colonies, established around 980, were part of the Rus Empire that was founded in the early 800’s.

Written sources
These archaeological finds substantiate the earliest writings of Saxo Grammaticus.

Kurlandic Brooch.

“Nobles, our enemy is a foreigner, begirt with the arms and the wealth of almost all of the West; let us, by endeavouring to defer the battle for our profit, make him a prey to famine…. It is easy to oppose the starving. Hunger will be a better weapon against our foe than arms…. Our success in arms will be more prosperous if hunger joins the battle first. Let hunger captain us, and so let us take the first chance of conflict. Let it decide the day in our stead, and let our camp remain free from the stir of war....”

Hadinga Saga, Saxo Grammaticus – The History of Denmark

Kurlandic King Dorno is said to have made this speech to his men who were dreading a perilous war with Danish King Frodo in the 9th c. As the story unfolded, Dorno set fire to his lands but unfortunately later lost the battle and died after he fell into a trap set by Frodo.

Saxo Grammaticus recounts this history a few centuries later in his chronicle and his writings provide some of the earliest information we have of the history of the Baltic during the Viking Age. As is the case with most writings of this period there is a mix of historical fact, fiction and mythology, but the battle itself is one of historical record.

The sagas of ‘Heimskringla’, Icelandic ‘Olaf Tryggvesson’, Njall and Egil as well as the old Russian chronicles all mention contact with Estonia and Latvia. The chronicles of Livonia and the Rhyming Chronicle of Livonia have some references to the Balts but are primarily concerned with the Teutonic Knights and Christianization during the 12th and 13th centuries.

Battles
The Danes first colonized the eastern shore of the Baltic in the 9th century. Most of the legends supplied by Saxo are associated with the Danish raids of the 9th and 10th centuries: Ragnar Lodbrok (840), Hastings (853), Rorik (857 and 962) and the Norwegian-led Jarl Hakor (970).

The Kurlanders, renowned for their piracy, raided Denmark in the 11th and 12th centuries under the rule of Magnus (1041) and Svein II (1049). Danish church prayers often included the phrase “God save us from the Kurlanders!”

During the attempted Danish conquests of Kurland in 920 the Swedes under Egil Skalagrim renewed their interests in Latvia.

The Norwegian Royal Saga ‘Fagrskinna’, Snorri Sturlusons ‘Heimskringla’, Icelandic ‘Olaf Tryggvason’ and Egil’s Sagas and Rimbert’s ‘Vita Ansgari’ (865–888) make several references to Kurlandic and Livonian wars with the Swedes.

During the centuries when the Kurlanders decided not to continue paying tributes to Sweden, they were often reminded to do so by force.

Runic stones
Runic stones in Sweden also cite references to Kurland and Estonia. From a damaged stone found in Södermanland, the inscription reads: ‘Sigrid had this stone put up for her husband Svein. He often sailed to Semigallia in laden ship round the Domensnes’.

The Domensnes was the northern tip of Kurland, which was rounded entering the Gulf of Riga. At Ada, this passage was cut into a cliff face by the roadside: ‘Hermond had this cut for his brother Bergrid. He was drowned in Latvia’ (translation).

Kurland
According to Rimbert, Kurland consisted of five states, each with its own ruler (Kungs), religious leader, war leader and law court.

Sagas refer to Swedish warriors defeating over 7000 Kurlandic defenders in Grobin and then defeating an army of over 1500 at Apules. Other references cite tribute paid to Sweden of 1/4 kg (1/2 lb) of silver per warrior or 1134 kg (2500 lbs). This tribute was paid from the spoils of war when the Kurlandic navy defeated the Danes in 853. During the 800–900’s
the Kurlanders often fought with the Swedes against the Danes and Livonians.

The writings that are available to us regarding this history can never be entirely relied upon. The Kurlandic piracy, victories and pagan beliefs were not looked upon favourably.

Very little is known of the pagan religion in Latvia and its subsequent Christianization assimilated or eradicated much of the belief systems. Recent archaeological excavations of religious groves and detailed analysis of folklore, including over 60,000 songs (Dainas), have shed some light on the subject.

The Kurlanders were known throughout Europe as prophets, diviners, augurs and sorcerers dressed in monastic clothing. The Spanish in particular sought their prophecies.

Kurland’s population lived predominately near or in over 120 wooden hill forts, 70% of which were smaller than 2000 sq. metres/21528 sq. feet. Their cemeteries, most of which have not been fully explored, yield rich finds of artefacts and jewellery.

Jewellery
Despite their close proximity to each other, the Latvian tribes each retained their own distinct jewellery styles and motifs. Their designs were not greatly affected by trade with other cultures. Some motifs were adapted (as the introduction of animal motifs from Scandinavia) but this is a relatively rare occurrence.

The simple geometric designs only became more complicated and graphic in defiance of cultural intrusions. The mythological elements are moons, suns, stylized heads and eyes of snakes and snakes themselves, heads of horses, owls, ducks, birds as well as motifs of deer.

The basic designs change little from the Mesolithic period. Their religious symbols, owls, water birds, snakes and antlers are still well represented in the 8–11th centuries. Time has only perfected the motifs.

The geometric motifs common throughout Latvia are points, straight lines, circles, triangles, rhombuses, X-motifs, equilateral crosses, and swastikas. Their combinations and permutations were varied and were in sequences of 3’s or 4’s. These symbols developed around a concept of the Tree of Life, which is reflected in the verbal folklore (folk sayings, seasonal and work songs).

Besides purely functional design, jewellery served a magical or talismanic purpose to assist or protect its wearer. Many of the artefacts had multiple pendants or bells, which would draw attention to a person as well as frighten away evil spirits.

In very broad terms Selian artefacts are similar to Lettgalian; Semigallian artefacts are similar to Kurlandic (and Gotlandic); Livonian artefacts are similar to Estonian and Finnish.

The grave finds in Latvia are rich in bronze jewellery. Kurlandic jewellery from the 8th century includes tin and gold gilded bronze often inlaid with blue glass. As trade developed and local economies prospered silver jewellery became more commonplace.

Trade between Gotland and Latvia and Estonia is indicated by the findings of the same and similar artefacts in each location.

Men's clothing
Clothing, being the most fragile, is difficult to preserve and identify. Fortunately the soil conditions and quantities of bronze jewellery and ornamentation have preserved a substantial number of textiles in Latvia.

In very general terms, men's clothing consisted of an under-tunic, over-tunic, trousers made of either linen or wool and a wool cloak. Their calves were often wrapped by wool or linen leg wrappings, sometimes woven with metal rings in geometric patterns.

Footwear consisted of socks made by naalbinding, an ancient method of knitting, and leather shoes or 'slippers' that laced up the legs. In some parts of Latvia a similar shoe was woven from grass.

Over-tunics were often decorated with a tablet-woven trim patterned with the same geometric designs utilized in the jewellery. The 'Juma' and 'Zalktis' patterns also exist in tablet-braid finds found in Sweden.

Fabrics were dyed from plants and colours were muted by today’s standards. Headwear consisted of leather or woolen hats occasionally trimmed with fur and metal. A distinct style of men's tunic not found outside of Lettgallian grave finds feature the upper half of the tunic entirely embellished with bronze beads in geometric patterns.

Women's clothing
Women's clothing for the Livonians and Kurlanders consisted of full-length under- and over-dresses, often covered by an 'apron' held up by tortoise-style or round brooches. This style of costume is similar to Finnish and Scandinavian designs.

Women's clothing
The Lettgallian, Selian and Kurlanders consisted of full-length under- and over-dresses, often covered by an 'apron' held up by tortoise-style or round brooches. This style of costume is similar to Finnish and Scandinavian designs.

Penannular-style brooch found in Gotland, Estonia and Latvia. Drawing by Ainas Alksnes-Alksntes

The footwear for men and women is identical.

Hats or head coverings for women were uncommon, unlike nations that had been Christianized. Lettgallian 'nobility' however wore bronze headaddresses made of coiled spirals with chains that hung to at least the shoulders, terminating in tassels or bells.

The Lettgallian, Selian and Semigallian women's clothing consisted of an under-dress with an over-tunic and...
wrapped skirt. Woollen cloaks were often woven with bronze rings or beads in geometric patterns with bronze trim and or hanging pendants along the hems.

Elaborate neck pieces of amber, glass beads, cowry shells were very common as were multiple strands of bronze or silver chains holding toiletry articles and other accessories. On top of these necklaces, neck torcs, sometimes several, were worn. The Lettgallian and Livonian costumes appear to be the most heavily ornamented with bronze.

Weapon
Weapon artefacts are numerous in Latvian grave finds. Spearheads, axes, arrowheads, leather-wrapped plank shields with plain metal bosses and the occasional helmet. Weapon styles are the same or similar to those found throughout Scandinavia.

Sword blades seem to have been imported from the western Baltic nations and assembled locally. The Type Z sword is the most widespread throughout Latvia, with the T1 and T1-Kurlandic 5–7 lobed pommel sword more prominent in Kurland.

Most other sword types are found in small numbers. The Antennal-style sword pommel found in Semigallia and Kurland is not seen anywhere else in Europe. Metal work on sheaths for knives and swords are tribal specific but shapes have much in common with Scandinavian finds.

Ships
Very little has been found in terms of boat or ship artefacts, despite Kurland’s strong maritime presence. However there is a find approximately 20 km/12.4 miles, south of Roja, known as the ‘Devil’s Boats’; three boulder-strewn ship-hull outlines measuring 14 x 5 m. The ship outlines and a rock carving of a four-spoke wheel at Roja are oriented in a northwest to southeast direction.

These grave features, rare on the eastern shores of the Baltic are similar to finds in Gotland and Öland. Northwest of Roja there are several pictographs carved in rock.

Daugmale lies 22 km upstream from present-day Riga and has been referred to in the chronicles as the Port of Semigallia or Duna. It was one of a number of hill forts which lay every 20–40km/12–25 miles, along the Daugava. Its roads extended to Semigallian lands and to the east to Estonia and to Pskov.

Daugmale had a long history. Its fortifications were renewed approximately 14 times before Riga gained dominance in the 12th century. Over 16,000 artefacts have been found within its boundaries, among them a Viking bronze figurine of a man and three bronze horseback-rider figures.

More than 80 amber artefacts were found, 13 cut in the shape of axes and the remainder in a trapezoidal shape. The amber was collected from the western shores of the Gulf of Riga where it washed up on shore following storms. The deposits of Baltic amber that could be mined lay on the northwest shores of Lithuania.

One of the most interesting finds from Daugmale is a dolomite mace head ornamented with Gotlandic interlaced designs and runes. The remaining inscription reads “this mace head made by….” It is impossible to tell if this was produced locally.

Being a port city, excavations have unearthed numerous workshops and their associated refuse material. Within the graves, numerous weighing scales and silver ingots have been found.

Buildings and hill forts
Buildings and hill forts were of stacked log timber construction.

A rare find in Europe was the remains of a 9th century village near Cesis, Araisu Ezerpils, which was built beside a small lake and over the centuries had sunk into the marsh. In the early 20th century it was resurrected and rebuilt, giving us an accurate example of village construction. (See VHM 4/2002 ed’s. note.)

Other Viking Age artefacts
Other artefacts of the Viking Age in Latvia include drinking and blowing horns, bone combs and toiletries, pottery,
eating and drinking vessels and utensils, fishing implements and all tools related to the home, farm or workshop. These artefacts are similar or identical to those found in Scandinavia. Ornamentation and pattern variations denote the differences.

Musical instruments such as flutes and whistles and drums are common throughout. The Latvian kokle can be compared with the Saxon lyre and the 11th century Gusli found at Novgorod.

Conclusion
Many, including historians and cultural anthropologists, have said that by observing the past, we can ‘find’ ourselves in the present; and therefore foretell the future. Through this process we hope to learn from past mistakes and lead richer lives.

Scandinavian contact with the Balts during the 7th–11th centuries was brief yet its impact upon Latvia and Latvia’s relationships with its neighbouring states and the Rus had far-reaching implications. Studying it can provide a small measure of understanding for those interested in their own culture and its development.

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Boys’ find was part of a Viking hoard!

Twins Arthur and Teodor Kruze and their cousin Jesper, all five years old, were digging at the foot of a tree in the garden when they found some interesting toys. At first their parents thought the necklace with a dragon motif and the medallion were just some of the ordinary rubbish that boys usually collect, but when they found an ancient-looking brooch in the boys’ toy box, they realized that this was something else.

It turned out that the boys had discovered a Viking hoard, 1200 years old, in the back garden. This incredible discovery took place in Tromso in Norway, a town 250 miles north of the Arctic Circle. This is the first time this special kind of Viking jewellery has been found in northern Norway, according to a local archaeologist.

More artefacts have now been found, among them a silver cross, more jewellery and nails. Archaeologists believe that the hoard may explain more about Viking movements and settlement.


About the author
Talis Kivlenieks is a first generation Canadian of Latvian descent. He keeps his heritage and culture alive at his shop (Kalupe) in Toronto, where he makes reproductions of Viking-age jewellery. Talis is a founding member of TorVik, a Viking re-enactment group.
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A Vinland saga – Final meeting of Destination Viking Sagalands project at L’Anse aux Meadows

By Geir Sør-Reime

The Sagalands story
Readers of this magazine have been able to follow the new Viking saga, the work and experiences of the partners of the Destination Viking Sagalands project. Now the first part of the voyage is over. The project has run for three years, and the final partner meeting was held in Newfoundland, on September 16-22. But as is the case in most sagas, this is not the end of the Sagalands story!

Returning for a moment to the meeting in Newfoundland, this was a highly successful ending to Chapter One! The partners arrived in St. John’s at the southern tip of Newfoundland on Friday, September 16. The partner program started almost immediately with sightseeing etc., followed by a Viking fair at Pier 7 in downtown St. John’s on the Saturday. Again an immediate success, with partners dressed in Viking dress, assisted by Vikings from L’Anse aux Meadows and Norstead Village greeting visitors, demonstrating Viking crafts and skills, all accompanied by a programme of storytelling and music.

A number of local, provincial and federal representatives attended this and other events organised during the partner meeting. NORA, the Nordic Atlantic Co-operation has always taken a keen interest in our project, and co-financed our first planning meeting. Kenneth Høegh, President of NORA, and Kaspar Lythans, Secretary-General of NORA, both participated in the first part of the Newfoundland meeting. They have been very supportive of the project, and were now also investigating possible opportunities for further European-Canadian joint projects in the North Atlantic area.

Norstead Viking Village. Photo Rögnvaldur Gudmundsson

Destination Viking

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

Destination Viking includes a number of separate projects, currently the Destination Viking Living History (former Baltic Stories), funded by the Interreg IIIB Baltic Sea Region programme and the Destination Viking Sagalands project, funded by the Interreg IIIB Northern Periphery programme.

The project Destination Viking Living History has now come to an end, see VHM 2/2005, as well as the Destination Viking Sagalands project, see this issue. But this is not the end of the story as both projects will continue in new forms. In this issue you can read more about the plans for the future.

Sagalands new website

This autumn the Destination Viking Sagalands project has launched a new attractive and informative website. Enjoy a visit at: www.sagalands.org
Sagas and evidence
On Sunday morning, the whole group flew from St. John’s northwards to St. Anthony, the closest airport to the L’Anse aux Meadows site. A visit to the World Heritage Site there was the ultimate experience here.

As we all know, this was the place where Helge and Anne Stine Ingstad excavated the first European settlement in America. The place is probably identical to the base camp established AD 1000 by Leifur Eiriksson at the northern tip of Newfoundland. Its appearance and layout corresponds well with the descriptions given in the sagas.

On Tuesday evening, a giant Viking feast was organised in the reconstructed longhouse at L’Anse aux Meadows. The biggest attraction on the menu was no doubt the bear meat, which tasted delicious! Moose and caribou were also on the menu, as was salmon. Both at this feast and at every other possible opportunity, storytelling flourished. The group was also invited to a party at Norstead Village. The people there also led a workshop on Viking presentations and skills, and all participants could make their own leather pouch.

The programme in the Northern Peninsula of Newfoundland also included a public lecture by Birgitta Wallace, well known from this magazine and archaeological consultant to the L’Anse aux Meadows sod huts. Photo Rögnvaldur Gudmundsson
The Storyteller

BY DAVID COOPER

“He stands alone on the earthen floor, his face red in the firelight. He wraps his cloak more tightly around himself and, clearing his throat, he allows his eyes to sweep over the assembled crowd.

The story begins. First come the characters, the time, and the place as he leads his listeners into a different world. A world of heroes and monsters, of myths and legends. Then the subtle interweaving of the plot as the story unfolds. The moments of suspense, high drama, deep despair and sheer joy all mingle as the story gains a momentum of its own.

Now he moves, his arms thrown wide, his shadow painting dramatic pictures on the walls. The excitement builds, his voice rising and falling to match the tempo of the story until at last the climax comes. The audience claps its hands and stamps its feet as he takes a modest bow and returns to his seat for a well-earned drink.”

The scene described above could in truth be from any period during the last 2000 years. The art of the storyteller is an ancient one and despite the alternatives presented by modern technology is still alive and kicking throughout the world and nowhere more strongly than in the Northern islands of Scotland.

The islands maintain this strong tradition of storytelling and Davy Cooper and Laurence Tulloch from Shetland and Tom Muir from Orkney have participated in the Destination Viking Sagalands project in a successful attempt to form connections between the storytellers in the Northern Periphery area.

Strong traditions

The Shetland Islands are situated on the borderline between the Atlantic Ocean and the North Sea some 300 km or so to the North of Scotland and almost the same distance to the West of Norway. This location has encouraged seafarers from many periods to stop at the islands and to use them not only as a base but also as a “refuelling” stop for taking on fresh supplies and fresh crewmembers.

For a long period the most common sailors around the islands were from Scandinavia and Shetland still retains many place names and cultural characteristics inherited from the islands’ “Viking” past. Indeed the kings of Norway controlled Shetland until well into the 15th century and the relatively remote nature of the islands has allowed them to retain much of their Norse culture despite the best efforts of a succession of Scots overlords.

A Scandinavian language (Norn) was commonly spoken until well into the 18th century and traces of this can even now be found in the distinctive Shetland dialect still used by native islanders.

This is nowhere more apparent than in the islands’ stories and legends which reflect not only the influence and prevalence of Norse settlers but also their beliefs and superstitions.

Viking folklore and stories

The island of Unst has long been known for its Viking connections as evidenced by the extensive number of longhouse sites on the island. It is equally well provided for in terms of Viking folklore and stories.

King Harald Fairhair was said to have landed at Haroldswick on the island when he made his voyage to Shetland to clear out Vikings who were raiding the Norwegian coast as mentioned in Heimskringla and indeed local legend has him buried there in a location called, naturally enough, Harald’s Grave. That this conflicts strongly with all documentary evidence to the contrary has never been allowed to spoil a good story.

Local legend also has it that the Danish sea king Guthrum, scourgé of Alfred the Great and conqueror of half of England, was trapped in a cave on the island on his way to invade Britain. His rescue by a local chief’s daughter and later rewarding her for the service forms the basis of a highly entertaining tale whose veracity is supported by the existence of a cave named Gotrum’s Hole in a cliff face on the North West corner of the isle.

Some versions of this story also indicated that Guthrum assembled at least part of his fleet in Yell Sound before departing on his English adventure.
One of the last Viking stories
One of the last Viking stories set in Shetland also had its origins in Unst.

Set in the transition period between Norse and Scottish rule this is the tale of a delegation of Norse farmers who defied their new Scottish masters and sailed to the Scottish mainland to lay their case directly before the king. The Scottish laird at that period was Laurence Bruce who resided in Muness Castle and had a grim reputation for the subjection of these free men who had largely governed themselves under the Norse system. The story is interwoven with tragic deaths and forbidden love to add to an already explosive situation.

It is relatively rare for folk tales in Shetland to have such an obvious political origin but this perhaps reflects the deep resentment which many freemen felt at that time regarding the loss of their independence.

The Viking Unst project
The island is about to become the scene of intense “Viking” activity over the next few years as the Shetland Amenity Trust embarks on the ambitious Viking Unst project. Three longhouse sites will be excavated and a long house reconstruction undertaken.

The Viking ship “Skidbladner” will also find her final resting place as a static exhibit on the island.

There are plans to develop Viking trails and living history and as a result the wheel will no doubt come full circle once more and the saga poet will stand in the firelight in a Viking longhouse and entertain his audience with tales of heroes and monsters as he has done for the last 1000 years.

The first living history Viking farm in Russia

The first example of a living history Viking farm in Russia is now being built in Leningradskaya oblast, 16 kilometers from Vyborg, not far from the Russian-Finnish border. The farm, called Sengard, is a reconstruction of a settlement from the beginning of the 11th century with a mixed ethnic structure (Slavs, Scandinavians and Finns).

The project is a non-governmental, non-profit project and it is run by private investments and volunteer efforts.

Up until now two buildings have been built, the long house and the forge. The village is open for visitors all year round and some people live on the farm permanently.

Events for historical reconstruction clubs and lessons for schoolchildren are organized on a regular basis.

Invitation
The staff of Sengard has written to VHM with this invitation that we would like to pass on to our readers:

“We are interested in collaborating with associates from all over the world, and we invite them to visit Sengard to help with joint projects.

Our most important needs:
- Development of historical and ecological tourism (management)
- School curriculum
- Craft and design training
- Cultural events (exhibitions, concerts, conferences)
- Boat construction
- Weaving

We are ready to share our knowledge and skills in:
- Construction of wooden buildings
- Forge work
- Moulding/Casting
- Manufacture of leather footwear and clothing
- Production of enactment programs, including fighting displays
- Wood and bone carving
- Wickerwork

We have begun this project as a serious long-term commitment. I’m sure that by helping each other, we can make it even better!”

For further information, contact Konstantin Sholmov
varanga@mail.ru
www.svengard.ru (in Russian only)
Archaeological remains in Þjórsárdalur, Iceland

By Kristín Huld
Sigurðardóttir

Þjórsárdalur (Thjorsardalur Valley)

Þjórsárdalur in Árnessýsla, Southern Iceland is one of the most interesting archaeological areas in Iceland. Having been subject to repeated eruptions of the volcano Hekla, most of the valley’s once prosperous farms were abandoned, most likely in the early 12th century. Life practically stopped in the valley in the 17th century.

The valley is the birthplace of one of the fundamental dating methods used in Icelandic archaeology, i.e. tephrochronology. The method introduced by geologist Prof. Dr. Sigurður Þórarinsson in the 1940s has been developed further in the following decades by himself and his followers.

The valley has repeatedly been the subject of archaeological research. The earliest being the registration of archaeological sites in the second half of the 19th century and some minor excavations around the turn of the century.

The area has not been systematically registered using modern methods, but a survey in 1951 revealed some 40 remains, 28 of which are listed as sites of national importance. Our knowledge about the remains in the valley is still based mostly on that survey. The remains include various farms with outhouses and a churchyard.

Later research has also revealed Viking-age burials and remains from iron smelting taking place as far back as the Viking Age.

Some of the remains in the valley were subject to a joint Nordic research project in 1939. The Þjórsárdalur research was the first multinational archaeological research project in Iceland with participants from Iceland, Denmark, Sweden and Finland.

The excavated Stöng site

The most known of the excavated sites is Stöng which has been used as the prototype for a well-known replica built in the valley in 1970s, called Þjórósveldshúsi.

Stöng consists of a large hall, a living room, a byre and a house which has been identified as a toilet by some archaeologists. Some outhouses, a cowshed and a smithy, were also excavated. The remains have been dated to the early 12th century.

A later research during the 1980s and 1990s revealed a church with some graves and the remains of a smithy under the...
church and some remains of older farms were discovered under Stöng. Basing his findings mainly on the objects found and some C¹⁴-dating the researcher came to the conclusion that the remains were somewhat later than the 12th century, but those specialising in tephrchronical and C¹⁴ dating are not of the same opinion.

The Stöng ruin was the first one in Iceland to be made accessible for tourists. After the excavation a house was constructed to cover the ruins and turf walls were reconstructed on top of the stone foundations, which were discovered when the site was excavated.

Skallakot
Skallakot is another known site in Pjörsárdalur, mainly thanks to the churchyard which was excavated there in 1939, revealing around 60 skeletons. The churchyard was eroding at the time of the excavation, and some skeletons had been removed previously, but the skeletal material has been the subject of various interesting studies that are still underway.

Preservation and information
In spite of vast archaeological and natural scientific information regarding the valley, little emphasis has been laid on spreading information to the general public.

Therefore we are now concentrating on the communication both in order to inform about the sites and also in order to preserve them, as they are extremely fragile. It is important since Pjörsárdalur is a very peaceful quiet area, not to disturb the visitor’s experience by polluting the area with too many information signs.

We intend to utilise communication technology, such as teletechniques and the Internet in order to inform the public about the past life in the valley. However we will have some minimal information signs by the sites.

A future project involves restorating Stöng and the outhouses by the site.

About the author
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Pjööveldisbaer, the reconstructed medieval farm in Pjörsárdalur. On the occasion of the 1100 anniversary of the settlement of Iceland in 1974, it was decided to reconstruct a medieval Icelandic farm as they were between 1000-1200 AD, based on the best current research. The Stöng farm was without a doubt the best candidate for this kind of reconstruction.

The Landnámssdagur “Settlement day” event was organized for the first time in Sköia- og Gnúpverjahreppur municipality in June 2004. Photo Ásborg
The most colourful of all the Icelandic saga heroes was Egil Skalla-Grimsson, the son of Skalla-Grimur Kveldulfsson in Egil’s saga.

Skalla-Grimur was one of the very first of the Viking settlers and the one who claimed land in Borgarfjordur. Egil himself was a larger-than-life character who was both a great poet and also a fierce warrior and Viking. Egil’s saga thus provides a perfect means for following one family clan as they settle in Iceland.

To tell the history of this remarkable period a cultural centre, The Icelandic Settlement Centre has been founded in the township of Borgarnes on the west coast of Iceland. It will open its doors to the public on May 14th 2006.

The township of Borgarnes lies approximately eighty kilometres north of the capital, Reykjavik. Being the setting for Egil’s saga this historical context combined with the charming natural beauty of the site makes it an ideal location for the Centre.

The Journey from Reykjavik to Borgarnes passes through the lush west coast farming land and from Borgarnes the arterial routes extend to the north and west of the country.

The Settlement Centre
The Settlement Centre is home to two major exhibitions: The Settlement of Iceland and The Saga of Egil Skalla-Grimsson.

The Settlement of Iceland
The first of the two exhibitions, The Settlement of Iceland, depicts how Iceland was discovered, how the Vikings navigated the open ocean and why they abandoned their homelands in Norway. It tells of the first men to set foot on the island and how the land was settled up to the establishment of the first parliament in the world, the Althing, at Thingvellir in 930 AD.

The display focuses on giving the visitor a first-hand experience of the excitement and trepidation of setting out in open boats on an ocean voyage in search of an unknown land. Audio guides are available giving visitors an audio-visual experience of these tumultuous and portentous times. The tour of this exhibition will take approximately 25 minutes.

The Saga of Egil Skalla-Grimsson
The second exhibition, The Saga of Egil Skalla-Grimsson, profiles the hero who gives his name to Egil’s Saga. The saga is a complex and vibrant intertwining of battles and love, magic and witchcraft.

The exhibition is set in the sunken stone cellar of the warehouse and again an audio guide is available. The commentary leads the visitor through a labyrinth-like display and into the fantastic adventures of the saga. This tour will also take approximately 25 minutes.

The Saga Loft
The top floor of the Centre, The Saga Loft, houses the storytellers. Here, performers will relate stories connected to the theme of the centre from their own personal perspective. These storytellers will include writers, scholars,
entertainers, actors, sailors and farmers. Thus they are a cross-section of the Icelandic people, a people who have inherited a culture with a rich storytelling tradition. Each storyteller has a particular interest in the settlement era or the Icelandic Sagas and a talent for communicating this interest to others.

Snorre Sturluson and Snorristofa

Egil's saga has often been attributed to the medieval writer Snorri Sturluson. Snorri ruled in Borgarfjordur during the age of the Sturlungar family (13th century) and lived both at Borg and in Reykholt.

In Reykholt, the recently built Snorristofa, a cultural centre and institution for research in medieval studies and ancient stories now stands. This centre is partly based upon the work and ideas of Snorri.

He was the author of several grand works of ancient Icelandic literature, such as Heimskringla (the history of the Norwegian kings), and Edda or Snorra-Edda, a priceless source of information on how the pagan ancestors of the Icelandic people viewed and explained the world in which they lived.

Not only was Snorri a brilliant author, he was also chieftain over the Borgarfjordur region, sitting in Reykholt which was an important place; the chieftain's house in the region. Snorri had tremendous power and wealth, with many men under his command.

When looking upon the history of the place and the importance of Snorri Sturluson as a scholar and an author, it is no wonder that Snorristofa was founded at Reykholt.

The building of Snorristofa went hand in hand with the building of the new church at Reykholt, both magnificent buildings. The founding of these two buildings took place in 1988, the church was completed in 1998 and Snorristofa in the year 2000.

Among the oldest preserved structures in Iceland is Snorralaug, a medieval geothermal pool and a tunnel, which led from the pool to Snorri's house. The earliest description of this pool in its modern form is dated to the early 18th century. It has been repaired countless times through the centuries and is now on the list of protected monuments in Iceland.

For further information:
www.icelandssettlement.com
www.snorristofa.is
www.reykholt.is
www.landnam.is

Snorri’s geothermal pool in Reykholt. Photo: Björn Hünbogi Sveinsson

Vikings filed their teeth!

According to a new report from the National Heritage Board of Sweden some Vikings filed horizontal deep furrows across their upper front teeth. This is the first time tooth filing has been found in European archaeological human skeletal material.

Anthropologist Caroline Arcini has found and analysed the teeth from 22 individuals, all men, dated from the Viking Age and found in present-day Sweden and Denmark.

The marks were cut deep into the enamel and were very skilfully made. But the reason for this marking is still a mystery. They might have served as identification for certain groups of tradesmen or warriors – or they might have been merely pure decoration in fashion just then.

The oldest evidence of filing and decorating teeth is from Central America, where it was a common practice between 1400 and 1000 BC.

The full report is available in English at: http://www.raa.se/nyheter/pdf/filadetander.pdf
Lofotr, the Viking museum at Borg in Lofoten

By Wenche Brun and Kjersti Jacobsen.

Lofotr, the Viking museum at Borg was established during the early 1990s and has developed into one of the most popular attractions in northern Norway. The fact that archaeological excavations confirm Viking settlement gives the site a historical background, while the handicraft activities reflect a living museum.

The museum consists of a reconstruction of a supposed chieftain’s farm that was excavated by archaeologists. In the reconstructed building you can experience an exhibition with original artefacts from the excavations, demonstrations of traditional handicrafts, cooking and guided tours.

The Borg area was farmland until 1981 when a local farmer’s ploughing led to an extraordinary find. The soil turned out to be darker than normal and pieces of glass and potsherds showed up in the furrows. The artefacts were classified as 1300-year old French and German glass and pottery, found for the first time so far north.

Surveys and excavations began and the results threw an entirely new light on the relationship between Lofoten, Southern Scandinavia and the rest of Europe.

The original building
An inter-Scandinavian research project converged from 1983–89, and scholars established the fact that this was the largest building ever found in the Viking world. The building comprises two main phases: first was a 67-metre long building erected in the 500s and then during the 700s this building was extended until it measured 83 metres by the beginning of the Viking Age.

The building was divided into five main rooms, including living quarters, a lobby, a hall, storage and a byre. After the excavation, the foundation walls were marked, as well as the posts, and a modern reconstruction was built close to the original location.

The building commanded a wide view, making the area easy to control, and it must have been visible a long way off. The Borg area has probably been a sacred site, at least from the heathen period until the present-day church.

Several other archaeological structures are also found in the immediate area: walls for long-ship boathouses, settlement sites as well as burial mounds, a courtyard site and an early medieval bridge. All together, this can indicate an Iron-age power centre.

The museum
The Viking-museum is a site museum, represented by a reconstruction of a chieftain’s longhouse.

Today’s reconstruction is based on the excavations and structures discovered: mainly the floor plan, room divisions, location of the hearths and walls. The height of 9 metres and the roof
construction are qualified guesses, calculated on the basis of recent research into Nordic Viking houses.

Lofotr – the Viking museum at Borg is both a traditional museum with exhibition of archaeological artefacts while at the same time the museum enjoys the status of being an attraction in its own right, a centre.

The building is divided into five different rooms, and the traditional artefact exhibition is displayed in the room that was the byre. The rest of the building consists of a “living exhibition” where, in the summer time, handicrafters, guides and kitchen people bring things to life for the visitors. There are also events like banquets and luncheons where the chieftain himself entertains the guests.

Examples of the handicrafts demonstrated at the museum are leatherwork, woodcarving, weaving, pottery making and stone carving.

Copies, reconstructions and constructions
The museum works with copies, reconstructions and constructions. The archaeological period is mainly the Iron Age, and since the archaeological material from this period is rather fragmented we have to consider some important factors.

A copy is a copy from an original artefact which is well preserved (complete). This means that it is impossible to make copy of the Iron-age clothing because no such complete archaeological find exists. A copy can be made using any method – it is the end result that counts.

A reconstruction, on the other hand, depends on the methods and procedure. A reconstruction copies some parts and then uses analogies and imagination to make a complete object.

However a construction can be approved even when there are no complete finds of a certain artefact. A copy can be made with modern tools while a reconstruction should be made using original tools, at least to some extent. In the reconstruction process one tries to follow traditional procedures, but problems can occur because these are not always known.

Reconstruction of buildings and artefacts
The unique background of the Viking museum is the extraordinary large building and the artefacts discovered in conjunction with this. The remains of this building yielded new knowledge about the island of Vestvågøy as a chieftain’s residence and centre of power during the Iron Age.

The excavations showed that the building, Borg I, was inhabited in the period 500–950 AD. This is a rather long period and during those years, the building was extended, restored and changed. Based on both the excavated structures and the artefacts, it was decided that the reconstruction should illustrate the last stage of the building from 700-950 AD.

A seminar with architects, archaeologists, historians, and building researchers was arranged and, based on this, the architect Gisle Jakhelln suggested a model for reconstruction, which was chosen and approved.

The main construction is based on ancient traditional Norwegian building techniques, mainly the “Salten-Stavlina” stavline construction. Some details in the structure are based upon stave churches, other elements are inspired by excavated structures from other places representing the same time period.

When the decision to make a reconstruction was made, we had to make a mixture of known elements, the
excavated structures on the Borg heights as well as elements from other places, the Bayeux tapestry, saga literature as well as “qualified guesses” by researchers in specialised fields, i.e. architects and archaeologists. One of the challenges was to estimate the height of the building and at least one solution was suggested. However, calculations were made and discussed during a Nordic workshop, and a height of nine meters was agreed upon.

Several forms of criticism have been made concerning the reconstruction during the life of the museum. Clearly we do not have the exact solution of how the building truly looked, but this is a matter of how we choose to present it.

Over the span of 450 years, different people, with different views and preferences regarding building techniques and aesthetics lived in the building. This indicates that it has been changing, just as our homes of today change over time. We had to choose one solution, but we do not present it as the only correct solution to our visitors. We think the building as it is today is a good media for activating visitors.

An important question is: is this a reconstruction or a construction? According to the discussion above we can call the building a reconstruction. The archaeological discovery and excavations form the basis as a starting point for the museum of today. After the excavations a hypothesis was made of how the building could have been, and then attempts were made to build this “hypothetical house”.

Experimental archaeology and handicraft activities

In addition to reconstructions of buildings, artefacts and objects we try to demonstrate traditional techniques and handicrafts. At the museum experimental archaeology and implementation of the Iron-age handicraft are an important aspect of the activities that visitors can experience. Whether we like it or not, institutions that work with experimental archaeology need to both discuss the use of the concepts, as well as to define their understanding and content of the concepts.

Here are some examples of what our crafters do: Tatinger-ware pottery, glass beads, weaving of sails and other fabrics/textiles, bronze-casting, tanning, plant dyeing and woodcarving.

When working with experimental archaeology and reconstructions, you sometimes have to be daring. There is a lot of knowledge that you don’t have before you begin experimenting.

At Borg Viking museum, some would say that we have a mix of copies and replicas, reconstructions and constructions. Maybe this is correct but that is not necessarily negative. What is decisive is the way it is presented. As long as you don’t force an opinion on the visitors, but rather try to activate them by presenting several solutions, and then challenge them to offer alternatives or other theories in to the dialogue.

Trial and failure, development and rejection. Methods may be changed after archaeological excavations have revealed new artefacts; tools or products and researchers have come up with new theories or solutions to known problems. You can’t avoid the fact that something which is quite sound theoretically doesn’t necessarily work in practice. It is important to have the opportunity to try out new ideas, as long as they are sound.

There is a fine line between a museum and an experience-centre, and what makes Lofotr- the Vikingmuseum at Borg belong to the first-mentioned institution?

An important aspect of the idea of a
living museum is that the museum must be developing. Reconstruction is a dynamic process involving research and interaction between visitors and craftspeople. An increasing public interest for archaeology and physical remains is visible at our museum. Lofotr has chosen to use the physical remains of the past as an educational resource.

The Viking market at Borg in August
This summer we arranged our first Viking market from August 3–7. It was a success for our visitors and the 70 participating Vikings as well as our museum.

Next summer a new market will take place from August 2–6 and we hope that many will want to take part even then. We had tradesmen, crafters, warriors, troubadours, dancers, lectures, games, sailors, a fortune-teller and a talented juggler. If you are skilled in any way in one or more of these professions or occupations we want you as a participant and can tempt you with:

- The northernmost Viking market in the world, a good excuse to experience Lofoten.
- A large reconstruction of an Iron-age farm, smithy, Viking ship and boathouse.
- Beautiful scenery, good opportunities for sightseeing and fishing. 24 hours of daylight.
- An idyllic market area without a trace of asphalt. As we are situated in the border area of the Norse and the Sámi, we are also trying to get Sámi craftsmen to attend. There is no market tax.

The normal rules about plastic, clothing, mobile phones etc. will naturally apply. We reserve the right to control the quality of goods and performances, and to expel people who do not follow the market rules. This has every chance of being both a unique and pleasant market, so don’t hesitate to join us in 2006!

We will carry on!
Destination Viking Living History Network arises from the ashes of the Destination Viking Living History Interreg IIIIB project!

By Geir Sør-Reime

Plan for the future
The funding period for the Destination Viking Living History project ended this autumn, and the last partner meeting of the project was held on Gotland 20–24 April (cf. Viking Heritage Magazine 2/2005). There was little time to discuss the future of the network at this meeting, as it concentrated on completing the project and preparing for the final reports. It was decided, however, to hold a network meeting in November, to plan for the future.

Meeting in Gunnes Gård
On November 3–4, 11 delegates from 9 different Viking villages met in Upplands Väsby in Sweden to discuss the future. Our hosts were the three girls from Gunnes Gård.

Besides visiting the Viking farm,
Gunnes Gård, the delegates spent several hours discussing the future of the network and the Destination Viking trademark.

It was generally agreed that there is a need for Viking villages in the Baltic Sea region to continue the co-operation and exchange of experience begun with the Interreg project, and that a network should be established to this end. It was further agreed that the Viking villages need to work closely with other Living History Museums, and that good relations should be maintained with the Swedish Network of Living History Museums (which should be developed into a Nordic Network), with the EXARC organisation and with the new liveArch project.

Finally, the need to maintain and develop Destination Viking as a marketing tool and trademark was strongly emphasised. The need to maintain good relations with and use Viking Heritage Magazine was also strongly underlined.

New Ideas

The meeting also identified two areas where we could come up with new project proposals in the near future.

One idea involves the Living History Museums and the schools. All Living History museums offer special programmes for visiting schools. It was felt there was a need to look into this, find out what others are doing and discuss how our teaching methods could be improved and developed.

The other idea concerns Viking Youth Camps, possibly linked to Viking Markets. The idea is to involve young people in the music, dance, handicrafts, cooking etc. of the Viking period. Such camps could be held at different museums, but instructors could be hired from a number of Living History museums.

The next meeting of the Destination Viking Living History Network is scheduled for March 2006, possibly at the Ale Viking Farmstead in Sweden. In the autumn of 2006, a meeting is planned for Ukrakenland in Germany.

How did the Vikings manage the heating of their houses? And how did they avoid dying from suffocation in all this smoke?

Many professionals, and laymen as well, have been pondering upon these questions. By simply using the dwelling house at Ale Viking-age Farmstead in Sweden, we have gained some experiences that so far seem to be positive, and which may help us to understand.

The air channels

Every fire needs air to burn (more specifically the oxygen in the air). The air that is consumed by the fire is immediately replaced by new air. If our fire draws in air from the room, a slight vacuum occurs in the room. This slight vacuum tends to be balanced by fresh air rushing in from outside via all the openings in the house. This replacement air is normally not warm, meaning that the temperature along the walls could be considerably lower than in the rest of the room.

In an attempt to avoid this, we built three air channels to lead the fresh air supply from the outside directly into the fire. Even before the sill was laid, we built those sections of the air channels which were to come under the sill. These were built authentically with flat stones, resembling a chest without gables, filled with sand to prevent collapsing during the building process.

Much later, these sections of the air channels were again opened up and the remaining sections of the air channels were built. However, now we used cement pipes, the main reason being that it is much easier to secure these against rats and wasps. These three cement pipes led under the floor into the middle of the house, protruding just above floor level – inside the fireplace.

A close-up of the hearth. We can judge from the direction of the flames that fresh air is supplied via the opening under the rectangular lid. Note that firewood to the right is being pre-heated before being placed on the fire.

Photo Jörgen Johansson

Smoke gets in your eyes?

By Jörgen Johansson
The fireplace

The fireplace is oval in shape, about 260 cm long and 90 cm wide. Its height varies from 37 cm in the middle to 45 cm towards the end; its shape resembling a ship. The fireplace is built entirely of natural stones held together by a mortar consisting of clay, sand, horse manure and water.

The top surface of the fireplace, the hearth, is slightly concave. To allow for some heat expansion, there are layers of loose natural gravel inside the fireplace, and many cavities have intentionally not been filled with mortar.

The fireplace is hollow! The interior is a big box in the bottom of which the three air channels end. From this big air pocket, three new channels lead directly upwards, ending in the hearth and covered with lids made of soapstone. Here the airflow is regulated by means of small stones under these lids. Thus the fresh air is led directly into the embers.

The fire

The fire burns with lively flames. Because of the length of the fireplace, one can build the fire in many different ways, e.g. two fires for heat and light, or one fire for heating and a pile of glowing embers for grilling or just keeping food warm.

By studying the glowing embers and the flames it can clearly be seen that the air channels function as intended.

Holding a smoking piece of wood by the side of the fireplace will show that the smoke goes upwards, following the smoke from the fire. It does not go into the fire as it would have, had the fire sucked air from the room.

We only use well-dried hardwood firewood to minimize the number of sparks. The firewood is chopped into fairly thin pieces, no thicker than an underarm. And, what is important: the firewood is pre-heated before put on the fire. It lies for a few minutes on the edge of the fireplace, before being laid on the fire. Pre-heated firewood does not cool the fire down very much, thus reducing the amount of smoke.

The smoke

All fires emit smoke. What is interesting in this connection is how much smoke the fire emits, and what happens to it.

While building the dwelling house at Ale Vikingagård, we made a decision to build four smoke hatches in the top of the arched roof. We wanted to have chance to experiment with the size of the total opening that we thought necessary to let
the smoke out. However, so far we have not made any hatches in the roof, as it seems that they will not be necessary at all.

Naturally there are smoke openings. There is one at the top of each of the two gables. They can be closed by means of lids on hinges, each lid operated with a long spar. By closing the opening on the windward gable, and keeping the opening on the leeward gable open, we have managed to get a fully satisfactory evacuation of smoke.

When wind passes over an arched roof, its velocity increases. This causes a slight vacuum around the upper part of the leeward gable, which in turn helps the smoke escape via the smoke opening.

On a few occasions of dead calm we have been forced to open both smoke openings. On such occasions one can clearly observe that smoke also emits through the roof! There are about 12,000 shingles on the roof, laid three layers thick. Each of these shingles is separated from the next by a tiny little slit. The smoke finds its way out via all these little slits.

It is important to remember that the turbulence of the air inside the house must be kept to a minimum. Light openings in the walls must be sealed with a membrane of some sort: glass, bladder, Muscovite or the like, and the door should be kept closed.

The heating

The dwelling house at Ale Vikingagård has double walls. A 10-cm air gap separates the outer wall from the inner wall. There are interior transverse walls. An upper floor serves as a ceiling when you are on the ground floor. These are factors that – combined with the good results of the air channels – give us good chances of achieving a comfortable indoor temperature.

As the construction of the second floor proceeds, we can feel the temperature gradually increasing. We plan to make a proper test of the heating, and to measure the indoor temperature at various places and at various times throughout a bitter cold winter night. I hope to be able to elaborate on the results of these tests at a later point.

Errata

In the article *The tidy metalworkers of Fröjel*, written by Ny Björn Gustafsson & Anders Söderberg and published in VHM 3/2005, figure 4 has by accident been cut in an unfortunate way. An important part of the picture has disappeared, which makes the figure caption hard to understand. The original and proper figure looks like this:

![Mould fragments found in the cupellation pit. Generally, the patterns in the mould fragments from Fröjel are poorly preserved. Left: one of two fragments from the same mould, below a sketch of the pattern. The nature of the object is still uncertain. Right: an imprint of a small fragment, the sketch below showing its zigzag pattern; a common pattern in the centre part of Gotlandic arm rings. Photo Anders Söderberg.](image)

About the author

Jörgen Johansson is the site manager of Ale Viking Age Farmstead on the west coast of Sweden. He also knows a lot about Viking ships, see VHM 2/2005.

Further information: www.alevikingatid.nu
Why not relax and spend some time in the fictional world of the Vikings? Actually this book is not new, it was published in 1999. But we have to clue you in on this novel of more than 600 pages that will take you on a wonderful adventurous journey with the Norse in North America around AD 1050, the time after Leif Eiriksson is believed to have travelled there.

Follow Sigtrygg Thorgilsson, the orphaned grandson of Leif Eiriksson who has been denied his birthright at home, and seeks his due overseas. He makes his way together with some men to the shores of the New World, to his grandfather’s half-forgotten land-claim and the reader gets to take part in a fantastic and exciting course of events.

The book presents many complex and interesting characters whose equals still surely exist and can be met at Viking events nowadays…

The engaging tale makes it hard to put this book down. So if you haven’t read it before – go for it now!

Ingegerd Olofsdotter, the daughter of the Swedish King Olof Skötkonung, lived at the end of the Viking Age. This was a very hectic and eventful period in Northern Europe with wars and struggles between paganism and Christianity.

Ingegerd spent most of her childhood in Sigtuna, which can be regarded as a political cum religious base of the time. During the Viking Age royal families were very international when it came to strengthening their position of power. State marriage was one of the weapons in this power struggle and when Ingegerd was of a marrying age she was drawn into this game.

After an unsuccessful proposal from King Haraldson from Norway, a new suitor from Russia arrived and at tender age Ingegerd became the wife of Yaroslav, Prince of Novgorod, a direct descendant of Rurik. After the marriage, Russia became her new homeland and by the age of 20 she had become a Russian Princess. Ingegerd raised her 10 children in Novgorod and Kiev and late in life she took the veil and is venerated in the Orthodox Church as Saint Anna of Novgorod.

This little book will give you a picture of a woman’s fate from childhood until and after her death. It describes Ingegerd as a historical and religious figure. What became of her children and why did she become glorified as Saint Anna?

The writer Rune Edberg is an author and an archaeologist working at Sigtuna Museum.

Carina Dahlström
The Northern Path

Norse myths and Legends retold and what they reveal

Written by Douglas “Dag” Rossman
Published by Seven Paws Press, Chapel Hill NCC, USA
ISBN 0-9649113-9-6

Norse mythology is a subject that has been researched for years, and still new books are published more or less every year. It is a subject that really appeals to people, even nowadays. “Dag” Rossman has a long and lasting interest in Norse mythology, and has published several books and articles, as well as designing and installing museum exhibitions of Norse mythology.

In this book, he reflects upon Norse myths and their value in modern times. The book is divided into two sections: firstly a retelling of the myths, and then an analysis of their sources, meaning, and application to modern people.

The book is fascinating reading and should appeal to a large audience, from the interested layman to scholars in the field.

Dan Carlson

By George M. Hollenback

A perforated, incised wooden disc from Wolin, dating from the 11th century, has tentatively been identified as a navigational aid called a “sun compass” (Gwin 2003; Stanislawski 2002). Particular features on the disc, however, suggest that it may have also served another function. Those features are the perforation in the center of the disc - thought to accommodate a gnomon - and a crudely segmented concentric ring scale divided into 24 increments.

The aforementioned features are consonant with a particular kind of sundial called the equatorial sundial, an elegant instrument consisting of a disc divided into 24 sectors with a gnomon perpendicularly mounted in its center. When the disc is tilted up and oriented so that the gnomon points toward the celestial pole, the shadow cast by the gnomon will sweep out constant solar hours across the sector markings (see Waugh 1973). This was a decided improvement over the typical sundial which simply divided available daylight into 12 variable “seasonal hours” that were longer in the summer and shorter in the winter.

References
Stanislawski, B. 2002. The wooden disc from Wolin—as the next sun compass? VHM 2/02, pp. 10–11.

About the author
George M. Hollenback, Houston, USA, enjoys pursuing a number of historical research interests.
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11th century coins found in Iceland

At recently discovered ruins of three houses at Háls at Karahnjúkar, Iceland, two very rare ancient coins have been found and examined. The coins date from the 11th century reign of the Norwegian King Haraldur and according to Anton Holt, a coin expert at the Sedlabanki Island’s coin collection, there are only 33 other known specimens of this coin.

Source: Iceland Review Online
The Vikings are coming...
Big Viking Event in Hamme, Flanders, Belgium

To celebrate the 5th anniversary of the Viking Genootschap (see VHM 4/2002, Vikings in Flanders, part 2) and the 50th anniversary of the Van Bogaerts-Wauters museum in Hamme, a Viking weekend called “The Vikings are coming” was organised.

This event was a unique happening with an academic session, a Viking exhibition and a show by our re-enactment group “Scaldingi”. It was the first time in the history of Flanders that a Viking event on this scale was organised and once again we succeeded in organising a fascinating weekend.

The event

The event went on for three days, June 24–26. In Viking outfit, promoting the event, we escorted the Mayor during the opening of the fair the first evening.

On Saturday, June 25th, we welcomed Renger De Bruyn (Utrecht Museum) as guest speaker for the opening of the academic session. Renger guided us back to the origin of the exhibition in Utrecht.

Erik De Quick then made a Power Point presentation of the Vikings and their way of life. Here a Viking-ship model 2,6m long (scale 1/10), made by one of our members, was presented. The use of the Viking compass was explained by a reconstruction.

In a room called: “The Chamber of the Normans” several archaeological artefacts found in the surroundings of Hamme were displayed, such as the remains of a Viking ship, a Viking anchor, several Viking weapons (axes, knives and swords) and a lot of daily utensils from Viking Age. These originals were tastefully complemented by reconstructions of Viking swords and a reconstruction of the tunic of the king of Mammen.

Back in the first room, the daily life of the Vikings was shown including weaving, spinning, trading and runic script. An exact full-scale reconstruction of the well-known Oseberg bed was exhibited as well as some artefacts from private Viking collections, such as an original whalebone needle with an entwined dragon design.

The exhibition ran for three weeks and all visitors were unanimous about one thing: it was a very informative exhibition, with an outstanding approach to the daily life of the Vikings.

Re-enactment

On Sunday the Scaldingi re-enactment group had their show close to the museum. At ten o’clock Erik lit the camp fire in a Viking way with a silex stone and a fire steel and a journalist from the national radio made an interview.

Once the fire was lit, cozy activities unfolded: women cutting vegetables and fruit for the Viking soup, men setting up tents, placing tripods and lighting forge fires. At noon, the soup was ready and everyone started working with Viking crafts. For the first time, we were knitting fishermen’s nets and the bone workers made beautiful buckles and needles. Even some gaming pieces to play “Hnefatafl” were made of original Viking-recipe clay.

The good weather made people thirsty so we were happy that a lot of our special Viking beer was consumed. The Danish mead “Viking Blød” seemed to find favour. The Schelderuiter, a group from Bornem (Flanders) presented two shows with...
During the event both children and adults could be photographed near a 20m-long carnival wagon in the shape of a Viking ship, owned by the Wuitens, the local carnival group.

The Viking Genootschap has now existed for 5 years and we intend to continue for another 50 or maybe 100 years. New perspectives have been revealed and we will certainly take the opportunity to grasp them with both hands.

Erik de Quick

Gjallar, the sounding horn of Heimdal!

A new website about the Norsemen in the Low Countries is now introduced.

Visit the site www.gjallar.nl

Ferrum paganorum incanduit, het ijzer van de heidenen schitterde – Deense heersers in de Lage Landen geportretteerd

This book was published for the 5th anniversary of the Viking Genootschap. It is written by Luit van der Tuuk and is only available in Dutch.

In 80 pages it describes some Danish rulers in the Low Countries during the Viking Age. In fact this is the result of research based only on contemporary sources.

The preface is written by Erik De Quick who pleads for more cooperation between academics and amateurs in the field of historical research.

In the sources from the 9th century we find a number of Danes who played an important role in the politics of the Low countries: the hunted king Klakkl-Haraldr, his brother Hemmingr, his sons Guðróðr and Hróðulf, his nephews Haraldr ‘junior’ and Hrörekr, Guðróðr also called Sea King, and Ragnar. Most of them were members of the same family that had exercised royal power in Denmark. Here the reader will be pulled into the political web of the 9th and 10th century. The book contains some fine illustrations of artefacts found in the Low Countries.

Further Information:
Viking Genootschap, p/a Erik De Quick, Korte Mermansstraat 4, B-2300 Turnhout (Flanders) or by e-mail: viking.genootschap@pandora.be
Dear Viking Heritage Magazine,

We would like to bring attention to Leif Erickson's courageous voyage to the New World.

When we were in elementary school, the teacher would say, “In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue.” As students, we were taught that Christopher Columbus was the European discoverer of the New World. This is not necessarily true. Nordic explorer Leif Erickson not only discovered the New World nearly five hundred years before Columbus, but he established the settlement in what is now known as Newfoundland, Canada.

In 1964, President Lyndon Johnson proclaimed October 9th as ‘Leif Erickson Day.’ We wanted to take this opportunity and use our artistic talent to create a plaque and a flag to commemorate Leif Erickson Day.

On this day this year we displayed our artwork at the statue of Leif Erickson in Leif Erickson Park here in Duluth, Minnesota. As our art was displayed, many people stopped and looked. Our message is getting out, and we want even more people to be aware of this Nordic Explorer.

Sincerely,
Andy Saur & Angel Sarkela-Saur
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