Editorial

IN THE FOOTSTEPS of the Vikings...

Beginning with this issue, Viking Heritage Magazine has taken the next step into the future by joining the EU-project Destination Viking Baltic Stories, which was recently launched in Foteviken, Sweden. This co-operation will help us to ensure the continuous publishing of the magazine and also improve it, as we hope you will notice in issues to come.

As earlier, Viking Heritage Magazine will continue to focus on exploring history from three main directions i.e. by disseminating knowledge from scientific research, by highlighting how the Vikings and the Viking Age are presented to the general public through exhibitions, reconstructions etc and by reflecting the present-day international Viking reenactment movement.

There is a need for a forum of different directions and viewpoints concerning the Viking Age, and Viking Heritage Magazine gives you the opportunity to meet others sharing the same interest – as well as learning more!

As you see by the contents of this issue, VHM will continue to keep you updated about what is happening in the Viking world, both 1000 years ago and today!

We hope you will enjoy reading it!

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Words of Wisdom

"With presents friends should please each other
With a shield or a costly coat
Mutual giving makes for friendship
So long as life goes well”

From Hávámal
(Words of “The High One”)

About the front page A snapshot from the Viking ball game called Knáttleikr, which was reconstructed this summer at the Museum of Trelleborg in Denmark. Read more about the work on the reconstruction and rules on page 9–11. Photo: Thomas Krakau, Å/S Sjællandske Dagblade, Denmark.
FOOTPRINTS OF THE VIKINGS were found during large-scale excavations in the Viking-age settlement of Kaupang, located near the outlet of the Oslo fjord. The 1200 year-old footprints were uncovered this summer. The footprints were located in a ditch between two building plots in the Viking-age town.

The variety of human and animal footprints present illustrates that the ditch was used as a busy pathway down to the harbour area. The footprints were made in wet clay and shortly thereafter covered by a thick layer of sand, preserving them until today. Several footprints were so well preserved that it was possible to identify foot size and the kind of footwear the owner was wearing at the time.

This unique find has met with great interest and has drawn many more visitors to the site. A large silicon cast of the footprints was made. We hope to exhibit a model of the footprints in the near future.
Uniting Viking Forces: Destination Viking is up running!

By Geir Sør-Reime

Destination Viking is a new and major initiative to co-ordinate the development and marketing of Viking-age attractions throughout Europe.

The project is based partly on the long and valuable experiences of Viking Heritage, and partly on two Interreg IIC projects called North Sea Viking Legacy and Via Viking Baltic Sea. North Sea Viking Legacy has been a partner of Viking Heritage during the last 3 years, co-publishing the magazine and the Western Viking route book. We also share the same website.

The two Viking-related Interreg IIC projects have also been working very closely together for the past 3 years.

The Viking Heritage Magazine has regularly reported on the progress of the North Sea Viking Legacy project. There have also been a number of articles related to the partners of the North Sea Viking Legacy project.

In recent issues of Viking Heritage Magazine we have also launched the new Destination Viking initiative. The idea is to join forces in a concerted effort to improve attraction development and marketing of Viking-related sites in Europe.

Destination Viking Baltic Sea

In the first step, Viking Heritage and Viking projects both in the Baltic Sea proper and along the western coast of Norway have developed a project application for “Vikings! – Destination Viking Baltic Sea”. We applied for around Euro 1 Million in grants from the Interreg IIIB programme for the Baltic Sea region in March, and at the end of May we received the news that our application had been successful! So now we can get down to work!

The region of Scania in Sweden, with Fotevikens Museum as the operational lead-partner and project manager leads destination Viking Baltic Sea. Director Björn Jakobsen at Fotevikens Museum has been appointed project manager. The financial manager of the project is Maria Wargren of Vellinge municipality.

The partners are:
Region Scania (Sweden), Fotevikens Museums (Sweden), Upplands Väsby Municipality (Gunnesgård, Sweden), Gotland University College (Viking Heritage, Sweden), Ale Municipality (Sweden), Storholmen Foundation (Sweden), The Museum at Trelleborg (Denmark), Ukranenland Historic Workshops (Germany), Karmøy Municipality (Norway), Rogaland Training and Education Centre (Norway), Institute of History of Tallinn (Estonia), Historical Foundation (Poland), The Institute of History of Material Culture of Russian Academy of Science (Russia), Re-enactment Historical Society “The Prince’s Druzhina” (Russia).

We will present all these partners and their projects in upcoming issues of Viking Heritage Magazine.

The main focus of the Destination Viking Baltic Sea project is on the presentation of Viking culture at reconstructed farmsteads and villages and through re-enactors. The project has therefore been divided into five so-called work packages or thematic focuses:

1. “The Touch of History” – reconstructed Viking-age remains
2. “Viking Heritage – Sites and Monuments of the Vikings” (making physical remains of the Vikings accessible both physically and mentally to tourists from all over the world)
3. “Vikings Alive” – The meeting of tourists and Vikings (tourists meeting living history presented by re-enactors)
4. “The Viking Way – Things, Thoughts and Traditions” (presenting balanced and current information about the

Björn and Maria have experience from several EU-projects, including the Via Viking Baltic Sea project.

In addition, Geir Sør-Reime from Rogaland in Norway has been appointed project consultant.

The partners of Destination Viking Baltic Sea are located in Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Poland, Latvia, Estonia and Russia.

Destination Viking North Sea – Vikings and Waterways will deal with Viking voyages and ships. This is a copy of a Viking ship from the so-called Barrier of Foteviken. The original ship was built in the year 1023, according to dendrodating.

All photos: The Museum of Foteviken.
Vikings and their neighbours to a broad range of audience, including tourists) 5. “Travelling with the Vikings – Austerled: The Baltic Sea Viking Route” (development and marketing of a Baltic Sea Viking route).

The first full partner meeting of Destination Viking Baltic Sea took place at Fotevikens Museum from August 31 to September 4. The programme included a seminar in addition to business meetings. The seminars in connection with the partner meetings will be open to interesting parties outside of the project proper. In addition, there was also a full-day excursion to Viking-related sites in Southern Sweden. Read more about the first partner meeting in a separate article in this issue.

Contact address for Destination Viking Baltic Sea:
Björn Jakobsen, project manager
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Maria Wargren, financial manager
Maria.Wargren@vellinge.se

Their website is www.vikinggate.com. Also look at www.destinationviking.com

Destination Viking - The Saga Lands will concentrate mostly on the Atlantic islands. Here participators in an international Viking gathering are on their way to the legendary Thingvellir (Tingvalla). Photo: The Museum of Foteviken.

Destination Viking – The Saga Lands
In the north, a number of partners from Greenland, Iceland, Faroes, Orkneys and Norway have agreed to apply for a project entitled “Sagas and Storytelling”. This project will also join the Destination Viking "umbrella".

The main focus in this project will be the Norse sagas and how these relate to the landscape. A major objective will be to visualise the stories of the sagas in the countryside. The project will also promote a revival of traditional storytelling.

This project will probably be the first Interreg project with an Icelandic lead-partner. Rögnvaldur Gudmundsson, with experience from several EU projects, including the North Sea Viking Legacy, is co-ordinating the application process.

The partners of this project first met in Dalir District on Iceland in the beginning of May this year, and had a second preparatory meeting at Fotevikens Museum in the middle of August. Here the application for Interreg funding was finalised. The application deadline is in October.

Rögnvaldur, the co-ordinator, can be contacted at rognv@mmedia.is

Destination Viking North Sea – Vikings and Waterways
Also in the North Sea region a Destination Viking project is currently being prepared. The application deadline for this is also in the beginning of October. A preparatory partner meeting is currently being prepared by the lead-partner to be, Jan Stobbe, on behalf of a municipality in the North Holland province of the Netherlands.

The main focus in the North Sea project will be on Vikings and...
Waterways. Our Swedish partners will concentrate on the Göta River and its role in the formation of the three Scandinavian kingdoms and as a boundary between them.

In addition, Fotevikens Museum will participate with a project focusing on the Battle of Foteviken and the waters around the Falsterbo peninsula.

Our Norwegian partners will highlight the Viking settlements along the coastal route and along the long fjords of Western Norway.

In the Netherlands, focus will be on the Viking raids and settlement attempts along the sea route down to Dorestad. The Viking sailing routes across the North Sea, especially from Western Norway to Orkneys, Shetland, the Western Isles and into the Irish Sea will also have special attention in this project.

It is further planned that a sub-theme of this project will be the Scandinavian Thing traditions.

Jan, the co-ordinator can be contacted at stichting.vikingen@tiscali.nl

**Destination Viking North West Europe**

As you may have understood by now, the division of the Destination Viking initiative into several sub-projects is based partly on differing thematic approaches in each project, and partly simply by the boundaries of the different Interreg IIIB regions.

The Baltic Sea region encompasses all of the Scandinavian countries, Finland, western parts of Russia, the Baltic States, Poland and north-eastern parts of Germany. The North Sea region includes southern Norway, western parts of Sweden, all of Denmark, north-western parts of Germany, the coastal areas of the Netherlands and Belgium, and the eastern coasts of England and Scotland, while the Northern Periphery region covers Greenland, Iceland, Faroes, northern Norway, Sweden and Finland, and northern parts of Scotland.

The north west Europe region includes all of Ireland, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, western parts of Germany and northern parts of France.

So far, initial contacts have been made between potential partners in this region, but a thematic focus has not yet been set. The question of lead-partnership also remains to be settled here.

Partners interested in this project could contact either Björn at the address above, or myself.

**Destination Viking – the “umbrella”**

In addition to these thematically and geographically limited projects, Destination Viking is an “umbrella” organisation co-ordinating the various initiatives and projects.

The first meeting of this over-all organisation will be held on the Isle of Man sometime during the autumn. The formal structure will then be decided.

Among the activities that all sub-projects will participate in is the publication of the Viking Heritage Magazine. This magazine will still be edited and published on Gotland, but all Destination Viking projects will now participate in the financing of the magazine, and contribute with news and articles. Each sub-project will also publish a guidebook similar to the Western Viking Route book published last year. These will also be edited on Gotland.

A joint intranet for project management and networking will be established, and improved websites are also a priority of the project. The marketing of Destination Viking on a worldwide basis will also be a task for the umbrella organisation.

Plans for further Destination Viking sub-projects are under consideration, and we always welcome new partners and ideas into our network. We know that our strength is our unity.

E-mail to Geir Sør-Reime:
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Destination Viking – Baltic Stories

By Geir Sør-Reime

The Baltic Sea Destination Viking project was approved for Interreg IIIB funding in May, and their kick-off meeting took place in Fotevikens Museum in southwest Scania between 30 August and 4 September.

Representatives of 13 partners from five countries attended the meeting. We hope that partners in three further countries will be on board when we have our second meeting in Norway later this year.

The Destination Viking project in the Baltic Sea Region has the new subtitle “Baltic Stories”. The main focus in the project is the encounter between Viking history and visitors to reconstructed sites around the Baltic Sea. At these sites, Viking re-enactors tell the stories. The project therefore will work with the quality of these presentations, including pedagogics, clothing and equipment, building reconstructions etc.

The Scania region in Sweden is the leading partner of the project. They have set up a management team consisting of Björn Jakobsen from Fotevikens Museum as the project manager, Maria Wårgren from Vellinge Municipality as the financial manager and Geir Sør-Reime from Rogaland County Council as a project consultant.

The first meeting naturally concentrated on management issues, like progress reporting, financial matters etc. The project has been organised into four so-called Work Packages, and this first meeting served as the kick-off for them.

Work Package One focuses on reconstructions of Viking-age buildings, and the work in this package will now be co-ordinated by Ale Municipality. Ale is currently undertaking a huge Viking project, which also includes the reconstruction of several Viking-age buildings.

Work Package Two deals with sites from the Viking Age and how we can improve public access and understanding of these. This package is led by Fotevikens Museum.

Work Package Three, which is co-ordinated by Trelleborg Museum.

Gotland University College co-ordinates Work Package Four, which deals with the dissemination of knowledge about the Viking Age to the general public.

Finally, Work Package Five, co-ordinated by Vellinge Municipality looks into the marketing strategies of the Viking theme.

In our next meeting, scheduled for November this year, we will plan the work in each of these work-packages in more detail.

At each partner meeting, we will also have a full-day seminar, focusing on some of the core elements of the project.

At the first meeting, the seminar dealt with tourism related to the Viking theme. Among others, Mrs Lena Birgersson from the Scania Tourism Board gave a presentation of the tourism strategy of Scania and discussed how the Viking theme would fit into this overall strategy.

Following up on this, each partner presented their own projects and how they relate to tourism. This was a very useful overview and a good starting point for further joint efforts to develop a marketing strategy.

An obligatory element of all partner meetings was the visit to a Viking site in Scania that we visited on the excursion day under guidance of Sven Rosborn, Fotevikens Museum.
meetings is a full-day excursion, this time led by Sven Rosborn from Fotevikens Museum.

We visited a number of important Viking-age and Early Medieval sites in southwest Scania; the most famous is probably the Úppåkra site close to Lund.

However our first stop was the Trelleborg fortress in Trelleborg. We had a good opportunity to discuss the role, dating and reconstructions of such fortresses. Here, of course, the competence of the Trelleborg Museum in Denmark added new dimensions to our understanding of these impressing sites.

At Úppåkra we visited the excavation site of this site, which probably represents the original urban settlement that was later moved to present-day Lund.

In Lund itself we visited the City Museum, the Kulturen. The main exhibition displays a number of artefacts and facts about medieval Lund and, in the open-air part of the museum, buildings with medieval links are displayed.

At Borås just north of Lund we visited the former castle of the archbishops of Lund. In fact, this castle was erected on the site of a Trelleborg! We rounded off the day with dinner at the small lake of Røstånga.

Among other events during the meeting was an official dinner hosted by the leading partner, the Region of Scania, at a restaurant in an old fish-smoking house in Skanör. The restaurant still smokes fish for its own use, and we were served a wide selection of their products. The leading officials of Vellinge Municipality also attended this dinner.

The Vinland Map again

The Vinland Map, is it a forgery or not? This much discussed map has once again been placed on the agenda since two different research teams recently published their results of investigations as to its authenticity.

An American team of collaborators from the Smithsonian Center for Materials Research and Education (SCMRE), Suitland MD, the University of Arizona, Tuscon, and the U.S. Department of Energy's Brookhaven National Laboratory, Upton, N.Y. have used carbon-dating techniques to analyse the parchment on which the map is drawn. Their findings, published in the August edition of the journal Radiocarbon, date the parchment of the map to 1434 A.D. give or take 11 years, 60 years before Christopher Columbus' arrival in the West Indies, and according to this result the map should be authentic.

British scientists from the University College, London have reached another result by using Raman microprobe spectroscopy to identify the chemical components in the inks used for drawing the map. They found that the black contour lines of the land areas tone into yellow on the edges, as if the ink adhered to the parchment later. And this yellowish line contains anatase, an artificial pigment that was not used until 1923. So their conclusion, published in the July 31 print issue of Analytical Chemistry, is that the map itself was drawn after 1923 and therefore must be a forgery.

But the Americans maintain that the British have exaggerated the mixture of the ink and that their result does not at all prove that the map is a fake. So the discussion on the Vinland Map will continue and new, even more elaborate, investigations will be made to try to find out the definitive truth...

Editor's recommendation: For further information about the Vinland Map, see the article The Vinland Map: False testimony about Norse Exploration by Kirsten Seaver published in VHM 2/2000!
The game of knáttleikr will be well-known to readers of the Icelandic Sagas. References to the game are numerous in the narrative medieval texts, and indicate that the game was hugely popular and widely played by the rugged inhabitants of the North Atlantic island in earlier days.

Strictly speaking, we have no references to the game that actually dates back to the Viking Age, but it seems very likely to have been as common then as it appears to have been in the Middle Ages. Likewise, few traces of the game seem to have survived outside Icelandic literature, but it may well have been as popular in other parts of the Viking world.

Unfortunately, none of the medieval chroniclers or saga-writers have found it worthwhile to write down the rules in their entirety. Most likely, knáttleikr was so common at the time that no-one considered it necessary to commit the rules to paper (or, as it were, parchment) as literally everybody knew them by heart anyway. Only hints and fragments of rules occur here and there, so that one source tells that it was played by teams of players, another one tells of the use of ball bats, while a third one claims that each player had his personal opponent on the other team, and so on. Thus, the rules of the game have in effect been lost for some 800 years, despite its once huge popularity.

In the summer of 2002, the game attracted the attention of the staff at the Museum at Trelleborg on Sealand, Denmark. The planning of the annual Viking Market in July was well underway, when the need for some entertaining and relevant new event became clear. Traditionally, the museum arranges some kind of activity to entertain the partaking Viking re-enactors in the evenings after closing time, and the idea of re-creating this allegedly fierce ballgame was born.

For the curator and Mr. Kim Nyborg, head of the Educational Department, an intense reading of the
When studying the Sagas, the reader easily gets an impression of the average knáttleikr-players as complete madmen, psychopathic murderers to a man. Often, stories tell of players being killed (with or without the use of weapons) during a game, and numerous accounts of downright murder can be found. Assuming that these occurrences appear in the sagas for narrative or literary purposes rather than as examples of how the game was actually played normally (and taking the view that even the Vikings weren’t that insane), the outline is still that of a very rough game.

No doubt deaths have occurred during knáttleikr, as they do accidentally on sportsfields even today, but it is unlikely to have been quite as common as described in the sources. It is difficult to seriously imagine a game that involves death as an integrated part of the rules; the Vikings may well have been brutal, but in general they weren’t totally bonkers.

Remarks like the one in Þórgrimsson’s Saga that playing was tough that day, and by nightfall six men lay dead sound very much like a literary invention, as does the tale of Egil Skallagrimsson’s axe-murder of an opponent in his tender youth, as related in chapter V of his saga (especially considering the remark in Víðgróta saga that Tórr Blogi was barred from playing due to his ill-tempered nature).

Laconic, blood-chilling stories like these abound in the sagas, and although the style gives a convincing impression of objectiveness, it is merely a literary convention, not a true-to-life recollection of past occurrences. In most ways, the sagas are far more closely related to the action-packed Hollywood movies of today than to factual history books. The characters of the Saga of Grettir the Strong, for instance, would probably feel far more at home in a Quentin Tarantino-movie than in real Viking-age life.

Furthermore, a certain amount of downright interpretation was necessary; the scarce, grassy and stone-filled meadows of the valleys). Likewise, the remark in Egil Skallagrimsson’s Saga that Skallagrim at one occasion had two opponents assigned to him instead of just the one mentioned elsewhere, may indicate that Skallagrim – a known berserker – was considered too much of a handful for just one opponent. All this, of course, had to be taken into account when attempting a reconstruction of the game.

Obviously, quite a lot of details had to be invented from scratch, or borrowed from what looked like related games. After thorough consideration, the games of hockey, rugby and hurling were chosen as sufficiently close to the descriptions of knáttleikr to be suitable sources of inspiration.

One may even venture a guess at knáttleikr as one possible primeval version of these games – the Irish hurling, at least, seems to go back to the times of the Vikings and could well be inspired by playful Norse settlers (or, of course, the other way round).

In the end, the shape of the goals were adapted from rugby, while handy wooden bats were decided upon for the players. The hockey-like sticks known from hurling were originally chosen, but later abandoned due to the amount of physical damage they were capable of in the hands of an eager player.

However, designing the rules on paper and actually playing the game turned out to be far from the same thing. On the evening of Saturday, July 4th, two teams of volunteers were formed by representatives of the Museum staff and the many re-enactment groups present at Trelleborg for the Market.

The teams were equipped with bats and coloured headbands so that they could be recognized, and sent into the field with 11 players on each team. The

The honorably wounded veteran from the test game, Mr Kim Nyborg, head of the Educational Department at Trelleborg Museum, acted as an umpire on the official opening of the reconstructed game. Photo: Thomas Krakau

Viking-age Iceland was not as regulated and rule-controlled a society as the one we know today. Rules may be rules, but it seems likely that rules were adjusted or even bent to suit a specific situation when required. The number of participants may have varied, for instance, or the size of the field could be regulated according to the physical appearance of the ground (often, it seems, knáttleikr was played on ice, but during summer it must have been on
field had been designed as a rectangle, 40 paces by 15 paces and marked in the corners with spears, and the players went about the game with an enthusiasm that was admirable.

Playing was rough (to say the least), and would no doubt have satisfied our Viking ancestors. Short of actual killings, bodily injury was abundant during the game; shoulders, knees, fingers, foreheads and ankles were viciously damaged, and it quickly became clear that the number of players on each team had to be reduced radically in order to avoid more serious injury.

Also, the number of goals required to complete the game was set far too high; in the absence of accurate, mechanical time-keeping (which the Vikings obviously did not have), the length of the game was designed to be until one team had scored ten goals, making the duration of the game determined by quantity rather than chronology.

After about half an hour of exhausting running back and forth, jumping on opponents (and occasionally one’s own team mates), and pure fistfighting, everybody was completely done for, and still only two goals had been scored. It was unanimously decided that three goals would be quite enough for one game.

When the game was officially played for the first time on the following Monday afternoon, the size of each team had been reduced to five and the general bloodthirstiness of the players was somewhat toned down for safety reasons. Although everybody was very keen to win the game, all the players had a sincere wish to survive, and thus played rather more carefully.

The need for an umpire had also been noted, although the sources make no mention of such a feature, and Mr. Kim Nyborg, being the one most familiar with the rules (and, incidentally, one of the honorably wounded veterans from the test game) was assigned the task. In spite of the various added limitations, the game was still quick, dynamic and rather violent, and the spectators were in for a treat.

In all, the game lasted for about half an hour, during which playing was action-packed and rather unpredictable. Injuries still occurred, but generally of a non life-threatening nature, the worst of which was a fractured rib.

In general, the Museum set out to re-create a vicious and dangerous ball game, and the result was thoroughly satisfying: the reconstructed rules fitted with most of the information in the sources (not all, though, as various sources directly contradict each other and thus choices had to be made), and the general “feel” of the play was one of authenticity. We all felt that we had probably come fairly close to the original rules.

The visitors to the Museum seemed to agree (as loud cries and roars of support or disapproval saluted the players, not unlike what one might see at a football world championship – a trait that is also common in the sources), as did the press; within the week, full page articles had been printed in nationwide papers, describing the bloodthirsty ball-game at Trelleborg and proclaiming the Museum staff slightly deranged in a rather amusing way…

At the Museum, hopes are high to continue the development of knáttleikr. Ultimately, real matches between established teams could be arranged, and proper tournaments initiated. Naturally, it cannot be “as the Vikings played it” as that knowledge is lost for good, but we feel quite confident that the game gives a reasonable impression of how the male youth in past times went about their bone-crushing pastimes…

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**Knáttleikr – the Trelleborg Rules**

Knáttleikr is played on a rectangular field, 40 by 15 paces and with rugby-style goals in each end, with the horizontal pole six feet above ground level. The ball is a leather or cloth ball of app. tennisball size. Sidelines may freely be crossed during play, but when the ball crosses the endlines, the game is suspended and the ball is thrown in by a player from the team whose endlines was crossed. Players wear cloth headbands, the colour of which defines the teams. Before the game starts, the teams agree who is to guard which opponent in particular. Thus, all players have a particular, personal opponent.

The players form two teams, each with five active players. Reserve players can be used to any number the teams prefer, and the exchange of players can take place throughout the game; when an active player wishes to leave the game for a period, he leaves the field and hits his bat against that of the chosen replacement, who then takes over his place in the game.

An umpire is appointed by common agreement, and each team chooses a captain. The function of captain can switch to another player at any time during the game.

All players have wooden bats, and the ball may be kicked, thrown or hit with the bat, but goals can only be scored by hitting the ball with the bat. A goal is scored when a player succeeds in hitting the ball over the horizontal pole of the goal, within the limits marked by the vertical sticks of the goal. The ball may be carried in the hand for up to five steps.

Before the game begins, the ball is placed in the centre of the field. The captains take position five paces from the ball, on the opposing team's half of the field. When the umpire blows his horn the captains battle for the ball, and the game is begun. Apart from the captains, all players must remain in their own half of the field until the ball is in play. When the play gets too fierce (or boring), the umpire may interrupt the game and start again. Tackling an opponent may be done with the upper body only, and bats may not be used for hitting opponent. Deliberately hitting or kicking at an opponent is not allowed. Playing continues until three goals have been scored.
A find from the northern mound in Jelling, the so-called King Gorm’s grave, has been used as the starting point for the pattern on the wall supports of the Viking house in Ale. From “Kungahøjene i Jellinge” av Komerup og H Jensen 1875.

By Anette Christensen, archaeologist. Member of the Ale Vikingagård project.

And Anna Kjærsgaard, conservator. Member of the Ale Vikingagård project.

A Viking-age chief’s residence is being built in the Municipality of Ale, Västergötland. The houses are modelled on archaeological remains from a settlement in Tissö, Denmark, which dates back to the 10th century.

Around twenty of us with different backgrounds are being trained in ancient handicraft techniques. There is also an opportunity to specialise in particular areas, such as Viking cultivation, wrought-iron work, dressmaking and ornamentation.

The main task of the ornamentation group has been to produce the basis for the decor of the first house. Half the load-bearing wall supports, the roof-ridge and around the main entrance of the dwelling house, which measures 16.5 x 7 metres, will be decorated.

We want to emphasise the status that a chief’s residence had during the Viking Age through unusually ornate decor.

Choice of ornamental style
We have started out from the mid–10th century when both the Jelling and Mammen styles dominated archaeological finds in Scandinavia. The Jelling style flourished during the first half of the 10th century and was gradually replaced by the Mammen style, which was most widespread during the latter half of the 10th century.

The idea of naming and classifying styles is modern; it is therefore impossible to find any clear demarcation. The transitions are fluid.

We have chosen the Mammen style for our model, as it has not been as widely copied as the Jelling style. The Mammen style is used mainly on wood, as the design suits this material.

There is one known rune stone with Mammen decoration in Västergötland, but there are few other finds from that time. We have therefore looked for models primarily from Denmark and Norway.

The Mammen style, which takes its name from an ornate axe found in Mammen, Denmark, is fairly widespread geographically. We have found examples in literature from Russia, Great Britain, Iceland, the Czech Republic, Poland, the Ukraine, Germany, Norway, Sweden and Denmark.

The Mammen style is characterised by an asymmetric tendril, and sometimes animals and the so-called Mammen mask. The pattern has a strong or double contour with rows of dot patterns in the contour or inside it.
In contrast to the Jelling style, the Mammen style has no static repeat of shapes or motifs.

As a starting point for our pattern on the wall supports we have used a find from the northern mound in Jelling, the so-called King Gorm’s grave. The chamber grave was built in 958/959, according to dendrochronological estimates.

The mound, which was dug up as far back as the end of the 19th century, contained four objects: one silver goblet (Jelling style) and three partly fragmented, painted wood-carvings (Mammen style).

We start with one of these wooden fragments and expand on it using examples from other finds with Mammen decor, such as a soapstone sinker from Rogaland in Norway, the Mammen axe from Denmark and the Bamberg case from Germany.

We chose the fragment from Jelling because its shape and width suited the wall supports well.

**Sculpture**

We went on a one-week crash course in sculpture, with the master Almut Lucht from Germany. The course started off with simple patterns on a trial board before letting us loose on the real decoration.

The pattern is drawn on a paper template and is transferred to the oak wall supports using carbon paper.

The supports rest on trestles at waist height for an optimum working position.

We use chisels, including special ones for carving, chosen according to the contours of the pattern. The chisels must be sharp to give good cuts. The course also teaches us to sharpen and whet our tools.

The ornamental work is time-consuming and calls for a fair measure of patience.

Once decorated, the wall supports are carried up to the site and assembled on location.

The ornamentation will later be painted with pigment similar to that found on the fragment in Jelling.

We are beginners when it comes to sculpture, and oak is not the easiest of woods to carve. Even so, it has gone well and it has been fun.

Later on we will be building the Great Hall, 35 x 11 metres. As this will serve as a representation house, the decor and embellishment will of course be even more ornate. It remains to be seen what it will look like, but one thing is certain, the ornamentation group will not be twiddling its thumbs…

Anna Kjærsgaard, this article’s author as well as conservator, is here cutting the decorations of the oak wall supports under the guidance of Almut Lucht.

Photo: The Ale Viking Age projekt
By Malin Lindquist

During the Viking Age three large political powers dominated Europe. The French Empire, the Byzantine Empire and the Arabic world. Moreover there was another powerful factor up in the far North, lacking a common interior organisation however.

During the 6th century the Abbassidian Caliphate spread from the Atlantic and Spain in the west to Asia Minor and Turkistan in the east. The Islamic world functioned as a barrier between the northern and southern hemispheres.

Long before the medieval Hanseatic organisation a widespread network of tradesmen existed in the Northern area. Hedeby in Denmark was the most important commercial Viking centre in Scandinavia controlling the trade from the North Sea to the Baltic. Wollin on the southern coast of the Baltic was the most powerful town of the Slavs. And in Sweden, Birka on the Lake Mälaren supported the far trade between East and West and also functioned as a nave in the trading connections mainly eastwards. In the middle of the Baltic, the island of Gotland became the centre of the trade between East and West but with its main connections eastwards.

The Gotlandic coast

During the 9th century the Gotlandic Vikings carried out a lively trade, mainly eastwards. Along the coasts a string of trading places and ports were established. The nearby farmers traded as a supplement to farming and fishing.

Paviken in Västergarn parish on the west coast of Gotland was the first of this kind of place to be excavated. For a long time it was the only known trading-port linking handicrafts and a shipyard. Set on a well-protected lagoon with contact with the sea as well as the water systems beyond it, Paviken was perfectly situated. We know that activity was established there as early as the 7th century and by the end of the 11th century it was at its height. Beside shipbuilding, people devoted themselves to iron forging, bronze foundry and making combs and beads. Imported material as amber, garnet and glass mosaics, iron, hundreds of silver coins, balances and weights all point to important and distant trade connections.

Modern science has now shown us that during the Viking Age there was a string of trading places or ports along the Gotlandic coast. Traces of some 50 places show a very strong expansion that begins around 700 AD, even a little earlier. Some of them, for instance Paviken, Fröjel and Bandelundaviken must be regarded as bigger and important places with far away contacts. Others were more like small fishing villages. The farmers in the neighbourhood carried out the trade as an important complement to farming and fishing.

Paviken “disappeared” around the year 1000 AD but another of these places developed after the 8th century into an important trading place: Visby.

Visby – port of the farmers

Situated on the west coast of Gotland Visby grew to one of the most important towns in the Baltic Sea trade during the Middle Ages, but its origin goes back to the 8th century.

This coastal area was populated as early as the Neolithic era. During the 9th century AD, the Gotlandic Vikings maintained an active trade mainly eastwards. This sheltered piece of land with plenty of fresh water was perfect for a settlement. At first the place was probably only used during the summer season but as time went on people became more and more resident.

In the beginning of the Viking Age the importance of the place seems to have been so great that the new religion, Christianity had its first church built “under the cliff”.

Referring to the thesis that trading was an important complement to farming and fishing one could say that Visby was a farmers’ port.

Cowrie shells found in graves on Gotland. Photo: Raymond Hejdström, the County Museum of Gotland.
The gravefield at Kopparsvik
South of Visby, in the cobbledstones near the sea one of the biggest Viking-age gravefields on Gotland was established. Of estimated 400 graves, 75% were men, the rest women. There were no children except two foetuses, a newborn baby and some “teen-agers”. Noteworthy is that in the part of the gravefield situated closest to Visby 90% were men while in the southern part it was 50/50.

Some of the graves were very rich, others only contained a few objects, but all were of the finest quality. More than 1000 artefacts, mainly jewellery and tools have been taken into care, many of a distinct Gotlandic character. The women’s graves all contained a set of jewellery of such a uniform character that it can be called a Gotland stile: brooches shaped as animal heads and boxes, pins and not least: the important keys to houses and chests.

The men’s graves also contained of a type of standard equipment: ring buckle, strap buckle, strap divider and strap-end. There were normally no weapons. One of the graves contained balance scales with weights of bronze – the trader’s most important tools. In one grave 12 Arabic silver coins were spread over the dead, in another a silver cross had been placed – maybe a first contact with the new religion.

Who were these people buried among the cobbledstones from the end of the 9th century to the late 10th century? The question is of course impossible to answer but it seems to have been a peaceful population due to lack of weapons. The name Kopparsvik originates from the old Gotlandic kaupa, meaning to buy – maybe a hint that these people were tradesmen. Perhaps they were Gotlanders, who in addition to their farming also traded. Perhaps they died during a temporary stay in Visby and were buried there? Or were they foreigners who had adopted the Gotlandic fashion? It is clear however that the grave field was directly connected to the settlement that later became the town of Visby.

The sea connects
In the other part of the world, along the East African coast a long-distance trading network was established and towns grew during the same time and the same conditions as in our part of the world.

According to classical sources, a flourishing trade with cattle, wool, spices, incense, iron and slaves emerged in the late centuries BC between Eastern Africa, Egypt, the Red Sea, Arabia and India. At the beginning of our era the villages along the East African coast lived by hunting, fishing, gathering wild plants and agriculture. They also had long-distance contacts with e.g. Egypt.

Around 500 AD, these societies changed and trade became increasingly important. The villages with their economic base in cattle farming, cereals and iron production grew. Archaeological excavations show that a network of trade routes over the Indian Ocean was established and around the year 1000 AD a string of towns had been established along the coast on the Comoro Islands and Northern Madagascar. A coastal culture emerged, focused on trade.

At the same time, a new religion, Islam, had increased in importance. The Swahili culture emerged here – a mixture of African, Arabic, and Indian characteristics. From Eastern Africa tradesmen set sail towards the Persian Gulf and the Abbasidian kingdom and its capital Baghdad, important stops on the way to India and China. Between November and April, the time of the Northeast monsoon, the African coast was accessible. Ships from the Far East arrived with cotton, spices and porcelain. From May to October they returned with the Southwest monsoon with cargoes of gold, ivory and slaves, among others.

The town reaches down to the beach and is totally surrounded by a wall with towers within which maybe 12000 inhabitants live. The surrounding landscape is magnificent with many trees and gardens with all kind of vegetables, lemons, limes and the best sweetest oranges that have ever been seen. The streets in the town are very narrow as the houses are very high - three or...
Kilwa – the queen of the South

During the 4th and 5th centuries, people settled on a small island off the Tanzanian coast. They were mainly farmers who cultivated sorghum and millet, kept livestock, fished, smelted iron and manufactured pottery. Later, in the 9th century, the houses were built from wood on a foundation of coral. Some trading was maintained with the coast and other islands.

At the end of the 11th century, the village had grown into a town that was visited by Arabic and Indian traders attracted by the highly demanded objects manufactured here. Soon local minting was established.

The inhabitants adopted new customs and built the largest mosque in the whole coastal area as well as palaces for the sultan and houses of stone. The town’s name was Kilwa and a sultan together with a council of elders ruled it. The language spoken was probably Swahili.

The town’s importance grew and in the 13th century Kilwa controlled all the gold transported from the towns located to the south along the coast. Kilwa became the perhaps most important link in a chain of trade between Eastern Africa, Persia, India and China and the inland kingdom of Monomotapa in the Zambesi valley.

In 1502, Kilwa was attacked by the Portuguese who wanted to assume control over the gold trade. Subsequently, Kilwa stagnated and today only grand ruins remain of the town, which was once a melting pot of people with different languages, customs and religions.

Kilwa was, like Visby, a port of farmers.

Could they have met?

A joint factor between these geographically diametrical areas was the same long-distance trade, which was the foundation of the origins of the towns as well as their richness. Probably northern and southern tradesmen never met.

However there are some finds from Gotland that can be traced to East Africa and the Indian Ocean. Two rings of ivory and some seashells have been found in Gotlandic graves. The rings of the inner part or the root of an elephant tusk might have been a kind of edging on a little bag or purse and the sea shells, as some of them have a small ring of bronze, were probably used as pendants or amulets. These shells were found in female graves dating from the 7th and 10th centuries.

The magnificent necklace from the Viking-age hoard from Nygårds, Väskinde parish, was made of beads of glass and glass paste. Out of about 200 beads, 90 were cut out from thick shells from the Indian Ocean, probably cowrie shells. These shells were also very popular among the Arabs.

Another “exotic” group of finds is rock crystal pendants and lenses found almost exclusively on Gotland and seeming to have been most valued. Rock crystal was quarried in Persia, especially Basra, during prehistoric times. Rock crystal was also one of the main trading goods along the East African coast. (It is worthy noting that in 868 AD, slaves from the East African coast working in the salt mines of Basra rebelled!)

How did these exotic items get here? They might have been brought from the East African coast through Egypt to Europe, or they reached Gotland the same way as the Viking silver hoards – on the Russian rivers, not to forget the importance of far-away Baghdad – the capital of the Abbasidian Caliphate. Maybe some Norse traders really reached Baghdad, the town that was such an important place on the long-distance route from East Africa to India and China.

Nobody knows but is it too wild a speculation that tradesmen from North and South actually met somewhere sometime?

This article is based on the exhibition “Beyond Robinson – a journey to the unknown past of East Africa”, a collaboration between Gotlandic Fornsal, Visby and the project Urban Origins Follow-up – Archaeological Institution, Uppsala University.
needle-case of copper alloy, four glass beads, a rock crystal bead and various iron artefacts (mountings, a sprout, a ball-shaped weight and about 15 rivets) besides the urn containing the bones.

The penannular brooch belongs to an artefact type that is usually considered as belonging to male dress. The needle-case and the beads are of a more female character even if beads are also found in male graves.

The artefact types together with the burial custom enable us to say that the grave should likely be dated to the 10th century. The rivets and the mountings may come from a chest or a boat in which the dead was cremated. The oval shape of the burnt layer may indicate a boat rather than a chest even if it is poor evidence.

At Tuna farm situated nearby the grave there are traces of activities from the Viking Age. Among other things are a rune carving on a flat rock and a number of graves from the Vendel and Viking periods that were investigated during 1941–42. The investigation at that time showed that a couple of the graves were precisely Viking-age boat-graves (Hansson 1944).

In the famous account of a journey from the beginning of the 10th century the Arabic envoy Ibn Fadlan describes his meeting with Vikings. He describes the Vikings burial customs in the following way:

“What happens is that a poor person is placed in a small boat that has been made where he is cremated. If it concerns a rich man, they collect his wealth and split it in three parts – one third to his family, one third to cut his shrouding and one third to brew the beer that is to be drunk when his female slave kills herself and is cremated together with her master.

Then they brought a dog that they cut to pieces and threw on the boat. Then they brought all his weapons and placed them along his side. Then they took two horses that had to run until they were lathered. They were then cut into pieces with swords and the meat was thrown on the boat. Then one man brought two cows that also were cut to pieces and placed them there. Then they came with a rooster and a hen, killed them, threw them in the boat” (The Museum of National Antiquities).

This scenario is really not so different from the one in Sollentuna investigated by personnel from the Stockholm County Museum in May 2002. And next to this excavated grave is a still unexcavated grave mound! A future investigation will reveal what it contains.
Fifty years with the Cult Site of Rösaring

By Börje Sandén

The cult site of Rösaring is located high on a glacial ridge some 40 kilometres northwest of Stockholm, in the municipality of Upplands-Bro. It has ancient cairns and a stone labyrinth, together with what makes this site like no other in Sweden – a well-made roadway running north south along the ridge for over half a kilometre (fig.1). A single carbon dating at one end of the road points to the Viking Age. The site provides the best setting yet discovered for fertility rites and wagon ceremonies as described by the Roman writer Tacitus for the goddess Nerthus.

It was in the summer of 1952 that I first set foot on Rösaring. Just one week earlier I had moved to the district to start my job as schoolteacher and church organist in the little parish of Låssa, never guessing that I was to stay on until 1993. Maybe it was the fascination of a region rich in ancient sites and relics that made me stay. I set about learning all I could, talking with my new neighbours as well as reading books on history and archaeology. At first this was just in order to teach local history, but in 1968 I was appointed local representative to the National Board of Antiquities, and then in 1977 came a special three year project on history and local identity coordinated by the National Board of Health and Welfare.

During the 1980s I was asked to write a broad-based history of our community, and since 1987 I have been working along with many others on a voluntary basis, within the Upplands-Bro Research Institute for History of Culture (UKF) – on excavations as well as publications.

As guide for the Rösaring site, I have long been in close contact with new discoveries and gradually evolving ideas about how the site was once used. Much has happened there in the past 50 years.

The cult site of Rösaring

The cult site of Rösaring has attracted many people through the ages, and has been reported by scholars since the 1670s. Unlike other cult sites, no church has ever been built on it, and today it is remote from major centres of population.

Rösaring is situated on a high part of one of the largest glacial ridges in Scandinavia, some 60 m above present sea level and 40 m above surrounding forests and farmland, with a magnificent view over the waters of Lake Mälaren.

During the Stone Age, when the future site of Stockholm was still well under the sea, the Rösaring site would have been a small island far out in the archipelago, not suitable for permanent settlement. But during the Bronze Age, as the land freed from its burden of ice continued to rise from the sea, people would have been able to establish themselves on the fertile soils around the base of the ridge, using the ridge itself for burials and ceremonies. This pattern of use would fit well with the observation of the Roman Tacitus, writing of the Germanic peoples to his north about 2000 years ago, that they worshipped the gods in the open air, not hiding them behind walls.

The cult site is thought to have been in use since the Bronze Age, mainly due to the appearance of the as yet unexcavated cairns. Not far from the cairns and taking up a prominent position at the south end of the ridge is an unusually large and complex labyrinth made up of small stones (fig.2). The name Rösaring is made up of röse, meaning pile of stones or cairn, and ring, as in the rings of a labyrinth.

This labyrinth was listed in 1994 as one of the oldest in Scandinavia, and may date back to early Iron Age or even late Bronze Age. Yet labyrinths made up of small loose stones are difficult to date with certainty, and the only relevant
carbon dating sample so far obtained for the entire cult site of Rösaring came from the well-made, 3 m wide roadway, which runs from the southern end of the site with its cairns and labyrinth, northwards along the ridge-top for 540 m. The roadway is unique in Sweden and may have been used for ceremonial purposes. The carbon sample was taken at the southern end where the road meets a large, flat-topped earth mound, and its date points to the early Viking Age.

Up to the 13th century Lake Mälaren was a bay of the Baltic Sea. One of the main Viking sea routes passed Rösaring, on the way to Uppsala and Vendel (fig.3).

Today, people travelling by road past the church of Bro may notice a rune stone with an inscription using the very word “vikings”. This rune stone tells us that a man called Assur had the role of watching out for Vikings (landvärnare mot vikingar), and that his widow built a bridge (bro) as a memory of him. It is rare that the word “vikings” is recorded at all in old texts, and here it suggests that they were outsiders to the community, and to be feared. Studies of ancient cemeteries at the base of the Rösaring site show that this area was well populated over a very long time.

The ceremonial road
The ceremonial road was an extraordinary find. Although the entire cult site been investigated by professionals for centuries, it was a local amateur archaeologist who reported the road, in 1979. Overgrown with sparse pine forest, the roadway was still relatively intact for its whole length.

It was excavated in 1981–82 by a group of amateurs, led by David Damell. They found it to be bordered on both sides by rows of small stones, and surfaced with a mixture of clay and sand. Along the west side, a ditch was visible. On the east side were about a hundred shallow round depressions, each about 1 m in diameter and 4 to 5 m apart.

At the north end was the stone base of a small rectangular building. At the south end, the flat-topped earth mound had tended to spread down on to the road after a thousand years of rain, so that the road seemed to lead into it.

This is why the first interpretation was of the road being for a funeral procession, with the mound used for burial of some important dignitary after the body had been prepared in the building at the northern end. But in 1985 in Old Sightuna, not far from Rösaring, another flattened mound of similar size was examined. It too had been thought to be a king’s grave but proved to have been a mound for a goddess in the wagon described by Tacitus.

Third, place names in the neighbourhood also call attention to a fertility cult. About 5 km from Rösaring we find the names Härnevi and Ullevi, which refer to the female earth goddess Härrn (Nerthus) and her male counterpart Ull, a sky god, both from the period before the Viking Age. A similar pattern of place names is to be found near all labyrinths lying on ridges crossing Lake Mälaren, as shown by John Kraft in a book published by UKF in 1999.

The labyrinth
The labyrinth at Rösaring was associated with ancient gods already in 1684, when Hadorph, known as the “father” of Swedish antiquarian research, wrote: “… on a high hill … where there is a Trojeborg … there has been much sacrifice to the gods in olden days”.

Labyrinths in Sweden have long been called “Trojeborg” (City of Troy), pointing to a link with Mediterranean countries, where such labyrinths were common before the Roman Empire. The Minoan culture of Crete even used labyrinths as symbols on their coins. Beside the labyrinth on the famous Etruscan vase from Tragliatella is written a name meaning Troy. Full scale or field labyrinths in these countries have not survived. There are some turf examples elsewhere in Europe, but today the majority of field labyrinths are in Scandinavia. Here they tend to survive more readily, being built of stones in a sparsely populated country. Most Swedish labyrinths are near the coast, built during recent centuries for quite different reasons to the 20 or so labyrinths found inland on ancient sites, such as Rösaring.

Typically, these labyrinths have only one path leading to the centre - a round, winding pathway defined by 8, 12 or 16 rings of small stones. Mazes with blind paths did not appear until the 15th century.

The historical form of labyrinths is said to be a symbolic city or castle, (borg in Swedish) from which a woman had to be liberated. The Homeric story of a
ten-year siege to free the fair Helen of Troy may be a relatively recent tale, based on the original ancient myth in which the woman in question was a fertility divinity, to be delivered with symbolic rites from her winter prison at the start of spring. We do not know for certain how this was done - no doubt it was in many different ways in various places and times, according to tales from all over the world. It is worth noting that in the church of Sibbo in Finland, a picture of a labyrinth includes a girl at the centre.

A report about Rösaring in 1717 comes from Johannes Arenius, living in the village at the foot of the glacial ridge. He wrote in a dissertation in Latin: “In the parish of Lossa you will find a massive hill rising steeply in the forest. It is called Rösaring because the place in antiquity was adorned with winding pathways bordered with stones where young people in summertime, up to this very day, come together for dancing and playing.”

It is not hard to imagine that what was by the 1700s just a bit of traditional summer fun for youth, might once have been a serious ritual for a much older community, concerned with survival and the prospering of animals and crops during the coming agricultural year.

Wagon-gods
Fertility gods appear as wagon-gods in many old cultures around the world. Wagons need roads, and there could hardly be a better setting for the ceremony of taking out and/or putting away such a wagon than Rösaring - the only place to date where a suitable roadway has been found so clearly marked in connection with fertility cult.

Many reports of wagons and their gods from other times and places can help us imagine how the site might have been used. Scandinavian examples continue into Christian times, with wagon burials and the crop-blessing processions of St. Eric. Relevant recent publications in Viking Heritage 1/2002 are “The woman on the wagon” by Jörn Staecker and “Freyja – a goddess of love and war” by Britt-Mari Näsström.

In my presentations of the “Rösaring story” I often use Tacitus’ description of the cult of the wagon-borne earth goddess Nerthus, thought to be the forerunner of later wagon-gods. I also include the processional wagons shown on the tapestry of Oseberg together with an image of a goddess and her attendants (Norway, 9th century AD). More examples are found in the writings of Strömbry and Frazer.

My own studies in Egyptology have suggested yet another comparison - between Tutanchamon and the Icelandic outlaw Gunnar Helming! An Icelandic saga that escaped Christian censorship (Flateyjarbók) tells of the resourceful Gunnar who fled into Svea territory (the Mälar region). There he took refuge in a wagon carrying the life-size image of the fertility god Frey, attended by a living priestess, and managed to convince many for a time that he was her companion the god Frey, come to life.

He thus acted as a living incarnation of the idol of Frey, just as the famous Pharaoh did when he represented the living incarnation of Amon, the sun god. Tut-anch-amon was not a personal name, but a title meaning “Amon’s living statue” (from tut, statue and anch, live or living).

Tacitus and the Nerthus cult
Tacitus admired much in the native culture of the peoples of Germania. He described their “invisible” goddess Nerthus who travelled at special times among the people in a covered wagon, which was kept in a sacred grove on an island in the sea (… in insula Oceani… in the Latin version). Before the wagon was returned to the grove, it underwent ritual cleansing in a secret isolated lake, carried out by slaves who were then drowned in the lake. Tacitus mentions seven tribes of people worshipping this fertility deity, somewhere to his north.

Scholars have not identified the place; suggestions have been made, but there...
are some unclear points in his text.
Tacitus never went to Germania, and his report was based on the tales of others.

For anyone wishing to speculate further in the matter, there are two vital points to consider in his story. First, is it possible to identify an island that was an important cult centre at least 2000 years ago, located in an ocean or sea? Second, is it possible to find there a secret isolated lake, where the slaves might be drowned when they had done their duty? Over the years I have entertained my audience with the following proposal.

"... on an island in the sea". To the Romans all of Scandinavia was in an ocean, and the Baltic Sea was simply an ocean extending northwards. The earliest maps of Scandinavia that were drawn in continental countries were based on sailors' tales. When I first saw Willem Barents' map from 1598 (fig. 4), I was astonished because it still showed Lake Mälaren as a bay of the Baltic – a full 300 years after the bay had become a lake, cut off by the rising land!

He showed Stockholm and Uppsala as if separated by an archipelago. If Lake Mälaren was regarded as a bay even then, how might it have been thought of when Tacitus wrote his book in 98 AD – a full 1500 years earlier, when the sea level was at least 10 m higher! Perhaps Tacitus, like Barents, based his story on information a few hundred years out of date. The hilltop on which Rösaring is located really was an island in the sea at that time. Note that to this very day, all of Upplands-Bro is connected to the mainland by stretch of land only 2 km wide. Could it be that we have here Tacitus' island in the sea?

"... a lake, lying in secret isolation". At the end of Tacitus' story, he describes a special lake where the slaves were sacrificed. Alf Önnerfors in 1960 translated the original text as: "a lake lying in secret isolation", Per Persson in 1929 used the words: "in a remote lake", and Hammarstedt in 1916 translated the phrase as "a solitary and well-concealed lake" (author's translations from Swedish).

If we consider sea levels at Rösaring about 2000 years ago, we find a strange-shaped, almost enclosed bay 1100 m directly north of the ceremonial road (fig. 5). It resulted from an unusual geological phenomenon. When the glacier that originally formed this region was about 2 km thick, the gravel, sand and boulders being pushed forward in a watery tunnel under the ice were blocked in their flow by an enormous clump of ice. This "iceberg" gradually melted, leaving behind a cavity. The lower part of this cavity is now a small bay of Lake Mälaren and the upper part is a narrow valley called Djupdal (Deep Valley).

When standing at the bottom of Djupdal, you are surrounded on three sides by impressive steep slopes 25 metres high, and can see the present lake about 200 m away to the north. Of course there would have been other bays and inlets here 2000 years ago, one of them even nearer the processional road, to its east – but all of these would have been too wide and open to be described as any kind of lake, let alone secret or isolated.

The cult site of Rösaring has all the elements which make it an ideal setting for Tacitus' story: a unique ceremonial road suited to wagons, a platform mound at the open southern end and a wagon shed in the forest to the north, beyond which lay a steep sided, almost enclosed, secluded "lake" for the last part of the ceremony, in which the wagon and the covering were cleansed and slaves drowned.

Tacitus mentioned one wagon location and seven tribes, none of which has been convincingly located by any researcher. His description of the northern parts of Germania as "girdled by the sea, flowing around broad peninsulas and vast islands" applies to a very large region.

But if we turn from his text to present-day evidence of place names and land forms, we cannot ignore the possibility that tribes in the Mälar valley worshipped Nerthus, and that Rösaring, being readily reachable by sea and suitable in so many other ways, was a keeping-place for a wagon of Nerthus – maybe even the place that Tacitus was writing about. Rösaring should at any rate not be omitted from future discussions.

**Rösaring, a stimulus to new ideas**
People continue to be attracted to Rösaring, testing new ideas. In the
1980s came dowsers, mapping patterns of earth forces shown by their divining rods, followed by others with various kinds of electronic equipment, some of which gave similar results. In the 1990s, a group of researchers led by Swedish astronomer Curt Roslund studied the ceremonial road at Rösaring and its near north-south alignment in relation to the sun, the moon, the Milky Way and the rainbow. Their reports can be found on UKF’s website (in English, 1997) and in the European Journal of Archeology, April 2000.

Rösaring is indeed a fascinating place. Even for those unfamiliar with its history and archaeology, its unusual geology and natural beauty are great attractions. Its geology also helps us to put forward interpretations of past uses of the place, especially important because the first written reports of Sweden’s geography and history are not fully reliable; they came from people who were never there.

The past 50 years have seen many discoveries at Rösaring, the grandest of all being the ceremonial road that lay intact but unnoticed for centuries. Interpretation of the site has also changed, and if investigations continue, there may be more surprises in store over the next 50 years.

How to get to there:

Låssa and Rösaring are about 5 km west of the township of Bro, which is half an hour by train from Stockholm Central Station.

Further information on Rösaring, travel, accommodation and events: website: www.algonet.se/~ukforsk
email: ukforsk@algonet.se or fax +468 582 41355.

Language revision by Heather Robertson.

Tacitus’ report of the goddess Nerthus.


“(These seven tribes) share a common worship of Nerthus, or Mother Earth. They believe that she takes part in human affairs, riding in a chariot among her people. On an island of the sea stands an inviolate grove, in which, veiled with a cloth, is a chariot that none but the priest may touch. The priest can feel the presence of the goddess in this holy of holies, and attends her with the deepest reverence as her chariot is drawn along by cows. Then follow days of rejoicing and merrymaking in every place that she condescends to visit and sojourn in. No one goes to war, no one takes up arms; every iron object is locked away. Then, and then only, are peace and quiet known and welcomed, until the goddess, when she has had enough of the society of men, is restored to her sacred precinct by the priest. After that, the chariot, the vestment, and (believe it if you will) the goddess herself are cleansed in a secluded lake. This service is performed by slaves who are immediately afterwards drowned in the lake. Thus mystery begets terror and a pious reluctance to ask what that sight can be which is seen only by men doomed to die.”

About the author

Börje Sandén has taken part in many community projects alongside his work as teacher and musician, including concerts in historical settings, computerisation of local history records and a book-on-demand publication system. Four books include the “Vad hände egentligen?” series (1990-93) showing the impact of local history on the early development of democracy in Sweden

Further reading


James Frazer. The Golden Bough. 1922.


Oskar Lundberg and Hans Sperber. Härnevi. 1912.


By Robert Dahlström

“They are Allah’s dirtiest creatures: they do not wash after relieving themselves, or having sexual intercourse, and they do not wash their hands after eating. They are like lost donkeys.”

_Ibn Fadlan_

The common picture of the Viking is that he was generally dirty and dressed in hides. This picture does not quite match with what the treasures of the earth tell us. In many cases Viking cloth was up to 60 times finer spun than we can possibly do with today’s modern techniques. But what about their hygiene?

According to Ibn Fadlan (an Arabic diplomat) the people of Scandinavia were the filthiest people God created. When one reads this it is important to remember that Ibn Fadlan was a devoted Muslim and washed himself ritually at least five times a day according to religious custom. He, of course, thought that whoever did not, was a disgusting heathen. Ibn Fadlan called anyone who did not follow his own customs filthy. Not just the Scandinavians.

Ibn Fadlan backs up his picture of the Scandinavians’ dirty lives with a story about “the Viking morning wash”. Each morning the chieftain was handed a bowl of water, he washed himself ritually and then passed the bowl to the next man in rank who followed the same procedure. The last one in the line, after washing, was probably even dirtier than he was before his wash.

This often mentioned “Viking wash” reminds me of a sketch performed by modern students with a toothbrush mug. This revolting sketch is performed solely to disgust the audience. The first person brushes his teeth and spits into a mug and hands it over to the next one in the line who then follows the same procedure. The last one in line drinks all the water and toothpaste foam and then spits into the mug. I myself have seen this skit performed in a scout camp and I believe that perhaps Ibn Fadlan had seen a similar done by Vikings in Russia and thought that this was common in Scandinavian culture.

One source that speaks against the Ibn Fadlan story is John of Wallingford’s chronicle. According to this chronicle the Vikings did take a bath every week, changed clothes often and combed their hair every day, which pleased the British women greatly. The only similarity between the two stories as told by Ibn Fadlan and John of Wallingford, is that Vikings combed their hair every day.

**Combs**

The most frequent finds in Viking graves are combs. It seems like every man and woman owned one and in the Viking cities archaeologists have found workshops of professional comb-makers. The combs were made of elk or deer antler and were often highly decorated.

Right up to the 11th century the most common comb was a comb with teeth only on one side. They were made of plates of antler with the teeth cut out. These plates were then riveted in between two supporting plates that held the comb together and acted as a handle. The men carried an antler cover that protected the comb’s teeth from breaking. The comb-covers often had some sort of hanging device making it possible to carry the comb in a belt.

There are no finds of antler covers for women’s combs, which might indicate that women carried their combs in a purse or bag. In the 11th century the double comb came into use. These were made in one piece and had teeth on both sides opposite from each other. One side was fine-toothed and the other side coarse.

**Jewellery and tools**

In the women’s tool bucket a pair of tweezers, a toothpick and an ear pick often hung together in a bundle. The tweezers were believed to have been used to remove embarrassing hair growth and as an all-round tool. They were mostly made of spring iron and were sometimes decorated with artistic bronze hangers.

The toothpicks made of bronze or iron are thought to have been used to remove dirt from teeth or nails. The ear pick was a miniature spoon made out of bronze, silver or antler, which was used to remove earwax. Often it had a wider handle that was decorated with figures or patterns.

**Cleanliness a virtue?**

If one carried decorated toilet tools and combs visibly it might be proof of the honour in being clean. The Old Norse poem of Havamal speaks in favour of this.

_Washed and satisfied the man rides to the Thing, even though his clothes are not expensive;_

_Of trousers and shoes shall none be ashamed, nor for the horse he owns, even if not good._

Even if a man did not own expensive things and fine clothes he should not be scorned if he were clean and had a full stomach.

Even when travelling, it was important to be clean. The Vikings that served the Emperor of Miklagård demanded that they have the right to have sauna baths now and then, which shows that being clean was deeply rooted in the Viking culture. Ibn Fadlan says that Vikings did not wash after meals. Maybe they did not but according to Havamal they did wash before the meal.

_Water one needs, who eat shall, a towel and decent invitation: kindness as well if he is worth it, honour and welcome back._

http://viking.hgo.se
As a host it was important to see to that the guests had the opportunity to wash themselves before eating. Washbasins of brass, made in the Rhine district, are found in a lot of Gotlandic graves but the most common washbowls were probably made of wood and are therefore not preserved till our time.

Urban environment
In modern society we still have environmental problems in the big cities. The air is full of toxic gases from cars and factories. But we have fresh running water and sewers. These are things that Viking cities did not have. Animal droppings and household waste covered the streets and the latrines were often located not far from the wells. Infant mortality was high and epidemics lured round every corner. The city was a new thing that Vikings were not used to and it would take a long time to solve the problem with excrement and garbage. Even in our time these problems still exist.

Filthy, dirty Vikings did exist, of course, but they were probably easiest found in cities like Haithabu, York and Birka.

About the author
Robert Dahlström has been a Viking re-enactor for ten years. He is also an amateur historian and – ethnologist. In VHM 4/99 he contributed with the articles Christmas party à la Viking and Drinking Christmas.

Traces of a stave church found
Traces of a stave church from the first half of the 11th century have been found in Klosterstad, a small parish situated in the county of Östergötland, Sweden. In archaeological excavations this summer, postholes as well as marks of chutes for the standing timber logs, have been found. The longhouse of the church was 5,5 by 8 meters and the sanctuary 3,5 by 3,5 meters.

According to the archaeologists the church was built before the time when the country was divided into parishes. In the 11th century private churches were built and this one might have been a church of a great man's farmstead.

Fragments of Christian grave monuments, ornamented with dragon coils and runes were also found, as well as skeleton remains that now will be analysed. The stave church was built during the period of transition between heathenism and Christianity.

Traces of stave churches have been found earlier only in four or five places in Sweden. But in Sweden's medieval period stave churches were common. There is only one still preserved in Sweden, built in the 16th century in the parish of Hedared. The rest have disappeared through fire or decay, and have been replaced by stone churches that stand up better against the ravages of time.

From Sundsvalls Tidning 2002-08-29
VIKINGS IN FLANDERS – Part 1

Text and photos by Erik De Quick

Just have a quick look at a historical map situating the places and districts or countries where Vikings went ashore, and compare it with the places where Viking activities actually take place, in form of museums, Viking markets, Viking houses and so on, and you will soon find out there is only one original place where no Viking activity is organised: Belgium.

For this reason some Flemish people want to put Flanders back on the World map of Viking activities.

In fact it all started with one person who has been fascinated by Vikings for a long time, named Erik De Quick. Some two and a half years ago he started forming an organisation called Viking Genootschap (ESONORM) that was inaugurated as a member of the althing of Foteviken in June this year. So we decided to devote two articles to this Viking activities in Flanders: in the first article Erik will introduce himself, in the second he will tell something more about the organisation he founded: Viking Genootschap. We all hope you will enjoy reading it.

An omen and a lonesome Viking looking for a life-style…

I was born on November 22nd 1957 in Geraardsbergen, a town in the south of the Belgian province of East Flanders.

The place itself not only owns the oldest and most original “manneken pis”, but also knows a great history and is the town with the oldest city charter of Belgium, dating back to 1068 and given by the first count of Flanders Boudewijn 1.

Every year, the last weekend of February, there is still a special procession with a ceremony, which reveals Celtic fertility rituals, such as making a bonfire on top of the hill, throwing ring-formed hard-baked breads into the crowd and, last but not least, drinking living fishes by the authorities.

Growing up in such a rich historical environment must produce a great interest in history. But let us get back to the point. My connection with the Vikings starts in fact with my birth. When my mother was expecting me, she had to rest and to stay in bed. My birth name should be “Lieven”… But a kin of hers came to visit her every day and read aloud every day from a cartoon published in a newspaper and titled the adventures of “Erik de Noorman” (Eric the Norseman). The story was so exciting that every day Elza (the name of the relative) asked my mother to call me Erik. Neither my father nor my mother liked this name, but at the moment of birth and with the emotions involved they decided to name me after the great Viking hero. So I started life with the destiny of being a re-born Viking. I still remember my seventh birthday when I received a Viking artefact for the first time in my life: a plastic horned Viking.
helmet. I still cherish it in my private museum.

During my school time sailing ships and their history fascinated me and so I discovered the perfection of the Viking ships. At the same time I followed evening courses with a woodworker and a furniture maker, and again I discovered the capacity the Vikings showed for woodworking and carving. Everything I did or everywhere I went was connected by invisible ties to the Viking Age and Viking culture. My destiny became clear.

When the school organised a trip for several days to Amsterdam, I met a Swedish boy, who told me he was a real Viking. ... We kept in touch with each other and when I decided to visit him in 1976 on my Interrail trip through Scandinavia, I was already determined to visit the Viking ship museum in Oslo and several Viking sites in Denmark and Sweden. That was the start of a yearly summer visit to Scandinavia and its Viking history. I learned a lot about Vikings in those days and above all I had many contacts with the locals. I went searching for rune-stones and Viking graveyards, fortresses and Viking museums. But it seemed I was the only one in Flanders interested in Vikings...

Then I married in the summer of 1982. We have four children, a girl and three boys. Other than the girl, Marijke, who is the oldest (this also had to do with the first emotions), we gave our children Viking names: Dieter Eriksson, Siegfried Eriksson and Ragnar Eriksson and we reinstated the old tradition of calling the boys after their father ( ...-son).

Possessed by Vikings and infected by the Viking virus, ...

The house we bought needed a renovation and so we intended to create a Viking atmosphere in our house. The only problem was that no contractor knew anything about Viking art or Viking life, so we had to do a lot of things ourselves.

We made a wooden floor from oak planks which were about 4,5 m long and which have a width varying between 16 and 34 cm. We installed a Viking door of 2,60 m high, turning on two wooden pins, between a set of heavy oak beams. No nails or iron were used. The walls were roughly plastered, and painted with a natural pigmented yellow-brown colour, so it looked like the walls of an old house with loam walls.

On every place possible, we used Viking patterns and items to decorate the rooms. The door to the kitchen was engraved with Germanic runes. Look alike stained glass windows, made of plastic, self-adhesive lead and coloured vitriol paint (shatterproof and as beautiful as real stained glass) were fit in it. Two wooden Viking sculptures guard the room. I call them Thor and Heimdal.

A lot of wood was used during the renovation; the planking on the first and second floors was made of Canadian yellow pine and the ceilings of Norwegian pinewood.

I had the feeling the origins of Flanders must have been Viking-oriented. Piece by piece I centralized everything concerning Vikings and the Viking Age. I started buying books about this theme and also concerning runes and mythology. The more I collected, the more I proved I was right, but I couldn't find crucial evidence. And so I had to look for better information, for more scientific information. I had to study the Viking habits and also Viking artefacts, to be able to recognize them when I came across them in museums.

So I am still collecting works about Viking history, runes and mythology, Viking archaeology and so on. My library keeps on growing and has reached about 600 works concerning those items, some 100 Viking cartoons included. Besides these works you'll also find in my library another 2500 works about general European history and history of Flanders, folk history, maritime history and sailing, etc.

Interior of the library.

Because there was a great need to store my books, I started building a real library. Together with my wife's nephew I built a cupboard 6 m long and 3,40 m high. Doors can close the lower part. The doors are sculptured and polychromated, showing some of the Gotland rune stones. Even the posts are ornamented with entwined dragons. I am really proud to show you some pictures of the result. Do I need to tell you it took many hours of research and planning before we were able to build this piece of art?

The first floor needed to be rebuilt as the heart of the Viking spirit. There we built our own bedroom and a room that would serve as museum and office.

Because real Vikings do not sleep in ordinary beds we made a reconstruction of the great Oseberg bed to original scale and original size, with original materials. Making a real replica of this bed is not so obvious, because beech wood deforms very easy when drying. We sleep every night in our Viking bed and no deformation has been seen until now. How this is possible I want to keep secret. We are lucky we are not very tall, because the sleeping area of the bed is rather small. Nevertheless it is very pleasant to sleep in, and it gives a good
feeling. The total weight is about 270 kg and it was installed like a “Viking IKEA”.

And so, even at night, we are able to stay in Viking spheres….

The other room, which, as I already said, is filled with all kinds of stuff with an image of Vikings or Viking ships. But also good replicas are shown. And to top the bill: I am the happy owner of some original Viking artefacts. The most beautiful original piece is a whalebone needle, with an engraved dragon motif. It is about 22 cm long. Also a blade of bone (used for skating), two little bronze dragonheads, an iron axe and spear and a bronze decorated buckle end. But the most valuable piece is a little spinning stone, which seems to have been found in the countryside. A similar spinning stone is mentioned in the catalogue Viking og Hvidekrist.

I collect not only artefacts, images and replicas, but also newspaper clippings about Vikings and archaeological Viking finds, postcards, photos, etc … So if anyone has something concerning Vikings that he doesn’t want to keep, just send it to me, so I can renew and enlarge my collection. I will be very grateful.

I am also collecting all kinds of poems about Vikings and the Viking Age. They may be romantic or historical, and language does not matter. The idea is to make an anthology of Viking poems. Perhaps your readers can help me?

In my collection you’ll find several serious films and documentaries about Vikings and their origins, boats, history and daily life but also romantic or comic films like Erik The Viking. Music tapes, CDs, CD ROMs, you cannot imagine what all exists about Vikings. And I can tell you it is a never-ending story and a lasting task, trying to collect it all.

Besides all this I am writing a novel about Viking-age life, with a mysterious mythical background. Even the runic knowledge is explained. However I am still writing it so it can take a few years before it will be published.

Every midwinter I invite some friends to tell them about the Viking way of life and the habits of the Vikings, their feasts and beliefs. Midwinter is a special feast in our family. We hang little biscuits in runic forms, Viking-shaped sand biscuits, salt pastries with Viking symbols, gold-painted nuts and apples in the Yule tree.

For this occasion we make about 4 litres of a special lemon gin, which is brought for tasting during the four weeks before Midwinter. Our guests like it rather well and no one would miss it.

Of course when you have such a way of life and such a house you cannot keep it quiet. So someone informed the national TV station and they made a short program about it.

Many times I have been invited as a special guest to several radio programs. In one of them they introduced me as a “Viking expert”. From that moment it seemed everyone was interested in Vikings and several students found their way to my Viking museum-library-home to do school projects or speeches about Vikings. I was invited to several places to give speeches and in fact I became the face of Viking-loving and Viking-minded Flanders.

I felt the need of an organisation and so I started one. The “Viking Genootschap” was created. Now our Viking Genootschap is doing research and study on Vikings and Viking Age, runes and mythology. We have our own magazine called: “de Ravenbanier” (the raven banner). I am very proud to tell you I was inaugurated as a member of the Viking Althing in Foteviken, during the summer of this year.

To be continued...

In a next issue you will read more about the organisation, its needs, purposes and working methods. But above all I hope the Vikings will receive the appreciation they deserve in history and until then I will keep on collecting, studying and producing Viking stuff.

Footnotes

1. Oudenberg: can be translated as Old mountain. Some assume it must be translated as Odins Hill or Odins mountain. In this opinion Ouden- would be a deformation of Odin-.

2. These “rituals” take place during the annual feast of “Krakelingen”, the last weekend of February.


4. My adress: Erik De Quick, Korte Mermansstraat 4, B-2300 Turnhout, Flanders, Belgium.
New theories concerning the origin of the so-called Lily-stones question the traditional historiography of the Christianization of Sweden. If the scientist's new hypotheses are right there should have been an Eastern Orthodox kind of Christianity in Sweden in the beginning of the 9th century. In that case this implies that Christianity came to the Nordic countries from the East.

The Museum of National Antiquities in Stockholm, Sweden, has opened a section with the theme Lily-stones and other Eastern Christian objects this summer as a part of their great Viking exhibition.

The mysterious Lily-stones, from the Swedish province Västergötland, are among the country's earliest Christian art.

There are no reliable written sources on the stones' origin and function, and, for that reason, the debate around them has been intense. The decorations on the stones, the lilies, are stylised Life-trees, a symbol for the resurrection.

Traditionally scientists were of the opinion that the Lily-stones were medieval and that they were manufactured at the same time as people started building stone churches in Västergötland in the 10th and 11th century. It is believed that the stones were used as grave slabs for important people and the prototype of the stones is supposed to have come from the Continent or England.

This traditional opinion has now been questioned by a number of scientists, among others doctoral candidate Leif Gren at the Archaeological Institution at Stockholm University.

These scientists now present a new theory; they mean that Vikings returning home from the East had had these stones made and risen in the beginning of the 9th century inspired by prototypes in the Byzantine empire, i.e. about the same as present-day Turkey and Greece. Besides this making the stones much older, it means in that case that they are also a mark of an eastern Orthodox Christianity.

These scientists mean that northerners who entered service for the Byzantine emperor as a kind of bodyguards, the so-called Varangians, contacted this kind of Christianity during their stay. They then voluntarily brought this new faith with them home to the Nordic countries, where it existed in some of the country's social groups until the end of the 9th century. The scientists mean that it was forced from its position due to the break between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church in 1054.

Not only the Lily-stones but also other archaeological objects are mentioned as illustrative examples of the theory that the Eastern Christian faith has existed in Sweden. Small portable altar stones, resurrection eggs, relic crucifixes and Greek crosses carved on rune stones are among these objects.

Perhaps the Christianising of Sweden was much more complicated than what the scientists earlier believed? If this new theory is right the history of religion has to be rewritten. The Viking Age, which is usually looked upon as a religious period of transition between heathenism and Christianity, might also been a period of transition between different Christian doctrines.

The Lily-stones and other Eastern religious objects are now on display at the Viking exhibition at The Museum of National Antiquities in Stockholm until the 15th of June 2003.
Great success for “Vikingarnas Värld” (The Viking World)!

If you visited the excellent archaeological exhibition in Fröjel, Gotland, this summer you may have seen the multimedia presentation “Vikingarnas Värld” (World of the Vikings). But you may have missed that it was especially produced for the exhibition by a Gotland-based team “Nomadia”!

As the Viking habitué you probably consider yourself to be, you’ve already read all those archaeological reports and other bundle of papers concerning the Vikings and the Viking world. But to be honest, how effective is this reading when it comes to really understanding Viking-age life and mentality, often at late nights? Doesn’t all this effort most of all give the eager Viking student grey hair and reddish eyes? Wouldn’t it be nice therefore, to just sit back and let the dramatic atmosphere of trade and conquer come to you easily for a change? Without having to read as much as a single line to really get the sought-after glimpse of what the Viking-age turmoil in far-away ancient realms could be like?

Now all this is possible with modern technology, of course. The solution comes, like so many times before, from the team behind the now-veteran web-craze “Meadshock”, well-known to all Viking Heritage web-crawlers. The result this time is a CD-ROM especially produced for this summer’s archaeological exhibition in Fröjel, Gotland, by “Nomadia”.

Each slideshow describes one important Viking-age town or place essential for trade and other impulses. It all starts with a presentation of two brothers and one sister who, in an attempt to restore the suddenly-lost family honour, feel forced to travel in three different directions to seek satisfaction. One brother goes trading to Baghdad in the East, the other brother goes plundering to Paris in the West and the sister gets married in Iceland and travels to Newfoundland in the North. The result is a bit more visual than what we’re used to in this connection.

If you had the opportunity to visit Fröjel this summer, then consider yourself lucky because you know what the hype is all about! To all you others, let’s hope for a future public release of “Vikingarnas Värld” (The Viking World)! If for nothing else than to just give you a chance to soothe those reddish eyes!
Rosala Viking Centre – a visitor centre in the Finnish archipelago

By Paula Wilson
Photos Copyright: Wilson Marin

The Viking Age
During the Viking Age there was a harbour and a market place in the sound between the islands Rosala and Hitis in the southwest archipelago in Finland. The sound was called Örsund, and it is mentioned in the 13th century itinerary of the Danish king Valdemar II. The harbour was part of the important trading route to the east. From Örsund the route continued to Russia and along the Russian rivers to the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea.

Archaeological excavations by the Finnish National Board of Antiquities in 1993-1997 have brought to daylight Viking-age jewellery, weapons, coins etc. Following years we built more houses and in 1997 we founded Rosala Viking Centre, a visitors’ centre with the aim of presenting the history of the Vikings in the archipelago.

The Centre consists of an exhibition building, reconstructed houses and an ancient path with a reconstructed field labyrinth, sacrificial altar etc. The centre is owned by our family enterprise, Wilson Marin, and we wish to develop the centre into an interesting Viking village, where it is possible to experience the history of the Vikings in many different ways.

The exhibition presents archaeological findings from the harbour, Viking-age market goods, clothing and weapons. Dioramas, Viking figures and a video film bring to life the Vikings and their gods.
There are four reconstructed houses: a dwelling house, a Viking-age Christian chapel, a smithy and a chieftain’s hall. It is possible to have dinner in the dwelling house and chieftain feasts for up to 80 persons in the chieftain’s hall. It is also possible to stay overnight in the chieftain’s hall. We even have clothes for those who wish to dress like the Vikings.

The Viking centre
The Viking centre is visited by many school children, sailors who sail in the archipelago and groups of people who want to experience the Viking Age by eating, sleeping and dressing like the Vikings. In the year 2002 about 10,000 people will visit the centre.

The centre is situated in Rosala, an ancient fishermen’s village in the most southern part of the southwestern archipelago. According to a legend the village was founded by four Viking brothers: Nils, Måns, Thomas and Mickel. They came by boat from Roslagen on the east coast of Sweden. Nowadays a ferry goes to the island of Rosala 6–7 times a day and taxi-boats also carry visitors to the island.

Other sights to visit on nearby islands are the national park centre in Kasnäs (where the road ends and the ferry begins) and the famous Bengtskär lighthouse at the entrance to the Gulf of Finland (18 km south of Rosala).

The archipelago is well known for its natural beauty and the landscape is so well preserved that it’s possible to experience almost the same scenery today as the Vikings did a thousand years ago. Rosala Viking Centre welcomes visitors to come to Finland in the footsteps of the Vikings. “The Viking islands” in the Finnish archipelago are well worth a visit.

Tandgnostir, the goat, guards the Rodeborg chieftain hall.

The chieftain hall Rodeborg stands ready for a sacrificial Viking feast.

ERRATA

In VHM 2/02, in the presentation of the new book Äspingen – The means of transport for the ancient Orient traveller, written by Fredrik Koivusalo, an unsuccessful translation of the name for this boat was made by Viking Heritage and not by the author of the book.

The term äsping comes from a hollowed-out log from the aspen tree, which was used for producing the boat. Often in English texts the terms “dugout” or “dugout boats” or analogously the word “asping” are used.

We are very sorry for any misunderstanding this may have caused the author and our readers.

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EDITOR
The Viking Times – A Viking comes to town

Just east of the church in Löddeköpinge in the region of Skåne, Sweden, work is in progress to create a new historical establishment – The Viking Times – based on our Viking heritage.

In this historical area the earliest Christian cemetery containing about 2500 graves was situated. Archaeological digs have shown that the cemetery was used from the early 11th century until the late 12th century. There are also signs of two wooden churches built on the site before the present stone church was founded.

Next to the old cemetery is a simple newly erected building containing office space and an exhibition describing the project, which will be built on the 30-hectare site designed for this purpose.

The name The Viking Times was chosen because the purpose is to describe the development during the 300 years of the Viking era. The objective of the project is to present interactive knowledge on how we lived one thousand years ago.

Reconstructing a Viking-Age Landscape

Looking a couple of years into the future the flat farmland will have been transformed into an exciting landscape with realistic Viking buildings and activities.

For the future visitor to The Viking Times the first visible sight will be a fort with a moat and drawbridge. Inside will be found an administration area, a lecture room, a shop and a restaurant/café. Visitors will be able to follow the production of handicrafts, which will be for sale in the shop. The products will be made following methods used by the Vikings and it will even be possible for the visitors to participate. There will also be an area for various historical exhibitions as well as concerts.

After passing through the main building the visitor will enter into the world of the Viking era in an authentic landscape the way it is thought to have looked one thousand years ago.

The main building forms a sluice gate from the present into the past. On footpaths and footbridges you will walk through history. There will be new and unusual smells and sounds with every experience from the Viking era. The site will be shielded from the outside world by vegetation.

The landscape will introduce the way the Vikings lived and farmed, their handicraft, their religion and how they entertained themselves. The farm

This is the design and plan for the area, as large as 16 football fields. All pictures copyright of Viking Times.
Around one thousand years ago maybe a shepherd boy took a rest. When he saw a small boat with reefed sails on the Lödde river on its way to the sea, he carved the image on his small whetstone.

animals will be of breeds similar to the ones the Vikings kept. In the stream that runs through the site there will be small boats for cargo and fishing and a small shipyard. A small watermill will be reconstructed to grind flour to be used in the village.

Lödde river, which borders one side of the site is the natural route to the sea a couple of kilometres downstream.

At the end of the walk the visitor will find a reconstruction of one of the churches once situated here. It was the first Christian church in this area and the aim is to reconstruct it to look as authentic as is possible. In order to do this a reference group of various experts was set up consisting of people representing, among others, universities and the church. The group has discussed what the exterior and interior of the church might have looked like and, although no definitive conclusion could be reached, a basis for the project will be finished during the autumn. This work is led by associate Professor Anders Ödman.

The realization of the project
Lotta Jonson, the heart and soul of the project tells us that the whole project will be fully completed by 2006 but some parts will come into use before then.

“We are keeping to the timetable, which we set when the formal organisation was established two years ago. This means that we have almost finalised all the formal permits and agreements necessary for a project like The Viking Times.

We have received financial contributions from Kävlinge Kommun, Skanska AB, Framtidens Kultur and several local businesses. This financial support has obviously been invaluable. We have also received a lot of support and interest for the project from the local population. We try and keep people informed with newsletters where we describe how the project is progressing and we also inform what life in Löddeköpinge was like during the Viking era.

On September 7-8, we will organise an “open house” for the general public. Visitors will be able to try everything from making handicrafts to shooting with bows and arrows. They will be able to watch rune carving and help with the cooking and churning butter. There will be music and story-telling for children. The Viking Times is a very exciting project. It is going to be the largest reconstruction of a Viking environment in Scandinavia. Everything will be done on a scientific basis to make it as authentic as possible. Naturally this is going to cost a lot of money and we are dependent on financial contributions. We are open for discussions with corporations regarding sponsorships and we believe we can offer something valuable in return in the form of PR and opportunities to use the establishment for various activities. We have also formed an organisation for individuals to support us. The name of this is “Meginjord”, the god Thor’s belt, which increased his strength. Membership is SEK 200 and presently this entitles members to receive our newsletters and attend special activities in the area. We have recently also set up our own website, where more information can be found.”

Behind “The Viking Times” is the Viking Foundation, a politically and religiously independent non-profit making organisation. The Board of the foundation consists of representatives from the business sector, universities, museums and local government.

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In Thorgunn Snaedal’s thesis (defended in Uppsala on April 28, 2002) c. 250 out of the total number of approximately 400 Gotlandic runic inscriptions from the 3rd century to the beginning of the 17th are discussed. When, during the 15th and 16th centuries, the runes had fallen mostly into disuse in other parts of Scandinavia, the Gotlanders continued to use them, now parallel with Latin script.

The latest dated inscription, from 1621, is found in the chancel of Atlingbo church, and mentions Jakob Isums. The early inscriptions are few and are inadequate for linguistic analysis, but from the 9th century and up to the beginning of the 17th century the development of the Old Gutnish language can be followed.

As an archaeologist I will not attempt to comment on the linguistic discussion, but more on the implications for the cultural history of the Viking Age.

Chronologically, Snaedal divides her material into the following eight groups:

1. The period of primitive Norse (late 3rd to beginning of 6th century) with 14 inscriptions;
2. Early Viking Age (c. 700 - 1025) with 15 inscriptions;
3. The Mission period (c. 1000 - 1150) with 36 inscriptions;
4. Early Middle Ages (c. 1150 - 1225) with 16 inscriptions;
5. Early High Middle Ages (1250 - 1325) with 32 inscriptions;
6. Late High Middle Ages (14th century) with 60 inscriptions, of which 54 occur on grave slabs;
7. Late Middle Ages (15th century) with 50 inscriptions;
8. The period of Reformation (16th century) with 15 inscriptions.

For Viking-age scholars groups 2 and 3 are of course the most important. The title of the thesis is a quotation from one of the rune stones belonging to group 3, G 343, found at an excavation in the ruins of St Hans’ Church in 1982. This stone has an interesting history: it was originally a picture stone from the 5th century, then during the mission period was used as a rune stone with an inscription and richly decorated with rune animals and an elaborate cross, and finally, in the 13th century, it was split up into pieces and reused as slabs of a sarcophagus!

The text of the rune stone goes “… erected the monument to the memory of Hailgair, father … God …. his soul. Always while the world wakes this monument shall lie here over the man to whom the heir made it … and Torlai., they carved the stone.” While the world wakes’ means as long as the world lasts.

In the chapter on research history we are told that the study of the Gotlandic runic inscriptions was taken up as early as the beginning of the 17th century, when the famous Dane Ole Worms gained some knowledge of them, and at the end of the century the Swedish antiquarian Johan Peringskiöld included pictures of some Gotlandic rune stones in his Monumenta Sveo-Gothorum.

Famous names from the 19th century are C.G. Hjelting and Carl Säve, and from the 20th century Hugo Pipping and Otto von Friesen. Two out of three planned volumes of Gotlands Runinskrifter in the series Sveriges Runinskrifter appeared in 1962 and 1978 respectively, and the third volume is under preparation.

The large selection of Gotlandic runic inscriptions is strictly presented and linguistically discussed by the author. More comparisons with the rune stones from mainland Sweden and from other areas within the Viking world would have been appreciated. For example, in connection with the exhaustive discussion on the important Pilgård stone, carved in memory of Rafn who was killed in one of the dangerous Dniepr cataracts, the single known Russian rune stone from Berezanj (a small island in the Black sea, close to the mouth of Dniepr), could have been mentioned.

The inscription tells us that Grane made this sarcophagus for Karl, his trading partner. It has been suggested that this trade expedition might have originated in Gotland, because of the word valv in the text. However, this word is known also from some inscriptions in Västergötland as well as in one single instance from Östergötland and Uppland respectively.

Another example: the wording sätta eller
The Visible Faith. Runestone crosses as reflections of the Christianisation of Sweden
Written by Linn Lager
Occasional Papers in Archaeology 31, Uppsala University
ISBN 91-506-1539-4

Rightly enough, a lot of people find runes and runestones fascinating. In Sweden, as early as the 17th century, it was seen to it that known stones were registered. A pioneer in this field was Johan Bureus, who in the end of the 16th century set his eyes on a runestone in the church of Riddarholmen, Stockholm, and this particular stone, which is missing today, laid the basis of this interest of his.

Recently two theses have been presented that reveal new discoveries regarding runestones. One of them is Work and Worship by Laila Kitzler Åhfeldt from Stockholm University, and the other is Den synliga tron by Linn Lager at Uppsala University. It is interesting to compare these two theses with each other, since one uses quite new methods while the other works with more conventional ones.

Linn Lager has three aims with her studies; to try to classify the shapes of the crosses on later runestones from Scandinavia, to find similarities in the shape of crosses on Swedish runestones and the

By Anne-Sofie Gräslund
Ph.D. Archaeologist
Uppsala University

Work and Worship
Laser Scanner analysis of Viking-age Runestones
Written by Laila Kitzler Åhfeldt
The Archaeological Research Laboratory, Stockholm University
ISBN 91-89338-10-3

By Torsten Svensson,
Art historian specializing in Medieval Church Art

Laser technique reveals the rune carvers’ secrets

New book!

By Thorgunn Snaedal
Medan världen vakar
Studier i de gotländska runinskrifternas språk och kronologi.

English title: While the world wakes
Studies in the language and chronology of the runic inscriptions of Gotland.
ISBN 91-506-1549-1

New book!

New books!
rest of Europe, and finally how the custom of erecting runestones with images was apprehended and used by the contemporary people.

Laila Kitzler Åhfeldt has two aims: to distinguish different rune carvers’ techniques by using a laser-scanner and if possible try to ascertain if different stone carvers worked together on the same stone.

The more interesting parts of Linn Lager’s thesis are the matters of erecting runestones and the stones’ ornamentation and motifs in relation to the contemporary society where they were made. Her discussion about the different motifs as cocks or masks is of great importance for those interested in the transition period between pre-Christian and Christian society.

Laila Kitzler Åhfeldt takes the help of laser technology when trying to identify the different rune carvers, and this has given a good result. As a kind of reference to her work, she has made use of two present-day rune carvers. When using laser scanning on their work she has been able to determine quite well which areas of the stone each carver has cut respectively. Also her results regarding older runestones show that more than one carver has taken active part in creating these stones. For example three rune masters seem to have been involved in the carving of a stone, credited to the rune master, Öpir.

Consequently many questions arise: who is the principle master and has he really taken part in the work with all stones mentioning his name, or should the name be seen as a signature for a family or the like instead?

A very important result is that every rune carver’s cutting technique or modus operandi is individual, not at least with the thought of possible use of this method in medieval churches or with churchly objects made of stone, like baptismal fonts. The difference in time between the establishment of the later runestones and the early churches is very short, or if to bring matters to a head we could say that there is none, they are simply contemporaneous. Of course the optimum would then be to find a stone master who had carved both a runestone and had done some work in a church.

This article was first published in Swedish in Populär Arkeologi 2/02.

A number of recommendations emerge from the discussions, and these include:
- The integration of spatial planning into all levels of government
- To encourage governments to produce their own standards concerning the historic environment and to adopt existing European standards
- To encourage public involvement in archaeology and cultural heritage
- To raise awareness of the importance of the historic landscape
- To encourage the integration of research into spatial planning development schemes
- The management of change
- To improve communication between different disciplines

This book will be essential reading for archaeologists, landscape and conservation professionals, spatial planners and all those concerned with the preservation of our cultural heritage.


A unique coin has been found among the more than 14,000 coins in the famous Spillings silver hoard (See VHM 3/99, 4/99, 1/2000, 4/2000). The coin is the first Jewish one that has ever been come across in a Viking-age find. The coin has an earlier unknown combination of reverse and obverse that makes it unique and the inscriptions on the coin indicate for the first time a link between Khazar and Judaism.

Most of the coins in the Viking-age Spillings silver hoard are from distant countries. On their way to Gotland they had lost their role as coins and instead become silver objects with a value depending on their weight. Approximately 85% of the coins in the hoard have been cut up into smaller pieces. This was done so that the coins should weigh exactly as much as was needed. Coins, rings, bracelets, rods etc. – either whole or in pieces – were used as a means of exchange or money.

So far 1400 of the coins in the hoard have been analysed. Almost all of them are Islamic, which is normal as Islamic coins were the principal type of coins in the Nordic countries right up to about 970 A.D. Some of them have been examined and classified by Gert Rispling, Orientalist at the County Museum of Gotland. The unique coin was discovered during this task. The coin in question has been dated to the 830s A.D. It can be connected to an issue of coins with the name of the mint, Ard al-Khazar (the land of the Khazars), as a part of its stamp. On one side of the coin there is an inscription that says, “Moses is the prophet of God”. The inscription is parallel to the Islamic confession of faith “Muhammed is the prophet of God”. The inscription about Moses is known earlier from four other coins but it has never been found with this obverse stamp, which in this case links the coin to the Khazars.

Thanks to its location, the Khazar realm between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea could benefit from the trade between the Vikings and Muslim merchants. The Khazars are famous foremost for two things; they stopped the Islamic attack in Caucasus so that the Muslims could not get to Europe from the East and they, or at least those in a leading political position, adopted Judaism.

Quite a number of written sources mention the Khazars as Jews. However, in the many archaeological excavations that have taken place in Russia only a few, if any, Jewish objects have been found that can confirm this assertion. The coin from the Spilling silver hoard has, therefore, great numismatic importance. It has been on display at The Museum of National Antiquities in Stockholm during the summer.

The unique coin from the Spillings Hoard with the inscription “Moses is the prophet of God”. Photo: Kungl. Myntkabinettet

The unique coin found in the Spillings silver hoard.

The Spillings Research Project

In the summer of 1999 the world’s largest silver hoard was found on Gotland, Sweden (See articles published in VHM 3/99, 4/99, 1/2000, 4/2000 and this issue). The hoard has been on display in the Museum of National Antiquities in Stockholm this summer.

It is now being valued, registered, photographed and systematized. When all this is done the hoard will be sent back to Gotland for scientific work up and publication.

The Spilling research project, which is International, will then deal with:

- Preservation
- Determination of the coins and analysis of the other silver objects
- Analysis of the find place and the context
- A publication in two parts; a scientific one and a popular scientific one
- An exhibition at the County Museum of Gotland

The project leader is Majvor Östergren PhD at the County Museum of Gotland.

The Spillings research project is meant to be concluded in 2005 with a new exhibition at the County Museum of Gotland in which the Spillings’ silver hoard will be presented. This will be a part of the “Year of the Vikings” on Gotland, planned by the network “Gotland Viking Island” (see a news item in this issue).
International virtual university courses about Vikings starting in spring 2003!

Viking Heritage, being a part of Gotland University College, is planning at least three new university courses about Vikings! As it looks today two of the courses, during spring and autumn, will be Internet-based courses. This makes it possible for students to participate in university education independent of place or time. The third course, during the summer, will be held on Gotland as a field course/field school for university students.

The prerequisites for the courses are general entrance requirements for university studies. We are still at an initial stage and will give you more exact information in the next issue of Viking Heritage Magazine. Also check our homepage http://viking.hgo.se

The system with Swedish credits can best be explained as: one credit is one week of full-time university study. So 10 Swedish credits are 10 weeks of study, full-time.

1: The Viking Age, an introduction to the Vikings and to archaeological theory. This course gives the student an introduction to the Viking Age in general and also an insight into archaeological theory. Study period: spring 2003. The course gives 10 Swedish credits or 15 ECTS.

2: Field course/field school: students will take part in an excavation of a Viking-age site on Gotland. This course is focusing on excavation methods, Viking-age artefacts and field documentation. There will be lectures about Viking-age harbours and trading places as well as more general lectures about excavations and the Viking Age. Study period: five weeks during the summer (probably from middle of July until August). 5 Swedish credits or 7.5 ECTS.

3: During the coming autumn one or maybe two different courses are being planned. The courses will explore special themes from the Viking Age. A team is working with the curriculum and study literature at the moment. The courses are planned to comprise 5 Swedish credits or 7.5 ECTS each.

Viking Beads on CD-R

The Viking Gallery is a project dealing with publishing artefacts from the island of Gotland, and mainly from the Viking port of trade at Fröjel. It will be done in the form of CD-R, where the first one, dealing with the beads, is just published. The CD contains almost 200 of the best-preserved beads out of a total number of around 500 beads (including some 200 beads from the graves excavated that will be dealt with in a future CD-R. An introductory text (PDF-file) gives a short review of Vikings and beads, and how beads were made. There is also a short description of Gotland and the Viking port itself.

The beads are displayed in galleries, readable through a normal web browser. The beads are also available for closer examination in the form of high-resolution photos (jpg)

In the interest of disseminating the history of the Vikings, there are further issues of CD-R’s to be made. The next volume concerns combs and comb-making in the Viking Age, with a short compilation about combs in Scandinavian prehistory in general. Preliminary release date is September 2002.

Next will be a CD-R about knives, one of the most common artefacts in Viking graves. Besides giving high resolution photos of different kinds of combs and knives, there will also be detailed measurements of size and design. Further, in the CD-R series, not only artefacts, but also things like houses, graves, runestones and agriculture will be dealt with. For further information about the project, please visit www.arkeodok.com

A grave excavated on the northern grave field in Fröjel during the international field course in 2001. The grave contained a man about 60 years old and around 175 cm tall. Photo: Petter Åkesson.
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The objectives of the network are:
- To develop and maintain the European Institute of Cultural Routes project.
- To co-operate with schools, universities etc. in the field of education and training in the study of the Vikings.
- To collect information of present Viking history activities, and to distribute information about Vikings and their history.

Viking Heritage acts as a monitoring and advisory body on all issues relating to an enhanced understanding of the Viking history.

In promoting these aims, VIKING HERITAGE provides an information service with VIKING HERITAGE SERVER & DATABASE (http://viking.hgo.se) and VIKING HERITAGE MAGAZINE.

Publisher and Editor-in chief: Dan Carlsson, dan.carlsson@hgo.se
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Editorial staff: Alexander Andreeff, Mia Göranson, Olle Hoffman, Therese Lindström, Catharina Lübeck
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Language and translation check where others are not mentioned: Luella Godman, luella.anders.godman@lrf.se
ISSN 1403-7319