

ISSUE 04 • FEBRUARY 2019

# HUGGIN & MUNIN



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## FROM THE EDITOR

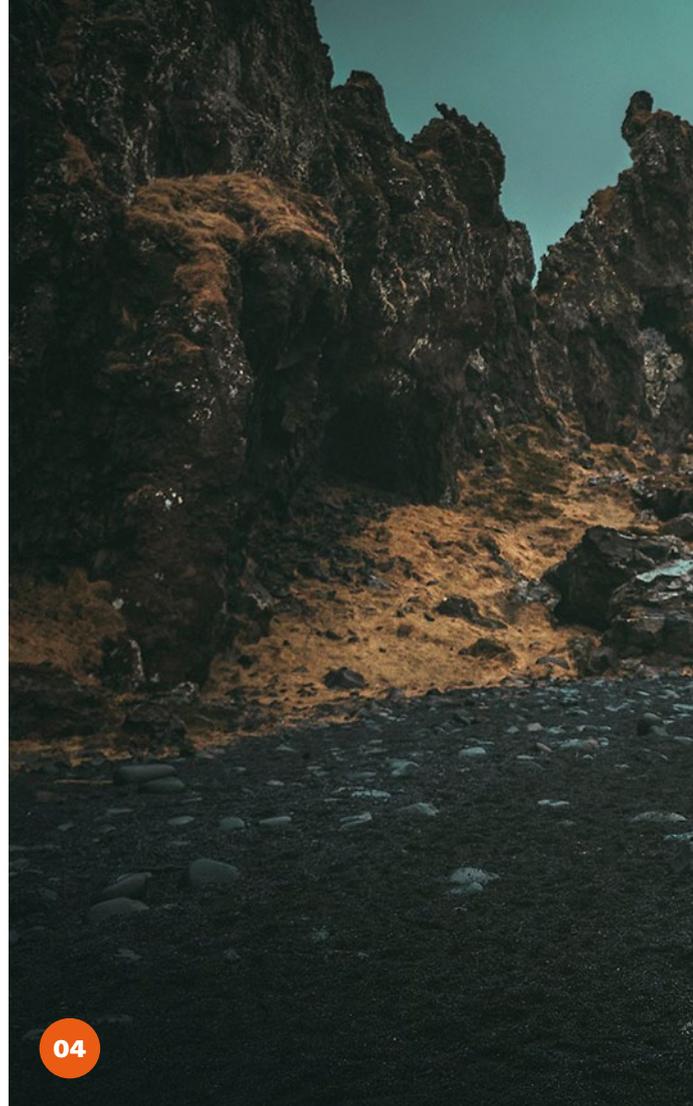


### Welcome to the fourth issue of Hugin & Munin.

The long cold winter is nearly at an end, but there is still time to come and sit by a warm glowing fire and enjoy some of the stories from around the Viking World. To coincide with the Follow the Vikings (FTV) seminar in York, Odin's eyes and ears were in the Kingdom of Jorvik in the shadow of Ivar "the Boneless" who captured the city back in 866. They headed south, to Holland to see the restoration of Godfried's sword found in the murky depths of the river Maas (Meuse). Then onto 'Hispania' discovering the secrets of the San Isidoro box in León. On their return north our feathery friends flew into Celtic Ireland, Norway and the Viking colony of Iceland following in the tracks of Melkorka, an Irish Princess forced into slavery by Viking raiders. It is also my great pleasure to welcome a true legend Michael Wood, journalist, broadcaster, author and film-maker, who has kindly written "England: The Vikings and the Forging of a Nation" for Hugin & Munin. Finally, in an exclusive interview we caught up with Hollywood and TV star Eric Johnson who is playing one of the most famous Vikings of them all, Erik "the Red", in the History channel's series "Vikings". As the FTV project nears completion, this will be the final edition of Hugin & Munin as part of that project. We hear about future plans for the Destination Viking Association from the new chairman and learn about the FTV graphic novel "Lore of the Hávamál". With the Hávamál in mind and as is tradition, I will leave you with a few wise words from Odin, the High One.

**Ben Baillie**

**"The foolish man thinks he will live forever if he avoids battle; but old age gives him no peace, though spears might spare him."**



04



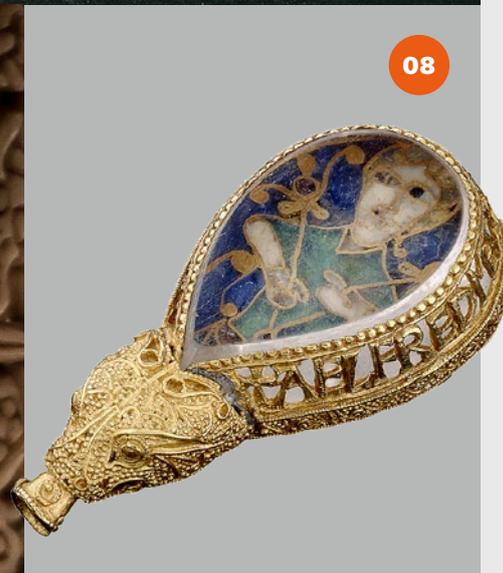
28

# CONTENTS

- 
- 04** MELKORKA  
A slave woman of the Viking Age
- 
- 08** ENGLAND  
The Vikings and the forging of a nation
- 
- 14** INSTAGRAM  
#followthevikings
- 
- 16** THE LEÓN CODE  
Deciphering and uncovering the secrets of the Viking San Isidoro box
- 
- 20** THE FALL OF EOFORWIC  
Ivar “the Boneless” and the capture of York
- 
- 26** GODFRIED’S SWORD  
The restoration of a unique Viking sword found in the murky depths of the River Maas (Meuse) Holland
- 
- 30** RAVEN’S EYE TV & FILM  
Exclusive interview with Eric Johnson
- 
- 32** HUGIN & MUNIN,  
BOOK CORNER
- 
- 34** LORE OF THE HÁVAMÁL  
Helen Smith interviews two of the creators of the graphic novel – Cat Mihos and Jouni Kopenen
- 
- 38** DVA NEWS  
Destination Viking Association member news
- 



18



08



34



Editor: Ben Baillie

Cover image: Ragnarok 7515, © York Archaeological Trust

*Hugin & Munin is the magazine for the Follow the Vikings project. This project was developed for the Destination Viking Association and all partners are members of the Association.*

# MELKORKA: A SLAVE WOMAN OF THE VIKING AGE

**Rosalind Kerven**

Slavery was an inescapable fact of the ancient world. The Viking Age was certainly no exception, with raiders and merchants co-operating to run a lucrative, insatiable slave trade. Captives of both sexes and all ages were valued in the marketplace, but unfortunate young women seem to have found themselves in particular demand.







Icelandic slave woman  
© Rebeca Saray Photography



**he grim fate of those** caught up in one violent raid was vividly described by the 11th century Norwegian poet, Valgarðr:

*...fair women were captured.  
A lock secured the girl's body;  
many a maiden went...to the warships;  
bright fetters bit greedily into the flesh.*

But what happened to such victims after they were taken? There are no written records from the captive women themselves, but some of their stories were passed down orally through many generations. Eventually, they were transcribed in the medieval Icelandic family sagas, which claim to tell of genuine events that occurred in the centuries after the Norse settlement of Iceland.

One of the surviving stories concerns the strange twists and turns of fate that affected a woman of the 10th century. It is told as a sideline to the main plot in Laxdaela Saga, which was written anonymously some 300 years later. The saga introduces our subject as a young captive at a slave market, which formed

part of the festivities around a convention of the Scandinavian kings. This was a major event, with huge crowds of followers and hangers-on milling around booths in the assembly grounds.

In one of these booths, behind a dividing curtain, twelve wretched women were sitting in a row. They were waiting to be sold by their 'owner', a wealthy merchant known as Gilli the Russian. This particular young woman sat silently at the end, dressed in shabby clothes. Suddenly, the curtain was pulled aside, and Gilli led another man into the inner chamber. The stranger was a well-to-do Icelandic landowner called Hoskuld Dala-Kolsson. The shabbily-dressed woman soon found him ogling her, and heard Hoskuld enquiring, in the words of the saga:

'What's the price of that woman?'

Gilli replied, 'Three silver pieces is what you must weigh me out for her.'

*'It seems to me that you charge very highly for this particular slave woman,' said Hoskuld. 'That's the normal price for three.'*

*Gilli said, 'You're right, I consider her to be worth much more than the others.'*

Gilli gave no hint of why he considered her so valuable, and even admitted frankly that she had a disability. She was, he said, a deaf-mute, for she had never spoken a single word to him. Perversely, both the high price and the problem stimulated Hoskuld's eagerness to purchase her. He took out his purse at once, handed over the full amount of silver and took the slave-woman straight back to his own booth. That night, the saga says blandly, *he slept with her* – a euphemism for what, from her point of view, could only have been rape. The next morning, he assuaged his conscience by dressing her up in splendid clothes to parade her about as he conducted his business errands. When he had finished, the young woman found herself forced onto a ship with him, bound for Iceland.

After they arrived, she quickly found relief from Hoskuld's sexual attentions – for his wife, Jorunn, was obviously not at all pleased to meet her. However, Jorunn pitied the slave-woman's disability and grudgingly allowed her to share their house. Hoskuld had to give up his physical relations with



Lofotr Viking Museum, Norway  
© Rebeca Franco Valle



**Above left:** Irish defensive ringfort from Melkorka's period in history, Irish National Heritage Park. Brian Morrison, ©Failte Ireland and Tourism Ireland



**Above Right:** Eiriksstaðir weaving loom, one of the symbols of slavery. © Richard Kerven LD



**IN ONE OF THESE  
BOOTHs, BEHIND A  
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her, but it was too late to prevent the consequences of his assault. For a few months later, the young woman gave birth to a baby boy. Hoskuld adored his illegitimate son, and named him Olaf. However, the jealous Jorunn made it plain that, if the young mother hoped to stay in their household, she must now work for them to earn her keep.

Young Olaf was a sturdy, good looking and very precocious lad. One morning when he was two, he was chattering away to his mother outside when Hoskuld suddenly appeared. Too late, the young woman realised that Hoskuld had overheard her talking back animatedly to the child – and thus finally discovered that her apparent deafness and dumbness was merely a deceit.

Then Hoskuld went to her and asked her name, and said it was useless for her to hide it any longer. She said so it should be, and they sat down on the edge of the field. Then she said, *'If you want to know my name, I am called Melkorka.'*

*Hoskuld bade her tell him of her kindred.*

*She answered, 'The name of my father is Myrkjartan. He is a king in Ireland. I was taken a prisoner of war from there when I was fifteen winters old.'*

This claim of royal blood infuriated the resentful Jorunn even more. That evening, as Melkorka helped her undress for bed, Jorunn started attacking Melkorka – who fought back even more violently, until Hoskuld separated them.

Melkorka's revelation, and the fight, turned out to be a turning point in her fortunes. For Hoskuld sent her right away to live on a farm of her own with their son, supplying everything she needed there. Thus her life was transformed for a second time. She had gone from being a princess, to a nameless slave-woman, and now finally to an independent farm manager.

But that was not the end of her story. Olaf grew from a promising boy to an outstanding young man who was *"far superior to other men, both on account of his beauty and courtesy"*, according to the saga. He was fostered by a local *goði* (priest-chieftain), who made him his sole heir. (Fostering while the parents were still alive was considered an honour in the Viking Age, and a way of extending one's kinship bonds). Hoskuld now neglected Melkorka. So she seized the opportunity to marry another farmer, who was willing to fund a voyage to Ireland for Olaf to meet his royal kinsmen there.

Olaf's trip was a great success. En route, he visited Norway, where he gained favour with King Harald Grey Coat and his powerful mother, Queen Gunnhild. The latter provided him with a ship and crew, enabling him to arrive in Ireland in style. There, he presented King Myrkjartan with a gold ring that the king himself had once given the young Melkorka – proof that his abducted daughter had survived, and that Olaf was none other than his grandson. Overjoyed, he offered to make Olaf sole heir of his kingdom – though Olaf pragmatically declined.

*By the time Melkorka saw her son again, he was wealthy in his own right, with their shared royal lineage proven beyond doubt. She lived to see him make a good marriage, and to inherit his foster-father's farm. Known as Olaf the Peacock, he later became an important character in the dramatic events that subsequently unfolded in Laxdaela Saga.*

**Rosalind Kerven is an independent scholar and author of "Viking Myths & Sagas, Retold from ancient Norse texts".**

**Find our more at:**  
[vikingmythsandsagas.blogspot.com](http://vikingmythsandsagas.blogspot.com)

**The Vikings and  
the Forging of a Nation**

**Engr**



For the last three years I've been involved with the committee planning the Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms exhibition at the British Library. For someone who has spent a lifetime thinking about Saxons, Celts and Vikings its been incredibly moving to see the exhibition take shape, and to see treasures arriving from abroad, some of which are returning to these islands for the first time in more than a thousand years.

**Michael Wood**

A large, stylized word 'Island' is displayed in a bold, lowercase font. The letters are filled with a detailed, golden-brown texture that resembles ancient stone or parchment, with visible cracks and uneven surfaces. The word is set against a solid black background.

The king and his Witan, from the eleventh century old English Hexateuch. © British Library



**T**here are so many standouts in the exhibition, which give startling insights into the culture of the Anglo-Saxons, in what is often still imagined as a Dark Age. One of the most striking facts, is the huge presence of the Vikings, as raiders, settlers, and eventually as rulers, over half of this 600 year period, the England that emerges at the time of the Norman Conquest in 1066 is in a real sense, an Anglo-Scandinavian Society that after 300 years of war, migration and settlement, changed our language, culture and law, and even our place names, especially in the East Midlands, East Anglia, Yorkshire and the North West. Few of us may be aware of it, but the sentence structure of modern English is Scandinavian-influenced; and even the word for that most English of creations - law - comes from the Danish.

So if you want a sense of how the Vikings affected the English imagination in the three hundred years of the Viking Age, just stroll round the exhibition and watch this fascinating story unfold.

The Vikings, or the Danes as the English called them, were the catalyst of the making of England during the 9th and 10 centuries: Viking raids began in the 750s in record (if Thomas Elmham is right to date an early devastation of Thanet to 754) and during the next century the patchwork of regional Anglo-Saxon kingdoms described by Bede in 731 had been broken down by Danish attacks.

The landmark events remained ingrained on the English imagination; as the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle describes *'In this year 794 dire portents appeared over Northumbria and deeply terrified the people. They consisted of huge whirlwinds and flashes of lightning and fiery dragons were seen flying in the sky. A great famine immediately followed those signs and a little after that in the same year on 8th June, the ravages of the heathen men miserably destroyed God's church on Lindisfarne with plunder and slaughter'*.

Northumbrian annals tell the tale with still more horrifying immediacy in an eye witness account of the atrocities that has a grimly modern ring: *'in the church of Lindisfarne they plundered and trampled the holy places with impious steps, dug up the altars and seized all the treasures of the holy shrine. Some of the monks they killed, some took away in chains; many they drove out naked and loaded with insults; some they drowned in the sea'. When the news reached the Yorkshire-born scholar Alcuin in France he wrote a tearful letter to his old friends in Northumbria full of foreboding: 'is this the beginning of something much worse?'*

Modern revisionists have suggested these horror stories have been exaggerated by monastic writers, and no doubt the monks saw the Danish attacks from their own perspective; the view was different from the palace in Winchester or a thegn's household in Devon. But the monasteries as repositories of treasure were obvious targets - gilded shrines and metalwork as well as jewelled gospel books were all looted. The random cruelty of the killing that accompanied the raids is something we see in wars even in our own time; such things were a natural concomitant of an age of violence in which state builders like Alfred the Great fought a long battle against the forces of disorder.



**THEY CONSISTED OF HUGE WHIRLWINDS AND FLASHES OF LIGHTNING AND FIERY DRAGONS WERE SEEN FLYING IN THE SKY**



Lichfield angel, Lichfield cathedral.  
© British Library

The Viking raids on Britain which began in the 8th century grew in frequency till the mid 800s, when Danish armies began to stay over winter; and finally in the 870s, in the ominous words of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle in the East Midlands and Northumbria *'they divided the land, settled down and began to plough'*. By then the old English royal families of the East Angles and Northumbrians ended; Mercia was partitioned and Wessex 'the Last Kingdom' stood alone. Alfred's desperate victories over the Danes in and after 878 staved off the conquest of all the English kingdoms, and left him 'King of the Anglo-Saxons' – i.e. of the Mercians and West Saxons together. It was this kingdom which, after over fifty years of warfare, became a kingdom of all the English, the ancestor of the later English state.

By then it was already a mixed kingdom, ethnically and linguistically. The Danish settlement brought fundamental changes in East Anglia, the East Midlands, and the North, which have left a permanent mark on our landscape. Evidence of the settlement of the 870s for example is visible in the place names all over eastern and northern England. The evidence is there too in dialect: Danish farming terminology is still embedded in living speech in places like the open field village of Laxton in Nottinghamshire. For example the word *sik* - in Scandinavian speech a watercourse or ditch dividing fields - becomes in east Midlands farming speech the grassy division between field strips. Such farming terms are still widely current too among the older generation in the Yorkshire Dales and the Lincolnshire Wolds. To anyone north of the Humber, even in to today's urban populations, there are many Danish dialect words; in Yorkshire schools for example *laikin* – the Viking word for playing, is still what kids do in the playground. In the huge region north and east of Watling Street, which became known as the Danelaw, the newcomers gave their names to farms and hamlets, fields and streams, customs and games.

**T**he film series we made in 2010, *The Story of England* focussing on Kibworth in the heartland of the Danish settlement in

Leicestershire, gave us many insights into this process down at the grass roots. The village names for example can even tell us about the chronology of the settlement in the ninth century. The hybrid place names which couple a Danish personal name with the older English 'tun' are thought to preserve the names of the leading warriors in the Danish "Great Army" of 874, the first wave settlers. Ilston on the Hill, for example, is named after an Iolfr whose kin survived for centuries in the area. The 'by' names (like Grimsby) on the other hand probably represent the settlements of the rank and file; whereas the 'thorp' names, which tend to be on the poorest soil, are thought to represent a later wave of settlers who had to be content with making their living on marginal land.

In Ilston the Viking Iolfr took over the older English village and gave it his name, but sometimes the Danes and the English lived side by side. In Kibworth parish the hamlet of Smeeton Westerby combines an English name 'the tun of the smiths' with a Danish place Westerby - the 'West Farm' next door. And all around are Danish field names - the little stream at the foot of Smeeton hill occurs in tithe maps as 'the Fleet', *fljotr* in Danish. There is a 'carr', from Danish *kjarr*: a boggy flat area covered with brushwood and in the fields close by are 'wongs', 'slangs', 'flats' and 'tofts'; 'gates' too are common, but in northern speech meaning not gate, but a lane or a track. One place name in Smeeton - Crackley, hides



**AS REGARDS MY DANISH SUBJECTS, WITH SECULAR LAW, I LEAVE IT TO THEM WHICH GOOD LAWS THEY JUDGE AS BEING BEST FOR THEIR PEOPLE**

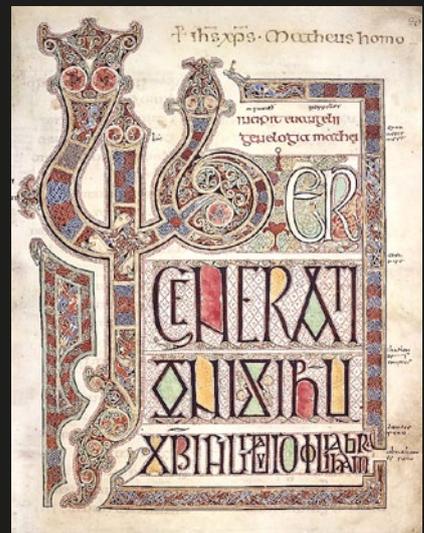
the Scandinavian word *kraka*, which is Old Norse for a raven, coupled with the Old English word 'leah' the name means 'Ravens Wood': and filming in the valley below the wood for our Kibworth series we were delighted to still see ravens today!

This largely untold tale of assimilation is what lies behind the monastic chronicles' accounts of ruin and devastation. But the scale now seems to have been bigger than was once thought. New evidence on the size of the armies has come from the remarkable recent excavation at Torksey in Lincolnshire. Here the remains of the Danish camp from the winter of 872-3 cover an astonishing 55 hectares, including industrial areas and metalworking quarters, clearly enough for several thousand people. A big Viking army in the ninth century was so large it resembled a moving town.

In that light, it's fair to assume that though the chronicles may at times overstate the devastation, the general picture they give is probably right. The disruption of local society was for a time considerable; the monasteries were powerhouses of culture and learning, but also centres of industry and economy, and when they were sacked the skills base and the economic network went, along with their moveable wealth and their equipment and tools.

So when the West-Saxon kings conquered the Danish territories in the east and north in the tenth century it took time to rebuild, converting and co-opting the descendants of the Danish settlers into the new kingdom of the English. Athelstan would call himself 'King of the Anglo-Saxons and the Danes' and the achievement of the English rulers from Athelstan to Edgar was to create an allegiance to the king and his law whether you were of English or Danish descent. At his great court assemblies Athelstan entertained earls with Viking names - Urm, Fraena, Guthrum and Scule, "*rejoicing under the wing of royal hospitality*" and it's a nice thought that Beowulf, the most famous Old English poem with its lavish praise of the old Danes may owe its survival to its popularity among Anglo-Danish audiences in the 10th century.

By the later 10th century, the kings who claimed to rule all England were now ruling Welsh speakers, Cornish and Cumbrians and people with Danish and Norse speech, as well as Angles and Saxons, so no one



Lindisfarne gospels. © British Library



code of law could really accommodate all that - they had to be flexible. In a law code from the 960s, King Edgar says: "*as regards my Danish subjects, with secular law, I leave it to them which good laws they judge as being best for their people.*" After a century of warfare with the Vikings that is to say the least, eye opening!

So by the late 10th century, as a Winchester writer puts it, England had become a land of 'many different races, languages, customs and costumes'. But with the presence of so many people of Danish origin, powerful foreign kingdoms



Alfred jewel, Ashmolean museum university of Oxford.  
© British Library

eyed the wealth of England with greedy eyes. In the century from the 870s to the 970s this threat called for a militarised society and for kings of great energy and nerve. Under lesser rulers cohesion crumbled, and disaster struck under Ethelred the Unready. Ethelred's 37 year reign is only exceeded in length by that of Victoria and our present queen, but it saw the return of the Danes in the shape of a powerful kingdom in Denmark, with a professionalised warrior class. This led to the defeat of the English, and the establishment in 1016 of a Danish kingdom of England under Cnut.

The England that emerged in the 1020s was in effect a bilingual Anglo-Scandinavian society. Over two centuries after the sack of Lindisfarne, the young

Dane Cnut is depicted in the frontispiece to the *Liber Vitae* of the New Minster in Winchester, one hand on his gift of a gold cross, the other on his sword pommel - a fitting elision of religion and war.

By Cnut's side is his wife Emma, the widow of Ethelred the Unready, by then in her early 30s (Cnut was 22.) Emma also underlines the strong Scandinavian links of the Old English state. She was of part Viking descent herself and is one of the most remarkable women in our history. Among the famous female rulers of England - Matilda, Elizabeth, Victoria - none surpasses the drama of her fifty years as queen, with both her Danish and English sons becoming kings of England. (Her story is told in the first biography of woman in our history *In Praise of Queen Emma*, which is also in the British Library exhibition, prefaced with her portrait.)

This was a time when the Danish kings of England ruled Denmark and parts of Norway and Sweden too - a North Sea

Empire, which would have meant a very different alignment for English history, had it lasted. But of course everything changed with the Norman Conquest of 1066. Of Norse descent, though now French speaking, the invaders came armed with the bravery and brutal realism of their ancestors. As Sir Frank Stenton put it, the Normans had created nothing to compare with the civilisation of Anglo-Saxon England, but 'politically they were masters of their world.'

And so, saving a brief flurry in the late 11th century, the Age of the Vikings in Britain came to an end. But the Vikings left a very long legacy in the British Isles, especially the further north you go. So by the time you reach the Shetland and Orkney islands you see a culture and dialect that is a living part of the rich Scandinavian heritage from the early middle ages in the islands and archipelagos of Britain and Ireland. Not to mention in Kibworth where the descendants of Iolfr the Viking are still bell-ringers in St Wilfrid's church!

**The Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms: Art, Word, War exhibition at the British Library ran from October 2018 to February 2019.**

# # follow the vikings

 Welcome to our Instagram feature. We are delighted to see lots of people tagging their Viking-themed images. We have selected a few of our favourites for you to enjoy! Follow them on Instagram to see more images and keep using **#followthevikings**

- 1 **Warrior at Follow the Vikings Roadshow, Iceland**  
© Melissa Apena Loque, Reykjavik  
@mtloki
- 2 **Viking town of Njardarheimr, Norway**  
© Viking Valley Gudvangen  
@vikingvalley.no
- 3 **Beady-eyed raven**  
© Follow the Vikings  
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- 4 **Reconstruction farm at Þjórsárdalur, Iceland**  
© Follow the Vikings  
@followthevikings
- 5 **Gokstad ship replica under the northern lights at Lofotr**  
© Rebeca Franco Valle  
@withinthnorth
- 6 **Lofotr Viking longship transports special cargo, an ancient breed of bull!**  
© Lofotr Viking Museum  
@lofotrvingmuseum
- 7 **Troula drummer from Catoira, Spain at Waterford Roadshow, Ireland**  
© Nikki Stik George  
@nik\_stixphotography





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# The León Code

Deciphering and uncovering  
the secrets of the Viking San Isidoro Box

**Rebeca Franco Valle**

**A**mong many magnificent ancient artefacts Spain has kept since time immemorial, a small box of eye-catching beauty and puzzling history stands out. This treasure of Scandinavian origins has been hidden for who knows how many centuries in the city of León, a place which once was the proud head of a powerful Kingdom bearing the same name.

Medieval charters of the Iberian Peninsula and Islamic sources inform us about Viking activity along the coasts since the 9th century. But the enigma of the box lies in the lack of evidence for commercial

relationships between Iberian and Scandinavian Peninsulas. Despite written sources telling us about short overwintering periods and place names suggesting the possibility of settlement, no material evidence exists to support any of this. With this meagre amount of information, it might seem that the mists of history surrounding this object are too thick to see through. Nonetheless, I have dedicated the last couple of years of my life to shed some light on this mystery. Now I would like to invite you to join me on my pursuit to discover the secrets of the fascinating Scandinavian San Isidoro Box.

### When and where was it made?

In our quest to find an answer to this question, we will have to travel far north, to the cold Scandinavia. It is here, in the homelands of the Vikings, where artistic productions of such beauty and particularity were created. We can establish an approximate date of creation, around the last decades of the 10th century, thanks to the originality and distinctive features of Viking Age art. It was in that time when a popular art style, known today as Mammen style, was starting to fade while a new fashionable Ringerike style was gaining popularity. We can detect these winds of change in our box: it is an Mammen style Ringerike-flavoured design. Nonetheless, because of the ubiquity of the objects made in these styles, it is not possible to establish a concrete workshop of origin for our box.

There are also other intriguing details on the surface of our box, namely in the two brass covers placed at both extremes of the cylinder, which are made in a slightly different style. These are much closer related to Ringerike instances of brass metalwork found in the Scandinavian colonies of the British Islands. It could be that the difference of style between the covers and the cylinder is because these were added later to the antler body. Could the antler cylinder have been something else before being a box, like decoration attached to a staff, or a handle going through it? Maybe an axe or a knife handle such as the Årnes cylinder, or a bishop staff? This would also explain the row of perforations along both rims of the antler cylinder. They were presumably made by nails to attach the cylinder to something inside it. We can however only imagine what it was used for. For now, let's face another question.

### What does it mean?

It has been argued that the box, like many of the objects adorned in Mammen and Ringerike styles, was beautifully decorated just for the sake of embellishment without any other meaningful pretension. However, aware of the dangers of falling into over-interpretation, I am going to bring forward other hypothesis. Could it be that there is a message hidden within the motifs of the box?

We must now head to the North Atlantic Ocean, to Iceland, land of extreme nature and breath-taking landscape. In this remote island a learned Icelander called Snorri Sturluson decided to write down traditional



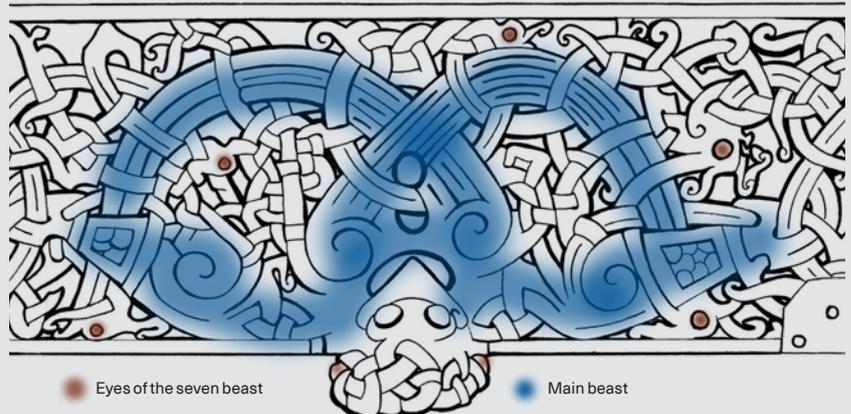
The Royal Pantheon, Leon, Spain, © Museo de San Isidoro-Derechos reservados, prohibida la reproducción total o parcial, prohibited reproduction.



Las Torres del Oeste, in the North-West of Spain, had the mission of keeping Santiago de Compostela protected from pirate attacks.



The brass covers on the San Isidoro Box are made in a style closer to Ringerike examples of brass metalwork, which might indicate that were added later to the antler cylinder.



Complete design at the Antler cylinder of San Isidoro. Five creatures are entangled in between the legs and wings of the main beast. Another two are attached to the bird-shaped head carved in a protrusion in the antler.

stories passed over generations. It was sometime around the second half of the 13th century, and Christianity had long been the official religion of the land by then. Nonetheless, these stories that we know as Edda contain glimpses of how the pre-Christian beliefs were in earlier centuries.

According to these writings, there was a world called Nifflheimr. This dark, misty and cold place was one of the two primordial worlds that emerged from the void in times of yore. A spring called Hvergelmir could also be found here and thence was growing one of the three roots of the world tree, the ash Yggdrasil. Many harmful creatures were inhabiting this spring, like the serpent-dragon Niðhöggr. This serpent tormented the bodies of the dead criminals, close in essence to the Christian hell. Niðhöggr also makes Yggdrasil suffer by gnawing the root that grows from the spring. The names of seven other serpents are mentioned in one of the stanzas of the Edda texts, dwelling in Hvergelmir besides Niðhöggr.

Meanwhile, at the other extreme of the world tree, far on the top sits Veðrfölnir. This is a falcon who is in constant conflict with Niðhöggr. The squirrel Ratatork keeps their conflict alive by running up and down along the tree, carrying slanderous messages between them. It follows that during the final battle of Ragnarök, while the bird peeps down towards hell, Niðhöggr flies from beneath the tree carrying corpses on his wings over the battlefields. It is in this final battle when the gods will meet their fates and the earth will ultimately be reborn.

Now let's take a closer look at the box in Spain. If we pay attention to the design, we can distinguish several beasts knitted together, entangling their bodies, heads and crests over the surface of the red deer antler cylinder. A main winged beast organises the space while seven smaller creatures can be spotted by their eyes. Could this design have something to do with the myth we have just recalled? Are these the seven serpents dwelling with Niðhöggr in Hvergelmir? Is this dragon Niðhöggr flying over the field during Ragnarök, carrying corpses on his wings? Or is it this beaked animal analogous to the one falcon looking down to hell from the top of the tree?

There is yet another creature entering the equation - a stag is present on the box, but it hides within the material the cylinder is made of, red deer antler. And here again, the Eddas provide us with a clue -



Mammen style casket preserved in Bamberg, Germany, is one of the closest examples to the San Isidoro Box. Made in walrus ivory and brass, it presents one of the most elaborate and exceptional quality examples of Mammen style art created under the sphere of influence of the Danish court.



This bird-shaped or Thor's Hammer pendant dated c.9th century was found at Sigtuna, south of Sweden. It is closely related stylistically to the beak of the box of San Isidoro. Thor's hammer pendants made in the southern areas of Sweden and north Germany look very similar to some parts of our box.



The bone cylinder found at Årnes in the north of Norway. The bone cylinder has rests rust produced by small nails that presumably kept it fixed to a wooden handle. It is likely that it was part of the residue of a knife handle.

Hvergelmir flows from the antlers of a stag, Eykþyrnir, who dwells at the top of the three. We could say that Niðhöggr "dwells" in the product of the stag antler. Could the box be a figurative depiction of the stream of life and death alluded by this myth? Is it a graphical representation of interchangeability of powers and the regeneration cycle alluded in myth of Ragnarök?

All things considered, it is worth leaving room to question the so-suggested lack of meaning in such a complex design like this one. One way or another, the aesthetic impression caused by the object would not be in contradiction with the associations that a viewer familiar to the Old Norse myths could have recalled watching the motifs of the box.

## How did it arrive to Spain?

We have now to consider the events happening in distant lands as pieces of the same puzzle. In the decades after the creation of the box, both Peninsulas, the Scandinavian and the Iberian, were going through turbulent times. In the South, the kingdom of León was immersed in the Reconquista. Meanwhile in the North, the kings of the newly Christianised territories of Scandinavia were trying to reinforce their kingly rights with the support of the church and other European Monarchs. Could this box have been a diplomatic gift from the Kingdom of León as Else Roesdahl suggests? It might well have been so, but there is another possibility if we take in consideration the expansion status of the Leonese Kingdom.

During the 10th and 11th centuries, as part of the Reconquista strategies, the depopulated territories south of the Kingdom of León were being settled with people of diverse origin. As suggested by Vicente Almazán, the villages of "Lordemanos" and "Lordemão" – place names indicating the possibility of Scandinavian settlement in the Iberia Peninsula – could have been the outcome of the participation of Vikings in the politic affairs of the Kingdom of León. And in this context, the box could have been gifted as demonstration of goodwill from the men of the north to the Kings of León.

But, it is here where our journey ends for now. Within this labyrinth of meanings, interests, of comings and goings, facts and suppositions, our Scandinavian box is entangled. We may lose ages struggling in the tangle of serpents, trying to unravel the convolutions of its history with the hope of finding a clarification, and still have not even scratched the surface. My hope is to have brought to my readers no definitive answers, but a lot of doubts and thirst for more knowledge, for this is what will take us further in our search.

*Rebeca Franco Valle works at the University of Bergen in Viking Age Art and Archaeology, Department of Archaeology, History Cultural Studies and Religion. She studied Art History at the University of León, Heritage Management at the University of Salamanca, and Viking and Medieval Norse Studies at the University of Iceland and University of Oslo. This article is based her research as part of her MA thesis at the University of Oslo.*

**For full biographical references, see [www.duo.uio.no/handle/10852/52150](http://www.duo.uio.no/handle/10852/52150)**



# THE FALL OF E OFORWIC

## IVAR THE BONELESS AND THE CAPTURE OF YORK

Emma Boast

**Y**ou may know him as Ívarr hinn Beinlausí, Hyngwar, Ivar Ragnarsson or Ivar the boneless but as a historical figure he is a man that continues to draw intrigue and mystery to this day. Whether you believe him to have been a giant of a man, forged from the union of a War Chief and Sorceress or an individual thriving to prove everyone wrong with incredible deeds, one thing is certain, Ivar was determined, focused, resourceful and cunning. A man shrouded in Old Norse poetry and prose, son of legendary warrior King Ragnar Loðbrók and Queen Aslaug, one of five brothers, Ivar's name is fixed in the English and Danish histories by his ancestry, but also by his role as the leader of the Great Heathen Army which invaded England in c.865. But what of the man and the world he shaped? Is it possible to piece together the threads left behind and understand Ivar in a snapshot of time, a time when, through his actions, he creates a city that to this day considers itself to be 'Viking' above all else.

Ivar was King of the Danish and southern Swedish Kingdoms at the time the Great Heathen Army landed on the shores of East Anglia. The Army landed in the summer of c.865, spent the time raiding the surrounding landscape and then decided to over-winter in Thetford. For 70 years previous, Danish and Norwegian Vikings had been raiding England back and forth, the Scandinavian presence on English shores had been seen and felt long before the Great Heathen Army ever arrived. Ivar's plan of a coordinated campaign would help turn England into a focal point of the ever expanding Viking World. A strategic vantage point to help increase Viking control and to unify Viking links to the east and north, Ivar could count on allies like Olaf the White in Dublin to help support his campaign. For Ivar the motivation for this invasion was catalysed by the murder of his father by the Northumbrian King Ælla, who famously threw Ragnar Loðbrók into a pit of snakes to die. This was something the Sons of Ragnar could not tolerate.



**I**n Northumbria the town of Eoforwic, modern day York, was in the midst of civil unrest. This was created by the power struggle and coup by the Saxon King Ælla who was trying to depose

King Osberht and take control of the entire region. With this strife making life in the Anglian Kingdom unstable, Ivar would have seen a prime opportunity to gather his forces and march north towards Eoforwic. With upwards of 3,000 Danes, Norsemen and warriors from across the Viking World descending on Eoforwic, there was little that could be done apart from fight or negotiate. King Ælla met Ivar outside York to discuss terms, the meeting of the vengeful son and proud King. It was known that the Danes and Norse in the past had managed to be subdued with land, goods and silver but King Ælla wanted to give as little away as possible,

**Above:**  
Jorvik Viking Centre,  
Fishermen on Wharf.  
© York Archaeological  
Trust

Northumbria was a wealthy Kingdom and King Ælla was proud; Ivar knew this. As part of the discussion King Ælla offered Ivar land, the size of which could be covered by a horsehide, in exchange for him leaving the town of Eoforwic unharmed. The terms of this submission would surely have been seen by Ivar as a pompous slight against him and his brothers. With his father's murder fresh in Ivar's mind and facing a foe that would clearly part with as little as possible, skillfully Ivar decided to accept Ælla's offer. What he did next is to accept the horsehide and slice it into thin strips, tying them together with enough space to encompass an area big enough for a wooden fortress to be built. This had the added advantage of infuriating King Ælla and allowing Ivar and his brother Halfdan an opportunity to create a temporary camp just outside of Eoforwic to gather strength.



On the morning of 1st November c.866, Ivar and the Great Heathen Army led a surprise attack on York. This date was significant as it was All Saints Day and it was known that there would be many of the high ranking officials present at church services throughout the town. King Ælla and Osberht were also in attendance, so the opportunity was perfect for Ivar to strike. The attack was quick, brutal and successful; Eoforwic was captured, although both Ælla and Osberht had escaped north. Ivar pursued and led the Great Heathen Army northwards; they reached as far as the Tyne and decided to over-winter nearby, possibly to send back spoils of war to Denmark, whilst sending out scouts to find the Northumbrian King. On the run and trying to draw up as much support as possible, it took four months for King Ælla and Osberht to put aside their differences, join forces and gather enough men to take

**Top:**  
The heart of the city,  
York Minster.  
© Pixabay.com

**Above:**  
JORVIK Viking Centre.  
© York Archaeological  
Trust

back Eoforwic from Viking control. King Ælla and Osberht attacked Eoforwic to try and reclaim it in March c.867. However this failed spectacularly, Ivar defended Jorvik with the remains of the Great Heathen Army that had stayed within the town. With the battle that ensued Osberht was killed and the remnants of the Northumbrian court fled northwards again. In the fray of battle Ivar managed to capture King Ælla, this now meant Ivar could hold control of the city of Jorvik and the entire Kingdom of Northumbria.

For the murder of his father, the goading in front of his army and the unwillingness to submit, Ivar laid down a ritual murder on King Ælla, which was meant to serve as a horrific reminder of the might and power of the Sons of Ragnar. This Ivar did by performing the 'blood eagle' on Ælla, the most gory and vivid account to have ever been recorded in histories from this time.



**E** oforwic would forever now be known as Jorvik, Ivar's Kingdom. After the events at Jorvik, Ivar controlled all the wealth he could wish for, the northern monasteries were wealthy and there was no shortage of goods to be used and traded. But Ivar sought for further conquest of Mercia and Wessex. So in his time away in pursuit of more wealth and power, King Egbert 'the puppet King' was placed on the throne of Northumbria at Jorvik. He was a man easily controlled by Ivar, whilst he was away trying to control and dominate the other Saxon Kingdoms to the south.

Over the years that followed, Ivar managed to bleed England for money and land, from demanding more wealth from the Mercian's to fighting the Britons up at Dumbarton Rock with Olaf the White. However, after all this success and unity with his fellow Viking brethren Ivar disappeared from histories at the end of the 9th century. The Annals of Ulster state Ivar died in Dublin in c.873, but in recent years archaeological excavations at Heath Wood cremation cemetery and Torksey winter

**Above:**  
Reconstruction of  
Viking age York.  
© York Archaeological  
Trust

camp have shed light on the movement of the Great Heathen Army across England. However, the most intriguing excavations were undertaken at the church site in Repton. Here lay the human remains of a high status man, buried in the central mausoleum, a broad, 6ft tall giant of a man, buried with sword and amulet, certainly having met his grizzly end on the battlefield. With recent research now stating this individual to have died after c.873, could it be Ivar Ragnarsson?

Other sources put Ivar in East Anglia at the time of his death. This could be more in keeping with the Saga of Ragnar Loðbrók, as it is said that before Ivar died he ordered that his body be buried in a mound on the English shore, stating that, so long as his bones guarded the coast, no enemy could invade successfully. This prophecy held true, as the saga states, until William the Conqueror came ashore. William then went to the burial site of Ivar and broke the mound, and saw that Ivar's body had not decayed. William then had a large pyre made, upon which Ivar's body was burned, William then proceeded with his invasion and succeeded. It's



**Top:**  
Death at the hands of Ivar. Blood eagle depiction from the Stora Hammars rune stone, Lärbro, Gotland, Sweden.

**Above left:**  
Death of King Edmund of East Anglia by Ivar the Boneless and the sons of Ragnar Lodbrok, © The Morgan Library & Museum MS M.736 fol. 14r

**Above right:**  
Reconstruction of the Repton warrior. © Derby Museum, Viking display

important to bear in mind that all the contemporary accounts written about Ivar Ragnarsson and the Great Heathen Army, are either written by historians glorifying Danish history, scribed by the Anglo Saxon chroniclers who were being attack by the Vikings, or by another later invader trying to use the 'Ivar Legend' as a way of seeking legitimacy on England.

Forever the city of Jorvik will be Ivar's city, a legacy formed by him and a story that still captivates the imagination. With archaeological investigation in York ever seeking to understand the interactions between the Vikings and Anglo Saxon people, one thing's for sure, you never know what you might find in the 'dark earth'. Whatever stories you believe about Ivar, his achievements were vast and guile great. If there was any person best to be described as a true Viking, it would be him.

**Emma Boast MA is Project Archaeologist at York Archaeological Trust**



**FOREVER THE CITY OF JORVIK WILL BE IVAR'S CITY, A LEGACY FORMED BY HIM AND A STORY THAT STILL CAPTIVATES THE IMAGINATION**



# GODFRIED'S SWORD

THE RESTORATION OF A UNIQUE VIKING  
SWORD FOUND IN THE MURKY DEPTHS OF  
THE RIVER MAAS (MEUSE) HOLLAND

Vic Mostart



**A**fter 1136 years, a unique Viking sword, from Limburg in the south eastern part of the Netherlands, has been brought back to life. Not just an everyday sword from the 9th century of the Viking era, but a very rare and impressive sword. A handmade 89.5cm long iron weapon, decorated with a fine silver braided band and beautiful depictions of both plants and animals in the traditional Trehwiddle style. A sword fit for a king, which was perhaps once handled by a Viking warlord with Danish-Frisian roots.

This mighty Viking sword was pulled from the bottom of the river Maas (Meuse) during gravel dredging operations, in an area of the river located just to the south of the village of Asselt. Asselt is located between the town of Swalmen and the city of Roermond. It is a place where the soil has been soaked in time with historical events and exciting legends. A place with several waterway junctions and historic Roman roads, located along the river Maas, a major crossroads for various past kingdoms. Asselt, formally known as the infamous medieval Ascloha, was a centre of power in the 9th century, during the era of Frankish Emperors and Vikings warlords.

What role would this mighty sword have played during the dark historical events around the date of July 21st in the year 882? The early medieval chronicles from that time indicate that this particular Tuesday was a hot summer's day. The Danish crown prince Godfried "the Younger" ascended the river Maas with his cousin Sigfried from England, together with a mighty Viking Army. They discovered the Koningshof of the Frankish Emperor Charles "the Fat" in Ascloha. In terms of the location, this was an ideal place amongst the network

of waterways and Roman roads. The Vikings created a fortress that could not be taken due to the construction of a wooden palisade and a trench. They plundered churches, abbeys and towns around a wide area for a couple of years using camp Ascloha as their base. Places such as Maastricht, Liège, Prüm, Bonn, Cologne, Aachen, Neus, Jülich, reported raids and looting by savage warriors coming from the North. The Annals of St Vaast commented that: *"The Northmen continue to kill and take Christian people captive; without ceasing they destroy churches and dwellings and burn towns. Along all the roads one sees bodies of the clergy and laity, of nobles and others, of women, children and infants."*



### WHAT ROLE WOULD THIS MIGHTY SWORD HAVE PLAYED DURING THE DARK HISTORICAL EVENTS

The Vikings also mixed and integrated with the local population during these years. The not so heroic Emperor Charles the Fat kept an eye on things from a distance, but eventually he was compelled to intervene. He departed for Ascloha with a huge army of Franks, Bajuwaren, Alamen, Thuringian and Saxon forces. But despite their efforts they could not take the Ascloha Viking camp by force. On the said Tuesday in July 882, the Viking leader and the Emperor finally made a dark Pact. This was a Pact full of political ambitions, surrounded with trouble and deceit. Godfried was appointed Duke of Frisia, Liege of the Emperor. He was

baptised and married into royal blood. Gisela of Lorraine, the daughter of King Lotharius became his wife, but what then happened to Godfried's sword? Was it deposited into the river as a form of ritual during the treaty? Was it lost in a skirmish on the river? We simply do not know, but for the first time in nearly a millennium it has been raised to the surface and with further study it may reveal its secrets.



Petra Lenssen Photography



Godfried's sword in the archaeological department of Center Céramique, Maastricht. © Vic Mostart

Now there are of course more of these special places of historical interest. But the extra special attraction of Asselt is that little has happened since that contentious day in July in 882. Even though the nearby city of Roermond grew into a developing city, Asselt never developed into anything similar, with little new construction or landscape pollution. Asselt has remained much the same as the early medieval Ascloha and has not succumbed to the ravages of time. It is precisely because of this, that your senses will capture the pure antiquity that you will see, feel and experience here. In the context of cultural education, environmental history and the passing on of historical knowledge to young people, this is a unique opportunity to take people by the hand and let them experience Asselt via amongst other things, the present Noormannenroute (Norman Viking route) with audible stories and educational Noormannen events.

Now back to Godfried's sword. In January 2018, as the initiator and producer of the "The Pact of Asselt", a Noormannen outdoor reconstruction play (Noormannenschouwspel), I went with scan company Hagenaars to the archaeological department of Center Céramique in Maastricht. In consultation with the Culture Department of the Municipality of Roermond, the age-old sword was removed from its safe location by a professional team of specialists and it was scanned in its entirety. In collaboration with the companies Mooneye and 'Mannen van 80' from Roermond, I intend to restore the Limburg Viking sword to its former glory. This will be done using aids such as contemporary print options and the use of virtual reality. The results will be used for educational purposes. What do you think that it would be like to have an exact copy of the original powerful Viking sword in the palm of your hand?

Further research will bring more light to this Limburg Viking puzzle. I am now working on the development of a curriculum for education, this is in collaboration with the teacher training school Fontys, in the town of Sittard, and a number of secondary schools situated in Limburg, including the Lyceum Schöndeln in Roermond. Developing a better understanding of cultural knowledge for young people, especially with an 'experience of the past', will help them become aware of whom they are today. Creating this self-awareness offers each one the opportunity to give substance to his or her own present and own future - discover yesterday, experience today and understand tomorrow.

**Vic Mostart is Initiator and producer of the Noormannenschouwspel and Noormannenarrangementen. He is also the museum manager of Cultuurhistorisch at the Museum Asselt, Holland.**

**For more information see:**  
[www.noormannenarrangement.nl](http://www.noormannenarrangement.nl)  
<http://www.museumasselt.nl/>

En-route to the Netherlands, illustration of the Viking warlord, Godfried.  
 Ben Baillie



## Events leading up to the Treaty of Asselt

In the year 879 'the Great Viking Army' led by Godfried and his cousin Sigfried, encamped on an English island then crossed the North Sea towards Belgium with a fleet of 300 ships.

879 winter camp in Gent (Belgium).

880 Infiltration inland, Sigfried takes the land route while Godfried contingent infiltrates with the fleet.

After some looting around Nijmegen (Netherlands) the fleet ascended into the River Maas (Meuse) and stopped in Ascloha (Asselt).

Nov. 881 Sigfried and Godfried regrouped in Ascloha.

5 Apr. 882 from camp base Ascloha, Godfried plundered: the cities of Kamelijk, Maastricht, Haspengouw, Keulen, Bonn, Trier, Aken. Also the monasteries and fortifications of Prüm of Cornelis, Münster of Stavelot and of Malmedy. Zülpich, Jülich and Neuss are sacked.

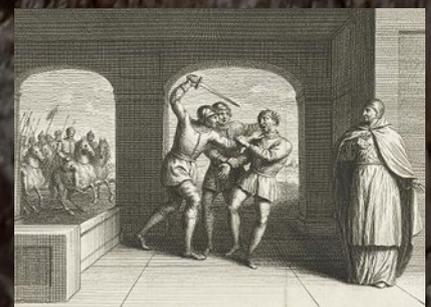
Jan. 882 Charles "the fat" becomes the new Frankish Emperor. Charles forms a great army of Franks, Lombards, Bajuwaren, Alamen, Thuringian and Saxons to campaign against the Vikings.

After the Rijksdag (Reichstag) in Worms the Emperor and his army head for Ascloha, led by Hendrik van Babenberg.

For 12 days they besiege the Viking camp of Ascloha, on the 21 Jul. 882 Godfried and Charles the fat make a Pact (treaty).

Godfried is made Duke of Frisia, he is baptised and marries royal blood, Gisela of Lorraine, the daughter of King Lotharius.

Jun. 885 Godfried, is murdered by the sword of Everhard the Saxon during an official meeting. This event ended the Viking period in the Netherlands.



The murder of Godfried. J. Wagenaar, 1790



# RAVEN'S EYE

TV + FILM

## THE REAL ERIK "THE RED"

Erik the Red is remembered in the Icelandic sagas as having founded the first continuous Norse settlement on Greenland. As a child, Erik left his native Norway for Western Iceland with his family. When Erik was exiled from Iceland around 980 for the murder of Eyjolf the Foul and Hólmgöngu-Hrafn he decided to explore the land to the west (Greenland). He set sail in 982, but was unable to approach the coastline because of the drifting ice pack. The party sailed around the Southern tip of Greenland and settled in an area near Julianehåb. One of Erik "the Red's" four children was Leif Eriksson, the Lucky, who would go on to explore the "New World" of the North American continent.



Welcome to the special edition of the Raven's Eye. Recently we had the great privilege of conducting an exclusive interview with the newest member of the hit TV series 'VIKINGS'. Hollywood star, **Eric Johnson** famous for playing characters such as Flash Gordon, Whitney Fordman in the cult TV series 'Smallville', the young Brad Pitt in 'Legends of the Fall' and more recently in the 'Fifty Shades' films will be playing the famous Viking Erik the Red.



### ERIC JOHNSON VS ERIK "THE RED"

**1. How does it feel to play one of the most famous Vikings Erik the Red and have you visited Erik's farm Eiríksstaðir in Iceland?**

"I think my character ERIK is a bit of an amalgamation of a few famous Erik's from the time but it is an honor for sure. In fact when I'd get sunburn as a kid I would get jokingly teased being called Erik the Red. So it's very fitting and if I was ever to play a Viking I would have picked him".

**2. Now as you have played your fair share of bad guys, how do you perceive playing Erik the Red. Although Erik was convicted and banished on more than one occasion do you consider him a "bad guy" or more a lovable rogue?**

"Time will tell how we end up seeing Erik. Right now I'd say he's a bit of a wild card."

◀ The statue of Leif Eriksson, son of Erik the Red in Qassiarsuk, South Greenland  
© Visitgreenland.com



**3. If you could take away one of the props from the series which one would it be?**

"There are so many beautiful works of art on this show. The craftsmanship is Extraordinary. I'd probably try and sneak out Bjorn Ironside's sword".

**4. What's the best and worst thing about filming Vikings in Ireland?**

"Best this is the people. It's a really fantastic team that put this show together. Worst thing is being away from family and missing watching my favorite hockey team play on TV".

**6. Hailing from Edmonton, Canada, how are your sailing skills and do you enjoy filming on the Viking ships?**

"Haha, I've got ZERO sailing skills so it will have to be a crash course".

**7. Apart from yourself, who is your favorite character in Vikings?**

"There are too many great characters to choose from, but who doesn't love a gal that can kick some ass, so my vote would go to team Lagertha".



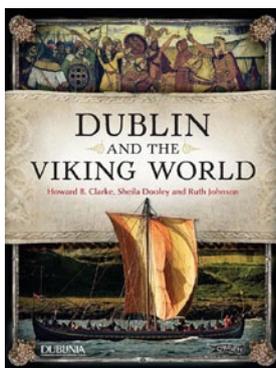
▲ Kathryn Winnick alias Lagertha.  
© Facebook VIKINGS



# HUGIN & MUNIN

## BOOK CORNER

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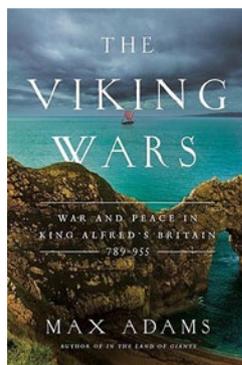
Non-fiction

### Dublin and the Viking World

Authors: *Howard Clarke, Ruth Johnston, Sheila Dooley.*

Paperback – 15 June 2018

Dig through the layers of time to find the Viking past beneath our city streets – Shipbuilding, raiding, trading, praying and playing – Viking customs and habits are brought to life in this richly illustrated account of the beginnings of Dublin town. Viking Dublin was a vibrant and major multicultural centre of commerce in early medieval Europe. Today Dublin is unique in the world for its enormous stock of preserved Viking records, both archaeological and written. Together, they reveal intimate details of life in the town and bring us beyond the myths to a people who developed a small coastal settlement into a bustling hub of trade and craft. Fully illustrated with photographs, drawings and new maps, “Dublin and the Viking World” takes readers into the streets and homes of this important Viking town. Expert authors explore the acclaimed Dublinia exhibition experience and the latest in world-class scholarship to show readers the real world of Viking Dublin.



Non-fiction

### The Viking Wars: War and Peace in King Alfred's Britain: 789–955

Author: *Max Adams*

Hardcover – 7 August 2018

Learn about the history of Britain in the violent and unruly era between the first Scandinavian raids in 789 and the final expulsion of the Vikings from York in 954. In 865, a great Viking army landed in East Anglia, precipitating a series of wars that would last until the middle of the following century. It was in this time of crisis that the modern kingdoms of Britain were born. In their responses to the Viking threat, these kingdoms forged their identities as hybrid cultures: vibrant and entrepreneurial peoples adapting to instability and opportunity. Traditionally, Alfred the Great is cast as the central player in the story of Viking Age Britain. But Max Adams, while stressing the genius of Alfred as war leader, law-giver, and forger of the English nation, has a more nuanced narrative approach to this conventional version of history. The Britain encountered by the Scandinavians of the ninth and tenth centuries was one of regional diversity and self-conscious cultural identities, depicted in glorious narrative fashion in “The Viking Wars”.



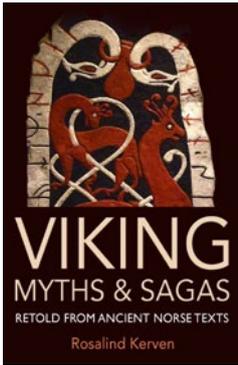
Non-fiction

### Gulatinget

Author: *Siri Ingvaldsen*

Paperback – 1 January 2018

Gulatinget is one of the oldest regional thing sites in Norway, probably established by Harald Hårfagre in the late 800s or early 900s. The original thing site was in Eivindvik in Gulen, in the middle of the West Norwegian coast, and near the inlet to Sognefjorden. Later the thing probably was moved to Flolid where a thing park has been created and designated as a millennium site for Sogn og Fjordane. The thing system was the first step towards politically organised power sharing in Norway and became a significant source of inspiration for modern democracy. There is a direct line from Gulatingslova to the Norwegian National Constitution of 1814. This book, also available in hardback and in Norwegian, narrates the history of Gulatinget and Gulatingslova in the Viking period and early Middle Ages. It is also a cultural and historical guide to the two thing sites Eivindvik and Flolid. “Gulatinget” is generously illustrated with photos and maps.



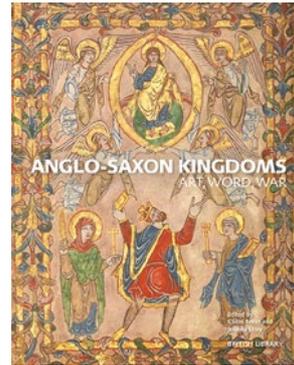
**Viking Myths & Sagas:  
retold from ancient Norse  
texts**

*Author: Rosalind Kerven  
Hardcover - Paperback,  
Kindle, 1 April 2015*

Non-fiction

An accessible, meticulously researched introduction to Viking Age oral literature – this comprises 34 stories based on the oldest texts, authentically interpreted and retold by a highly

acclaimed storyteller. The book features little known Viking Age sagas and heroic legends alongside the Norse myths – and the first major new retellings of the myths for 35 years. It brings alive all the most significant and interesting Viking Age stories, painting vivid portraits of Viking people, culture and beliefs. Included are many fascinating tales previously only known within the academic world. Each story complemented by detailed notes discussing its origins, similar narratives, archaeological evidence etc. The book features authentic Viking Age proverbs, poems, riddles and spells. Introduces many iconic Viking women: real life queens, noblewomen, farmwives and slaves; alongside mythical giantesses, goddesses and Valkyries. “Viking Myths & Sagas” presents the true story of the Vikings’ discovery of North America 500 years before Columbus; legends of the cursed ring that inspired Tolkien, and the Viking story behind Shakespeare’s Hamlet.



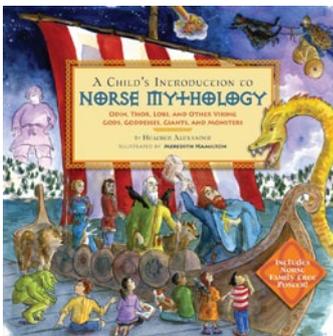
**Anglo-Saxon  
Kingdoms**

*Authors: Claire Brey,  
Joanna Story  
Hardback – October  
2018*

Non-fiction

The Anglo-Saxon period stretches from the arrival of Germanic groups on British shores in the early 5th century to the Norman Conquest of 1066. During

these centuries, the English language was used and written down for the first time, pagan populations were converted to Christianity, and the foundations of the kingdom of England were laid. At the heart of the book is the British Library’s outstanding collection of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, the richest source of evidence about Old English language and literature, including Beowulf and other poetry; the Lindisfarne Gospels, one of Britain’s greatest artistic and religious treasures; the St Cuthbert Gospel, the earliest intact European book; and historical manuscripts such as Bede’s Ecclesiastical History and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. These national treasures are discussed alongside other internationally important manuscripts and museum objects held in major collections in Britain, Europe and the United States. This book, and the exhibition it accompanies, chart a fascinating and dynamic period in early medieval history, and will bring to life our understanding of these formative centuries.

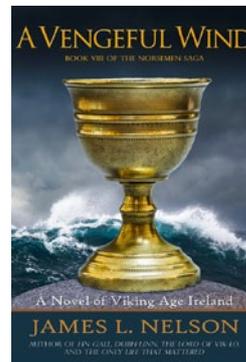


**A Child's  
Introduction to  
Norse Mythology:  
Odin, Thor, Loki, and  
Other Viking Gods,  
Goddesses, Giants,  
and Monsters**

*Author: Heather  
Alexander, Meredith  
Hamilton (Illustrator)  
Hardcover – 15  
November 2018*

Fiction

The newest book in the best-selling, award-winning A Child’s Introduction series explores the popular and captivating world of Norse mythology. Organised into two parts, part one introduces characters like Odin, the leader of the Norse gods; Thor and his mighty hammer Mjollner; Frigg, weaver of the destinies of humans and gods; frost and fire giants; cunning dwarves like Brokk and Eitri; and many more. Part two tells the stories of the suspenseful myths themselves including The Creation of the Cosmos, The Aesir-Vanir War, Loki Bound, Thor’s Hammer. Full of charming and witty illustrations from Meredith Hamilton, a Norse name pronunciation guide, and a removable Norse Family Tree poster, “A Child’s Introduction to Norse Mythology” is the perfect way for children to learn the historic stories behind today’s popular mythical characters.



**A Vengeful Wind (The  
Norsemen Saga, Volume 8)**

*Author: James L. Nelson  
Paperback – 2 August 2018*

Fiction

Summer comes to Ireland and an uneasy peace holds at Loch Garman. The Northmen, eager to get to sea, work relentlessly on their ships, with the aid of their unlikely allies, the Irish, who are just as eager to see them go. But not everyone is willing to just let

them sail away. Certain that God demands the heathens be punished, the one-eyed warrior-turned-monk Brother Bécc is determined that Thorgrim and his men will not simply go free. And when another band of raiders arrives, Bécc finds the excuse he needs to take action. Meanwhile, in the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Wessex, murder leads to a violent struggle for the seat of ealdorman, ruler of the shire of Dorset. Desperate as each side is to tip the balance of power their way, no one imagines that the upper hand might come from the direction they least expect—from the sea.

# LORE OF THE HÁVAMÁL

A new Graphic Novel about Vikings has just been published as part of the Follow the Vikings project. Project Manager **Helen Smith** from Shetland Amenity Trust interviews two of the creators of “Lore of the Hávamál” – **Cat Mihos and Jouni Kopenen.**





FREYR



VIDAR



LOKI



HABLE / HABLE



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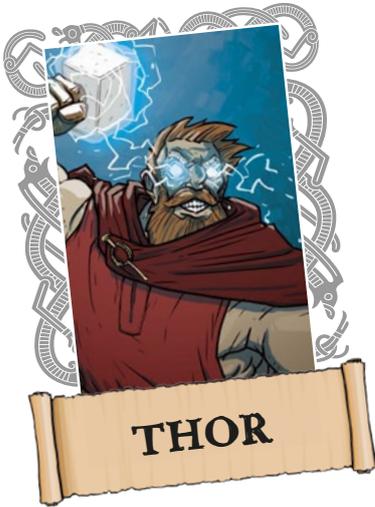
KYY

ULFBERTH → SWORD



**Give me a brief outline of the story of Lore of the Hávamál.**

**JOUNI:** Well, I've always described it as: Ragnarok gone wrong and Odin is trying to figure out what happened.



**You've brought Odin into modern day life as a bartender – what sparked that idea, and was it important for you to give him a contemporary setting?**

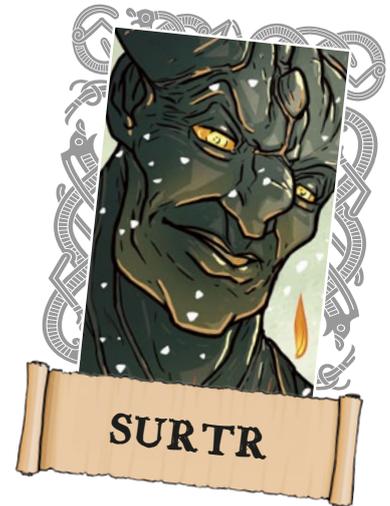
**CAT:** We hit on the idea of Odin serving drinks and correcting stories of the past Viking history, so that we could bend the timelines and settings into bite-size chunks of information.

**JOUNI:** The idea of Odin as a bartender was Cat's idea and I loved it right away. It raised immediately the question of why would Odin, All-Father, Grimnir, the highest of Norse gods work as a bartender in a pub ... and the story basically wrote itself after that. I think it was very important to give Norse Mythology a new flavour, new perspective. I don't see point in re-telling the same exact stories over and over again. I would much rather tell stories that give the old characters new life and inspire the reader to go searching for the original stories after they have put the comic down.

**Tell me a little about the Graphic Novel industry – it seems to be more popular than ever ...**

**CAT:** I worked in a comic book store while I was a kitten in Baltimore, and remember selling so many of Neil [Gaiman]'s "Sandman", mostly to young women who walked into the shop. Back then, you had to wait every month for issues to come out, now you can eat them in one big bite, because the 75 issues are all now collected. You can binge-read the whole storyline, I go back every couple of years and do just that! The DC and Marvel universes are huge, and the driving forces behind some of the world's biggest films. There are also countless small press titles.

**JOUNI:** I've always been a comics fan. I think comics are a very unique art form and it can tell stories that no other medium can. I'm kinda old-fashioned about comics in that I like to own a physical copy of the comic... but during past few years I've slowly gotten used to digital comics.



**When did you first start working together?**

**CAT:** Jouni and I met in 2004 when we did the Fiddler's Green/Neil Gaiman festival in Minnesota. We have done a few prints together, Jouni's version of Neil's "The Day The Saucers Landed" was a huge hit, and our first sold-out item. (We are now in the second printing). We also worked together in 2010, doing the American Gods House on the Rock Halloween festival. I was on tour in Finland but it was too far for Jouni to visit me, so I will have to go back!

**JOUNI:** Yup. We met in Minneapolis. It was an amazing festival. A big hotel full of Sandman fans and comics nerds. There were also great guests: Jill Thompson, Caitlin R. Kiernan ... and of course Neil Gaiman (just to mention few). I had just illustrated Neil's short story "Shoggoth's Old Peculiar" and it was released as a small "chapbook" at the event. I held my first signing session in there ... with Neil 'frigging' Gaiman! I wasn't sure which was freaking me out more: the fact that I was signing books to people or that I was sitting next to Neil. Oh, House on the Rock was also fun. It is a very, VERY weird place ... in a good way.



**Tell me about the creative process of developing a graphic novel. How do you begin, where do you draw inspiration from?**

**CAT:** I will never forget reading the back pages of Neil Gaiman's Sandman collection of Dream Country where he shares a comic script. It opened a door wide for me. I used that template when I wrote my first comic back in 2008, Sugar from Comic Book Tattoo. The book won an Eisner, so technically, I hold 1/75th of the award! On this one, Jouni and I kicked ideas back and forth, and he was extremely generous in the process. His art just keeps getting better.

**Jouni – what's involved from your side to make the characters come to life?**

**JOUNI:** I start with the character designs. I try to find the right look and feel to the main characters and after that I start visualising how they have ended up looking like that. So basically I create the characters and then I let them tell me their story. I draw my inspiration from anything and everything

around me: books, comics, movies, games ...I've even met some characters in my dreams.

**Cat/Jouni – How has working with Neil Gaiman influenced your creative styles?**

**CAT:** Right now, Neil has projects across almost every medium. Stage, TV, film, comic books, novels, radio, even music! Running his production company has been a lesson in everything, a paid college education. I have watched him take fearless risks and take new directions in his work. I have never been bored once in my job and that is my biggest gratitude, how many can say that about their work life?

**JOUNI:** Neil is one of the absolute greatest storytellers there is ... in ANY medium. And I love the way he can take an old folk tale or mythology or some forgotten superhero and make it relevant and interesting... while keeping it true to it's origin. Neil, if you ever read this ... I love you, man. BTW Cat, I can honestly tell you that there hasn't been a boring moment working with you either.

**How is working on the FTV project different from how you'd normally work?**

**CAT:** Having a partner who is 10 hours ahead in time zone has its own set of challenges. LA – Finland! I also realise that we have the special circumstances of Brexit and all of the new world that will bring. It's been a pleasure working with all the experts.

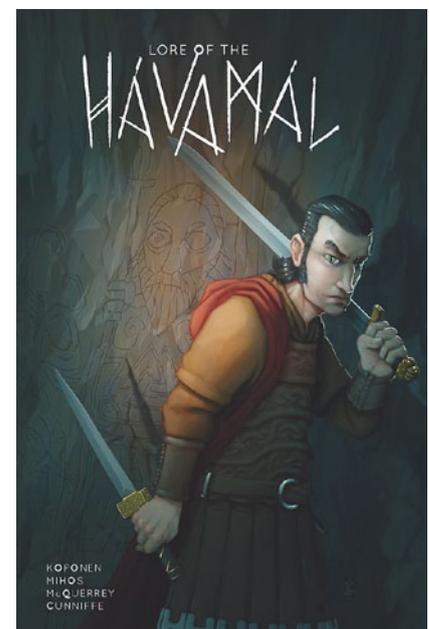
**JOUNI:** Yes. Working across the whole planet has been ... interesting. It is true that with modern technology, sending messages to the other side of the planet is easy ... but it doesn't matter much if the person on the other end is fast asleep! :-)



**Not to spoil anything for our readers but Lore of the Havamal has a cliff hanger ending – does this leave the door open for a follow up?**

**CAT:** Why, yes, it just might!

**JOUNI:** What cliff-hanger? I don't see any cliffs. There's lots of snow outside, but no cliffs ...





Cultural route  
of the Council of Europe  
Itinéraire culturel  
du Conseil de l'Europe



## DESTINATION VIKING ASSOCIATION NEWS

Welcome to the Destination Viking Association (DVA) news column. In this issue we meet the new DVA chairman, Edmund Southworth, and hear about the future aspirations for the organisation.

### Chairman's News

It's been a very busy period for the Destination Viking Association (DVA) in recent months. The emphasis for many has been on delivering what we promised to deliver under the Follow the Vikings Creative Europe project. As the end of the project is in sight - all the teams managing the separate work streams are talking to each other frequently. We are using video-conferencing as an important tool and most weeks there are several online sessions. There have been performances of the Roadshow in Shetland and Iceland, and we now look forward to the final show and closing events in York.

Our big challenge has been to accelerate our work in order to finish in time but at the same time make sure we have a legacy. A separate group of partners has audited all the tangible and intangible outputs of the FTV project and we are working to make sure that the DVA can pick up things such as the website and social media presence, and that there is a smooth transition after March 2019.

On top of all this work we have had a major review of our Cultural Routes activity. The DVA is the guardian and manager of the Viking Route of Cultural Heritage on behalf of the Council of Europe. Every three years we have to apply for formal re-accreditation. Last summer we surveyed our membership to find out how you had taken up the opportunities presented by the Cultural Route and I am very grateful for all the detailed responses we received. Once we submitted the lengthy application it was reviewed by an external specialist. This process included telephone interview and visits. Many thanks to colleagues in York and Denmark who hosted visits, and to those who took telephone calls. We think we have done well, but we expect the formal results of the accreditation to be announced in April.

Importantly for the DVA, the European Union and the Council of Europe are developing the Cultural Routes programme in several sub-regions of Europe. Vice-chair Ea Stevns Matzon and I went to a meeting in Oslo last year to meet with representatives of other Routes such as the Hansa and the St Olave's Way about the Baltic sub-region. We have submitted a small grant application to the Council of Europe to develop our understanding of how the Viking and Hansa period relate to each other and what potential there might be for joint working. Watch this space!

We recognised last year that the DVA was both ambitious and enthusiastic about the future, but that we relied too much on the generosity of members in terms of their time and resources. We therefore agreed at the AGM in Stockholm to strengthen our finances by increasing membership subscriptions from the forthcoming financial year. There will be a "banding" system which will make it easier for smaller organisations to be members – and larger members will contribute more. We recognise that we still need to give all members the right incentives to join and contribute as we go forward. For example we hope that the legacy of the FTV project will include some more commercial opportunities.

The DVA continues to attract new members and the Board is considering how we give new members the chance to contribute. One way is to be more flexible in the way we organise meetings. We want all members to have the opportunity to organise events such as study tours, which raise their profile and help them interact with colleagues in their own country and further afield. Do let me know if you would like to know more about this.

It continues to be a great time to be following the Vikings – and I hope to meet more of you in the year ahead.



### FORTHCOMING EVENTS

#### Viking festival "Seeburg" 2019, Grobiņa, Latvia 25 May 2019

Experience the spirit of the 7th-9th centuries at the Viking festival. For one day within the year the Grobiņa hillfort (Skābaržakalns) is brought to life! All day long you can see ancient crafts, battles, taste authentic Viking age food, learn new facts about history and feel the Viking blood course through your veins! The festival ends with unique and special evening show set on the exact site of the ancient Viking port.

#### Contacts and more information:

[www.grobinaturisms.lv](http://www.grobinaturisms.lv)  
[www.facebook.com/grobinaturisms](https://www.facebook.com/grobinaturisms)  
[ilze@grobinaturisms.lv](mailto:ilze@grobinaturisms.lv)  
phone: +371 26486189

#### Sailing trips from the Viking Ship Museum, Roskilde, Denmark 1st May - 30th September

Climb on board a Viking ship and sail on Roskilde Fjord!  
The Viking Ship Museum is the only place in the world where you can view 1000-year-old Viking ships and then go directly out to the Museum harbour, where the full-scale reconstructed Viking ships lie moored at the quayside. Viking ships were originally used for war, trading, fishing and transport during short every day trips or on longer voyages to foreign shores.  
The Museum invites guests to take part in unique daily sailing trips with either Viking ships or traditional Nordic boats, which are the descendants of the Vikings' ships. Tickets are sold as additional tickets to the entrance ticket on a 'first-come' basis from 10:00am on the day of the sailing.  
[www.vikingskibsmuseet.dk](http://www.vikingskibsmuseet.dk)

# VISIT THE NEW VIKING MUSEUM IN STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN

Read more at [www.vikingaliv.se](http://www.vikingaliv.se)



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